# Les Misérables, volume 2/5, by Victor Hugo



# LES MISÉRABLES.

**BY**

# VICTOR HUGO.

**PART SECOND.**

**COSETTE.**

**AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION BY SIR LASCELLES WRAXALL.**

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FAUCHELEVENT AND THE GRAVE-DIGGER.

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**CHAPTER I.**

## ON THE NIVELLES ROAD.

On a fine May morning last year (1861) a wayfarer, the person who is telling this story, was coming from Nivelles, and was proceeding toward La Hulpe. He was on foot and following, between two rows of trees, a wide paved road which undulates over a constant succession of hills, that raise the road and let it fall again, and form, as it were, enormous waves. He had passed Lillois and Bois-Seigneur Isaac, and noticed in the west the slate-covered steeple of Braine l'Alleud, which looks like an overturned vase. He had just left behind him a wood upon a hill, and at the angle of a cross-road, by the side of a sort of worm-eaten gallows which bore the inscription, "Old barrier, No. 4," a wine-shop, having on its front the following notice: "The Four Winds, Échabeau, private coffee-house."

About half a mile beyond this pot-house, he reached a small valley, in which there is a stream that runs through an arch formed in the causeway. The clump of trees, wide-spread but very green, which fills the valley on one side of the road, is scattered on the other over the fields, and runs gracefully and capriciously toward Braine l'Alleud. On the right, and skirting the road, were an inn, a four-wheeled cart in front of the door, a large bundle of hop-poles, a plough, a pile of dry shrubs near a quick-set hedge, lime smoking in a square hole, and a ladder lying along an old shed with straw partitions. A girl was hoeing in a field, where a large yellow bill—probably of a show at some Kermesse—was flying in the wind. At the corner of the inn, a badly-paved path ran into the bushes by the side of a pond, on which a flotilla of ducks was navigating. The wayfarer turned into this path.

After proceeding about one hundred yards, along a wall of the 15th century, surmounted by a coping of crossed bricks, he found himself in front of a large arched stone gate, with a rectangular moulding, in the stern style of Louis XIV., supported by two flat medallions. A severe façade was over this gate; a wall perpendicular to the façade almost joined the gate and flanked it at a right angle. On the grass-plat in front of the gate lay three harrows, through which the May flowers were growing pell-mell. The gate was closed by means of two decrepit folding-doors, ornamented by an old rusty hammer.

The sun was delightful, and the branches made that gentle May rustling, which seems to come from

nests even more than from the wind. A little bird, probably in love, was singing with all its might. The wayfarer stooped and looked at a rather large circular excavation in the stone to the right of the gate, which resembled a sphere. At this moment the gates opened and a peasant woman came out. She saw the wayfarer and noticed what he was looking at.

"It was a French cannon-ball that made it," she said, and then added: "What you see higher up there, on the gate near a nail, is the hole of a heavy shell, which did not penetrate the wood."

"What is the name of this place?" the wayfarer asked.

"Hougomont," said the woman.

The wayfarer drew himself up, he walked a few steps, and then looked over the hedge. He could see on the horizon through the trees a species of mound, and on this mound something which, at a distance, resembled a lion. He was on the battlefield of Waterloo.

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**CHAPTER II.**

## HOUGOMONT.

Hougomont was a mournful spot, the beginning of the obstacle, the first resistance which that great woodman of Europe, called Napoleon, encountered at Waterloo; the first knot under the axe-blade. It was a château, and is now but a farm. For the antiquarian Hougomont is Hugo-mons: it was built by Hugo, Sire de Sommeril, the same who endowed the sixth chapelry of the Abbey of Villers. The wayfarer pushed open the door, elbowed an old carriage under a porch, and entered the yard. The first thing that struck him in this enclosure was a gate of the 16th century, which now resembles an arcade, as all has fallen around it. A monumental aspect frequently springs up from ruins. Near the arcade there is another gateway in the wall, with key-stones in the style of Henri IV., through which can be seen the trees of an orchard. By the side of this gateway a dung-hill, mattocks, and shovels, a few carts, an old well with its stone slab and iron windlass, a frisking colt, a turkey displaying its tail, a chapel surmounted by a little belfry, and a blossoming pear-tree growing in espalier along the chapel wall,—such is this yard, the conquest of which was a dream of Napoleon's. This nook of earth, had he been able to take it, would probably have given him the world. Chickens are scattering the dust there with their beaks, and you hear a growl,—it is a large dog, which shows its teeth and fills the place of the English. The English did wonders here; Cooke's four companies of Guards resisted at this spot for seven hours the obstinate attack of an army.

Hougomont, seen on a map, buildings and enclosures included, presents an irregular quadrangle, of which one angle has been broken off. In this angle is the southern gate within point-blank range of this wall. Hougomont has two gates,—the southern one which belongs to the château, and the northern which belongs to the farm. Napoleon sent against Hougomont his brother Jérôme; Guilleminot's, Foy's, and Bachelie's divisions were hurled at it; nearly the whole of Reille's corps was employed there and failed; and Kellermann's cannon-balls rebounded from this heroic wall. Bauduin's brigade was not strong enough to force Hougomont on the north, and Soye's brigade could only attack it on the south without carrying it.

The farm-buildings border the court-yard on the south, and a piece of the northern gate, broken by the French, hangs from the wall. It consists of four planks nailed on two cross-beams, and the scars of the attack may still be distinguished upon it. The northern gate, which was broken down by the French, and in which a piece has been let in to replace the panel hanging to the wall, stands, half open, at the extremity of the yard; it is cut square in a wall which is stone at the bottom, brick at the top, and which

closes the yard on the north side. It is a simple gate, such as may be seen in all farm-yards, with two large folding-doors made of rustic planks; beyond it are fields. The dispute for this entrance was furious; for a long time all sorts of marks of bloody hands could be seen on the side-post of the gate, and it was here that Bauduin fell. The storm of the fight still lurks in the court-yard: horror is visible there; the incidents of the fearful struggle are petrified in it; people are living and dying in it,—it was only yesterday. The walls are in the pangs of death, the stones fall, the breaches cry out, the holes are wounds, the bent and quivering trees seem making an effort to fly.

This yard was more built upon in 1815 than it is now; buildings which have since been removed, formed in it redans and angles. The English barricaded themselves in it; the French penetrated, but could not hold their ground there. By the side of the chapel stands a wing of the château, the sole relic left of the Manor of Hougomont, in ruins; we might almost say gutted. The château was employed as a keep, the chapel served as a block-house. Men exterminated each other there. The French, fired upon from all sides, from behind walls, from granaries, from cellars, from every window, from every air-hole, from every crack in the stone, brought up fascines, and set fire to the walls and men; the musketry fire was replied to by arson.

In the ruined wing you can look through windows defended by iron bars, into the dismantled rooms of a brick building; the English Guards were ambuscaded in these rooms, and the spiral staircase, hollowed out from ground-floor to roof, appears like the interior of a broken shell. The staircase has two landings; the English, besieged on this landing and massed on the upper stairs, broke away the lowest. They are large slabs of blue stone which form a pile among the nettles. A dozen steps still hold to the wall; on the first the image of a trident is carved, and these inaccessible steps are solidly set in their bed. All the rest resemble a toothless jaw. There are two trees here, one of them dead, and the other, which was wounded at the root, grows green again in April. Since 1815 it has taken to growing through the staircase.

Men massacred each other in the chapel, and the interior, which is grown quiet again, is strange. Mass has not been said in it since the carnage, but the altar has been left,—an altar of coarse wood supported by a foundation of rough stone. Four whitewashed walls, a door opposite the altar, two small arched windows, a large wooden crucifix over the door, above the crucifix a square air-hole stopped up with hay; in a corner, on the ground, an old window sash, with the panes all broken,—such is the chapel. Near the altar is a wooden statue of St. Anne, belonging to the 15th century; the head of the infant Saviour has been carried away by a shot. The French, masters for a moment of the chapel and then dislodged, set fire to it. The flames filled the building, and it became a furnace; the door burned, the flooring burned, but the wooden Christ was not burned; the fire nibbled away the feet, of which only the blackened stumps can now be seen, and then stopped. It was a miracle, say the country people. The walls are covered with inscriptions. Near the feet of Christ you read the name Henquinez; then these others, Conde de Rio Maïor, Marquis y Marquisa de Almagro (Habana). There are French names with marks of admiration, signs of anger. The wall was whitewashed again in 1849, for the nations insulted each other upon it. It was at the door of this chapel that a body was picked up, holding an axe in its hand; it was the body of Sub-lieutenant Legros.

On leaving the chapel you see a well on your left hand. As there are two wells in this yard, you ask yourself why this one has no bucket and windlass? Because water is no longer drawn from it. Why is it not drawn? Because it is full of skeletons. The last man who drew water from this well was a man called William van Kylsom: he was a peasant who lived at Hougomont, and was gardener there. On June 18, 1815, his family took to flight and concealed themselves in the woods. The forest round the Abbey of Villers sheltered for several days and nights the dispersed luckless country people. Even at the present day certain vestiges, such as old burnt trunks of trees, mark the spot of these poor encampments among the thickets. Van Kylsom remained at Hougomont to "take care of the château,"

and concealed himself in a cellar. The English discovered him there; he was dragged from his lurking-place, and the frightened man was forced by blows with the flat of a sabre to wait on the combatants. They were thirsty, and he brought them drink, and it was from this well he drew the water. Many drank there for the last time, and this well, from which so many dead men drank, was destined to die too. After the action, the corpses were hastily interred; death has a way of its own of harassing victory, and it causes pestilence to follow glory. Typhus is an annex of triumph. This well was deep and was converted into a tomb. Three hundred dead were thrown into it, perhaps with too much haste. Were they all dead? The legend says no. And it seems that, on the night following the burial, weak voices were heard calling from the well.

This well is isolated in the centre of the yard; three walls, half of brick, half of stone, folded like the leaves of a screen, and forming a square tower, surround it on three sides, while the fourth is open. The back wall has a sort of shapeless peep-hole, probably made by a shell. This tower once had a roof of which only the beams remain, and the iron braces of the right-hand wall form a cross. You bend over and look down into a deep brick cylinder full of gloom. All round the well the lower part of the wall is hidden by nettles. This well has not in front of it the large blue slab usually seen at all Belgian wells. Instead of it, there is a frame-work, supporting five or six shapeless logs of knotted wood which resemble large bones. There is no bucket, chain, or windlass remaining: but there is still the stone trough, which served to carry off the water. The rain-water collects in it, and from time to time a bird comes from the neighboring forest to drink from it and then fly away.

One house in this ruin, the farm-house, is still inhabited, and the door of this house opens on the yard. By the side of a pretty Gothic lock on this gate there is an iron handle. At the moment when the Hanoverian lieutenant Wilda seized this handle in order to take shelter in the farm, a French sapper cut off his hand with a blow of his axe. The old gardener Van Kylsom, who has long been dead, was grandfather of the family which now occupies the house. A gray-headed woman said to me: "I was here, I was three years old, and my sister, who was older, felt frightened and cried. I was carried away to the woods in my mother's arms, and people put their ears to the ground to listen. I imitated the cannon and said, 'Boom, boom.'" A door on the left hand of the yard, as we said, leads into the orchard, which is terrible. It is in three parts, we might almost say, in three acts. The first part is a garden, the second the orchard, the third a wood. These three parts have one common enceinte; near the entrance, the buildings of the château and the farm, on the left a hedge, on the right a wall, and at the end a wall. The right-hand wall is of brick, the bottom one of stone. You enter the garden first; it slopes, is planted with gooseberry-bushes, is covered with wild vegetation, and is closed by a monumental terrace of cut stones with balustrades. It was a Seigneurial garden in the French style, that preceded Le Notre: now it is ruins and briers. The pilasters are surmounted by globes that resemble stone cannon-balls. Forty-three balustrades are still erect; the others are lying in the grass, and nearly all have marks of musket-balls. One fractured balustrade is laid upon the stem like a broken leg.

It was in this garden, which is lower than the orchard, that six voltigeurs of the 1st light regiment, having got in and unable to get out, and caught like bears in a trap, accepted combat with two Hanoverian companies, one of which was armed with rifles. The Hanoverians lined the balustrade and fired down: the voltigeurs, firing up, six intrepid men against two hundred, and having no shelter but the gooseberry-bushes, took a quarter of an hour in dying. You climb up a few steps and reach the orchard, properly so called. Here, on these few square yards, fifteen hundred men fell in less than an hour. The wall seems ready to recommence the fight, for the thirty-eight loop-holes pierced by the English at irregular heights may still be seen. In front of the wall are two English tombs made of granite. There are only loop-holes in the south wall, for the principal attack was on that side. This wall is concealed on the outside by a quickset hedge. The French came up under the impression that they had only to carry this hedge, and found the wall an obstacle and an ambuscade; the English Guards,

behind the thirty-eight loop-holes, firing at once a storm of canister and bullets; and Soye's brigade was dashed to pieces against it. Waterloo began thus.

The orchard, however, was taken; as the French had no ladders, they climbed up with their nails. A hand-to-hand fight took place under the trees, and all the grass was soaked with blood, and a battalion of Nassau, 700 strong, was cut to pieces here. On the outside the wall, against which Kellermann's two batteries were pointed, is pock-marked with cannon-balls. This orchard is sensitive, like any other, to the month of May; it has its buttercups and its daisies, the grass is tall in it, the plough-horses browse in it, hair ropes on which linen is hung to dry occupy the space between the trees, and make the visitor bow his head, and as you walk along your foot sinks in mole-holes. In the middle of the grass you notice an uprooted, outstretched, but still flourishing tree. Major Blackman leaned against it to die. Under another large tree close by fell the German General Duplat, a French refugee belonging to a family that fled upon the revocation of the edict of Nantes. Close at hand an old sickly apple-tree, poulticed with a bandage of straw and clay, hangs its head. Nearly all the apple-trees are dying of old age, and there is not one without its cannon-ball or bullet. Skeletons of dead trees abound in this orchard, ravens fly about in the branches, and at the end is a wood full of violets.

Bauduin killed; Foy wounded; arson, massacre, carnage, a stream composed of English, French, and German blood furiously mingled; a well filled with corpses; the Nassau regiment and the Brunswick regiment destroyed; Duplat killed; Blackman killed; the English Guards mutilated; twenty French battalions of the forty composing Reille's corps decimated; three thousand men in this château of Hougomont alone, sabred, gashed, butchered, shot, and burnt,—all this that a peasant may say to a traveller at the present day, "If you like to give me three francs, sir, I will tell you all about the battle of Waterloo."

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**CHAPTER III.**

## JUNE 18, 1815.

Let us go back, for that is one of the privileges of the narrator, and place ourselves once again in the year 1815, a little prior to the period when the matters related in the first part of this book begin. If it had not rained on the night between the 17th and 18th June, 1815, the future of Europe would have been changed; a few drops of rain more or less made Napoleon oscillate. In order to make Waterloo the end of Austerlitz, Providence only required a little rain, and a cloud crossing the sky at a season when rain was not expected was sufficient to overthrow an empire. The battle of Waterloo could not begin till half-past eleven, and that gave Blücher time to come up. Why? Because the ground was moist and it was necessary for it to become firmer, that the artillery might manœuvre. Napoleon was an artillery officer, and always showed himself one; all his battle plans are made for projectiles. Making artillery converge on a given point was his key to victory. He treated the strategy of the opposing general as a citadel, and breached it; he crushed the weak point under grape-shot, and he began and ended his battles with artillery. Driving in squares, pulverizing regiments, breaking lines, destroying and dispersing masses,—all this must be done by striking, striking, striking incessantly, and he confided the task to artillery. It was a formidable method, and, allied to genius, rendered this gloomy pugilist of war invincible for fifteen years.

On June 18, 1815, he counted the more on his artillery, because he held the numerical superiority. Wellington had only one hundred and fifty-nine guns, while Napoleon had two hundred and forty. Had the earth been dry and the artillery able to move, the action would have begun at six A.M. It would have been won and over by two P.M., three hours before the Prussians changed the fortune of the day.

How much blame was there on Napoleon's side for the loss of this battle? Is the shipwreck imputable to the pilot? Was the evident physical decline of Napoleon at that period complicated by a certain internal diminution? Had twenty years of war worn out the blade as well as the scabbard, the soul as well as the body? Was the veteran being awkwardly displayed in the captain? In a word, was the genius, as many historians of reputation have believed, eclipsed? Was he becoming frenzied, in order to conceal his own weakening from himself? Was he beginning to oscillate and veer with the wind? Was he becoming unconscious of danger, which is a serious thing in a general? In that class of great material men who may be called the giants of action, is there an age when genius becomes short-sighted? Old age has no power over ideal genius; with the Dantes and the Michael Angelos old age is growth, but is it declension for the Hannibals and the Buonapartes? Had Napoleon lost the direct sense of victory? Had he reached a point where he no longer saw the reef, guessed the snare, and could not discern the crumbling edge of the abyss? Could he not scent catastrophes? Had the man who formerly knew all the roads to victory, and pointed to them with a sovereign finger, from his flashing car, now a mania for leading his tumultuous team of legions to the precipices? Was he attacked at the age of forty-six by a supreme madness? Was the Titanic charioteer of destiny now only a Phaëton?

We do not believe it.

His plan of action, it is allowed by all, was a masterpiece. Go straight at the centre of the allied line, make a hole through the enemy, cut him in two, drive the British half over Halle, and the Prussians over Tingres, carry Mont St. Jean, seize Brussels, drive the German into the Rhine and the Englishman into the sea. All this was contained for Napoleon in this battle; afterwards he would see.

We need hardly say that we do not pretend to tell the story of Waterloo here; one of the generating scenes of the drama we are recounting is connected with this battle; but the story of Waterloo has been already told, and magisterially discussed, from one point of view by Napoleon, from another by a galaxy of historians. For our part, we leave the historians to contend; we are only a distant witness, a passer-by along the plain, a seeker bending over the earth made of human flesh, and perhaps taking appearances for realities; we possess neither the military practice nor the strategic competency that authorizes a system; in our opinion, a chain of accidents governed both captains at Waterloo; and when destiny, that mysterious accused, enters on the scene, we judge like the people, that artless judge.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

### A.

Those who wish to form a distinct idea of the battle of Waterloo, need only imagine a capital A laid on the ground. The left leg of the A is the Nivelles road, the right one the Genappe road, while the string of the A is the broken way running from Ohain to Braine l'Alleud. The top of the A is Mont St. Jean, where Wellington is; the left lower point is Hougomont, where Reille is with Jérôme Bonaparte; the right lower point is La Belle Alliance, where Napoleon is. A little below the point where the string of the A meets and cuts the right leg, is La Haye Sainte; and in the centre of this string is the exact spot where the battle was concluded. It is here that the lion is placed, the involuntary symbol of the heroism of the old Guard.

The triangle comprised at the top of the A between the two legs and the string, is the plateau of Mont St. Jean; the dispute for this plateau was the whole battle. The wings of the two armies extend to the right and left of the Genappe and Nivelles roads, d'Erlon facing Picton, Reille facing Hill. Behind the point of the A, behind the plateau of St. Jean, is the forest of Soignies. As for the plan itself, imagine a

vast undulating ground; each ascent commands the next ascent, and all the undulations ascend to Mont St. Jean, ending there in the forest.

Two hostile armies on a battle-field are two wrestlers. It is a body-grip. One tries to throw the other; they cling to everything; a thicket is a basis; an angle in the wall is a breastwork; for want of a village to support it, a regiment gives way; a fall in the plain, a transverse hedge in a good position, a wood, a ravine, may arrest the heel of that column which is called an army, and prevent it slipping. The one who leaves the field is beaten; and hence the necessity for the responsible chief to examine the smallest clump of trees, and investigate the slightest rise in the ground. The two generals had attentively studied the plain of Mont St. Jean, which is called at the present day the field of Waterloo. In the previous year, Wellington, with prescient sagacity, had examined it as suitable for a great battle. On this ground and for this duel of June 18, Wellington had the good side and Napoleon the bad; for the English army was above, the French army below.

It is almost superfluous to sketch here the appearance of Napoleon, mounted and with his telescope in his hand, as he appeared on the heights of Rossomme at the dawn of June 18. Before we show him, all the world has seen him. The calm profile under the little hat of the Brienne school, the green uniform, the white facings concealing the decorations, the great coat concealing the epaulettes, the red ribbon under the waistcoat, the leather breeches, the white horse with its housings of purple velvet, having in the corners crowned N's and eagles, the riding-boots drawn over silk stockings, the silver spurs, the sword of Marengo,—the whole appearance of the last of the Cæsars rises before every mind, applauded by some, and regarded sternly by others. This figure has for a long time stood out all light; this was owing to a certain legendary obscuration which most heroes evolve, and which always conceals the truth for a longer or shorter period, but at the present day we have history and light. That brilliancy called history is pitiless; it has this strange and divine thing about it, that, all light as it is, and because it is light, it often throws shadows over spots before luminous, it makes of the same man two different phantoms, and one attacks the other, and the darkness of the despot struggles with the lustre of the captain. Hence comes a truer proportion in the definitive appreciation of nations; Babylon violated, diminishes Alexander; Rome enchained, diminishes Cæsar; Jerusalem killed, diminishes Titus. Tyranny follows the tyrant, and it is a misfortune for a man to leave behind him a night which has his form.

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**CHAPTER V.**

## THE QUID OBSCURUM OF BATTLES.

All the world knows the first phase of this battle; a troubled, uncertain, hesitating opening, dangerous for both armies, but more so for the English than the French. It had rained all night; the ground was saturated; the rain had collected in hollows of the plain as in tubs; at certain points the ammunition wagons had sunk in up to the axle-trees and the girths of the horses; if the wheat and barley laid low by this mass of moving vehicles had not filled the ruts, and made a litter under the wheels, any movement, especially in the valleys, in the direction of Papelotte, would have been impossible. The battle began late; for Napoleon, as we have explained, was accustomed to hold all his artillery in hand like a pistol, aiming first at one point, then at another of the battle, and he resolved to wait until the field batteries could gallop freely, and for this purpose it was necessary that the sun should appear and dry the ground. But the sun did not come out; it was no longer the rendezvous of Austerlitz. When the first cannon-shot was fired, the English General Colville drew out his watch, and saw that it was twenty-five minutes to twelve.

The action was commenced furiously, more furiously perhaps than the Emperor desired, by the French

left wing on Hougomont. At the same time Napoleon attacked the centre by hurling Quiot's brigade on La Haye Sainte, and Ney pushed the French right wing against the English left, which was leaning upon Papelotte. The attack on Hougomont was, to a certain extent, a feint, for the plan was to attract Wellington there, and make him strengthen his left. This plan would have succeeded had not the four companies of Guards and Perponcher's Belgian division firmly held the position; and Wellington, instead of massing his troops, found it only necessary to send as a reinforcement four more companies of Guards and a battalion of Brunswickers. The attack of the French right on Papelotte was serious; to destroy the English left, cut the Brussels road, bar the passage for any possible Prussians, force Mont St. Jean, drive back Wellington on Hougomont, then on Braine l'Alleud, and then on Halle,—nothing was more distinct. Had not a few incidents supervened; this attack would have succeeded, for Papelotte was taken and La Haye Sainte carried.

There is a detail to be noticed here. In the English Infantry, especially in Kempt's brigade, there were many recruits, and these young soldiers valiantly withstood our formidable foot, and they behaved excellently as sharp-shooters. The soldier when thrown out en tirailleur, being left to some extent to his own resources, becomes as it were his own general; and these recruits displayed something of the French invention and fury. These novices displayed an impulse, and it displeased Wellington.

After the taking of La Haye Sainte, the battle vacillated. There is an obscure interval in this day, between twelve and four; the middle of this battle is almost indistinct, and participates in the gloom of the mêlée. A twilight sets in, and we perceive vast fluctuations in this mist, a dizzying mirage, the panoply of war at that day, unknown in our times; flaming colpacks; flying sabretaches; cross-belts; grenade pouches; Hussar dolmans; red boots with a thousand wrinkles; heavy shakos enwreathed with gold twist; the nearly black Brunswick infantry mingled with the scarlet infantry of England; the English soldiers wearing clumsy round white cushions for epaulettes; the Hanoverian light horse with their leathern helmets, brass bands, and red horse-tails; the Highlanders with their bare knees and checkered plaids, and the long white gaiters of our grenadiers,—pictures but not strategic lines; what a Salvator Rosa, but not a Gribeauval, would have revelled in.

A certain amount of tempest is always mingled with a battle, quid obscurum, quid divinum. Every historian traces to some extent the lineament that pleases him in the hurly-burly. Whatever the combination of the generals may be, the collision of armed masses has incalculable ebbs and flows; in action the two plans of the leaders enter into each other and destroy their shape. The line of battle floats and winds like a thread, the streams of blood flow illogically, the fronts of armies undulate, the regiments in advancing or retiring form capes or gulfs, and all these reefs are continually shifting their position; where infantry was, artillery arrives; where artillery was, cavalry dash in; the battalions are smoke. There was something there, but when you look for it, it has disappeared; the gloomy masses advance and retreat; a species of breath from the tomb impels, drives back, swells, and disperses these tragic multitudes. What is a battle? An oscillation. The immobility of a mathematical plan expresses a minute and not a day. To paint a battle, those powerful painters who have chaos in their pencils are needed. Rembrandt is worth more than Vandermeulin, for Vandermeulin, exact at mid-day, is incorrect at three o'clock. Geometry is deceived, and the hurricane alone is true, and it is this that gives Folard the right to contradict Polybius. Let us add that there is always a certain moment in which the battle degenerates into a combat, is particularized and broken up into countless detail facts which, to borrow the expression of Napoleon himself, "belong rather to the biography of regiments than to the history of the army." The historian, in such a case, has the evident right to sum up; he can only catch the principal outlines of the struggle, and it is not given to any narrator, however conscientious he may be, absolutely to fix the form of that horrible cloud which is called a battle.

This, which is true of all great armed collisions, is peculiarly applicable to Waterloo; still, at a certain moment in the afternoon, the battle began to assume a settled shape.

**CHAPTER VI.**

## FOUR O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON.

At about four o'clock P.M. the situation of the English army was serious. The Prince of Orange commanded the centre, Hill the right, and Picton the left. The Prince of Orange, wild and intrepid, shouted to the Dutch Belgians: "Nassau! Brunswick! never yield an inch." Hill, fearfully weakened, had just fallen back on Wellington, while Picton was dead. At the very moment when the English took from the French the flag of the 105th line regiment, the French killed General Picton with a bullet through his head. The battle had two bases for Wellington, Hougomont and La Haye Sainte. Hougomont still held out, though on fire, while La Haye Sainte was lost. Of the German battalion that defended it, forty-two men only survived; all the officers but five were killed or taken prisoners. Three thousand combatants had been massacred in that focus; a sergeant of the English Guards, the first boxer of England, and reputed invulnerable by his comrades, had been killed there by a little French drummer. Baring was dislodged, and Alten was sabred; several flags had been lost, one belonging to Alten's division and one to the Luxembourg battalion, which was borne by a Prince of the Deux-ponts family. The Scotch Grays no longer existed; Ponsonby's heavy dragoons were cut to pieces,—this brave cavalry had given way before the lancers of Bro and the cuirassiers of Travers. Of twelve hundred sabres only six hundred remained; of three lieutenant-colonels, two were kissing the ground, Hamilton wounded, and Mather killed. Ponsonby had fallen, pierced by seven lance wounds; Gordon was dead, March was dead, and two divisions, the fifth and sixth, were destroyed. Hougomont attacked, La Haye Sainte taken; there was only one knot left, the centre, which still held out, Wellington reinforced it; he called in Hill from Merbe-Braine and Chassé from Braine l'Alleud.

The centre of the English army, which was slightly concave, very dense and compact, was strongly situated; it occupied the plateau of Mont St. Jean, having the village behind it, and before it the slope, which at that time was rather steep. It was supported by that strong stone house, which at that period was a domainial property of Nivelles, standing at the cross-road, and an edifice dating from the 16th century, so robust that the cannon-balls rebounded without doing it any injury. All round the plateau the English had cut through the hedges at certain spots, formed embrasures in the hawthorns, thrust guns between branches and loop-holed the shrubs,—their artillery was ambuscaded under the brambles. This Punic task, incontestably authorized by the rules of war which permit snares, had been so well effected that Haxo, who had been sent by the Emperor at eight o'clock to reconnoitre the enemy's batteries, returned to tell Napoleon that there was no obstacle, with exception of the barricades blocking the Nivelles and Genappe roads. It was the season when the wheat is still standing, and along the edge of the plateau a battalion of Kempt's brigade, the 95th, was lying in the tall corn. Thus assured and supported, the centre of the Anglo-Dutch army was in a good position.

The peril of this position was the forest of Soignies, at that time contiguous to the battle-field and intersected by the ponds of Groenendæl and Boitsford. An army could not have fallen back into it without being dissolved, regiments would have been broken up at once, and the artillery lost in the marshes. The retreat, according to the opinion of several professional men, contradicted, it is true, by others, would have been a flight. Wellington added to this centre a brigade of Chassé's removed from the right wing, one of Wicke's from the left wing, and Clinton's division. He gave his English—Halkett's regiments, Mitchell's brigade, and Maitland's guards—as epaulments and counterforts, the Brunswick infantry, the Nassau contingent, Kielmansegge's Hanoverians, and Ompteda's Germans. He had thus twenty-six battalions under his hand; as Charras says, "the right wing deployed behind the centre." An enormous battery was masked by earth-bags, at the very spot where what is called "the

Museum of Waterloo" now stands, and Wellington also had in a little hollow Somerset's Dragoon Guards, counting one thousand four hundred sabres. They were the other moiety of the so justly celebrated English cavalry; though Ponsonby was destroyed, Somerset remained. The battery which, had it been completed, would have been almost a redoubt, was arranged behind a very low wall, hastily lined with sand-bags and a wide slope of earth. This work was not finished, as there was not time to palisade it.

Wellington, restless but impassive, was mounted, and remained for the whole day in the same attitude, a little in front of the old mill of Mont St. Jean, which still exists, and under an elm-tree, which an Englishman, an enthusiastic Vandal, afterwards bought for two hundred francs, cut down, and carried away. Wellington was coldly heroic; there was a shower of cannon-balls, and his aide-de-camp Gordon was killed by his side. Lord Hill, pointing to a bursting shell, said to him, "My Lord, what are your instructions, and what orders do you leave us, if you are killed?" "Do as I am doing," Wellington answered. To Clinton he said laconically, "Hold out here to the last man." The day was evidently turning badly, and Wellington cried to his old comrades of Vittoria, Talavera, and Salamanca, "Boys, can you think of giving way? Remember old England."

About four o'clock the English line fell back all at once; nothing was visible on the crest of the plateau but artillery and sharp-shooters, the rest had disappeared. The regiments, expelled by the French shell and cannon-balls, fell back into the hollow, which at the present day is intersected by the lane that runs to the farm of Mont St. Jean. A retrograde movement began, the English front withdrew. Wellington was recoiling. "It is the beginning of the retreat," Napoleon cried.

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**CHAPTER VII.**

## NAPOLEON IN GOOD HUMOR.

The Emperor, although ill, and though a local pain made riding uncomfortable, had never been so good-tempered as on this day. From the morning his impenetrability had been smiling, and on June 18, 1815, this profound soul, coated with granite, was radiant. The man who had been sombre at Austerlitz was gay at Waterloo. The greatest predestined men offer these contradictions, for our joys are a shadow, and the supreme smile belongs to God. Ridet Cæsar, Pompeius flebit, the legionaries of the Fulminatrix legion used to say. On this occasion Pompey was not destined to weep, but it is certain that Cæsar laughed. At one o'clock in the morning, amid the rain and storm, he had explored with Bertrand the hills near Rossomme, and was pleased to see the long lines of English fires illumining the horizon from Frischemont to Braine l'Alleud. It seemed to him as if destiny had made an appointment with him on a fixed day and was punctual. He stopped his horse, and remained for some time motionless, looking at the lightning and listening to the thunder. The fatalist was heard to cast into the night the mysterious words,—"We are agreed." Napoleon was mistaken; they were no longer agreed.

He had not slept for a moment: all the instants of the past night had been marked with joy for him. He rode through the entire line of main guards, stopping every now and then to speak to the videttes. At half-past two he heard the sound of a marching column near Hougomont, and believed for a moment in a retreat on the side of Wellington. He said to Bertrand,—"The English rear-guard is preparing to decamp. I shall take prisoners the six thousand English who have just landed at Ostend." He talked cheerfully, and had regained the spirits he had displayed during the landing of March 1st, when he showed the Grand Marshal the enthusiastic peasant of the Juan Gulf, and said,—"Well, Bertrand, here is a reinforcement already." On the night between June 17 and 18 he made fun of Wellington. "This little Englishman requires a lesson," said Napoleon. The rain became twice as violent, and it thundered

while the Emperor was speaking. At half-past three A.M. he lost one illusion: officers sent to reconnoitre informed him that the enemy was making no movement. Nothing was stirring, not a single bivouac fire was extinguished, and the English army was sleeping. The silence was profound on earth, and there was only noise in the heavens. At four o'clock a peasant was brought to him by the scouts: this peasant had served as guide to a brigade of English cavalry, probably Vivian's, which had taken up a position on the extreme left in the village of Ohain. At five o'clock two Belgian deserters informed him that they had just left their regiments, and the English army meant fighting. "All the better," cried Napoleon; "I would sooner crush them than drive them back."

At daybreak he dismounted on the slope which forms the angle of the Plancenoit road, had a kitchen table and a peasant chair brought from the farm of Rossomme, sat down with a truss of straw for a carpet, and laid on the table the map of the battlefield, saying to Soult,—"It is a pretty chess-board." Owing to the night rain, the commissariat wagons, which stuck in the muddy roads, did not arrive by daybreak. The troops had not slept, were wet through and fasting; but this did not prevent Napoleon from exclaiming cheerfully to Soult,—"We have ninety chances out of a hundred in our favor." At eight o'clock the Emperor's breakfast was brought, and he invited several generals to share it with him. While breakfasting, somebody said that Wellington had been the last evening but one at a ball in Brussels, and Soult, the rough soldier with his archbishop's face, remarked, "The ball will be to-day." The Emperor teased Ney for saying,—"Wellington will not be so simple as to wait for your Majesty." This was his usual manner. "He was fond of a joke," says Fleury de Chaboulon; "The basis of his character was a pleasant humor," says Gourgaud; "He abounded with jests, more peculiar than witty," says Benjamin Constant. This gayety of the giant is worth dwelling on: it was he who called his Grenadiers "Growlers;" he pinched their ears and pulled their moustachios. "The Emperor was always playing tricks with us," was a remark made by one of them. During the mysterious passage from Elba to France, on February 27, the French brig of war, the Zephyr, met the Inconstant, on board which Napoleon was concealed, and inquiring after Napoleon, the Emperor, who still had in his hat the white and violet cockade studded with bees which he had adopted at Elba, himself laughingly took up the speaking-trumpet, and answered,—"The Emperor is quite well." A man who jests in this way is on familiar terms with events. Napoleon had several outbursts of this laughter during the breakfast of Waterloo: after breakfast he reflected for a quarter of an hour; then two generals sat down on the truss of straw with a pen in their hand and a sheet of paper on their knee, and the Emperor dictated to them the plan of the battle.

At nine o'clock, the moment when the French army, échelonned and moving in five columns, began to deploy, the divisions in two lines, the artillery between, the bands in front, drums rattling and bugles braying,—a powerful, mighty, joyous army, a sea of bayonets and helmets on the horizon, the Emperor, much affected, twice exclaimed,—"Magnificent! magnificent!"

Between nine and half-past ten, although it seems incredible, the whole army took up position, and was drawn up in six lines, forming, to repeat the Emperor's expression, "the figure of six V's." A few minutes after the formation of the line, and in the midst of that profound silence which precedes the storm of a battle, the Emperor, seeing three 12-pounder batteries defile, which had been detached by his orders from Erlon, Reille, and Lobau's brigades, and which were intended to begin the action at the spot where the Nivelles and Genappe roads crossed, tapped Haxo on the shoulder, and said, "There are twenty-four pretty girls, General." Sure of the result, he encouraged with a smile the company of sappers of the first corps as it passed him, which he had selected to barricade itself in Mont St. Jean, so soon as the village was carried. All this security was only crossed by one word of human pity: on seeing at his left, at the spot where there is now a large tomb, the admirable Scotch Grays massed with their superb horses, he said, "It is a pity." Then he mounted his horse, rode toward Rossomme, and selected as his observatory a narrow strip of grass on the right of the road running from Genappe to

Brussels, and this was his second station. The third station, the one he took at seven in the evening, is formidable,—it is a rather lofty mound which still exists, and behind which the guard was massed in a hollow. Around this mound the balls ricochetted on the pavement of the road and reached Napoleon. As at Brienne, he had round his head the whistle of bullets and canister. Almost at the spot where his horse's hoofs stood, cannon-balls, old sabre-blades, and shapeless rust-eaten projectiles, have been picked up; a few years ago a live shell was dug up, the fusee of which had broken off. It was at this station that the Emperor said to his guide, Lacoste, a hostile timid peasant, who was fastened to a hussar's saddle, and tried at each volley of canister to hide himself behind Napoleon, "You ass! it is shameful; you will be killed in the back." The person who is writing these lines himself found, while digging up the sand in the friable slope of this mound, the remains of a shell rotted by the oxide of forty-six years, and pieces of iron which broke like sticks of barley-sugar between his fingers.

Everybody is aware that the undulations of the plains on which the encounter between Napoleon and Wellington took place, are no longer as they were on June 18, 1815. On taking from this mournful plain the material to make a monument, it was deprived of its real relics, and history, disconcerted, no longer recognizes itself; in order to glorify, they disfigured. Wellington, on seeing Waterloo two years after, exclaimed, "My battle-field has been altered." Where the huge pyramid of earth surmounted by a lion how stands, there was a crest which on the side of the Nivelles road had a practicable ascent, but which on the side of the Genappe road was almost an escarpment. The elevation of this escarpment may still be imagined by the height of the two great tombs which skirt the road from Genappe to Brussels: the English tomb on the left, the German tomb on the right. There is no French tomb,—for France the whole plain is a sepulchre. Through the thousands of cart-loads of earth employed in erecting the mound, which is one hundred and fifty feet high and half a mile in circumference, the plateau of Mont St. Jean is now accessible by a gentle incline; but on the day of the battle, and especially on the side of La Haye Sainte, it was steep and abrupt. The incline was so sharp that the English gunners could not see beneath them the farm situated in the bottom of the valley, which was the centre of the fight. On June 18, 1815, the rain had rendered the steep road more difficult, and the troops not only had to climb up but slipped in the mud. Along the centre of the crest of the plateau ran a species of ditch, which it was impossible for a distant observer to guess. We will state what this ditch was. Braine l'Alleud is a Belgian village and Ohain is another; these villages, both concealed in hollows, are connected by a road about a league and a half in length, which traverses an undulating plain, and frequently buries itself between hills, so as to become at certain spots a ravine. In 1815, as to-day, this road crossed the crest of the plateau of Mont St. Jean: but at the present day it is level with the ground, while at that time it was a hollow way. The two slopes have been carried away to form the monumental mound. This road was, and still is, a trench for the greater part of the distance,—a hollow trench, in some places twelve feet deep, whose scarped sides were washed down here and there by the winter rains. Accidents occurred there: the road was so narrow where it entered Braine l'Alleud, that a wayfarer was crushed there by a wagon, as is proved by a stone cross standing near the grave-yard, which gives the name of the dead man as "Monsieur Bernard Debrye, trader, of Brussels," and the date, "February, 1637." It was so deep on the plateau of Mont St. Jean, that a peasant, one Mathieu Nicaise, was crushed there in 1783 by a fall of earth, as is proved by another stone cross, the top of which disappeared in the excavations, but whose overthrown pedestal is still visible on the grass slope to the left of the road between La Haye Sainte and the farm of Mont St. Jean. On the day of the battle, this hollow way, whose existence nothing revealed, a trench on the top of the escarpment, a rut hidden in the earth, was invisible, that is to say, terrible.

**CHAPTER VIII.**

## THE EMPEROR ASKS THE GUIDE A QUESTION.

On the morning of Waterloo, then, Napoleon was cheerful, and had reason to be so,—for the plan he had drawn up was admirable. Once the battle had begun, its various incidents,—the resistance of Hougomont; the tenacity of La Haye Sainte; Bauduin killed, and Foy placed hors de combat; the unexpected wall against which Soye's brigade was broken; the fatal rashness of Guilleminot, who had no petards or powder-bags to destroy the farm gates; the sticking of the artillery in the mud; the fifteen guns without escort captured by Uxbridge in a hollow way; the slight effect of the shells falling in the English lines, which buried themselves in the moistened ground, and only produced a volcano of mud, so that the troops were merely plastered with mud; the inutility of Piret's demonstration on Braine l'Alleud, and the whole of his cavalry, fifteen squadrons, almost annihilated; the English right but slightly disquieted and the left poorly attacked; Ney's strange mistake in massing instead of échelonning the four divisions of the first corps; a depth of twenty-seven ranks and a line of two hundred men given up in this way to the canister; the frightful gaps made by the cannon-balls in these masses; the attacking columns disunited; the oblique battery suddenly unmasked on their flank; Bourgeois, Donzelot, and Durutte in danger; Quiot repulsed; Lieutenant Viot, that Hercules who came from the Polytechnic school, wounded at the moment when he was beating in with an axe the gates of La Haye Sainte, under the plunging fire of the English barricade on the Genappe road; Marcognet's division caught between infantry and cavalry, shot down from the wheat by Best and Pack, and sabred by Ponsonby; its battery of seven guns spiked; the Prince of Saxe Weimar holding and keeping in defiance of Count d'Erlon, Frischemont and Smohain; the flags of the 105th and 45th regiments which he had captured; the Prussian black Hussar stopped by the scouts of the flying column of three hundred chasseurs, who were beating the country between Wavre and Plancenoit; the alarming things which this man said; Grouchy's delay; the fifteen hundred men killed in less than an hour in the orchard of Hougomont; the eighteen hundred laid low even in a shorter space of time round La Haye Sainte,—all these stormy incidents, passing like battle-clouds before Napoleon, had scarce disturbed his glance or cast a gloom over this imperial face. Napoleon was accustomed to look steadily at war; he never reckoned up the poignant details; he cared little for figures, provided that they gave the total—victory. If the commencement went wrong, he did not alarm himself, as he believed himself master and owner of the end; he knew how to wait, and treated Destiny as an equal. He seemed to say to fate, "You would not dare!"

One half light, one half shade, Napoleon felt himself protected in good, and tolerated in evil. There was, or he fancied there was, for him a connivance, we might say almost a complicity, on the part of events, equivalent to the ancient invulnerability; and yet, when a man has behind him the Beresina, Leipsic, and Fontainebleau, it seems as if he might distrust Waterloo. A mysterious frown becomes visible on the face of heaven. At the moment when Wellington retrograded, Napoleon quivered. He suddenly saw the plateau of Mont St. Jean deserted, and the front of the English army disappear. It was rallying, but was screened from sight. The Emperor half raised himself in his stirrups, and the flash of victory passed into his eyes. If Wellington were driven back into the forest of Soignies, and destroyed, it would be the definitive overthrow of England by France: it would be Cressy, Poictiers, Malplaquet, and Ramilies avenged; the man of Marengo would erase Agincourt. The Emperor, while meditating on this tremendous stroke, turned his telescope to all parts of the battle-field. His Guards, standing at ease behind him, gazed at him with a sort of religious awe. He was reflecting, he examined the slopes, noted the inclines, scrutinized the clumps of trees, the patches of barley, and the paths; he seemed to be counting every tuft of gorse. He looked with some fixity at the English barricades,—two large masses of felled trees, the one on the Genappe road defended by two guns, the only ones of all the English artillery which commanded the battlefield, and the one on the Nivelles road, behind which flashed the

Dutch bayonets of Chassé's brigade. He remarked near this barricade the old chapel of St. Nicholas, which is at the corner of the cross-road leading to Braine l'Alleud. He bent down and spoke in a low voice to the guide Lacoste. The guide shook his head with a probably perfidious negative.

The Emperor drew himself up and reflected; Wellington was retiring, and all that was needed now was to complete this retreat by an overthrow. Napoleon hurriedly turned and sent off a messenger at full speed to Paris to announce that the battle was gained. Napoleon was one of those geniuses from whom thunder issues, and he had just found his thunder-stroke; he gave Milhaud's cuirassiers orders to carry the plateau of Mont St. Jean.

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**CHAPTER IX.**

## A SURPRISE.

They were three thousand five hundred in number, and formed a front a quarter of a league in length; they were gigantic men mounted on colossal horses. They formed twenty-six squadrons, and had behind them, as a support, Lefebvre Desnouette's division, composed of one hundred and six picked gendarmes, the chasseurs of the Guard, eleven hundred and ninety-seven sabres, and the lancers of the Guard, eight hundred and eighty lances. They wore a helmet without a plume, and a cuirass of wrought steel, and were armed with pistols and a straight sabre. In the morning the whole army had admired them when they came up, at nine o'clock, with bugles sounding, while all the bands played, "Veillons au salut de l'Empire," in close column with one battery on their flank, the others in their centre, and deployed in two ranks, and took their place in that powerful second line, so skilfully formed by Napoleon, which having at its extreme left Kellermann's cuirassiers, and on its extreme right Milhaud's cuirassiers, seemed to be endowed with two wings of steel.

The aide-de-camp Bernard carried to them the Emperor's order: Ney drew his sabre and placed himself at their head, and the mighty squadrons started. Then a formidable spectacle was seen: the whole of this cavalry, with raised sabres, with standards flying, and formed in columns of division, descended, with one movement and as one man, with the precision of a bronze battering-ram opening a breach, the hill of the Belle Alliance. They entered the formidable valley in which so many men had already fallen, disappeared in the smoke, and then, emerging from the gloom, reappeared on the other side of the valley, still in a close compact column, mounting at a trot, under a tremendous canister fire, the frightful muddy incline of the plateau of Mont St. Jean. They ascended it, stern, threatening, and imperturbable; between the breaks in the artillery and musketry fire the colossal tramp could be heard. As they formed two divisions, they were in two columns: Wathier's division was on the right, Delord's on the left. At a distance it appeared as if two immense steel snakes were crawling toward the crest of the plateau; they traversed the battle-field like a flash.

Nothing like it had been seen since the capture of the great redoubt of the Moskova by the heavy cavalry: Murat was missing, but Ney was there. It seemed as if this mass had become a monster, and had but one soul; each squadron undulated, and swelled like the rings of a polype. This could be seen through a vast smoke which was rent asunder at intervals; it was a pell-mell of helmets, shouts, and sabres, a stormy bounding of horses among cannon, and a disciplined and terrible array; while above it all flashed the cuirasses like the scales of the hydra. Such narratives seemed to belong to another age; something like this vision was doubtless traceable in the old Orphean epics describing the men-horses, the ancient hippanthropists, those Titans with human faces and equestrian chest whose gallop escaladed Olympus,—horrible, invulnerable, sublime; gods and brutes. It was a curious numerical coincidence that twenty-six battalions were preparing to receive the charge of these twenty-six squadrons. Behind

the crest of the plateau, in the shadow of the masked battery, thirteen English squares, each of two battalions and formed two deep, with seven men in the first lines and six in the second, were waiting, calm, dumb, and motionless, with their muskets, for what was coming. They did not see the cuirassiers, and the cuirassiers did not see them: they merely heard this tide of men ascending. They heard the swelling sound of three thousand horses, the alternating and symmetrical sound of the hoof, the clang of the cuirasses, the clash of the sabres, and a species of great and formidable breathing. There was a long and terrible silence, and then a long file of raised arms, brandishing sabres, and helmets, and bugles, and standards, and three thousand heads with great moustaches, shouting, "Long live the Emperor!" appeared above the crest. The whole of this cavalry debouched on the plateau, and it was like the commencement of an earthquake.

All at once, terrible to relate, the head of the column of cuirassiers facing the English left reared with a fearful clamor. On reaching the culminating point of the crest, furious and eager to make their exterminating dash on the English squares and guns, the cuirassiers noticed between them and the English a trench, a grave. It was the sunken road of Ohain. It was a frightful moment,—the ravine was there, unexpected, yawning, almost precipitous, beneath the horses' feet, and with a depth of twelve feet between its two sides. The second rank thrust the first into the abyss; the horses reared, fell back, slipped with all four feet in the air, crushing and throwing their riders. There was no means of escaping; the entire column was one huge projectile. The force acquired to crush the English, crushed the French, and the inexorable ravine would not yield till it was filled up. Men and horses rolled into it pell-mell, crushing each other, and making one large charnel-house of the gulf, and when this grave was full of living men the rest passed over them. Nearly one-third of Dubois' brigade rolled into this abyss. This commenced the loss of the battle. A local tradition, which evidently exaggerates, says that two thousand horses and fifteen hundred men were buried in the sunken road of Ohain. These figures probably comprise the other corpses cast into the ravine on the day after the battle. It was this brigade of Dubois, so fatally tried, which an hour before, charging unsupported, had captured the flag of the Luxembourg battalion. Napoleon, before ordering this charge, had surveyed the ground, but had been unable to see this hollow way, which did not form even a ripple on the crest of the plateau. Warned, however, by the little white chapel which marks its juncture with the Nivelles road, he had asked Lacoste a question, probably as to whether there was any obstacle. The guide answered No, and we might almost say that Napoleon's catastrophe was brought about by a peasant's shake of the head.

Other fatalities were yet to arise. Was it possible for Napoleon to win the battle? We answer in the negative. Why? On account of Wellington, on account of Blücher? No; on account of God. Buonaparte, victor at Waterloo, did not harmonize with the law of the 19th century. Another series of facts was preparing, in which Napoleon had no longer a place: the ill will of events had been displayed long previously. It was time for this vast man to fall; his excessive weight in human destiny disturbed the balance. This individual alone was of more account than the universal group: such plethoras of human vitality concentrated in a single head—the world, mounting to one man's brain—would be mortal to civilization if they endured. The moment had arrived for the incorruptible supreme equity to reflect, and it is probable that the principles and elements on which the regular gravitations of the moral order as of the material order depend, complained. Streaming blood, over-crowded grave-yards, mothers in tears, are formidable pleaders. When the earth is suffering from an excessive burden, there are mysterious groans from the shadow, which the abyss hears. Napoleon had been denounced in infinitude, and his fall was decided. He had angered God. Waterloo is not a battle, but a transformation of the Universe.

**CHAPTER X.**

## THE PLATEAU OF MONT ST. JEAN.

The battery was unmasked simultaneously with the ravine,—sixty guns and the thirteen squares thundered at the cuirassiers at point-blank range. The intrepid General Delort gave a military salute to the English battery. The whole of the English field artillery had entered the squares at a gallop; the cuirassiers had not even a moment for reflection. The disaster of the hollow way had decimated but not discouraged them; they were of that nature of men whose hearts grow large when their number is diminished. Wathier's column alone suffered in the disaster: but Delort's column, which he had ordered to wheel to the left, as if he suspected the trap, arrived entire. The cuirassiers rushed at the English squares at full gallop, with hanging bridles, sabres in their mouths, and pistols in their hands. There are moments in a battle when the soul hardens a man, so that it changes the soldier into a statue, and all flesh becomes granite. The English battalions, though fiercely assailed, did not move. Then there was a frightful scene. All the faces of the English squares were attacked simultaneously, and a frenzied whirl surrounded them. But the cold infantry remained impassive; the front rank kneeling received the cuirassiers on their bayonets, while the second fired at them; behind the second rank the artillery-men loaded their guns, the front of the square opened to let an eruption of canister pass, and then closed again. The cuirassiers responded by attempts to crush their foe; their great horses reared, leaped over the bayonets, and landed in the centre of the four living walls. The cannon-balls made gaps in the cuirassiers, and the cuirassiers made breaches in the squares. Files of men disappeared, trampled down by the horses, and bayonets were buried in the entrails of these centaurs. Hence arose horrible wounds, such as were probably never seen elsewhere. The squares, where broken by the impetuous cavalry, contracted without yielding an inch of ground; inexhaustible in canister they produced an explosion in the midst of the assailants. The aspect of this combat was monstrous: these squares were no longer battalions, but craters; these cuirassiers were no longer cavalry, but a tempest,—each square was a volcano attacked by a storm; the lava combated the lightning.

The extreme right square, the most exposed of all, as it was in the air, was nearly annihilated in the first attack. It was formed of the 75th Highlanders; the piper in the centre, while his comrades were being exterminated around him, was seated on a drum, with his bagpipe under his arm, and playing mountain airs. These Scotchmen died thinking of Ben Lothian, as the Greeks did remembering Argos. A cuirassier's sabre, by cutting through the pibroch and the arm that held it, stopped the tune by killing the player.

The cuirassiers, relatively few in number, and reduced by the catastrophe of the ravine, had against them nearly the whole English army; but they multiplied themselves, and each man was worth ten. Some Hanoverian battalions, however, gave way: Wellington saw it and thought of his cavalry. Had Napoleon at this moment thought of his infantry, the battle would have been won, and this forgetfulness was his great and fatal fault. All at once the assailers found themselves assailed; the English cavalry were on their backs, before them the squares, behind them Somerset with the one thousand four hundred Dragoon Guards. Somerset had on his right Dornberg with the German chevau-legers, and on his left Trip with the Belgian carbineers; the cuirassiers, attacked on the flank and in front, before and behind, by infantry and cavalry, were compelled to make a front on all sides. But what did they care? They were a whirlwind; their bravery became indescribable.

