



Alexandre Dumas
The Count of Monte Cristo

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The name of ALEXANDRE DUMAS is synonymous with romance and adventure. His father, son of a French marquis and a Saint Domingo slave, was one of Napoleon's generals but died poor in 1806. Alexandre was brought up by his mother at Villers-Cotterêts, fifty miles from Paris, where he was born in 1802. In 1823, having found employment as a clerk, he settled in Paris, determined to make his name as an author. By 1829 he had achieved fame as one of the leaders of the new Romantic movement in literature. By 1840 he had turned his attention away from the theatre and embarked upon a series of historical romances which he hoped would make him the French Walter Scott. *The Three Musketeers* (1844) and its sequels, together with *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1844–6), his most enduring novels, have not only delighted generations of readers but made history exciting. His output was prodigious and fills more than 300 volumes in the standard French edition. First serialized in the new, cheap newspapers before appearing in volume form, his books brought him enormous popularity and extraordinary wealth which he readily gave away to anyone who asked, or squandered on a succession of mistresses and on follies like the 'Château de Monte Cristo', his monument to his own grandeur at Marly. He was an inveterate traveller and a cook of genius. He courted princes and loved wearing medals (some of which he bought himself), but was at heart a republican with a strong sense of social justice. He took part in the July Revolution of 1830 and gave spirited support to Garibaldi's efforts to create Italian independence in 1860. Many envied Dumas, some accused him of employing others to write the books he signed, but few ever spoke ill of this generous, open-handed, and disarming man. He lived just long enough to survive his talent and died of a stroke at Puy, near Dieppe, in 1870.

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ALEXANDRE DUMAS

*The Count of
Monte Cristo*



Revised translation, with an Introduction and Notes by

DAVID COWARD

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CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-------|
| <i>Introduction</i> | ix |
| <i>Note on the Text</i> | xxii |
| <i>Select Bibliography</i> | xxiii |
| <i>A Chronology of Alexandre Dumas</i> | xxiv |

THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. The Arrival at Marseilles | 3 |
| 2. Father and Son | 10 |
| 3. The Catalans | 17 |
| 4. The Plotters | 26 |
| 5. The Betrothal Feast | 31 |
| 6. The Deputy Procureur | 45 |
| 7. The Examination | 54 |
| 8. The Château d'If | 62 |
| 9. The Evening of the Betrothal | 70 |
| 10. The Little Room in the Tuileries | 74 |
| 11. The Corsican Ogre | 81 |
| 12. Father and Son | 88 |
| 13. The Hundred Days | 94 |
| 14. In the Dungeons | 100 |
| 15. Number 34 and Number 27 | 108 |
| 16. A Learned Italian | 120 |
| 17. In the Abbé's Cell | 130 |
| 18. The Treasure | 150 |
| 19. The Death of the Abbé | 161 |
| 20. The Cemetery of the Château d'If | 170 |
| 21. The Isle of Tiboulén | 175 |
| 22. The Smugglers | 183 |
| 23. The Isle of Monte Cristo | 190 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| 24. The Search | 197 |
| 25. At Marseilles Again | 203 |
| 26. The Inn of Pont du Gard | 211 |
| 27. The Tale | 225 |
| 28. The Prison Registers | 237 |
| 29. The House of Morrel and Son | 243 |
| 30. The Fifth of September | 254 |
| 31. Italy: Sinbad the Sailor | 267 |
| 32. The Awakening | 286 |
| 33. Roman Bandits | 292 |
| 34. Vampa | 307 |
| 35. The Colosseum | 317 |
| 36. La Mazzolata | 339 |
| 37. The Carnival at Rome | 350 |
| 38. The Catacombs of Saint Sebastian | 364 |
| 39. The Rendezvous | 377 |
| 40. The Guests | 384 |
| 41. The Breakfast | 389 |
| 42. The Presentation | 407 |
| 43. Monsieur Bertuccio | 418 |
| 44. The House at Auteuil | 422 |
| 45. The Vendetta | 428 |
| 46. The Rain of Blood | 447 |
| 47. Unlimited Credit | 459 |
| 48. The Dappled Greys | 470 |
| 49. Ideology | 483 |
| 50. Haydée | 492 |
| 51. The Morrel Family | 497 |
| 52. Pyramus and Thisbe | 505 |
| 53. Toxicology | 517 |
| 54. Robert le Diable | 531 |
| 55. A Talk about Stocks | 548 |
| 56. Major Cavalcanti | 558 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 57. Andrea Cavalcanti | 567 |
| 58. At the Gate | 578 |
| 59. M. Noirtier de Villefort | 587 |
| 60. The Will | 595 |
| 61. The Telegraph | 604 |
| 62. The Bribe | 611 |
| 63. Shadows | 620 |
| 64. The Dinner | 627 |
| 65. The Beggar | 636 |
| 66. A Conjugal Scene | 643 |
| 67. Matrimonial Plans | 651 |
| 68. The Office of the Procureur du Roi | 659 |
| 69. A Summer Ball | 668 |
| 70. The Inquiry | 674 |
| 71. The Ball | 682 |
| 72. Bread and Salt | 688 |
| 73. Madame de Saint-Méran | 692 |
| 74. The Promise | 702 |
| 75. The Villefort Family Vault | 723 |
| 76. A Signed Statement | 730 |
| 77. The Progress of M. Cavalcanti the Younger | 740 |
| 78. Haydée | 748 |
| 79. Yanina | 766 |
| 80. The Lemonade | 784 |
| 81. The Accusation | 795 |
| 82. The Room of the Retired Baker | 799 |
| 83. The Burglary | 815 |
| 84. The Hand of God | 826 |
| 85. Beauchamp | 831 |
| 86. The Journey | 836 |
| 87. The Trial | 843 |
| 88. The Challenge | 854 |
| 89. The Insult | 859 |

| | |
|---|------|
| 90. Mercédès | 867 |
| 91. The Meeting | 873 |
| 92. The Mother and Son | 883 |
| 93. The Suicide | 888 |
| 94. Valentine | 896 |
| 95. The Confession | 902 |
| 96. The Father and Daughter | 912 |
| 97. The Contract | 919 |
| 98. The Departure for Belgium | 928 |
| 99. The Inn of the Bell and Bottle | 933 |
| 100. The Law | 943 |
| 101. The Apparition | 951 |
| 102. The Serpent | 956 |
| 103. Valentine | 961 |
| 104. Maximilian | 965 |
| 105. Danglars' Signature | 972 |
| 106. The Cemetery of Père-la-Chaise | 980 |
| 107. The Division | 991 |
| 108. The Lions' Den | 1003 |
| 109. The Judge | 1009 |
| 110. The Assizes | 1017 |
| 111. Expiation | 1025 |
| 112. The Departure | 1031 |
| 113. The House in the Allées de Meillan | 1035 |
| 114. Peppino | 1053 |
| 115. Luigi Vampa's Bill of Fare | 1061 |
| 116. The Pardon | 1067 |
| 117. The Fifth of October | 1071 |
| <i>Explanatory Notes</i> | 1083 |

INTRODUCTION

ALEXANDRE DUMAS was a force of nature. A robust, roaring man of vast appetites and even vaster energies, he cries out to be measured in cubits rather than the feet and inches which are used for mere mortals. For forty years, sparks from his mighty anvil lit fires which inflamed the world and burn still. D'Artagnan and Edmond Dantès are the stuff of dreams.

He was born in 1802 at Villers-Cotterêts, about fifty miles north-east of Paris, the second child of an innkeeper's daughter and of one of Napoleon's most remarkable generals. Thomas-Alexandre Davy de la Pailleterie was born at Saint Domingo in 1762, the son of a French marquis and Marie-Cessette Dumas, a slave. Disowned by his father, he took his mother's name, enlisted as a private soldier in 1786 and rose rapidly through the ranks during the early Revolutionary campaigns. A courageous and dashing field officer, he usually had more to say for himself than was politic. In 1799, he quarrelled with Napoleon and never regained his favour, nor did he receive the army pay that was due to him. He died poor in 1806, leaving his wife and children to manage as they could.

At the schools which he attended with no great enthusiasm, young Alexandre, who inherited all his father's drive and (as caricaturists were later to emphasize) some of his negroid features, learned at least to write a good hand. It was for his handwriting rather than through his father's old friends that he found work as a none-too-diligent minor clerk in 1823. He had left Villers-Cotterêts for good and was determined to make his way in Paris as an author. While waiting for his hour to come, he set about laying the foundations of his future life. He spent more money than he earned, developed a habit of collaborating with other writers and kept up a steady stream of affairs: by Catherine Labay, a seamstress, he had a son in 1824, also called Alexandre, who later became famous as the author of *La Dame aux Camélias* before turning into the self-appointed guardian of the nation's morality and censor of his father's excesses. Many plays and numerous mistresses later, Dumas scored an enormous success with *Henry III and His Court* (1829), a play which helped to inaugurate the new 'Romantic' drama which was a potent expression of the reaction against the ultra-conservative political, moral, and cultural climate of the Restoration. He threw himself unbidden into the July Revolution of 1830 and

single-handedly captured a powder magazine at Soissons. He persuaded Lafayette, the liberal hero of old Revolutionary struggles who had helped set the constitutionally minded Louis-Philippe on the throne of France, to appoint him organizer of the National Guard in the Vendée, but Dumas, a natural republican, soon gave up when he encountered strong local Royalist opposition. He returned to Paris where he resumed his position as one of the age's leading theatrical lights.

Dumas tackled contemporary subjects in plays like *Antony* (1831), a lurid story of marital infidelity, but as a dramatist was always temperamentally attracted by historical anecdotes, which he unfailingly exploited for their melodramatic potential. He also rewrote, with or without permission, plays by other hands and soon acquired a suspect reputation for his nonchalant attitude to literary property. By the mid-1830s, however, conscious of the inadequacy of his education, he began reading history seriously with a view to creating the French 'historical novel' which would be as respected and successful as the English historical novels of Walter Scott. In the meantime he accepted whatever commissions came his way. It was thus that he undertook a walking tour of the South of France in 1834 to collect material for a series of articles which he later published as the first of his books of travel impressions. As a travel writer, Dumas gave short historical and geographical measure, but always succeeded in interesting his reader with local lore coaxed out of chance acquaintances, and with amazing anecdotes of his personal perils and astounding adventures. (The Romantic poet Lamartine once remarked that while some men spent their lives looking for the secret of perpetual motion, Dumas had invented 'perpetual astonishment'.) His journeys were not always motivated by commissions—in 1832, when his republican sympathies had become dangerous, he prudently left Paris for Switzerland. Surrounded by mistresses, fending off creditors, and habitually working fourteen hours a day at his desk to meet his many commitments, he remained as yet a man of the theatre and consolidated his position with the triumph of *Kean* in 1836.

But by the late 1830s he was turning to the novel, partly because he was interested in the possibilities of fiction and partly because the market was favourable. The appearance in 1836 of *La Presse* and *Le Siècle*, the first of a new breed of cheap newspapers financed almost entirely by advertising revenues, revolutionized the newspaper industry. Editors found that they could increase circulation by running novels in serial form, though not all writers were able to provide the thrilling climax to each episode which ensured that readers would buy the next issue.

Where Balzac failed, Eugène Sue succeeded: when *Le Constitutionnel* outbid its rivals for Sue's *Le Juif errant* (*The Wandering Jew*) in 1843, the number of copies sold daily soared within three weeks from 4,000 to 24,000. Dumas's gift for melodrama and the speed at which he worked ensured that he made the most of his opportunities and on occasions was writing three or even four serial novels simultaneously. When the episodes were collected (as they at first were by opportunist Belgian publishers who paid no royalties) and sold in multi-volume sets, he became not merely France's best-known writer but also the most famous Frenchman of his day, a star who was recognized wherever he travelled.

He thrived on fame and success and lived up to the image of extravagance, indestructibility, and recklessness which he himself encouraged. He married an actress in 1840 from whom he separated in 1844. By this time he was growing close to his son, Alexandre, whom he undertook to initiate into the literary and social life of the capital. With Alexandre, he set off for Spain in 1846—simply abandoning a number of novels he was writing on the grounds that he needed to rest—and thence travelled to Algeria, with an official commission to write one of his inimitable travel books which the government hoped would make North Africa attractive to potential colonizers. In 1847 he moved to Marly, to the 'Château de Monte Cristo' which was to have been a modest residence but had grown into a costly palace which symbolized his success. The same year, he inaugurated the 'Théâtre historique' where he hoped to reap enormous financial rewards by staging mainly his own plays. Meanwhile the stream of historical romances continued to feed the presses of the Paris newspapers and he commanded huge fees, which he squandered. Dumas had no financial acumen and the horde of social and literary spongers took full advantage of his generosity.

Though he courted kings and princes, his democratic (or rather meritocratic) leanings prompted him to stand, unsuccessfully, as a republican candidate in the 1848 elections. But while he welcomed the change of regime, the Revolution which ended Louis-Philippe's bourgeois monarchy also ruined the market for his novels and plays and he was never thereafter to earn the vast sums he needed to finance his lavish adventures. In 1850 the 'Château de Monte Cristo', which had cost him 400,000 francs, was sold to an American dentist for 30,000. The 'Théâtre historique' failed and Dumas fled to Brussels to avoid his creditors. His reputation still made him attractive to women who more often than not counted on him to advance their careers. His son grew increasingly embarrassed by his self-indulgence. He continued to write indefatigably and to travel, notably to Russia in 1859. In 1860, he met

Garibaldi and was swept up enthusiastically into the cause of Italian independence. In 1867 he began his final liaison, with the American actress Ada Mencken, and published *La Terreur prussienne* (*The Prussian Terror*), which carried a clear-sighted warning of the threat looming from across the Rhine. He lived long enough to be saddened by the decline of his powers and to witness the Franco–Prussian War he had predicted. In September 1870 he suffered a stroke and lingered until 5 December when he died at the home of his son at Puy, near Dieppe.

Dumas, who had earned millions, was not a rich man when he died. He had no financial sense, nor indeed much of a sense of property. He kept money in drawers and tobacco jars and was as ready to give large sums away as he was unembarrassed when borrowing his cab-fare or annexing sections of a neighbour's land to complete his estate at Marly. This open-handedness helps to explain his cavalier attitude to literary property. Early in his career, comments were made about his use of collaborators, and even friends and fellow authors found it hard to believe that any one man could, unaided, write or even dictate all the vast novels he signed. In 1845 a journalist named Émile de Mirecourt attempted to expose Dumas, accusing him of directing a 'fiction-factory' which employed writers to turn out the serials and volumes to which he put his signature. Dumas took him to court and won his case.

But though his good faith cannot be doubted, the question of Dumas's authorship of his works cannot be left there. He never tried to hide his debts to others and was always eager to acknowledge the contribution of collaborators. As a playwright in the 1830s, he had been in the habit of working with one or more experienced hands. Sometimes plays which had not found a home would be brought to him for rewriting: *La Tour de Nesle* (*The Tower of Nesle*) (1832) was the result of one such proposal. He might call too upon others to supply the historical and documentary background for his romances: for *Georges* (1843) he talked to a Mauritian who gave him enough information for Dumas to describe the island as vividly as though he had been there. His most regular collaborator, however, was Auguste Maquet (1813–88), a failed author of a scholarly disposition, with whom he discussed the direction his plots should take and who furnished him with historical and other materials which Dumas duly incorporated into the books that continued to appear under his name. Dumas's contemporaries raised an eyebrow at this practice, but his collaborative working habits certainly help to explain just why he was able to publish over 600 plays, novels, travel books, and memoirs: 1,348 volumes, in all, it has been calculated. Of this total, it is likely that one or two titles were never even read by

Dumas who on occasions agreed to lend his name to help a struggling writer: the name of Dumas could sell anything. But there can be no doubt that he wrote all his books himself, though with the kind of help enjoyed by modern script-writers. Some of his collaborators would nowadays be called 'researchers'. Others, providing no more than secretarial assistance, recopied his manuscripts, adding punctuation and correcting inconsistencies. Others still—Maquet in particular—were involved in what would nowadays be called 'script-conferences', discussing story-lines, the development of characters, and ways of grafting fictional events onto solid historical stock. But only Dumas had the 'Dumas touch', and he alone was ultimately responsible for the final tone, tension, and form of his romances. The writing of *Monte Cristo* is a case in point.

In an article published in his own newspaper, *Le Monte Cristo*, in April 1857, Dumas explained that in 1842 he had accompanied Prince Napoleon on a sailing expedition to Elba. It was then that he first saw the Island of Monte Cristo which so took his imagination that he promised the Prince that he would one day write a novel in which it would feature. In 1843 he signed a contract with the publishers Bèthune and Plon for eight volumes of 'Impressions of Paris'. But the success of Eugène Sue's *Mystères de Paris* gave the publishers second thoughts and they subsequently informed Dumas that they now wanted a novel rather than the historical and archaeological guide they had originally commissioned. Having received an advance but not yet having written a word, Dumas was only too happy to oblige. He dusted down an 'anecdote' which he had found in the *Mémoires historiques tirés des archives de la police de Paris* (1838, 6 vols.) by Jacques Peuchet (1758–1830), a former police archivist, who had written accounts of a number of intriguing cases in the manner designed to thrill, titillate, and horrify.

The affair that had attracted Dumas was entitled 'Le Diamant et la vengeance' ('Revenge and the Diamond') and began in Paris in 1807 where four friends from the Midi, François Picaud, Gervais Chaubard, Guilhem Solari, and Antoine Allut were in the habit of meeting regularly at the café run by one Mathieu Loupian, a widower with two children. When Picaud, a cobbler, announced that he was to marry Marguerite Vigoroux, a pretty girl with a handsome dowry, the envious Loupian persuaded the others that Picaud needed to be taught a lesson. With only Allut dissenting from what he considered to be a dangerous jest, they denounced Picaud as an English spy. He was arrested and disappeared from sight. Seven years later, in April 1814, Picaud was released from the prison of Fenestrelles in Piedmont. While serving his sentence,

he had grown close to another prisoner, a Milanese cleric abandoned by his family, who had come to regard him as a son. Before his death in January 1814, the cleric made over to him a vast fortune which included a secret hoard of three million gold coins. Picaud returned to Paris an extremely rich man on 15 February 1815.

There he learned that Marguerite had waited for him for two years before marrying Loupian who had used her dowry to open what had become one of the most fashionable caf  s in Paris. Following the trail, he travelled to see Allut who had retired to N  mes. Calling himself the abb   Baldini, he explained that he had shared a cell in a Naples jail with Picaud who was now dead. For services rendered to a wealthy English prisoner, Picaud had acquired a diamond worth 50,000 francs and had charged the abb   to give it to Allut, the only dissenting member of the conspiracy, on condition that he reveal the identity of those who had denounced him. Their names were to be engraved on his tombstone. Allut hesitated but was brow-beaten into accepting by his greedy, shrewish wife. Subsequently the merchant who bought the diamond resold it for 100,000 francs, thus incurring the anger of the Alluts. When he was found dead, Allut was charged with murder and jailed.

At about the same time in Paris, an old lady approached Loupian and offered him a small regular payment to employ an old family servant named Prosper. Shortly afterwards, Chaubard, one of the original four friends, was found stabbed on the Pont des Arts. Attached to the handle of the murder-weapon was a note which read: 'Number One'. It was the first of a series of sinister incidents. Loupian's dog and his wife's parrot were poisoned. Mademoiselle Loupian was seduced and promised marriage by a rich nobleman who proved to be a former galley-slave who promptly absconded. The caf   burned down and Loupian was ruined. One night Solari was taken violently ill and died in agony. A note pinned to the body proclaimed: 'Number Two'. Loupian's son was lured into bad company, took to crime, and was jailed for twenty years. Marguerite died and Loupian's daughter, now destitute, was forced into prostitution by Prosper.

One night in the Jardin des Tuileries, Loupian was surprised by old Prosper who revealed that he was Picaud, the architect of the catastrophes which had befallen him, his purpose being to ruin the man who had ruined his life. Picaud stabbed his victim to death but was himself overpowered by a stranger who locked him up in a lonely cellar. The stranger was Allut who had followed the trail of the 'abb   Baldini' but had arrived too late to warn Loupian. He too now wanted revenge for the time he had spent in prison and demanded 25,000 francs every

time Picaud asked for food. Though he was worth 16 millions, Picaud had grown avaricious and refused to pay. Finally Allut lost patience and murdered him before fleeing to England where he revealed the full story on his death-bed in 1828.

Dumas retained the tripartite structure of Picaud's revenge which he decided initially was the essence of the anecdote. From Monte Cristo's disguises to Vampa's treatment of his prisoner Danglars—but not the character of Marguerite/Mercédès, who is given a central role—he relied heavily on Peuchet's sombre version of events. He began by setting his story in Rome at what is now Chapter 31. Working quickly, he took events up to the return of Albert de Morcerf and Franz d'Epinay to Paris—though his chronicle was at this stage written in the first person from Franz's point of view. He then showed what he had written to Maquet who asked why the most dramatic part of the story—the betrayal, imprisonment, and escape of the hero—had been omitted. The tale would have to be related at some point to justify the theme of vengeance: it was too long to be introduced retrospectively and too interesting to be summarized. Dumas agreed and the next day decided that the novel should fall into three parts: Marseilles, Rome, and Paris (that is, Chapters 1–30, 31–9, and 40–117 in this translation). Subsequent 'script conferences' prompted Maquet to write out a kind of story-board which Dumas was only too happy to follow.