In addition, they had behind them the still thundering battery, and it was only in such a way that these men could be wounded in the back. One of these cuirasses with a hole through the left scapula is in the Waterloo Museum. For such Frenchmen, nothing less was required than such Englishmen. It was no longer a mêlée; it was a headlong fury, a hurricane of flashing swords. In an instant the one thousand four hundred Dragoons were only eight hundred; and Fuller, their lieutenant-colonel, was dead. Ney

dashed up with Lefebvre Desnouette's lancers and chasseurs; the plateau of Mont St. Jean was taken and retaken, and taken again. The cuirassiers left the cavalry to attack the infantry, or, to speak more correctly, all these men collared one another and did not loose their hold. The squares still held out after twelve assaults. Ney had four horses killed under him, and one half of the cuirassiers remained on the plateau. This struggle lasted two hours. The English army was profoundly shaken; and there is no doubt that, had not the cuirassiers been weakened in their attack by the disaster of the sunken road, they would have broken through the centre and decided the victory. This extraordinary cavalry petrified Clinton, who had seen Talavera and Badajoz. Wellington, three parts vanquished, admired heroically; he said in a low voice, "Splendid!" The cuirassiers annihilated seven squares out of thirteen, captured or spiked sixty guns, and took six English regimental flags, which three cuirassiers and three chasseurs of the Guard carried to the Emperor before the farm of La Belle Alliance.

Wellington's situation had grown worse. This strange battle resembled a fight between two savage wounded men, who constantly lose their blood while continuing the struggle. Which would be the first to fall? The combat for the plateau continued. How far did the cuirassiers get? No one could say; but it is certain that on the day after the battle, a cuirassier and his horse were found dead on the weighing machine of Mont St. Jean, at the very spot where the Nivelles, Genappe, La Hulpe, and Brussels roads intersect and meet. This horseman had pierced the English lines. One of the men who picked up this corpse still lives at Mont St. Jean; his name is Dehaye, and he was eighteen years of age at the time. Wellington felt himself giving way, and the crisis was close at hand. The cuirassiers had not succeeded, in the sense that the English centre had not been broken. Everybody held the plateau, and nobody held it; but, in the end, the greater portion remained in the hands of the English. Wellington had the village and the plain; Ney, only the crest and the slope. Both sides seemed to have taken root in this mournful soil. But the weakness of the English seemed irremediable, for the hemorrhage of this army was horrible. Kempt on the left wing asked for reinforcements. "There are none," Wellington replied. Almost at the same moment, by a strange coincidence which depicts the exhaustion of both armies, Ney asked Napoleon for infantry, and Napoleon answered, "Infantry? where does he expect me to get them? Does he think I can make them?"

Still the English army was the worse of the two; the furious attacks of these great squadrons with their iron cuirasses and steel chests had crushed their infantry. A few men round the colors marked the place of a regiment, and some battalions were only commanded by a captain or a lieutenant. Alten's division, already so maltreated at La Haye Sainte, was nearly destroyed; the intrepid Belgians of Van Kluze's brigade lay among the wheat along the Nivelles road: hardly any were left of those Dutch Grenadiers who, in 1811, fought Wellington in Spain, on the French side, and who, in 1815, joined the English and fought Napoleon. The loss in officers was considerable; Lord Uxbridge, who had his leg interred the next day, had a fractured knee. If on the side of the French, in this contest of the cuirassiers, Delord, l'Heretier, Colbert, Duof, Travers, and Blancard were hors de combat, on the side of the English, Alten was wounded, Barnes was wounded, Delancey killed, Van Meeren killed, Ompteda killed, Wellington's staff decimated,—and England had the heaviest scale in this balance of blood. The 2d regiment of foot-guards had lost five lieutenant-colonels, four captains, and three ensigns; the first battalion of the 30th had lost twenty-four officers, and one hundred and twelve men; the 79th Highlanders had twenty-four officers wounded, and eighteen officers and four hundred and fifty men killed. Cumberland's Hanoverian Hussars, an entire regiment, having their Colonel Hacke at their head, who at a later date was tried and cashiered, turned bridle during the flight and fled into the forest of Soignies, spreading the rout as far as Brussels. The wagons, ammunition trains, baggage trains, and ambulance carts full of wounded, on seeing the French, gave ground, and approaching the forest, rushed into it; the Dutch, sabred by the French cavalry, broke in confusion. From Vert Coucou to Groenendæl, a distance of two leagues on the Brussels roads, there was, according to the testimony of living witnesses, a dense crowd of fugitives, and the panic was so great that it assailed the Prince de Condé at Mechlin and Louis

XVIII. at Ghent. With the exception of the weak reserve échelonned behind the field hospital established at the farm of Mont St. Jean, and Vivian's and Vandeleur's brigades, which flanked the left wing, Wellington had no cavalry left, and many of the guns lay dismounted. These facts are confessed by Siborne; and Pringle, exaggerating the danger, goes so far as to state that the Anglo-Dutch army was reduced to thirty-four thousand men. The Iron Duke remained firm, but his lips blanched. The Austrian commissioner Vincent, and the Spanish commissioner Alava, who were present at the battle, thought the Duke lost; at five o'clock Wellington looked at his watch, and could be heard muttering, "Blücher or night!"

It was this moment that a distant line of bayonets glistened on the heights on the side of Frischemont. This was the climax of the gigantic drama.

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**CHAPTER XI**

## BÜLOW TO THE RESCUE.

Everybody knows Napoleon's awful mistake; Grouchy expected, Blücher coming up, death instead of life. Destiny has such turnings as this: men anticipate the throne of the world, and perceive St. Helena. If the little shepherd who served as guide to Bülow, Blücher's lieutenant, had advised him to debouche from the forest above Frischemont, instead of below Plancenoit, the form of the 19th century would have been different, for Napoleon would have won the battle of Waterloo. By any other road than that below Plancenoit the Prussian army would have come upon a ravine impassable by artillery, and Bülow would not have arrived. Now one hour's delay—the Prussian general Muffling declares it—and Blücher would not have found Wellington erect,—"the battle was lost." It was high time, as we see, for Bülow to arrive, and as it was he had been greatly delayed. He had bivouacked at Dion-le-Mont and started at daybreak but the roads were impracticable, and his divisions stuck in the mud. The ruts came up to the axle-tree of the guns; moreover, he was compelled to cross the Dyle by the narrow bridge of Wavre: the street leading to the bridge had been burned by the French, and artillery train and limbers, which could not pass between two rows of blazing houses, were compelled to wait till the fire was extinguished. By mid-day Bülow's vanguard had scarce reached Chapelle Saint Lambert.

Had the action begun two hours sooner, it would have been over at four o'clock, and Blücher would have fallen upon the battle gained by Napoleon. At mid-day, the Emperor had been the first to notice through his telescope, on the extreme horizon, something which fixed his attention, and he said, "I see over there a cloud which appears to me to be troops." Then he asked the Duke of Dalmatia, "Soult, what do you see in the direction of Chapelle Saint Lambert?" The Marshal, after looking through his telescope, replied, "Four or five thousand men, Sire." It was evidently Grouchy; still they remained motionless in the mist. All the staff examined the cloud pointed out by the Emperor, and some said, "They are columns halting;" but the majority were of opinion that they were trees. The truth is that the cloud did not move, and the Emperor detached Doncoul's division of light cavalry to reconnoitre in the direction of this dark point.

Bülow, in fact, had not stirred, for his vanguard was very weak and could effect nothing. He was obliged to wait for the main body of the army, and had orders to concentrate his troops before forming line; but at five o'clock, Blücher, seeing Wellington's danger, ordered Bülow to attack, and employed the remarkable phrase, "We must let the English army breathe." A short time after, Losthin's, Hiller's, Hacke's, and Ryssel's brigades deployed in front of Lobau's corps, the cavalry of Prince William of Prussia debouched from the Bois de Paris, Plancenoit was in flames, and the Prussian cannon-balls began pouring even upon the ranks of the guard held in reserve behind Napoleon.

CHAPTER XII.

## THE GUARD.

The rest is known,—the irruption of a third army; the battle dislocated; eighty-six cannon thundering simultaneously; Pirch I. coming up with Bülow; Ziethen's cavalry led by Blücher in person: the French driven back; Marcognet swept from the plateau of Ohain; Durutte dislodged from Papelotte; Donzelot and Quiot falling back; Lobau attacked on the flank; a new battle rushing at nightfall on the weakened French regiments; the whole English line resuming the offensive, and pushed forward; the gigantic gap made in the French army by the combined English and Prussian batteries; the extermination, the disaster in front, the disaster on the flank, and the guard forming line amid this fearful convulsion. As they felt they were going to death, they shouted, "Long live the Emperor!" History has nothing more striking than this death-rattle breaking out into acclamations. The sky had been covered the whole day, but at this very moment—eight o'clock in the evening—the clouds parted in the horizon, and the sinister red glow of the setting sun was visible through the elms on the Nivelles road. It had been seen to rise at Austerlitz.

Each battalion of the Guard, for this dénouement, was commanded by a general; Friant, Michel, Roguet, Harlot, Mallet, and Pont de Morvan were there. When the tall bearskins of the Grenadiers of the Guard with the large eagle device appeared, symmetrical in line, and calm, in the twilight of this fight, the enemy felt a respect for France; they fancied they saw twenty victories entering the battlefield with outstretched wings, and the men who were victors, esteeming themselves vanquished, fell back; but Wellington shouted, "Up, Guards, and take steady aim!" The red regiment of English Guards, which had been lying down behind the hedges, rose; a storm of canister rent the tricolor flag waving above the heads of the French; all rushed forward, and the supreme carnage commenced. The Imperial Guard felt in the darkness the army giving way around them, and the vast staggering of the rout: they heard the cry of "Sauve qui peut!" substituted for the "Vive l'Empereur!" and with flight behind them they continued to advance, hundreds falling at every step they took. None hesitated or evinced timidity; the privates were as heroic as the generals, and not one attempted to escape suicide.

Ney, wild, and grand in the consciousness of accepted death, offered himself to every blow in this combat. He had his fifth horse killed under him here. Bathed in perspiration, with a flame in his eye and foam on his lips, his uniform unbuttoned, one of his epaulettes half-cut through by the sabre-cut of a horse-guard, and his decoration of the great Eagle dinted by a bullet,—bleeding, muddy, magnificent, and holding a broken sword in his hand, he shouted, "Come and see how a marshal of France dies on the battle-field!" But it was in vain; he did not die. He was haggard and indignant, and hurled at Drouet d'Erlon the question, "Are you not going to get yourself killed?" He yelled amid the roar of all this artillery, crushing a handful of men, "Oh, there is nothing for me! I should like all these English cannon-balls to enter my chest!" You were reserved for French bullets, unfortunate man.

CHAPTER XIII.

## THE CATASTROPHE.

The rout in the rear of the guard was mournful; the army suddenly gave way on all sides simultaneously,—at Hougomont, La Haye Sainte, Papelotte, and Plancenoit. The cry of "Treachery!"

was followed by that of "Sauve qui peut!" An army which disbands is like a thaw,—all gives way, cracks, floats, rolls, falls, comes into collision, and dashes forward. Ney borrows a horse, leaps on it, and without hat, stock, or sword, dashes across the Brussels road, stopping at once English and French. He tries to hold back the army, he recalls it, he insults it, he clings wildly to the rout to hold it back. The soldiers fly from him, shouting, "Long live Marshal Ney!" Two regiments of Durutte's move backward and forward in terror, and as it were tossed between the sabres of the Hussars and the musketry fire of Kempt's, Best's, and Pack's brigades. A rout is the highest of all confusions, for friends kill one another in order to escape, and squadrons and battalions dash against and destroy one another. Lobau at one extremity and Reille at the other are carried away by the torrent. In vain does Napoleon build a wall of what is left of the Guard; in vain does he expend his own special squadrons in a final effort. Quiot retires before Vivian, Kellermann before Vandeleur, Lobau before Bülow, Moraud before Pirch, and Domor and Subervie before Prince William of Prussia. Guyot, who led the Emperor's squadrons to the charge, falls beneath the horses of English Dragoons. Napoleon gallops along the line of fugitives, harangues, urges, threatens, and implores them; all the mouths that shouted "Long live the Emperor!" in the morning, remained wide open; they hardly knew him. The Prussian cavalry, who had come up fresh, dash forward, cut down, kill, and exterminate. The artillery horses dash forward with the guns; the train soldiers unharness the horses from the caissons and escape on them; wagons overthrown, and with their four wheels in the air, block up the road and supply opportunities for massacre. Men crush one another and trample over the dead and over the living. A multitude wild with terror fill the roads, the paths, the bridges, the plains, the hills, the valleys, and the woods, which are thronged by this flight of forty thousand men. Cries, desperation; knapsacks and muskets cast into the wheat; passages cut with the edge of the sabres; no comrades, no officers, no generals recognized,—an indescribable terror. Ziethen sabring France at his ease. The lions become kids. Such was this fight.

At Genappe an effort was made to turn and rally; Lobau collected three hundred men; the entrance of the village was barricaded, but at the first round of Prussian canister all began flying again, and Lobau was made prisoner. This volley of shot may still be seen, buried in the gable of an old brick house on the right of the road, just before you reach Genappe. The Prussians dashed into Genappe, doubtless furious at being such small victors, and the pursuit was monstrous, for Blücher commanded extermination. Roguet had given the mournful example of threatening with death any French Grenadier who brought in a Prussian prisoner, and Blücher surpassed Roguet Duchesme, general of the young guard, who was pursued into the doorway of an inn in Genappe, surrendered his sword to an Hussar of death, who took the sword and killed the prisoner. The victory was completed by the assassination of the vanquished. Let us punish, as we are writing history,—old Blücher dishonored himself. This ferocity set the seal on the disaster; the desperate rout passed through Genappe, passed through Quatre Bras, passed through Sombreffe, passed through Frasnes, passed through Thuin, passed through Charleroi, and only stopped at the frontier. Alas! and who was it flying in this way? The grand army.

Did this vertigo, this terror, this overthrow of the greatest bravery that ever astonished history, take place without a cause? No. The shadow of a mighty right hand is cast over Waterloo; it is the day of destiny, and the force which is above man produced that day. Hence the terror, hence all those great souls laying down their swords. Those who had conquered Europe, fell crushed, having nothing more to say or do, and feeling a terrible presence in the shadow. Hoc erat in fatis. On that day the perspective of the human race was changed, and Waterloo is the hinge of the 19th century. The disappearance of the great man was necessary for the advent of the great age, and He who cannot be answered undertook the task. The panic of the heroes admits of explanation: in the battle of Waterloo there is more than a storm, —there is a meteor.

At nightfall, Bernard and Bertrand seized by the skirt of his coat, in a field near Genappe, a haggard, thoughtful, gloomy man, who, carried so far by the current of the rout, had just dismounted, passed the

bridle over his arm, and was now, with wandering eye, returning alone to Waterloo. It was Napoleon, the immense somnambulist of the shattered dream, still striving to advance.

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#### CHAPTER XIV.

### THE LAST SQUARE.

A few squares of the Guard, standing motionless in the swash of the rout, like rocks in running water, held out till night. They awaited the double shadow of night and death, and let them surround them. Each regiment, isolated from the others, and no longer connected with the army which was broken on all sides, died where it stood. In order to perform this last exploit, they had taken up a position, some on the heights of Rossomme, others on the plain of Mont St. Jean. The gloomy squares, deserted, conquered, and terrible, struggled formidably with death, for Ulm, Wagram, Jena, and Friedland were dying in it. When twilight set in at nine in the evening, one square still remained at the foot of the plateau of Mont St. Jean. In this mournful valley, at the foot of the slope scaled by the cuirassiers, now inundated by the English masses, beneath the converging fire of the hostile and victorious artillery, under a fearful hailstorm of projectiles, this square still resisted. It was commanded by an obscure officer of the name of Cambronne. At each volley the square diminished, but continued to reply to the canister with musketry fire, and each moment contracted its four walls. Fugitives in the distance, stopping at moments to draw breath, listened in the darkness to this gloomy diminishing thunder.

When this legion had become only a handful, when their colors were but a rag, when their ammunition was exhausted, and muskets were clubbed, and when the pile of corpses was greater than the living group, the victors felt a species of sacred awe, and the English artillery ceased firing. It was a sort of respite; these combatants had around them an army of spectres, outlines of mounted men, the black profile of guns, and the white sky visible through the wheels; the colossal death's-head which heroes ever glimpse in the smoke of a battle, advanced and looked at them. They could hear in the twilight gloom that the guns were being loaded; the lighted matches, resembling the eyes of a tiger in the night, formed a circle round their heads. The linstocks of the English batteries approached the guns, and at this moment an English general,—Colville according to some, Maitland according to others,—holding the supreme moment suspended over the heads of these men, shouted to them, "Brave Frenchmen, surrender!"

Cambronne answered, "Merde!"

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#### CHAPTER XV.

### CAMBRONNE.

Out of respect for the French reader, the grandest word that any Frenchman has ever uttered must not be repeated. Dump no sublimity into the stream of history.

At our own risk, we shall disregard this notice.

Among these giants, then, there was one Titan, Cambronne.

To speak out this word and then die, what could be more sublime than this! For to be ready to die is to die, and it was no fault of his if amid a storm of grape-shot he still lived.

The man who won the battle of Waterloo was not Napoleon routed; it was not Wellington giving ground at four o'clock, driven to despair at five; it was not Blücher, who had not fought at all: the man who won the battle of Waterloo was Cambronne.

To overwhelm with such a word the thunder-bolt which kills you, is to win the victory.

To reply thus to disaster, to say this to fate, to lay such a foundation for the lion which was to mark the spot, to hurl this reply to the night's rain, to the masked wall of Hougomont, to the sunken road of Ohain, to the delay of Grouchy, to the arrival of Blücher, to be Irony in the tomb, to struggle to his feet again after having fallen, to drown in two syllables the European coalition, to offer to kings these latrines already used by the Cæsars, to make the last of words the first, lending it the splendor of France, to end Waterloo with the jeers of the Mardi-Gras, to supplement Leonidas with Rabelais, to sum up this victory in one last word impossible to repeat, to lose ground and preserve history, after such carnage to have the laugh on his side, this is grand.

This insult to the lightning reaches the sublimity of Æschylus.

Cambronne's exclamation has the effect of an explosion. It is the bursting of a bosom with disdain; it is the surcharge of agony which breaks out. Who did conquer? Was it Wellington? No. Without Blücher he was lost. Was it Blücher? No. If Wellington had not begun, Blücher could not have finished. This Cambronne, this new-comer upon the scene, this unknown soldier, this infinitesimal atom of the war, feels that there is a lie somewhere in the disaster, which doubles its bitterness; and at the moment when he is bursting with rage, they offer him this mockery, life! How could he help bursting out? They are there,—all the kings of Europe, the conquering generals, the thundering Jupiters; they have a hundred thousand victorious soldiers, and behind the hundred thousand, a million; their cannon, the matches lighted, are yawning; they have trampled under foot the Imperial Guard and the Grand Army; they have just crushed Napoleon; only Cambronne is left; only this earthworm remains to protest. He will protest. Then he looks about for a word, as he would for a sword. Froth rises to his lips, and this froth is the word. Before this victory, stupendous but commonplace, before this victory without victors, driven to despair, he stands erect again. He yields to its weight, but he proves its nothingness; and he does more than spit upon it; and weighed down by numbers, by force, by matter, he finds for his soul one expression, "Merde!" We repeat—to say this, to do this, to find this, is to win the victory.

The spirit of the great past entered into this unknown man at this fatal moment. Cambronne finds the word of Waterloo just as Rouget de l'Isle finds the Marseillaise—by an inspiration from above. A magnetic current from the divine whirlwind passes through these men and they vibrate, and one sings the grand song, the other utters the terrible cry. This word of superhuman scorn Cambronne hurls not alone at Europe in the name of the Empire,—that would be little; he hurls it at the past in the name of the Revolution. In Cambronne is heard and is recognized the old soul of the giants. It seems as if it were Danton speaking or Kleber roaring.

To this word of Cambronne's, the English voice replied, "Fire!" The batteries blazed, the hill trembled, from all these brazen mouths leaped a last fearful belching of grape, a dense cloud of smoke rolled forth silvered in waves by the rising moon, and when the smoke cleared away, there was nothing left there. This dreaded remnant was annihilated. The four walls of the living redoubt lay low, there being hardly perceptible here and there a quivering among the corpses; and thus the French legions, greater than those of Rome, died at Mont St. Jean, on the earth drenched with rain and blood, in the gloomy wheat-fields, at the spot where now there passes at four o'clock in the morning, whistling and gayly flicking his horse with the whip, Joseph, who drives the Nivelles mail-cart.

**CHAPTER XVI.**

## QUOT LIBRAS IN DUCE.

The Battle of Waterloo is an enigma as obscure for those who gained it as for him who lost it. To Napoleon it is a panic; Blücher sees nothing in it but fire; Wellington does not understand it at all. Look at the reports: the bulletins are confused; the commentaries are entangled; the latter stammer, the former stutter. Jomini divides the battle of Waterloo into four moments; Muffling cuts it into three acts; Charras, although we do not entirely agree with him in all his appreciations, has alone caught with his haughty eye the characteristic lineaments of this catastrophe of human genius contending with divine chance. All the other historians suffer from a certain bedazzlement in which they grope about. It was a flashing day; in truth, the overthrow of the military monarchy which, to the great stupor of the kings, has dragged down all kingdoms,—the downfall of strength and the rout of war.

In this event, which bears the stamp of superhuman necessity, men play but a small part. If we take Waterloo from Wellington and Blücher, does that deprive England and Germany of anything? No. Neither illustrious England nor august Germany is in question in the problem of Waterloo; for, thank Heaven! nations are great without the mournful achievements of the sword. Neither Germany nor England nor France is held in a scabbard; at this day, when Waterloo is only a clash of sabres, Germany has Goethe above Blücher, and England Byron above Wellington. A mighty dawn of ideas is peculiar to our age; and in this dawn England and Germany have their own magnificent flash. They are majestic because they think; the high level they bring to civilization is intrinsic to them; it comes from themselves and not from an accident. Any aggrandizement the 19th century may have cannot boast of Waterloo as its fountain-head; for only barbarous nations grow suddenly after a victory: it is the transient vanity of torrents swollen by a storm. Civilized nations, especially at the present day, are not elevated or debased by the good or evil fortune of a captain, and their specific weight in the human family results from something more than a battle. Their honor, dignity, enlightenment, and genius are not numbers which those gamblers, heroes, and conquerors can stake in the lottery of battles. Very often a battle lost is progress gained, and less of glory more of liberty. The drummer is silent and reason speaks; it is the game of who loses wins. Let us, then, speak of Waterloo coldly from both sides, and render to chance the things that belong to chance, and to God what is God's. What is Waterloo,—a victory? No; a great prize in the lottery. A prize won by Europe and paid by France. It was hardly worth while erecting a lion for it.

Waterloo, by the way, is the strangest encounter recorded in history; Napoleon and Wellington are not enemies, but contraries. Never did God, who delights in antitheses, produce a more striking contrast or a more extraordinary confrontation. On one side precision, foresight, geometry, prudence, a retreat assured, reserves prepared, an obstinate coolness, an imperturbable method, strategy profiting by the ground, tactics balancing battalions, carnage measured by a plumb-line, war regulated watch in hand, nothing left voluntarily to accident, old classic courage and absolute correctness. On the other side we have intuition, divination, military strangeness, superhuman instinct, a flashing glance; something that gazes like the eagle and strikes like lightning, all the mysteries of a profound mind, association with destiny; the river, the plain, the forest, and the hill summoned, and to some extent compelled, to obey, the despot going so far as even to tyrannize over the battle-field; faith in a star blended with strategic science, heightening but troubling it. Wellington was the Barême of war, Napoleon was its Michael Angelo, and this true genius was conquered by calculation. On both sides somebody was expected; and it was the exact calculator who succeeded. Napoleon waited for Grouchy, who did not come; Wellington waited for Blücher, and he came.

Wellington is the classical war taking its revenge; Bonaparte, in his dawn, had met it in Italy and superbly defeated it,—the old owl fled before the young vulture. The old tactics had been not only

overthrown, but scandalized. Who was this Corsican of six-and-twenty years of age? What meant this splendid ignoramus who, having everything against him, nothing for him, without provisions, ammunition, guns, shoes, almost without an army, with a handful of men against masses, dashed at allied Europe, and absurdly gained impossible victories? Whence came this mad thunderer, who, almost without taking breath, pulverized one after another the five armies of the Emperor of Germany, upsetting Beaulieu upon Alvinzi, Wurmser upon Beaulieu, Mélas upon Wurmser, Mack upon Mélas? Who was this new-comer of war who possessed the effrontery of a planet? The academic military school excommunicated him, while bolting, and hence arose an implacable rancor of the old Cæsarism against the new, of the old sabre against the flashing sword, and of the chess-board against genius. On June 18, 1815, this rancor got the best; and beneath Lodi, Montebello, Montenotte, Mantua, Marengo, and Arcola, it wrote,—Waterloo. It was a triumph of mediocrity, sweet to majorities, and destiny consented to this irony. In his decline, Napoleon found a young Wurmser before him,—in fact, it is only necessary to whiten Wellington's hair in order to have a Wurmser. Waterloo is a battle of the first class, gained by a captain of the second.

What must be admired in the battle of Waterloo is England, the English firmness, the English resolution, the English blood; and what England had really superb in it is (without offence) herself; it is not her captain, but her army. Wellington, strangely ungrateful, declares in his despatch to Lord Bathurst, that his army, the one which fought on June 18, 1815, was a "detestable army." What does the gloomy pile of bones buried in the trenches of Waterloo think of this? England has been too modest to herself in her treatment of Wellington; for making him so great is making herself small. Wellington is merely a hero like any other man. The Scotch Grays, the Life Guards, Maitland and Mitchell's regiments, Pack and Kempt's infantry, Ponsonby and Somerset's cavalry, the Highlanders playing the bagpipes under the shower of canister, Ryland's battalions, the fresh recruits who could hardly manage a musket and yet held their ground against the old bands of Essling and Rivoli,—all this is grand. Wellington was tenacious, that was his merit, and we do not deny it to him; but the lowest of his privates and his troopers was quite as solid as he, and the iron soldier is as good as the iron duke. For our part, all our glorification is offered to the English soldier, the English army, the English nation; and if there must be a trophy, it is to England that this trophy is owing. The Waterloo column would be more just if, instead of the figure of a man, it raised to the clouds the statue of a people.

But this great England will be irritated by what we are writing here; for she still has feudal illusions, after her 1688, and the French 1789. This people believes in inheritance and hierarchy; and while no other excels it in power and glory, it esteems itself as a nation and not as a people. As a people, it readily subordinates itself, and takes a lord as its head; the workman lets himself be despised; the soldier puts up with flogging. It will be remembered that, at the battle of Inkermann, a sergeant who, as it appears, saved the British army, could not be mentioned by Lord Raglan, because the military hierarchy does not allow any hero below the rank of officer to be mentioned in despatches. What we admire before all, in an encounter like Waterloo, is the prodigious skill of chance. The night rain, the wall of Hougomont, the sunken road of Ohain, Grouchy deaf to the cannon, Napoleon's guide deceiving him, Bülow's guide enlightening him,—all this cataclysm is marvellously managed.

Altogether, we will assert, there is more of a massacre than of a battle in Waterloo. Waterloo, of all pitched battles, is the one which had the smallest front for such a number of combatants,—Napoleon's, three quarters of a league, Wellington's, half a league, and seventy-two thousand combatants on either side. From this density came the carnage. The following calculation has been made and proportion established: loss of men at Austerlitz, French, fourteen per cent; Russian, thirty per cent; Austrian, forty-four per cent: at Wagram, French, thirteen per cent; Austrian, fourteen per cent: at Moskova, French, thirty-seven per cent; Russian, forty-four per cent: at Bautzen, French, thirteen per cent; Russian and Prussian, fourteen per cent: at Waterloo, French, fifty-six per cent; Allies, thirty-one per

cent,—total for Waterloo, forty-one per cent, or out of one hundred and forty-four thousand fighting men, sixty thousand killed and wounded. The field of Waterloo has at the present day that calmness which belongs to the earth, and resembles all plains. At night, a sort of visionary mist rises from it, and if any traveller walk about it, and listen and dream like Virgil on the mournful plain of Philippi, the hallucination of the catastrophe seizes upon him. The frightful June 18 lives again, the false monumental hill is levelled, the wondrous lion is dissipated, the battle-field resumes its reality, lines of infantry undulate on the plain, furious galloping crosses the horizon; the startled dreamer sees the flash of sabres, the sparkle of bayonets, the red light of shells, the monstrous collision of thunderbolts; he hears, like a death-groan from the tomb, the vague clamor of the phantom battle. These shadows are grenadiers; these flashes are cuirassiers; this skeleton is Napoleon; this skeleton is Wellington; all this is non-existent, and yet still combats, and the ravines are stained purple, and the trees rustle, and there is fury even in the clouds and in the darkness, while all the stern heights—Mont St. Jean, Hougomont, Frischemont, Papelotte, and Plancenoit—seem confusedly crowned by hosts of spectres exterminating one another.

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**CHAPTER XVII.**

## OUGHT WATERLOO TO BE APPLAUDED?

There exists a highly respectable liberal school, which does not detest Waterloo, but we do not belong to it. For us Waterloo is only the stupefied date of liberty; for such an eagle to issue from such a shell is assuredly unexpected. Waterloo, if we place ourselves at the culminating point of the question, is intentionally a counter-revolutionary victory,—it is Europe against France; it is Petersburg, Berlin, and Vienna against Paris; it is the statu quo opposed to the initiative; it is the 14th July, 1789, attacked through March 20, 1815; it is all the monarchies clearing the decks to conquer the indomitable French spirit of revolt. The dream was to extinguish this vast people which had been in a state of eruption for six-and-twenty years; and for this purpose, Brunswick, Nassau, the Romanoffs, Hohenzollern, and the Hapsburger coalesced with the Bourbons, and Waterloo carries divine right on its pillion. It is true that as the Empire was despotic, Royalty, by the natural reaction of things, was compelled to be liberal, and a constitutional order issued from Waterloo, much to the regret of the conquerors. The fact is, that the Revolution can never be really conquered, and being providential and absolutely fatal, it constantly reappears,—before Waterloo in Napoleon overthrowing the old thrones; after Waterloo in Louis XVIII. granting and enduring the charter. Bonaparte places a postilion on the throne of Naples, and a sergeant on the throne of Sweden, employing inequality to demonstrate equality; Louis XVIII. at St. Ouen countersigns the declaration of the rights of man. If you wish to understand what revolution is, call it progress; and if you wish to understand what progress is, call it to-morrow. To-morrow ever does its work irresistibly and does it to-day, and it ever strangely attains its object. It employs Wellington to make an orator of Foy who was only a soldier. Foy falls at Hougomont and raises himself in the tribune. Such is the process of progress, and that workman has no bad tools: it fits to its divine work the man who bestrode the Alps and the old tottering patient of Père Élysée, and it employs both the gouty man and the conqueror,—the conqueror externally, the gouty man at home. Waterloo, by cutting short the demolition of thrones by the sword, had no other effect than to continue the revolutionary work on another side. The sabres have finished, and the turn of the thinkers arrives; the age which Waterloo wished to arrest marched over it, and continued its route, and this sinister victory was gained by liberty.

Still it is incontestable that what triumphed at Waterloo; what smiled behind Wellington; what procured him all the marshals' staffs of Europe, including, by the way, that of Marshal of France; what rolled along joyously the wheelbarrows of earth mingled with bones to erect the foundation for the lion, on

whose pedestal is inscribed the date June 18, 1815; what encouraged Blücher in cutting down the routed army; and what from the plateau of Mont St. Jean hovered over France like a prey,—was the counter-revolution. It is the counter-revolution that muttered the hideous word "Dismemberment"; but on reaching Paris it had a close view of the crater, it felt that the ashes burned its feet, and it reflected. It went back to the job of stammering a charter.

Let us only see in Waterloo what there really is in it. There is no intentional liberty, for the counter-revolution was involuntarily liberal in the same way as Napoleon, through a corresponding phenomenon, was involuntarily a Revolutionist. On June 18, 1815, Robespierre on horseback was thrown.

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**CHAPTER XVIII.**

## RESTORATION OF DIVINE RIGHT.

With the fall of the Dictatorship, an entire European system crumbled away, and the Empire vanished in a shadow which resembled that of the expiring Roman world. Nations escaped from the abyss as in the time of the Barbarians; but the Barbarism of 1815, which could be called by its familiar name the counter-revolution, had but little breath, soon began to pant, and stopped. The Empire, we confess, was lamented, and by heroic eyes, and its glory consists in the sword-made sceptre; the Empire was glory itself. It had spread over the whole earth all the light that tyranny can give,—a dim light, we will say, an obscure light; for when compared with real day, it is night. This disappearance of the night produced the effect of an eclipse.

Louis XVIII. re-entered Paris, and the dances of July 8 effaced the enthusiasm of March 20. The Corsican became the antithesis of the Bearnais, and the flag on the dome of the Tuileries was white. The exile was enthroned, and the deal table of Hartwell was placed before the fleur-de-lysed easy-chair of Louis XIV. People talked of Bouvines and Fontenoy as if they had occurred yesterday, while Austerlitz was antiquated. The throne and the altar fraternized majestically, and one of the most indubitable forms of the welfare of society in the 19th century was established in France and on the Continent,—Europe took the white cockade. Trestaillon was celebrated, and the motto, nec pluribus impar, reappeared in the stone beams representing a sun on the front of the barracks, on the Quai d'Orsay. Where there had been an Imperial Guard, there was a "red household;" and the arch of the Carrousel, if loaded with badly endured victories, feeling not at home in these novelties, and perhaps slightly ashamed of Marengo and Arcola, got out of the difficulty by accepting the statue of the Duc d'Angoulême. The cemetery of the Madeleine, a formidable public grave in '93, was covered with marble and jasper, because the bones of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette were mingled with that dust. In the moat of Vincennes a tomb emerged from the ground, as a reminder that the Duc d'Enghien died there in the same month in which Napoleon was crowned. Pope Pius VII., who had performed the ceremony very close upon that death, tranquilly blessed the downfall, as he had blessed the elevation. There was at Schönbrunn a shadow four years of age, whom it was seditious to call the King of Rome. And these things took place, and these kings regained their thrones, and the master of Europe was put in a cage, and the old regime became the new, and the light and the shadow of the earth changed places, because on the afternoon of a summer day a peasant boy said to a Prussian in a wood, "Go this way and not that!"

That 1815 was a sort of melancholy April; the old unhealthy and venomous realities assumed a new aspect. Falsehood espoused 1789; divine right put on the mask of a charter; fictions became constitutional; prejudices, superstitions, and after-thoughts, having article fourteen in their hearts,

varnished themselves with liberalism. The snakes cast their slough. Man had been at once aggrandized and lessened by Napoleon; idealism, in this reign of splendid materialism, received the strange name of ideology. It was a grave imprudence of a great man to ridicule the future; but the people, that food for powder, so fond of the gunner, sought him. "Where is he? What is he doing?" "Napoleon is dead," said a passer-by to an invalid of Marengo and Waterloo. "He dead!" the soldier exclaimed; "much you know about him!" Imaginations deified this thrown man. Europe after Waterloo was dark, for some enormous gap was long left unfilled after the disappearance of Napoleon. The kings placed themselves in this gap, and old Europe took advantage of it to effect a reformation. There was a holy alliance,—Belle Alliance, the fatal field of Waterloo had said beforehand. In the presence of the old Europe reconstituted, the lineaments of a new France were sketched in. The future, derided by the Emperor, made its entry and wore on its brow the star—Liberty. The ardent eyes of the youthful generation were turned toward it; but, singular to say, they simultaneously felt equally attached to this future Liberty and to the past Napoleon. Defeat had made the conquered man greater; Napoleon fallen seemed better than Napoleon standing on his feet. Those who had triumphed were alarmed. England had him guarded by Hudson Lowe, and France had him watched by Montcheme. His folded arms became the anxiety of thrones, and Alexander called him his insomnia. This terror resulted from the immense amount of revolution he had in him, and it is this which explains and excuses Buonapartistic liberalism. This phantom caused the old world to tremble, and kings sat uneasily on their thrones, with the rock of St. Helena on the horizon.

While Napoleon was dying at Longwood, the sixty thousand men who fell at Waterloo rotted calmly, and something of their peace spread over the world. The Congress of Vienna converted it into the treaties of 1815, and Europe called that the Restoration.

Such is Waterloo; but what does the Infinite care? All this tempest, all this cloud, this war, and then this peace. All this shadow did not for a moment disturb the flash of that mighty eye before which a grub, leaping from one blade of grass to another, equals the eagle flying from tower to tower at Notre Dame.

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**CHAPTER XIX.**

## THE BATTLE-FIELD BY NIGHT.

We must return, for it is a necessity of the story, to the fatal battle-field of June 18, 1815. The moon shone brightly, and this favored Blücher's ferocious pursuit, pointed out the trail of the fugitives, surrendered this sad crowd to the Prussian cavalry, and assisted the massacre. Such tragical complacency of the night is witnessed at times in catastrophes. After the last cannon was fired the plain of Mont St. Jean remained deserted. The English occupied the French encampment, for the usual confirmation of victory is to sleep in the beds of the conquered. They established their bivouac a little beyond Rossomme, and while the Prussians followed up the fugitives, Wellington proceeded to the village of Waterloo, to draw up his report for Lord Bathurst. Were ever the Sic vos non vobis applicable, it is most certainly to this village of Waterloo, which did nothing, and was half a league away from the action. Mont St. Jean was cannonaded, Hougomont burned, Papelotte burned, Plancenoit burned, La Haye Sainte carried by storm, and La Belle Alliance witnessed the embrace of the two victors; but these names are scarce known, and Waterloo, which did nothing during the battle, has all the honor of it.

We are not of those who flatter war, and when the opportunity offers, we tell it the truth. War has frightful beauties which we have not concealed; but it has also, we must allow, some ugly features. One of the most surprising is the rapid stripping of the dead after victory; the dawn that follows a battle

always rises on naked corpses. Who does this? Who sullies the triumph in this way? Whose is the hideous furtive hand which slips into the pocket of victory? Who are the villains dealing their stroke behind the glory? Some philosophers, Voltaire among them, assert that they are the very men who have made the glory; they say that those who keep their feet plunder those lying on the ground, and the hero of the day is the vampire of the night. After all, a man has the right to strip a corpse of which he is the author. We do not believe it, however; reaping a crop of laurels and stealing the shoes of a dead man do not seem to us possible from the same hand. One thing is certain, that, as a usual rule, after the conquerors come the thieves; but we must leave the soldier, especially the soldier of to-day, out of the question.

Every army has a tail; and it is that which must be accused. Batlike beings, half servants, half brigands, all the species of the vespertilio which the twilight called war engenders, wearers of uniform who do not fight, malingerers, formidable invalids, interloping sutlers, trotting with their wives in small carts and stealing things which they sell again, beggars offering themselves as guides to officers, villains, marauders,—all these, armies marching in former times (we are not alluding to the present day) had with them, so that, in the special language, they were called "the stragglers." No army and no nation was responsible for these beings,—they spoke Italian, and followed the Germans; they spoke French, and followed the English. It was by one of these scoundrels, a Spanish camp-follower who spoke French, that the Marquis de Fervacques, deceived by his Picardy accent, and taking him for a Frenchman, was killed and robbed on the battle-field during the night that followed the victory of Cerisolles. The detestable maxim, "Live on the enemy," produced this leprosy, which strict discipline alone could cure. There are some reputations which deceive, and we do not always know why certain generals, in other respects great, became so popular. Turenne was adored by his troops, because he tolerated plunder; evil permitted is kindness, and Turenne was so kind that he allowed the Palatinate to be destroyed by sword and fire. A larger or a smaller number of marauders followed an army, according as the chief was more or less severe. Hoche and Morceau had no camp-followers, and Wellington, we willingly do him the justice of stating, had but few.

Still, on the night of June 18, the dead were stripped. Wellington was strict; he ordered that everybody caught in the act should be shot, but rapine is tenacious, and marauders plundered in one corner of the field while they were being shot in the other. The moon frowned upon this plain. About midnight a man was prowling, or rather crawling, about the hollow road of Ohain: he was, according to all appearance, one of those whom we have just described, neither English nor French, nor peasant nor soldier, less a man than a ghoul, attracted by the smell of the dead, whose victory was robbery, and who had come to plunder Waterloo. He was dressed in a blouse, which looked something like a gown, was anxious and daring, and looked behind while he went onwards. Who was this man? Night knew probably more about him than did day. He had no bag, but evidently capacious pockets under his blouse. From time to time he stopped, examined the plain around him as if to see whether he was watched, bent down quickly, disturbed something lying silent and motionless on the ground, and then drew himself up again and stepped away. His attitude, and his rapid mysterious movements, made him resemble those twilight larvæ which haunt ruins, and which the old Norman legends call "les alleurs;" certain nocturnal fowlers display the same outline on the marshes.

Any one who had attentively examined would have seen behind the house which stands at the intersection of the Nivelles and Mont St. Jean roads, a sort of small vivandière's cart with a tilt of tarpaulin stretched over wicker-work, drawn by a hungry-looking, staggering horse, which was nibbling the nettles. In this cart, a woman was seated on chests and bundles, and there was probably some connection between this cart and the prowler. There was not a cloud in the sky, and though the ground may be blood red, the moon remains white; that is the indifference of nature. In the fields branches of trees broken by cannon-balls, but still holding on by the bark, waved softly in the night

breeze. A breath shook the brambles, and there was a quiver in the grass that resembled the departure of souls. In the distance could be confusedly heard the march of the English patrols and rounds. Hougomont and La Haye Sainte continued to burn, making, one in the west, the other in the east, two large bodies of flames, to which were joined the English bivouac fires, stretching along the hills on the horizon, in an immense semicircle. The scene produced the effect of an unfastened ruby necklace, with a carbuncle at either end.

We have described the catastrophe of the Ohain road; the heart is chilled by the thought of what this death had been for so many brave men. If there be anything frightful, if there exist a reality which surpasses dreaming, it is this,—to live; to see the sun; to be in full possession of manly vigor; to have health and joy; to laugh valiantly; to run toward a glory glittering before you; to feel in your chest lungs that breathe, a heart that beats, and a will that reasons; to speak, to think, to hope, to love; to have a mother, a wife, and children; to have light, and then suddenly, before there is time for a cry, to be hurled into an abyss; to fall, roll, crush, and be crushed; to see corn-stalks, flowers, leaves, and branches, and to be unable to hold on to anything; to feel your sabre useless, men under you and horses over you; to struggle in vain; to have your ribs fractured by some kick in the gloom; to feel a heel on your eyes; to bite with rage the horses' bits; to stifle, to yell, to writhe; to be underneath, and to say to yourself, "A moment ago I was a living man!"

At the spot where this lamentable disaster occurred, all was now silence. The hollow way was filled with an inextricable pile of horses and their riders. There was no slope now, for the corpses levelled the road with the plain, and came up flush to the top, like a fairly measured bushel of barley. A pile of dead atop, a stream of blood at bottom,—such was the road on the night of June 18, 1815. The blood ran as far as the Nivelles road, and extravasated there in a wide pool, in front of the barricade, at a spot which is still pointed out. It will be remembered that the destruction of the cuirassiers took place at the opposite point, near the Genappe road. The depth of the corpses was proportionate to that of the hollow way; toward the middle, at the spot where Delord's division passed, the layer of dead was thinner.

The nocturnal prowler, at whom we have allowed the reader a glance, proceeded in that direction, searching this immense tomb. He looked around and held a hideous review of the dead; he walked with his feet in the blood. All at once he stopped. A few paces before him in the hollow way, at the point where the pile of dead ended, an open hand, illumined by the moon, emerged from a heap of men and horses. This hand had on one finger something that glittered, and was a gold ring. The man bent down, and when he rose again there was no longer a ring on this finger. He did not exactly rise; he remained in a savage and shy attitude, turning his back to the pile of dead, investigating the horizon, supporting himself on his two forefingers, and his head spying over the edge of the hollow way. The four paws of the jackal are suited for certain actions. Then, making up his mind, he rose, but at the same moment he started, for he felt that some one was holding him behind. He turned and found that it was the open hand, which had closed and seized the skirt of his coat. An honest man would have been frightened, but this one began laughing.

"Hilloh!" he said, "it is only the dead man. I prefer a ghost to a gendarme."

The hand, however, soon relaxed its hold, for efforts are quickly exhausted in the tomb.

"Can this dead man be alive?" the marauder continued; "let me have a look."

He bent down again, removed all the obstacles, seized the hand, liberated the head, pulled out the body, and a few minutes later dragged an inanimate or at least fainting man into the shadow of the hollow way. He was an officer of cuirassiers of a certain rank, for a heavy gold epaulette peeped out from under his cuirass. This officer had lost his helmet, and a furious sabre-cut crossed his face, which was covered with blood. He did not appear, however, to have any bones broken, and through some fortunate accident,—if such a word be possible here,—the dead had formed an arch over him so as to save him

from being crushed. His eyes were closed. He had on his cuirass the silver cross of the Legion of Honor, and the prowler tore away this cross, which disappeared in one of the gulfs he had under his blouse. After this he felt the officer's fob, found a watch, and took it; then he felt in his pockets and drew from them a purse. When he was at this stage of the assistance he was rendering the dying man, the officer opened his eyes.

"Thanks," he said feebly.

The roughness of the man's movements, the freshness of the night, and the freely inhaled air had aroused him from his lethargy. The prowler did not answer, but raised his head. A sound of footsteps could be heard on the plain; it was probably some patrol approaching. The officer murmured, for there was still the agony of death in his voice,—

"Who won the battle?"

"The English," the marauder answered.

The officer continued,—

"Feel in my pockets; you will find a purse and a watch, which you can take."

Though this was already done, the prowler did what was requested, and said,—

"There is nothing in them."

"I have been robbed," the officer continued; "I am sorry for it, as I meant the things for you."

The footsteps of the patrol became more and more distinct.

"Some one is coming," the marauder said, preparing to go away.

The officer, raising his arm with difficulty, stopped him.

"You have saved my life; who are you?"

The prowler answered rapidly and in a low voice.

"I belong, like yourself, to the French army; but I must leave you, for if I were caught I should be shot. I have saved your life, so now get out of the scrape as you can."

"What is your rank?"

"Sergeant."

"Your name?"

"Thénardier."

"I shall not forget that name," the officer said; "and do you remember mine; it is Pontmercy."

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**BOOK II**

## THE SHIP ORION.

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**CHAPTER I.**

## NO. 24,601 BECOMES NO. 9430.

Jean Valjean was recaptured. As our readers will probably thank us for passing rapidly over painful details, we confine ourselves to the quotation of two paragraphs published by the newspapers of the day, a few months after the occurrence of the surprising events at M——. These articles are rather summary, but it must be remembered that no Gazette des Tribunaux existed at that period. The first we take from the Drapeau Blanc, dated July 25, 1823.

"A bailiwick of the Pas de Calais has just been the scene of an uncommon event. A man, who was a stranger to the department and called M. Madeleine, had some years previously revived by a new process an old local trade,—the manufacture of jet and black beads. He made his own fortune, and, let us add, that of the bailiwick, and in acknowledgment of his services he was appointed Mayor. The police discovered that M. Madeleine was no other than an ex-convict, who had broken his ban, condemned in 1796 for robbery, of the name of Jean Valjean. He has been sent back to the Bagne. It appears that prior to his arrest he succeeded in withdrawing from M. Lafitte's a sum of more than half a million, which he had banked there, and which it is said that he had honestly acquired by his trade. Since his return to Toulon futile efforts have been made to discover where this amount is concealed."

The second article, which is rather more detailed, is extracted from the Journal de Paris of the same date:—

"An ex-convict of the name of Jean Valjean has just been tried at the Var assizes, under circumstances which attract attention. This villain had succeeded in deceiving the vigilance of the police, and had behaved so cleverly as to be made Mayor of one of our small towns in the north, where he established a rather considerable trade. He was at length unmasked, and arrested through the indefatigable zeal of the public authorities. He had, as his concubine, a girl of the town, who died of a fit at the moment of his arrest. This scoundrel, who is endowed with Herculean strength, managed to escape but three or four days later the police again captured him in Paris, at the moment when he was entering one of those small coaches which run from the capital to the village of Montfermeil (Seine et Oise). It is said that he took advantage of these three or four days of liberty to withdraw from one of our chief bankers an amount estimated at six or seven hundred thousand francs. According to the indictment he buried it at some spot only known to himself, and it has not been found; but however this may be, this Jean Valjean has just been tried at Var assizes for a highway robbery committed with violence some eight years ago upon one of those honest lads, who, as the patriarch of Ferney has said in immortal verse,—

'De Savoie arrivent tous les ans
Et dont la main légèrement essuie
Ces longs canaux engorgés par la suie.'

This bandit made no defence, but it was proved by the skilful and eloquent organ of public justice that Jean Valjean was a member of a band of robbers in the south. Consequently Valjean was found guilty and sentenced to death. The criminal refused to appeal to the Court of Cassation, but the King, in his inexhaustible mercy, deigned to commute his sentence into penal servitude for life. Jean Valjean was immediately removed to the galleys at Toulon."

It will not be forgotten that Jean Valjean had displayed religious tendencies at M——, and some of the papers, among them the Constitutionnel, regarded this commutation as a triumph of the Priest party. Jean Valjean changed his number at Toulon, and was known as 9430. Let us state here once and for all that with M. Madeleine the prosperity of M—— disappeared: all he had foreseen in his night of hesitation and fever was realized; his absence was in truth the absence of the soul. After his fall there

took place at M—— that selfish division of great fallen existences, that fatal break-up of flourishing things, which is daily accomplished obscurely in the human community, and which history has only noticed once because it occurred after the death of Alexander. Lieutenants crown themselves kings; overseers suddenly became manufacturers, and envious rivalries sprang up. M. Madeleine's large work-shops were shut up; the buildings fell into a ruinous condition, and the artisans dispersed, some leaving the town, others the trade. All was henceforth done on a small scale instead of a large one, for lucre instead of the public welfare. There was no centre, but on all sides violent competition. M. Madeleine had commanded and directed everything. When he fell, a spirit of contest succeeded that of organization, bitterness succeeded cordiality, and mutual hatred the good-will of the common founder. The threads tied by M. Madeleine became knotted and broken; the process was falsified, the articles became worse, and confidence was destroyed; the outlets diminished, and there were fewer orders; wages fell, there were stoppages, and lastly came bankruptcy.

The State itself perceived that some one had been crushed somewhere, for less than four years after the sentence of the court identifying M. Madeleine and Jean Valjean, to the profit of the galleys, the cost of collecting the taxes was doubled in the bailiwick of M——. M. de Villèle made a remark to that effect in the House in February, 1827.

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**CHAPTER II.**

## TWO LINES OF A DOUBTFUL ORIGIN.

Before going further we will enter into some details about a strange fact that occurred at about the same period at Montfermeil, and which may possibly possess some coincidence with certain police conjectures. There is at Montfermeil a very old superstition, which is the more curious and valuable because a popular superstition in the neighborhood of Paris is like an aloe-tree in Siberia. We are of those who respect everything which is in the condition of a rare plant. This, then, is the Montfermeil superstition: it is believed that from time immemorial the fiend has selected the forest as the spot where he buries his treasure. Old women declare that it is not rare to meet at nightfall, and in remote parts of the forest, a black man resembling a wagoner or wood-cutter, dressed in wooden shoes and canvas trousers and blouse, and recognizable from the fact that he has on his head two enormous horns in place of cap or hat. This man is usually engaged in digging a hole, and there are three modes of action in the event of meeting him. The first is to go up to the man and address him; in that case you perceive that he is simply a peasant, that he appears black because it is twilight, that he is not digging a hole, but cutting grass for his kine, and that what you had taken for horns is nothing but a dung-fork he carries on his back, whose prongs seem to grow out of his head. You go home and die within the week. The second plan is to watch him, wait till he has dug his hole and filled it up and gone away; then you run up to the hole and take out the treasure which the black man had necessarily deposited in it. In this case you die within the month. The last way is not to speak to the black man at all, not to look at him, but run away at full speed, and you die within the year.

All three modes have their inconveniences; but the second, which offers at any rate some advantages, among others that of possessing a treasure, if only for a month, is the one most generally adopted. Bold men whom chances tempt have consequently, so it is declared, frequently reopened the hole dug by the black man, and robbed the demon. It seems, however, as if the profits are small; at any rate if we may believe tradition, and particularly and especially two enigmatical lines in dog Latin, which a wicked Norman monk, a bit of a sorcerer, and of the name of Tryphon, left on the subject. This Tryphon lies at St. George's Abbey at Bocherville near Rouen, and frogs are born on his tomb. A man makes enormous

exertions, then, for the holes are generally very deep: he perspires, works the whole night through (for the operation must be carried out at night), gets a wet shirt, burns out his candle, breaks his pick, and when he at last reaches the bottom of the hole and lays his hand on the treasure, what does he find? What is the fiend's treasure? A sou, at times a crown-piece, a stone, a skeleton, a bleeding corpse, or a spectre folded up like a sheet of paper in a pocket-book, and sometimes nothing at all! This appears to be revealed to the searchers by Tryphon's lines,—

"Fodit et in fossâ thesauros condit opacâ,
As, nummos, lapides, cadaver, simulacra, nihilque."