The 'first part' appeared in *Le Journal des débats* between 28 August and 18 October. The 'Roman' section followed immediately but 'Part III' was delayed by Dumas's other commitments: in addition to deadlines for *L'Histoire d'une casse-noisette* (*The History of a Nutcracker*) (1845) and a number of similar smaller commissions, he had contracted to write *La Dame de Monsoreau* for *Le Constitutionnel*, and *Les Quarante-Cinq* (*The Forty-Five Guardsmen*) and *Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge* for *La Démocratie pacifique*. As a result, Part III did not appear until June 1845 and the final instalment, beginning at Chapter 63 of the present edition, ran more or less smoothly to its end on 15 January 1846. It is hardly surprising that Dumas, who regularly over-committed himself in this way, gladly accepted whatever help he could get.

But if Maquet had given him a line to follow, it was Dumas who breathed his own life into the saga of Edmond Dantès, which retains many features of Peuchet's anecdote and yet is quite different from its mood. From his stay in Marseilles in 1834, he recalled the Morrel family, the Catalan community, and his visit to the Chateau d'If where he had inspected the cell once occupied by Mirabeau. He remembered too the stories he had heard of the strange and learned abbé Faria who

had died in 1819 (see note to p. 104). To give a ring of authenticity to the murders perpetrated by Mme de Villefort, the wife of the magistrate who sent Dantès to the Château d'If, he borrowed scientific details from the trial of the poisoner Castaing and the experiments he and a friend named Thibaut had carried out with toxic substances (see notes to pp. 344 and 700). He drew on his own experience for his descriptions of If, Monte Cristo, and Rome, while his picture of Paris—and Dumas thought of the book as essentially a novel of contemporary manners—was rooted in his own observation. But more important than the way the story was put together or the memories of places and people which made it authentic and immediate, Dumas's imagination took his melodramatic plot into the realm of legend. The first part especially has an extra, special, magnetic charge. In Italy and Paris, Monte Cristo the avenger burns like ice, but Edmond Dantès, the super-hero of the Château d'If, generates a sense of wonder and simply makes off with the reader. Balzac or Stendhal, who were greater novelists, never achieved as much, and only Hugo's archetypes, Jean Valjean and Quasimodo, have a comparable epic presence.

Yet for all the oriental and magical aura of his tale, events are rooted in real life, as the explanatory notes at the end of the present edition serve to show. Dumas parades his knowledge of horticulture, art, architecture, literature, and history and in so doing attaches his tale to the common-place, common-sense world. His characters live at real addresses, patronize well-known stables and watchmakers, see the operas and plays which everyone who was someone had seen, live in authentic social milieus in the Chaussée d'Antin or the Faubourg Saint-Germain and adopt attitudes appropriate to their age and rank. Politically they live in the shadow first of Napoleon, then of the conservative Restoration before emerging into the kind of society where opportunists like Danglars made fortunes by speculating in the new railways and the nascent industrial revolution, and where canny politicians like Villefort or Debray always stayed on the winning side.

Against the forces of conservatism stands the idealism which had made Greece independent, sought a just settlement in Carlist Spain, and turned Mehemet Ali and Ali Pacha into heroes in the struggle against tyranny in general and the British in particular. Dumas, who took pride in being the friend of Kings and Princes, was a paradoxical democrat and his mixed liberal sympathies give the novel an ambiguous political colour. His contempt for the ambition of the representatives of the people who despise the voters who elected them is as clear as his sympathy for Faria's belief in the inevitability of

national and personal freedom. Edmond Dantès is not merely the victim of the envy of Danglars but a pawn in a game of political intrigue: the clothes and titles may be different, but France is as firmly under the control of sultans and vizirs as the Orient where the outward forms of tyranny were at least openly acknowledged. Yet Monte Cristo speaks out against 'the socialists' and rejects all loyalty to a society hostile to the idea of justice: is not Villefort 'the living statue of the law?' Dantès the victim turns himself through his own efforts into a hardened individualist who, though he never forgets the rights of man, has relied on his own energies, brains, and will to overcome impossible odds.

At this level *Monte Cristo* shares the nascent habit of realism best exemplified by Balzac: indeed, the novel is sometimes thought of as a kind of 'Comédie humaine' in its own right. Then again, Dumas's protagonist, a superman who tastes disillusionment, also belongs with those disintegrating, self-doubting heroes who so fired the Romantic imagination. He suffers the fate of those who live to see their wishes come true: the heady wine of vengeance turns to dust in his mouth. But Dantès' trials and his heaven-sent opportunity to avenge the wrongs done him also cripple him emotionally. His first thought on returning to France may well be to reward the good, and Morrel's business is duly saved. But he is doomed to engineer human happiness in which he cannot share: he is a man apart, an outsider. And the terrible toll he takes of those who wronged him leaves him empty rather than fulfilled. Vengeance may be a meal best eaten cold, but cold meats do not satisfy him. He is as lonely as Vigny's Moses who is abandoned by God. Monte Cristo does not simply live above the society which he judges, he is cut off from it, without human contact, a solitary figure chained to the destiny of his mission. He believes that he is God's agent through whom just punishment is meted out to those who have sinned against man and heaven. But as time passes, even he begins to doubt that anyone can really be 'the angel of Providence'. As Mercédès points out, self-appointed Hammers of the Lord are not always able to distinguish between Justice and Anger: why does Monte Cristo remember crimes that Providence has forgotten? It is only when Villefort has gone mad, and Morcerf is dead that Monte Cristo understands that he is not the privileged instrument of God's providence but a victim of Fate like all the others. Only then does he abandon his obsession: the crimes of Mme de Villefort and the death of Edward, which he had not foreseen, do not simply teach him that Fate is beyond his control but finally sicken him. Monte Cristo's ultimate victory is not the defeat of

his enemies but the spiritual rebirth which enables him to rejoin the human race and sail away in hope with Haydée.

Thus to historical realism and strong social types is added a level of psychological depth which is also present in the bold sketch of the lesbian Eugénie, say, or in the mixture of puritanism and sadism which explains so much of Villefort's later conduct. ('I am on the earth to punish', he says.) But *Monte Cristo* is also a highly moral book. François Picaud revenged himself by acts which were criminal; Monte Cristo, as the agent of Providence, remains neutral, refuses to intervene, and settles for laying traps in which his prey entangle themselves through greed or ambition. His victims are made responsible for bringing about their own downfall and their fate is a punishment not only for what they once did to Edmond Dantès but also for the crimes they have since committed against moral and social law: Danglars for his financial opportunism, Fernand for betraying Ali Pacha, and Villefort for applying the law without mercy. Behind events is a vigorous defence of Justice.

But of course it is not Dumas's moral lessons or social and psychological realism nor the solitary Romantic anguish of the hero which explain the novel's lasting popularity. For most readers, *Monte Cristo* is not about Justice at all, but about Injustice. It is a tale of Revenge and Retribution which does not lead back to the Paris of the 1840s but opens into a world of magic, of fabulous treasure buried on desert islands, of bandits and dark intrigue, of wizardry and splendours borrowed from the *Arabian Nights*. The fearless Monte Cristo is a super-hero who overcomes all the odds. A master of disguise, he has the secret of all knowledge, immense physical strength, endless resourcefulness, and complete power to punish the wicked. Heroes do not come any taller. He is the stuff of adolescent dreams and will retain his fascination, as Swinburne said, 'while the boy's heart beats in man'. It was for 'the Great Dumas'' capacity to stir the emotions and carry his reader into a world of excitement and adventure that Thackeray was kept 'on the stretch for nearly nine hours one day' in July 1849. In September 1853 he wrote to a friend: 'began to read Monte Christo [*sic*] at six one morning and never stopped until eleven at night'. Shaw placed Dumas with Dickens and Scott 'in the second order because, though they are immensely entertaining, their morality is ready made', and commented reproachfully that Dumas 'made French history like an opera by Meyerbeer for me'. But the niggards and carpers (and they have never been in short supply) will always lose hands down. With *Monte Cristo*, Dumas, King of Romance and Prince of Story-tellers, achieved what

he also managed in *The Three Musketeers*: he manufactured a folk legend.

Where in that extrovert, amiable, and engaging personality Dumas found the resources to deal with such sombre subjects as treachery and revenge remains a mystery. Part of the answer surely lies in the exuberance of his imagination which was equalled in his own age only by that of Victor Hugo. Hugo's literary gifts were undoubtedly the greater but even he deferred to Dumas. After Dumas's death, he wrote: 'The name of Alexandre Dumas is more than French, it is European; and it is more than European, it is universal.'

For even during his lifetime, *The Count of Monte Cristo* had travelled far beyond the frontiers of France. It was quickly translated into English, German, Spanish, and Italian and subsequently into many other languages from Arabic to Swedish. By the time its seemingly undentable popularity began at last to wane at home, the whole of the English-speaking world had been infected by Dumas-mania. D'Artagnan, Queen Margot, and Monte Cristo were everywhere. Thirty separate editions of the book appeared in Britain between 1890 and 1910, while in the United States the figure was nearer fifty. Despite a revival in the 1920s, sales have never since reached quite such heights, though the novel has never been out of print on either side of the Atlantic in a variety of forms: leather-bound, paper-wrapped, complete, abridged, annotated, with and without illustrations.

Monte Cristo himself, however, did not go into a decline. He simply migrated to a new medium. The silent cinema projected him onto the world's screens where he seemed even more tremendous than on the printed page. Hobart Bosworth was the first Edmond Dantès in a film of the prison episode directed by Francis Boggs in 1908. He repeated the role in 1912 and Eugene O'Neill's son James played the part in another pared-down version of the story in 1913. A fuller telling of the betrayal, suffering, escape, and revenge of the Count was made in 1922, starring John Gilbert. To Hollywood's tally of five in the era when cinema had not yet learned to speak must be added the two versions made in Italy, two in Austria, and one in Germany.

The first talking *Monte Cristo* was released in 1934. Directed by Rowland V. Lee and with Robert Donat in the title role, it is still affectionately regarded as one of the best of all the filmed versions. Curiously, it was to be the last American adaptation of Dumas's novel for half a century. New screen versions were made in Mexico, Spain, and Korea, and Monte Cristo re-emerged anew from Hollywood in 1975, wearing the face of Richard Chamberlain. Another American

Monte Cristo was released in 2002 with James Caviezel as the Count and Richard Harris, in his last film role, as the abbé Faria. Though suitably spectacular, this heavily truncated version disappointed many readers of the novel.

In France, the first, silent *Monte Cristo* was made in 1922, though the 1928 adaptation, directed by Henri Frescourt, is altogether more substantial. The wartime film starring Pierre-Richard Willm (1943), released in two parts, now seems rather stagey, though it manages the difficult problem of condensing Dumas's proliferating plot with considerable success. Since then, the role has been played by some of France's most celebrated leading men—they include Jean Marais (1953–4) and Louis Jourdan (1961)—but none to greater acclaim or effect than Gérard Depardieu in a sumptuous made-for-television version first transmitted in 1998. With a few exceptions, notably that of Donat, actors are more convincing either as Dantès, the action hero of the first part of the book, or as Monte Cristo, the sophisticated avenger. Depardieu, the most versatile French actor of his generation, succeeds in both roles and, like the lavish and generously proportioned eight-hour adaptation which he dominates, is by far the most satisfying of all the screen Counts.

It was not the first adaptation for television. There was a BBC *Monte Cristo* in 1964, with Alan Badel, and a German mini-series in 1992. The book was serialized for radio by the BBC in six parts in 1988, has attracted the makers of animated films in Australia (1993) and Japan (2004), and even resurfaced in 2001 in Stephen Fry's novel, *The Stars' Tennis Ball*, whose hero, Ned Maddstone, is an anagram and sosie of Edmond Dantès . . .

Dumas would of course have approved wholeheartedly of this exploitation of his literary property. He himself had, in collaboration with Maquet, adapted his novel for the stage in four parts (1848–52) and launched a newspaper, *Le Monte Cristo*, in 1857. Trading on the name of one of his best-known characters came naturally to him. And many have followed where he led. In the 1880s, to feed the public's insatiable appetite for serialized fiction, authors like Jules Lermina, J. Le Prince, and Paul Malahin found readers eager for spin-offs and sequels such as *Le Fils de Monte Cristo*, *Mademoiselle de Monte Cristo*, and *La Comtesse de Monte Cristo*. The Count's cinema fame in the USA was already such that in 1917 Eugene Moore made use of his name for *A Modern Monte Cristo*, a revenge melodrama entirely unconnected with Dumas. Although Hollywood has filmed Dumas's novel on only three occasions (1934, 1975, 2002), in the 1940s in particular it

produced a succession of exploitative spin-offs entitled the *Son/Wife/Sword/Return/Revenge/Treasure of Monte Cristo*, some of which were transposed into contemporary settings. In 1934, *The Countess of Monte Cristo* featured the heroine of *King Kong*, Fay Wray, in what was billed as a comedy. The same title was used in 1948 to showcase, rather unexpectedly, the ice-skating talents of Sonja Henie. Similar exploitations in France include *Le secret de Monte Cristo* (1948) and *Sous le signe de Monte Cristo* (1968), directed by André Hunebelle. Thus, to the hundred or so more or less faithful adaptations of Dumas's novel must therefore be added this false family of interlopers and impostors who have nevertheless helped to keep the memory green.

Like d'Artagnan and the Musketeers, Monte Cristo has fascinated readers (and, latterly, cinema-goers and television audiences) across the globe for over a hundred and fifty years. His exploitation by other media has doubtless extended his longevity. But the appeal of Dantès, victim of injustice, who turns into Monte Cristo, the avenger and hand of Providence, owes most to the extraordinary imagination of his creator. Master of disguise and Man of Mystery, Monte Cristo long ago ceased to be a Romantic hero rooted in his time but constantly leaps into ours, whatever year it happens to be. He is a vulnerable but rustproof model of honest if muscular endeavour, an emblem of civilized values, who is saved from his baser self at the last moment, a cipher for the way we might all live our lives. "I say he is a myth," says Albert de Morcerf, "and never had an existence." "And what may a myth be?" enquired Pastrini. "The explanation would be too long, my dear landlord," replied Franz.' And too dreary. The simplest course is to admit to the plain truth that Monte Cristo is quite simply irresistible.

NOTE ON THE TEXT

Le Comte de Monte Cristo was serialized in *Le Journal des Débats* between 28 August 1844 and 15 January 1846 and was first published in volume form in Paris by Pétion (18 vols., 1844–5). The standard French editions are those prepared by Gilbert Sigaux for La Pléiade (Paris, 1981) and by Claude Schopp for the ‘Bouquins’ series (Paris, 1993, 2 vols.). Readers wishing to follow the complex printing history of Dumas’ voluminous writings in French may still usefully consult Frank W. Reed’s *A Bibliography of Dumas père* (London, 1933) and Douglas Munro’s *Dumas: A Bibliography of Works Published in French, 1825–1900* (New York and London, 1981). *Alexandre Dumas père: A Bibliography of Works Translated into English to 1910* (New York and London, 1978), also by Douglas Munro, is the best guide to British and American editions.

The first English translation was made in 1846 by Emma Hardy for the inexpensive Parlour Novelist series published in Belfast, but it was the anonymous translation published the same year by Chapman and Hall which later took the English-speaking world by storm. Based at least in part on the serialized, rather than the revised version, it differs in minor ways from the standard French text but is full and thoroughly readable, though fonder perhaps of polysyllables than present-day taste admits. Most so-called ‘new’ translations published since have drawn heavily on it and it has again been modestly ‘modernized’ for the present edition.

Routledge of London secured the rights in 1852 and reprinted it at least twenty times before 1900. Thereafter, it was adopted by Nelson, Dent’s Everyman Library, and Collins. It appeared first in the United States in 1846 and was subsequently reissued many times by T. B. Peterson of Philadelphia, Routledge’s New York office, and Little, Brown and Company of Boston. This classic translation which first thrilled readers in the age of Dickens and Washington Irving has been in print more or less continuously for more than a century and a half.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

DUMAS's autobiography, *Mes Mémoires* (1852–5) (ed. Claude Schopp, Paris, 1989; English trans., London, 1907–9), stops short at 1832 and is as unreliable as it is entertaining. The best French biographies are: Claude Schopp, *Dumas, le génie de la vie* (Paris, 1985; English trans., New York and Toronto, 1988) and Daniel Zimmerman, *Alexandre Dumas le Grand* (Paris, 1993). For a concise, handsomely illustrated introduction, see Christian Biet, Jean-Paul Brighelli, and Jean-Luc Rispail, *Alexandre Dumas, ou les aventures d'un romancier* (Paris, Gallimard, 'Collection Découvertes', 1986). Gilles Henri's *Monte Cristo, ou l'extraordinaire aventure des ancêtres d'Alexandre Dumas* (Paris, 1976) is especially interesting for the light thrown on the Davy-Dumas family. Isabelle Jan's *Dumas romancier* (Paris, 1973) offers a general survey of his fiction.

Among the many books in English devoted to Dumas, approachable introductions are provided by Ruthven Todd, *The Laughing Mulatto* (London, 1940), A. Craig Bell, *Alexandre Dumas* (London, 1950), and Richard Stowe, *Dumas* (Boston, 1976). Michael Ross's *Alexandre Dumas* (Newton Abbot, 1981) gives a sympathetic account of Dumas's life. The most balanced and comprehensive guide to the man and his work, however, remains F. W. J. Hemmings's excellent *The King of Romance* (London, 1979).

Useful too are special numbers of literary magazines devoted to Dumas, notable among which are *Europe*, 490–1 (February–March 1970), *Le Magazine littéraire*, 72 (January 1973), and *L'Arc*, 71 (1978). Readers looking for further information may visit a number of dedicated websites, of which the most helpful is www.dumaspère.com; an English version is available at www.dumaspère/pages/English/société/sommaire.html.

A CHRONOLOGY OF ALEXANDRE DUMAS

- 1762 25 March: Birth at Saint Domingo of Thomas-Alexandre, son of the Marquis Davy de la Pailleterie and a mulatto, Marie-Cessette Dumas. He returns to France with his father in 1780.
- 1792 28 November: Colonel Dumas marries Marie-Louise-Elizabeth Labouret, daughter of an inn-keeper, at Villers-Cotterêts.
- 1801 1 May: General Dumas returns to France from prison in Italy.
- 1802 24 July: Birth of Alexandre Dumas at Villers-Cotterêts.
- 1806 26 February: Death of General Dumas who had been refused an army pension by Napoleon who disliked his independent spirit.
- 1812 Dumas goes to school at Villers-Cotterêts.
- 1814 Madame Dumas given a licence to run a tobacco-shop.
- 1817 Dumas becomes a lawyer's office-boy.
- 1819 Dumas falls in love with Adèle Dalvin who subsequently marries a wealthy man older than herself. Meets Adolphe de Leuven, with whom he collaborates in writing unsuccessful plays.
- 1822 Visits Leuven in Paris, meets Talma and resolves to become a playwright.
- 1823 Moves to Paris. Enters the service of the Duke d'Orléans. Falls in love with a seamstress, Catherine Labay.
- 1824 27 July: Birth of Alexandre Dumas *fils*.
- 1825 22 September: Dumas's first play, *La Chasse et l'amour* (*The Chase and Love*), written in collaboration with Leuven and Rousseau, makes no impact.
- 1826 Publication of *Les Nouvelles contemporaines* (*Tales of Today*), Dumas's first solo composition. It sells four copies.
- 1827 A company of English actors, which includes Kean, Kemble, and Mrs Smithson, performs Shakespeare in English to enthusiastic Paris audiences: Dumas is deeply impressed. Liaison with Mélanie Waldor.
- 1828–9 Liaison with the actress Virginie Bourbier. Dumas enters Parisian literary circles through Charles Nodier.
- 1829 11 February: First of about fifty performances of *Henri III et sa cour* (*Henry III and His Court*) which makes Dumas famous and thrusts him into the front line of the Romantic revolution in literature. Dumas meets Victor Hugo.
- 1830 30 March: First performance of *Christine* (written in 1828). In May start of an affair with the actress Belle Krelsamer. Active in the July

- Revolution: Dumas single-handedly captures a gunpowder magazine at Soissons and is sent by Lafayette to promote the National Guard in the Vendée: he makes little headway against strong local royalist loyalties.
- 1831 5 March: Birth of Marie, his daughter by Belle Krelsamer. 17 March: Dumas acknowledges Alexandre, his son by Catherine Labay. First performances of *Napoléon Bonaparte* (10 January), *Antony*, starring Marie Dorval (3 May), *Charles VII et ses grands vassaux* (*Charles VII and the Barons*, 20 October), and *Richard Darlington* (10 December).
- 1832 6 February: Start of his affair with the actress Ida Ferrier. 15 April: Dumas infected by the cholera which kills 20,000 Parisians. First performance of *La Tour de Nesle* (*The Tower of Nesle*, 29 May): Gaillardet accuses Dumas of plagiarism. In July, suspected of republicanism, Dumas leaves for a three-month stay in Switzerland where he meets Chateaubriand. After the spectacular failure of his next play, *Le Fils de l'émigré* (*The Son of the Emigré*, 28 August), he begins to take an interest in the fictional possibilities of French history.
- 1833 Start of serial publication of the first of Dumas's many travel books: *Impressions de voyage: En Suisse* (*Travel Impressions: Switzerland*).
- 1834–5 October: Dumas travels in the Midi with the landscape painter Godefroy Jadin. There he meets the Catalans, visits the Château d'If and inspects the cell once occupied by Mirabeau. From the Riviera, he embarks on the first of many journeys to Italy.
- 1836 31 August: Dumas returns triumphantly to the theatre with *Kean*, with Frederick Lemaître in the title role.
- 1837 Becomes a *chevalier* of the Legion of Honour.
- 1838 Death of Dumas's mother. Travels along the Rhine with Gérard de Nerval who introduces him to Auguste Maquet in December.
- 1840 1 February: Dumas marries Ida Ferrier, travels to Italy and publishes *Le Capitaine Pamphile*, the best of his children's books.
- 1840–2 Dividing his time between Paris and Italy, Dumas increasingly abandons the theatre for the novel.
- 1842 June: During a cruise in the Mediterranean with Prince Napoleon (son of Jérôme Bonaparte, ex-King of Westphalia), Dumas visits Elba and sails round the Ile of Monte Cristo. He publishes a travelogue, *Le Speronare*, and the first of the romances written in collaboration with Maquet: *Le Chevalier d'Harmental*. Subsequently he enlisted Maquet's support for his most famous novels: *The Three Musketeers*, *Vingt Ans Après* (*Twenty Years After*), *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *La Reine Margot* (*Queen Margot*), *Joseph Balsamo* (*Memoirs of a Physician*), *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne*, etc. 2 August: Dumas hurries back to Paris for the funeral of the Duke d'Orléans.