It seems that in our days there are also found sometimes a gunpowder flask and balls, or an old pack of greasy, dirty cards which have evidently been used by the fiends. Tryphon does not record these two facts, because he lived in the 12th century, and it does not appear that the fiend had the sense to invent gunpowder before Roger Bacon, or playing cards before Charles VI. If you play with the cards you are safe to lose all you possess; while the gunpowder displays the peculiarity of making your gun burst in your face.

A very short time after the period when it occurred to the police that Jean Valjean during his four days of liberty had been prowling round Montfermeil, it was noticed in the same village that a certain old road-mender of the name of Boulatruelle was "up to his tricks" in the forest. It was believed generally that this Boulatruelle had been to the galleys: he was to some extent under police inspection, and as he could not find work anywhere, the administration employed him at a low wage as mender of the cross-road from Gagny to Lagny. This Boulatruelle was a man looked on askance by the villageois, as he was too respectful, too humble, ready to doff his cap to everybody, trembling and fawning before the gendarmes, and probably allied with the robbers, so it was said, and suspected of lurking about the roads after dark. The only thing in his favor was that he was a drunkard.

This is what people fancied that they noticed. For some time past Boulatruelle had left work at an early hour, and gone into the forest with his pickaxe. He was met toward evening in the most desolate clearings, in the wildest thickets, apparently seeking something, and at times digging holes. The old women who passed at first took him for Beelzebub, and when they recognized Boulatruelle did not feel at all more easy in mind. Such meetings greatly annoyed Boulatruelle, and hence it was plain that he tried to hide himself, and that there was a mystery in what he was doing. It was said in the village, "It is clear that the fiend has made his appearance. Boulatruelle saw him, and is seeking; well, he is cunning enough to pocket Lucifer's treasure." The Voltairians added: "Will Boulatruelle cheat the devil, or the devil cheat Boulatruelle?" while the old women crossed themselves repeatedly. Boulatruelle, however, discontinued his forest rambles, and regularly resumed his work, whereupon something else was talked about. Some persons, however, remained curious, thinking that there was probably in the affair, not the fabulous treasure of the legend, but something more palpable and tangible than the fiend's bank-notes, and that the road-mender had doubtless found out half the secret. The most puzzled were the schoolmaster and Thénardier the publican, who was everybody's friend, and had not disdained an intimacy with Boulatruelle.

"He has been to the galleys," Thénardier would say. "Well, good gracious! we do not know who is there, or who may go there."

One evening the schoolmaster declared that in other times the authorities would have inquired what Boulatruelle was about in the wood, and that he would have been obliged to speak; they would have employed torture if necessary, and Boulatruelle would not have resisted the ordeal of water, for instance. "Let us give him the ordeal of wine," said Thénardier. They set to work, and Boulatruelle drank enormously, but held his tongue. He combined, with admirable tact and in magisterial proportions, the thirst of a sponge with the discretion of a judge. Still, by returning to the charge, and

by putting together the few obscure words that escaped him, this is what Thénardier and the schoolmaster fancied that they could make out.

Boulatruelle, on going to work at daybreak one morning, was surprised at seeing under a bush a spade and a pick, which "looked as if they were hidden;" still he fancied that they belonged to Father Six-fours, the water-carrier, and did not think any more of the matter. On the evening of the same day, however, he saw, without being himself seen, as he was hidden behind a tree, "an individual who did not belong to these parts, and whom he, Boulatruelle, knew," proceeding toward the most retired part of the wood. This Thénardier translated as "a comrade at the galleys," but Boulatruelle obstinately refused to mention his name. This individual was carrying a bundle, something square, like a box or small chest. Boulatruelle was surprised; but it was not till some ten minutes later that the idea of following the "individual" occurred to him. But it was too late; the individual was already among the trees, night had fallen, and Boulatruelle was unable to overtake him. Then he resolved to watch the skirt of the wood, and the moon was shining. Boulatruelle, some two or three hours after, saw this individual come out of the wood, not carrying the box, however, but a spade and pick. Boulatruelle allowed him to pass, and did not address him, for he said to himself that the other man was thrice as strong as he, and being armed with a pick would probably smash him on recognizing him and finding himself recognized; a touching effusion on the part of two old comrades who suddenly meet. But the spade and pick were a ray of light for Boulatruelle; he hurried to the bush at daybreak, and no longer found them there. From this he concluded that his individual, on entering the wood, had dug a hole with his pick, buried his box in it, and then covered it up with the spade. Now, as the box was too small to contain a corpse, it must contain money, and hence his researches. Boulatruelle explored the forest in all directions, and especially at spots where the ground seemed to have been recently turned up, but it was all of no use; he discovered nothing. Nobody in Montfermeil thought any more of the matter, except some worthy gossips who said,—"You may be sure that the road-mender did not take all that trouble for nothing; it is certain that the fiend has been here."

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#### CHAPTER III.

## ON BOARD THE "ORION."

Toward the close of October, in the same year, 1823, the inhabitants of Toulon saw a vessel enter their port which had sustained some damage in a heavy storm. It was the "Orion," which at a later date was employed at Brest as a training school, but now formed part of the Mediterranean fleet. This vessel, battered as it was, for the sea had ill-treated it, produced an effect on entering the roads. It displayed some flag which obtained it the regulation salute of eleven guns, to which it replied round for round,—a total of two-and-twenty rounds. It has been calculated that in salvos, royal and military politeness, exchanges of courtesy signals, formalities of roads and citadels, sunrise and sunset saluted every day by all the fortresses and vessels of war, opening and closing gates, etc., the civilized world fired every twenty-four hours, and in all parts of the globe, one hundred and fifty thousand useless rounds. At six francs the round, this makes 900,000 francs a day. Three hundred millions a year expended in smoke. During this time poor people are dying of starvation.

The year 1823 was what the Restoration called "the epoch of the Spanish war." This war contained many events in one, and many singularities. It was a great family affair for the House of Bourbon; the French branch succoring and protecting the Madrid branch, that is to say, proving its majority; an apparent return to national traditions, complicated by servitude and subjection to the northern cabinets. The Duc d'Angoulême, surnamed by the liberal papers the "hero of Andujar," repressing in a triumphal

attitude, which what somewhat spoiled by his peaceful looks, the old and very real terrorism of the Holy Office, which was contending with the chimerical terrorism of the liberals; the sans culottes resuscitated to the great alarm of dowagers, under the name of Descamisados; monarchy offering an obstacle to the progress which it termed anarchy; the theories of '89 suddenly interrupted in their sap; a European check given to the French idea which was making its voyage round the world by the side of the Generalissimo son of France; the Prince de Carignan, afterwards Charles Albert, enrolling himself as a volunteer with the red wool epaulettes of a grenadier in this crusade of the kings against the peoples; the soldiers of the empire taking the field again, after eight years rest, aged, sad, and wearing the white cockade; the tricolor waved in a foreign country by an heroic handful of Frenchmen, as the white flag had been at Coblentz thirty years previously; monks mingled with the French troopers; the spirit of liberty and novelty set right by bayonets; principles checkmated by artillery; France undoing by her arms what she had done by her mind; the enemy's leaders sold; the soldiers hesitating; towns besieged by millions; no military perils, and yet possible explosions, as in every mine which is surprised and invaded; disgrace for a few persons, and glory for none,—such was this war, brought about by princes who descended from Louis XIV., and conducted by generals who issued from Napoleon. It had the sad fate of recalling neither the great war nor the great policy.

Some engagements were serious. The passage of the Trocadero, for instance, was a brilliant military achievement; but on the whole, we repeat, the trumpets of that war have a cracked sound, the whole affair was suspicious, and history agrees with France in the difficulty of accepting this false triumph. It seemed evident that certain Spanish officers ordered to resist, yielded too easily, and the idea of corruption was evolved from the victory; it seemed as if generals rather than battles had been gained, and the victorious soldier returned home humiliated. It was, in truth, a diminishing war, and the words "Bank of France" could be read in the folds of the flag. The soldiers of the war of 1808, on whom the ruins of Saragossa fell so formidably, frowned in 1823 at the easy opening of citadel gates, and began regretting Palafox. It is the humor of France to prefer a Rostopchin before her rather than a Ballesteros. From a more serious point of view, on which it is right to dwell here, this war, which offended the military spirit in France, humiliated the democratic spirit. It was undertaken on behalf of serfdom; in this campaign the object of the French soldier, who was the son of democracy, was to bow others under the yoke. This was a hideous mistake, for France has the mission of arousing the soul of nations, and not stifling it. Since 1792 all the revolutions of Europe have been the French Revolution, and liberty radiates from France. He must be blind who does not recognize this. It was Bonaparte who said so.

The war of 1823, an attempt upon the generous Spanish nation, was therefore at the same time an attack on the French Revolution. It was France that committed this monstrous act of violence; for, with the exception of wars of liberation, all that armies do they do by force, as the words "passive obedience" indicate. An army is a strange masterpiece of combination, in which strength results from an enormous amount of impotence. In this way can we explain war carried on by humanity against humanity, in spite of humanity. The war of 1823 was fatal to the Bourbons; they regarded it as a triumph, for they did not see what danger there is in killing an idea by a countersign. In their simplicity they committed the mistake of introducing into this establishment the immense weakness of a crime as an element of strength; the spirit of ambuscading entered into their policy, and 1830 germinated in 1823. The Spanish campaign became in their councils an argument for oppression, and the government by right divine. France, having re-established el rey neto in Spain, could establish the absolute king at home. They fell into the formidable error of taking the obedience of the soldier for the consent of the nation, and such a confidence is the destruction of thrones. Men must go to sleep neither in the shadow of a machineel-tree nor in that of an army.

Let us now return to the "Orion." During the operations of the army commanded by the Prince generalissimo a squadron cruised in the Mediterranean, to which, as we said, the "Orion" belonged, and

was driven into Toulon roads to repair damages. The presence of a man-of-war in a port has something about it which attracts and occupies the mob. It is grand, and the multitude love anything that is grand. A vessel of the line is one of the most magnificent encounters which the genius of man has with the might of nature; it is composed simultaneously of what is the heaviest and lightest of things, because it has to deal with three forms of substance at once,—the solid, the liquid, and the fluid, and must contend against all three. It has cloven iron claws to seize the granite of the sea-bed, and more wings and antennæ than the two-winged insect to hold the wind. Its breath issues from its one hundred and twenty guns as through enormous bugles, and haughtily replies to the thunder. Ocean tries to lead it astray in the frightful similitude of its waves; but the vessel has its soul in its compass, which advises it and always shows it the north, and on dark nights its lanterns take the place of the stars. Hence it has tackle and canvas to oppose the wind, wood to oppose water, iron, copper, and lead to oppose the rocks, light to oppose darkness, and a needle to oppose immensity. If we wish to form an idea of all the gigantic proportions whose ensemble constitute a vessel of the line, we need only enter one of the covered building-docks at Toulon or Brest. The vessels in construction are there under glass, so to speak. That colossal beam is a yard; that huge column of wood of enormous length lying on the ground is the main-mast. Measuring from its root in the keel to its truck in the clouds it is three hundred and sixty feet in length, and is three feet in diameter at its base. The navy of our fathers employed hemp cables, but ours has chains; the simple pile of chain cable for a hundred-gun vessel is four feet high and twenty feet in width. And then, again, in building such a vessel three thousand loads of wood are used; it is a floating forest. And it must not be left out of sight that we are here describing a man-of-war of forty years ago, a simple sailing-vessel; steam, then in its infancy, has since added new miracles to the prodigy which is called a vessel of war. At the present day, for instance, the screw man-of-war is a surprising machine, impelled by a surface of canvas containing three thousand square yards, and a boiler of two thousand five hundred horse power. Without alluding to these new marvels, the old vessel of Christopher Columbus and De Ruyter is one of the great masterpieces of man; it is inexhaustible in strength as infinity is in width; it garners the wind in its sails, it is exact in the immense diffusion of the waves; it floats, and it reigns.

And yet the hour arrives when a gust breaks like a straw this yard, fifty feet in length; when the wind bends like a reed this mast, four hundred feet in height; when this anchor, weighing thousands of pounds, twists in the throat of the waves like a fisherman's hook in the mouth of a pike; when these monstrous cannon utter plaintive and useless groans, which the wind carries away into emptiness and night, and when all this power and majesty are swallowed up by a superior power and majesty. Whenever an immense force is displayed in attacking immense weakness, it causes men to reflect. Hence at seaports curious persons throng around these marvellous machines of war and navigation, without exactly explaining the reason to themselves. Every day, then, from morning till night, the quays and piers of Toulon were covered with numbers of idlers, whose business it was to look at the "Orion." This vessel had long been in a sickly state. During previous voyages barnacles had collected on her hull to such an extent that she lost half her speed; she had been taken into dry dock the year previous to scrape off these barnacles, and then put to sea again. But this scraping had injured the bolts, and when off the Balearic Isles, she sprang a leak, and took in water, as vessels were not coppered in those days. A violent equinoctial gale supervened, which injured her larboard bows and destroyed the fore-chains. In consequence of this damage the "Orion" put into Toulon, and anchored near the arsenal for repairs. The hull was uninjured, but a few planks had been unnailed here and there to let air in, as is usually the case.

One morning the crowd witnessed an accident. The crew were engaged in bending the sails, and the top-man, who had charge of the starboard tack of the main-top-sail, lost his balance. He was seen to totter, the crowd on the arsenal quay uttered a cry, his head dragged him downwards, and he turned round the yard, with his hands stretched down to the water; but he caught hold of the foot-rope as he

passed it, first with one hand then with the other, and remained hanging from it. The sea was below him at a dizzy depth, and the shock of his fall had given the foot-rope a violent swinging movement. The man swung at the end of the rope like a stone in a sling. To go to his assistance would be running a frightful risk, and not one of the sailors, all coast fishermen lately called in for duty, dared to venture it. Still the unhappy top-man was growing tired: his agony could not be seen in his face, but his exhaustion could be distinguished in all his limbs, and his arms were awfully dragged. Any effort he made to raise himself only caused the foot-rope to oscillate the more, and he did not cry out, for fear of exhausting his strength. The minute was close at hand when he must let go the rope, and every now and then all heads were turned away not to see it happen. There are moments in which a rope, a pole, the branch of a tree, is life itself, and it is a fearful thing to see a living being let go of it and fall like ripe fruit. All at once a man could be seen climbing up the shrouds with the agility of a tiger-cat. As he was dressed in red, this man was a convict; as he wore a green cap, he was a convict for life. On reaching the top a puff of wind blew away his cap and displayed a white head; hence he was not a young man.

A convict, employed on board with a gang, had in fact at once run up to the officer of the watch, and in the midst of the trouble and confusion, while all the sailors trembled and recoiled, asked permission to risk his life in saving the top-man. At a nod of assent from the officer he broke with one blow of a hammer the chain riveted to his ankle, took up a rope, and darted up the shrouds. No one noticed at the moment with what ease this chain was broken; and the fact was not remembered till afterwards. In a second he was upon the yard, where he stood for a little while as if looking round him. These seconds, during which the wind swung the top-man at the end of a thread, seemed ages to the persons who were looking at him. At length the convict raised his eyes to heaven and advanced a step. The crowd breathed again, as they saw him run along the yard. On reaching the end he fastened to it the rope he had brought with him, let it hang down, and then began going down it hand over hand. This produced a feeling of indescribable agony, for instead of one man hanging over the gulf, there were now two. He resembled a spider going to seize a fly; but in this case the spider brought life and not death. Ten thousand eyes were fixed on the group: not a cry, not a word could be heard; every mouth held its breath, as if afraid of increasing in the slightest degree the wind that shook the two wretched men. The convict, in the interim, had managed to get close to the sailor, and it was high time, for a minute later the man, exhausted and desperate, would have let himself drop into the sea. The convict fastened him securely with the rope to which he clung with one hand, while he worked with the other. At length he was seen to climb back to the yard and haul the sailor up: he supported him there for a moment to let him regain his strength, then took him in his arms and carried him along the yard to the cap, and thence to the top, where he left him with his comrades. The crowd applauded him, and several old sergeants of the chain-gang had tears in their eyes: women embraced each other on the quay, and every voice could be heard shouting with a species of frenzy,—"Pardon for that man!"

The convict, however, began going down again immediately to rejoin his gang. In order to do so more rapidly he slid down a rope and ran along a lower yard. All eyes followed him, and at one moment the spectators felt afraid, for they fancied they could see him hesitate and totter, either through fatigue or dizziness; all at once the crowd uttered a terrible cry,—the convict had fallen into the sea. The fall was a dangerous one, for the frigate "Algésiras" was anchored near the "Orion," and the poor galley-slave had fallen between the two ships, and might be sucked under one of them. Four men hastily got into a boat, and the crowd encouraged them, for all felt anxious again. The man did not come to the surface again, and disappeared in the sea without making a ripple, just as if he had fallen into a barrel of oil. They dragged for him, but in vain; they continued the search till nightfall, but his body was not even found. The next day the Toulon paper printed the following lines: "Nov. 17, 1823.—Yesterday a convict, one of a gang on board the "Orion," fell into the sea and was drowned, as he was returning from assisting a sailor. His body has not been found, and is supposed to be entangled among the piles at arsenal point. The man was imprisoned as No. 9430, and his name the Jean Valjean."

BOOK III.

# THE PROMISE TO THE DEAD FULFILLED.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE WATER QUESTION AT MONTFERMEIL.

Montfermeil is situated between Livry and Chelles, on the southern slope of the lofty plateau which separates the Ourque from the Marne. At the present day it is a rather large place, adorned with stucco villas all the year round, and with holiday-making cits on Sunday. In 1823 there were neither so many white houses nor so many happy cits as there are now, and it was merely a village in the woods. A visitor certainly came across here and there a few country-houses of the last century, recognizable by their air of pretension, their balconies of twisted iron, and the tall windows, in which the little squares produce all sorts of green hues on the white of the closed shutters. But Montfermeil was not the less a village; retired cloth-dealers and persons fond of country life had not yet discovered it. It was a quiet, pleasant spot, which was not on a road to anywhere. Persons lived there cheaply that peasant life which is so tranquil and abundant. The only thing was that water was scarce, owing to the elevation of the plateau, and it had to be fetched from some distance. That end of the village which was on the Gagny side obtained its water from the splendid ponds in the forest there; but the other end, which surrounds the church and is on the Chelles side, could only obtain drinking-water from a little spring about a quarter of an hour's walk from Montfermeil, near the road to Chelles; laying in water was therefore a hard task for every family. The large houses and the aristocracy, among which Thénardier's pot-house may be reckoned, paid a liard a bucket to a man whose trade it was, and who earned by it about eight sous a day. But this man only worked till seven P.M. in summer, and till five in winter; and once night had set in and the ground-floor shutters were closed, any person who had no water to drink must either fetch it or go without.

This was the terror of the poor creature whom the reader will not have forgotten, little Cosette. It will be remembered that Cosette was useful to the Thénardiers in two ways,—they made the mother pay and the child act as servant. Hence when the mother ceased payment, for the reason which we know, the Thénardiers kept Cosette, who took the place of a servant. In this quality she had to fetch water when it was wanted, and the child, terrified at the idea of going to the spring at night, was very careful that the house should never be without water. Christmas of 1823 was peculiarly brilliant at Montfermeil; the beginning of the winter was mild, and there had been neither snow nor frost. Some mountebanks, who came from Paris, had obtained leave from the mayor to erect their booth in the village high street, and a party of travelling hawkers had put their stalls in the church square, and even in the lane in which Thénardier's pot-house was situated. This filled the inns and pot-houses, and produced a noisy, joyous life in this quiet little place. As a faithful historian we are bound to add that among the curiosities displayed in the market-place was a menagerie, in which some ragged fellows showed the peasants of Montfermeil one of those terrific Brazilian vultures of which the Paris Museum did not possess a specimen till 1845, and which have a tricolor cockade for an eye. Naturalists, I believe, call this bird Caracara Polyborus; it belongs to the Apicide order and the vulture family. A few old Bonapartist soldiers living in the village went to see this bird with devotion, and the mountebanks declared that the tricolor cockade was a unique phenomenon, and expressly produced by Nature for

their menagerie.

On the Christmas evening several carters and hawkers were sitting to drink, round four or five candles, in Thénardier's tap-room. This room was like those usually found in pot-houses; there were tables, pewter pots, bottles, drinkers, and smokers, but little light, and a good deal of uproar. The date of the year was, however, indicated by the two objects, fashionable at that time among tradespeople, and which were on a table,—a kaleidoscope and a lamp of clouded tin. Madame Thénardier was watching the supper, which was roasting before a bright clear fire, while her husband was drinking with his guests and talking politics. In addition to the political remarks, which mainly referred to the Spanish war and the Duc d'Angoulême, local parentheses like the following could be heard through the Babel: —

"Over at Nanterre and Suresne the vintage has been very productive, and where people expected ten barrels they have a dozen. The grapes were very juicy when put under the press."—"But the grapes could not have been ripe?"—"In these parts, they must not be picked ripe, for the wine becomes oily in spring."—"Then it must be a very poor wine?"—"There are poorer wines than those about here," etc.

Or else a miller exclaimed,—

"Are we responsible for what there is in the sack? We find a lot of small seeds, which we can't waste time in sifting, and which must pass under the mill-stones; such as tares, lucern, cockles, vetches, amaranths, hemp-seed, and a number of other weeds, without counting the pebbles which are so frequent in some sorts of wheat, especially Breton wheat. I don't like grinding Breton wheat, any more than sawyers like sawing beams in which there are nails. You can fancy the bad dust all this makes in the hopper, and then people complain unfairly of the flour, for it is no fault of ours."

Between two windows a mower seated at a table with a farmer, who was making a bargain to have a field mown in spring, said,—

"There is no harm in the grass being damp, for it cuts better. But your grass is tender, and hard to cut, sir, for it is so young, and bends before the scythe," etc. etc.

Cosette was seated at her usual place, the cross-bar of the table, near the chimney; she was in rags, her bare feet were thrust into wooden shoes, and she was knitting, by the fire-light, stockings intended for the young Thénardiers. Two merry children could be heard laughing and prattling in an adjoining room; they were Éponine and Azelma. A cat-o'-nine-tails hung from a nail by the side of the chimney. At times, the cry of a baby somewhere in the house was audible through the noise of the tap-room; it was a little boy Madame Thénardier had given birth to one winter, "without knowing how," she used to say, "it was the effect of the cold," and who was a little over three years of age. The mother suckled him, but did not love him; when his cries became too troublesome, Thénardier would say,—"There's your brat squalling; go and see what he wants." "Bah!" the mother would answer, "he's a nuisance;" and the poor deserted little wretch would continue to cry in the darkness.

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**CHAPTER II.**

## TWO FULL-LENGTH PORTRAITS.

Up to the present, only a side-view of the Thénardiers has been offered the reader of this book; but the moment has now arrived to walk round the couple and regard them on all sides. Thénardier had passed his fiftieth year, Madame Thénardier was just on her fortieth, which is fifty in a woman; and in this way there was a balance of age between husband and wife. Our readers may probably have retained from

the first meeting some recollection of this tall, light-haired, red, fat, square, enormous, and active woman; she belonged, as we said, to the race of giantesses, who show themselves at fairs, with paving-stones hanging from their hair. She did everything in the house; made the beds, cleaned the rooms, was cook and laundress, produced rain and fine weather, and played the devil. Her only assistant was Cosette,—a mouse in the service of an elephant. All trembled at the sound of her voice,—windows, furniture, and people; and her large face, dotted with freckles, looked like a skimmer. She had a beard, and was the ideal of a market porter dressed in female attire. She swore splendidly, and boasted of being able to crack a walnut with a blow of her fist. Had it not been for the romances she had read, and which at times made the affected woman appear under the ogress, no one would ever have dreamed of thinking that she was feminine. She seemed to be the product of a cross between a young damsel and a fish fag. When people heard her speak, they said,—"'T is a gendarme;" when they saw her drink, they said,—"'T is a carter;" and when they saw her treatment of Cosette, they said,—"'T is the hangman;" when she was quiet, a tooth projected from her mouth.

Thénardier was a short, thin, sallow, angular, bony, weak man, who looked ill, and was perfectly well—his cunning began with this. He smiled habitually through caution, and was polite to nearly everybody, even to the beggar whom he refused a halfpenny. He had the eye of a ferret and the face of a man of letters, and greatly resembled the portraits of Abbé Delille. His coquetry consisted in drinking with carriers, and no one had ever been able to intoxicate him. He wore a blouse and under it an old black coat, and had pretensions to literature and materialism. There were some names he frequently uttered in order to support an argument, such as Voltaire, Raynal, Parny, and, strangely enough, St. Augustine. He declared that he had "a system." He was a thorough scamp, however. It will be remembered that he asserted he had been a soldier, and told people with some pomp how at Waterloo, where he was sergeant in the 6th or 9th light something, he alone, against a squadron of Hussars of death, had covered with his body and saved "a severely wounded general." Hence came his flaming sign, and the name by which his house was generally known, "The Sergeant of Waterloo." He was liberal, classical, and Bonapartist; he had subscribed to the Champ d'Asile, and it was said in the village that he had studied for the priesthood. We believe that he had simply studied in Holland to be an inn-keeper. This scoundrel of a composite order was in all probability some Fleming of Lille, a Frenchman at Paris, a Belgian at Brussels, conveniently striding over two frontiers. We know his prowess at Waterloo, and, as we see, he exaggerated slightly. Ebb and flow and wandering adventures were the elements of his existence. A tattered conscience entails an irregular life, and probably at the stormy period of June 18, 1815, Thénardier belonged to that variety of marauding sutlers to whom we have alluded, who go about the country selling to some and robbing others, and moving about in a halting cart after marching troops, with the instinct of always joining the victorious army. When the campaign was over, having, as he said, "some brads," he opened a pot-house at Montfermeil. These "brads," consisting of purses and watches, gold rings and silver crosses, collected in ditches filled with corpses, did not make a heavy total, and did not carry very far this sutler turned inn-keeper.

Thénardier had something rectangular in his movements, which, when joined to an oath, recalls the barrack,—to the sign of the cross, the seminary. He was a clever speaker, and liked to be thought educated; but the schoolmaster noticed that he made mistakes. He drew up a traveller's bill in a masterly way, but practised eyes sometimes found orthographical errors in it. Thénardier was cunning, greedy, indolent, and skilful: he did not despise his servant-girls, and for that reason his wife no longer kept any. This giantess was jealous, and fancied that this little yellow man must be an object of universal covetousness. Thénardier above all, as a crafty and well-balanced man, was a villain of the temperate genus; and this breed is the worst, as hypocrisy is mixed up in them. It was not that Thénardier was not at times capable of passion, at least quite as much as his wife, but it was very rare, and at such moments,—as he owed a grudge to the whole human race, as he had within him a profound furnace of hatred, as he was one of those persons who avenge themselves perpetually, who accuse

everybody who passes before them for what falls upon them, and who are ever ready to cast on the first-comer, as a legitimate charge, the whole of the annoyances, bankruptcies, and deceptions of their life,—when all this leaven was working in him and boiling in his mouth and eyes, he was fearful. Woe to the person who came under his fury at such times.

In addition to his other qualities, Thénardier was attentive and penetrating, silent or chattering according to occasion, and always with great intelligence. He had the glance of sailors who are accustomed to wink when looking through a telescope. Thénardier was a statesman. Any new-comer, on entering the pot-house, said upon seeing the woman, "That is the master of the house." Mistake. She was not even the mistress, for her husband was both master and mistress. She did and he created, he directed everything by a species of invisible and continuous magnetic action; a word, sometimes a sign, from him was sufficient, and the mastodon obeyed. The husband was to his wife, though she did not know it, a species of peculiar and sovereign being. However much she might dissent from "Monsieur Thénardier,"—an inadmissible hypothesis,—she would have never proved him publicly in the wrong for any consideration. She would never have committed "in the presence of strangers" that fault which wives so often commit, and which is called, in parliamentary language, "exposing the crown." Although their agreement only resulted in evil, there was meditation in Madame Thénardier's submission to her husband. This mountain of noise and flesh moved under the little finger of this frail despot; seen from its dwarfish and grotesque aspect, it was the great universal thing,—adoration of matter for the mind. There was something strange in Thénardier, and hence came the absolute dominion of this man over this woman. At certain moments she saw him as a lighted candle, at others she felt him as a claw. This woman was a formidable creature, who only loved her children, and only feared her husband. She was a mother because she was mammiferous; her maternity ceased, however, with her girls, and, as we shall see, did not extend to boys.

Thénardier himself had only one thought,—to enrich himself; but he did not succeed, for a suitable stage was wanting for this great talent. Thénardier ruined himself at Montfermeil, if ruin is possible at zero; in Switzerland or the Pyrenees he would have become a millionnaire. But where fate fastens a landlord he must browse. In this year, 1823, Thénardier was in debt to the amount of 1500 francs, which rendered him anxious. Whatever might be the obstinate injustice of destiny against him, Thénardier was one of those men who thoroughly understand, and in the most modern fashion, the theory which is a virtue in barbarous nations, and an article of sale among civilized nations,—hospitality. He was also an admirable poacher, and renowned for the correctness of his aim, and he had a certain cold and peaceful laugh, which was peculiarly dangerous.

His landlord theories burst forth from him at times in flashes, and he had professional aphorisms which he drove into his wife's mind. "The duty of a landlord," he said one day savagely, and in a low voice, "is to sell to the first-comer ragouts, rest, light, fire, dirty sheets, chamber-maids, fleas, and smiles; to arrest passers-by, empty small purses, and honestly lighten heavy ones; to shelter respectfully travelling families, rasp the husband, peck the wife, and pluck the children; to set a price on the open window, the shut window, the chimney-corner, the easy-chair, the sofa, the stool, the feather-bed, the mattress, and the bundle of straw; to know how much the reflection wears off the looking-glass, and charge for it, and by the five hundred thousand fiends to make the traveller pay for everything, even to the flies his dog eats!"

This husband and this wife were craft and rage married, and formed a hideous and terrible pair. While the husband ruminated and combined, the she Thénardier did not think about absent creditors, had not thought of yesterday or to-morrow, and lived violently only for the moment. Such were these two beings, between whom Cosette stood, enduring their double pressure, like a creature who was being at once crushed by a mill-stone and torn with a pair of pincers. Man and wife had each a different way. Cosette was beaten, that came from the wife; she went about barefoot in winter, that came from the

husband. Cosette went up and down stairs, washed, brushed, scrubbed, swept, ran about, panted for breath, moved heavy weights, and, little though she was, did all the hard work. She could expect no pity from a ferocious mistress and a venomous master, and the "Sergeant of Waterloo" was, as it were, a web in which Cosette was caught and trembled. The ideal of oppression was realized by this gloomy household, and it was something like a fly serving spiders. The poor child was passively silent. What takes place in these souls, which have just left the presence of God, when they find themselves thus, in their dawn, all little and naked among human beings?

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**CHAPTER III.**

## MEN WANT WINE AND HORSES WATER.

Four new travellers arrived. Cosette was sorrowfully reflecting; for though only eight years of age she had already suffered so much that she thought with the mournful air of an old woman. Her eye-lid was blackened by a blow which the woman had given her, which made Madame say now and then, "How ugly she is with her black eye!" Cosette was thinking then that it was late, very late; that she had been suddenly obliged to fill the jugs and bottles in the rooms of the travellers who had just arrived, and that there was no water in the cistern. What reassured her most was the fact that but little water was drunk at the "Sergeant of Waterloo." There was no lack of thirsty souls, but it was that sort of thirst which applies more readily to the wine-jar than to the water-bottle. Any one who asked for a glass of water among the glasses of wine would have appeared a savage to all these men. At one moment, however, the child trembled; her mistress raised the cover of a stew-pan bubbling on a stove, then took a glass and hurried to the cistern. The child had turned, and was watching all the movements. A thin stream of water ran from the tap and filled the glass. "Hilloh!" she add, "there is no water," Then she was silent for a moment, during which the child did not breathe.

"Well," Madame Thénardier continued, as she examined the half-filled glass, "this will be enough."

Cosette returned to her work, but for more than a quarter of an hour she felt her heart beating in her chest. She counted the minutes that passed thus, and wished that it were next morning. From time to time one of the topers looked out into the street and said, "It's as black as pitch," or "A man would have to be a cat to go into the street at this hour without a lantern," and Cosette shivered. All at once one of the pedlers lodging at the inn came in and said in a harsh voice,—

"My horse has had no water."

"Oh yes, it has," said Madame Thénardier.

"I tell you it has not, mother," the pedler went on.

Cosette had crept out from under the table.

"Oh yes, sir," she said, "your horse drank a bucketful, and I gave it the water and talked to it."

This was not true.

"There's a girl no bigger than one's fist who tells a lie as big as a house," the pedler exclaimed. "I tell you it has not had any water, you little devil; it has a way of breathing which I know well when it has not drunk."

Cosette persisted, and added in a voice rendered hoarse by agony, and which was scarce audible,—

"Oh, indeed, the horse drank a lot."

"Enough of this," the pedler said savagely; "give my horse water."

Cosette went back under the table.

"Well, that is but fair," said Madame; "if the brute has not drunk it ought to drink." Then she looked around her. "Why, where is the little devil?"

She stooped down, and discovered Cosette hidden at the other end of the table, almost under the feet of the topers.

"Come out of that!" her mistress shouted.

Cosette came out of the hole in which she had hidden herself, and the landlady continued,—

"Miss What's-your-name, give the horse water."

"There is no water, Madame," Cosette said faintly.

Her mistress threw the street door wide open.

"Well, go and fetch some."

Cosette hung her head, and fetched an empty bucket standing in a corner near the chimney; it was larger than herself, and she could have sat down in it comfortably. Madame Thénardier returned to her stove and tasted the contents of a stew-pan with a wooden spoon, while growling,—

"There's plenty at the spring. I believe it would have been better to sift the onions."

Then she rummaged in a drawer which contained halfpence, pepper, and shalots.

"Here, Miss Toad," she added, "as you come back, you will fetch a loaf from the baker's. Here's a fifteen-sous piece."

Cosette had a small pocket in her apron, in which she placed the coin; then she stood motionless, bucket in hand, and with the door open before her. She seemed to be waiting for some one to come to her help.

"Be off!" her mistress shouted.

Cosette went out and shut the door after her.

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**CHAPTER IV.**

## A DOLL COMES ON THE STAGE.

The file of open-air shops, it will be remembered, ran as far as Thénardier's inn. These stalls, owing to the approaching passage of persons going to midnight mass, were all lit up with candles in paper funnels, which, as the schoolmaster, who was seated at this moment in Thénardier's tap-room, declared, produced a "magical effect." To make up for this, not a star glittered in the sky. The last of these shops, exactly facing Thénardier's door, was a child's toy establishment, all flashing with tinsel, glass beads, and magnificent things in block-tin. Right in front the dealer had placed upon a white napkin an enormous doll, nearly two feet high, which was dressed in a pink crape gown, with golden wheat-ears in her hair,—which was real hair,—and had enamel eyes. The whole day had this marvel been displayed, to the amazement of all passers-by under ten years of age; but not a mother in Montfermeil had been rich enough or extravagant enough to give it to her child, Éponine and Azelma had spent hours in contemplating it, and even Cosette had ventured to take a furtive look at it.

At the moment when Cosette went out, bucket in hand, though she felt so sad and desolate, she could not refrain from raising her eyes to the prodigious doll, the "lady" as she called it. The poor child stopped petrified, for she had not seen this doll so close before. The whole stall seemed to her a palace, and this doll was not a doll, but a vision. Joy, splendor, wealth, and happiness appeared in a sort of chimerical radiance to the unhappy little creature who was deeply buried in mournful and cold wretchedness. Cosette measured with the simple and sad sagacity of childhood the abyss which separated her from this doll. She said to herself that a person must be a queen or a princess to have a "thing" like that. She looked at the fine dress, the long smooth hair, and thought, "How happy that doll must be!" She could not take her eyes off this fantastic shop, and the more she looked the more dazzled she became, and she fancied she saw Paradise. There were other dolls behind the large one, which appeared to her fairies and genii. The tradesman, who walked about at the back of the shop, seemed to her something more than mortal. In this adoration she forgot everything, even the task on which she was sent; but suddenly the rough voice of her mistress recalled her to the reality. "What, you little devil, you have not gone! Just wait till I come to you, you little viper!" Madame Thénardier had taken a look out into the street, and noticed Cosette in ecstasy. The child ran off with her bucket, taking enormous strides.

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**CHAPTER V.**

## THE LITTLE ONE ALONE.

As Thénardier's inn was in that part of the village near the church, Cosette had to fetch the water from the spring in the forest on the Chelles side. She did not look at another stall; so long as she was in the lane and the vicinity of the church, the illuminated booths lit up the road, but the last gleam of the last stall soon disappeared, and the poor child found herself in darkness. She went farther into it; but, as she felt some emotion while walking, she shook the handle of her bucket as much as she could, which produced a noise that gave her company. The farther she went, the more dense the gloom became; there was no one in the streets except a woman, who turned on seeing her pass, and muttered between her teeth, "Wherever can the child be going? Can she be a goblin?" Then she recognized Cosette. "Why," she said, "it is the Lark." Cosette in this way went through the labyrinth of winding deserted streets which end the village of Montfermeil on the side of Chelles; and so long as she had houses, or even walls on both sides of the way, she walked rather boldly. From time to time she saw a candle glimmering through the crack of a shutter; it was light and life, people were there, and this reassured her. Still, in proportion as she advanced, her step became slower, as if mechanical, and when she had passed the corner of the last house, Cosette stopped. Going beyond the last stall had been difficult, but going farther than the last house became an impossibility. She put her bucket on the ground, plunged her hand into her hair, and began scratching her head slowly,—a gesture peculiar to terrified and undecided children. It was no longer Montfermeil, but the fields, and black deserted space was before her. She looked despairingly at this space in which there was nobody, but where there were beasts, and there might be ghosts. She looked out, and heard the beasts walking in the grass, and distinctly saw the ghosts moving among the trees. Then she took her bucket again, and fear gave her boldness. "Well," she said, "I will tell her that there was no water;" and she boldly re-entered Montfermeil. She had scarce gone one hundred yards when she stopped, and began scratching her head again. Now it was her mistress who appeared to her,—her hideous mistress with her hyena mouth, and her eyes flashing with passion. The child took a lamentable glance before and behind her. What should she do? What would become of her? Where should she go? It was from her mistress she recoiled; she turned back in the direction of the spring, and began running. She left the village running, she entered the wood running,

looking at nothing, hearing nothing. She did not stop till breath failed her, but she still went on ahead, wildly. While running she felt inclined to cry, for the nocturnal rustling of the forest completely surrounded her. She did not think, she did not see; the immensity of night was opposed to this little creature; on one side was darkness, on the other an atom. It was only seven or eight minutes' walk from the skirt of the wood to the spring, and Cosette knew the road from having gone there several times by day. Strange to say, she did not lose her way, for a remnant of instinct vaguely guided her; still she did not look either to the right or left, for fear of seeing things in the branches and shrubs. In this way she reached the spring; it was a narrow natural basin hollowed by the water in the dry soil, about two feet in depth, surrounded by moss and that gauffered grass which is called Henri IV.'s ruff, and paved with a few heavy stones. A rivulet escaped from it with a little gentle murmur.

Cosette did not take the time to breathe; it was very dark, but she was accustomed to come to this fountain. She felt in the obscurity for a young oak that leaned over the spring, and usually served her as a support, caught a branch, stooped down, and plunged the bucket into the water. She was in such a violent state that her strength was tripled. While thus bent, she did not notice that the pocket of her apron emptied itself into the stream, and that the fifteen-sous piece fell into the water. Cosette neither saw nor heard it fall; she drew up the bucket nearly full, and placed it on the grass. This done, she felt that she was exhausted with fatigue; she would have liked to start again at once, but the effect of filling the bucket had been so great that she found it impossible to move a step. She fell on to the grass, and lay there utterly exhausted. She shut her eyes, then opened them again, not knowing why, but unable to do otherwise. By her side the water stirring in the bucket made circles that resembled snakes of white fire. Over her head the sky was covered with large black clouds, which seemed like smoke; the tragic mask of the gloom seemed to bend vaguely over this child. Jupiter was setting in the profundity; the child gazed with a wondering eye at this large star, which she did not know, and which terrified her. The planet, in fact, was at this moment very near the horizon, and was passing through a dense fog, which gave it a horrible redness. The fog, which was of a gloomy purple hue, enlarged the planet and it looked like a luminous wound. A cold wind blew from the plain; the wood was dark, but there was no rustling of leaves, and none of the vague and fresh gleams of summer. Large branches stood out frightfully, and shapeless, stunted bushes soughed in the glades. The tall grass twined under the breeze like eels, and the brambles writhed like long arms provided with claws seeking to clutch their prey. A few withered patches of fern, impelled by the breeze, passed rapidly, and seemed to be flying before something that was coming up.

Darkness produces a dizziness. Man requires light, and any one who enters the opposite of light, feels his heart contracted. When the eye sees darkness, the soul sees trouble: in an eclipse, in night, in sooty opaqueness, there is anxiety even for the strongest men. No one walks alone at night in a forest without a tremor, for shadows and trees are formidable densities. A chimerical reality appears in the indistinct profundity; the inconceivable is visible a few paces from you with spectral clearness. You see floating in space, or in your own brain, something vague and intangible, like the dreams of sleeping flowers. There are stern attitudes on the horizon, and you breathe the effluvia of the great black vacuum. You feel frightened and inclined to look behind you. The cavities of night, the silent outlines which disperse as you advance, the irritated tufts, the lurid pools, the lugubrious reflected in the mournful, the sepulchral immensity of silence, the possible strange beings, the bending of mysterious branches, the frightful torsos of trees, the long waves of quivering grass,—you are defenceless against this. There is no man, however bold, who does not shudder and feel this proximity of agony; something hideous is experienced, as if the soul were amalgamated with the shades. This penetration of darkness is indescribably sinister in a child. Forests are apocalypses, and the beating of the wings of a little soul produces a sound of death beneath their monstrous dome.

Without understanding what she experienced, Cosette felt herself affected by this black enormity of

nature: it was no longer terror alone that over-powered her, but something even more terrible than terror. She shuddered, and words fail us to describe the strange nature of this shudder which chilled her to the heart. Her eye had become stern, and she felt as if she could not prevent herself from returning to the same spot on the morrow. Then, by a species of instinct, and in order to emerge from this singular state which she did not understand, but which terrified her, she began counting aloud one, two, three, four, up to ten, and when she finished, she began again. This restored her a true perception of the things that surrounded her: she felt the coldness of her hands, which she had wetted in drawing the water. She rose, for fear had seized upon her again, a natural and insurmountable fear. She had only one thought left, to fly, fly at full speed through the wood, and across the fields, as far as the houses, the windows, and the lighted candles. Her eye fell on the bucket before her; and such was the terror with which her mistress inspired her that she did not dare fly without the bucket. She seized the handle with both hands and found it difficult to lift. She proceeded thus for about a dozen yards, but the bucket was full and heavy, and she was compelled to set it on the ground. She breathed for a moment, and then lifted the bucket and started again, this time going a little farther. But she was still obliged to stop once more, and after a few moments' rest, set out again. She walked with body bent forward and drooping head, like an old woman, and the weight of the bucket stiffened her thin arms. The iron handle swelled and froze her small white hands. From time to time she was forced to stop, and each time she did so, the cold water from the bucket plashed her bare legs. This occurred in the heart of a wood, at night, in winter, far from any human eye. She was a child of eight years of age, and God alone at this moment saw this sorrowful sight, and her mother too, doubtless! for there are things which open the eyes of the dead in their graves.

She breathed with a sort of dolorous rattle; sobs contracted her throat, but she did not dare cry, for she was so afraid of her mistress, even at a distance. It was her habit always to imagine Madame Thénardier present. Still, she did not make much progress in this way, and she walked very slowly, although she strove to lessen the length of her halts and walk as long as she possibly could between them. She thought with agony that it would take her more than an hour to get back to Montfermeil in this way, and that her mistress would beat her. This agony was mingled with her terror at being alone in the wood at night; she was worn out with fatigue, and had not yet left the forest. On reaching an old chestnut-tree which she knew, she made a longer halt than the others to rest herself thoroughly; then she collected all her strength, took up the bucket again, and began walking courageously. Still the poor little creature in her despair could not refrain from exclaiming,—"My God! my God!" All at once she suddenly felt that the bucket no longer weighed anything; a hand which seemed to her enormous had seized it, and was vigorously lifting it. She raised her head, and saw a tall black form walking by her side; it was a man who had come up behind her, and whom she had not heard. This man, without saying a word, had seized the handle of the bucket which she was carrying. There is an instinct in every meeting of this life. The child felt no fear.

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**CHAPTER VI.**

## BOULATRUELLE MAY HAVE BEEN RIGHT.

On the afternoon of this same Christmas day, 1823, a man walked for a long time about the most desolate part of the Boulevard de l'Hôpital, at Paris. He seemed to be looking for a lodging, and to stop for choice at the most shabby houses in this skirt of the Faubourg St. Marceau. As we shall see presently, this man had really hired a bed-room in this isolated district. Both in dress and person he realized the type of what might be called the respectable mendicant, or extreme misery combined with extreme cleanliness. This is a very rare blending, which inspires intelligent minds with the twofold

respect which is felt for the very poor and the very worthy man. He wore a very old and carefully-brushed round hat, a threadbare coat of coarse yellow-ochre colored cloth,—a color which was not absolutely odd at that day,—a long waistcoat with enormous pockets, black breeches which had turned gray at the knees, black worsted stockings, and stout shoes with brass buckles. He looked like the ex-tutor of a good family returned from emigration. From his white hair, wrinkled forehead, livid lips, and his face in which everything revealed weariness of life, he might have been supposed much beyond sixty years of age; but his firm though slow step, and the singular vigor imprinted on all his movements, made him look scarce fifty. The wrinkles on his forehead were well placed, and would have favorably disposed any one who observed him closely; his lip was contracted by a strange curve, which seemed stern, but was humble, and there was a lugubrious serenity in his look. He carried in his left hand a small parcel tied up in a handkerchief; and in his right he had a stick cut from a hedge. This stick had been carved with some care, and was not too bad-looking; advantage had been taken of the knots, and a coral knob had been made with red sealing-wax,—it was a cudgel and seemed a cane.

Few people pass along this boulevard, especially in winter; this man, however, seemed to avoid rather than seek them, though without affectation. At this period Louis XVIII. went almost daily to Choisy le Roi, which was one of his favorite drives. At two o'clock the royal carriage and escort could almost invariably be seen passing at full gallop along the Boulevard de l'Hôpital. This did as well as a clock or watch for the poor women of the district, who said, "It is two o'clock, for he is returning to the Tuileries." And some ran up and others drew up, for a king who passes always produces a tumult. Moreover, the appearance and disappearance of Louis XVIII. produced a certain effect in the streets of Paris, for it was rapid but majestic. This impotent king had a taste for galloping; unable to walk, he wished to run; and this cripple would have liked to be drawn by lightning. He passed, peaceful and stern, amid drawn sabres; his heavy gilded berline, with large branches of lilies painted on the panels, rolled noisily along. There was scarce time to take a glance at him; you saw in the right-hand corner a broad, firm, red face, a healthy forehead powdered à l'oiseau royal, a proud, harsh, artful eye, an intelligent smile, two heavy epaulettes with hanging fringe upon a civilian coat; the golden fleece, the Cross of St. Louis, the Cross of the Legion of Honor, the silver plate of the Holy Ghost, a large stomach, and a wide blue ribbon,—it was the king. When out of Paris he carried his white feathered hat on his knees, up to which came tall English gaiters; when he returned to the city he put his hat on his head, and bowed rarely. He looked at the people coldly, and they returned the compliment; when he appeared for the first time in the Faubourg St. Marceau, his entire success consisted in a remark made by a workman to his chum,—"That fat man is the government."

The infallible passage of the king at the same hour was hence the daily event of the Boulevard de l'Hôpital. The promenader in the yellow coat plainly did not belong to that quarter, and probably not to Paris, for he was ignorant of the fact. When at two o'clock the royal carriage, surrounded by Life Guards with their silver aiguillettes, turned into the boulevard, after coming round the Salpêtrière, he seemed surprised and almost terrified. As he was alone in the walk, he quickly concealed himself behind an angle of the wall; but this did not prevent the Duc d'Havre from noticing him. As Captain of the Guards on duty that day, he was seated in the carriage opposite to the king, and said to his Majesty, —"There is an ill-looking fellow." The policemen, who cleared the way for the king, also noticed him, and one of them received orders to follow him. But the man turned into the solitary streets of the Faubourg, and, as night was setting in, the agent lost his trail, as is proved by a report addressed the same evening to Count Anglès, Minister of State and Prefect of Police. When the man in the yellow coat had thrown out the agent, he doubled his pace, though not without looking back many times to make sure that he was not followed. At a quarter-past four, that is to say, at nightfall, he passed in front of the Porte St. Martin theatre, where the "Two Convicts" would be performed that evening. This bill, lit up by theatre lamps, struck him, for though he was walking rapidly, he stopped to read it. A moment later he entered "The Pewter Platter," which was at that time the office of the Lagny coach, which

started at half-past four. The horses were put in, and the passengers, summoned by the driver, were hastily clambering up the iron steps of the vehicle. The man asked,—

"Have you a seat left?"

"Only one, by my side, on the box," the driver said.

"I will take it."

"Get up," the driver said.

Before starting, however, he took a glance at the passenger's poor dress and the smallness of his bundle, and asked for the fare.

"Are you going all the way to Lagny?" he said.

"Yes," the man answered.

The traveller paid his fare to Lagny and the coach started. After passing the city gate, the driver tried to get up a conversation, but the traveller only answered in monosyllables; so the driver began whistling and swearing at his horses. As the night was cold, he wrapped himself in his cloak, but the passenger did not seem to notice it. At about six o'clock they reached Chelles, where the driver stopped for a moment to let his horses breathe, at an inn opened in the old buildings of the Royal Abbey.

"I shall get down here," the man said.

He took his bundle and stick and jumped off the coach. A moment after he had disappeared, but he did not enter the inn. When the coachman started again a few moments after, he did not meet him in the high street of Lagny, and he turned round to his inside passengers:—

"That man," he said, "does not belong to these parts, for I do not know him. He looks as if he had not a penny; and yet he don't care for money, as he paid his fare to Lagny and only came as far as Chelles. It is night, all the houses are closed, he has not gone into the inn, and yet I can't see him, so he must have sunk into the ground."

The man had not sunk into the ground, but walked hastily along the main street of Chelles, in the darkness; then he turned to his left before reaching the church, into a cross-road that runs to Montfermeil, like a man who knows the country and had been there before. He followed this road rapidly, and at the spot where it is intersected by the old road that runs from Lagny to Gagny, he heard wayfarers coming. He hurriedly concealed himself in a ditch, and waited till they had passed; the precaution, however, was almost superfluous, for, as we have said, it was a very dark December night, and only two or three stars were visible in the sky. The man did not return to the Montfermeil road, but went to his right, across the fields, and hurried in the direction of the wood. When he was in it, he slackened his pace, and began looking carefully at all the trees, walking step by step, as if seeking and following a mysterious road known to himself alone. There was a moment at which he seemed to lose himself and appeared undecided; but at last, by repeated groping, he reached a glade in which there was a pile of large white stones. He walked hurriedly toward these stones and attentively examined them, as if passing them in review. A large tree, covered with those excrescences which are the warts of vegetation, was a few paces from the heap; he went up to it and passed his hand over the back as if trying to recognize and count all the warts. Opposite this tree, which was an ash, there was a sickly chestnut shedding its bark, upon which a ring of zinc had been placed as a poultice. He stood on tip-toe and felt this ring; then he examined for some time the ground in the space contained between the tree and the stones, as if assuring himself that the ground had not been freshly turned up. This done, he looked about him, and resumed his walk through the wood.

It was this man who came across Cosette. While proceeding in the direction of Montfermeil, he

perceived this little shadow depositing a load on the ground, then taking it up again and continuing her journey. He went up and saw that it was a young child carrying an enormous bucket; then he drew to her side and silently took the bucket handle.

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**CHAPTER VII.**

## COSETTE IN THE DARK WITH THE STRANGER.

Cosette, as we stated, was not frightened. The man spoke to her in a serious, almost low voice,—

"My child, what you are carrying is very heavy."

Cosette raised her head and replied, "Yes, sir."

"Give it to me," the man continued; "I will carry it."

Cosette let go the bucket, and the man walked on by her side.

"It is really very heavy," he muttered; then added, "What is your age, little one?"

"Eight years, sir."

"And have you come far with this?"

"From the spring in the wood."

"And how far have you to go?"

"About a quarter of an hour's walk."

The man stopped for a moment, and then suddenly said,—

"Then you have not a mother?"

"I do not know," the child answered.

Before the man had time to speak, she continued,—

"I do not think so; other girls have one, but I have not."

And after a silence, she added,—

"I believe that I never had one."

The man stopped, put the bucket on the ground, and laid his two hands on her shoulders, making an effort to see her face in the darkness. Cosette's thin sallow countenance was vaguely designed in the vivid gleam of the sky.

"What is your name?" the man asked her.

"Cosette."

The man seemed to have an electric shock; he looked at her again, then removed his hands, took the bucket up again, and continued his walk. A moment after he asked,—

"Where do you live, little one?"