- 1843 A particularly prolific year for plays and novels which include *Georges*, a tale of vengeance which anticipates *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Dumas quarrels with the theatre critic Jules Janin and a duel is narrowly averted.
- 1844 Publication of *The Three Musketeers* and the start of the serialization of *The Count of Monte Cristo* in *Le Journal des débats*. 15 October: amicable separation from Ida Ferrier.
- 1845 Dumas signs contracts with *La Presse* and *Le Constitutionnel* to write nine volumes of fiction a year. He wins his suit against the journalist Émile de Mirecourt, author of *Fabrique de romans: Maison Alexandre Dumas et Cie (A Fiction Factory: The Firm of Alexandre Dumas and Co.)*, in which he accused him of publishing other men's work under his own name.
- 1846 Separates from Ida Ferrier. Brief liaison with Lola Montès. November–January: travels with his son to Spain and North Africa.
- 1847 Completion of the 'Château de Monte Cristo' at Marly-le-Roi. 20 February: opening of the 'Théâtre historique'. Questions asked in the House about Dumas's use of the Navy vessel, *Le Vélote*, during his visit to North Africa. Loses a lawsuit brought by newspaper proprietors for not producing copy for which he had received considerable advances.
- 1848 1 March: Founds a newspaper, *Le Mois*, which he personally edits until Dumas puts up, unsuccessfully, as a parliamentary candidate. Votes for Louis-Napoleon in the December elections.
- 1850 Beginning of a nine-year liaison with Isabella Constant. 20 March: the 'Théâtre historique' is declared bankrupt. The 'Château de Monte Cristo' is sold for 30,000 francs.
- 1851 Michel Lévy begins to bring out the first volumes of Dumas's complete works which will eventually fill 301 volumes. 7 December: using Louis-Napoleon's *coup d'état* as an excuse, Dumas flees to Belgium to avoid his creditors.
- 1852 Publication of the first volumes of *Mes Mémoires*. Dumas declared bankrupt with debts of 100,000 francs.
- 1853 November: After making a settlement with his creditors, Dumas returns to Paris and founds a periodical, *Le Mousquetaire* (last issue 7 February 1857) for which he writes most of the copy himself.
- 1857 23 April: Founds a literary weekly, *Le Monte Cristo*, which, with one break, survives until 1862.
- 1858 15 June: Dumas leaves for Russia where he travels until March 1859.
- 1859 11 March: Death of Ida Ferrier. Beginning of a liaison with Emilie Cordier which lasts until 1864. Spends two days with Victor Hugo in exile on Guernsey.

- 1860 Meets Garibaldi at Turin and just misses the taking of Sicily (June). He returns to Marseilles where he buys guns for the Italian cause and is in Naples just after the city falls in September. Garibaldi stands, by proxy, as godfather to Dumas's daughter by Emilie Cordier. 11 October: founds *L'Indipendente*, a literary and political periodical published half in French and half in Italian.
- 1863 The works of Dumas are placed on the Index by the Catholic Church.
- 1864 April: Dumas returns to Paris.
- 1865 Further travels in Italy, Germany, and Austria.
- 1867 Publishes *Le Terreur prussienne* (*The Prussian Terror*), a novel, to warn France against Prussian might. Begins a last liaison, with Ada Menken, an American actress (d. 1868).
- 1869 10 March: First performance of Dumas's last play, *Les Blancs et les Bleus* (*The Whites and the Blues*).
- 1870 5 December: Dumas dies at Puy, near Dieppe, after a stroke in September.
- 1872 Dumas's remains transferred to Villers-Cotterêts.
- 1883 Unveiling of a statue to Dumas by Gustave Doré in the Place Malesherbes in Paris.
- 2002 November: To mark the bicentenary of Dumas's birth, his remains are brought from Villers-Cotterêts to lie in state at the Château de Monte Cristo before being escorted through Paris by soldiers in Musketeer uniforms and laid to rest in the Pantheon where they lie beside Hugo, Zola, and many of France's greatest literary and national figures.
- 2005 First publication in volume form of Dumas's last novel, *Le Chevalier de Sainte-Hermine*, set during Napoleon's Consulate and Empire, which was rescued from *Le Moniteur universel* in which it was serialized in 1869.

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THE COUNT OF
MONTE CRISTO

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ON the 24th of February, 1815, the lookout of Notre-Dame de la Garde signalled the three-master, the *Pharaon*, from Smyrna, Trieste, and Naples.

As usual, a pilot put off immediately, and rounding the Château d'If, got on board the vessel between Cape Morgion and the Isle of Rion.

Immediately, and according to custom, the platform of Fort Saint-Jean was covered with spectators; it is always an event at Marseilles for a ship to come into port, especially when this ship, like the *Pharaon*, had been built, rigged, and laden on the stocks of the old Phocée, and belonged to an owner of the city.

The ship sailed on: it had safely passed the strait, which some volcanic shock has made between the Isle of Calasareigne and the Isle of Jaros; had cleared the Island of Pomègue, and approached the harbour under topsails, jib, and foresail, but so slowly and sedately that the idlers, with that instinct which misfortune sends before it, asked one another what misfortune could have happened on board. However, those experienced in navigation saw plainly that if any accident had occurred, it was not to the vessel herself, for she bore down with all the evidence of being skilfully handled, the anchor ready to be dropped, the bowsprit-shrouds loose, and beside the pilot, who was steering the *Pharaon* into the narrow entrance of the port of Marseilles, was a young man, who with an active and vigilant eye, watched every motion of the ship, and repeated each direction of the pilot.

The vague disquietude which prevailed amongst the spectators had so much affected one of the crowd that he did not await the arrival of the vessel in harbour, but jumping into a small skiff, desired to be pulled alongside the *Pharaon*, which he reached as she rounded the creek of La Réserve.

When the young man on board saw this individual approach, he left his station by the pilot, and came, hat in hand, to the side of the ship's bulwarks.

He was a fine, tall, slim young fellow, with black eyes, and hair as dark as the raven's wing; and his whole appearance bespoke that calmness and resolution peculiar to men accustomed from their cradle to contend with danger.

‘Ah! is it you, Dantès?’ cried the man in the skiff. ‘What’s the matter and why is there such an air of tragedy aboard?’

‘A great misfortune, M. Morrel,’* replied the young man,—‘a great misfortune, for me especially! Off Civita Vecchia we lost our brave Captain Leclere.’

‘And the cargo?’ inquired the owner anxiously.

‘Is all safe, M. Morrel; and I think you will be satisfied on that head. But poor Captain Leclere——’

‘What happened to him?’ asked the owner, with an air of considerable resignation. ‘What happened to the worthy captain?’

‘He died.’

‘Fell into the sea?’

‘No, sir, he died of brain-fever in dreadful agony.’ Then turning to the crew, he said:

‘Look out there! all ready to drop anchor!’

All hands obeyed. At the same moment the eight or ten seamen, who composed the crew, sprang some to the main-sheets, others to the braces, others to the halyards, others to the jib-ropes, and others to the topsail brails.

The young sailor gave a look to see that his orders were promptly and accurately obeyed, and then turned again to the owner.

‘And how did this misfortune occur?’ he inquired, resuming the inquiry suspended for a moment.

‘Alas, sir, in the most unexpected manner. After a long conversation with the harbour-master, Captain Leclere left Naples greatly disturbed in his mind. At the end of twenty-four hours he was attacked by a fever, and died three days afterwards. We performed the usual burial service, and he is at his rest, sewn up in his hammock, with two cannon balls of thirty-six pounds each at his head and heels, off the Island of El Giglio. We bring to his widow his sword and cross of honour. It was worth while, truly,’ added the young man, with a melancholy smile, ‘to make war against the English for ten years, and to die in his bed at last, like everybody else.’

‘Ah, Edmond,’ replied the owner, who appeared more comforted at every moment, ‘we are all mortal, and the old must make way for the young. If not, why, there would be no promotion; and as you have assured me that the cargo——’

‘Is all safe and sound, M. Morrel, take my word for it; and I advise you not to take less than £1000* for the profits of the voyage.’

Then, as they were just passing the Round Tower, the young man shouted out, ‘Ready, there, to lower topsails, foresail, and jib!’

The order was executed as promptly as if on board a man-of-war.

‘Let go—and brail all!’

At this last word all the sails were lowered, and the bark moved almost imperceptibly onwards.

‘Now, if you will come on board, M. Morrel,’ said Dantès, observing the owner’s impatience, ‘here is your supercargo,* M. Danglars, coming out of his cabin, who will furnish you with every particular. As for me, I must look after the anchoring, and dress the ship in mourning.’

The owner did not wait to be twice invited. He seized a rope which Dantès flung to him, and with an activity that would have done credit to a sailor, climbed up the side of the ship, whilst the young man, going to his task, left the conversation to the individual whom he had announced under the name of Danglars, who now came towards the owner. He was a man of twenty-five or twenty-six years of age, of unprepossessing countenance, obsequious to his superiors, insolent to his inferiors; and then, besides his position as responsible agent on board, which is always obnoxious to the sailors, he was as much disliked by the crew as Edmond Dantès was beloved by them.

‘Well, M. Morrel,’ said Danglars, ‘you have heard of the misfortune that has befallen us?’

‘Yes—yes: poor Captain Leclere! He was a brave and an honest man!’

‘And a first-rate seaman, grown old between sky and ocean, as should a man charged with the interests of a house so important as that of Morrel and Son,’ replied Danglars.

‘But,’ replied the owner, following with one eye on Dantès who was watching the anchoring of his vessel, ‘it seems to me that a sailor needs not to be so old as you say, Danglars, to understand his business; for our friend Edmond seems to understand it thoroughly and not to require instruction from any one.’

‘Yes,’ said Danglars, casting towards Edmond a look in which a feeling of envy was strongly visible. ‘Yes, he is young, and youth is invariably self-confident. Scarcely was the captain’s breath out of his body than he assumed the command without consulting any one, and he caused us to lose a day and a half at the Isle of Elba, instead of making for Marseilles direct.’

‘As to taking the command of the vessel,’ replied Morrel, ‘that was his duty as captain’s mate; as to losing a day and a half off the Isle of Elba, he was wrong, unless the ship wanted some repair.’

‘The ship was as well as I am and as, I hope you are, M. Morrel, and this day and a half was lost from pure whim, for the pleasure of going ashore and nothing else.’

‘Dantès,’ said the shipowner, turning towards the young man, ‘come this way!’

‘In a moment, sir,’ answered Dantès, ‘and I’m with you!’ Then calling to the crew, he said:

‘Let go!’

The anchor was instantly dropped, and the chain ran rattling through the port-hole. Dantès continued at his post, in spite of the presence of the pilot, until this manœuvre was completed, and then he added, ‘Lower the pennant half-mast high—put the ensign in a weft, and slope the yards!’

‘You see,’ said Danglars, ‘he fancies himself captain already, upon my word.’

‘And so, in fact, he is,’ said the owner.

‘Except for your signature and your partner’s, M. Morrel.’

‘And why should he not have it?’ asked the owner; ‘he is young, it is true, but he seems to me a thorough seaman, and of full experience.’

A cloud passed over Danglars’ brow.

‘Your pardon, M. Morrel,’ said Dantès, approaching, ‘the ship now rides at anchor, and I am at your service. You hailed me, I think?’

Danglars retreated a step or two.

‘I wish to inquire why you stopped at the Isle of Elba?’

‘I do not know, sir; it was to fulfil a last instruction of Captain Leclere, who, when dying, gave me a packet for the Maréchal Bertrand.’*

‘And did you see him, Edmond?’

‘Who?’

‘The maréchal?’

‘Yes.’

Morrel looked around him, and then, drawing Dantès on one side, he said suddenly:

‘And how is the emperor?’

‘Very well, as far as I could judge from my eyes.’

‘You saw the emperor, then?’

‘He entered the maréchal’s apartment whilst I was there.’

‘And you spoke to him?’

‘Why, it was he who spoke to me, sir,’ said Dantès, with a smile.

‘And what did he say to you?’

‘Asked me questions about the ship, the time it left Marseilles, the course she had taken, and what was her cargo. I believe, if she had not been laden, and I had been master, he would have bought her. But I told him I was only mate and that she belonged to the firm of Morrel and Son. “Ah! ah!” he said. “I know them! The Morrels have been

shipowners from father to son; and there was a Morrel who served in the same regiment with me when I was in garrison at Valence.”’

‘*Pardieu!* and that is true!’ cried the owner, greatly delighted. ‘And that was Policar Morrel, my uncle, who was afterwards a captain. Dantès, you must tell my uncle that the emperor remembered him, and you will see it will bring tears into the old soldier’s eyes. Come, come!’ continued he, patting Edmond’s shoulder kindly. ‘You did very right, Dantès, to follow Captain Leclere’s instruction and call at the Isle of Elba, although, if it were known that you had conveyed a packet to the *maréchal* and had conversed with the emperor, it might get you into trouble.’

‘How could that get me into trouble, sir?’ asked Dantès, ‘for I did not even know of what I was the bearer; and the emperor merely made such inquiries as he would of the first comer. But your pardon; here are the officers of health and the customs coming alongside!’ and the young man went to the gangway. As he departed, Danglars approached, and said:

‘Well, it appears that he has given you satisfactory reasons for his landing at Porto-Ferrajo?’

‘Yes, most satisfactory, my dear Danglars.’

‘Well, so much the better,’ said the supercargo; ‘for it is always painful to see a comrade who does not do his duty.’

‘Dantès has done his,’ replied the owner, ‘and that is not saying much. It was Captain Leclere who gave orders for this delay.’

‘Talking of Captain Leclere, has not Dantès given you a letter from him?’

‘To me? —no—was there one?’

‘I believe that, besides the packet, Captain Leclere had confided a letter to his care.’

‘Of what packet are you speaking, Danglars?’

‘Why, that which Dantès left at Porto-Ferrajo.’

‘How do you know he had a packet to leave at Porto-Ferrajo?’

Danglars turned very red.

‘I was passing close to the door of the captain’s cabin which was half open, and I saw him give the packet and letter to Dantès.’

‘He did not speak to me of it,’ replied the shipowner; ‘but if there be any letter he will give it to me.’

Danglars reflected for a moment.

‘Then, M. Morrel, I beg of you,’ said he, ‘not to say a word to Dantès on the subject. I may have been mistaken.’

At this moment the young man returned and Danglars retreated as before.

‘Well, my dear Dantès, are you now free?’ inquired the owner.

'Yes, sir.'

'You have not been long detained?'

'No. I gave the custom-house officers a copy of our bill of lading. As to the other papers, they sent a man off with the pilot to whom I gave them.'

'Then you have nothing more to do here?'

'No, all is arranged now.'

'Then you can come and dine with me?'

'Excuse me, M. Morrel, excuse me, if you please; but my first visit is due to my father, though I am not the less grateful for the honour you have done me.'

'Right, Dantès, quite right. I always knew you were a good son.'

'And,' inquired Dantès, with some hesitation, 'do you know how my father is?'

'Well, I believe, my dear Edmond, although I have not seen him lately.'

'Yes, he likes to keep himself shut up in his little room.'

'That proves, at least, that he has wanted for nothing during your absence.'

Dantès smiled.

'My father is proud, sir; and if he had not money enough for a meal left, I doubt if he would have asked anything from any one, except God.'

'Well, then, after this first visit has been made we rely on you.'

'I must again excuse myself, M. Morrel; for after this first visit has been paid I have another, which I am most anxious to pay.'

'True, Dantès, I forgot that there was at the Catalans some one who expects you no less impatiently than your father—the lovely Mercédès.'

Dantès blushed.

'Ah! ah!' said the shipowner, 'that does not astonish me, for she has been to me three times, inquiring if there were any news of the *Pharaon. Peste!* Edmond, you have a very handsome mistress!'

'She is not my mistress,' replied the young sailor gravely, 'she is my betrothed.'

'Sometimes one and the same thing,' said Morrel, with a smile.

'Not with us, sir,' replied Dantès.

'Well, well, my dear Edmond,' continued the owner, 'do not let me detain you. You have managed my affairs so well that I ought to allow you all the time you require for your own. Do you want any money?'

'No, sir; I have all my pay to take—nearly three months' wages.'

'You are a careful fellow, Edmond.'

‘Say I have a poor father, sir.’

‘Yes, yes, I know how good a son you are, so now haste away to see your father. I have a son too, and I should be very angry with those who detained him from me after a three months’ voyage.’

‘Then I have your leave, sir?’

‘Yes, if you have nothing more to say to me.’

‘Nothing.’

‘Captain Leclere did not, before he died, give you a letter for me?’

‘He was unable to write, sir. But that reminds me that I must ask your leave of absence for some days.’

‘To get married?’

‘Yes, first, and then to go to Paris.’

‘Very good; have what time you require, Dantès. It will take quite six weeks to unload the cargo, and we cannot get you ready for sea until three months after that; only be back again in three months, for the *Pharaon*,’ added the owner, patting the young sailor on the back, ‘cannot sail without her captain.’

‘Without her captain!’ cried Dantès, his eyes sparkling with animation; ‘pray mind what you say, for you are touching on the most secret wishes of my heart. Is it really your intention to appoint me captain of the *Pharaon*?’

‘If I were sole owner I would appoint you this moment, my dear Dantès, and say it is settled; but I have a partner, and you know the Italian proverb—*Che a compagno a padrone*—“He who has a partner has a master.” But the thing is at least half done, since you have one out of two voices. Rely on me to procure you the other; I will do my best.’

‘Ah, M. Morrel,’ exclaimed the young seaman, with tears in his eyes, and grasping the owner’s hand, ‘M. Morrel, I thank you in the name of my father and of Mercédès.’

‘Good, good! Edmond. There’s a sweet little cherub that sits up aloft that keeps a good watch for good fellows! Go to your father, go and see Mercédès, and come to me afterwards.’

‘Shall I row you ashore?’

‘No, I thank you; I shall remain and look over the accounts with Danglars. Have you been satisfied with him this voyage?’

‘That is according to the sense you attach to the question, sir. Do you mean is he a good comrade? No, for I think he never liked me since the day when I was silly enough, after a little quarrel we had, to propose to him to stop for ten minutes at the Isle of Monte Cristo to settle the dispute, a proposition which I was wrong to suggest and he quite right to refuse. If you mean as responsible agent that you ask me the

question, I believe there is nothing to say against him and that you will be content with the way in which he has performed his duty.'

'But tell me, Dantès, if you had the command of the *Pharaon*, should you have pleasure in retaining Danglars?'

'Captain or mate, M. Morrel,' replied Dantès, 'I shall always have the greatest respect for those who possess our owners' confidence.'

'Good! good! Dantès. I see you are a thorough good fellow, and will detain you no longer. Go, for I see how impatient you are.'

'Then I have leave?'

'Go, I tell you.'

'May I have the use of your skiff?'

'Certainly.'

'Then for the present, M. Morrel, farewell, and a thousand thanks!'

'I hope soon to see you again, my dear Edmond. Good luck to you!'

The young sailor jumped into the skiff, and sat down in the stern, desiring to be put ashore at the Canebière. The two rowers bent to their work and the little boat glided away as rapidly as possible in the midst of the thousand vessels which choke up the narrow way which leads between the two rows of ships from the mouth of the harbour and the Quai d'Orléans.

The shipowner, smiling, followed him with his eyes, until he saw him spring out on the quay, and disappear in the midst of the throng which, from five o'clock in the morning until nine o'clock at night, choke up this famous street of La Canebière, of which the modern Phocéens are so proud, and say with all the gravity in the world, and with that accent which gives so much character to what is said, 'If Paris had La Canebière, Paris would be a second Marseilles.'* On turning round, the owner saw Danglars behind him, who apparently attended to his orders but in reality followed, as he did, the young sailor with his eyes; only there was a great difference in the expression of the looks of the two men who thus watched the movements of Edmond Dantès.

2

FATHER AND SON

WE will leave Danglars struggling with the feelings of hatred and endeavouring to insinuate in the ear of the shipowner, Morrel, some evil suspicions against his comrade, and follow Dantès who, after having traversed the Canebière, took the Rue de Noailles, and entering

into a small house, situated on the left side of the Allées de Meillan, rapidly ascended four flights of a dark staircase, holding the baluster in one hand, whilst with the other he repressed the beatings of his heart, and paused before a half-opened door which revealed all the interior of a small apartment.

This apartment was occupied by Dantès' father.

The news of the arrival of the *Pharaon* had not yet reached the old man, who, mounted on a chair, was amusing himself with staking some nasturtiums with tremulous hand, which, mingled with clematis, formed a kind of trellis at his window.

Suddenly he felt an arm thrown round his body, and a well-known voice behind him exclaimed, 'Father! dear father!'

The old man uttered a cry, and turned round; then, seeing his son, he fell into his arms, pale and trembling.

'What ails you, my dearest father? Are you ill?' inquired the young man, much alarmed.