"At Montfermeil, if you know the place."

"Are we going there?"

"Yes, sir."

There was another pause, and then he began again.

"Who was it that sent you to fetch water from the wood at this hour?"

"Madame Thénardier."

The man continued with an accent which he strove to render careless, but in which there was, for all that, a singular tremor:—

"What is this Madame Thénardier?"

"She is my mistress," the child said, "and keeps the inn."

"The inn?" remarked the man; "well, I am going to lodge there to-night. Show me the way."

"We are going to it."

Though the man walked rather quickly, Cosette had no difficulty in keeping up with him; she no longer felt fatigue, and from time to time raised her eyes to this man with a sort of indescribable calmness and confidence. She had never been taught to turn her eyes toward Providence, and yet she felt within her something that resembled hope and joy, and which rose to heaven. After the lapse of a few minutes the man continued,—

"Does Madame Thénardier keep no servant?"

"No, sir."

"Is there no one but you?"

"No, sir."

There was another interruption, and then Cosette raised her voice,—

"That is to say, there are two little girls."

"What little girls?"

"Ponine and Zelma."

The child simplified in this way the romantic names dear to Madame Thénardier.

"Who are they?"

"They are Madame Thénardier's young ladies, as you may say,—her daughters."

"And what do they do?"

"Oh!" said the child, "they have handsome dolls, and things all covered with gold. They play about and amuse themselves."

"All day?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you?"

"Oh, I work."

"All day?"

The child raised her large eyes, in which stood a tear, invisible in the darkness, and replied softly,—

"Yes, sir." After a silence she continued: "Sometimes, when I have finished my work and they allow

me, I amuse myself."

"In what way?"

"As I can; they let me be, but I have not many toys. Ponine and Zelma do not like me to play with their dolls, and I have only a little leaden sword, no longer than that."

The child held out her little finger.

"And which does not cut?"

"Oh yes, sir," said the child; "it cuts salad and chops flies' heads off."

They reached the village, and Cosette guided the stranger through the streets. When they passed the baker's, Cosette did not think of the loaf which she was to bring in. The man had ceased questioning her, and preserved a gloomy silence; but when they had left the church behind them, on seeing all the open-air shops, he asked Cosette,—

"Is it the fair-time?"

"No, sir, it is Christmas."

When they approached the inn, Cosette touched his arm timidly.

"Sir."

"What is it, my child?"

"We are close to the house."

"Well?"

"Will you let me carry my bucket now?"

"Why?"

"Because Madame will be at me if she sees that it has been carried for me."

The man gave her the bucket, and a moment later they were at the door of the pot-house.

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**CHAPTER VIII.**

## IS HE RICH OR POOR?

Cosette could not refrain from taking a side glance at the large doll which was still displayed at the toy-shop, and then tapped at the door; it opened, and Madame Thénardier appeared, candle in hand.

"Oh, it's you, you little devil! Well, I'll be hanged if you have not taken time enough; you've been playing, I expect."

"Madame," said Cosette, with a violent tremor, "this gentleman wants a bed-room."

Madame Thénardier exchanged her coarse look for an amiable grimace,—a change peculiar to landladies,—and greedily turned her eyes on the new-comer.

"Is this the gentleman?" she said.

"Yes, Madame," the man answered, touching his hat.

Rich travellers are not so polite. This gesture and the inspection of the stranger's clothes and luggage,

which the landlady took in at a glance, caused the amiable grimace to disappear and the rough look to return. She continued dryly,—

"Come in, my good man."

The "good man" entered; the landlady gave him a second look, carefully examined his threadbare coat and broken-brimmed hat, and consulted her husband, who was still drinking with the carter, by a toss of the head, a curl of her nose, and a wink. The husband answered with that imperceptible movement of the forefinger which, laid on the puffed-out lips, signifies, "No go!" Upon this the landlady exclaimed, —

"My good man, I am very sorry, but I haven't a bed-room disengaged."

"Put me where you like," the man said,—"in the loft or the stable. I will pay as if it were a bed-room."

"Forty sous."

"Be it so."

"Forty sous!" a carrier whispered to the landlady; "why, it is only twenty sous."

"It's forty for a man like him," Madame Thénardier replied in the same tone; "I do not lodge poor people under."

"That is true," the husband added gently; "it injures a house to have customers of that sort."

In the mean while the man, after leaving his bundle and stick on a form, sat down at a table on which Cosette had hastened to place a bottle of wine and a glass. The pedler who had asked for the bucket of water himself carried it to his horse, while Cosette returned to her place under the kitchen table and her knitting. The man, who had scarce moistened his lips with the glass of wine he poured out, gazed at the child with strange attention. Cosette was ugly, but had she been happy she might possibly have been pretty. We have already sketched her little overclouded face: Cosette was thin and sickly, and, though eight years of age, looked hardly six. Her large eyes, buried in a species of shadow, were almost extinguished by constant crying, while the corners of her mouth had the curve of habitual agony, which may be observed in condemned prisoners and in patients who are given over. "Her hands were," as her mother had foretold, "ruined with chilblains." The fire-light, which shone upon her at this moment, brought out the angles of her bones and rendered her thinness frightfully visible; as she constantly shivered, she had grown into the habit of always keeping her knees pressed against each other. Her entire clothing was one rag, which would have aroused pity in summer, and caused horror in winter. She had only torn calico upon her person, and not a morsel of woollen stuff: her skin was here and there visible, and everywhere could be distinguished blue or black marks, indicating the spots where her mistress had beaten her. Her bare legs were red and rough, and the hollow between her shoulder-blades would have moved you to tears. The whole person of this child, her attitude, the sound of her voice, the interval between one word and the next, her look, her silence, her slightest movement, expressed and translated but one idea,—fear. Fear was spread over her; she was, so to speak, clothed in it; fear drew up her elbows against her hips, withdrew her heels under her petticoats, made her occupy as little room as possible, breathe only when absolutely necessary, and had become what might be called the habit of her body, without any possible variation save that of increasing. There was a corner in her eye in which terror lurked. This fear was so great that Cosette on returning wet through did not dare go to the fire, but silently began her work again. The expression of this child's eye was habitually so gloomy and at times so tragical, that it seemed at certain moments as if she were on the point of becoming either an idiot or a demon. Never, as we said, had she known what prayer was; never had she set foot in a church. "Can I spare the time for it?" Madame Thénardier used to say. The man in the yellow coat did not take his eyes off Cosette. All at once her mistress cried,—

"Hilloh! where's the loaf?"

Cosette, according to her custom whenever Madame Thénardier raised her voice, quickly came from under the table. She had completely forgotten the loaf, and had recourse to the expedient of terrified children,—she told a falsehood.

"Madame, the baker's was shut up."

"You ought to have knocked."

"I did do so, but he would not open."

"I shall know to-morrow whether that is the truth," said her mistress; "and if it is not, look out, that's all. In the mean while give me back my fifteen-sous piece."

Cosette plunged her hand into the pocket of her apron and turned green: the coin was no longer in it.

"Well," her mistress said, "did you not hear me?"

Cosette turned her pocket out, but there was nothing in it: what could have become of the money? The wretched little creature could not find a word to say; she was petrified.

"Have you lost it," her mistress asked, "or are you trying to rob me?"

At the same time she stretched out her hand to the cat-o'-nine-tails; this formidable gesture restored Cosette the strength to cry,—

"Mercy, Madame! I will never do it again."

Madame Thénardier took down the whip.

The man in the yellow coat had been feeling in his waistcoat pocket, though no one noticed it. Moreover, the other guests were drinking or card-playing, and paid no attention to him. Cosette had retreated in agony to the chimney-corner, shivering to make herself as little as she could, and protect her poor half-naked limbs. Her mistress raised her arm.

"I beg your pardon, Madame," said the man, "but just now I saw something fall out of the little girl's pocket and roll away. It may be that."

At the same time he stooped and appeared to be searching for a moment.

"Yes, here it is," he continued, as he rose and held out a coin to the landlady.

"Yes, that's it," she said.

It was not the real coin, it was a twenty-sous piece, but Madame made a profit by the transaction. She put it in her pocket, and confined herself to giving the child a stern glance, saying,—"That had better not happen again."

Cosette returned to what her mistress called her niche, and her large eyes, fixed on the strange traveller, began to assume an expression they had never had before. It was no longer a simple astonishment, but a sort of stupefied confidence was mingled with it.

"Do you want any supper?" the landlady asked the traveller.

He did not reply, but seemed to be lost in thought. "What can this man be?" she muttered to herself. "He is some wretched beggar who has not a penny to pay for his supper. Will he be able to pay for his bed-room? It is lucky, after all, that he did not think of stealing the silver coin that was on the ground."

At this moment a door opened, and Éponine and Azelma came in. They were really two pretty little girls, of the middle class rather than peasants, and very charming, one with her auburn well-smoothed

tresses, the other with long black plaits hanging down her back; both were quick, clean, plump, fresh, and pleasant to look on through their beaming health. They were warmly clothed, but with such maternal art that the thickness of the stuff did not remove anything of the coquetry of the style; winter was foreseen, but spring was not effaced. In their dress, their gayety, and the noise which they made, there was a certain queenliness. When they came in, their mother said to them in a scolding voice, which was full of adoration, "There you are, then."

Then, drawing them on to her knees in turn, smoothing their hair, re-tying their ribbons, and letting them go with that gentle shake which is peculiar to mothers, she exclaimed, "How smart they are!" They sat down by the fire-side, with a doll which they turned over on their knees with all sorts of joyous prattle. At times Cosette raised her eyes from her knitting and mournfully watched their playing, Éponine and Azelma did not look at Cosette, for to them she was like the dog. These three little girls did not count four-and-twenty years between them, and already represented human society,—on one side envy, on the other, disdain. The doll was very old and broken, but it did not appear the less wonderful to Cosette, who never in her life possessed a doll,—a "real doll," to employ an expression which all children will understand. All at once the landlady, who was going about the room, noticed that Cosette was idling, and watching the children instead of working.

"Ah, I have caught you," she exclaimed; "that's the way you work, is it? I'll make you work with the cat-o'-nine tails."

The stranger, without leaving his chair, turned to Madame Thénardier.

"Oh, Madame," he said with an almost timid smile, "let her play!"

Such a wish would have been a command from any traveller who had ordered a good supper and drunk a couple of bottles of wine, and who did not look like a beggar. But the landlady did not tolerate a man who had such a hat, having a desire, and one who wore such a coat, daring to have a will of his own! Hence she answered sharply,—

"She must work, since she eats; I do not keep her to do nothing."

"What is she doing, pray?" the stranger continued, in that gentle voice which formed such a strange contrast with his beggar clothes and porter shoulders.

The landlady deigned to reply,—

"She is knitting stockings, if you please, for my little girls, who have none, so to speak, and are forced to go about barefooted."

The man looked at Cosette's poor red feet, and said,—

"When will she have finished that pair of stockings?"

"She has three or four good days' work, the idle slut!"

"And how much may such a pair be worth when finished?"

The landlady gave him a contemptuous glance.

"At least thirty sous."

"Will you sell them to me for five francs?" the man continued.

"Pardieu!" a carrier who was listening exclaimed, with a coarse laugh, "I should think so,—five balls!"

Thénardier thought it his duty to speak.

"Yes, sir, if such be your fancy, you can have the pair of stockings for five francs; we cannot refuse

travellers anything."

"Cash payment," the landlady said in her peremptory voice.

"I buy the pair of stockings," the man said, and added, as he drew a five-franc piece from his pocket and laid it on the table, "I pay for them."

Then he turned to Cosette,—

"Your labor is now mine; so play, my child."

The carrier was so affected by the five-franc piece that he left his glass and hurried up.

"It is real," he exclaimed, after examining it; "a true hind-wheel, and no mistake."

Thénardier came up and silently put the coin in his pocket. The landlady could make no answer, but she bit her lips, and her face assumed an expression of hatred. Cosette was trembling, but still ventured to ask,—

"Is it true, Madame? May I play?"

"Play!" her mistress said, in a terrible voice.

And while her lips thanked the landlady, all her little soul thanked the traveller. Thénardier had returned to his glass, and his wife whispered in his ear,—

"What can this yellow man be?"

"I have seen," Thénardier replied, with a sovereign air, "millionnaires who wore a coat like his."

Cosette had laid down her needle, but did not dare leave her place, for, as a rule, she moved as little as possible. She took from a box behind her a few old rags and her little leaden sword, Éponine and Azelma paid no attention to what was going on, for they were carrying out a very important operation. They had seized the cat, thrown the doll on the ground, and Éponine, who was the elder, was wrapping up the kitten, in spite of its meawings and writhings, in a quantity of red and blue rags. While performing this serious and difficult task, she was saying to her sister in the sweet and adorable language of children, the grace of which, like the glistening of butterflies' wings, disappears when you try to fix it,—

"This doll, sister, is more amusing than the other, you see, for it moves, cries, and is warm; so we will play with it. It is my little daughter, and I am a lady; you will call upon me, and look at it. By degrees you will see its whiskers, and that will surprise you, and then you will see its ears and its tail, and that will surprise you too, and you will say to me, 'Oh, my goodness!' and I shall answer, 'Yes, Madame, it is a little child I have like that; little children are so at present.'"

Azelma listened to Éponine in admiration; in the mean while the topers had begun singing an obscene song at which they laughed till the ceiling shook, Thénardier encouraging and accompanying them. In the same way as birds make a nest of everything, children make a doll of no matter what. While Éponine and Azelma were wrapping up the kitten, Cosette on her side was performing the same operation on her sword. This done, she laid it on her arm, and sang softly to lull it to sleep. A doll is one of the most imperious wants, and at the same time one of the most delicious instincts, of feminine childhood. To clean, clothe, adorn, dress, undress, dress again, teach, scold a little, nurse, lull, send to sleep, and imagine that something is somebody,—the whole future of a woman is contained in this. While dreaming and prattling, making little trousseaux and cradles, while sewing little frocks and aprons, the child becomes a girl, the girl becomes a maiden, and the maiden a woman. The first child is a continuation of the last doll. A little girl without a doll is nearly as unhappy and quite as impossible as a wife without children; Cosette, therefore, made a doll of her sword. The landlady, in the mean while,

walked up to the "yellow man." "My husband is right," she thought, "it is perhaps M. Lafitte. Some rich men are so whimsical." She leaned her elbow on the table and said, "Sir—"

At the word "Sir" the man turned round, for the female Thénardier had up to the present only addressed him as "My good man."

"You see, sir," she continued, assuming her gentle air, which was still more dreadful to see than her fierce look, "I am glad to see the child play, and do not oppose it, and it is all right for once, as you are generous. But, you see, she has nothing, and must work."

"Then, she is not a child of yours?" the man asked.

"Oh! Lord, no, sir; she is a poor little girl we took in out of charity. She is a sort of imbecile, and I think has water on the brain, for she has a big head. We do all we can for her; but we are not rich, and though we write to her people, we have not had an answer for six months. It looks as if the mother were dead."

"Ah!" said the man, and fell back into his reverie.

"The mother could n't have been much," the landlady added, "for she deserted her child."

During the whole of the conversation Cosette, as if an instinct warned her that she was being talked about, did not take her eyes off her mistress. She listened, and heard two or three indistinct words here and there. In the mean while, the drinkers, who were three parts intoxicated, struck up their unclean song again with redoubled gayety, and Madame Thénardier went to take part in the bursts of laughter. Cosette, under her table, looked at the fire, which was reflected in her fixed eyes; she had begun rocking the species of doll which she had made, and while lulling it to sleep, sang in a low voice, —"My mother is dead, my mother is dead, my mother is dead." On being pressed again by the landlady, the yellow man, the "millionnaire," consented to take some supper.

"What will you have, sir?"

"Bread and cheese."

"He is certainly a beggar," the landlady thought. The drunkards were still singing their song, and the child, under the table, still sang hers. All at once Cosette broke off: she turned, and perceived, lying on the ground a few paces from the kitchen table, the doll which the children had thrown down on taking up the kitten. She let the wrapped-up sword, which only half satisfied her, fall, and then slowly looked round the room. The landlady was whispering to her husband and reckoning some change, Éponine and Azelma were playing with the kitten; the guests were eating, drinking, or singing, and no one noticed her. She had not a moment to lose, so she crept on her hands and knees from under the table, assured herself once again that she was not watched, and seized the doll. A moment after she was back in her seat, and turned so that the doll which she held in her arms should be in the shadow. The happiness of playing with this doll was almost too much for her. No one had seen her, excepting the traveller, who was slowly eating his poor supper. This joy lasted nearly a quarter of an hour.

But in spite of the caution which Cosette took, she did not notice that one of the doll's feet was peeping out, and that the fire lit it up very distinctly. This pink luminous foot emerging from the glow suddenly caught the eye of Azelma, who said to Éponine, "Look, sister!"

The two little girls were stupefied. Cosette had dared to take their doll! Éponine rose, and without letting the cat go, ran to her mother and plucked the skirt of her dress.

"Let me be," said the mother; "what do you want now?"

"Mother," said the girl, "just look!"

And she pointed to Cosette, who, yielding entirely to the ecstasy of possession, saw and heard nothing

more. The landlady's face assumed that peculiar expression which is composed of the terrible blended with the trifles of life, and which has caused such women to be christened Megæras. This time wounded pride exasperated her wrath: Cosette had leaped over all bounds, and had made an assault on the young ladies' doll. A czarina who saw a moujik trying on her Imperial son's blue ribbon would not have a different face. She cried in a voice which indignation rendered hoarse,—"Cosette!"

Cosette started as if the earth had trembled beneath her, and turned round.

"Cosette!" her mistress repeated.

Cosette gently laid the doll on the ground with a species of veneration mingled with despair; then, without taking her eyes off it, she clasped her hands, and, frightful to say of a child of her age, wrung them, and then burst into tears, a thing which none of the emotions of the day had caused,—neither the walk in the wood, the weight of the bucket, the loss of the coin, the sight of the lash, nor the harsh remarks of her mistress. The traveller had risen from his chair. "What is the matter?" he asked the landlady.

"Don't you see?" she replied, pointing to the corpus delicti which lay at Cosette's feet.

"Well, what?" the man continued.

"That wretch," the landlady answered, "has had the audacity to touch my children's doll!"

"So much noise about that!" the man said. "Well, suppose that she did play with the doll!"

"She has touched it with her dirty hands," the landlady continued,—"her frightful hands."

Here Cosette redoubled her sobs.

"Will you be quiet?" her mistress yelled.

The man went straight to the street door, opened it, and walked out; the landlady took advantage of his absence to give Cosette a kick under the table, which made her scream. The door opened again, and the man reappeared, carrying in his hands the fabulous doll to which we have alluded, and which all the village children had been contemplating since the morning. He placed it on its legs before Cosette, saying,—

"Here, this is for you."

We must suppose that, during the hour he had been sitting in a reverie, he had confusedly noticed the toyman's shop, which was so brilliantly lit with lamps and candles that it could be seen through the tap-room window like an illumination. Cosette raised her eyes: she had looked at the man coming toward her with the doll, as if he were the sun; she heard the extraordinary words "This is for you;" she looked at him, looked at the doll, then drew back slowly, and concealed herself entirely in a corner under the table. She did not cry, she did not speak, but looked as if she dared hardly breathe. The landlady, Éponine, and Azelma were so many statues: the topers themselves had stopped drinking, and there was a solemn silence in the tap-room. The mother, petrified and dumb, began her conjectures again. "Who is this man? Is he poor, or a millionnaire? He is, perhaps, both; that is to say, a thief." The husband's face offered that expressive wrinkle which marks the human face each time that the ruling instinct appears on it with all its bestial power. The landlord looked in turn at the doll and the traveller: he seemed to be sniffing round the man, as he would have done round a money-bag. This only lasted for a second; then he went up to his wife and whispered:

"That machine costs at least thirty francs. No nonsense; crawl in the dust before the man."

Coarse natures have this in common with simple natures, that they have no transitions.

"Well, Cosette," the landlady said, in a voice which strove to be gentle, and which was composed of the

bitter honey of wicked women, "why don't you take your doll?"

Cosette ventured to crawl out of her hole.

"My little Cosette," her mistress continued fawningly, "this gentleman gives you the doll; so take it, for it is yours."

Cosette gazed at the wonderful doll with a sort of terror; her face was still bathed in tears, but her eyes were beginning to fill, like the sky at dawn, with strange rays of joy. What she felt at this moment was something like what she would have felt had some one suddenly said to her, "Little girl, you are Queen of France."

It seemed to her that if she touched this doll thunder would issue from it; and this was true to a certain point, for she said to herself that her mistress would scold and beat her. Still, the attraction gained the victory; she at length crawled up to the doll and murmured timidly as she turned to the landlady,—

"May I, Madame?"

No expression could render this air, which was at once despairing, terrified, and ravished.

"Of course," said her mistress, "since this gentleman gives it to you."

"Is it true, sir?" Cosette continued. "Is the lady really mine?"

The stranger's eyes were full of tears, and he seemed to have reached that point of emotion when a man does not speak in order that he may not weep. He nodded to Cosette, and placed the "lady's" little hand in hers. Cosette quickly drew back her hand as if the lady's burned her, and looked down at the brick floor. We are compelled to add that at this moment she put her tongue out to an enormous length; all at once she turned and passionately seized the doll.

"I will call her Catherine," she said.

It was a strange sight when Cosette's rags met and held the doll's ribbons and fresh muslins.

"May I put her in a chair, Madame?" she continued.

"Yes, my child," her mistress answered.

It was now the turn of Éponine and Azelma to look enviously at Cosette. She placed Catherine in a chair, and then sat down on the ground before her, motionless, without saying a word, and in a contemplative attitude.

"Play, Cosette," the stranger said.

"Oh, I am playing!" the child answered.

This unknown man, this stranger who had the air of a visitor sent by Providence to Cosette, was at the moment the person whom Madame Thénardier hated most in the world; still, she must put a constraint on herself. This emotion was more than she could endure, accustomed to dissimulation though she was by the copy which she had to take of her husband in all his actions. She hastened to send her children to bed, and then asked the yellow man's leave to send off Cosette, "who had been very tired during the day," she added with a maternal air. Cosette went off to bed carrying Catherine in her arms. The landlady went from time to time to the other end of the room, where her husband was, in order to relieve her mind. She exchanged with him a few sentences, which were the more furious because she dared not utter them aloud.

"Old ass! what has he got in his noddle to come and disturb us in this way; to wish that little monster to play; to give her dolls,—dolls worth forty francs, to a wretch whom I would gladly sell for forty sous? A little more, and he would call her 'Your Majesty,' like the Duchesse de Berry. Can he be in his senses?

The mysterious old fellow must be cracked!"

"Why so? It is very simple," Thénardier replied. "Suppose it amuses him? It amuses you that the little one should work; it amuses him to see her play. He has a right, for a traveller can do as he likes so long as he pays. If this old man is a philanthropist, how does it concern you? If he is an ass, it is no business of yours. Why do you interfere, so long as he has money?"

This was the language of a master and the reasoning of a landlord, neither of which admitted a reply.

The man was resting his elbow on the table, and had resumed his thoughtful attitude; the other travellers, pedlers, and carriers had gone away or left off singing. They regarded him from a distance with a sort of respectful fear; this poorly-clad individual, who drew hind-wheels from his pocket with such ease and lavished gigantic dolls on ragged girls, was assuredly a magnificent and formidable man. Several hours passed, midnight mass was finished, the matin bell had been rung, the drinkers had gone away, the pot-house was closed, the fire was out in the tap-room, but the stranger still remained at the same spot and in the same posture. From time to time he changed the elbow on which he was leaning, that was all; but he had not uttered a syllable since Cosette went off to bed. The Thénardiers alone remained in the room, through politeness and curiosity.

"Is he going to pass the night like that?" the landlady pouted. When it struck two, she declared herself conquered, and said to her husband, "I am off to bed; you can do as you like." The husband sat down at a table in a corner, lit a candle, and began reading the Courrier Français. A good hour passed, during which the worthy host read the paper through thrice from the date of the number to the imprint, but the stranger did not stir. Thénardier moved, coughed, spat, and made his chair creak, but the man made no movement. "Can he be asleep?" Thénardier thought. The man was not asleep, but no movement aroused him. At length the landlord doffed his cap, walked up gently, and ventured to say,—

"Do you not wish to repose, sir?"

"To sleep" would have appeared to him excessive and familiar, while "repose" hinted at luxury, and was respectful. Such words have the mysterious and admirable quality of swelling the bill on the next morning: a room in which you sleep costs twenty sous; one in which you repose costs twenty francs.

"Why, you are right," said the stranger; "where is your stable?"

"I will show you the way, sir," Thénardier replied with a smile.

He took the candle; the man fetched his stick and bundle, and Thénardier led him to a room on the first floor, which was most luxurious, with its mahogany furniture, and the bed with its red cotton curtains.

"What is this?" the traveller asked.

"Our own wedding bed-room," the landlord replied; "my wife and I occupy another, and this room is only entered three or four times a year."

"I should have preferred the stable," the man said roughly. Thénardier pretended not to hear this disagreeable reflection, but lit two new wax candles standing on the mantel-piece. A rather large fire was flashing in the grate. Upon the mantel-piece was also a woman's head-dress, made of silver tissue and orange-flowers, under a glass shade.

"And what is this?" the stranger continued.

"That, sir," Thénardier said, "is my wife's wedding bonnet."

The traveller looked at the object in a way that seemed to say,—"Then there was a moment when this monster was a virgin."

This was a falsehood of Thénardier's. When he hired the house to convert it into a public, he found this

room thus furnished, and bought the lot, thinking that it would cast a graceful shadow over his "spouse," and that his house would derive from it what the English call respectability. When the traveller turned round, Thénardier had disappeared, without saying good-evening, as he did not wish to treat with disrespectful cordiality a man whom he intended to flay royally the next morning. The landlord went to his room, where his wife was in bed, but not asleep. So soon as she heard her husband's footstep, she said to him,—

"You know that I mean to turn Cosette out to-morrow?" Thénardier coldly answered,—

"How you go on!"

They exchanged no more words, and a few minutes after the candle was extinguished. For his part, the stranger had placed his stick and bundle in a corner. When the landlord had withdrawn, he sat down in an easy-chair and remained thoughtful for a time; then he took off his shoes, seized one of the candlesticks, and left the room, looking about him as if in search of something. He went along a passage and reached the staircase; here he heard a very gentle sound, like the breathing of a child. He followed this sound, and reached a triangular closet under the stairs, or, to speak more correctly, formed by the stairs themselves. Here, among old hampers and potsherds, in dust and cobwebs, there was a bed, if we may apply the term to a paillasse so rotten as to show the straw, and a blanket so torn as to show the mattress. There were no sheets, and all this lay on the ground; in this bed Cosette was sleeping. The man walked up and gazed at her. Cosette was fast asleep and had all her clothes on; in winter she did not undress, that she might be less cold. She was holding to her bosom the doll, whose large open eyes glistened in the darkness; from time to time she gave a heavy sigh, as if about to awake, and pressed the doll almost convulsively in her arms. There was nothing by her bed-side but one of her wooden shoes. Through an open door close by a large dark room could be seen, through which the stranger entered. At the end, two little white beds, belonging to Éponine and Azelma, were visible through a glass door. Behind this a wicker curtainless cradle was half hidden, in which slept the little boy who had been crying all the evening.

The stranger conjectured that this room communicated with that of the Thénardiers. He was about to return, when his eye fell on the chimney,—one of those vast inn chimneys, in which there is always so little fire when there is a frost, and which are so cold to look at. In this chimney there was no fire, not even ashes; but what there was in it attracted the travellers attention. He saw two little child's shoes of coquettish shape and unequal size; and the traveller recollected the graceful and immemorial custom of children who place their shoe in the chimney on Christmas night, in order to obtain some glittering present from their good fairy in the darkness. Éponine and Azelma had not failed in this observance. The traveller bent down; the fairy, that is, the mother, had already paid her visit, and in each shoe a handsome ten-sou piece could be seen shining. The man rose and was going away, when he observed another object in the darkest corner of the hearth; he looked at it, and recognized a hideous wooden shoe, half broken and covered with ashes and dried mud. It was Cosette's; with the touching confidence of children who may be disappointed, but are never discouraged, she had also placed her shoe in the chimney. Hope in a child that has never known aught but despair is a sublime and affecting thing. There was nothing in this shoe; but the stranger felt in his pocket and laid a louis d'or in it; then he crept noiselessly back to his bed-room.

**CHAPTER IX.**

## THÉNARDIER AT WORK.

The next morning, almost two hours before daybreak, Thénardier was seated, pen in hand, at a table in the tap-room, and making out the bill of the yellow-coated traveller. His wife, standing behind him, was watching him; they did not exchange a syllable; on one side there was a profound meditation, on the other that profound admiration with which people watch a marvel of the human mind expanding. A noise could be heard in the house; it was the Lark sweeping the stairs. At the end of a quarter of an hour and some erasures, Thénardier produced this masterpiece,—

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"THE GENT IN NO. 1.
Supper....  3 francs.
Bed....... 10  "
Candles...  5  "
Fire......  4  "
Service...  1  "

Total      23 francs."
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Service was written serviss.

"Twenty-three francs!" the wife exclaimed, with an admiration mingled with some hesitation.

Like all great artists, Thénardier was not satisfied, and said, "Pooh!" It was the accent of Castlereagh drawing up the little bill for France to pay at the Congress of Vienna.

"Monsieur Thénardier, you are right; he certainly owes it," the wife muttered, thinking of the doll given to Cosette in the presence of her children: "it is fair, but it is too much; he will not pay it."

Thénardier gave his cold laugh, and said, "He will pay it!"

This laugh was the supreme signification of certainty and authority; what was said in this way must be. The wife made no objection, but began arranging the tables, while her husband walked up and down the room; a moment after he added,—

"Why, I owe fifteen hundred francs."

He sat down in the ingle-nook, meditating with his feet in the warm ashes.

"By the bye," the wife continued, "you don't forget that I mean to bundle out Cosette to-day? The monster! she eats my heart with her doll; I would sooner marry Louis XVIII. than keep her a day longer in the house."

Thénardier lit his pipe, and said between two puffs,—"You will hand the man the bill."

Then he went out, and had scarce left the room ere the traveller entered; Thénardier at once appeared behind and stood in the half-open door, only visible to his wife. The yellow man carried his stick and bundle in his hand.

"Up so soon?" the landlady said. "Are you going to leave us already, sir?"

While speaking this, she turned the bill in her hands with an embarrassed air and made folds in it with her nails; her harsh face had an unusual look of timidity and scruple. It seemed to her difficult to present such a bill to a man who looked so thoroughly poor. The traveller seemed absent and preoccupied, as he replied,—

"Yes, Madame, I am going."

"Then you had no business to transact at Montfermeil, sir?" she continued.

"No; I am merely passing through, that is all. What do I owe you, Madame?"

The landlady, without replying, handed him the folded paper; he opened and looked at it, but his attention was visibly elsewhere.

"Do you do a good business here?" he asked.

"Tolerably well, sir," the landlady answered, stupefied at not seeing any other explosion; then she went on with an elegiac and lamentable accent,—

"Oh, sir, times are very bad! And then there are So few respectable people in these parts. It is lucky we have now and then generous and rich travellers like yourself, sir, for the expenses are so high. Why, that little girl costs us our eyes out of our head."

"What little girl?"

"Why, you know, Cosette, the Lark, as they call her hereabout."

"Oh!" said the man.

She continued,—

"What asses these peasants are with these nick-names! She looks more like a bat than a lark. You see, sir, we don't ask for charity, but we can't give it; our earnings are small and our expenses great,—the license, the door and window tax, and so on! You know, sir, that the Government claims a terrible deal of money. And then I have my own daughters, and do not care to support another person's child."

The man replied, in a voice which he strove to render careless, and in which there was a tremor,—

"And suppose you were freed of her?"

"Of whom,—of Cosette?"

The landlady's red and violent face was illumined by a hideous grin.

"Ah, sir, my good sir; take her, keep her, carry her off, sugar her, stuff her with truffles, eat her, drink her, and may all the Saints in Paradise bless you!"

"It is settled."

"You really will take her away at once?"

"At once. Call her."

"Cosette!" the landlady shouted.

"In the mean while," the man continued, "I will pay my score. How much is it?"

He took a glance at the bill, and could not restrain a start of surprise. Twenty-three francs! He looked at the landlady and repeated, "Twenty-three francs?" There was in his pronunciation of the two words the accent which separates the point of exclamation from the point of interrogation. Madame Thénardier had had time to prepare for the collision, and hence answered with assurance,—

"Yes, sir, twenty-three francs."

The stranger laid five five-franc pieces on the table.

"Go and fetch the girl," he said.

At this moment Thénardier walked into the middle of the room and said,—

"The gentleman owes twenty-six sous."

"Twenty-six sous!" the wife exclaimed.

"Twenty sous for the bed-room," Thénardier continued coldly, "and six for the supper. As for the girl, I must talk a little with the gentleman first. Leave us, wife."

The landlady had one of those bedazzlements which unforeseen flashes of talent produced; she felt that the great actor had come on the stage, made no answer, and went out. So soon as they were alone Thénardier offered the traveller a chair. He sat down; Thénardier remained standing, and his face assumed a singular expression of kindliness and simplicity.

"I must tell you," he said, "sir, that I adore the child."

The stranger looked at him fixedly.

"What child?"

Thénardier continued,—

"How strange it is, but you grow attached to them. What is the meaning of all that money? Put it back in your pocket; I adore the child."

"What child?" the stranger asked.

"Why, our little Cosette! Don't you wish to take her from us? Well, I speak frankly, and as true as you are an honest man, I cannot consent. I should miss the child, for I have known her since she was a baby: it is true that she costs us money, that she has her faults, that we are not rich, and that I paid more than upwards of four hundred francs for medicines alone in one of her illnesses. She has neither father nor mother, and I brought her up; and I have bread both for her and for me. Look you, I am fond of the child; affection grows on you; I am a good foolish fellow, and don't reason; I love the girl, and though my wife is quick, she loves her too. She is like our own child, and I want to hear her prattle in the house."

The stranger still looked at him fixedly, as he continued,—

"Excuse me, sir, but a child can't be given like that to the first passer-by. You will allow that I am right? I don't say that you are not rich and look like a very worthy man, and that it may be for her welfare; but I am bound to know. You understand that supposing I let her go and sacrificed myself, I should like to know where she is going, and not lose her out of sight; I should wish to know where she is, and go and see her now and then, to convince the child that her foster-father is watching over her. In short, there are some things which are not possible; I don't even know your name. I ought at least to see some scrap of paper, a passport, and so on."

The stranger, without ceasing to fix on him that look which pierces to the bottom of the conscience, said in a grave, firm voice,—

"Monsieur Thénardier, a man does not require a passport to go four leagues from Paris; and if I take Cosette away, I take her away, that is all. You will not know my name, my residence, or where she is; and it is my intention that she shall never see you again. I break the string which she has round her foot, and away she flies. Does that suit you? Yes or no!"

In the same way as demons and genii recognize, by certain signs, the presence of a superior deity, Thénardier understood that he had to do with a very strong man. It was a sort of intuition, and he comprehended with his distinct and sagacious promptitude. On the previous evening, while drinking, smoking, and singing, he had constantly looked at the stranger, watching him like a cat and studying him like a mathematician. He had both watched him on his own account, through pleasure and instinct,

and played the spy on him as if paid to do so. Not a gesture or movement of the yellow-coated man escaped him, and even before the stranger so clearly manifested his interest in Cosette, Thénardier divined it. He surprised the profound glances of this old man which constantly reverted to the child. Why this interest? Who was this man? Why was his attire so wretched when his purse was so full? These questions he asked himself and could not answer, and they irritated him; he reflected on them the whole night. He could not be Cosette's father. Was he her grandfather? Then, why did he not make himself known at once? When a man has a claim, he proves it, and this man evidently had no claim on Cosette. In that case, what was it? Thénardier lost himself in suppositions; he caught a gleam of everything and saw nothing. However this might be, on beginning the conversation, feeling sure that there was a secret in all this, and that the man was interested in remaining in the shadow, he felt himself strong; but on hearing the stranger's firm and distinct answer, when he saw that this mysterious person was simply mysterious, he felt himself weak. He had not expected anything of this sort, and it routed his conjectures. He rallied his ideas, and weighed all this in a second. Thénardier was one of those men who judge of a situation at a glance, and considered that it was the moment to advance straight and rapidly. He behaved like great captains at that decisive instant which they alone can recognize, and suddenly unmasked his battery.

"Sir," he said, "I want one thousand five hundred francs."

The stranger drew from his side-pocket an old black leathern portfolio, and took from it three bank-notes which he laid on the table; then he placed his large thumb on the notes, and said to the landlord, —

"Bring Cosette here."

While this was taking place, what was Cosette about? On waking, she ran to her sabot and found the gold coin in it; it was not a napoleon, but one of those new twenty-franc pieces of the Restoration, on which the Prussian queue was substituted for the crown of laurels. Cosette was dazzled, and her destiny was beginning to intoxicate her; she knew not what a gold piece was, she had never seen one, and she hurriedly hid it in her pocket, as if she had stolen it. She felt it was really hers; she guessed whence the gift came, but she experienced a feeling of joy full of fear. She was happy, but she was more stupefied; these magnificent things did not seem to her real,—the doll frightened her, the gold coin frightened her, and she trembled vaguely at this magnificence. The stranger alone did not frighten her; on the contrary, he reassured her since the previous evening. Through her amazement and her sleep, she thought in her little childish mind of this man, who looked so old and poor and sad, and who was so rich and good. Ever since she met him in the wood all had changed for her, as it were. Cosette, less happy than the meanest swallow, had never yet known what it is to take refuge in the shadow and beneath the wing of her mother; for five years, that is to say, so far back as her thoughts went, the poor child had trembled and shuddered. She had always been exposed in her nudity to the bleak blast of misfortune, and she felt as if she were clothed; formerly her soul was cold, now it was warm. Cosette no longer felt afraid of her mistress, for she was no longer alone; she had some one by her side. She had set about her daily work very quickly, and the louis, which she had in the same pocket from which the fifteen-sous piece fell on the previous night, caused her thoughts to stray. She did not dare touch it, but she looked at it for five minutes at a time. While sweeping the stairs, she stood motionless, forgetting her broom and the whole world, engaged in watching this star sparkle in her pocket. It was during one of these contemplations that her mistress came to her; by her husband's order she had come to fetch the child, and, extraordinary to say, did not strike her, or even abuse her.

"Cosette," she said almost gently, "come directly."

A moment after, Cosette entered the tap-room. The stranger took his bundle and untied it; it contained a complete mourning dress for a child of seven years of age.

"My dear," the man said, "take these and go and dress yourself quickly."

Day was breaking, when those inhabitants of Montfermeil who were beginning to open their doors saw a poorly-clad man and a girl, holding a large doll, going along the Paris road toward Livry. It was our man and Cosette. No one knew the man, and few recognized Cosette in her new dress. Cosette was going away. With whom, she was ignorant. Where to, she did not know. All she understood was that she was leaving Thénardier's pot-house behind her; no one thought of saying good-by to her, or she to any one. She left the house, hated and hating. Poor gentle being, whose heart up to this hour had only been compressed!

Cosette walked gravely, opening her large eyes and looking at the sky; she had placed her louis in the pocket of her new apron, and from time to time stooped down and looked at it, and then at her companion.

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**CHAPTER X.**

## THÉNARDIER HAS ONE REGRET.

Madame Thénardier, according to her habit, had left her husband to act, and anticipated grand results. When the man and Cosette had left, Thénardier let a good quarter of an hour elapse, then took her on one side and showed her the fifteen hundred francs.

"Is that all?" she said.

It was the first time since her marriage that she ventured to criticise an act of her master. The blow went home.

"You are right," he said; "I am an imbecile! Give me my hat." He thrust the three notes into his pocket and went out; but he made a mistake and first turned to the right. Some neighbors of whom he inquired put him on the right track, and he walked along at a great rate, and soliloquizing.

"The man is evidently a millionnaire dressed in yellow, and I am a blockhead. He gave first twenty sous, then five francs, then fifty francs, then fifteen hundred francs, and all with the same facility. He would have given fifteen thousand francs! But I shall overtake him." And then, the bundle of clothes prepared beforehand was singular, and there was a mystery behind it. Now mysteries must not be let go when you hold them, for the secrets of the rich are sponges full of gold, if you know how to squeeze them. All these thoughts whirled about his brain. "I am an ass!" he said. On leaving Montfermeil and reaching the angle formed by the Livry road, you can see it running for a long distance before you upon the plateau. On getting to this point he calculated that he should see the man and child, and looked as far as he could, but saw nothing. He inquired again, and passers-by told him that the man and the child he was looking for had gone in the direction of Gagny wood. He followed them; for, though they had the start of him, a child walks slowly. He went fast, and then, again, the country was familiar to him. All at once he stopped and smote his forehead, like a man who has forgotten the essential thing and is ready to retrace his steps.

"I ought to have brought my gun," he said to himself. Thénardier was one of those double natures, that pass at times among us without our knowledge, and disappear unknown, because destiny has only shown us one side of them: it is the fate of many men to live thus half submerged. In an ordinary situation Thénardier had everything necessary to make him—we do not say to be—what is conventionally termed an honest tradesman or a worthy citizen. At the same time, certain circumstances being given, certain shocks stirring up his nature from the bottom, he had everything required to make

him a villain. He was a shop-keeper in whom there was a monster. Satan must at times crouch in a corner of the lair in which Thénardier lived, and dream before this hideous masterpiece. After a moment's hesitation he thought,—

"Nonsense! they would have time to escape."

And he continued his walk, going rapidly ahead and almost with an air of certainty, displaying the sagacity of a fox scenting a flock of partridges. In fact, when he had passed the ponds and cut across the wide turfed glade which covers the old water-way of the Abbey de Chelles, he noticed under a shrub a hat, on which he built many conjectures. The shrub was low, and Thénardier saw that the man and Cosette were sitting under it. The child could not be seen, but the doll's head was visible. Thénardier was not mistaken; the man had sat down there to let the child rest a little, and the tavern-keeper dodged round the shrub and suddenly appeared before those whom he was seeking.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, panting, "but here are your fifteen hundred francs."

The man raised his eyes.

"What is the meaning of this?"

Thénardier answered respectfully,—

"It means, sir, that I am going to take Cosette back!"

The child started, and clung to the man. The latter answered, looking fixedly at Thénardier and leaving a space between each word,—

"You—take—Cosette—back?"

"Yes, sir, I do: and I must tell you that I have reflected. The truth is, that I have no right to give her to you. Look you, I am an honest man: the little one does not belong to me, but to her mother, who intrusted her to me, and I can only give her back to her mother. You will say to me, 'Her mother is dead.' Good. In that case, I can only surrender Cosette to a person who brings me a written authority from her mother. That is clear enough."

The man, without answering, felt in his pocket, and Thénardier saw the portfolio with the bank-notes reappear. He gave a start of joy.

"Good," he thought; "I have him, he is going to bribe me."

Before opening the portfolio the traveller looked around him; the place was utterly deserted, and there was not a soul in the wood or the valley. The man opened the pocket-book and took out, not the handful of bank-notes which Thénardier anticipated, but a simple sheet of paper, which he opened and handed to the landlord, saying,—

"You are right: read."

Thénardier took the paper and read:—

> "M. sur M., March 25, 1823.
> "MONSIEUR THÉNARDIER,—You will hand over Cosette to the bearer, who will pay up all little matters.
>
> Yours respectfully,
> FANTINE."

"Do you know the signature?" the man continued.

It was really Fantine's, and Thénardier recognized it, and had no reply. He felt a double annoyance—first, at having to renounce the bribery which he expected; and secondly, that of being beaten. The man added,—

"You can keep that paper as your discharge."

Thénardier folded it up neatly, and growled,—

"The signature is tolerably well imitated. Well, be it so."

Then he attempted a desperate effort.

"So far, so good, sir, since you are the bearer; but the expenses must be paid, and there is a heavy sum owing me."

The man rose, and said, as he dusted his threadbare cuff, "Monsieur Thénardier, in January the mother calculated that she owed you 120 francs; in February you sent in an account of 500 francs; you received 300 at the end of that month, and 300 more early in March. Since then nine months have elapsed at the agreed-on price of fifteen francs, which makes 135 francs. You had received 100 francs too much, so this leaves 35 francs owing you, and I have just given you 1500."

Thénardier felt just like the wolf when it is caught by the leg in a steel trap.

"Who in the fiend's name is this man?" he thought.

He behaved like the wolf: he shook himself: impudence had carried him through before now.

"Monsieur, I don't know your name," he said boldly, and, putting off his respectful manner, "if you do not give me 3000 francs I shall take Cosette back."

The stranger said quietly, "Come, Cosette." He took the child by his left hand, and with the right picked up his stick. Thénardier noticed the hugeness of the stick and the solitude of the spot; the man buried himself in the wood, leaving the landlord motionless and confounded. As he walked away Thénardier regarded his broad shoulders and enormous fists, then his eye fell on his own thin arms. "I must have been a fool," he said, "not to bring my gun, as I was going to the chase."

Still the tavern-keeper did not give in. "I will know where he goes," he said, and began following them at a distance. Two things remained in his hands,—irony in the shape of the scrap of paper signed "Fantine," and a consolation in the 1500 francs. The man led Cosette in the direction of Bondy; he walked slowly, with drooping head and in a pensive attitude. Winter had rendered the wood transparent, and hence Thénardier did not lose sight of them, while keeping some distance off. From time to time the man turned round and looked to see whether he were followed, and suddenly perceived Thénardier. He drew Cosette into a clump of trees, in which they both disappeared. "Confusion!" said Thénardier, as he doubled his pace. The closeness of the trees compelled him to draw nearer to them, and when the man was at the thickest part he turned round and saw Thénardier, although the latter tried to conceal himself in the branches. The man gave him a restless glance, then tossed his head and continued his walk. Thénardier followed him; but after going some two hundred yards the man turned and looked at him so menacingly that the landlord thought it "useless" to go any farther, and turned back.

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**XI.**

## NO. 9430 REAPPEARS, AND COSETTE WINS IT IN THE LOTTERY.

Jean Valjean was not dead.

When he fell into the sea, or rather when he threw himself into it, he was, as we have seen, without irons. He swam in the trough of the sea alongside a vessel at anchor, to which a skiff was made fast. He managed to conceal himself in this skiff until evening. When night came he entered the water again and reached the shore at a short distance from Cape Brun. There, as he had no lack of money, he was able to provide himself with clothes. An inn in the suburbs of Balaguier was then the dressing-room of escaped convicts,—a profitable line of business. Then, Jean Valjean, like all these unhappy runaways who try to guard against the law and chance meetings, followed a track both obscure and winding. He found his first shelter at Pradeux near Beausset. From there he journeyed toward Grand-Villard, near Briançon, in the Upper Alps,—a groping and restless flight, a mole-track with unknown branches. Later, some trace of his passage could be found at l'Ain, in the district of Civrieux, in the Pyrenees at Accons, at a place called Grange-de-Doumecq, near the hamlet of Chavailles and in the suburbs of Périgueux, at Brienne, in the Canton of Chapelle-Gonaguet. He reached Paris. We have just seen him at Montfermeil.

His first care, on reaching Paris, had been to buy mourning robes for a little girl of seven or eight years, then to find a lodging-place. That done, he made his appearance at Montfermeil.

It will be remembered that once before at the time of his former escape he had made there a mysterious journey of which justice had had some information.

However, he was thought to be dead, and this thickened the obscurity which surrounded him. While in Paris there fell into his hands a journal which recorded the fact. He felt reassured, and almost as much at peace as if he really were dead.

On the very evening of the day on which Jean Valjean saved Cosette from the clutches of Thénardier he came back to Paris. He re-entered the city at nightfall with the child, through the Barrière Monceaux. There he jumped into a cab which brought him to the esplanade of the Observatory. Here he got out, paid the driver, took Cosette by the hand, and they both took their course in the dark night through the deserted streets near the Oursine and the Glacière toward the Boulevard de l'Hôpital.

The day had been strange and full of emotions for Cosette. They had dined behind hedges on bread and cheese bought at unfrequented cook-shops; they had frequently changed carriages, and made part of the journey on foot. She did not complain, but she was tired, and Jean Valjean felt it by his hand, on which she hung more and more as she walked. He took her on his back; Cosette, without letting go of Catherine, laid her head on his shoulder and fell asleep.

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**BOOK IV.**

# THE GORBEAU TENEMENT.

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**I.**

## MASTER GORBEAU.

Forty years ago the solitary walker who ventured into the lost districts of the Salpêtrière, and went up the boulevard as far as the Barrière d'Italie, reached a quarter where it might be said that Paris disappeared. It was not solitude, for there were passers-by; it was not the country, for there were houses and streets; it was not a town, for the streets had ruts as large as those in the high-roads, and grass grew

in them; and it was not a village, for the houses were too lofty. What was it then? It was an inhabited place where there was nobody, a deserted spot where there was somebody; it was a boulevard of the great city, a street of Paris, more ferocious at night than a forest, more gloomy by day than a cemetery. It was the old quarter of the Marché-aux-Chevaux. The rambler, if he risked himself beyond the tottering walls of the market, if he even consented to pass the Rue du Petit-Banquier, reached the corner of the Rue des Vignes St. Marcel, a but little known latitude, after leaving on his right a garden protected by high walls; next a field in which stood tan-mills resembling gigantic beaver-dams; next an enclosure encumbered with planks, tree-stumps, sawdust, and chips, on the top of which a large dog barked; then a long low wall, all in ruins, with a small, decrepit back gate, covered with moss, which burst into flower in spring; and lastly, in the most desolate spot, a hideous and decrepit building, on which could be read in large letters, "Stick no Bills." Here, close to a foundry, and between two garden walls, could be seen, at the time of which we write, a poor house, which, at the first glance, seemed small as a cottage, but was in reality large as a cathedral. It turned its gable end to the public thoroughfare, and hence came its apparent smallness; nearly the whole house was concealed, and only a door and a window could be perceived.

This house was only one story high. On examining it, the first fact that struck you was that the door could never have been other than that of a low lodging-house, while the window, had it been carved in stone instead of made of stucco, might have belonged to a mansion. The door was nothing but a collection of worm-eaten planks, clumsily held together by roughly-planed cross-beams. It opened immediately on a steep staircase, muddy, dirty, and dusty, of the same width as itself, which could be seen from the street mounting steep as a ladder, and disappearing in the gloom between two walls. The top of the clumsy opening in which the door stood was masked by a thin deal plank, in which a triangular hole had been cut. On the inside of the door a brush dipped in ink had clumsily traced No. 52, while over the skylight the same brush had painted No. 50; so people hesitated. Dust-colored rags hung like a drapery over the triangular skylight. The window was wide, tolerably lofty, filled with large panes of glass, and protected by Venetian shutters; but these panes had various wounds, at once concealed and betrayed by an ingenious bandage of paper, and the Venetian shutters, broken and hanging from their hinges, threatened passers-by more than they protected the inhabitants. The horizontal screen-boards were wanting here and there, and these places had been filled up with boards nailed on perpendicularly; so that the affair began by being a Venetian screen, and ended by being a shutter. This door, which had an unclean look, and this window, which looked honest, though fallen in the world, produced the effect of two beggars walking side by side with two different faces under the same rags, the one having always been a mendicant, while the other had once been a gentleman. The staircase led to a very large building, which resembled a shed which had been converted into a house. This building had, as its intestinal tube, a long passage, upon which opened, right and left, compartments of various dimensions, habitable at a pinch, and more like booths than cells. These rooms looked out on the dreary landscape around. The whole was dark, wearisome, dull, melancholy, and sepulchral, and traversed, according as the cracks were in the roof or the door, by cold sunbeams or sharp draughts. An interesting and picturesque peculiarity of houses of this description is the enormous size of the cobwebs. To the left of the door, on the boulevard, and at about six feet from the ground, a bricked-up window formed a square hole filled by passing lads with stones. A portion of this building has been recently demolished, but what still remains will allow an idea to be formed of what it was. The whole affair is not more than a century old; one hundred years are the youth of a church and the old age of a human abode. It seems as if the house of man shares his brief tenure, and the House of God His eternity. The postman called this house No. 50-52, but it was known in the quarter by the name of Maison Gorbeau. Let us state whence this title came.

The collectors of things not generally known, who make anecdotal herbals, and prick fugacious dates into their memory with a pin, know that there were in Paris, about the year 1770, two advocates at the

Châtelet of the names of Corbeau and Renard,—two names foreseen by Lafontaine. The opportunity was too good to be neglected, and ere long the following parody, in rather halting verse, was in everybody's mouth:—

"Maître Corbeau, sur un dossier perché,
Tenait dans son bec une saisie exécutoire;
Maître Renard, par l'odeur alléché,
Lui fit à peu près cette histoire:
Eh, bonjour," etc.