'No, no, my dear Edmond—my boy—my son!—no; but I did not expect you; and joy, the surprise of seeing you so suddenly——Ah! it really seemed as if I were going to die!'

'Come, come, cheer up, my dear father! It really is me! They say joy never hurts, and so I come to you without any warning. Come now, look cheerfully at me instead of gazing as you do with your eyes so wide. Here I am back again, and we will now be happy.'

'Yes, yes, my boy, so we will—so we will,' replied the old man, 'but how shall we be happy?—Will you never leave me again?—Come, tell me all the good fortune that has befallen you.'

'God forgive me,' said the young man, 'for rejoicing at happiness derived from the misery of others; but Heaven knows I did not seek this good fortune: it has happened, and I really cannot pretend to be sorry. Good Captain Leclere is dead, father, and it is probable that, with the aid of M. Morrel, I shall have his place. Do you understand, father? Only imagine me a captain at twenty, with a hundred louis pay, and a share in the profits! Is this not more than a poor sailor like me could have hoped for?'

'Yes, my dear boy,' replied the old man, 'and much more than you could have expected.'

'Well, then, with the first money I receive, I mean you to have a small house, with a garden to plant your clematis, your nasturtiums, and your honeysuckles. But what ails you, father? Are not you well?'

'Tis nothing, nothing; it will soon pass away,' and as he said so the old man's strength failed him, and he fell backwards.

'Come, come,' said the young man, 'a glass of wine, father, will revive you. Where do you keep your wine?'

'No, no; thank ye. You need not look for it; I do not want it,' said the old man.

'Yes, yes, father, tell me where it is;' and he opened two or three cupboards.

'It is no use,' said the old man; 'there is no wine.'

'What! no wine?' said Dantès, turning pale, and looking alternately at the hollow cheeks of the old man and the empty cupboards. 'What! no wine? Have you been short of money, father?'

'I want for nothing now you are here,' said the old man.

'Yet,' stammered Dantès, wiping the perspiration from his brow—'yet I gave you two hundred francs when I left three months ago.'

'Yes, yes, Edmond, that is true, but you forgot at that time a little debt to our neighbour Caderousse. He reminded me of it, telling me if I did not pay for you, he would be paid by M. Morrel; and so, you see, lest he might do you an injury——'

'Well?'

'Why, I paid him.'

'But,' cried Dantès, 'it was a hundred and forty francs I owed Caderousse.'

'Yes,' stammered the old man.

'And you paid him out of the two hundred francs I left you?'

The old man made a sign in the affirmative.

'So that you have lived for three months on sixty francs?' muttered the young man.

'You know how little I require,' said the old man.

'Heaven pardon me,' cried Edmond, falling on his knees before the old man.

'What are you doing?'

'You have cut me to the heart.'

'Never mind it, for I see you once more,' said the old man; 'and now all is forgotten—all is well again.'

'Yes, here I am,' said the young man, 'with a happy prospect and a little money. Here, father! here!' he said, 'take this—take it, and send for something immediately.'

And he emptied his pockets on the table, whose contents consisted of a dozen pieces of gold, five or six crowns, and some smaller coin.

The countenance of old Dantès brightened.

'Who does this belong to?' he inquired.

'To me! to you! to us! Take it; buy some provisions; be happy, and to-morrow we shall have more.'

'Gently, gently,' said the old man, with a smile; 'and by your leave I will use your purse moderately, for they would say, if they saw me buy too many things at a time, that I had been obliged to await your return, in order to be able to purchase them.'

'Do as you please; but, first of all, pray have a servant, father. I will not have you left alone so long. I have some smuggled coffee, and most capital tobacco, in a small chest in the hold, which you shall have to-morrow. But, hush! here comes somebody.'

'Tis Caderousse, who has heard of your arrival, and, no doubt, comes to congratulate you on your fortunate return.'

'Ah! lips that say one thing, whilst the heart thinks another,' murmured Edmond. 'But never mind, he is a neighbour who has done us a service on occasions, so he's welcome.'

As Edmond finished his sentence in a low voice, there appeared at the door the black and shock head of Caderousse. He was a man of twenty-five or twenty-six years of age, and held in his hand a length of cloth, which, in his capacity as a tailor, he was about to turn into the lining of a coat.

'What! is it you, Edmond, returned?' said he, with a broad Marseillaise accent, and a grin that displayed teeth as white as ivory.

'Yes, as you see, neighbour Caderousse; and ready to be agreeable to you in any and every way,' replied Dantès, but ill concealing his feeling under this appearance of civility.

'Thanks—thanks; but, fortunately, I do not want for anything; and it chances that at times there are others who have need of me.' Dantès made a gesture. 'I do not allude to you, my boy. No!—no! I lent you money, and you returned it; that's like good neighbours, and we are quits.'

'We are never quits with those who oblige us,' was Dantès' reply; 'for when we do not owe them money, we owe them gratitude.'

'What's the use of mentioning that? What is done is done. Let us talk of your happy return, my boy. I had gone on the quay to find a match for a piece of mulberry cloth, when I met friend Danglars.

'What! you in Marseilles?'

'Yes,' says he.

'I thought you were in Smyrna.'

'I was; but am now back again.'

'And where is the dear boy, our Edmond?'

'Why, with his father, no doubt,' replied Danglars. And so I came,' added Caderousse, 'as fast as I could to have the pleasure of shaking hands with a friend.'

'Worthy Caderousse!' said the old man, 'he is so much attached to us!'

'Yes, to be sure I am. I love and esteem you, because honest folks are so rare. But it seems you have come back rich, my boy,' continued the tailor, looking askance at the handful of gold and silver which Dantès had thrown on the table.

The young man remarked the greedy glance which shone in the dark eyes of his neighbour.

'Oh!' he said negligently, 'this money is not mine: I was expressing to my father my fears that he had wanted many things in my absence, and to convince me he emptied his purse on the table. Come, father,' added Dantès, 'put this money back in your box—unless neighbour Caderousse wants anything, and in that case it is at his service.'

'No, my boy, no,' said Caderousse. 'I am not in any want, thank God! the state nourishes me. Keep your money—keep it, I say;—one never has too much;—but at the same time, my boy, I am as much obliged by your offer as if I took advantage of it.'

'It was offered with goodwill,' said Dantès.

'No doubt, my boy; no doubt. Well, you stand well with M. Morrel, I hear,—you insinuating dog, you!'

'M. Morrel has always been exceedingly kind to me,' replied Dantès.

'Then you were wrong to refuse to dine with him.'

'What! did you refuse to dine with him?' said old Dantès; 'and did he invite you to dine?'

'Yes, father,' replied Edmond, smiling at his father's astonishment at the excessive honour paid to his son.

'And why did you refuse, son?' inquired the old man.

'That I might the sooner see you again, father,' replied the young man. 'I was most anxious to see you.'

'But it must have vexed M. Morrel, good, worthy man,' said Caderousse. 'And when you are looking forward to being captain, it was wrong to annoy the owner.'

'But I explained to him the cause of my refusal,' replied Dantès; 'and I hope he fully understood it.'

'Yes, but to be captain one must give way a little to the owners.'

'I hope to be captain without that,' said Dantès.

'So much the better—so much the better! Nothing will give greater pleasure to all your old friends; and I know one down there behind the citadel of Saint Nicolas, who will not be sorry to hear it.'

'Mercédès?' said the old man.

'Yes, father, and with your permission, now I have seen you, and know you are well, and have all you require, I will ask your consent to go and pay a visit to the Catalans.'

‘Go, my dear boy,’ said old Dantès; ‘and may Heaven bless you in your wife, as it has blessed me in my son!’

‘His wife!’ said Caderousse; ‘why, how fast you go on, M. Dantès; she is not his wife yet, it appears.’

‘No, but according to all probability she soon will be,’ replied Edmond.

‘Yes—yes,’ said Caderousse; ‘but you were right to return as soon as possible, my boy.’

‘And why?’

‘Because Mercédès is a very fine girl, and fine girls never lack lovers; she, particularly, has them by dozens.’

‘Really?’ answered Edmond, with a smile which had in it traces of slight uneasiness.

‘Ah, yes,’ continued Caderousse, ‘and capital offers too; but you know you will be captain, and who could refuse you then?’

‘Meaning to say,’ replied Dantès, with a smile which but ill concealed his trouble, ‘that if I were not a captain——’

‘Eh—eh!’ said Caderousse, shaking his head.

‘Come, come,’ said the sailor, ‘I have a better opinion than you of women in general, and of Mercédès in particular; and I am certain that, captain or not, she will always be faithful to me.’

‘So much the better—so much the better,’ said Caderousse. ‘When one is going to be married, there is nothing like implicit confidence; but never mind that, my boy,—just go and announce your arrival, and let her know all your hopes and prospects.’

‘I will go directly,’ was Edmond’s reply; and, embracing his father, and saluting Caderousse, he left the apartment.

Caderousse lingered for a moment, then taking leave of old Dantès, he went downstairs to rejoin Danglars, who awaited him at the corner of the Rue Senac.

‘Well,’ said Danglars, ‘did you see him?’

‘I have just left him,’ answered Caderousse.

‘Did he allude to his hope of being captain?’

‘He spoke of it as a thing already decided.’

‘Patience!’ said Danglars, ‘he is in too much hurry, it appears to me.’

‘Why, it seems M. Morrel has promised him the thing.’

‘So that he is quite elated about it.’

‘That is to say, he is actually insolent on the matter—has already offered me his patronage, as if he were a grand personage, and offered me a loan of money, as though he were a banker.’

‘Which you refused.’

'Most assuredly; although I might easily have accepted, for it was I who put into his hands the first silver he ever earned; but now M. Dantès has no longer any occasion for assistance—he is about to become a captain.'

'Pooh!' said Danglars, 'he is not one yet.'

'*Ma foi!*—and it will be as well he never should be,' answered Caderousse; 'for if he should be, there would be really no speaking to him.'

'If we choose,' replied Danglars, 'he will remain what he is, and, perhaps, become even less than he is.'

'What do you mean?'

'Nothing—I was speaking to myself. And is he still in love with the Catalan girl?'

'Over head and ears: but, unless I am much mistaken, there will be a storm in that quarter.'

'Explain yourself.'

'Why should I?'

'It is more important than you think, perhaps. You do not like Dantès?'

'I never like upstarts.'

'Then tell me all you know relative to the Catalan girl.'

'I know nothing for certain; only I have seen things which lead me to believe, as I told you, that the future captain will find some annoyance in the environs of the Vieilles Infirmeries.'

'What do you know?—come, tell me!'

'Well, every time I have seen Mercédès come into the city, she has been accompanied by a tall, strapping, black-eyed Catalan, with a red complexion, brown skin, and fierce air, whom she calls cousin.'

'Really; and you think this cousin pays her attentions?'

'I only suppose so. What else can a strapping lad of twenty-one mean with a fine wench of seventeen?'

'And you say Dantès has gone to the Catalans?'

'He went before I came down.'

'Let us go the same way; we will stop at La Réserve, and we can drink a glass of La Malue whilst we wait for news.'

'Come along,' said Caderousse; 'but mind you pay the shot.'

'Certainly,' replied Danglars; and going quickly to the spot alluded to, they called for a bottle of wine and two glasses.

Père Pamphile had seen Dantès pass not ten minutes before. So, assured that he was at the Catalans, they sat down under the budding foliage of the planes and sycamores, in the branches of which the birds were joyously singing on a lovely day in early spring.

3

THE CATALANS

ABOUT a hundred paces from the spot where the two friends sat, with their looks fixed on the distance, and their ears attentive, whilst they imbibed the sparkling wine of La Malgue, behind a bare, and torn, and weather-worn wall, was the small village of the Catalans.

One day a mysterious colony left Spain, and settled on the tongue of land on which it is to this day. It arrived from no one knew where, and spoke an unknown tongue. One of its chiefs, who understood Provençal, begged the commune of Marseilles to give them this bare and barren promontory, on which, like the sailors of ancient times, they had run their boats ashore. The request was granted, and three months afterwards, around the twelve or fifteen small vessels which had brought these gipsies of the sea, a small village sprang up.

This village, constructed in a singular and picturesque manner, half Moorish, half Spanish, is that which we behold at the present day inhabited by the descendants of those men who speak the language of their fathers. For three or four centuries they remained faithful to this small promontory, on which they had settled like a flight of sea-birds, without mixing with the Marseillaise population, intermarrying, and preserving their original customs and the costume of their mother country, as they have preserved its language.

Our readers will follow us along the only street of this little village, and enter with us into one of the houses, on the outside of which the sun had stamped that beautiful colour of the dead leaf peculiar to the buildings of the country, and on the inside a coat of lime-wash, of that white tint which forms the only ornament of Spanish posadas.

A young and beautiful girl, with hair as black as jet, her eyes as velvety as the gazelle's, was leaning with her back against the wainscot, rubbing in her slender fingers, moulded after the antique style, a bunch of heath-blossoms, the flowers of which she was picking off and strewing on the floor; her arms bare to the elbow, tanned, and resembling those of the Venus at Arles, moved with a kind of restless impatience, and she tapped the earth with her pliant and well-formed foot so as to display the pure and full shape of her well-turned leg, in its red cotton stocking with grey and blue clocks.

At three paces from her, seated in a chair which he balanced on two legs, leaning his elbow on an old worm-eaten table, was a tall young

man of twenty or two-and-twenty, who was looking at her with an air in which vexation and uneasiness were mingled. He questioned her with his eyes, but the firm and steady gaze of the young girl controlled his look.

'You see, Mercédès,' said the young man, 'here is Easter come round again; tell me, is this the moment for a wedding?'

'I have answered you a hundred times, Fernand, and really you must be your own enemy to ask me again.'

'Well, repeat your answer,—repeat it, I beg of you, that I may at last believe it! Tell me for the hundredth time that you refuse my love, which had your mother's sanction. Make me fully comprehend that you are trifling with my happiness, that my life or death are immaterial to you. Ah! to have dreamed for ten years of being your husband, Mercédès, and to lose that hope, which was the only stay of my existence!'

'At least it was not I who ever encouraged you in that hope, Fernand,' replied Mercédès; 'you cannot reproach me with the slightest coquetry. I have always said to you, I love you like a brother, but do not ask from me more than sisterly affection, for my heart is another's. Is not this true, Fernand?'

'Yes, I know it well, Mercédès,' replied the young man. 'Yes, you have been cruelly frank with me; but do you forget that it is among the Catalans a sacred law to intermarry?'

'No, Fernand, it is not a law, but merely a custom; and, I pray of you, do not cite this custom in your favour. You are included in the conscription, Fernand, and are only at liberty on sufferance, liable at any moment to be called upon to take up arms. Once a soldier, what would you do with me, a poor orphan, forlorn, without fortune, with nothing but a hut, half in ruins, containing some ragged nets, a miserable inheritance left by my father to my mother, and by my mother to me? She has been dead a year, and you know, Fernand, I have subsisted almost entirely on public charity. Sometimes you pretend I am useful to you, and that is an excuse to share with me the produce of your fishing; and I accept it, Fernand, because you are the son of my father's brother, because we were brought up together, and still more because it would give you so much pain if I refuse. But I feel very deeply that the fish which I go and sell, and with the produce of which I buy the flax I spin,—I feel very keenly, Fernand, that this is charity!'

'And if it were, Mercédès, poor and alone as you are, you suit me as well as the daughter of the greatest shipowner, or the richest banker of Marseilles! What do such as we desire but a good wife and careful housekeeper, and where can I look for these better than in you?'

‘Fernand,’ answered Mercédès, shaking her head, ‘a woman becomes a bad manager, and who shall say she will remain an honest woman, when she loves another man better than her husband? Rest content with my friendship, for I repeat to you that is all I can promise, and I will promise no more than I can bestow.’

‘I understand,’ replied Fernand, ‘you can endure your own wretchedness patiently, but you are afraid of mine. Well, Mercédès, beloved by you, I would tempt fortune; you would bring me good luck, and I should become rich. I could extend my occupation as a fisherman, might get a place as clerk in a warehouse, and become a merchant in time.’

‘You could do no such thing, Fernand; you are a soldier, and if you remain at the Catalans it is because there is no war; so remain a fisherman and contented with my friendship, as I cannot give you more.’

‘Well, you are right, Mercédès. I will be a sailor; instead of the costume of our fathers, which you despise, I will wear a varnished hat, a striped shirt, and a blue jacket with an anchor on the buttons. Would not that dress please you?’

‘What do you mean?’ asked Mercédès, darting at him an angry glance,—‘what do you mean? I do not understand you.’

‘I mean, Mercédès, that you are harsh and cruel with me, because you are expecting some one who is thus attired; but, perhaps, he you await is inconstant, or, if he is not, the sea is so to him.’

‘Fernand!’ cried Mercédès, ‘I believed you were good hearted, and I was mistaken! Fernand, you are wicked to call to your aid jealousy and the anger of God! Yes, I will not deny it, I do await, and I do love him; and, if he does not return, instead of accusing him of the inconstancy which you insinuate, I will tell you that he died loving me and me only.’

The young Catalan made a gesture of rage.

‘I understand you, Fernand; you would be revenged on him because I do not love you; you would cross your Catalan knife with his dirk. What end would that answer? To lose you my friendship if he lost, and see that friendship changed into hate if you won. Believe me, to seek a quarrel with a man is a bad method of pleasing the woman who loves that man. No, Fernand, you will not thus give way to evil thoughts. Unable to have me for your wife, you will content yourself with having me for your friend and sister; and besides,’ she added, her eyes troubled and moistened with tears, ‘wait, wait, Fernand, you said just now that the sea was treacherous, and he has been gone four months, and during these four months we have had some terrible storms.’

Fernand made no reply, nor did he attempt to check the tears which flowed down the cheeks of Mercédès, although for each of these tears he would have shed his heart's blood; but these tears flowed for another. He arose, paced awhile up and down the hut, and then, suddenly stopping before Mercédès, with his eyes glowing and his hands clenched:

'Say, Mercédès,' he said, 'once for all, is this your final determination?'

'I love Edmond Dantès,' the young girl calmly replied, 'and none but Edmond shall ever be my husband.'

'And you will always love him?'

'As long as I live.'

Fernand let fall his head like a defeated man, heaved a sigh which resembled a groan, and then, suddenly looking her full in the face, with clenched teeth and expanded nostrils, said:

'But if he is dead——'

'If he is dead, I shall die too.'

'If he has forgotten you——'

'Mercédès!' cried a voice joyously, outside the house,—'Mercédès!'

'Ah!' exclaimed the young girl, blushing with delight, and springing up with love, 'you see he has not forgotten me, for here he is!' And rushing towards the door, she opened it, saying, 'Here, Edmond, here I am!'

Fernand, pale and trembling, receded like a traveller at the sight of a serpent, and fell into a chair beside him.

Edmond and Mercédès were clasped in each other's arms. The burning sun of Marseilles, which penetrated the room by the open door, covered them with a flood of light. At first they saw nothing around them. Their intense happiness isolated them from all the rest of the world, and they only spoke in broken words, which are the tokens of a joy so extreme that they seem rather the expression of sorrow.

Suddenly Edmond saw the gloomy countenance of Fernand, as it was defined in the shadow, pale and threatening. By a movement, for which he could scarcely account to himself, the young Catalan placed his hands on the knife at his belt.

'Ah! your pardon,' said Dantès, frowning in his turn. 'I did not perceive that there were three of us.' Then, turning to Mercédès, he inquired, 'Who is this gentleman?'

'One who will be your best friend, Dantès, for he is my friend, my cousin, my brother,—it is Fernand—the man whom, after you, Edmond, I love the most in the world. Do you not remember him?'

‘Yes,’ said Edmond, and without relinquishing Mercédès’ hand clasped in one of his own, he extended the other to the Catalan with a cordial air.

But Fernand, instead of responding to this friendly gesture, remained mute and trembling.

Edmond then cast his eyes enquiringly at Mercédès, agitated and embarrassed, and then again on Fernand, gloomy and menacing.

‘I did not know, when I came with such haste to you, that I was to meet an enemy here.’

‘An enemy!’ cried Mercédès, with an angry look at her cousin. ‘An enemy in my house, do you say, Edmond! If I believed that, I would place my arm under yours and go with you to Marseilles, leaving the house to return to it no more.’

Fernand’s eye darted lightning.

‘And, should any misfortune occur to you, dear Edmond,’ she continued, with the same calmness, which proved to Fernand that the young girl had read the very innermost depths of his sinister thought, ‘if misfortune should occur to you, I would climb the highest point of the Cape de Morgion, and cast myself headlong from it.’

Fernand became deadly pale.

‘But you are deceived, Edmond,’ she continued. ‘You have no enemy here—there is no one but Fernand, my brother, who will grasp your hand as a devoted friend.’

And at these words the young girl fixed her imperious look on the Catalan, who, as if fascinated by it, came slowly towards Edmond, and offered him his hand.

His hatred, like a powerless though furious wave, was broken against the strong ascendancy which Mercédès exercised over him.

Scarcely, however, had he touched Edmond’s hand than he felt he had done all he could do, and rushed hastily out of the house.

‘Oh!’ he exclaimed, running furiously and tearing his hair—‘oh! who will deliver me from this man? Wretched—wretched that I am!’

‘Hallo, Catalan! Hallo, Fernand! where are you running to?’ exclaimed a voice.

The young man stopped suddenly, looked around him, and perceived Caderousse sitting at table with Danglars under an arbour.

‘Well,’ said Caderousse, ‘why not join us? Are you really in such a hurry that you have not time to say, “how do” to your friends?’

‘Particularly when they have a full bottle before them,’ added Danglars. Fernand looked at them both with a stupefied air, but did not say a word.