The two honest lawyers, who were unable to hold their heads up under the outbursts of laughter that followed them, resolved to get rid of their names, and for that purpose appealed to the king. The petition was handed to Louis XV. on the very day when the Papal Nuncio kneeling on one side, and Cardinal de la Roche Aymon on the other, were drawing the slippers on to the bare feet of Madame du Barry, who had just left her couch. The king, who was laughing, continued to laugh, gayly passed from the two bishops to the two lawyers, and forgave them their names, or nearly so. By royal authority Master Corbeau was allowed to add a tail to his initial letter and become Gorbeau; but Master Renard was less fortunate,—he could only obtain leave to place a P before his R, and call himself Prenard, so that the second name was nearly as significant as the first. Now, according to local tradition, Master Gorbeau had been owner of the building numbered 50-52, on the Boulevard de l'Hôpital, and was even author of the grand window. From this has this tumble-down place the name of Maison Gorbeau. Opposite the house there stands, amid the boulevard trees, an elm which is nearly three parts dead; a little farther on is the Rue de la Barrière des Gobelins,—a street at that time without houses, unpaved, planted with badly-growing trees, and which ran straight down to the city walls. A copperas smell issues in puffs from the roof of an adjacent manufactory. The barrier was close by, and in 1823 the city walls were still in existence. The barrier itself cast a gloom over the mind, for it was on the road to Bicêtre. Under the Empire and the Restoration men condemned to death returned to Paris through it on the day of their execution. Here was committed, about the year 1829, that mysterious assassination called "the murder of the Barrière de Fontainebleau,"—a frightful problem which has never been elucidated, a mournful enigma which has never been solved. A few steps farther on you come to the fatal Rue Croulebarbe, in which Ulbach stabbed the woman who looked after the Ivry goats, to the sound of thunder, as in a melodrama. A few more steps and you reach the abominable pollard-elms of the Barrière St. Jacques, that philanthropic expedient concealing the scaffold, the paltry, disgraceful Place de Grève of a shop-keeping society, which has recoiled before the penalty of death, though not daring to abolish it with grandeur or keep it up with authority. Thirty-seven years ago, and leaving aside this place St. Jacques, which was, as it were, predestined, and has always been horrible, the gloomiest point perhaps of all this gloomy boulevard was that where No. 50-52 stood. Tradespeople did not begin to brood there till five-and-twenty years later. The place was morose, for you felt yourself between La Salpêtrière, whose dome was just visible, and Bicêtre, whose barrier you could touch; that is to say, between male and female mania. As far as the eye could reach, nothing was visible save the slaughter-houses, the city wall, and a few rare frontages of foundries, resembling barracks or monasteries. Everywhere were sheds and rubbish, old walls black as coffins, new walls white as winding-sheets; everywhere parallel rows of trees, buildings standing in rows, long odd lines, and the gloomy sadness of right angles. There was not a diversity of the soil, not a single architectural whim; the ensemble was freezing, regular, and hideous. Nothing makes the heart so heavy as symmetry, because symmetry is ennui, and ennui is the basis of mourning, a yawning despair. It is possible to imagine something more horrible than an Inferno in which people suffer; it is one in which they are ennuyés. If such an Inferno existed, this section of the Boulevard de l'Hôpital might be its avenue.

At nightfall, at the moment when light disappears, and before all in winter, at the hour when the

evening breeze is tearing from the elms their last rusty leaves, when the darkness is profound and starless, and when the moon and the wind make rents in the clouds, this boulevard became really terrifying. The black outlines were lost in the gloom, and the passer-by could not refrain from thinking of the countless gallows traditions of the spot. This solitude, in which so many crimes had been committed, had something awful about it; traps could almost be foreseen in the darkness, all the confused shapes of the darkness appeared suspicious, and the long, hollow squares noticed between the trees seemed graves. By day it was ugly, in the evening lugubrious, and at night sinister. In the summer twilight a few old women might be seen sitting under the elms upon raw, rotted benches; these worthy old ladies had a partiality for begging. Even at the time of which we write, however, this quarter, which looked more superannuated than ancient, was striving to transform itself, and any one who wished to see it was obliged to make haste, for each day some detail disappeared from the ensemble. For the last twenty years the Orleans railway station has been by the side of the old faubourg, and has worked it up; for wherever a station is built on the skirt of a capital it is the death of a suburb and the birth of a town. Round these centres of popular movement, at the rolling of these mighty machines, under the breath of these monstrous horses of civilization which devour coal and snort fire, the earth trembles, and opens to swallow up the old abodes of men and bring forth new ones; the old houses crumble away, and new ones rise in their place.

From the day when the Orleans railway station invaded the territory of the Salpêtrière, the old narrow streets that border the Jardin des Plantes have been shaken down, traversed as they are three or four times a day by those currents of diligences, hackney coaches, and omnibuses, which, within a given time, drive back the houses on both sides: for it is a curious though perfectly true fact that, just as in large capitals the sun makes the fronts of houses grow and expand to the south, the frequent passing of vehicles widens streets. The symptoms of a new life are visible in the remotest corners of this old provincial district; pavement is being laid down and is beginning to extend to spots where there are as yet no wayfarers. One memorable morning in July, 1845, the bitumen caldrons were suddenly seen smoking there, and on that day it may be said that civilization reached the Rue de l'Oursine, and that Paris entered the Faubourg St. Marceau.

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**CHAPTER II.**

## THE NEST OF AN OWL AND A LINNET.

Jean Valjean stopped before No. 50-52. Like the dull bird, he had selected this deserted spot in which to build his nest. He felt in his pocket, took out a latch-key, opened and carefully shut the door again, and went upstairs, still carrying Cosette on his back. When he reached the landing he took from his pocket a key, with which he opened another door. The room he entered was a sort of spacious garret, furnished with a mattress laid on the ground, a table, and a few chairs. There was a burning stove in the corner, and the boulevard lamp faintly illumined this poor interior. At the end of the room was a closet with a poor bedstead, to which Jean Valjean carried the child and laid her on it, without awaking her. He struck a light and lit a candle,—all this had been prepared on the previous day,—and he then began gazing at Cosette with a look full of ecstasy, in which the expression of kindness and tenderness almost attained delirium. The little girl, with that calm confidence which only appertains to extreme strength and extreme weakness, had fallen asleep without knowing with whom she was, and continued to sleep without knowing where she was. Jean Valjean bent down and kissed the child's hand. Nine months previously he had kissed her mother's hand, who bad also just fallen asleep, and the same painful, religious, poignant feeling filled his heart. He knelt down by the side of Cosette's bed.

Long after daybreak the child was still asleep. A pale beam of the December sun filtered through the window and made large strips of light and shadow on the ceiling. Suddenly a heavily-laden wagon, passing along the boulevard, shook the house like a blast of wind and made it tremble from top to bottom.

"Yes, Madame," Cosette cried, waking with a start, "I am coming directly."

And she jumped out of bed, her eyelids still half closed by the weight of sleep, and stretched out her arms to a corner of the wall.

"Oh, goodness, my broom!" she said.

She opened her eyes thoroughly, and saw Jean Valjean's smiling face.

"Ah, it is true," the child said. "Good-morning, sir.

Children accept at once and familiarly joy and happiness, for they are themselves by nature happiness and joy. Cosette saw Catherine at the foot of her bed, caught her up, and while playing, asked Jean Valjean a hundred questions,—"Where was she? Was Paris large? Was Madame Thénardier a long way off, and would she never return?" etc. etc. etc. All at once she exclaimed, "How pretty it is here!"

It was a frightful hole, but she felt herself free.

"Must I sweep?" she at length continued.

"Play," said Jean Valjean.

The day passed in this way; and Cosette, not feeling any anxiety at understanding nothing, was inexpressibly happy between her doll and this good man.

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**CHAPTER III.**

## TWO EVILS MAKE A GOOD.

The next morning at daybreak Jean Valjean was again standing by Cosette's bedside; he was motionless and waiting for her to awake: something new was entering his soul. Jean Valjean had never loved anything. For twenty-five years he had been alone in the world, and had never been father, lover, husband, or friend. At the galleys he was wicked, gloomy, chaste, ignorant, and ferocious,—the heart of the old convict was full of virginities. His sister and his sister's children had only left in him a vague and distant reminiscence, which in the end entirely faded away: he had made every effort to find them again, and, not being able to do so, forgot them,—human nature is thus constituted. The other tender emotions of his youth, if he had any, had fallen into an abyss. When he saw Cosette, when he carried her off, he felt his heart stirred: all the passion and affection there was in him was aroused and rushed toward this child. He went up to the bed on which she slept, and he trembled with joy: he felt pangs like a mother, and knew not what it was; for the great and strange emotion of a heart which is preparing to love is a very obscure and sweet thing. Poor old heart still young! But as he was fifty-five years of age and Cosette eight, all the love he might have felt during life was melted into a species of ineffable glow. This was the second white apparition he met: the Bishop had caused the dawn of virtue to rise on his horizon, and Cosette now produced that of love.

The first days passed in this bedazzlement. On her side Cosette became unconsciously different, poor little creature! She was so little when her mother left her that she did not remember; and like all children, who resemble the young vine-twigs that cling to everything, she tried to love, and had not

succeeded. All had repulsed her,—the Thénardiers, their children, and other children; she had loved the dog which died, and after that nothing and nobody would have anything to do with her. It is a sad thing to say, but at the age of eight she had a cold heart. It was not her fault, it was not that she lacked the faculty of loving; but it was, alas! the possibility. Hence, from the first day, all that felt and thought within her began to love the good man; and she experienced what she had never known before,—a feeling of expansion. The man no longer even produced the effect upon her of being old or poor; she found Jean Valjean handsome, in the same way as she found the garret pretty. Such are the effects of dawn, childhood, youth, and joy. The novelty of earth and life have something to do in it, and nothing is so charming as the coloring reflection of happiness upon an attic; in this way we have all a blue garret in our past. Nature had placed a profound interval, of fifty years, between Jean Valjean and Cosette; but destiny filled up this separation. Destiny suddenly united, and affianced with its irresistible power, these two uprooted existences so different in age, so similar in sorrow; and the one, in fact, was the complement of the other. Cosette's instinct sought a father, in the same way as Jean Valjean's sought a child, and to meet was to find each other. At the mysterious moment when their two hands clasped they were welded together; and when their two souls saw each other they recognized that each was necessary to the other, and joined in a close embrace. Taking the words in their most comprehensive and absolute meaning, we may say that, separated from everything by the walls of the tombs, Jean Valjean was the widower as Cosette was the orphan, and this situation caused Jean Valjean to become in a celestial manner Cosette's father. And, in truth, the mysterious impression produced upon Cosette in the Chelles wood by Jean Valjean's hand grasping hers in the darkness was not an illusion but a reality.

Jean Valjean had selected his asylum well, and in a security which might appear perfect. The room he occupied with Cosette was the one whose window looked out on the boulevard, and as it was the only one of the sort in the house, he had not to fear the curiosity of neighbors, either in front or on his side. The ground-floor of No. 50-52, a sort of rickety pentice, was employed as a tool-house by nursery-gardeners, and had no communication with the first floor. The latter, as we have said, contained several rooms, and a few garrets, one of which alone was occupied by the old woman who looked after Jean Valjean. It was this old woman who was known as the chief lodger, and who in reality performed the duties of porter, that let him the room on Christmas day. He had represented himself as an annuitant ruined by the Spanish bonds, who meant to live there with his little daughter. He paid six months' rent in advance, and requested the old woman to furnish the room in the way we have seen; and it was this woman who lit the stove and prepared everything on the evening of their arrival. Weeks passed away, and these two beings led a happy life in this wretched garret. With the dawn Cosette began laughing, chattering, and singing; for children, like the birds, have their matin song. Sometimes it happened that Jean Valjean took her little red chilblained hand and kissed it; the poor child, accustomed to be beaten, did not know what this meant, and went away quite ashamed. At times she became serious, and looked at her little black frock. Cosette was no longer dressed in rags, but in mourning; she had left wretchedness, and was entering life. Jean Valjean set to work teaching her to read. Occasionally he thought that it was with the idea of doing evil that he learned to read at the galleys, and this idea had turned to teaching a child to read. Then the old galley-slave smiled the pensive smile of the angels. He felt in it a premeditation of heaven, and he lost himself in a reverie, for good thoughts have their depths as well as wicked. Teaching Cosette to read, and letting her play, almost constituted Jean Valjean's entire life; and then, he spoke to her about her mother, and made her play. She called him "father," and knew him by no other name. He spent hours in watching her dress and undress her doll, and listening to her prattle. From this moment life appeared to him full of interest; men seemed to him good and just; he no longer reproached any one in his thoughts, and perceived no reason why he should not live to a great age, now that this child loved him. He saw a future illumined by Cosette, as by a delicious light; and as the best men are not exempt from a selfish thought, he said to himself at times joyfully that she

would be ugly.

Although it is only a personal opinion, we fancy that at the point which Jean Valjean had reached when he began to love Cosette, he required this fresh impulse to continue in the right path. He had just seen, under new aspects, the wickedness of men and the wretchedness of society; but the aspects were incomplete, and only fatally showed him one side of the truth,—the fate of woman comprised in Fantine, and public authority personified in Javert; he had returned to the galleys, but this time for acting justly; he had drunk the new cup of bitterness to the dregs; disgust and weariness seized upon him; the very recollection of the Bishop was approaching an eclipse, and though it would have perhaps reappeared afterwards luminous and triumphant, still this holy recollection was beginning to fade. Who knows whether Jean Valjean was not on the eve of growing discouraged and relapsing? But he loved and became strong again. Alas! he was no less tottering than Cosette; he protected her and she strengthened him; through him, she was able to advance in her life; through her, he could continue in the path of virtue. Oh unfathomable and divine mystery of the equilibrium of destiny!

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**CHAPTER IV.**

## THE REMARKS OF THE CHIEF LODGER.

Jean Valjean was so prudent as never to go out by day; every evening he walked out for an hour or two, sometimes alone, but generally with Cosette in the most retired streets, and entering the churches at nightfall. When he did not take Cosette with him, she remained with the old woman; but it was her delight to go out with him. She preferred an hour with him to the ravishing têtes-à-têtes with Catherine. He walked along holding her by the hand, and talking pleasantly with her, for Cosette's temper turned to be extremely gay.

The old woman cleaned, cooked, and bought food for them; they lived quietly, always having a little fire, but as if they were very poor. Jean Valjean had made no change in the furniture since the first day, except that he had a wooden door put up in place of the glass door in Cosette's sleeping closet. He still wore his yellow coat, black breeches, and old hat, and in the streets he was taken for a poor man. It happened at times that charitable women turned and gave him a sou, which Jean Valjean accepted with a deep bow. It happened at times also that he met some wretch asking for charity; in such a case he looked behind him to see that no one was watching, furtively approached the beggar, gave him money, —now and then silver,—and hurried away. This entailed inconveniences, for people began to know him in the district under the name of the alms-giving beggar. The old chief lodger, a spiteful creature, full of envy and uncharitableness toward her neighbors, watched him closely, though he did not suspect it. She was rather deaf, which rendered her prone to gossip, and there remained to her from the past two teeth, one atop and one at bottom, which she constantly rattled against each other. She questioned Cosette, who, knowing nothing, could say nothing except that she came from Montfermeil. One day this spy saw Jean Valjean go into one of the uninhabited rooms in a way that seemed to her peculiar. She followed him with the stealthy step of an old cat, and was able to watch him, herself unseen, through the crack of the door, to which Jean Valjean turned his back, doubtless as a greater precaution. She saw him take out of his pocket a pair of scissors, needle, and thread, and then begin ripping up the lining of his coat, and pull out a piece of yellow paper, which he unfolded. The old woman recognized with horror that it was a thousand-franc note, the second or third she had seen in her life, and she fled in terror. A moment after Jean Valjean addressed her, and requested her to change the note for him, adding that it was his half-year's dividend, which he had received on the previous day. "When?" the old woman thought; "he did not go out till six in the evening, and the Bank is certainly not open at that

hour." The old woman went to change the note and made her conjectures; the amount of money being considerably multiplied, afforded a grand topic of conversation for the gossips of the Rue des Vignes St. Marcel.

A few days after it happened that Jean Valjean, in his shirt-sleeves, was chopping wood in the passage, and the old woman was in his room cleaning up. She was alone, for Cosette was admiring the wood-chopping. She saw the coat hanging on a nail, and investigated it. The lining had been sewn up again, but the good woman felt it carefully, and fancied she could notice folds of paper between the cloth and the lining. More bank-notes, of course! She also noticed that there were all sorts of things in the pockets; not only the needles, scissors, and thread she had seen, but a large portfolio, a big clasp knife, and, most suspicious fact of all, several different colored wigs. Each pocket of this coat seemed to be a species of safeguard against unexpected events.

The inhabitants of the house thus reached the last days of winter.

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**CHAPTER V.**

## NOISE MADE BY A FALLING FIVE-FRANC PIECE.

There was near S. Médard's church a poor man who usually sat on the edge of a condemned well, to whom Jean Valjean liked to give alms. He never passed him without giving him a trifle, and at times spoke to him. The persons who envied this beggar said that he belonged to the police, and he was an ex-beadle seventy-five years of age, who was constantly telling his beads. One evening when Jean Valjean passed alone, he perceived the beggar at his usual place under the lamp which had just been lit. The man, according to his habit, seemed to be praying, and was crouched. Jean Valjean went up to him and placed his usual charity in his hand, and the beggar suddenly raised his eyes, looked fixedly at Jean Valjean, and then let his head hang again. This movement was like a flash, but Jean Valjean gave a start; he fancied that he had seen by the flickering light of the lamp not the placid and devout face of the old beadle, but a terrifying and familiar face. He had such a feeling as he would have had had he suddenly found himself face to face with a tiger in the darkness. He recoiled, terrified and petrified, not daring to breathe, remain, or fly, staring at the beggar, who had let his head fall, and did not appear to know that he was there. At this strange moment, an instinct, perhaps that of self-preservation, urged Valjean not to utter a syllable. The beggar was of the same height, wore the same rags, and looked as he did every day. "Stuff!" said Valjean, "I am mad; dreaming; it is impossible!" And he went home sorely troubled in mind. He hardly dared confess to himself that the face which he fancied he had seen was Javert's. At night, on reflecting, he regretted that he had not spoken to the man and made him raise his head a second time. The next evening he returned and found the beggar at his seat. "Good day, my man," Jean Valjean said resolutely, as he gave him a sou. The beggar raised his head and replied in a complaining voice, "Thank you, my good gentleman." It was certainly the old beadle. Jean Valjean felt fully reassured, and began laughing. "How on earth could I have thought that it was Javert? Am I getting blind?" and he thought no more of it.

A few days later, at about eight in the evening, he was giving Cosette a spelling lesson, when he heard the house door open and then close again. This appeared to him singular, for the old woman, who alone lived in the house beside himself, always went to bed at nightfall to save candle. Jean Valjean made Cosette a sign to be silent, for he heard some one coming upstairs. After all it might be the old woman, who felt unwell, and had been to the chemist's. Jean Valjean listened; the footstep was heavy and sounded like a man's; but the old woman wore thick shoes, and nothing so closely resembles a man's footstep as an old woman's. For all that, though, Jean Valjean blew out his candle. He had sent Cosette

to bed, saying in a whisper, "Make no noise," and while he was kissing her forehead the footsteps stopped. Jean Valjean remained silently in his chair, with his back turned to the door, and holding his breath in the darkness. After a long interval, hearing nothing more, he turned noiselessly, and, on looking at his door, saw a light through the key-hole, which formed a sort of sinister star in the blackness of the door and the wall. There was evidently some one there holding a candle in his hand and listening. A few minutes passed, and then the light went away: still he did not hear the sound of footsteps, which seemed to indicate that the man who came to listen had taken off his shoes. Jean Valjean threw himself full-dressed on his bed, and could not close his eyes all night. At daybreak, when he was just yielding to fatigue, he was aroused by the creaking of a door which opened into a room at the end of the passage, and then heard the same footstep which had ascended the stairs the previous evening drawing nearer. He put his eye to the key-hole, which was rather large, in the hope of seeing the man who had listened at his door over-night. It was really a man, who this time passed Jean Valjean's door without stopping. The passage was still too dark for him to distinguish his face; but when the man reached the staircase a ray of light from outside fell upon him, and Jean Valjean saw his back perfectly. He was a tall man, dressed in a long coat, with a cudgel under his arm; and he was very like Javert. Valjean might have tried to see him on the boulevard through his window; but for that purpose he must have opened it, and that he dared not do. It was plain that this man came in with a key and was quite at home. Who gave him this key? What did it mean? At seven o'clock, when the old woman came to clean up, Jean Valjean gave her a piercing glance, but did not question her. The good woman was as calm as usual, and while sweeping she said to him,—

"I suppose you heard some one come in last night, sir?"

At that age, and on that boulevard, eight in the evening is the blackest night.

"Yes, I remember," he said, with the most natural accent. "Who was it?"

"A new lodger in the house."

"What is his name?"

"I forget. Dumont or Daumont,—something like that."

"And what may he be?"

The old woman looked at him with her little ferret eyes, and answered,—

"He lives on his property, like yourself."

Perhaps she meant nothing, but Jean Valjean fancied that he could detect a meaning. When the old woman had gone off he made a rouleau of some hundred francs which he had in a chest of drawers and put it in his pocket. Whatever precautions he took to keep the money from rattling, a five-franc piece fell from his hand and rolled noisily on the floor. At nightfall he went down and looked attentively all along the boulevard: he saw nobody, and it seemed utterly deserted. It is true that some one might have been concealed behind the trees. He went up again, and said to Cosette, "Come!" He took her hand and both left the house together.

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**BOOK V.**

## FOR A STILL HUNT A DUMB PACK.

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**CHAPTER I.**

## STRATEGIC ZIGZAGS.

An observation is necessary here about the present pages and others which will follow. It is now many years that the author of this work—forced, he regrets to say, to allude to himself—has been absent from Paris, and since he left that city it has been transformed, and a new city has sprung up, which is to some extent unknown to him. He need not say that he is fond of Paris, for it is his mental birth-place. Owing to demolitions and rebuilding, the Paris of his youth, the Paris which he religiously carried away in his memory, is at this hour a Paris of the past. Permit him, then, to speak of that Paris as if it still existed. It is possible that at the present day there is neither street nor house at the spot where the author purposes to lead the reader, saying, "In such a street there is such a house." If the readers like to take the trouble they can verify. As for him, he does not know new Paris, and writes with old Paris before his eyes in an illusion which is precious to him. It is sweet to him to fancy that something still remains of what he saw when he was in his own country, and that all has not faded away. So long as you move about in your native land you imagine that these streets are matters of indifference to you, that these roofs and doors are as nothing, that these walls are strange to you, that these trees are no better than the first tree you come across, that these houses which you do not enter are useless to you, and that the pavement on which you walk is made of stones and nothing more. At a later date, when you are no longer there, you perceive that these streets are dear to you, that you miss these roofs, windows, and doors, that the walls are necessary to you, that you love the trees, that these houses, which you did not enter, you entered daily, and that you have left some of your feelings, your blood, and your heart, on these paving-stones. All these spots which you no longer see, which perhaps you may never see again, and of which you have retained the image, assume a melancholy charm, return to you with the sadness of an apparition, make the sacred land visible to you, and are, so to speak, the very form of France: and you love and evoke them such as they are, such as they were, obstinately refusing to make any change in them; for you cling to the face of your country as to the countenance of your mother. Let us be permitted, then, to speak of the past at present: we will beg our readers to bear this in mind, and will continue our narrative.

Jean Valjean at once left the boulevard and entered the streets, making as many turnings as he could, and at times retracing his steps to make sure that he was not followed. This manœuvre is peculiar to the tracked deer, and on ground where traces are left it possesses the advantage of deceiving huntsmen and dogs; in venery it is called a "false reimbushment." The moon was at its full, and Jean Valjean was not sorry for it, for as the luminary was still close to the horizon it formed large patches of light and shade in the streets. Valjean was able to slip along the houses and walls on the dark side and watch the bright side; perhaps he did not reflect sufficiently that the dark side escaped his notice. Still, in all the deserted lanes which border the Rue de Poliveau he felt certain that no one was following him. Cosette walked on without asking questions; the sufferings of the first six years of her life had introduced something passive into her nature. Moreover—and this is a remark to which we shall have to revert more than once—she was accustomed to the singularities of her companion, and the strange mutations of fate. And then she felt in safety as she was with him. Jean Valjean did not know any more than Cosette whither he was going; he trusted to God, as she trusted to him. He fancied that he also held some one greater than himself by the hand, and felt an invisible being guiding him. However, he had no settled idea, plan, or scheme; he was not absolutely certain that it was Javert; and then again it might be Javert ignorant that he was Jean Valjean. Was he not disguised? Was he not supposed to be dead? Still, during the last few days several things had occurred which were becoming singular, and he wanted nothing more. He was resolved not to return to No. 50-52, and, like the animal driven from its lair, he sought a hole in which to hide himself until he could find a lodging. Jean Valjean described several labyrinths in the Quartier Mouffetard, which was as fast asleep as if it were still under mediæval discipline and the

yoke of the Curfew, and combined several streets into a clever strategic system. There were lodging-houses where he now was, but he did not enter them, as he did not find anything to suit him, and he did not suppose for a moment that if persons were on his trail they had lost it again.

As the clock of St. Étienne du Mont struck eleven he passed the police office at No. 14, in the Rue de Pontoise. A few minutes after, the instinct to which we have referred made him look round, and he distinctly saw, by the office lamp which betrayed them, three men, who were following him rather closely, pass in turn under this lamp on the dark side of the street. One of these men turned into the office, and another, who was in front, appeared to him decidedly suspicious.

"Come, child," he said to Cosette; and he hastened out of the Rue de Pontoise. He made a circuit, skirted the Passage des Patriarches, which was closed at that hour, and eventually turned into the Rue des Postes. There is an open space here, where the Rollin College now stands, and into which the Rue Neuve St. Geneviève runs.

We need hardly say that the Rue Neuve St. Geneviève is an old street, and that a post-chaise does not pass along the Rue des Postes once in ten years. This street was inhabited by potters in the 13th century, and its real name is Rue des Pots.

The moon threw a bright light upon this open space, and Jean Valjean hid himself in a doorway, calculating that if the men were still following him he could not fail to have a good look at them as they crossed the open space. In fact, three minutes had not elapsed when the men appeared. There were now four of them, all tall, dressed in long brown coats and round hats, and holding large sticks in their hands. They were no less alarming through their stature and huge fists, than through their sinister movements in the darkness; they looked like four spectres disguised as citizens. They stopped in the centre of the square, and formed a group as if consulting, and apparently undecided. The leader turned and pointed with his right hand in the direction Jean Valjean had taken, while another seemed to be pointing with some degree of obstinacy in the opposite direction. At the moment when the first man turned the moon lit up his face brilliantly, and Jean Valjean recognized Javert perfectly.

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### CHAPTER II.

## IT IS FORTUNATE THAT THE BRIDGE OF AUSTERLITZ WILL CARRY WAGONS.

Uncertainty ceased for Jean Valjean; but fortunately it still lasted with the men. He took advantage of their hesitation, for it was time lost by them and gained by him. He left the gateway in which he was concealed, and pushed on along the Rue des Postes toward the region of the Jardin des Plantes. As Cosette was beginning to feel tired, he took her in his arms and carried her. No one was passing, and the lamps had not been lit, on account of the moon. He doubled his pace, and in a few strides reached the Goblet pottery, on the front of which the moonshine made the old inscription distinctly visible:—

"Du Goblet fils c'est içi la fabrique:
Venez choisir des cruches et des brocs:
Des pots à fleurs, des tuyaux, de la brique,
À tout venant le Cœur vend des carreaux."

He left behind him the Rue de la Clef, skirted the Jardin des Plantes, and reached the quay. Here he turned; the quay was deserted, the streets were deserted. There was no one behind him, and he breathed again. He reached the Austerlitz bridge, where a toll still existed at the time, and he handed the tollman a sou.

"It is two sous," said the man; "you are carrying a child who can walk, so you must pay for two."

He paid, though greatly vexed that his passing had given rise to any remark. A heavy wain was passing the river at the same time as himself, and also proceeding to the right bank. This was useful for him, as he could cross the whole of the bridge in its shadow. On reaching the arches of the bridge, Cosette, whose feet were numbed, asked to be put down; he did so, and took her by the hand again. After crossing the bridge, he saw a little to his right building-yards, towards which he proceeded. In order to reach them he must cross an open brilliantly-lighted space; but he did not hesitate. His pursuers were evidently thrown out, and Jean Valjean believed himself out of danger; he might be looked for, but he was not followed. A little street, the Rue du Chemin Vert St. Antoine, ran between two timber-yards; it was narrow, dark, and seemed expressly made for him, but before entering it he looked back. From the spot where he was he could see the whole length of the bridge of Austerlitz; four shadows had just come upon it, and were walking towards the right bank. The four shadows were the four men.

Jean Valjean gave a start like a recaptured animal. One hope was left him,—it was that the four men had not been upon the bridge at the moment when he crossed the large illumined space with Cosette. In that case, by entering the little street before him, he might escape, if he could reach the timber-yards, kitchen-gardens, fields, and land not yet built on. He fancied that he could trust to this little silent street, and entered it.

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#### CHAPTER III.

### CONSULT THE PLAN OF PARIS IN 1727.

After going three hundred yards he came to a spot where the road formed two forks, and Jean Valjean had before him, as it were, the two branches of a Y. Which should he choose? He did not hesitate, but took the right one, because the other ran towards the faubourg, that is to say, inhabited parts, while the right branch went in the direction of the country, or deserted parts. Still they did not walk very rapidly, for Cosette checked Jean Valjean's pace, and hence he began carrying her again, and Cosette laid her head on his shoulder and did not say a word. At times he looked back, while careful to keep on the dark side of the street. The first twice or thrice that he turned he saw nothing, the silence was profound, and he continued his walk with a little more confidence. All at once, on turning suddenly, he fancied that he saw something moving on the dark part of the street which he had just passed. He rushed forward rather than walked, hoping to find some side lane by which he could escape, and once again break his trail. He reached a wall, which, however, did not render further progress impossible, for it was a wall skirting a cross-lane, into which the street Jean Valjean had entered ran. Here he must make his mind up again whether to turn to the right or left. He looked to the right; the lane ran for some distance between buildings, which were barns or sheds, and then stopped. The end of the blind alley, a high white wall, was distinctly visible. He looked to the left; on this side the lane was open, and at a distance of about two hundred yards fell into a street, of which it was an affluent. On that side safety lay. At the moment when Jean Valjean turned to his left in order to reach this street, he saw at the angle formed by the street and the lane a species of black and motionless statue; it was evidently a man posted there to prevent him from passing. Jean Valjean fell back.

The part of Paris where Jean Valjean now was, situated between the Faubourg St. Antoine and la Rapée, was one of those which have been utterly transformed by those recent works which some call disfigurements, others beautifying. The fields, the timber-yards, and old buildings have been removed, and there are now brand-new wide streets, arenas, circuses, hippodromes, railway stations, and a prison, Mazas,—progress as we see with its corrective. Half a century back, in that popular language all

made up of traditions which insists on calling the Institute "les Quatre Nations," and the Opéra Comique "Feydeau," the precise spot where Jean Valjean now stood was called "le Petit Picpus." The Porte St. Jacques, the Porte Paris, the Barrière des Sergents, the Porcherons, the Galiote, the Celestins, the Capucins, the Mail, the Bourbe, the tree of Cracow, Little Poland, and Little Picpus, are names of old Paris swimming on the surface of the new. The memory of the people floats on the flotsam of the past. Little Picpus, which by the way scarce existed, and was never more than the outline of a quarter, had almost the monastic look of a Spanish town. The streets were scarce paved, and hardly any houses lined them; excepting two or three streets, to which we are about to refer, all was wall and solitude. There was not a shop or a vehicle, scarce a candle lighted in the windows, and every light was put out by ten o'clock. The quarter consisted of gardens, convents, timber-yards, and kitchen-grounds, and there were a few low houses with walls as lofty as themselves. Such was the quarter in the last century; the Revolution fiercely assailed it, and the Republican board of works demolished and made gaps in it: rubbish was allowed to be shot there. Thirty years ago this quarter was disappearing under the erasure of new buildings, and now it is entirely obliterated.

Little Picpus, of which no modern map retains a trace, is very clearly indicated in the plan of 1727, published at Paris by Denis Thierry, Rue St. Jacques, opposite the Rue du Plâtre; and at Lyons by Jean Girin, Rue Mercière. Little Picpus had what we have just called a Y of streets formed by the Rue du Chemin Vert St. Antoine dividing into two branches, the left-hand one taking the name of the Petite Rue Picpus, and the right-hand that of Rue Polonceau. The two branches of the Y were joined at their summit by a sort of cross-bar called Rue Droit-mur. Any one who, coming from the Seine, reached the end of Rue Polonceau, had on his left Rue Droit-mur, turning sharply at a right angle, in front of him the wall of that street, and on his right a truncated prolongation of the Rue Droit-mur called the Cul-de-sac Genrot.

It was here that Jean Valjean was; as we said, on perceiving the black shadow standing on watch at the corner of the Rue Droit-mur and the Petite Rue Picpus, he fell back, for this phantom was doubtless watching for him. What was to be done? He had no time to retrograde, for what he had seen moving in the shadow a few moments previously in his rear was of course Javert and his squad. Javert was probably already at the beginning of the street at the end of which Jean Valjean was. Javert, according to appearances, was acquainted with this labyrinth, and had taken his precautions by sending one of his men to guard the outlet. These conjectures, which so closely resembled certainty, whirled suddenly in Jean Valjean's troubled brain like a handful of dust raised by an unexpected puff of wind. He examined the blind alley; that was barred. He examined the Rue Picpus, a sentry was there, and he saw his black shadow distinctly thrown on the white moonlit pavement. To advance was falling into this man's clutches; to fall back was throwing himself into Javert's arms. Jean Valjean felt himself caught in a net which was being slowly hauled in, and looked up to Heaven in despair.

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**CHAPTER IV.**

## ATTEMPTS TO ESCAPE.

In order to understand the following, the reader must form an exact idea of the Droit-mur lane, and in particular of the angle which the visitor left on his left when he turned out of the Rue Polonceau into this lane. The lane was almost entirely bordered on the right by poor-looking houses, on the left by single slim-looking edifices, composed of several corps de logis, which gradually rose from one floor to two as they approached Little Rue Picpus so that this building, which was very lofty on that side, was very low on the side of Rue Polonceau, where, at the corner to which we have alluded, it sank so

low as to be only a wall. This wall did not run parallel with the lane, but formed a very deep cant, concealed by its corners from any observers in Rue Polonceau and Rue Droit-mur. From this cant the wall extended along Rue Polonceau up to a house bearing the No. 49, and in Rue Droit-mur, where it was much shorter, up to the frowning building to which we have referred, whose gable it intersected, thus forming a new re-entering angle in the street. This gable had a gloomy appearance, for only one window was visible, or, to speak more correctly, two shutters covered with sheet zinc and always closed. The description of the locality which we are now giving is strictly correct, and will doubtless arouse a very precise souvenir in the mind of the old inhabitants of the quarter.

The cant in the wall was entirely occupied by a thing that resembled a colossal and wretched gateway; it was a vast collection of perpendicular planks, the top ones wider than those below, and fastened together by long cross-strips of iron. By the side of this gate was a porte-cochère of ordinary dimensions, which had apparently been made in the wall about fifty years previously. A linden-tree displayed its branches above the cant, and the wall was covered with ivy on the side of the Rue Polonceau.

In Jean Valjean's desperate situation this gloomy building had an uninhabited and solitary look about it which tempted him. He hurriedly examined it, and said to himself that if he could only enter it he might perhaps be saved. In the centre of the frontage of this building, turned to the Rue Droit-mur, there were old leaden drain-pipes at all the windows of the different floors. The various branches which led to a central pipe formed a species of tree on the façade; these ramifications with their hundred elbows imitated those old vine branches which cling to the front of old farm-houses. This singular espalier of lead and iron branches was the first thing that caught Jean Valjean's attention. He put Cosette down with her back against a post, bidding her be silent, and hurried to the spot where the main pipe reached the ground. Perhaps there might be a way to scale it and enter the house; but the pipe was worn out, and scarce held in its cramps. Besides, all the windows of this silent house were defended by thick iron bars, even the garrets. And then the moon shone full on this front, and the man watching at the end of the street would see Jean Valjean climb up; and then what was he to do with Cosette? How was he to hoist her up a three-storied house? He gave up all idea of climbing by the pipe, and crawled along the wall to re-enter Rue Polonceau. When he reached the cant where he had left Cosette he noticed that no one could see him there. As we stated, he was safe from all eyes, no matter on what side; moreover, he was in the shadow, and then, lastly, there were two gates, which might perhaps be forced. The wall over which he saw the linden-tree and the ivy evidently belonged to a garden in which he could at least conceal himself, though there was no foliage on the trees, and pass the rest of the night. Time was slipping away, and he must set to work at once. He felt the porte-cochère, and at once perceived that it was fastened up inside and out, and then went to the other great gate with more hope. It was frightfully decrepit, its very size rendered it less solid, the planks were rotten, and the iron bands, of which there were only three, were rusty. It seemed possible to break through this affair. On examining this gate, however, he saw that it was not a gate; it had no hinges, lock, or partition in the centre; the iron bands crossed it from side to side without any solution of continuity. Through the cracks of the planks he caught a glimpse of coarsely-mortared rag-stone, which passers-by might have seen ten years back. He was forced to confess to himself with consternation that this fancied gate was simply a make-believe; it was easy to pull down a plank, but he would find himself face to face with a wall.

**CHAPTER V.**

## A THING IMPOSSIBLE IN GASLIGHT.

At this moment a hollow, cadenced sound began to grow audible a short distance off, and Jean Valjean ventured to take a peep round the corner of the street. Seven or eight soldiers were entering the street. He could see their bayonets gleaming, and they were coming toward him. These soldiers, at the head of whom he distinguished Javert's tall form, advanced slowly and cautiously, and frequently halted; it was plain that they were exploring all the corners and all the doors and lanes. It was—and here conjecture could not be wrong—some patrol which Javert had met and requested to assist him. Judging from the pace at which they marched, and the halts they made, they would require about a quarter of an hour to reach the spot where Jean Valjean was. It was a frightful thought; a few moments separated Jean Valjean from the awful precipice which yawned before him for the third time. And the galleys were now not merely the galleys, but Cosette lost forever; that is to say, a life resembling the interior of a tomb.

There was only one thing possible. Jean Valjean had one peculiarity, that he might be said to carry two wallets; in one he had the thoughts of a saint, in the other the formidable talents of a convict, and he felt in one or the other as opportunity offered. Among other resources, owing to his numerous escapes from the Toulon galleys, he had become a perfect master in the incredible art of raising himself without ladder or cramping irons, and by his mere muscular strength, and holding on by his shoulders and knees, in the right angle of a wall, to the sixth floor if necessary,—an art which rendered so terrible and so celebrated that corner of the yard in the Paris Conciergerie by which the condemned convict Battemolle escaped twenty years ago. Jean Valjean measured the height of the wall above which he saw the linden-tree, and found that it was about eighteen feet. The lower part of the angle which it made with the gable end of the large building was filled up with a triangular mass of masonry, very common in Parisian corners. This mass was about five feet high, and the space to be cleared from the top of it was not more than fourteen; but the difficulty was Cosette, for she could not climb a wall. Abandon her? Jean Valjean did not think of it, but carrying her was impossible; a man requires his whole strength to carry out such an ascent, and the slightest burden would displace his centre of gravity and hurl him down. He required a rope, but he had none. Where was he to find a rope at midnight in the Rue Polonceau? Assuredly at this moment if Jean Valjean had possessed a kingdom he would have given it for a rope. All extreme situations have their flashes, which at one moment blind, at another illumine us. Jean Valjean's desperate glance fell on the lamp-post in the blind alley. In those days there were no gaslights in the streets of Paris; at nightfall lamps were lit at regular distances, which were pulled up and down by a rope that crossed the street and fitted into a groove in a post. The end of the rope was kept in an iron box under the lantern, of which the lamp-lighter had the key, and the rope itself was protected by a metal case. Jean Valjean leaped across the street, burnt the lock of the box with the point of his knife, and a moment later was again by Cosette's side holding a rope. Such gloomy finders of expedients when struggling with fatality set rapidly to work. We have mentioned that the lamps were not lit on this night; the one in the blind alley therefore was naturally extinguished, and any one might have passed close without noticing that it was no longer in its place.

The hour, the place, the darkness, Jean Valjean's preoccupation, his singular gestures, his coming and going, were all beginning to alarm Cosette. Any other child would have begun crying kindly long before; but she confined herself to pulling the skirt of his coat. The noise of the approaching patrol constantly became more distinct.

"Father," she whispered, "I am frightened; who is coming?"

"Silence," the unhappy man replied; "it is Madame Thénardier."

The child trembled, and he added,—

"Do not say a word, but leave me to act: if you cry out or sob she will catch you and take you back again."

Then, without hurry, but without doing anything twice over, with a firm and sharp precision, which was the more remarkable at such a moment, when the patrol and Javert might be instantly expected, he undid his cravat, fastened it under Cosette's armpits, while careful not to hurt her, fastened the rope to the cravat, took the other end in his teeth, took off his shoes and stockings, which he threw over the wall, and began raising himself in the corner of the wall with as much certainty as if he had cramping irons under his heels and elbows. Half a minute had not elapsed ere he was astride the coping. Cosette looked at him in stupor, without saying a word; for Jean Valjean's mention of the landlady's name had frozen her. All at once she heard Jean Valjean say to her in a very low voice,—

"Lean against the wall."

She obeyed.

"You must not say a word, or feel frightened," he continued.

And she felt herself lifted from the ground, but before she had time to look round she found herself on the top of the wall. Jean Valjean placed her on his back, took her two little hands in his left hand, and crawled along the wall till he reached the cant. As he had suspected, there was a building here, whose roof began at the top of the bastard gate and descended in a gentle slope nearly to the ground, grazing the linden-tree. This was a fortunate circumstance, for the wall was much higher on this side than on that of the street, and Jean Valjean could scarce see the ground, so far was it beneath him. He had just reached the sloping roof, and had not yet loosed his hold of the coping, when a violent uproar announced the arrival of the patrol, and he heard Javert's thundering voice,—

"Search the blind alley; all the streets are guarded, and I will wager that he is in it."

The soldiers rushed forward into the alley Genrot. Jean Valjean slipped down the roof, still supporting Cosette, reached the linden-tree, and leaped on the ground. Either through terror or courage the child had not said a word; her hands were only slightly grazed.

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#### CHAPTER VI.

## THE BEGINNING OF AN ENIGMA.

Jean Valjean found himself in a large garden of most singular appearance, one of those gloomy gardens that appear made to be looked at in winter, and by night. This garden was of an oblong shape, with a walk of tall poplars at the end, tall shrubs in the corner, and an unshadowed space, in the centre of which an isolated tree could be distinguished. There were also a few stunted fruit-trees bristling like brambles, vegetable plots, a melon-bed, whose frames glistened in the moonlight, and an old well. Here and there were stone benches that seemed black with moss; the walks were bordered with small gloomy-looking and upright shrubs; grass covered one half of the walks, and a green mould the other half.

Jean Valjean had by his side the building by help of whose roof he had descended, a pile of fagots, and behind the latter, close to the wall, a stone statue whose mutilated face was merely a shapeless mask appearing indistinctly in the darkness. The building was a species of ruin, containing several dismantled rooms, of which one was apparently employed as a shed. The large edifice of the Rue Droit-

mur had two façades looking into this garden at right angles, and these façades were even more melancholy than those outside. All the windows were barred, and not a single light could be seen, while at the upper window there were scuttles as in prisons. One of these frontages threw its shadow upon the other, which fell back on the garden like an immense black cloth. No other house could be noticed, and the end of the garden was lost in mist and night. Still, walls could be indistinctly noticed intersecting each other, as if there were other gardens beyond, and the low roofs in the Rue Polonceau. Nothing more stern and solitary than this garden could well be imagined; there was no one in it, as was natural at such an hour, but it did not look as if the spot were made for any one to walk in even in bright daylight.

Jean Valjean's first care was to put on his shoes and stockings again, and then enter the shed with Cosette. A man who is escaping never considers himself sufficiently concealed, and the child, who was still thinking of Madame Thénardier, shared his instinct for concealment. Cosette trembled and clung close to him: for she could hear the tumultuous noise of the patrol searching the street and lane, the blows of musket-butts against the stones, Javert's appeals to the men whom he had posted, and his oaths, mingled with words which could not be distinguished. At the expiration of a quarter of an hour this species of stormy grumbling appeared to be retiring, and Jean Valjean could scarce breathe. He had gently laid his hand on Cosette's mouth. The solitude in which he found himself was so strangely calm, however, that the furious uproar so close at hand did not even cast the shadow of a trouble over it. All at once in the midst of this profound calm a new sound burst forth,—a heavenly, divine, ineffable sound, as ravishing as the other had been horrible. It was a hymn, that issued from the darkness, a dazzling blending of prayer and harmony in the dark and fearful silence of the night: female voices, but composed at once of the pure accent of virgins and the simple voices of children,—such voices as do not belong to earth, and resemble those which the new-born still hear, and the dying begin to hear. This chant came from the gloomy building that commanded the garden, and at the moment when the noise of the demons was retiring it seemed like a choir of angels approaching in the dark. Cosette and Jean Valjean fell on their knees. They knew not what it was, they knew not where they were; but both man and child, the penitent and the innocent, felt that they must fall on their knees. The voices had this strangeness about them, that they did not prevent the edifice from appearing deserted; it seemed like a supernatural chant in an uninhabited house. While the voices sang, Jean Valjean thought of nothing else; he no longer saw the night, but an azure sky. He fancied that the wings which we all of us have within us were expanding in him. The singing ceased; it had probably lasted some time, but Jean Valjean could not have said how long, for hours of ecstasy never occupy more than a minute. All had become silent again: there was no sound in the garden, no sound in the street; that which threatened, that which reassured, all had vanished. The wind shook on the coping of the wall some dry grass, which produced a soft and melancholy sound.

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**CHAPTER VII.**

## CONTINUATION OF THE ENIGMA.

The night breeze had risen, which proved that it must be between one and two in the morning. Cosette said nothing, and as she was leaning her head against him, Jean Valjean fancied that she was asleep. He bent down and looked at her: her eyes were wide open, and she had a pensive look which hurt Jean Valjean. She was still trembling.

"Do you feel inclined to sleep?" he asked her.

"I am very cold," she answered; a moment after she continued,—

"Is she still there?"

"Who?" Jean Valjean asked.

"Madame Thénardier."

Jean had forgotten the way he had employed to keep Cosette silent.

"Ah," he said, "she is gone, and you have nothing to fear."

The child sighed, as if a weight had been taken off her chest.

The ground was damp, the shed open on all sides, and the wind grew more cutting every moment. He took off his coat and wrapped Cosette up in it.

"Are you less cold now?" he said.

"Oh yes, father."

"Well, wait for me a minute."

He left the ruin and began walking along the large building in search of some better shelter. He came to doors, but they were closed, and there were bars on all the ground-floor windows. After passing the inner angle of the edifice he noticed that he had come to some arched windows, and perceived a faint light. He raised himself on tip-toe and looked through one of the windows; they all belonged to a large hall paved with stones, in which nothing could be distinguished but a little light and great shadows. The light came from a night-lamp burning in the corner. This hall was deserted and nothing was stirring in it; and yet, after a long look, he fancied that he could see on the ground something that seemed to be covered with a pall and resembled a human form. It was stretched out flat, with its face against the stones, its arms forming a cross, and motionless as death. From a species of snake which dragged along the pavement, it looked as if this sinister form had the rope round its neck. The whole hall was bathed in that mist of badly-lighted places which intensifies the horror.

Jean Valjean often said afterwards that, although he had witnessed many mournful sights in his life, he had never seen one more chilling or terrifying than this enigmatical figure performing some strange mystery at this gloomy spot, and thus caught sight of through the darkness. It was frightful to suppose that it might be dead, and more frightful still to think that it might possibly be still alive. He had the courage to place his face to the pane, and watch whether the figure would stir; but though he remained for a time which appeared to him very long, the outstretched form made no movement. All at once he felt himself assailed by an indescribable horror, and he ran off toward the shed without daring to look back; he fancied that if he turned his head he should see the figure walking after him and waving its arms. When he reached the ruin he was panting, his knees gave way, and the perspiration was running down his back. Where was he? Who could have imagined anything like this species of sepulchre in the heart of Paris? What was the strange house? An edifice full of nocturnal mystery, calling souls in the darkness, the voice of angels, and when they arrive, suddenly offering them this frightful vision; promising to open the bright gate of heaven, and, instead, opening the horrible gate of the tomb! And it was really a mansion, a house which had its number in a street. It was not a dream; but he was obliged to touch the stones in order to believe it. Cold, anxiety, apprehension, and the emotion of the night brought on him a real fever, and all his ideas were confused in his brain. He approached Cosette. She slept.

**CHAPTER VIII.**

## THE ENIGMA INCREASES.

The child had rested her head on a stone and fallen asleep. Jean Valjean sat down by her side and began gazing at her; gradually, as he looked, he grew calm and regained possession of his freedom of mind.

He clearly perceived this truth, the basis of his future life, that, so long as she was there, so long as he had her by his side, he would require nothing except for her, nor fear anything save on her account. He did not even feel the cold particularly; for, though he had taken off his coat, it was to cover her. Still, through the reverie into which he had fallen he had heard for some time past a singular noise, like a bell being rung, and it was in the garden. It could be heard distinctly, though faintly, and resembled those cattle-bells which produce a gentle melody at night in the grazing fields. This noise made Jean Valjean turn, and he saw that there was some one in the garden. A being looking like a man was walking among the melon-frames, rising, stooping, and stopping with regular movements, as if he was dragging or stretching out something on the ground. This man was apparently lame. Jean Valjean gave the continual, trembling start of the unhappy; everything is hostile and suspicious to them; they distrust the day because it allows them to be seen, and night because it helps in surprising them. Just now he shuddered because the garden was deserted, and now he shuddered because there was some one in it. He fell back from chimerical into real terror; he said to himself that Javert and the police had probably not gone away, that they had, in any case, left watchmen in the street; and that if this man discovered him he would give an alarm and hand him over to the police. He gently raised the still sleeping Cosette in his arms, and carried her behind a mass of old furniture in the most remote part of the shed; Cosette did not stir. From this spot he observed the movements of the being in the melon-ground; the strange thing was that the noise of the bell followed this man's every movement. When he approached the sound approached; when he went away the sound went away. If he made a sudden movement a little peal followed the movement, and when he stopped the noise ceased. It appeared evident that the bell was fastened to this man; but in that case what could be the meaning of it? Who was the man to whom a bell was fastened as if he were a ram or an ox? While asking himself these questions he touched Cosette's hands; they were chilled.

"Oh, Heaven!" he said.

And he asked in a whisper,—"Cosette!"

She did not open her eyes. He shook her sharply, but she did not awake.

"Can she be dead?" he said to himself; and he rose shivering from head to foot.

The most frightful thoughts crossed his mind pell-mell. There are moments when hideous suppositions assail us like a band of furies and violently force the bolts of our brain. When it is a question about people whom we love, our prudence invents all sorts of follies. He remembered that sleep in the open air on a cold night might be mortal. Cosette was lying stretched out motionless at his feet. He listened for her breath; she was breathing, but so faintly that it seemed as if the respiration would cease at any moment. How was he to warm her? How was he to wake her? All that did not refer to this slipped from his mind, and he rushed wildly from the shed. It was absolutely necessary that Cosette should be in bed before a fire within a quarter of an hour.

**CHAPTER IX.**

## THE MAN WITH THE BELL.

Jean Valjean walked straight up to the man whom he saw in the garden, and while doing so took from his pocket the rouleau of silver. This man was looking down, and did not see him coming, and in a few strides Jean Valjean was by his side, and addressed him with the cry, "One hundred francs."

The man started and raised his eyes.

"One hundred francs to be gained," Jean Valjean continued, "if you will find me a shelter for this night."

The moon fully lit up Jean Valjean's alarmed face.

"Why, it is you, Father Madeleine!" the man said.

The name uttered thus in the darkness at this strange spot, by this strange man, made Jean Valjean recoil, for he expected everything save that. The man who addressed him was a stooping, lame old man, dressed nearly like a peasant, and wearing on his left leg a leathern knee-cap, from which hung a rather large bell. It was impossible to distinguish his face, which was in the shadow; still the man had doffed his bonnet, and said all in a tremor,—

"Oh, Lord, how did you get here, Father Madeleine? Which way did you come in? Why, you must have fallen from heaven. Well, if ever you do fall, it will be from there. And then, what a state you are in! You have no cravat, no hat, and no coat! Do you know that you would have frightened anybody who did not know you? No coat! Oh, my goodness, are the saints going mad at present? But how did you get in here?"

One word did not wait for the next, the old man spoke with a rustic volubility in which there was nothing alarming; and it was all said with a mixture of stupefaction and simple kindness.

"Who are you, and what is this house?" Jean Valjean asked.

"Oh, Lord, that is too strong!" the old man exclaimed. "Why, did you not get me the situation, and in this house too? What, don't you recognize me?"

"No," said Jean Valjean; "and how is it that you know me?"

"You saved my life," the man said.

He turned; a moonbeam played on his face, and Jean Valjean recognized old Fauchelevent.

"Ah!" he said, "it is you? Oh, now I recognize you."

"That is lucky," the old man said reproachfully.

"And what are you doing here?" Jean Valjean asked.

"Why, I am covering my melons!"

Old Fauchelevent really held in his hand at the moment when Jean Valjean accosted him a piece of matting, which he was engaged in spreading over the melon-frame. He had laid a good many pieces during the hour he had been in the garden, and it was this operation that produced the peculiar movements which Jean Valjean had noticed from the shed. He continued,—

"I said to myself, there is a bright moon and it is going to freeze, so I had better put these great-coats on my melons." And he added, as he looked at Jean Valjean with a grin, "You should have done the same. But how have you got here?"

Jean Valjean, feeling himself known by this man, at least under the name of Madeleine, only advanced cautiously. He multiplied his questions, and curiously enough they changed parts,—he, the intruder, became the questioner.

"And what is that bell you have on your knee?"

"That?" Fauchelevent said; "it is that they may avoid me."

"What on earth do you mean?"

Old Fauchelevent gave an inimitable wink.

"Oh, Lord, they are only women in this house, and lots of girls. It seems that I should be dangerous to meet, and so the bell warns them; when I come they go."

"What is this house?"

"Oh, nonsense, you know."

"Indeed I do not."

"Why, you got me the gardener's place here."

"Answer me as if I knew nothing."

"Well, it is the Convent of the Little Picpus, then."

Jean Valjean's recollections returned to him. Chance, that is to say, Providence, had brought him to the very convent in the Quartier St. Antoine where Fauchelevent after his accident had been engaged on his recommendation two years back. He repeated, as if speaking to himself,—

"'Little Picpus'!"

"But come, tell me," Fauchelevent continued, "how the deuce did you get in here, Father Madeleine? For though you are a saint, you are a man, and no men are admitted here."

"Why, you are!"

"Well, only I."

"And yet," Jean Valjean continued, "I must remain."

"Oh, Lord!" Fauchelevent exclaimed.

Jean Valjean walked up to the gardener and said in a grave voice,—

"Fauchelevent, I saved your life."

"I was the first to remember it," Fauchelevent answered.

"Well, you can do for me to-day what I did for you formerly."

Fauchelevent took Jean Valjean's muscular hands in his old wrinkled and trembling hands, and for some seconds seemed as if unable to speak; at length he exclaimed,—

"Oh, it would be a blessing from Heaven if I could repay you a slight portion! Save your life! M. Madeleine, you can dispose of an old man as you please."

An admirable joy had transfigured the aged gardener, and his face seemed radiant.

"What do you wish me to do?" he continued.

"I will explain. Have you a room?"

"I have a cottage behind the ruins of the old convent, in a corner which no one visits, with three

rooms."

"Good," said Jean Valjean; "now I will ask two things of you."

"What are they, M. le Maire?"

"First, that you will tell nobody what you know about me; and secondly, that you will not try to learn anything further."

"As you please. I know that you can do nothing but what is honest, and that you have ever been a man after God's heart. And then, again, it was you who got me this situation, and I am at your service."

"Enough; now come with me, and we will go and fetch the child."

"Ah," said Fauchelevent,"there is a child!"

He did not add a word, but followed Jean Valjean as a dog follows its master. In less than half an hour, Cosette, who had become rosy again by the heat of a good fire, was asleep in the old gardener's bed. Jean Valjean had put on his cravat and coat again; the hat thrown over the wall had been found and picked up, and Fauchelevent took off his knee-cap and bell, which now adorned the wall by the side of a door. The two men were seated near the fire at a table on which Fauchelevent had placed a lump of cheese, biscuits, a bottle of wine, and two glasses, and the old man said to Jean Valjean as he laid his hand on his knee,—

"Ah, Father Madeleine! you did not recognize me at once; you save people's lives and forget them afterwards! Oh, that is wrong, for they remember you; you are an ungrateful man."

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**CHAPTER X.**

## HOW JAVERT ONLY FOUND THE NEST.

The events of which we have just seen the back, so to speak, had occurred under the simplest conditions. When Jean Valjean, on the night of the day on which Javert arrested him by Fantine's death-bed, broke out of M—— jail, the police supposed that the escaped convict would proceed to Paris. Paris is a maelstrom in which everything is lost and disappears in the whirlpool of the streets: no forest can conceal a man so well as that crowd, and fugitives of every description are aware of the fact. They go to Paris to be swallowed up, for that is at times a mode of safety. The police are aware of this too, and it is at Paris they seek what they have lost elsewhere. They sought there the ex-mayor of M——, and Javert was summoned to assist in the search, and in truth powerfully assisted in recapturing Jean Valjean. The zeal and intelligence he displayed in this office were noticed by M. Chabouillet, Secretary to the Prefecture under Count Anglès, and this gentleman, who had before been a friend to Javert, had the police-inspector of M—— appointed to the Paris district. Here Javert proved himself variously and —let us say it, though the word seems inappropriate when applied to such services—honorably useful.

He thought no more of Jean Valjean—with these dogs ever on the hunt the wolf of to-day causes the wolf of yesterday to be forgotten—until in December, 1823, he, who never read newspapers, read one. But Javert, who was a legitimist, was anxious to learn the details of the triumphal entry of the "Prince Generalissimo" into Bayonne. When he had finished the article that interested him a name—the name of Jean Valjean at the foot of a column—attracted him. The newspaper announced that the convict Jean Valjean was dead, and published the fact in such formal terms that Javert did not doubt it. He musing said, "That is the best bolt;" then threw away the paper, and thought no more of the subject. Some time after, it happened that a report was sent by the Prefecture of the Seine et Oise to that of Paris about the

abduction of a child, which took place, it was said, under peculiar circumstances, in the parish of Montfermeil. A little girl of seven or eight years of age, who had been intrusted by her mother to a publican in the town, had been stolen by a stranger. The child answered to the name of Cosette, and her mother was a certain Fantine, who had died in an hospital, it was not known when or where. This report passed under Javert's eyes, and rendered him thoughtful. The name of Fantine was familiar to him; he remembered that Jean Valjean had made him laugh by asking him for a respite of three days to go and fetch this creature's child. He remembered that Jean Valjean was arrested at Paris at the very moment when he was getting into the Montfermeil coach, and some facts had led to the supposition at the time that he had taken a trip to the vicinity of the village on the previous day, for he had not been seen in the village itself. What was his business at Montfermeil? No one was able to guess; but Javert now understood it. Fantine's daughter was there, and Jean Valjean had gone to fetch her. Now this child had just been stolen by a stranger. Who could the stranger be? Could it be Jean Valjean? But he was dead. Javert, without saying a word to anybody, took the coach at the "Pewter Platter," and went off to Montfermeil.

He expected to find here a great clearing up, but only found a great obscurity. At the beginning, the Thénardier, in their vexation, had chattered, and the disappearance of the Lark produced a sensation in the village. There were at once several versions of the story, which finally settled down into an abduction, and hence the police report. Still, after he had got over his first outburst of temper, Thénardier, with his admirable instinct, very speedily comprehended that it is never useful to set the authorities at work, and that his complaint about the abduction of Cosette would have the primary result of fixing the flashing gaze of justice upon himself, and many dark matters he was mixed up in. The thing that owls least like is to have a candle brought to them. And then, again, how would he get out of the fifteen hundred francs which he had received? He stopped short, put a gag in his wife's mouth, and affected amazement when people spoke about "the stolen child." He did not at all understand; he had certainly complained at the first moment about his little darling being taken from him so suddenly; he should have liked to keep her for two or three days longer through affection; but it was her grandfather who had come to fetch her in the most natural way in the world. He added the "grandfather," which produced a good effect, and it was on this story that Javert fell upon reaching Montfermeil: the grandfather caused Jean Valjean to fade out of memory. Javert, however, drove a few questions like probes into Thénardier's story: "Who was this grandfather, and what was his name?" Thénardier answered simply, "He is a rich farmer; I saw his passport, and I fancy his name was M. Guillaume Lambert." Lambert is a respectable and most reassuring name, and so Javert returned to Paris. "Jean Valjean is really dead," he said to himself, "and I am an ass."

He was beginning to forget the whole affair again, when in the course of March, 1824, he heard talk of a peculiar character who lived in the parish of St. Médard, and was surnamed the "beggar who gives alms." This man was said to be an annuitant, whose name no one exactly knew, and who lived alone with a little girl of eight years of age, who knew nothing about herself except that she came from Montfermeil. Montfermeil! that name constantly returned, and made Javert prick up his ears. An old begging spy, an ex-beadle, to whom this person was very charitable, added a few more details. "He was a very stern person; he never went out till night; he spoke to nobody, except to the poor now and then, and let no one approach him. He wore a horrible old yellow coat, which was worth several millions, as it was lined all through with bank-notes." This decidedly piqued Javert's curiosity. In order to see this annuitant closer without startling him, he one day borrowed the beadle's rags and the place where the old spy crouched every evening, snuffling his orisons through his nose, and spying between his prayers. "The suspicious individual" really came up to Javert, thus travestied, and gave him alms. At this moment Javert raised his head, and the shock which Jean Valjean received on fancying that he recognized Javert, Javert received on fancying that he recognized Jean Valjean. Still, the darkness might have deceived him; and Jean Valjean's death was official. Javert felt serious doubts; and when in

doubt, Javert, a scrupulous man, never put his hand on the person's collar. He followed his man to No. 50-52, and made the old woman talk, which was no difficult task. She confirmed the fact of the great-coat lined with millions, and told the story about the thousand-franc note; she had seen it; she had felt it! Javert hired a room, and took possession of it that same night. He listened at the door of the mysterious lodger, in the hope of hearing his voice; but Jean Valjean saw his candle through the key-hole, and foiled the spy by holding his tongue.

On the next day Jean Valjean decamped; but the noise of the five-franc piece which he let drop was noticed by the old woman, who supposed that he was about to leave, and hastened to warn Javert. Hence, when Jean Valjean left the house at night, Javert was waiting for him behind the trees with two men. Javert had requested assistance at the Prefecture, but had not mentioned the name of the individual whom he hoped to seize. That was his secret, and he kept it for three reasons: first, because the slightest indiscretion might give Jean Valjean the alarm; secondly, because laying hands on an old escaped convict supposed to be dead, on a condemned man whom justice had already classified forever among "the malefactors of the most dangerous class," was a magnificent success, which the older policemen of Paris would certainly not leave to a new-comer like Javert,—and he was afraid lest he might be robbed of his galley-slave; lastly, because Javert, having artistic tastes, was fond of anything unexpected. He hated those successes which are deflowered by being talked of a long time beforehand, and he liked to elaborate his masterpieces in the darkness and suddenly unveil them. Javert followed Jean Valjean from tree to tree, and then from street corner to street corner, and had not once taken his eye off him; even at the moment when Jean Valjean fancied himself the safest, Javert's eye was upon him. Why did Javert not arrest him, though? Because he was still in doubt. It must be borne in mind that at this period the police were not exactly at their ease, and the free press annoyed them. A few arbitrary arrests, denounced by the newspapers, had found an echo in the Chambers, and rendered the Prefecture timid. Attacking individual liberty was a serious matter; the agents were afraid of being deceived, for the Prefect made them answerable, and a mistake was dismissal. Just imagine the effect which would have been produced in Paris by the following short paragraph reproduced by twenty papers,—"Yesterday an old white-haired grandfather, a respectable fund-holder, who was taking a walk with his granddaughter, eight years of age, was arrested and taken to the House of Detention as an escaped convict." Let us repeat also that Javert had scruples of his own; the warnings of his conscience were added to those of the Prefect, and he really doubted. Jean Valjean had his back turned to him, and was walking in the dark; sorrow, anxiety, despondency, the fresh misfortune of being compelled to fly by night and seek a chance refuge for Cosette and himself in Paris, the necessity of regulating his pace by that of a child,—all this had unconsciously changed Jean Valjean's demeanor, and imparted to him such a senility, that the very police, incarnated in Javert, might be deceived and were deceived. The impossibility of approaching close, his attire as an old émigré tutor, Thénardier's statement which made him out a grandpapa, and lastly, the belief in his death at the galleys, added to the uncertainty that clouded Javert's mind. For a moment he had the idea of suddenly asking for his papers; but if the man was not Jean Valjean, and if he were not a respectable fund-holder, he was in all probability some fellow deeply entangled in the meshes of Parisian crime; some leader of a band who gave alms to hide his other talents, and who had his "pals," his accomplices, and his lurking-places, where he could conceal himself. All the turnings this man made in the streets seemed to indicate that all was not quite right with him, and arresting him too quickly would be "killing the goose with the golden eggs." Where was the harm of waiting? Javert felt quite certain that he could not escape. He walked along, therefore, in great perplexity, asking himself a hundred questions about this enigmatical personage. It was not till some time after that he decidedly recognized Jean Valjean in the Rue Pontoise, by the brilliant light that poured from a wine-shop.

There are only two beings in the world that thrill profoundly,—the mother who recovers her child, and the tiger that finds its prey again; but Javert had the same thrill. So soon as he had positively recognized

Jean Valjean, the formidable convict, he noticed that he had only two companions, and asked for support at the police office in the Rue Pontoise. Before catching hold of a thorn-bush, people put on gloves. This delay and the halt at the Rollin Square to arrange with his agents all but made him lose the trail; but he quickly guessed that Jean Valjean wished to place the river between himself and his hunters. He hung his head and reflected, like a blood-hound putting its nose to the ground to lift the scent, and then, with the powerful correctness of his instinct, walked to the Austerlitz bridge. One remark of the toll-collector's put him on his track. "Have you seen a man with a little girl?" "I made him pay two sous," the collector answered. Javert reached the bridge just in time to see Jean Valjean leading Cosette across the moonlit square; he saw him enter the Rue du Chemin Vert St. Antoine; he thought of the blind alley arranged there like a trap, and the sole issue from it by the little Rue Picpus; and in order to stop the earth, as sportsmen say, he sent off a policeman by a detour to guard the issue. A patrol, which was returning to the arsenal, happening to pass, he requested its assistance; for in such games as this soldiers are trumps, and, moreover, it is a principle that, in forcing a boar from its lair, the hunter must be scientific, and there must be a strong pack of hounds. These arrangements made, Javert, feeling that Jean Valjean was caught between the blind alley on the right, his own agent on the left, and himself behind, took a pinch of snuff. Then he began playing and enjoying a delicious and infernal moment; he let his man go before him, knowing that he held him, but desiring to defer as long as possible the moment of arresting him; delighted at feeling him caught, and at seeing him free, and watching him with the pleasure of the spider that lets the fly flutter for a while, and the cat that lets the mouse run. The claw and the talon have a monstrous sensuality in the fluttering movements of the animal imprisoned in their prisons. What a delight such a strangling must be! Javert was playing. The meshes of his net were so solidly made, he was certain of success, and now he only needed to close his hand. Accompanied as he was, the idea of resistance was impossible, however energetic, vigorous, and desperate Jean Valjean might be.

Javert advanced slowly, examining and searching as he passed every corner of the street, like the pockets of a thief; but when he reached the centre of the web he did not find his fly. We can imagine his exasperation. He questioned his watchmen, but they quietly declared that they had not seen the man pass. It happens at times that a stag will escape with the pack at its heels, and in such cases the oldest huntsmen know not what to say. In a disappointment of this nature Artonge exclaimed,—"It is not a stag, but a sorcerer." Javert would have gladly uttered the same cry, for his disappointment was midway between despair and fury.

It is certain that errors were committed by Napoleon in the Russian war, by Alexander in the Indian war, by Cæsar in his African war, by Cyrus in the Scythian war, and by Javert in his campaign against Jean Valjean. He was probably wrong in hesitating to recognize the ex-galley slave, for a glance ought to have been sufficient for him. He was wrong in not apprehending him purely and simply at No. 50-52. He was wrong in not arresting him, upon recognition, in the Rue Pontoise. He was wrong to arrange with his colleagues in the bright moonlight, although certainly advice is useful, and it is as well to interrogate those dogs which deserve credence. But the hunter cannot take too many precautions when he is following restless animals, like the wolf and the convict; and Javert, by displaying too much anxiety in setting the blood-hounds on the track, alarmed his game and started it off. Above all, he was wrong, on finding the trail again of the Austerlitz bridge, in playing the dangerous and foolish trick of holding such a man by a string. He fancied himself stronger than he really was, and that he could play with the lion as if it were a mouse. At the same time he imagined himself too weak when he fancied that he must procure help; it was a fatal precaution, and the loss of precious time. Javert committed all these faults, but for all that was not the less one of the cleverest and most certain spies that ever existed. He was, in the full acceptation of the term, a dog that runs cunning; but where is the man who is perfect? Great strategists have their eclipses, and great follies are often made, like stout ropes, of a multitude of fibres. Take the cable thread by thread, catch hold of all the small determining motives

separately, and you break them one after the other, and say to yourself, "It is only that;" but twist them together and you have an enormity. It is Attila hesitating between Marcianus in the East and Valentinianus in the West; it is Hannibal delaying at Capua; it is Danton falling asleep at Arcis-sur-Aube.

However this may be, even at the moment when Javert perceived that Jean Valjean had slipped from his clutches he did not lose his head. Certain that the convict could not be very far off, he established watches, organized mousetraps and ambuscades, and beat up the quarter the whole night through. The first thing he saw was the cut cord of the lantern. This was a valuable sign, which, however, led him astray so far that it made him turn all his attention to the Genrot blind alley. There are in this alley low walls, surrounding gardens which skirt open fields, and Jean Valjean had evidently fled in that direction. The truth is, that if he had gone a little farther down the blind alley he would in all probability have done so and been a lost man. Javert explored the gardens and fields as if looking for a needle, and at daybreak he left two intelligent men on duty, and returned to the Prefecture of Police, looking as hang-dog as a spy captured by a robber.

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**BOOK VI**

# PETIT PICPUS.

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**CHAPTER I**

## NO. 62, RUE PICPUS.

Half a century ago nothing more resembled any ordinary porte-cochère than that of No. 62, Petite Rue Picpus. This door, generally half open in the most inviting manner, allowed you to see two things which are not of a very mournful nature,—a court-yard with walls covered with vines, and the face of a lounging porter. Above the bottom wall tall trees could be seen, and when a sunbeam enlivened the yard, and a glass of wine had enlivened the porter, it was difficult to pass before No. 62 and not carry away a laughing idea. And yet, you had had a glimpse of a very gloomy place. The threshold smiled, but the house prayed and wept. If you succeeded, which was not easy, in passing the porter—as was, indeed, impossible for nearly all, for there was an "Open, Sesame," which it was necessary to know—you entered on the right a small hall from which ran a staircase enclosed between two walls, and so narrow that only one person could go up at a time: if you were not frightened by the canary-colored plaster and chocolate wainscot of this staircase, and still boldly ascended, you crossed two landings and found yourself in a passage on the first floor, where the yellow distemper and chocolate skirting-board followed you with a quiet pertinacity. The staircase and passage were lighted by two fine windows, but the latter soon made a bend and became dark. When you had doubled this cape, you found yourself before a door, which was the more mysterious because it was not closed. You pushed it open, and found yourself in a small room about six feet square, well scrubbed, clean, and frigid, and hung with a yellow-green sprigged paper, at fifteen sous the piece. A white pale light came through a large window with small panes, which was on the left, and occupied the whole width of the room; you looked about you, but saw nobody; you listened, but heard neither a footstep nor a human sound; the walls were bare, and the room unfurnished—there was not even a chair.

You looked again, and saw in the wall facing the door a square hole covered with a black knotty

substantial cross-barred grating, which formed diamonds—I had almost written meshes—at least an inch and a half across. The little green sprigs on the yellow paper came right up to these bars, calmly and orderly, and the funereal contact did not make them start or wither. Even supposing that any human being had been so wondrously thin as to attempt to go in or out by the square hole, the bars would have prevented him: but though they did not let the body pass, the eyes, that is to say, the mind, could. It seemed as if this had been thought of, for it had been lined with a tin plate, in which were bored thousands of holes more microscopic than those of a strainer. Beneath this plate was an opening exactly like the mouth of a letter-box, and a bell-wire hung by the side of this hole. If you pulled this wire, a bell tinkled, and you heard a voice close to you which made you start.

"Who is there?" the voice asked.

It was a female voice, a gentle voice, so gentle that it was melancholy. Here, again, there was a magic word which it was necessary to know; if you did not know it, the voice ceased, and the wall became silent again, as if the terrifying darkness of the tomb were on the other side. If you knew the word, the voice continued,—"Turn to the right." You then noticed, facing the window, a door, the upper part of which was of gray painted glass. You raised the latch, walked in, and experienced precisely the same expression as when you enter a box at the theatre, before the gilt grating has been lowered and the chandelier lighted. You were in fact in a species of box, scarce lighted by the faint light that came through the glass door, narrow, furnished with two old chairs and a ragged sofa,—a real box with a black entablature to represent the front. This box had a grating; but it was not made of gilt wood as at the opera, but was a monstrous trellis-work of frightfully interlaced iron bars, fastened to the wall by enormous clamps that resembled clenched fists. When the first few moments were past, and your eye began to grow accustomed to this cellar-like gloom, you tried to look through the grating, but could not see more than six inches beyond it; there it met a barrier of black shutters, connected and strengthened by cross-beams, and painted of a ginger-bread yellow. These shutters were jointed, divided into long thin planks, and covered the whole width of the grating; they were always closed. At the expiration of a few minutes you heard a voice calling to you from behind the shutters, and saying to you,—

"I am here; what do you want with me?"

It was a loved voice, sometimes an adored voice, but you saw nobody, and could scarce hear the sound of breathing. It seemed as it were an evocation addressing you through the wall of a tomb. If you fulfilled certain required and very rare conditions, the narrow plank of one of the shutters opened opposite to you, and the evocation became an apparition. Behind the grating, behind the shutter, you perceived, as far as the grating would allow, a head, of which you only saw the mouth and chin, for the rest was covered by a black veil. You caught a glimpse of a black wimple, and of a scarce distinct form covered by a black pall. This head spoke to you, but did not look at you, and never smiled. The light that came from behind you was so arranged that you saw her in brightness and she saw you in darkness; this light was a symbol. Still, your eyes plunged eagerly through the opening into this place, closed against all looks; a profound vacuum surrounded this form clothed in mourning. Your eyes investigated this vacuum and tried to distinguish what there was around the apparition, but in a very little time you perceived that you could see nothing. What you saw was night, emptiness, gloom, a winter fog mingled with the vapor from a tomb; a sort of terrifying peace; a silence in which nothing could be heard, not even sighs; a shadow in which nothing could be distinguished, not even phantoms. What you saw was the interior of a nunnery, the interior of that gloomy and stern house which was called the Convent of the Perpetual Adoration. The box in which you found yourself was the parlor, and the first voice that addressed you was that of a lay sister who always sat, silent and motionless, on the other side of the wall, near the square opening which was defended by the iron grating and the tin plate with the thousand holes like a double visor.

The obscurity in which the grated box was plunged, resulted from the fact that the parlor, which had a

window on the side of the world, had none on the side of the convent; profane eyes must not see any portion of this sacred spot. Still, there was something beyond the shadow; there was a light and life amid this death. Although this convent was the most strictly immured of all, we will try to enter it and take the reader in with us, and describe, with due regard to decorum, things which novelists have never seen, and consequently never recorded.

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**CHAPTER II.**

## THE OBEDIENCE OF MARTIN VERGA.

This convent, which had existed for many years prior to 1824 in the Rue Picpus, was a community of Bernardines belonging to the obedience of Martin Verga. These Bernardines, consequently, were not attached to Clairvaux, like the Bernardine brothers, but to Citeaux, like the Benedictines. In other words, they were subjects, not of Saint Bernard, but of Saint Benedict. Any one who has at all turned over folios knows that Martin Verga founded, in 1425, a congregation of Bernardo-Benedictines, whose headquarters were Salamanca, and which had Alcala as an offshoot. Such a grafting of one order upon another is not at all unusual in the Latin Church. If we confine our attention merely to the Order of St. Benedict, we find four congregations attached to it, beside the obedience of Martin Verga; in Italy two, Monte Cassino and St. Justina of Padua; two in France, Cluny and St. Marco, and nine orders,—Valombrosa, Grammont, the Celestins, the Calmalduli, the Chartreux, the Humiliated, the Olivateurs, and the Silvestrines, and lastly, Citeaux; for Citeaux itself, while trunk for other orders, is only a branch with Saint Benedict. Citeaux dates from Saint Robert, Abbot of Molesmes, in the diocese of Langres, in 1098. Now it was in 529 that the devil, who had retired to the desert of Subiaco (he was old, did he turn hermit?), was expelled from the temple of Apollo in which he resided, by Saint Benedict, a youth of seventeen years of age.

Next to the rule of the Carmelites, who walk barefoot, wear a piece of wicker-work on their throat, and never sit down, the hardest rule is that of the Bernardo-Benedictines of Martin Verga. They are dressed in black with a wimple, which, by the express order of Saint Benedict, comes up to the chin; a serge gown with wide sleeves, a large woollen veil, the wimple cut square on the chest, and the coif, which comes down to their eyes,—such is their dress. All is black, excepting the coif, which is white. Novices wear the same garb, but all white, while the professed nuns also wear a rosary by their side. The Bernardo-Benedictines of Martin Verga practise the Perpetual Adoration, in the same way as those Benedictines called the ladies of the Holy Sacrament, who, at the beginning of this century, had two houses in Paris, one in the Temple, the other in the Rue Neuve St. Geneviève. In other respects, the nuns of the Little Picpus to whom we are referring entirely differed from the ladies of the Holy Sacrament; there were several distinctions in the rule as well as in the dress. The nuns of Little Picpus wore a black wimple, the former a white one, and had also on their chest a Holy Sacrament, about three inches in length, of plate or gilt brass. The nuns of the Little Picpus did not wear this decoration. The Perpetual Adoration, while common in Little Picpus and the Temple house, leaves the two orders perfectly distinct. This practice is the only resemblance between the ladies of the Holy Sacrament and the Bernardines of Martin Verga, in the same way as there was a similitude, for the study and glorification of all the mysteries attaching to the infancy, life, and death of the Saviour, between two orders which were greatly separated and at times hostile,—the oratory of Italy, established at Florence by Philippe de Neri, and the oratory of France, established in Paris by Pierre de Bérulle. The Paris oratory claimed precedence because Philippe de Neri was only a saint, while Bérulle was a cardinal. But to return to the harsh Spanish rule of Martin Verga.

The Bernardo-Benedictines of this obedience abstain from meat the whole year; fast all Lent, and on many other days special to themselves; get up in their first sleep, from one to three A.M., in order to read their breviary and chant matins; sleep in serge sheets at all seasons, and on straw; never bathe or light fires; chastise themselves every Friday; observe the rule of silence; only speak during recreation, which is very short; and wear coarse flannel chemises for six months, from September 14th, which is the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, up to Easter. These six months are a moderation; the rule says all the year, but the flannel chemise, insupportable in the heat of summer, produced fevers and nervous spasms. Even with this relief, when the nuns put on the flannel chemise on September 14th, they suffer from fever for three or four days. Obedience, poverty, chastity, perseverance,—such are their vows, which are greatly aggravated by the rule. The prioress is elected for three years by mothers called "Mères Vocales," because they have a voice in the Chapter. She can be re-elected only twice, which fixes the longest possible reign of a prioress at nine years. They never see the officiating priest, who is hidden from them by a green baize curtain nine feet high. At the sermon, when the preacher is in the chapel, they draw their veil over their face; they must always speak low, and walk with their eyes fixed on the ground. Only one man is allowed to enter the convent, and he is the Diocesan Archbishop. There is certainly another, who is the gardener; but he is always an aged man, and in order that he may be constantly alone in the garden, and that the nuns may avoid him, a bell is fastened to his knee. The nuns must display absolute and passive submission to the prioress, and it is canonical subjection in all its self-denial. They must obey as if it were the voice of Christ, ut voci Christi, at a nod, at the first signal, ad nutum, ad primum signum; at once, cheerfully, perseveringly, and with a certain bland obedience, prompte, hilariter, perseveranter, et cœca quadam obedientiâ,; like the file in the workman's hand, quasi limam in manibus fabri, and are not allowed to read or write anything without express permission, legere vel scribere non ediscerit sine expressa superioris licentia. Each of them performs in turn what they call the "reparation." This reparation is a prayer for all the sins, faults, irregularities, violations, iniquities, and crimes performed upon earth. For twelve consecutive hours, from four in the evening till four the next morning, the sister who performs the reparation remains on her knees, on the stone before the Holy Sacrament, with her hands clasped, and a rope round her neck. When the fatigue becomes insupportable she prostrates herself with her face on the ground, and her arms forming a cross,—that is her sole relief. In this attitude she prays for all the guilty in the world; it is a grand, almost a sublime idea. As this act is accomplished in front of a stake on the top of which a wax candle is burning, it is called either "making reparation," or "being at the stake." The nuns through humility, indeed, prefer the latter expression, which contains an idea of punishment and abasement. Making reparation is a function in which the whole soul is absorbed; the sister at the stake would not turn round were a thunder-bolt to fall behind her. Moreover, there is always a nun on her knees before the Holy Sacrament; this station lasts an hour, and they relieve each other like sentries. That is the Perpetual Adoration.

The prioress and mothers nearly all have names imprinted with peculiar gravity, recalling, not saints and martyrs, but the incidents in the life of the Saviour,—such as Mother Nativity, Mother Conception, Mother Presentation, and Mother Passion; still, the names of saints are not interdicted. When you see them, you never see more of them than their mouth; and they all have yellow teeth, for a tooth-brush never entered the convent. Cleaning the teeth is the first rung of the ladder, at the foot of which is "losing the soul." They do not call anything "mine;" they have nothing of their own, and must not be attached to anything. They say of everything "ours,"—thus, our veil, our beads; if they were to allude to their chemise they would say "our chemise." Sometimes they grow attached to some trifling object, a book of hours, a relic, or consecrated medal; but so soon as they perceive that they are beginning to grow fond of it, they are obliged to give it away. They remember the remark of Saint Theresa, to whom a great lady said, at the moment of entering her order,—"Allow me, Holy Mother, to send for a Bible to which I am greatly attached." "Ah, you are still attached to something! In that case do not come among

us." No one must lock herself in under any pretence, or have a room of her own; and they live with open doors. When they pass each other, one says, "The most Holy Sacrament of the Altar be blessed and adored!" and the other answers, "Forever." There is the same ceremony when one sister raps at another sister's door; the door has scarce been touched, ere a gentle voice is heard saying hurriedly from within, "Forever." Like all practices, this one becomes mechanical through habit; and a sister will sometimes say, "Forever," before the other has had time to utter the long sentence, "The most Holy Sacrament of the Altar be blessed and adored!" Among the Visitandines, the one who enters says, "Ave Maria," to which the other replies, "Gratiâ, plena;" this is their greeting, which is truly full of grace. At each hour of the day three supplementary strokes are struck on the chapel bell, and at this signal, prioress, vocal mothers, professed nuns, lay sisters, novices, and postulants break off what they are saying, doing, or thinking, and all repeat together,—if it be five o'clock, for instance,—"At five o'clock, and at every hour, may the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar be blessed and adored!" and so on, according to the hour. This custom, which is intended to break off thoughts and ever lead them back to God, exists in many communities, the form alone varying. Thus at the Infant Jesus they say, "At the present hour, and at every hour, may the love of Jesus inflame my heart!"

The Bernardo-Benedictines of Martin Verga sing the offices to a grave, full chant, and always in a loud voice, during the whole of the service. Whenever there is an asterisk in the missal, they pause, and say in a low voice, "Jesus, Mary, Joseph." In the service for the dead they employ such a deep note that female voices can scarce descend to it, and there results from it a striking and tragical effect. The sisters of Little Picpus had a vault under their high altar for the burial of their community, but the Government, as they call it, would not allow coffins to be placed in this vault, and they therefore left the convent when they were dead; this afflicted and consternated them like an infraction. They had obtained the slight consolation of being buried at a special hour and in a special corner of the old Vaugirard cemetery, which was established in a field that had once belonged to the community. On Thursday these nuns attend high mass, vespers, and all the services, as on Sunday. And they also scrupulously observe all the little festivals unknown to people of the world, of which the Church was formerly so prodigal in France, and still remains so in Spain and Italy. Their stations in the chapels are innumerable; and as for the number and length of their prayers, we cannot give a better idea than by quoting the simple remark of one of them,—"The prayers of the postulants are frightful, those of the novices worse, and those of the professed nuns worse still." Once a week the Chapter meets, the prioress presiding and the vocal mothers assisting. Each sister comes in her turn to kneel on the stone, and confesses aloud, in the presence of all, the faults and sins which she has committed during the week. The vocal mothers consult after each confession and inflict the penances aloud. In addition to the loud confession, for which all faults at all serious are reserved, they have for venial faults what they call "la coulpe." The penitent prostrates herself on her face during service in front of the prioress, who is never addressed otherwise than "our mother," until the latter warns the sufferer, by a slight tap on the arm of her stall, that she can get up. The nuns perform this penance for very trivial things; breaking a glass, tearing a veil, an involuntary delay of a few seconds in attending service, a false note in chapel, —that is enough. This penance is quite voluntary, and the culprit (this word is etymologically in its place here) tries and punishes herself. On festivals and Sundays there are four singing mothers, who chant at a large lectern with four desks. One day a singing mother was striking up a psalm, which began with the word Ecce, and said instead, quite loud, ut, si, sol; and for this absence of mind she underwent a penance that lasted the whole service. What rendered the fault enormous was that the congregation laughed.

When a nun is summoned to the parlor, even if she be the prioress, she pulls down her veil in such a way as only to show her mouth. The prioress alone can communicate with strangers; the others can only see their nearest relations, and that very rarely. If by chance a person from the outer world requests to see a nun whom she had formerly known or loved, a lengthened negotiation is required. If it be a

woman, the permission may possibly be granted. The nun comes and is spoken to through the shutters, which are only opened for a mother or a sister. We need hardly say that permission is never granted to men.

Such is the rule of Saint Benedict, aggravated by Martin Verga. These nuns are not gay, rosy, and fresh, as we find sometimes in other orders; they are pale and serious, and between 1825 and 1830 three of them went mad.

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**CHAPTER III.**

## SEVERITIES.

Any one desirous of joining the community of Martin Verga must be at least two years a postulant, sometimes four, and four years a novice. It is rare for the final vows to be taken before the age of twenty-three or twenty-four years. The Bernardo-Benedictines of Martin Verga admit no widows into their order. In their cells they undergo many strange macerations, of which they are not allowed to speak. On the day when a novice professes, she is dressed in her best clothes, wears a wreath of white roses, has her hair curled, and then prostrates herself; a large black veil is spread over her, and the service for the dead is performed. Then the nuns divide into two files, one of which passes her, saying in a plaintive voice, "Our sister is dead," and the other answers triumphantly, "Living in Jesus Christ."

At the period when this story is laid, there was a boarding-school attached to the convent, the pupils being young ladies of noble birth, and generally rich. Among them could be noticed Mlles. de Sainte Aulaire and de Bélissen, and an English girl bearing the illustrious Catholic name of Talbot. These young ladies, educated by the nuns between four walls, grew up with a horror of the world and of the century; one of them said to us one day, "Seeing the street pavement made me shudder from head to foot." They were dressed in blue, with a white cap, and a plated or gilt Holy Ghost on the chest. On certain high festivals, especially Saint Martha, they were allowed, as a high favor and supreme happiness, to dress themselves like nuns, and perform the offices and practices of Saint Benedict for the whole day. At first the nuns lent them their black robes, but this was deemed a profanity, and the prioress forbade it; so the novices alone were permitted to make such loans. It is remarkable that these representations, doubtless tolerated in the convent through a secret spirit of proselytism, and in order to give their children some foretaste of the sacred dress, were a real happiness and true recreation for the boarders; they were amused by them, for "it was a novelty and changed them,"—candid reasons of children, which do not succeed, however, in making us worldly-minded people understand the felicity of holding a holy-water brush in one's hand, and standing for hours before a lectern and singing quartettes. The pupils conformed to all the practices of the convent, though not to all the austerities. We know a young lady who, after returning to the world and being married for some years, could not break herself of hastily saying, each time that there was a rap at the door, "Forever!" like the nuns. The boarders only saw their parents in the parlor; their mothers themselves were not even allowed to kiss them. To show how far this severity was carried, a young lady was visited one day by her mother, accompanied by a little sister three years of age. The young lady cried, because she would have liked to kiss her sister but it was impossible. She implored at least permission for the child to pass her hand through the bars, so that she might kiss it; but it was refused almost as a scandal.

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**CHAPTER IV.**

## GAYETIES.

For all this, though, the young ladies filled this grave house with delightful reminiscences. At certain hours childhood sparkled in this cloister. The bell for recreation was rung, the gate creaked on its hinges, and the birds whispered to each other, "Here are the children." An irruption of youth inundated this garden, which with its cross-walks resembled a pall. Radiant faces, white foreheads, ingenuous eyes, full of gay light—all sorts of dawn—spread through the gloom. After the psalm-singing, the bell-ringing, and the services, the noise of girls, softer than the buzzing of bees, suddenly burst out. The hive of joy opened, and each brought her honey; they played, they called each other, they formed groups, and ran about; pretty little white teeth chattered at corners; in the distance veils watched the laughter, shadows guarded the beams,—but what matter! they were radiant, and laughed. These four mournful walls had their moment of bedazzlement; vaguely whitened by the reflection of so much joy, they watched this gentle buzzing of the swarm. It was like a shower of roses falling on this mourning. The girls sported beneath the eye of the nuns, for the glance of impeccability does not disturb innocence; and, thanks to these children, there was a simple hour among so many austere hours. The little girls jumped about and the elder danced, and nothing could be so ravishing and august as all the fresh, innocent expansion of these childish souls. Homer would have come here to dance with Perrault, and there were in this black garden, youth, health, noise, cries, pleasure, and happiness enough to unwrinkle the brows of all the ancestry, both of the epic poem and the fairy tale, of the throne and the cottage, from Hecuba down to La Mère Grand. In this house, more perhaps than elsewhere, those childish remarks were made which possess so much grace, and which make the hearer laugh thoughtfully. It was within these four gloomy walls that a child of four years of age one day exclaimed,—"Mother, a grown-up girl has just told me that I have only nine years and ten months longer to remain here. What happiness!" Here too it was that the memorable dialogue took place:—

A vocal mother.—Why are you crying, my child?

The child (six years old), sobbing.—I said to Alix that I knew my French history. She says that I don't know it, but I do know it.

Alix, the grown-up girl (just nine).—No. She does not know it.

Mother.—How so, my child?

Alix.—She told me to open the book haphazard, and ask her a question out of the book, which she would answer.

"Well?"

"She did not answer it."

"What was it you asked her?"

"I opened the book as she said, and I asked her the first question that I came across."

"And pray what was the question?"

"It was, 'What happened next?'"

It was here that the profound observation was made about a rather dainty parrot which belonged to a lady boarder. "How well bred it is! It eats the top of the slice of bread and butter, just like a lady." In one of these cloisters was also picked up the following confession, written beforehand, so as not to forget it, by a little sinner of seven years of age:—

"My father, I accuse myself of having been avaricious.

"My father, I accuse myself of having committed adultery.

"My father, I accuse myself of having raised my eyes to gentlemen."

It was on one of the benches in the garden that the following fable was improvised by rosy lips six years of age, and listened to by blue eyes of four and five years:—

"There were three little cocks, which lived in a place where there were many flowers. They picked the flowers and put them in their pockets; after that they plucked the leaves and put them in their play-things. There was a wolf in those parts, and there was a great deal of wood; and the wolf was in the wood, and all the three cocks."

It was here too that the following sweet and affecting remark was made by a foundling child whom the convent brought up through charity. She heard the others speaking of their mothers, and she murmured in her corner,—"My mother was not there when I was born." There was a fat portress who could continually be seen hurrying along the passage with her bunch of keys, and whose name was Sister Agathe. The grown-up girls—those above ten years of age—called her Agathoclès (Agathe aux clefs). The refectory, a large, rectangular room, which only received light through an arched window looking on the garden, was gloomy and damp, and, as children say, full of animals. All the surrounding places furnished their contingent of insects; and each of the four corners had received a private and expressive name, in the language of the boarders. There were Spider corner, Caterpillar corner, Woodlouse corner, and Cricket corner; the latter was near the kitchen, and highly esteemed, for it was warmer there. The names had passed from the refectory to the school-room, and served to distinguish four nations, as in the old Mazarin College. Every boarder belonged to one or other of these nations, according to the corner of the refectory in which she sat at meals. One day the archbishop, while paying a pastoral visit, noticed a charming little rosy-faced girl, with glorious light hair, pass, and he asked another boarder, a pretty brunette with pink cheeks, who was near him,—

"Who is that?"

"She is a spider, sir."

"Nonsense; and this other?"

"Is a cricket."

"And this one?"

"A caterpillar."

"Indeed! and what may you be?"

"I am a woodlouse, Monseigneur."

Each house of this nature has its peculiarities: at the beginning of this century Écouen was one of those places in which the childhood of children is passed in an almost august gloom. At Écouen a distinction was made between the virgins and flower-girls in taking rank in the procession of the Holy Sacrament. There were also the "canopies," and the "censers," the former holding the cords of the canopy, the latter swinging the censers in front of the Holy Sacrament, while four virgins walked in front. On the morning of the great day it was not rare to have people say in the dormitory,—"Who is a virgin?" Madame Campan mentions a remark made by a little girl of seven to a grown-up girl of sixteen, who walked at the head of the procession, while she, the little one, remained behind: "You are a virgin, but I am not one."

**CHAPTER V.**

## AMUSEMENTS.

Above the refectory door was painted in large black letters the following prayer, which was called the "White Paternoster," and which had the virtue of leading persons straight to Paradise.

"Little white Paternoster, which God made, which God said, which God placed in Paradise. At night, when I went to bed, I found three angels at my bed,—one at the foot, two at the head, and the good Virgin Mary in the middle,—who told me to go to bed and fear nothing. The Lord God is my father, the good Virgin is my mother, the three apostles are my brothers, the three virgins are my sisters. My body is wrapped up in the shirt in which God was born: the cross of Saint Marguerite is written on my chest. Madame the Virgin weeping for the Lord went into the fields and met there M. St. John. 'Monsieur St. John, where do you come from?' 'I have come from the Ave Salus'. 'You have not seen the Lord, have you?' 'He is on the tree of the cross, with hanging feet, nailed-up hands, and a little hat of white-thorn on his head.' Whosoever repeats this, thrice at night and thrice in the morning, will gain Paradise in the end."[1]

In 1827, this characteristic orison had disappeared beneath a triple coat of whitewash, and at the present day it is almost effaced from the memory of those who were young girls then, and old women now.

A large crucifix fastened to the wall completed the decoration of this refectory, whose only door opened on the garden. Two narrow tables, with wooden benches on each side, formed two long parallel lines from one end to the other of the refectory. The walls were white, the tables black; for these two mourning colors are the sole variations in convents. The meals were poor, and the food of even the children scanty; a single plate of meat and vegetables or salt-fish was the height of luxury. This ordinary, reserved for the boarders alone, was, however, an exception. The children ate and held their tongues under the guardianship of the mother of the week, who, from time to time, if a fly dared to move or buzz contrary to regulation, noisily opened and closed a wooden book. This silence was seasoned with the "Lives of the Saints," read aloud from a little desk standing at the foot of the crucifix, the reader being a grown-up pupil appointed for the week. At regular distances on the bare table there were earthen-ware bowls, in which the pupils themselves washed their cups and forks and spoons, and sometimes threw in a piece of hard meat or spoiled fish; but this was severely punished. Any child who broke the silence made a cross with her tongue. Where? On the ground: she licked the stones. Dust, that finale of all joys, was ordered to chastise these poor little rose-leaves that were guilty of prattling. There was in the convent a book of which only one copy was printed, and which no one was allowed to read,—the "Rule of St. Benedict,"—a mystery which no profane eye must penetrate. Nemo regulas seu constitutiones nostras externis communicabit. The boarders succeeded one day in getting hold of this book and began perusing it eagerly, though frequently interrupted by a fear of being surprised, which made them close the book hurriedly. They only derived a slight pleasure from the danger they incurred; for the most interesting portion was a few unintelligible pages about the sins of lads.

They played in a garden walk bordered by a few stunted fruit-trees. In spite of the extreme watch and the severity of the punishment, when the wind shook the trees they at times succeeded in picking up furtively a green apple, or a spoiled apricot, or a wasp-inhabited pear. I will here let a letter speak which I have before me, a letter written by an ex-boarder five-and-twenty years ago, who is now the Duchesse de ——, and one of the most elegant women in Paris. I quote exactly. "We hide our pear or our apple as we can. When we go up to lay our veil on the bed before supper we thrust it under a pillow, and eat it at night in bed; and when that is not possible we eat it in the closet." This was one of their liveliest pleasures. On one occasion, at a period when the archbishop was paying a visit at the convent, one of the young ladies, Mademoiselle Bouchard, who was related to the Montmorencys, laid

a wager that she would ask him for a holiday,—an enormity in such an austere community. The wager was taken, but not one of those who took it believed in it. When the moment arrived for the archbishop to pass before the boarders, Mademoiselle Bouchard, to the indescribable horror of her companions, stepped out of the ranks and said, "Monseigneur, a holiday." Mademoiselle Bouchard was fresh and tall, and had the prettiest pink-and-white face in the world. M. de Quélen smiled, and said,—"What, my dear child, a day's holiday! Three, if you like; I grant three days." The prioress could do nothing, as the archbishop had said it. It was a scandal for the convent, but a joy for the boarding-school. Just imagine the effect!

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This harsh convent, however, was not so well walled in but that the passions of the outer world, the dramas, and even the romance of life, entered it. To prove this, we will briefly describe a real and incontestable fact, though it is in no way connected with the story which we are narrating. We mention the fact in order to complete the physiognomy of the convent in the reader's mind. About this period, then, there was in the convent a mysterious personage, who was not a nun, but was treated with great respect, and called Madame Albertine. Nothing was known about her except that she was mad, and that in the world she was supposed to be dead. It was said that behind the story were certain monetary arrangements necessary for a grand marriage. This woman, who was scarce thirty years of age and a rather pretty brunette, looked vacantly around with her large black eyes. Did she see? It was doubted. She glided along rather than walked; she never spoke, and people were not quite sure whether she breathed. Her nostrils were pinched up and livid, as if she had drawn her last sigh: touching her hand was like touching snow, and she had a strange spectral grace. Wherever she entered she produced a chill; and one day a sister seeing her pass, said to another, "She is supposed to be dead." "Perhaps she is," the other replied. A hundred stories were current about Madame Albertine, and she was the eternal object of curiosity with the boarders. There was in this chapel a gallery called "L'œil de Bœuf," and it was in this place that Madame Albertine attended service. She was usually alone there, because, as the gallery was high, the preacher could be seen from it, which was prohibited to the nuns. One day the pulpit was occupied by a young priest of high rank, le Duc de Rohan, Peer of France, officer in the Red Musqueteers in 1815, when he was Prince de Leon, and who died about 1830, a cardinal, and Archbishop of Besançon. It was the first time that this M. de Rohan preached at the Little Picpus. Madame Albertine usually sat in perfect calmness through the service; but on this day, so soon as she perceived M. de Rohan, she half rose, and cried aloud, "Why, it is Auguste!" The whole community looked round in stupefaction, the preacher raised his eyes, but Madame Albertine had fallen back into her apathy; a breath from the outer world, a flash of light, had momentarily passed over this set face, then faded away, and the maniac became once again a corpse. This remark, however, made everybody in the convent who could speak, talk incessantly. What revelations were contained in this "Why, it is Auguste!" It was evident that Madame Albertine had moved in the highest society, since she knew M. de Rohan, spoke about so great a nobleman in such a familiar way, and was at least a near relation of his, since she knew his Christian name.

Two very strict Duchesses, Mesdames de Choiseul and de Serent, frequently visited the community, doubtless by virtue of their privilege as Magnates Mulieres, and terribly frightened the boarders. When the two old ladies passed, all the poor girls trembled and let their eyes fall. M. de Rohan was, besides, unwittingly the object of attention among the boarders. He had just been appointed, while waiting for a bishopric, Grand Vicar of the Archbishop of Paris, and it was one of his habits to serve mass in the chapel of the Little Picpus Convent. Not one of the young recluses could see him, on account of the baize curtain; but he had a soft and rather shrill voice, which they had managed to recognize and distinguish. He had been a Mousquetaire; and besides, he was said to be somewhat of a dandy, had fine chestnut hair curled round his head, wore a wide scarf of magnificent moire, and his black cassock was

cut in the most elegant style. He greatly occupied all their youthful imaginations. No external sound penetrated the convent, and yet one year the sound of a flute reached it. It was an event, and the boarders of that day still remember it. It was a flute which some one was playing in the neighborhood: it was the same tune, one now very aged, "Ma Zétulbé, viens regner sur mon âme," and it was heard two or three times a day. The girls spent hours in listening, the vocal mothers were upset, brains were at work, and punishments were constant. This lasted several months; the boarders were more or less enamoured of the unknown musician, and each fancied herself Zétulbé. The sound of the flute came from the direction of the Rue Droit-mur. They would have given anything, compromised anything, attempted anything, in order to see, if only for a moment, the young man who played the flute so exquisitely, and at the same time played on all their minds. Some of them slipped out through a back door and ascended to the third story looking out of the street, in order to try and see him through the grating; but it was impossible. One went so far as to pass her arm between the bars and wave her white handkerchief. Two others were even bolder; they managed to climb on to the roof, and at length succeeded in seeing the "young man." It was an old émigré gentleman, blind and ruined, who played the flute in his garret in order to kill time.

[1]This Paternoster is so curious that the translator has quoted the original.

"Petite Paternôtre blanche, que Dieu dit, que Dieu fit, que Dieu mit en Paradis. Au soir, m'allant coucher, je trouvis [sic] trois anges à mon lit couches, un aux pieds, deux au chevet, la bonne Vierge Marie au milieu qui me dit que je m'y couchis, qui rien ne doutis. Le bon Dieu est mon père, la bonne Vierge est ma mère, les trois apôtres sont mes frères, les trois vierges sont mes sœurs. La chemise ou Dieu fut né, mon corps en est enveloppé; la Croix Sainte Marguerite à ma poitrine est écrite. Madame la Vierge s'en va sur les champs. Dieu pleurant, recontrit M. St. Jean. Monsieur St. Jean, d'où venez-vous? Je viens d'Ave Salus. Vous n'avez vu le bon Dieu, si est? Il est dans l'arbre de la Croix, les pieds pendans, les mains clouans, un petit chapeau d'épine blanche sur la tête. Qui la dira trois fois au soir, trois fois au matin, gagnera le Paradis à la fin."

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**CHAPTER VI.**

## THE LITTLE CONVENT.

There were within the walls of Little Picpus three perfectly distinct buildings,—the great convent inhabited by the nuns, the schoolhouse in which the boarders were lodged, and, lastly, what was called the little convent. The latter was a house with a garden, in which all sorts of old nuns of various orders, the remains of convents broken up in the Revolution, dwelt in common; a reunion of all the black, white, and gray gowns of all the communities, and all the varieties possible; what might be called, were such a conjunction of words permissible, a hotch-potch convent. Under the Empire all these dispersed and homeless women were allowed to shelter themselves under the wings of the Bernardo-Benedictines; the Government paid them a small pension, and the ladies of Little Picpus eagerly received them. It was a strange pell-mell, in which each followed her rule. At times the boarders were allowed, as a great recreation, to pay them a visit, and it is from this that these young minds have retained a recollection of Holy Mother Bazile, Holy Mother Scholastica, and Mother Jacob.

One of these refugees was almost at home here; she was a nun of Sainte Aure, the only one of her order who survived. The old convent of the ladies of Sainte Aure occupied at the beginning of the 18th century the same house which at a later date belonged to the Benedictines of Martin Verga. This holy woman, who was too poor to wear the magnificent dress of her order, which was a white robe with a scarlet scapulary, had piously dressed up in it a small doll, which she was fond of showing, and left at

her death to the house. In 1820 only one nun of this order remained; at the present day only a doll is left. In addition to these worthy mothers, a few old ladies of the world, like Madame Albertine, had gained permission from the prioress to retire into the little convent. Among them were Madame de Beaufort d'Hautpoul and the Marquise Dufresne; another was only known in the convent by the formidable noise she made in using her handkerchief, and hence the boarders called her Madame Vacarmini. About the year 1820 Madame de Genlis, who edited at that period a small periodical called L'Intrépide, asked leave to board at the Little Picpus, and the Duc d'Orleans recommended her. There was a commotion in the hive, and the vocal mothers were all of a tremor, for Madame de Genlis had written romances; but she declared that she was the first to detest them, and moreover she had reached her phase of savage devotion. By the help of Heaven and of the prince she entered, and went away again at the end of six or eight months, alleging as a reason that the garden had no shade. The nuns were delighted at it. Although very old, she still played the harp, and remarkably well too. When she went away she left her mark on her cell. Madame de Genlis was superstitious and a Latin scholar, and these two terms give a very fair idea of her. A few years ago there might still be seen, fixed in the inside of a small cupboard of her cell, in which she kept her money and jewelry, the following five Latin verses, written in her own hand with red ink on yellow paper, and which, in her opinion, had the virtue of frightening away robbers:—

"Imparibus meritis pendent tria corpora ramis:
Dismas et Gesmas, media est divina potestas:
Alta petit Dismas, infelix, infima, Gesmas:
Nos et res nostras conservet summa potestas.
Hos versus dicas, ne tu furto tua perdas."

These verses, in sixteenth-century Latin, raise the question whether the two thieves of Calvary were called, as is commonly believed, Demas and Gestas, or Dismas and Gesmas. The latter orthography would thwart the claims made in the last century by the Viscomte de Gestas to be descended from the wicked thief. However, the useful virtue attached to these verses is an article of faith in the order of the Hospitaler nuns. The church, so built as to separate the great convent from the boarding-school, was common to the school, and the great and little convents. The public were even admitted by a sort of quarantine entrance from the street: but everything was so arranged that not one of the inhabitants of the convent could see a single face from the outer world. Imagine a church whose choir was seized by a gigantic hand, and crushed so as no longer to form, as in ordinary chapels, a prolongation behind the altar, but a sort of obscure cavern on the side of the officiating priest; imagine this hall closed by the green baize curtain to which we have referred; pile up in the shadow of this curtain upon wooden seats the nuns on the left, the boarders on the right, and the lay sisters and novices at the end, and you will have some idea of the Little Picpus nuns attending divine service. This cavern, which was called the choir, communicated with the convent by a covered way, and the church obtained its light from the garden. When the nuns were present at those services at which their rule commanded silence, the public were only warned of their presence by the sound of the seats being noisily raised and dropped.

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**CHAPTER VII.**

## A FEW PROFILES FROM THE SHADOW.

During the six years between 1819 and 1825 the prioress of Little Picpus was Mademoiselle de Blémeur, called in religion Mother Innocent. She belonged to the family of that Marguerite de Blémeur who was authoress of the "Lives of the Saints of the Order of Saint Benedict." She was a lady of about

sixty years, short, stout, and with a voice "like a cracked pot," says the letter from which we have already quoted; but she was an excellent creature, the only merry soul in the convent, and on that account adored. She followed in the footsteps of her ancestress Marguerite, the Dacier of the order; she was lettered, learned, competent, versed in the curiosities of history, stuffed with Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and more a monk than a nun. The sub-prioress was an old Spanish nun, almost blind, Mother Cineres. The most estimated among the "vocals" were—Mother Saint Honorine, the treasurer; Mother Saint Gertrude, first mistress of the novices; Mother Saint Ange, second mistress; Mother Annunciation, sacristan; Mother Saint Augustine, head of the infirmary, the only unkind person in the convent; then Mother Saint Mechtilde (Mlle. Gauvain), who was young, and had an admirable voice; Mother des Auges (Mlle. Drouet), who had been in the convent of the Filles Dieu, and that of the Treasury near Gisors; Mother Saint Joseph (Mlle. de Cogolludo); Mother Saint Adelaide (Mlle. D'Auverney); Mother Miséricorde (Mlle. de Cifuentes, who could not endure the privations); Mother Compassion (Mlle. de La Miltière, received at the age of sixty, contrary to the rule, but very rich); Mother Providence (Mlle. de Laudinière); Mother Presentation (Mlle. de Siguenza), who was prioress in 1847; and lastly, Mother Saint Céligne (sister of Cerachhi the sculptor), who went mad; and Mother Saint Chantal (Mlle. de Suzon), who also went mad. Among the prettiest was a charming girl of three-and-twenty, who belonged to the Bourbonnais, and was descended from the Chevalier Roze, who was called in the world Mlle. Roze, and in religion Mother Assumption.

Mother Saint Mechtilde, who had charge of the singing arrangements, was glad to make use of the boarders for this purpose; she generally selected a complete musical scale, that is to say, seven assorted voices, from ten to sixteen years inclusive, whom she drew up in a line, ranging from the shortest to the tallest. In this way she produced a species of living Pandean pipes, composed of angels. The lay sisters whom the boarders liked most were Sister Saint Euphrasie, Sister Saint Marguerite, Sister Saint Marthe, who was childish, and Sister Saint Michel, at whose long nose they laughed. All these nuns were kind to the children, and only stern to themselves; there were no fires lit except in the schoolhouse, and the food there was luxurious when compared with that of the convent. The only thing was that when a child passed a nun and spoke to her, the latter did not answer. This rule of silence produced the result that in the whole convent language was withdrawn from human creatures and given to inanimate objects. At one moment it was the church bell that spoke, at another the gardener's; and a very sonorous gong, placed by the side of the sister porter, and which could be heard all through the house, indicated by various raps, which were a sort of acoustic telegraphy, all the actions of natural life which had to be accomplished, and summoned a nun, if required, to the parlor. Each person and each thing had its raps: the prioress had one and one, the sub-prioress one and two; six-five announced school hour, so that the pupils talked of going to six-five; four-four was Madame Genlis' signal, and as it was heard very often, uncharitable persons said she was the "diable à quatre." Nineteen strokes announced a great event; it was the opening of the cloister door, a terrible iron plate all bristling with bolts, which only turned on its hinges before the archbishop. With the exception of that dignitary and the gardener, no other man entered the convent; but the boarders saw two others,—one was the chaplain, Abbé Banès, an old ugly man, whom they were allowed to contemplate through a grating; while the other was M. Ansiaux, the drawing-master, whom the letter which we have already quoted calls "M. Anciot," and describes as an odious old hunchback. So we see that all the men were picked.

Such was this curious house.

**CHAPTER VIII.**

## POST CORDA LAPIDES.

After sketching the moral figure, it may not be time lost to indicate in a few words the material configuration, of which the reader already possesses some idea.

The convent of the Little Picpus occupied a large trapeze, formed by the four streets to which we have so frequently alluded, and which surrounded it like a moat. The convent was composed of several buildings and a garden. The main building, regarded in its entirety, was a juxtaposition of hybrid constructions, which, looked at from a balloon, would very exactly form a gallows laid on the ground. The long arm of the gallows occupied the whole of the Rue Droit-mur, comprised between the Little Rue Picpus and the Rue Polonceau; while the shorter arm was a tall, gray, stern, grated façade, looking on the Little Rue Picpus, of which the carriage-entrance, No. 62, was the extremity. Toward the centre of this façade dust and ashes whitened an old, low-arched gate, where the spiders made their webs, and which was only opened for an hour or two on Sundays, and on the rare occasions when the coffin of a nun left the convent; this was the public entrance to the church. The elbow of the gallows was a square room, used as an office, and which the nuns called the "buttery." In the long arm were the cells of the mothers, sisters, and novices; in the short one the kitchens, the refectory, along which a cloister ran, and the church. Between No. 62 and the corner of Aumarais Lane was the school, which could not be seen from the exterior. The rest of the trapeze formed the garden, which was much lower than the level of the Rue Polonceau, and this caused the walls to be much loftier inside than out. The garden, which was slightly arched, had at its centre and on the top of a mound a fine-pointed and conical fir-tree, from which ran, as from the boss of a shield, four large walks, with eight smaller ones arranged two and two, so that, had the enclosure been circular, the geometrical plan of the walks would have resembled a cross laid upon a wheel. The walks, which all ran to the extremely irregular walls of the garden, were of unequal length, and were bordered by gooseberry-bushes. At the end a poplar walk ran from the ruins of the old convent, which was at the angle of the Rue Droit-mur, to the little convent, which was at the corner of Aumarais Lane. In front of the little convent was what was called the small garden. If we add to this ensemble a court-yard, all sorts of varying angles formed by the inside buildings, prison walls, and the long black line of roofs that ran along the other side of the Rue Polonceau, as the sole prospect, we can form an exact idea of what the house of the Bernardines of Little Picpus was five-and-forty years ago. This sacred house was built on the site of a famous racket-court in the 16th century, which was called the "Tripot des onze mille diables." All these streets, indeed, were the oldest in Paris; the names Droit-mur and Aumarais are very old, but the streets that bear them are far older. Aumarais Lane was before called Maugout Lane; the Rue Droit-mur was called the Rue des Eglantines, for God opened the flowers before man cut building-stones.

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**CHAPTER IX.**

## A CENTURY UNDER A WIMPLE.

As we are giving details of what was formerly the Little Picpus convent, and have ventured to let in light upon this discreet asylum, the reader will perhaps permit us another slight digression, which has nothing to do with the story, but is characteristic and useful in so far as it proves that a convent can have its original people. There was in the little convent a centenarian, who came from the Abbey of Fontevrault, and before the Revolution she had even been in the world. She talked a good deal about M. de Miromesnil, keeper of the seals under Louis XVI., and the wife of a President Duplat, who had

been a great friend of hers. It was her pleasure and vanity to drag in these two names on every possible occasion. She told marvels about the Abbey of Fontevrault, which was like a town, and there were streets in the convent. She spoke with a Picard accent which amused the boarders; every year she renewed her vows, and at the moment of taking the oath would say to the priest: "Monseigneur St. Francis took it to. Monseigneur St. Julien, Monseigneur St. Julien took it to Monseigneur St. Eusebius, Monseigneur St. Eusebius took it to Monseigneur St. Procopius, etc., etc., and thus I take it to you, father." And the boarders would laugh, not in their sleeves, but under their veils,—a charming little suppressed laugh, which made the vocal mothers frown.

At other times the centenarian told anecdotes. She said that in her youth the Bernardines took precedence of the Musqueteers; it was a century that spoke, but it was the 18th century. She described the Champenois and Burgundian custom of the four wines before the Revolution. When a great personage, a marshal of France, a prince, a duke and peer, passed through a town of Champagne or Burgundy, the authorities addressed and presented him with four silver cups filled with four different sorts of wine. On the first cup was the inscription "ape-wine," on the second "lion-wine," on the third "sheep-wine," and on the fourth "hog-wine." These four mottoes expressed the four stages of intoxication,—the first that enlivens, the second that irritates, the third that dulls, and the fourth that brutalizes.

She had a mysterious object, to which she was greatly attached, locked up in a cupboard, and the rule of Fontevrault did not prohibit this. She would not show it to anybody; she locked herself in, which her rule also permitted, and hid herself each time that a desire was expressed to see it. If she heard footsteps in the passage she closed the cupboard as hastily as she could with her aged hands. So soon as it was alluded to, she, who was so fond of talking, held her tongue; the most curious persons were foiled by her silence, and the most tenacious by her obstinacy. This was a subject of comment for all the idlers and gossips in the convent. What could this precious and hidden thing be which was the centenarian's treasure? Of course some pious book or unique rosary, or well-tried relic. On the poor woman's death they ran to the cupboard, more quickly perhaps than was befitting, and opened it. They found the object under three folds of linen; it was a Faenza plate representing Cupids flying away, and pursued by apothecaries' apprentices armed with enormous squirts. The pursuit is full of comical grimaces and postures; one of the charming little Cupids is already impaled; he writhes, flutters his wings, and strives to fly away, but the assassin laughs a Satanic laugh. Moral,—love conquered by a colic. This plate, which is very curious, and perhaps had the honor of furnishing Molière with an idea, still existed in September, 1845; it was for sale at a curiosity shop on the Boulevard Beaumarchais. This good old woman would not receive any visitors, "because," as she said, "the parlor is too melancholy."

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**CHAPTER X.**

## ORIGIN OF THE PERPETUAL ADORATION.

This parlor, almost sepulchral, which we have described is a thoroughly local fact, which is not reproduced with the same severity in other convents. In the convent of the Rue du Temple, which, it is true, belonged to another order, brown curtains were substituted for the black shutters, and the parlor itself was a boarded room with white muslin curtains at the windows, while the walls admitted all sorts of pictures,—the portrait of a Benedictine nun with uncovered face, painted bouquets, and even a Turk's head. It was in the garden of this convent that the chestnut tree grew, which was considered the handsomest and largest in France, and which had the reputation among the worthy eighteenth-century

folk of being "the father of all the chestnut trees in the kingdom." As we said, this convent of the Temple was occupied by Benedictines of the Perpetual Adoration, who greatly differed from those Benedictines who descended from Citeaux. This order of the Perpetual Adoration is not the oldest, and does not date back beyond two hundred years. In 1640 the Holy Sacrament was twice profaned at an interval of a few days, in two parish churches, St. Sulpice and St. Jean en Grève,—a frightful and rare sacrilege which stirred up the whole city. The Prior Grand-Vicar of St. Germain-des-Près ordered a solemn procession of all his clergy, in which the Papal Nuncio officiated, but this expiation was not sufficient for two worthy ladies, Madame Courtin, Marquise de Boucs, and the Countess de Châteauvieux. This outrage done to the "most august Sacrament of the Altar," though transient, would not leave their pious minds, and it seemed to them that it could alone be repaired by a "Perpetual Adoration" in some nunnery. In 1652 and 1653 both gave considerable sums of money to Mother Catharine de Bar, called of the Holy Sacrament and a Benedictine nun, for the purpose of founding for this pious object a convent of the order of St. Benedict. The first permission for this foundation was given to Mother Catharine de Bar by M. de Metz, Abbé of St. Germain, "on condition that no person should be received unless she brought a pension of three hundred livres, or a capital sum of six thousand livres." After this the king granted letters-patent, which were countersigned in 1654 by the Chamber of Accounts and the Parliament.

Such are the origin and legal consecration of the establishment of the Benedictines of the Perpetual Adoration of the Holy Sacrament at Paris. Their first convent was built for them in the Rue Cassette, with the funds of Mesdames de Boucs and Châteauvieux. This order, as we see, must not be confounded with the Benedictines of Citeaux. It was a dependency of the Abbé of Saint Germain-des-Près, in the same manner as the Ladies of the Sacred Heart are subjects of the general of the Jesuits, and the Sisters of Charity of the general of the Lazarists. It was also entirely different from the order of the Bernardines of Little Picpus, whose interior we have just shown. In 1657 Pope Alexander VII. authorized, by special brief, the Bernardines of Little Picpus to practise the Perpetual Adoration like the Benedictines of the Holy Sacrament, but the two orders did not remain the less distinct.

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**CHAPTER XI.**

## THE END OF LITTLE PICPUS.

Toward the beginning of the Restoration, Little Picpus began to pine away; it shared in the general death of the order, which after the eighteenth century began to decay, like all religious orders. Contemplation, like prayer, is a want of humanity; but, like all that the revolution has touched, it will be transformed, and will become favorable to human progress, instead of being hostile to it. The house of Little Picpus became rapidly depopulated. In 1840 the little convent and the school had disappeared; there were no old women or young girls left; the former were dead, the latter had fled away. Volaverunt.

The rule of the Perpetual Adoration is so strict that it horrifies; novices hold back, and the order is not recruited. In 1845 a few lay sisters were still found here and there, but no professed nuns. Forty years ago there were nearly one hundred nuns; fifteen years ago there were only twenty-eight; how many are there now? In 1847 the prioress was young, a sign that the choice was becoming restricted. She was not forty years old. In proportion as the number diminishes the fatigue is augmented; the service of each becomes more painful; and the moment may be seen approaching at which there will be only a dozen sore and bent shoulders to bear the heavy rule of St. Benedict. The burden is implacable, and remains the same for the few as for the many; it used to press, but now it crushes. Hence they die out. At the

time when the author of this book still resided in Paris two died,—one twenty-five, the other twenty-three years of age. The latter can say, like Julia Alpinula: Hic jaceo. Vixi annos viginti et tres. It is owing to this decadence that the convent has given up the education of girls.

We were unable to pass by this extraordinary, unknown, and obscure house without entering it, and taking with us those who are reading—we trust with some advantage to themselves—the melancholy story of Jean Valjean. We have penetrated into this community so full of those old practices which seem so novel at the present day. It is a closed garden. Hortus conclusus. We have spoken of this singular spot in detail, but with respect, so far, at least, as respect and detail are compatible. We do not understand everything, but we insult nothing. We keep at an equal distance from the hosanna of Joseph de Maistre, who ended by consecrating the hangman, and the sneers of Voltaire, who even jeered at the crucifix.

There is a lack of logic in Voltaire's attitude, be it said in passing; for Voltaire ought to have defended Jesus as he defended Calas; and even for those who deny the Divine incarnation, what does the crucifix stand for? The good man murdered. In the nineteenth century the religious idea is undergoing a crisis. We unlearn some things, and we do well, provided that in unlearning one thing, we learn another. There must be no vacuum in the heart of man. Some demolitions are made, and it is well that they should be made, but only on condition that they shall be followed by reconstructions.

In the meanwhile let us study the things which are past. It is necessary to know them were it only to avoid them. The counterfeits of the past take on false names, and try to pass themselves off for the future. This ghost, the past, may falsify his passport. We must learn to unmask the trick. We must be on our guard against it. The past has a face, superstition; and a mask, hypocrisy. We must identify the face, and tear off the mask.

As for the convents, they offer a complex question,—a question of civilization which condemns them, a question of liberty which protects them.

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**BOOK VII**

# A PARENTHESIS.

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**CHAPTER I.**

## THE CONVENT AS AN ABSTRACT IDEA.

This book is a drama in which the hero is the Infinite. The second character is Man.

Under these circumstances, as a convent happens to lie on our road, we ought to enter it. Why? Because the convent, which belongs as much to the East as to the West, to antiquity as to modern times, to Paganism, to Buddhism, to Mahometanism, as to Christianity, is one of the lenses which man brings to bear on the Infinite.

This is no place to develop unrestrictedly certain ideas; still, while we maintain absolutely our reservations, our restrictions, and even our indignation, we ought to acknowledge, that whenever we find in man the sense of the Infinite, well or ill conceived, we are seized with a feeling of respect. In the synagogue, in the mosque, in the pagoda, in the wigwam, there is a repulsive side which we detest, and

a sublime side which we reverence. What a subject for meditation for the spirit, and what a boundless revery is the reverberation of God on the human wall!

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**CHAPTER II.**

## THE CONVENT AS AN HISTORICAL FACT.

From the point of view of history, of reason, and of truth, monastic life must be condemned.

Monasteries when they abound in a nation are tourniquets applied to circulation, oppressive fixtures, centres of idleness where centres of activity are needed. Monastic communities bear the same relation to the great community of society that the mistletoe does to the oak, or the wart to the human body. Their prosperity and their plumpness are the impoverishment of the country. The rule of the monastery, salutary at the beginning of civilizations, useful in bringing about the subjugation of brutality by the spiritual, is harmful in the ripe strength of a nation. Further, when it relaxes and when it enters into its period of decadence, as it still sets the example, it becomes harmful by the very reasons which made it healthful in its time of purity.

The cloister has had its day. Monasteries, helpful to the early education of modern civilization, have checked its growth, and hindered its development. As an educating force and a means of formation for man, the monasteries, good in the tenth century, questionable in the fifteenth, are abominable in the nineteenth. The monastic leprosy has eaten almost to the bone two great nations, Italy and Spain, the one the light, the other the splendor of Europe for ages; and at our own time, these two illustrious nations have only begun to heal, thanks to the strong and vigorous treatment of 1789.

The convent, the old convent for women especially, such as it still appeared at the threshold of this century, in Italy, in Austria, in Spain, is one of the most gloomy concretions of the Middle Ages. The cloister, this very cloister, is the point of intersection of terrors. The Catholic cloister, rightly so-called, is all filled with the black rays of death.

The Spanish convent is especially doleful. There in the dim light, under misty arches, beneath domes made vague by the shadows, rise altars massive as the Tower of Babel, lofty as cathedrals; there in the gloom huge white crucifixes hang by chains; there stand out naked against the ebony background, huge white Christs of ivory—more than bloody, bleeding; frightful yet grand, the elbows showing the bone, the kneepans showing the ligaments, the wounds showing the flesh; crowned with thorns of silver, nailed with nails of gold, with drops of blood in rubies on the forehead and tears of diamonds in the eyes. The diamonds and rubies look wet, and draw tears from those down below in the gloom,—veiled beings, whose sides are wounded by the hair shirt and by the scourge with iron points, their bosoms crushed by wicker jackets, their knees galled by prayer; women who believe themselves brides, spectres who believe themselves seraphim. Do these women ever think? No. Have they wills? No. Do they love? No. Do they live? No. Their nerves have turned to bone, their bones to stone. Their veil is woven of the night. Their breathing under the veil is like some tragic respiration of death. Their abbess, a phantom, hallows them and terrifies them. The Immaculate is there, implacable. Such are the old monasteries of Spain. Retreats of fearful devotion, caves of virgins, savage wildernesses.

Catholic Spain was more Roman than Rome itself. The Spanish convent was pre-eminently the Catholic convent. It had a touch of the East about it. The Archbishop, kislar-agar of heaven, locked up and watched this seraglio of souls reserved for God. The nun was the odalisque, the priest was the eunuch. The devoted were chosen in their dreams, and possessed Christ. By night the beautiful young man descended naked from the cross and became the rapture of the cell. High walls guarded from every

living distraction the mystic sultana who had for her sultan the Crucified One. A mere glance outside was an infidelity. The in pace took the place of the leather sack. What they threw into the sea in the East, they threw into the earth in the West. In both places, women's arms were writhing; for these the sea, for those the grave; here the drowned, there the buried. Dreadful analogy!

To-day, the champions of the past, since they cannot deny these things, have adopted the course of making light of them. They have made it the fashion, this convenient and strange way of suppressing the revelations of history, of weakening the commentaries of philosophy, and of getting rid of all troublesome facts and all grave questions. "Matter for declamations," say the able ones. "Declamations" repeat the fools. Jean-Jacques, a declaimer; Diderot, a declaimer; Voltaire on Calas, Labarre and Sirven, a declaimer. They have made it out now that Tacitus was a declaimer, that Nero was a victim, and that we really ought to feel very sorry for "poor Holofernes."

Facts are obstinate, however, and hard to disconcert. The writer of this book has seen with his own eyes, within eight leagues of Brussels, and that is a part of the Middle Ages which every one has at hand, at the Abbey of Villers, the dungeon-hole in the middle of the meadow which used to be the court-yard of the cloister; and on the banks of the Thil, four stone cells, half under ground, half under water. These were the in pace. Each of these cells has the remains of an iron door, a latrine, and a barred window, which from the outside is two feet above the water, and from the inside is six feet above the floor. Four feet of river wash the outside of the wall. The floor is always wet. The tenant of the in pace had for a bed this wet earth. In one of these cells there is a broken piece of a collar fastened to the wall; in another may be seen a kind of square box made of four slabs of granite, too short to lie down in, too low to sit up in. They put into that a human being with a stone lid over her. This exists. You can see it. You can touch it. These in pace, these cells, these iron hinges, these collars, this high window, close to which flows the river, this stone box closed with a granite lid like a tomb, with this difference, that here the corpse was a living being, this floor of mud, this sewer, these oozing walls,—what declaimers these are!

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**CHAPTER III.**

## ON WHAT TERMS THE PAST IS VENERABLE.

The monastic system, as it existed in Spain, and as it exists now at Thibet, is to civilization a sort of consumption. It stops life short. It depopulates, nothing more nor less,—claustration, castration. It has been the scourge of Europe. Add to this the violence so often done to conscience, the forced vocations, the feudal system resting upon the cloister, primogeniture pouring into the monastic system the overflow of the family, these cruelties of which we have just spoken, the in pace, the mouths sealed, the brains walled up, so many unhappy intellects thrown into the dungeon of eternal vows, the taking of the veil, the burying alive of souls. Add the individual sufferings to the national degradation, and whoever you may be, you feel yourself shudder before the frock and the veil, these two shrouds of human invention.

However, on some points, and in some places, in spite of philosophy, in spite of progress, the monastic spirit persists in the midst of the nineteenth century, and a strange reopening of the monastic sore astonishes at this moment the civilized world. The obstinacy which old institutions show in perpetuating themselves is like the stubbornness of rancid perfume demanding to be used on our hair, the pretension of spoiled fish clamoring to be eaten, the persecution of the child's garment demanding to clothe the man, and the tenderness of corpses coming back to embrace the living.

"Ingrates!" says the garment. "I have sheltered you in the bad weather. Why do you cast me off?" "I come from the deep sea," says the fish. "I was once the rose," says the perfume. "I have loved you," says the corpse. "I have civilized you," says the convent.

To this there is one answer: "Yes, in times past."

To dream of the indefinite prolongation of things that are dead, and the government of men by embalmment, to restore to life dogmas that are rotting away, to regild the shrines, to replaster the cloisters, to reconsecrate the reliquaries, to refurnish the superstitions, to galvanize the fanaticisms, to put new handles on the holy water sprinklers, to set up again monastic and military rule, to believe in the saving of society by the multiplication of parasites, to impose the past on the present,—this seems strange. There are, however, theorists for these theories. These theorists, sensible men in other respects, have a very simple expedient. They varnish the past with a coating which they call social order, divine right, morality, family, respect for ancestors, ancient authority, sacred tradition, legitimacy, religion; and they go about crying, "Here! take this, my good people." This logic was known to the ancients. The soothsayers used to practise it They rubbed with chalk a black heifer, and said, "She is white." Bos cretatus.

As for us, we respect the past here and there, and we spare it always, provided that it consents to stay dead. If it tries to come to life again, we attack it, and we try to kill it.

Superstitions, bigotries, hypocrisies, prejudices, these phantoms, though they are only phantoms, are tenacious of life; they have teeth and claws in their obscurity, and we must grapple with them body to body, and make war upon them, and war without truce; for it is the fate of humanity to be condemned to eternal combat with phantoms. The spectre is hard to take by the throat, and throw to earth.

A convent in France in the full noon of the nineteenth century is a college of owls blinking at the daylight. A cloister in the open act of asceticism, in the very midst of the city of '89, of 1830, and of 1848,—Rome blossoming in Paris,—is an anachronism. At any ordinary time, to lay an anachronism, and make it vanish, we need only to make it spell out the date. But we are not in ordinary times.

Let us fight.

Let us fight; but let us distinguish. The essence of truth consists in never exaggerating. What need has she of exaggerating? There are some things that must be destroyed, and there are some things that need only be lighted up and looked at. Kind and serious examination, what a power it is! Let us not use fire where light will answer even purpose.

Given the nineteenth century, then, we are opposed on general principles, and in all nations, in Asia as well as in Europe, in India as in Turkey, to cloistered asceticism. Convent means bog. Their putrescence is undisguisable, their stagnation is unhealthy, their fermentation breeds fever and wasting pestilence in nations, their increase becomes one of the plagues of Egypt. We cannot think without fright of those countries where fakirs, bonzes, santons, caloyers, marabouts, talapoins, and dervishes multiply like swarms of vermin.

This said, the question of religion still remains. This question has phases which are mysterious and almost fearful. Let us look at it steadily.

**CHAPTER IV.**

## THE CONVENT FROM MORAL STANDPOINT.

Some men unite and live together. By what right? By the right of association.

They shut themselves up at home. By what right? By the right which every man has to keep his door open or shut.

They do not go out. By what right? By the right to go and come, which implies the right to stay at home.

There, at home, what do they do?

They speak in low tones; they lower their eyes; they work. They renounce the world, cities, sensual joys, pleasures, vanity, pride, interest. They are clad in coarse wool, or coarse canvas. Not one of them has any property of his own. In entering, he who was rich makes himself poor. Whatever he has he gives to them all. He who was what the world calls well born, the nobleman and the lord, is the equal of him who was a peasant. All have the same cell. All bear the same tonsure, wear the same frock, eat the same black bread, sleep on the same straw, die on the same ashes. The same sackcloth on the back, the same rope around the loins. If it is the rule to go barefoot, all go barefoot. One of them may have been a prince, this prince is the same shade as the others. No more titles, family names even have disappeared. They bear only Christian names. All bow beneath the equality of baptismal names. They have dissolved the fleshly family, and have formed in their community the spiritual family. They have no longer any other kindred than mankind. They help the poor, they heal the sick. They elect those whom they obey. They call each other "brother."

You stop me, and you exclaim, "But that is an ideal convent."

It is enough that such a convent is possible to make it my duty to take it into account.

This is the reason that in the preceding book I have spoken of a convent in a tone of respect. Putting aside the Middle Ages, putting aside Asia, reserving the consideration of the historical and political question from the purely philosophical point of view, outside of the necessities of militant politics, upon the condition that the monastery should be wholly voluntary, and should shut up only those who freely consent, I should always regard the claustral community with attentive and on some accounts reverend gravity. Where the community is, there is the commune; where the commune is, there is human right. The monastery is the result of the formula: Equality, Fraternity. Oh, how great is Liberty! What a glorious transfiguration! Liberty is all that is needed to transform the monastery into the republic.

Let us go on.

But these men or these women, who are behind these four walls, they wear sackcloth, they are equal, they call each other brother. Very well; but is there anything else that they do?

Yes.

What?

They look into the darkness, they fall upon their knees, and they clasp their hands.

What does that mean?

CHAPTER V.

## PRAYER.

They pray.

To whom?

To God.

To pray to God,—what does this mean?

Is there an infinite power outside of us? Is this infinite power a unity, immanent and enduring,—necessarily material, because it is infinite, and if it lacked matter, in so far it would be circumscribed; necessarily intelligent, because it is infinite, and if it lacked intelligence, again it would be limited? Does this infinite power awaken in us the idea of the essence of things, while we can only ascribe to ourselves the idea of existence? In other words, is it not the Absolute of which we are the Relative?

While there is an infinite power outside of us, is there not an infinite power within us? Do not these two infinites (what a fearful plural!) rest one upon the other? Does not the second infinite depend upon the first? Is it not its mirror, its reflection, its echo, an abyss concentric with another abyss? Is this second infinite also intelligent? Does it think? Does it love? Has it a will? If both these infinites are intelligent, each of them has volition, and there is an Ego in the infinite above, as there is an Ego in the infinite below. The Ego in the one below is the soul; the Ego in the one above is God.

To bring by thought the infinite below in contact with the infinite above is called praying.

Let us take nothing from the human spirit; to suppress anything is wrong. Let us regenerate and transform it. Some of man's faculties are directed toward the Unknown,—thought, revery, prayer. The Unknown is an ocean. What is conscience? It is the mariner's compass of the Unknown. Thought, revery, prayer, these are great mysterious rays; let us respect them. Whither tend these grand radiations of the soul? Into the darkness; that is to say, to the light.

The grandeur of democracy is in its denying nothing and abjuring nothing of humanity. Next to the right of man comes the right of the soul.

To crush out fanaticism, and to reverence the infinite, such is the law. Let us not be content to prostrate ourselves under the tree of Creation, and to contemplate its immense branches full of stars. We have a duty,—to work for the human soul, to distinguish between mystery and miracle; to worship the incomprehensible and reject the absurd; to admit as inexplicable only what we must; to make faith more healthy, to remove from religion the superstitions that encumber it; to brush the cobwebs from the image of God.

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CHAPTER VI.

## ABSOLUTE GOODNESS OF PRATER.

As to the manner of prayer, all are good, provided that they are sincere. Turn your book upside down, and be in the infinite.

There is, as we know, a philosophy which denies the infinite. There is also a philosophy, in pathological classification, which denies the sun; this philosophy is called blindness.

To set up as a source of truth a sense which we lack is the consummate assurance of a blind man.

The strange part of it lies in the lofty, superior, and pitying airs which this groping philosophy takes on in the presence of the philosophy which sees God. You fancy you hear the mole exclaim, "How I pity the poor men with their sun!"

There are some eminent and able atheists, we admit. These at bottom being brought back to the truth by their very ability, are not sure that they are atheists; it is scarcely more than a matter of definition with them; and at any rate, if they do not believe in God, being great minds, they bear unconscious witness to His existence.

We hail in them the philosopher, while we deny relentlessly their philosophy.

Let us go on.

It is wonderful, too, to see how easily they amuse themselves with words, A metaphysical school of the North, a little impregnated with fog, thought that it was making a revolution in the human understanding when it replaced the word "Force" by the word "Will."

To say "the plant wills" instead of "the plant grows;" this would amount to something, if they added "the universe wills," Why? Because it would lead to this: the plant wills, then it has a self; the universe wills, then it has a God.

To us, however, who, unlike this school, reject nothing a priori, a will in the plant, which this school admits, seems more difficult to admit than a will in the universe, which this school denies.

To deny the will of the infinite, that is to say, God, is impossible without denying the infinite. This we have demonstrated.

The denial of the infinite leads straight to nihilism. Everything becomes "a conception of the mind."

With nihilism no argument is possible; for the logical nihilist doubts the existence of his opponent in the discussion, and is not quite sure that he exists himself.

From his point of view it may be that his own existence is only a "conception of his mind."

He does not see, however, that all that he has denied he admits in the lump by merely using this word "mind."

In short, no way is left open for thought by a philosophy which makes everything end in the monosyllable "No."

To "No," there is but one answer, "Yes."

Nihilism has no range.

There is no nothing. Zero does not exist. Everything is something. Nothing is nothing.

Man lives by affirmation even more than by bread.

To see and point out the way is not enough. Philosophy ought to be a living force; it ought to have for end and aim the amelioration of mankind. Socrates ought to enter into Adam, and produce Marcus Aurelius; in other words, turn the man of selfish enjoyment into the wise and good man. Change Eden into the Lyceum. Knowledge ought to be a stimulant. To enjoy life, what a poor aim, what a mean ambition! The brute enjoys. To think, that is the true triumph of the soul.

To hold out thought to quench men's thirst, to give to all men as an elixir the idea of God, to make conscience and knowledge fraternize in them, and by this mysterious partnership to make them just,—this is the work for real philosophy. Morality is a blossoming of truths. Thought leads to action. The absolute ought to be practical. The ideal must be brought into such form that it can be breathed, drunk, and eaten by the human soul. The ideal is the very one to say, "Take, eat; this is my body, this is my

blood." Knowledge is a holy communion. Thus it ceases to be a sterile love of knowledge to become the one and sovereign means of human advancement, and from philosophy it is exalted to religion.

Philosophy ought not to be an arch built over mystery, the better to look down on it, merely as a convenience for curiosity.

Postponing to another time the development of this thought, we content ourselves now with saying that we understand neither man as the point of departure nor progress as the goal, without these two motive forces, faith and love.

Progress is the goal, the ideal is the type.

What is the ideal? It is God.

Ideal, absolute, perfection, infinite,—all mean the same.

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**CHAPTER VII.**

## CARE TO BE EXERCISED IN CONDEMNING.

History and philosophy have eternal duties which are at the same time simple duties. To oppose Caiaphas as a high priest, Draco as a judge, Trimalcion as a law-giver, Tiberius as an emperor,—that is a duty simple, direct, and clear, and gives no room for doubt. But the right to live apart, even with its objections and its abuse, must be demonstrated and handled carefully; monasticism is a human problem.

In speaking of convents, these homes of error but of innocence, of wanderings from the true path but of good intentions, of ignorance but of devotion, of torture but of martyrdom, we must almost always say yes and no.

A convent is a contradiction: its aim, salvation; its means, sacrifice. The convent is supreme selfishness having as its result supreme abnegation.

To abdicate in order to reign seems to be the motto of monasticism.

In the convent, they suffer in order to enjoy. They take out a letter of credit on death. They discount in earthly night the light of heaven. In the convent hell is endured in advance of the heirship to paradise.

The taking of the veil or the frock is a suicide recompensed by eternity.

Mockery on such a subject does not seem to us to be in place. Everything there is serious, the good as well as the bad.

The just man frowns, but never sneers at it We can sympathize with indignation, but not with malignity.

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**CHAPTER VIII.**

## FAITH, LAW.

A few words more. We blame the Church when it is steeped in intrigues. We scorn the spiritual when it is not in accord with the temporal; but we honor the thoughtful man wherever we find him.

We bow to the man who kneels.

A faith of some kind is necessary to man. Alas for him who believes nothing!

We are not necessarily idle because we are absorbed. Labor may be invisible as well as visible.

To reflect is to labor; to think is to act.

The folded arms labor, the clasped hands work. The gaze directed to heaven is a labor.

Thales stayed immovable for four years. He founded philosophy.

In our opinion, monks are not drones, and hermits are not idlers.

To think of the future life is a serious business.

Without withdrawing at all from the position which we have just taken, we believe that a continual reminder of the tomb is good for the living. On this point the priest and the philosopher agree. We must die. The Trappist Abbé replies to Horace.

To mix with his life some presence of the tomb is the law of the wise man; and it is also the law of the recluse. Here recluse and wise man agree.

There is such a thing as material growth; we are glad of it. There is also such a thing as moral grandeur; we insist upon it.

Thoughtless and hasty spirits say: "What is the use of these figures motionless by the side of mystery? What purpose do they serve? What good do they do?"

Alas! In presence of the darkness which envelops us, and which awaits us, not knowing what will become of us in the dispersion of all things, we answer, "There is no work more sublime, perhaps, than that which these souls are doing." And we add, "There is, perhaps, no work more useful."

Those who always pray are needed for those who never pray.

In our opinion, it all depends on the amount of thought that enters into the prayer.

Leibnitz in prayer, this is grand. Voltaire in adoration, this is sublime. Deo erexit Voltaire.

We are on the side of religion against religions.

We believe in the worthlessness of supplications and the sublimity of worship.

Besides, at this moment through which we are passing, a moment which luckily will not leave its imprint upon the nineteenth century, at this hour when so many men have the forehead low and the soul far from lofty, among so many beings whose code is selfish enjoyment, and who are taken up with material things, ephemeral and shapeless, he who exiles himself seems to us worthy of veneration.

The monastery is a renunciation. Mistaken sacrifice is still sacrifice. To mistake for duty a serious error, this has its noble side.

Taken by itself ideally, and looking on all sides of truth until we have exhausted impartially all its aspects, the monastery and still more the convent for women,—for in our society woman is the greatest sufferer, and her protest appears in this exile of the cloister,—the convent for women has undeniably a certain grandeur.

This cloistered life so austere and so sad, some of whose features we have pointed out, is not life, for it is not liberty; it is not the tomb, for it is not lasting. It is the weird place from which is seen as from the crest of a high mountain on one side the abyss in which we now are, on the other, the abyss in which we shall be; it is a narrow and misty boundary which separates two worlds, cast into light and into shadow by both at a time, where the weak ray of life blends with the flickering ray of death; it is the penumbra of the tomb.

While we do not believe as these women do, we live like them by faith; and we have never been able to think, without a kind of terror, religious and tender, without a sort of pity mixed with envy, of these devoted creatures, trembling and trusting, these souls humble and proud, who dare to live on the very border of mystery, waiting between the world which is closed, and heaven which is not yet open, faced toward the light which they do not see, having only the consolation of thinking that they know where it is, longing for the gulf and the unknown, with eyes fixed upon the motionless darkness, kneeling, distracted, stupefied, shuddering, half lifted at times by the deep breathing of eternity.

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**BOOK VIII**

# CEMETERIES TAKE WHAT IS GIVEN THEM.

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**CHAPTER I.**

## HOW TO GET INTO A CONVENT.

It was into this house that Jean Valjean had fallen from heaven, as Fauchelevent said. He had climbed the garden-wall which formed the angle of the Rue Polonceau; the hymn of angels which he heard in the middle of the night was the nuns chanting matins; the hall which he had caught a glimpse of in the darkness was the chapel; the phantom he had seen stretched out on the ground was the phantom making reparation; and the bell which had so strangely surprised him was the gardener's bell fastened to Fauchelevent's knee. So soon as Cosette was in bed Jean Valjean and Fauchelevent supped on a glass of wine and a lump of cheese before a good blazing log; then, as the only bed in the cottage was occupied by Cosette, each threw himself on a truss of straw. Before closing his eyes Jean Valjean said, "I must stop here henceforth", and this remark trotted about Fauchelevent's head all night In fact, neither of them slept; Jean Valjean, feeling himself discovered and Javert on his track, understood that he and Cosette were lost if they entered Paris. Since the new blast of wind had blown him into this convent Jean Valjean had but one thought, that of remaining in it. Now, for a wretch in his position, this convent was at once the most dangerous and the safest place,—the most dangerous, because as no man was allowed to enter it, if he were discovered it would be a crime, and Jean Valjean would only take one step from the convent to the prison; the safest, because if he succeeded in remaining in it who would come to seek him there? Inhabiting an impossible spot was salvation.

On his side, Fauchelevent racked his brains. He began by declaring to himself that he understood nothing. How was M. Madeleine, in spite of all the surrounding walls, here? And convent walls cannot be passed at a stride. How was he here with a child? People do not scale a perpendicular wall with a child in their arms. Who was this child? Where did they both come from? Since Fauchelevent had been in the convent he had received no news from M——, and did not know what had occurred there. Father Madeleine had that look which discourages questioning, and moreover Fauchelevent said to himself, "A saint is not to be cross-questioned." It was only from a few words which escaped Jean Valjean that the gardener fancied he could come to the conclusion that M. Madeleine had probably been made bankrupt by the hard times, and was pursued by his creditors; or else he was compromised in a political affair and was in hiding, which idea did not displease Fauchelevent, because, like most of the peasants in the north of France, he was a stanch Bonapartist. M. Madeleine had chosen the convent as his asylum, and it was simple that he should wish to remain there. But the inexplicable thing, to which Fauchelevent constantly recurred and which addled his brains, was that M. Madeleine was here, and

here with this child. Fauchelevent saw them, touched them, spoke to them, and did not believe it. The gardener was stumbling among conjectures and saw nothing clear but this,—"M. Madeleine saved my life." This sole certainty was sufficient, and decided him; he said to himself, "It is my turn now." He added in his conscience, "M. Madeleine did not deliberate long when he had to get under the cart to save me," and he decided upon saving M. Madeleine. He, however, asked himself several questions, to which he gave divers answers. "After what he did for me, should I save him, if he were a robber? All the same. If he were an assassin, would I save him? All the same. Since he is a saint, shall I save him? All the same."

What a problem it was, though, to enable him to remain in the convent! Still, Fauchelevent did not recoil before this almost chimerical attempt; this poor Picard peasant, who had no other ladder but his devotion, his good-will, and a small stock of old rustic craft, this time turned to a generous purpose, undertook to scale the impossibilities of the convent, and the rough escarpments of the rule of St. Benedict. Fauchelevent was an old man, who had been during life selfish, and who, at the end of his days, limping, infirm, and taking no interest in the world, found it pleasant to be grateful, and seeing a virtuous action to be done, he flung himself upon it like a man who, on the point of death, lays his hand on a glass of good wine which he had never tasted, and eagerly drinks it off. We may add, that the air which he had been breathing for some years in this convent had destroyed his personality, and had eventually rendered some good deed a necessity for him. He, therefore, formed the resolution of devoting himself for M. Madeleine. We have just called him a "poor Picard peasant;" the qualification is correct but incomplete. At the present stage of our story a little physiological examination of Father Fauchelevent becomes useful. He was a peasant, but he had been a notary, which added chicanery to his cunning and penetration to his simplicity. Having, through various reasons, failed in his business, he descended from a notary to be a carter and day-laborer; but in spite of the oaths and lashes necessary for horses, as it seems, something of the notary had clung to him. He had some natural wit; he did not say "I are" or "I has;" he could converse, which was a rare thing in a village, and the other peasants used to say of him, "He talks exactly like a gentleman in a hat." Fauchelevent in fact belonged to that species which the impertinent and light vocabulary of the last century qualified as "a bit of a rustic and a bit of a townsman, pepper and salt." Fauchelevent, though sorely tried, and much worn by fate, a sort of poor old threadbare soul, was still a man to act on the first impulse, and spontaneously,—a precious quality which prevents a man from ever being wicked. His defects and vices, for he had such, were on the surface, and altogether his physiognomy was one of those which please the observer. His old face had none of those ugly wrinkles on the top of the forehead which signify wickedness or stupidity. At daybreak, after thinking enormously, Father Fauchelevent opened his eyes and saw M. Madeleine sitting on his truss of straw, and looking at the sleeping Cosette; Fauchelevent sat up too, and said,—

"Now that you are here, how will you manage to get in?" This remark summed up the situation, and aroused Jean Valjean from his reverie. The two men held counsel.

"In the first place," said Fauchelevent, "you must begin by not setting foot outside this cottage, neither you nor the little one. One step in the garden, and we are done."

"That is true."

"Monsieur Madeleine," Fauchelevent continued, "you have arrived at a very lucky moment, I ought to say a very unhappy one, for one of our ladies is dangerously ill. In consequence of this, folk will not look much this way. It seems that she is dying, and the forty hours' prayers are being said. The whole community is aroused, and that occupies them. The person who is on the point of going off is a saint. In fact, though, we are all saints here; the only difference between them and me is that they say 'our cell,' and I say 'my cottage.' There will be a service for the dying, and then the service for the dead. For to-day we shall be all quiet here; but I do not answer for to-morrow."

"Still," Jean Valjean observed, "this cottage is retired; it is hidden by a sort of ruin; there are trees, and it cannot be seen from the convent."

"And I may add that the nuns never approach it."

"Well?" Jean Valjean asked.

The interrogation that marked this "well" signified "I fancy that we can remain concealed here," and it was to this interrogation that Fauchelevent replied:

"There are the little ones."

"What little ones?" Jean Valjean asked.

As Fauchelevent opened his mouth to answer, a stroke rang out from a bell.

"The nun is dead," he said, "that is the knell."

And he made Jean Valjean a sign to listen. A second stroke rang out.

"It is the passing bell, Monsieur Madeleine. The bell will go on so minute after minute for twenty-four hours, till the body leaves the church. You see they play about; at recreations they need only lose a ball, and in spite of the prohibition, they will come and look for it here and ransack everything. Those cherubs are little devils."

"Who?" Jean Valjean asked.

"The little ones; I can tell you that you would soon be discovered. They would cry out, 'Why, it's a man!' But there is no danger to-day, for there will be no recreation. The day will be spent in prayer. You hear the bell, as I told you, one stroke a minute;—it is the knell."

"I understand, Father Fauchelevent, they are boarders."

And Jean Valjean thought to himself:

"It is a chance for educating Cosette."

Fauchelevent exclaimed,—

"By Job, I should think they are boarders! They would sniff around you, and then run away. To be a man here is to have the plague, as you can see; a bell is fastened to my paw as if I were a wild beast."

Jean Valjean reflected more and more deeply. "This convent would save us," he muttered, and then added aloud,—

"Yes, the difficulty is to remain."

"No," said Fauchelevent, "it is to go out."

Jean Valjean felt the blood rush back to his heart.

"Go out?"

"Yes, Monsieur Madeleine, in order to come in, you must go out."

And, after waiting till a knell had died out in air, Fauchelevent continued,—

"You must not be found here like that. Where do you come from? For me, you fall from heaven because I know you, but the nuns require that people should come in by the front door."

All at once a complicated ringing of another bell could be heard.

"Ah!" said Fauchelevent, "the vocal mothers are being summoned to a Chapter,—a Chapter is always

held when any one dies. She died at daybreak, and they generally die at daybreak. But can't you go out by the way that you came in? Come,—I don't want to ask you a question,—but where did you come in?"

Jean Valjean turned pale: the mere idea of going back to that formidable street made him tremble. Come out of a forest full of tigers, and once out of it just imagine a friend advising you to go in again. Jean Valjean figured to himself the police still searching in the quarter, the agents watching, vedettes everywhere, frightful fists stretched out toward his collar, and Javert, perhaps, in a corner lurking for his prey.

"Impossible!" he said. "Suppose, Father Fauchelevent, that I really fell from above."

"Why, I believe it," Fauchelevent continued; "you need not tell me so. Well, there is another peal; it is to tell the porter to go and warn the municipal authorities that they should send and inform the physician of the dead, so that he may come and see there is a dead woman here. All that is the ceremony of dying. The good ladies are not very fond of such visits, for a doctor believes in nothing; he raises the veil, and sometimes raises something else. What a hurry they have been in to warn the doctor this time! What is up, I wonder? Your little girl is still asleep; what is her name?"

"Cosette."

"Is she your daughter? I mean, are you her grandfather?"

"Yes."

"To get her out will be easy. I have my special door, which opens into the yard; I knock, the porter opens. I have my basket on my back, with the little girl in it, and go out. You will tell her to be very quiet, and she will be under the hood. I will leave her for the necessary time with an old Mend of mine, a fruiteress in the Rue du Chemin Vert, who is deaf, and where there is a little bed. I will shout in her ear that it is my niece, and bid her keep her for me till to-morrow; then the little one will come in with you, for I mean to bring you in again. But how will you manage to get out?"

Jean Valjean shook his head.

"The great point is that no one sees me, Father Fauchelevent. Find means to get me out in the same way as Cosette."

Fauchelevent scratched the tip of his ear with the middle finger of his left hand, which was a sign of serious embarrassment. A third peal caused a diversion.

"That is the doctor going away," said Fauchelevent. "He has had a look and said, 'She is dead, all right.' When the doctor has countersigned the passport for Paradise, the undertakers send a coffin. If it is a mother, the mothers put her in it; if a sister, the sisters; and after that, I nail up. That is part of my gardening, for a gardener is a bit of a grave-digger. The coffin is placed in the vestry room which communicates with the street, and which no man is allowed to enter but the doctor, for I don't count the undertakers and myself as men. It is in this room that I nail up the coffin; the undertakers fetch it, and then—Gee-up, driver—that's the way people go to heaven. A box is brought, in which there is nothing, and it is carried off with something in it; and that's what a burial is. De Profundis."

A horizontal sunbeam illumined the face of the sleeping Cosette, who opened her lips and looked like an angel imbibing light. Jean Valjean was gazing at her again, and no longer listened to Fauchelevent. Not to be heard is no reason why a man should hold his tongue, so the worthy old gardener quickly continued his chatter,—

"The grave is dug in the Vaugirard cemetery; people say that it is going to be shut up. It is an old cemetery, which has no uniform, and is going on half-pay; it is a pity, for it is convenient. I have a

friend there, Father Mestrenne, the grave-digger. The nuns of this house possess the privilege of being carried to that cemetery at nightfall; they have a decree of the prefecture expressly for them. But what events since yesterday! Mother Crucifixion is dead, and Father Madeleine—"

"Is buried," Jean Valjean said, with a sad smile.

Fauchelevent echoed the word.

"Well, if you were here altogether it would be a real burial."

A fourth peal rang out. Fauchelevent quickly took down his knee-cap and put it on.

"This time it is for me. The Mother Prioress wants me. There, I have pricked myself with the tongue of my buckle. Monsieur Madeleine, don't stir, but wait for me. There is something up; if you are hungry, there is bread, wine, and cheese."

And he left the cottage, saying, "Coming, coming."

Jean Valjean watched him hurrying across the garden as rapidly as his leg would allow, while taking a side glance at his melon frames. Less than ten minutes after, Father Fauchelevent, whose bell routed all the nuns as he passed, tapped gently at a door, and a soft voice answered, "Forever, forever," that is to say, "Come in." It was the door of the parlor reserved expressly for the gardener, and adjoining the Chapter room. The prioress, seated on the only chair in the room, was waiting for Fauchelevent.

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**CHAPTER II.**

To have an agitated and serious air is peculiar, on Critical occasions, to certain characters and professions, and notably to priests and monks. At the moment when Fauchelevent entered, this double form of preoccupation was imprinted on the face of the prioress, who was that charming and learned Mademoiselle de Blémeur, or Mother Innocent, who was usually so cheerful. The gardener gave a timid bow, and remained in the door-way of the cell; the prioress, who was telling her beads, raised her eyes, and said,—

"Oh, it is you, Father Fauvent?"

This abbreviation had been adopted in the convent. Fauchelevent began his bows again.

"Father Fauvent, I summoned you."

"Here I am, Reverend Mother."

"I wish to speak with you."

"And I, on my side," said Fauchelevent, with a boldness which made him tremble inwardly, "have something to say to the Most Reverend Mother."

The prioress looked at him.

"Ah! you have a communication to make to me?"

"A request."

"Well, speak."

Fauchelevent, the ex-notary, belonged to that class of peasants who possess coolness. A certain skilful ignorance is a strength; people do not suspect it, and you have them. During the two years Fauchelevent had lived in the convent, he had made a success in the community, and while alone and attending to his gardening, he had nothing else to do than be curious. Remote as he was from all these

veiled women, he saw nothing before him but an agitation of shadows; but by constant attention and penetration, he had succeeded in putting flesh on these phantoms, and these dead lived for him. He was like a deaf man whose sight is improved, and a blind man whose hearing is sharpened. He had turned his mind to discover the meaning of the various peals, and had succeeded; so that this enigmatical and mysterious convent had nothing hidden from him; and this sphinx whispered all its secrets in his ear. Fauchelevent, while knowing everything, concealed everything, and that was his art; the whole convent believed him to be stupid, and that is a great merit in religion. The vocal mothers set value on Fauchelevent, for he was a curious dumb man and inspired confidence. Moreover, he was regular, and only went out when absolutely compelled by the claims of his orchard or kitchen-garden, and this discretion was placed to his credit. But for all that, he had made two men talk,—in the convent, the porter, and he thus knew all the peculiarities of the parlor, and at the cemetery, the grave-digger, and he knew the regularities of the burial; so that he possessed a double light about these nuns,—the light of life and the light of death. But he made no abuse of his knowledge, and the congregation were attached to him. Old, lame, seeing nothing, and probably rather deaf; what qualifications! It would be difficult to fill up his place. The good man, with the assurance of a servant who knows his value, began a rustic address to the prioress, which was rather diffuse and very artful. He talked a good deal about his age, his infirmities, years hence-forward reckoning double for him, the growing demands of his work, nights to pass,—as, for instance, the last, in which he was obliged to draw matting over the melon frames, owing to the moon,—and he ended with this, that he had a brother (the prioress gave a start),—a brother who was not young (a second start, but not so alarmed),—that if leave were granted, this brother would come and live with him and help him; that he was an excellent gardener, and would be of more use to the community than himself was; and that, on the other hand, if his brother's services were not accepted, as he, the elder, felt worn out and unequal to his work, he would be compelled, to his great regret, to give up his situation; and that his brother had a little girl whom he would bring with him, and who would be brought into the house, and might—who knew?—become a nun some day. When he had finished speaking, the prioress broke off her occupation of letting the beads of her rosary slip through her fingers, and said,—

"Could you procure a strong iron bar between this and to-night?"

"What to do?"

"To act as a lever."

"Yes, Reverend Mother," Father Fauchelevent replied.

The prioress, without adding a syllable, rose and walked into the adjoining room, where the Chapter was assembled. Fauchelevent was left alone.

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#### CHAPTER III.

### MOTHER INNOCENT.

About a quarter of an hour passed ere the prioress came in again and sat down on her chair. The two speakers appeared preoccupied. We will do our best to record their conversation accurately.

"Father Fauvent?"

"Reverend Mother?"

"Do you know the chapel?"

"I have a little cage in it where I hear Mass and the offices."

"And have you gone into the choir for your work?"

"Two or three times."

"A stone will have to be lifted."

"What stone?"

"The one at the side of the altar."

"The stone that closes the vault?"

"Yes."

"That is a job where two men would be useful."

"Mother Ascension, who is as strong as a man, will help you."

"A woman is never a man."

"We have only a woman to help you, and everybody does the best. Although Dom Mabillon gives four hundred and seventeen epistles of Saint Bernard, and Merlonus Horstius only gives three hundred and sixty-seven, I do not despise Merlonus Horstius."

"Nor I."

"The merit is to work according to your strength. A convent is not a work-yard."

"And a woman is not a man. My brother is a strong fellow!"

"And then, you will have a crowbar."

"It is the only sort of key that fits such locks."

"There is a ring in the stone."

"I will put the crowbar through it."

"And the stone works on hinges."

"All right, Reverend Mother, I will open the vault."

"And the four chanting mothers will help you."

"And when the vault is open?"

"You must shut it again."

"Is that all?"

"No."

"Give me your orders, most Reverend Mother."

"Fauvent, we place confidence in you."

"I am here to do everything."

"And to hold your tongue about everything."

"Yes, Reverend Mother."

"When the vault is opened—"

"I will shut it again."

"But, first—"

"What, Reverend Mother?"

"You must let down something into it."

There was a silence; and the prioress, after a pout of the lower lip, which looked like hesitation, continued,—

"Father Fauvent!"

"Reverend Mother?"

"You are aware that a mother died this morning."

"No."

"Did you not hear the bell?"

"Nothing can be heard at the end of the garden."

"Really now?"

"I can hardly distinguish my own ring."

"She died at daybreak."

"And besides, this morning the wind did not blow in my direction."

"It is Mother Crucifixion, a blessed saint."

The prioress was silent, moved her lips for a moment, as if in mental prayer, and went on,—

"Three years ago, through merely seeing Mother Crucifixion pray, a Jansenist, Madame de Béthune, became orthodox."

"Oh, yes, I hear the passing bell now, Reverend Mother."

"The mothers have carried her into the dead-room adjoining the church."

"I know."

"No other man but you can or ought to enter that room, so keep careful watch. It would be a fine thing to see another man enter the chamber of the dead."

"More often."

"Eh?"

"More often."

"What do you mean?"

"I say more often."

"More often than what?"

"Reverend Mother, I did not say 'more often than what,' but 'more often.'"

"I do not understand you; why do you say 'more often'?"

"To say the same as yourself, Reverend Mother."

"But I did not say 'more often.'"

"You did not say it, but I said it to say the same as you."

At this moment nine o'clock struck.

"At nine in the morning and every hour be the most Holy Sacrament of the altar blessed and adored!" said the prioress.

"Amen," said Fauchelevent.

The hour struck opportunely, for it cut short the "more often." It is probable that without it the prioress and Fauchelevent would never have got out of this tangle. Fauchelevent wiped his forehead; and the prioress gave another internal murmur, and then raised her voice.

"In her life-time Mother Crucifixion performed conversions, after her death she will perform miracles."

"She will do them," Fauchelevent said, determined not to give ground again.

"Father Fauvent, the community was blessed in Mother Crucifixion. Of course it is not granted to every one to die, like Cardinal de Bérulle, while reading the Holy Mass, and exhale his soul to God while uttering the words, Hanc igitur oblationem. But though she did not attain such happiness, Mother Crucifixion had a very blessed death. She retained her senses up to the last moment; she spoke to us, and then conversed with the angels. She gave us her last commands; if you had more faith, and if you had been in her cell, she would have cured your leg by touching it. She smiled, and we all felt that she was living again in God,—there was Paradise in such a death."

Fauchelevent fancied that it was the end of a prayer; "Amen," he said.

"Father Fauvent, what the dead wish must be carried out."

The prioress told a few beads. Fauchelevent held his tongue; then the lady continued,—

"I have consulted on this point several ecclesiastics, who labor in our Lord, who turn their attention to the exercise of clerical life, and reap an admirable harvest."

"Reverend Mother, the knell is heard better here than in the garden."

"Moreover, she is more than a dead woman, she is a saint."

"Like yourself, Reverend Mother."

"She slept in her coffin for more than twenty years, by express permission of our Holy Father Pius VII."

"The same who crowned the Emp—Bonaparte."

For a clever man like Fauchelevent the recollection was ill-timed. Luckily the prioress, who was deep in thought, did not hear him, and went on,—

"Father Fauvent?"

"Reverend Mother?"

"Saint Diodorus, Archbishop of Cappadocia, requested that only one word should be inscribed on his tombstone, Acarus, which means a worm, and it was done. Is that true?"

"Yes, Reverend Mother."

"The blessed Mezzocanes, Abbot of Aquila, wished to be buried under a gallows, and it was done."

"That is true."

"Saint Terentius, Bishop of Oporto, at the mouth of the Tiber on the sea, ordered that there should be engraved on his tombstone the symbol which was placed on the grave of parricides, in the hope that passers-by would spit on his tomb; and it was done, for the dead ought to be obeyed."

"So be it."

"The body of Bernard Guidonis, who was born in France, near Roche Abeille, was, as he ordered, and in defiance of the King of Castile, conveyed to the Church of the Dominicans of Limoges, although Bernard Guidonis was Bishop of Tuy in Spain. Can you say the contrary?"

"Certainly not, Reverend Mother."

"The fact is attested by Plantavit de la Fosse."

A few beads were told in silence, and then the prioress resumed,—

"Father Fauvent, Mother Crucifixion will be buried in the coffin in which she has slept for twenty years."

"That is but fair."

"It is a continuation of sleep."

"Then I shall have to nail her up in that coffin?"

"Yes."

"And we shall not employ the undertaker's coffin?"

"Exactly."

"I am at the orders of the most Reverend Community."

"The four singing mothers will help you."

"To nail up the coffin? I do not want them."

"No, to let it down."

"Where?"

"Into the vault."

"What vault?"

"Under the altar."

Fauchelevent started.

"The vault under the altar?"

"Yes."

"But—"

"You have an iron bar."

"Yes, still—"

"You will lift the stone by passing the bar through the ring."

"But—"

"We must obey the dead. It was the last wish of Mother Crucifixion to be buried in the vault under the chapel altar, not to be placed in profane soil, and to remain when dead at the place where she had prayed when alive. She asked this of us, indeed, ordered it."

"But it is forbidden."

"Forbidden by man, ordered by God."

"Suppose it oozed out?"

"We have confidence in you."

"Oh! I am a stone of your wall."

"The Chapter is assembled; the vocal mothers, whom I have just consulted once again, and who are deliberating, have decided that Mother Crucifixion should be interred according to her wish, under our altar. Only think. Father Fauvent, if miracles were to take place here! What a glory in God for the community! Miracles issue from tombs."

"But, Reverend Mother, supposing the Sanitary Commissioner—"

"Saint Benedict II., in a matter of burial, resisted Constantine Pogonatus."

"Still the Inspector—"

"Chonodemairus, one of the seven German kings who entered Gaul during the empire of Constantius, expressly recognized the right of monks to be buried in religion, that is to say, beneath the altar."

"But the Inspector of the Prefecture—"

"The world is as nothing in presence of the cross. Martin, eleventh general of the Carthusians, gave his order this device, Stat crux dam volvitur orbis."

"Amen!" Fauchelevent said, who imperturbably got out of the scrape in that way whenever he heard Latin.

Any audience suffices for a person who has been a long time silent. On the day when Gymnastoras, the rhetorician, left prison, with a great many dilemmas and syllogisms inside him, he stopped before the first tree he came to, harangued it, and made mighty efforts to convince it. The prioress, whose tongue was usually stopped by the dam of silence, and whose reservoir was over-full, rose and exclaimed with the loquacity of a raised sluice,—

"I have on my right hand Benedict, and on my left Bernard. Who is Bernard? The first abbot of Clairvaux. Fontaines in Burgundy is a blessed spot for having witnessed his birth. His father's name was Técelin, his mother's Alèthe; he began with Citeaux to end with Clairvaux; he was ordained abbot by William de Champeaux, Bishop of Châlons sur Saône; he had seven hundred novices, and founded one hundred and sixty monasteries; he over-threw Abeilard at the Council of Sens in 1140, and Pierre de Bruys and Henry his disciple, as well as an errant sect called the Apostolicals; he confounded Arnold of Brescia, crushed the monk Raoul, the Jew-killer, led the Council of Reims in 1148, condemned Gilbert de la Porée, Bishop of Poitiers, and Éon de l'Étoile, settled the disputes of the princes, enlightened King Louis the young, advised Pope Eugene III., regulated the temple, preached the Crusade, and performed two hundred and fifty miracles in his life, and as many as thirty-seven in one day. Who is Benedict? He is the patriarch of Monte Cassino; he is the second founder of the claustral Holiness, the Basil of the West. His order has produced fourteen popes, two hundred cardinals, fifty patriarchs, one thousand six hundred archbishops, four thousand six hundred bishops, four emperors, twelve empresses, forty-six kings, forty-one queens, three thousand six hundred canonized saints, and still exists after one thousand four hundred years. On one side Saint Bernard, on the other the Sanitary Inspector! On one side Saint Benedict, on the other the Inspector of the streets! What do we know about the State, the regulations, the administration, and the public undertaker? Any witnesses would be indignant at the way in which we are treated; we have not even the right to give our dust to Christ! Your salubrity is a revolutionary invention. God subordinate to a Police Inspector, such is the age! Silence, Fauvent!"

Fauchelevent did not feel very comfortable under this douche, but the prioress continued,—

"The right of the monasteries to sepulture is indubitable, and it can only be denied by fanatics and schismatics. We live in times of terrible confusion; people do not know what they should, and know what they should not. Men are crass and impious; and there are people at the present day who cannot distinguish between the most mighty Saint Bernard and that Bernard called of the poor Catholics, a certain worthy ecclesiastic who lived in the thirteenth century. Others are so blasphemous as to compare the scaffold of Louis XVI. with the cross of our Saviour. Louis XVI. was only a king. There are no just or unjust persons left; the name of Voltaire is known and that of Cæsar de Bus unknown,—but Cæsar de Bus is blessed, while Voltaire is condemned. The last archbishop, Cardinal de Périgord, did not even know that Charles de Gondrin succeeded Bérullus, and François Bourgoin Gondrin, and Jean François Senault Bourgoin, and Father de Sainte Marthe Jean François Senault. The name of Father Coton is known, not because he was one of the three who urged the foundation of the Oratory, but because he supplied the Huguenot King Henri IV. with material for an oath. What makes people of the world like Saint Francis de Sales, is that he cheated at play. And then religion is attacked, and why? Because there have been bad priests; because Sagittarius, Bishop of Gap, was brother of Salonces, Bishop of Embrun, and both followed Mommolus. Of what consequence is all this? Does it prevent Martin of Tours from being a saint, and having given one half of his cloak to a poor man? The saints are persecuted, and people close their eyes against the truth. They are accustomed to the darkness, and the most ferocious beasts are blind beasts. No one thinks of hell seriously; oh, the wicked people! 'By the king's order' means at the present day by order of the revolution. People forget what they owe, either to the living or the dead. We are forbidden to die in holiness; burial is a civil matter, and this is horrible. Saint Leon II. wrote two letters expressly,—one to Peter Notarius, the other to the King of the Visigoths, to combat and reject, in questions that affect the dead, the authority of the exarchus and the supremacy of the Emperor. Gauthier, Bishop of Châlons, opposed Otho, Duke of Burgundy, in this matter. The old magistrates coincided, and we formerly had a voice in the Chapter itself upon temporal affairs. The Abbot of Citeaux, general of the order, was councillor by right of birth in the Parliament of Burgundy. We do what we like with our dead. Is not the body of Saint Benedict himself in France at the Abbey of Fleury, called Saint Benedict, in the Loire, although he died at Monte Cassino in Italy, on Saturday, March 21, 543? All this is incontestable. I abhor the psallants, I hate the priors, I execrate heretics, but I should detest even worse any one who opposed my views in this matter. It is only necessary to read Arnoul Wion, Gabriel Bucelinus, Trithème, Maurolicus, and Dom Luc d'Achery."

The prioress breathed, and then turned to Fauchelevent. "Father Fauvent, is it settled?"

"It is, Reverend Mother."

"Can we reckon on you?"

"I will obey."

"Very good."

"I am entirely devoted to the convent."

"You will close the coffin, and the sisters will carry it into the chapel. The office for the dead will be read, and then we shall return to the cloisters. Between eleven and twelve you will come with your iron bar, and everything will be performed with the utmost secrecy; there will be no one in the chapel but the four singing mothers, Mother Ascension, and yourself."

"And the sister who will be at the post?"

"She will not turn round."

"But she will hear."

"She will not listen. Moreover, what the convent knows the world is ignorant of."

There was another pause, after which the prioress continued,—

"You will remove your bell, for it is unnecessary for the sister at the stake to notice your presence."

"Reverend Mother?"

"What is it, Father Fauvent?"

"Has the physician of the dead paid his visit?"

"He will do so at four o'clock to-day; the bell has been rung to give him notice. But do you not hear any ringing?"

"I only pay attention to my own summons."

"Very good, Father Fauvent."

"Reverend Mother, I shall require a lever at least six feet long."

"Where will you get it?"

"Where there are plenty of gratings there are plenty of iron bars. I have a pile of old iron at the end of the garden."

"About three quarters of an hour before midnight, do not forget."

"Reverend Mother?"

"What is it?"

"If you have other jobs like this, my brother is a strong fellow for you,—a Turk."

"You will be as quick as possible."

"I cannot do things quickly, for I am infirm, and for that reason require an assistant. I halt."

"Halting is not a crime, and may be a blessing. The Emperor Henry II., who combated the Anti-pope Gregory, and re-established Benedict VIII., has two surnames,—the saint and the cripple."

"Two excellent surtouts," muttered Fauchelevent, who really was rather hard of hearing.

"Father Fauvent, now I think of it, take a whole hour, for it will not be too much. Be at the High Altar with your crowbar at eleven o'clock, for the service begins at midnight, and all must be finished a good quarter of an hour previously."

"I will do everything to prove my zeal to the community. I will nail up the coffin, and be in the chapel at eleven o'clock precisely; the singing mothers and Mother Ascension will be there. Two men would be better; but no matter, I shall have my crowbar. We will open the vault, let down the coffin, and close it again. After that there will not be a trace, and the Government will have no suspicion. Reverend Mother, is all arranged thus?"

"No."

"What is there still?"

"There is the empty coffin."

This was a difficulty; Fauchelevent thought of and on it, and so did the prioress.

"Father Fauvent, what must be done with the other coffin."

"It must be buried."

"Empty?"

Another silence. Fauchelevent made with his left hand that sort of gesture which dismisses a disagreeable question.

"Reverend Mother, I will nail up the coffin and cover it with the pall."

"Yes; but the bearers, while placing it in the hearse and lowering it into the grave, will soon perceive that there is nothing in it."

"Oh, the de—!" Fauchelevent exclaimed. The prioress began a cross, and looked intently at the gardener; the vil stuck in his throat, and he hastily improvised an expedient to cause the oath to be forgotten.

"Reverend Mother, I will put earth in the coffin, which will produce the effect of a body."

"You are right, for earth is the same as a human being. So you will manage the empty coffin?"

"I take it on myself."

The face of the prioress, which had hitherto been troubled and clouded, now grew serene. She made the sign of a superior dismissing an inferior, and Fauchelevent walked toward the door. As he was going out, the prioress gently raised her voice.

"Father Fauvent, I am satisfied with you; to-morrow, after the interment, bring me your brother, and tell him to bring me his daughter."

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**CHAPTER IV.**

## A PLAN OF ESCAPE.

The strides of halting men are like the glances of squinters, they do not reach their point very rapidly. Fauchelevent was perplexed, and he spent upwards of a quarter of an hour in returning to the garden cottage. Cosette was awake, and Jean Valjean had seated her by the fireside. At the moment when Fauchelevent entered, Jean Valjean was pointing to the gardener's basket leaning in a corner, and saying to her,—

"Listen to me carefully, little Cosette. We are obliged to leave this house, but shall return to it, and be very happy. The good man will carry you out in that thing upon his back, and you will wait for me with a lady till I come to fetch you. If you do not wish Madame Thénardier to catch you again, obey, and say not a word."

Cosette nodded her head gravely; at the sound Fauchelevent made in opening the door Jean Valjean turned round.

"Well?"

"All is arranged, and nothing is so," said Fauchelevent. "I have leave to bring you in, but to bring you in you must go out. That is the difficulty; it is easy enough with the little one."

"You will carry her out?"

"Will she be quiet?"

"I answer for that."

"But you, Father Madeleine?"

And after an anxious silence Fauchelevent cried,—

"Why, go out in the same way as you came in."

Jean Valjean, as on the first occasion, confined himself to saying "Impossible!"

Fauchelevent, speaking to himself rather than to Jean Valjean, growled,—

"There is another thing that troubles me. I said that I would put earth in it, but now I come to think of it, earth instead of a body will not do, for it will move about and the men will notice it. You understand, Father Madeleine, the Government will perceive the trick?"

Jean Valjean looked at him, and fancied that he must be raving; Fauchelevent continued,—

"How the deuce are you going to get out? For everything must be settled to-morrow, as the prioress expects you then."

Then he explained to Valjean that it was a reward for a service which he, Fauchelevent, was rendering the community. It was part of his duty to attend to the funerals, nail up the coffin, and assist the grave-digger at the cemetery. The nun who had died that morning requested to be buried in the coffin which served her as bed in the vault under the altar of the chapel. This was forbidden by the police regulations, but she was one of those women to whom nothing could be refused. The prioress and the vocal mothers intended to carry out the wishes of the deceased, and so all the worse for the Government. He, Fauchelevent, would nail up the coffin in the cell, lift the stone in the chapel, and let down the body into the vault. As a reward for this the prioress would admit into the house his brother as gardener, and his niece as boarder. The prioress had told him to bring his brother the next day after the pretended funeral; but he could not bring M. Madeleine in from outside if he were not there. This was his first embarrassment, and then he had a second in the empty coffin.

"What do you mean by the empty coffin?" Valjean asked.

"Why, the Government coffin."

"I do not understand you."

"A nun dies, and the physician of the municipality comes and says: 'There is a nun dead.' Government sends a coffin; the next day it sends a hearse and undertaker's men to fetch the coffin and carry it to the cemetery. They will come and lift the coffin, and there's nothing in it."

"Put something in it."

"A dead person? I have n't such a thing."

"Well, then, a living one."

"Who?"

"Myself," said Jean Valjean.

Fauchelevent, who was seated, sprang up as if a shell had exploded under his chair.

"You?"

"Why not?"

Jean Valjean had one of those rare smiles which resembled a sunbeam in a wintry sky.

"You know that you said, Fauchelevent, 'Mother Crucifixion is dead,' and I added, 'And Father Madeleine is buried,' It will be so."

"Oh, you are joking, not speaking seriously."

"Most seriously. Must I not get out of here?"

"Of course."

"I have told you to find for me also a basket and a tilt."

"Well?"

"The basket will be of deal, and the tilt of black cloth."

"No, white cloth. Nuns are buried in white."

"All right, then, white cloth."

"You are not like other men, Father Madeleine."

To see such ideas, which are nought but the wild and daring inventions of the hulks, issue from his peaceful surrounding, and mingled with what he called "the slow pace of the convent," produced in Fauchelevent a stupor comparable to that which a passer-by would feel on seeing a whaler fishing in the gutter of the Rue St. Denis. Jean Valjean went on.

"The point is to get out of here unseen, and that is a way. But just tell me, how does it all take place? Where is the coffin?"

"The empty one?"

"Yes."

"In what is called the dead-house. It is upon two trestles, and covered with the pall."

"What is the length of the coffin?"

"Six feet."

"What is this dead-house?"

"A ground-floor room with a grated window looking on the garden, and two doors, one leading to the church, the other to the convent."

"What church?"

"The street church, the one open to everybody."

"Have you the keys of these doors?"

"No, I have the key of the one communicating with the convent; but the porter has the other."

"When does he open it?"

"Only to let the men pass who come to fetch the body. When the coffin has gone out the door is locked again."

"Who nails up the coffin?"

"I do."

"Who places the pall over it?"

"I do."

"Are you alone?"

"No other man, excepting the doctor, is allowed to enter the dead-house. It is written on the wall."

"Could you hide me in that house to-night, when all are asleep in the convent?"

"No; but I can hide you in a dark hole opening out of the dead-house, in which I put the burial tools, of

which I have the key."

"At what hour to-morrow will the hearse come to fetch the body?"

"At three in the afternoon. The interment takes place at the Vaugirard cemetery a little before nightfall, for the ground is not very near here."

"I will remain concealed in your tool-house during the night and morning. How about food? For I shall be hungry."

"I will bring you some."

"You can nail me up in the coffin at two o'clock." Fauchelevent recoiled and cracked his finger-bones.

"Oh, it is impossible!"

"Nonsense! To take a hammer and drive nails into a board?"

What seemed to Fauchelevent extraordinary was, we repeat, quite simple to Jean Valjean, for he had gone through worse straits; and any man who has been a prisoner knows how to reduce himself to the diameter of the mode of escape. A prisoner is affected by flight just as a sick man is by the crisis which saves or destroys him, and an escape is a cure. What will not a man undergo for the sake of being cured? To be nailed up and carried in a box, to live for a long time in a packing-case, to find air where there is none, to economize one's breath for hours, to manage to choke without dying, was one of Jean Valjean's melancholy talents.

Besides, a coffin in which there is a living body, this convict's expedient, is also an imperial expedient. If we may believe the monk Austin Castillejo, it was the way employed by Charles V., who, wishing to see La Plombes for the last time after his abdication, contrived to get her in and out of the monastery of St. Yuste. Fauchelevent, when he had slightly recovered, exclaimed,—

"But how will you manage to breathe?"

"I will manage it."

"In that box? Why, the mere idea of it chokes me.

"You have a gimlet. You will make a few holes round the mouth, and nail down the lid, without closing it tightly."

"Good! and suppose you cough or sneeze?"

"A man who is escaping does not do such a thing."

And Jean Valjean added,—

"Father Fauchelevent, we must make up our minds. I must either be captured here or go out in the hearse."

Everybody must have noticed the fancy which cats have of stopping and sniffing in a half-opened door. Who has not said to a cat, "Come in, then"? There are men who, when an incident stands half opened before them, have also a tendency to remain undecided between two resolutions, at the risk of being crushed by destiny as it hurriedly closes the adventure. The more prudent, cats though they are, and because they are cats, often incur greater danger than the more daring. Fauchelevent was of this hesitating nature; still, Jean Valjean's coolness involuntarily mastered him, and he growled,—

"After all, there is no other way."

Jean Valjean continued,—

"The only thing I am anxious about is what will take place at the cemetery."

"There is the very thing I am not anxious about," said Fauchelevent; "if you feel sure of getting out of the coffin, I feel sure of getting you out of the grave. The grave-digger is a friend of mine and a drunkard of the name of Father Mestienne; he puts the dead in the grave, and I put the grave-digger in my pocket. I will tell you what will occur. We shall arrive a little before twilight, three quarters of an hour before the cemetery gates are closed The hearse will drive up to the grave; and I shall follow, for that is my business. I shall have a hammer, a chisel, and pincers in my pocket; the hearse stops, the undertaker knots a cord round your coffin and lets you down; the priest says the prayers, makes the sign of the cross, sprinkles the holy water, and bolts. I remain alone with Father Mestienne; and he is a friend of mine, I tell you. One of two things is certain; he will either be drunk or not be drunk. If he is not drunk, I shall say to him, 'Come, and have a drink before the "Bon Coing" closes.' I take him away, make him drunk, which does not take long, as he has always made a beginning. I lay him under the table, take his card, and return to the cemetery without him. You will have only to deal with me. If he is drunk I shall say to him, 'Be off; I will do your work for you.' He will go, and I get you out of the hole."

Jean Valjean held out his hand, which Father Fauchelevent seized with a touching peasant devotion.

"It is settled, Father Fauchelevent. All will go well."

"Providing that nothing is deranged," Fauchelevent thought; "suppose the affair was to have a terrible ending!"

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**CHAPTER V.**

## A DRUNKARD IS NOT IMMORTAL.

The next day, as the son was setting, the few passers-by on the Boulevard de Maine took off their hats to an old-fashioned hearse, ornamented with death's-head, thigh-bones, and tears. In this hearse was a coffin covered with a white pall, on which lay an enormous black cross, like a tall dead woman with hanging arms. A draped carriage, in which could be noticed a priest in his surplice, and a chorister in his red skull-cap, followed. Two mutes in a gray uniform with black facings walked on the right and left of the hearse, while behind them came an old man in workman's garb, who halted. The procession proceeded toward the Vaugirard cemetery. Projecting from the man's pocket could be seen the handle of a hammer, the blade of a cold-chisel, and the double antennæ of a pair of pincers. This cemetery formed an exception to the others in Paris. It had its peculiar usages, just as it had a large gate and a side gate, which old people in the quarters, tenacious to old names, called the horseman's gate and the footman's gate. The Bernardo-Benedictines of the Little Picpus had obtained, as we have stated, permission to be buried there in a separate corner, and by night, because the cemetery had formerly belonged to their community. The grave-diggers, having thus an evening duty in summer and a night duty in winter, were subjected to special rules. The gates of Parisian cemeteries were closed at that period at sunset; and as this was a police measure, the Vaugirard cemetery was subjected to it like the rest. The two gates adjoined a pavilion, built by the architect Perronet, in which the porter lived, and they were inexorably closed at the moment when the sun disappeared behind the dome of the Invalides. If any grave-digger were detained at that moment in the cemetery, he had only one way to get out, his card, with which the undertaker's department supplied him. There was a species of letter-box in the shutter of the porter's window; the grave-digger threw his card into this box, the porter heard it fell, pulled the string, and the small gate opened. If the grave-digger had not his card he gave his name; the porter got up, recognized him, and opened the gate with his key; but in that case the grave-digger paid a fine of fifteen francs.

This cemetery, with its own regulations, was a flaw on the administrative symmetry, and it was put down shortly after 1830. The cemetery of Mont Parnasse succeeded it, and inherited the famous cabaret attached to the Vaugirard cemetery, which was known by the sign, "Au Bon Coing," one side of which looked out on the drinking tables, the other on the tombs. It was what might be called a faded cemetery, and it was falling into decay; green mould was invading it, and the flowers deserted it. Respectable tradesmen did not care to be buried at Vaugirard, for it had a poverty-stricken smell. La Père Lachaise, if you like! to be buried there was like having a mahogany suit of furniture. The Vaugirard cemetery was a venerable enclosure, laid out like an old French garden; in it were straight walks, box-trees, holly-trees, old tombs under old yew-trees, and very tall grass. At night it was a tragical-looking spot.

The sun had not yet set when the hearse with the white pall and black cross entered the avenue of this cemetery; and the halting man who followed it was no other than Fauchelevent. The interment of Mother Crucifixion in the vault under the altar, getting Cosette out, and introducing Jean Valjean into the dead-house, had been effected without the slightest hitch.

Let us say, in passing, that the burial of Mother Crucifixion beneath the altar is to us a very venial thing, and one of those faults which resemble a duty. The nuns had accomplished it, not only without feeling troubled, but with the applause of their conscience. In a convent, what is called "the Government" is only an interference with the authorities, which admits of discussion. First comes the rule,—as for the code, time enough for that. Men, make as many laws as you please, but keep them for yourselves! Rendering unto Cæsar only comes after rendering unto God, and a prince is nothing by the side of a principle.

Fauchelevent limped after the hearse with great satisfaction; his twin plots, the one with the nuns, the other with M. Madeleine, one for, the other against, the convent, were getting on famously. The calmness of Jean Valjean was one of those powerful tranquillities which are contagious, and Fauchelevent no longer doubted of success. What he still had to do was nothing; during the last two years he had made the grave-digger drunk a dozen times, and he played with him. He could do what he liked with Father Mestienne, and his head exactly fitted Fauchelevent's cap. The gardener's security was complete.

At the moment when the procession entered the avenue leading to the cemetery, Fauchelevent looked at the hearse with delight, and rubbed his huge hands as he said in a low voice, "What a lark!"

All at once the hearse stopped; it had reached the gates, and the permission for burying must be shown. The undertaker conversed with the porter, and during this colloquy, which occupied two or three minutes, a stranger stationed himself behind the hearse by Fauchelevent's side. He was a sort of workman, wearing a jacket with wide pockets, and holding a spade under his arm. Fauchelevent looked at the stranger, and asked him,—

"Who are you?"

The man replied, "The grave-digger."

If any man could survive a cannon-ball right in the middle of his chest, he would cut such a face as Fauchelevent did.

"Why, Father Mestienne is the grave-digger."

"Was."

"How, was?"

"He is dead."

Fauchelevent was prepared for anything except this, that a grave-digger could die; and yet, it is true

that grave-diggers themselves die; while digging holes for others, they prepare one for themselves. Fauchelevent stood with widely-opened mouth, and had scarce strength to stammer,—

"Why, it is impossible."

"It is the case."

"But the grave-digger," he went on feebly, "is Father Mestienne."

"After Napoleon, Louis XVIII. After Mestienne, Gribier. Rustic, my name is Gribier."

Fauchelevent, who was very pale, stared at Gribier; he was a tall, thin, livid, thoroughly funereal man. He looked like a broken-down doctor who had turned grave-digger. Fauchelevent burst into a laugh.

"Ah, what funny things do happen! Father Mestienne is dead, but long live little Father Lenoir! Do you know who he is? A bottle of Surêne, morbigou! real Paris Surêne. And so Father Mestienne is dead; I feel sorry for him, as he was a jolly fellow. But you are a jolly fellow too, are you not, comrade? We will drink a glass together, eh?"

The man answered, "I have finished my education, and I never drink."

The hearse had set out again, and was now going along the main avenue. Fauchelevent had decreased his pace, and limped more through anxiety than infirmity. The grave-digger walked in front of him, and Fauchelevent once again surveyed this unknown Gribier. He was one of those men who when young look old, and who, though thin, are very strong.

"Comrade!" Fauchelevent cried.

The man turned round.

"I am the convent grave-digger."

"My colleague," the man said.

Fauchelevent, uneducated though very sharp, understood that he had to deal with a formidable species, a fine speaker; he growled,—

"So, then, Father Mestienne is dead."

The man answered, "Completely. Le bon Dieu consulted his bill-book. Father Mestienne was due, and so Father Mestienne is dead."

Fauchelevent repeated mechanically, "Le bon Dieu."

"Le bon Dieu," the man said authoritatively,—"with philosophers the Eternal Father; with Jacobins, the Supreme Being."

"Are we not going to form an acquaintance?" Fauchelevent stammered.

"It is formed. You are a rustic, I am a Parisian."

"People never know one another thoroughly till they have drunk together; for when a man empties his glass, he empties his heart. You will come and drink with me; such an offer cannot be refused."

"Work first."

Fauchelevent thought, "It's all over with me."

They had only a few more yards to go before reaching the nuns' corner. The grave-digger added,—

"Peasant, I have seven children to feed, and as they must eat I must not drink."

And he added with the satisfaction of a serious man who is laying down an axiom,—

"Their hunger is the enemy of my thirst."

The hearse left the main avenue, and turned down a smaller one, which indicated the immediate proximity of the grave. Fauchelevent reduced his pace, but could not reduce that of the hearse. Fortunately, the ground was saturated with winter rains, and rendered their progress slower. He drew closer to the grave-digger.

"There is such a capital Argenteuil wine," he muttered.

"Villager," the man replied, "I was not meant to be a grave-digger. My father was porter at the 'Prytanæum,' and destined me for literature, but he was unfortunate in his speculations on the Exchange. Hence I was compelled to relinquish the profession of author, but I am still a public writer."

"Then you are not a grave-digger?" Fauchelevent retorted, clinging to this very weak branch.

"One does not prevent the other. I cumulate." Fauchelevent did not understand the last word.

"Let us go to drink," he said.

Here a remark is necessary. Fauchelevent, however great his agony might be, proposed drinking, but did not explain himself on one point. Who was to pay? As a general rule, Fauchelevent proposed, and Father Mestienne paid. A proposal to drink evidently resulted from the new situation created by the new grave-digger, and that proposal the gardener must make; but he left, not undesignedly, the proverbial quarter of an hour called Rabelais' in obscurity. However affected Fauchelevent might be, he did not feel anxious to pay.

The grave-digger continued with a grand smile, "As a man must live, I accepted Father Mestienne's inheritance. When a man has nearly completed his course of studies, he is a philosopher; and I have added the work of my arms to that of my hand. I have my writer's stall at the market in the Rue de Sèvres—you know the umbrella market? all the cooks of the Croix Rouge apply to me, and I compose their declarations to the soldiers. In the morning I write billets-doux, in the evening I dig graves; such is life, rustic."

The hearse went on, and Fauchelevent looked all about him with the greatest anxiety; heavy drops of perspiration fell from his forehead.

"Still," the grave-digger continued, "a man cannot serve two mistresses, and I must choose between the pick and the pen. The pick ruins my hand."

The hearse stopped; the chorister got out of the coach, and then the priest. One of the small front wheels of the hearse was slightly raised by a heap of earth, beyond which an open grave was visible.

"Here's a trick!" Fauchelevent said in consternation.

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**CHAPTER VI.**

## BETWEEN FOUR PLANKS.

Who was in the coffin? It was, as we know, Jean Valjean, who had so contrived as to be able to live in it, and could almost breathe. It is a strange thing to what an extent security of conscience produces other security; the whole combination premeditated by Valjean had been going on since the previous evening, and was still going on excellently. He calculated, like Fauchelevent, upon Father Mestienne, and did not suspect the end. Never was a situation more critical or a calamity more perfect.

The four planks of a coffin exhale a species of terrible peace; and it seemed as if some of the repose of

the dead were blended with Valjean's tranquillity. From the bottom of this coffin he had been able to follow and did follow all the phases of the formidable drama which he performed with death. A short while after Fauchelevent had finished nailing down the coffin lid, Valjean felt himself raised and then carried along. Through the cessation of the jolting he felt that they had passed from the pavement to the stamped earth, that is to say, the hearse had left the streets and had turned into the boulevards. From the hollow sound he guessed that he was crossing the bridge of Austerlitz; at the first halt, he understood that he was entering the cemetery, and at the sound he said to himself, "Here is the grave."

He suddenly felt hands seize the coffin, and then noticed a rumbling grating on the planks; he guessed that a rope was being fastened round the coffin in order to let it down into the grave. After this, he felt dizzy for a while; in all probability the men had made the coffin oscillate and let the head down before the feet. He perfectly recovered when he found himself horizontal and motionless. He felt a certain amount of cold, as a chill and solemn voice was raised above him, and he heard the Latin words which he did not understand pass away so slowly that he could distinguish each in turn.

"Qui dormiunt in terræ pulvere, evigilabunt; alii in vitam æternam, et alii in opprobrium, ut videant semper."

A boyish voice said, "De profundis."

The grave voice began again, "Requiem æternam dona ei, Domine!"

The boyish voice replied, "Et lux perpetua luceat ei!"

He heard something like the gentle plash of rain upon the coffin lid; it was probably the holy water. He thought: "It is finished, and I only need a little patience. The priest will go away, and Fauchelevent take Mestienne off to drink. I shall be left here till Fauchelevent returns alone, and I shall get out. It will take about an hour."

The grave voice continued, "Requiescat in pace!"

And the boyish voice said, "Amen."

Jean Valjean, who was listening attentively, heard something like the sound of retreating footsteps.

"They are going away," he thought. "I am alone." All at once he heard over his head a noise which appeared to him like a thunder-clap; it was a spadeful of earth falling on the coffin; a second spadeful fell, and one of the holes by which he breathed was stopped; a third spadeful fell, and then a fourth. There are some things stronger than the strongest man, and Jean Valjean lost his senses.

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**CHAPTER VII.**

## FAUCHELEVENT HAS AN IDEA.

This is what took place above the coffin which contained Jean Valjean. When the hearse had gone away, when the priest and the chorister had driven off in the coach, Fauchelevent, who did not once take his eyes off the grave-digger, saw him stoop down and seize his spade, which was standing upright in the heap of earth. Fauchelevent formed a supreme resolution; he placed himself between the grave and the digger, folded his arms, and said,—

"I'll pay."

The grave-digger looked at him in amazement, and replied,—

"What, peasant?"

Fauchelevent repeated, "I'll pay for the wine."

"What wine?"

"The Argenteuil."

"Where is it?"

"At the 'Bon Coing.'"

"Go to the devil!" said the grave-digger.

And he threw a spadeful of earth on the coffin, which produced a hollow sound. Fauchelevent tottered, and was himself ready to fall into the grave. He cried, in a voice with which a death-rattle was beginning to be mingled,—

"Come along, mate, before the 'Bon Coing' closes."

The grave-digger filled his spade again, and Fauchelevent continued, "I'll pay."

And he seized the grave-digger's arm.

"Listen to me, mate; I am the convent grave-digger, and have come to help you. It is a job which can be done by night, so let us begin by having a drink."

And while speaking, while clinging to this desperate pressing, he made the melancholy reflection, "And suppose he does drink, will he get drunk?"

"Provincial," said the grave-digger, "since you are so pressing, I consent. We will drink, but after work, not before."

And he raised his spade, but Fauchelevent restrained him.

"It is Argenteuil wine."

"Why," said the grave-digger, "you must be a bell-ringer; ding, dong, ding, dong. You can only say that. Go and have yourself pulled."

And he threw the second spadeful. Fauchelevent had reached that moment when a man is no longer aware of what he says.

"But come and drink," he cried, "since I offer to pay."

"When we have put the child to bed," said Gribier.

He threw the third spadeful; and then added as he dug the spade into the ground,—

"It will be very cold to-night, and the dead woman would halloo after us if we were to leave her here without a blanket."

At this moment the grave-digger stooped to fill his spade and his jacket-pocket gaped. Fauchelevent's wandering glance fell mechanically into his pocket and remained there. The sun was not yet hidden by the horizon, and there was still sufficient light to distinguish something white at the bottom of this gaping pocket.

All the brightness of which a Picard peasant's eye is capable glistened in Fauchelevent's,—an idea had struck him. Unnoticed by the grave-digger, he thrust his hand into his pocket from behind, and drew out the white thing at the bottom. The grave-digger threw the fourth spadeful into the grave: and as he hurried to raise a fifth, Fauchelevent looked at him with profound calmness, and said,—

"By the way, my novice, have you your card?"

The grave-digger stopped.

"What card?"

"The sun is just going to set."

"Very good, it can put on its nightcap."

"The cemetery gates will be shut."

"Well, and what then?"

"Have you your card?"

"Ah, my card!" the grave-digger said; and he felt in one pocket and then in another, he passed to his fobs and turned them inside out.

"No," he said; "I have not got my card, I must have forgotten it."

"Fifteen francs' fine," said Fauchelevent.

The grave-digger turned green, for the pallor of livid men is green.

"Oh, Lord, have mercy upon me!" he exclaimed; "fifteen francs' fine!"

"Three one hundred sous pieces," said Fauchelevent.

The grave-digger let his shovel fall, and Fauchelevent's turn had arrived.

"Come, conscript," said the old gardener, "no despair; you need not take advantage of the grave to commit suicide. Fifteen francs are fifteen francs, and besides, you can avoid paying them. I am old and you a new-comer, and I am up to all the tricks and dodges. I will give you a piece of friendly advice. One thing is clear,—the sun is setting; it is touching the dome, and the cemetery will shut in five minutes."

"That is true."—

"Five minutes will not be enough for you to fill up this grave, which is deuced deep, and reach the gates in time to get out before they close."

"Perfectly correct."

"In that case, fifteen francs' fine. But you have time,—where do you live?"

"Hardly a quarter of an hour's walk from here, at No. 87, Rue de Vaugirard."

"You have just time enough to get out, if you look sharp."

"So I have."

"Once outside the gates, you will gallop home and fetch your card; and when you return the porter will open the gate for you gratis. And you will bury your dead woman, whom I will stop from running away during your absence."

"I owe you my life, peasant."

"Be off at once," said Fauchelevent.

The grave-digger, who was beside himself with gratitude, shook his hand and ran off.

When he had disappeared behind a clump of trees, Fauchelevent listened till his footsteps died away, then bent over the grave, and said in a low voice, "Father Madeleine!"

There was no reply. Fauchelevent trembled; he tumbled all of a heap into the grave, threw himself on

the coffin lid, and cried,—

"Are you there?"

There was silence in the coffin, and Fauchelevent, who could not breathe for trembling, took out his cold-chisel and hammer and pried off the coffin lid. He could see Jean Valjean's face in the gloom, pale, and with the eyes closed. The gardener's hair stood on end; he got up, and then fell against the side of the grave. He gazed at Jean Valjean, who lay livid and motionless. Fauchelevent murmured in a voice faint as a breath, "He is dead!"

And drawing himself up, he folded his arms so violently that his clenched fists struck his shoulders, and cried, "That is the way in which I save him!"

Then the poor old man began sobbing and soliloquizing; for it is a mistake to suppose that there is no soliloquy in nature. Powerful agitations often talk aloud.

"It is Father Mestienne's fault. Why did that ass die? Had he any occasion to go off the hooks so unexpectedly? It is he who has killed M. Madeleine. Father Madeleine! he is in his coffin, and it is all over with him. Has such a thing as this any common-sense? Oh, my goodness, he is dead! Well, and what shall I do with his little girl? What will the green-grocer say? Is it possible that such a man can die in such a way? When I think how he got under my cart! Father Madeleine! Father Madeleine! By Heaven, he is suffocated, as I said he would be, and he would not believe me. Well I this is a pretty trick of my performance. The worthy man is dead, the best man among all God's good people; and his little one! Well, I sha'n't go back to the convent, but stop here. To have done such a thing as this! it is not worth while being two old men to be two old fools. But how did he manage to get into the convent? That was the beginning, and a man ought not to do things like that. Father Madeleine, Madeleine, Monsieur Madeleine, Monsieur le Maire! He does not hear me. Get out of it now as best you can."

And he tore his hair. A shrill grating sound was audible at a distance through the trees; it was the closing of the cemetery gate. Fauchelevent bent over Jean Valjean, and all at once bounded back to the further end of the grave,—Jean Valjean's eyes were open and staring at him.

If seeing a death is fearful, seeing a resurrection is nearly as frightful. Fauchelevent became like stone. He was pale, haggard, confounded by such excessive emotion, not knowing if he had to do with a dead man or a living man, and looking at Jean Valjean, who looked at him.

"I was falling asleep," said Valjean.

And he sat up. Fauchelevent fell on his knees.

"Holy Virgin! how you frightened me!"

Then he rose and cried,—"Thank you, Father Madeleine!"

Jean Valjean had only fainted, and the fresh air aroused him again. Joy is the reflux of terror; and Fauchelevent had almost as much difficulty in recovering himself as had Jean Valjean.

"Then you are not dead! Oh, what a clever fellow you are! I called to you so repeatedly that you came back. When I saw your eyes closed, I said, 'There, he is suffocated!' I should have gone stark mad, fit for a strait waistcoat, and they would have put me in Bicêtre. What would you have me do if you were dead; and your little girl? The green-grocer's wife would not have understood it at all. A child is left upon her hands, and the grandfather is dead! What a story! Oh, my good saints in Paradise, what a story! Well, you are alive, that's the great thing."

"I am cold," said Valjean.

This remark completely recalled Fauchelevent to the reality, which was urgent. These two men, who

had scarce recovered, had a troubled mind, they knew not why, which emanated from the gloomy place where they were.

"Let us get out of this at once," said Fauchelevent.

He felt in his pocket and produced a flask.

"But a dram first," he said.

The flask completed what the fresh air had begun. Valjean drank a mouthful of spirits and regained perfect possession of himself. He got out of the coffin, and helped Fauchelevent to nail on the lid again; three minutes later they were out of the grave.

Fauchelevent was calm, and took his time. The cemetery was closed, and there was no fear of Gribier returning. That "conscript" was at home, busily seeking his card, and prevented from finding it because it was in Fauchelevent's pocket. Without it he could not return to the cemetery. Fauchelevent took the spade, and Valjean the pick, and they together buried the empty coffin. When the grave was filled op, Fauchelevent said,—

"Come along; you carry the pick and I will carry the spade."

The night was falling.

Jean Valjean felt some difficulty in moving and walking; for in the coffin he had grown stiff, and become to some extent a corpse. The rigidity of death had seized upon him between these four planks, and he must, so to speak, become thawed.

"You are stiff," said Fauchelevent; "it is a pity that I am a cripple, or we would have a run."

"Nonsense," said Valjean, "half a dozen strides will make my legs all right again."

They went along the avenues by which the hearse had passed, and on reaching the gate, Fauchelevent threw the grave-digger's card into the box; the porter pulled the string, and they went out.

"How famously it has all gone," said Fauchelevent; "it was an excellent idea you had, Father Madeleine!"

They passed through the Vaugirard barrier in the simplest way in the world, for in the vicinity of a cemetery, a spade and a pick are two passports. The Rue de Vaugirard was deserted.

"Father Madeleine," Fauchelevent said, as they walked along, "you have better eyes than I have, so show me No. 87."

"Here it is," said Valjean.

"There is no one in the street," Fauchelevent continued; "give me the pick, and wait for me a couple of minutes."

Fauchelevent entered No. 87, went right to the top, guided by that instinct which ever leads the poor man to the garret, and rapped at a door in the darkness. A voice replied, "Come in." It was Gribier's voice.

Fauchelevent pushed the door. The grave-digger's room was like all these wretched abodes, an impoverished and crowded garret. A packing-case—possibly a coffin—occupied the place of a chest of drawers, a butter-jar was the water-cistern, a paillasse represented the bed, while the floor filled the place of chairs and table. In one corner, on an old ragged piece of carpet, were a thin woman and a heap of children. The whole of this poor interior displayed signs of a convulsion, and it seemed as if an earthquake "for one" had taken place there. The blankets were torn away, the rags scattered about, the jug was broken, the mother had been crying, and the children probably beaten,—there were evident

signs of an obstinate and savage search. It was plain that the grave-digger had been wildly looking for his card, and made everything in the garret responsible for it, from his jug to his wife. He looked desperate, but Fauchelevent was too eager to notice this sad side of his success; he went in, and said, "I have brought you your spade and pick."

Gribier looked at him in stupefaction.

"Is it you, peasant?"

"And to-morrow morning you will find your card with the porter of the cemetery."

And he placed the shovel and pick on the floor.

"What does this mean?" Gribier asked.

"It means that you let your card fall out of your pocket, that I found it on the ground when you had left, that I have buried the dead woman, filled up the grave, done your work, the porter will give you your card, and you will not pay fifteen francs. That's what it is, conscript!"

"Thanks, villager," said Gribier, quits dazzled, "next time I will pay for a bottle."

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**CHAPTER VIII.**

## A SUCCESSFUL EXAMINATION.

An hour later two men and a child presented themselves in the darkness of night at No. 69, Little Rue Picpus. The elder of the two men raised the knocker and rapped.

The two men had fetched Cosette from the green-grocer's, where Fauchelevent had left her on the previous evening. Cosette had spent the four-and-twenty hours in understanding nothing and silently trembling; she trembled so greatly that she had not cried, nor had she eaten nor slept. The worthy green-grocer had asked her a hundred questions; but had only obtained as answer a gloomy look, ever the same. Cosette did not breathe a syllable of what she had seen or heard during the last two days; for she guessed that she was passing through a crisis, and felt deeply that she must be "good." Who has not experienced the sovereign power of the words, "say nothing," uttered with a certain accent in the ear of a little startled being? Fear is dumb; besides, no one can keep a secret like a child.

The only thing was, that when she saw Jean Valjean again after these mournful four-and-twenty hours, she uttered such a cry of joy that any thoughtful person who had heard it would have divined in this cry an escape from a gulf.

Fauchelevent belonged to the convent, and knew all the pass-words; hence doors readily opened to him, and thus was solved the double and startling problem, "how to get in, and how to get out." The porter, who had his instructions, opened the little gate which communicated between the court-yard and the garden, in the wall of the former facing the gateway, which might still be seen from the street twenty years ago. The porter showed them all three through this gate, and thence they reached the inner private parlor where Fauchelevent had received the orders of the prioress on the previous day.

The prioress was waiting for them, rosary in hand, and a vocal mother, with her veil down, was standing near her. A discreet candle lit up, or to speak more correctly, pretended to light up the parlor. The prioress took a thorough look at Jean Valjean, for no eye examines like a drooping one. Then she questioned him.

"Are you the brother?"

"Yes, Reverend Mother," Fauchelevent answered.

"What is your name?"

Fauchelevent answered: "Ultime Fauchelevent."

He had really had a brother of that name, who was dead.

"Where do you come from?"

Fauchelevent.—"From Picquigny near Amiens."

"What is your age?"

F.—"Fifty."

"What is your trade?"

F.—"Gardener."

"Are you a good Christian?"

F.—"All the members of our family are so."

"Is this little girl yours?"

F.—"Yes, Reverend Mother."

"Are you her father?"

F.—"Her grandfather."

The vocal mother said to the prioress in a whisper, "He answers well."

Jean Valjean had not said a word. The prioress looked attentively at Cosette, and whispered to the vocal mother, "She will be ugly."

The two mothers consulted for a few minutes in a very low voice in a corner of the parlor, and then the prioress turned and said,—

"Father Fauvent, you will get another knee-cap and bell, for we shall require two in future."

On the morrow two bells were really heard in the garden, and the nuns could not resist the temptation of raising a corner of their veils. They could see under the shade of the trees two men digging side by side, Fauvent and another. It was an enormous event; and silence was so far broken that they whispered, "It is an assistant gardener," while the vocal mothers added, "It is a brother of Father Fauvent's."

Jean Valjean was in fact permanently installed; he had the leathern knee-cap and bell, and was henceforth official. He called himself Ultime Fauchelevent. The most powerful determining cause of his admission was the remark of the prioress with reference to Cosette,—"She will be ugly." The prioress, once she had prognosticated this, felt an affection for Cosette, and gave her a place in the boarding-school. This is very logical after all; for although there may be no looking-glasses in a convent, women are conscious of their face. Now, girls who feel themselves pretty have a disinclination to take the veil; and as profession is generally in an inverse ratio to the beauty, more is hoped from ugly than from pretty girls.

All this adventure aggrandized Fauchelevent, for he had a three-fold success,—with Jean Valjean, whom he saved and sheltered; with Gribier, who said to himself, "He saved me fifteen francs;" and with the convent, which, thanks to him, while keeping the coffin of Mother Crucifixion under the altar, eluded Cæsar and sanctified God. There was a coffin with a body at the Little Picpus, and a coffin

without a body in the Vaugirard cemetery; public order was doubtless deeply affected by this, but did not perceive the fact. As for the convent, its gratitude to Fauchelevent was great; he became the best of servants, and most precious of gardeners. On the archbishop's very next visit, the prioress told the whole affair to the Grandeur, partly in confusion, and partly in a boastful spirit. The archbishop, on leaving the convent, spoke about it applaudingly and in a whisper to M. de Latil, Confessor to Monseigneur, and afterwards Archbishop of Reims and Cardinal. The admiration felt for Fauchelevent travelled all the way to Rome; and we have seen a letter addressed by the then reigning Pope, Leo XII., to one of his relatives, Monsignore, in the Paris Nunciature, and called, like himself, Della Genga, in which were the following lines,—"It appears that there is at a convent in Paris an excellent gardener, who is a holy man, of the name of Fauvent." Nothing of all this triumph reached Fauchelevent in his hut; he went on grafting, hoeing, and covering his melon beds, quite unaware of his excellence and sanctity. He no more suspected his glory than does a Durham or Surrey steer whose portrait is published in the Illustrated London News, with the inscription "The ox that gained the Short-horn prize."

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**CHAPTER IX.**

## IN THE CONVENT.

Cosette in the convent continued to be silent. She naturally thought herself Valjean's daughter, but as she knew nothing, she could say nothing, and in any case would have said nothing, as we have remarked; for nothing trains children to silence like misfortune. Cosette had suffered so greatly that she feared everything, even to speak, even to breathe, for a word had so often brought down an avalanche upon her! She had scarce begun to grow reassured since she had belonged to Jean Valjean, but she grew very soon accustomed to the convent. The only thing she regretted was Catherine, but she did not dare say so. One day, however, she remarked to Valjean, "If I had known, I would have brought her with me."

Cosette, on becoming a boarder at the convent, was obliged to assume the garb of the pupils of the house. Jean Valjean begged, and obtained the old clothes she left off; the same mourning clothes he made her put on when he removed her from the Thénardiers', and they were not much worn. Jean Valjean placed these clothes and her shoes and stockings, with a quantity of camphor and other odorous drugs with which convents abound, in a small valise which he managed to procure. He placed this valise on a chair by his bed-side, and always had the key about him.

"Father," Cosette asked him one day, "what is that box which smells so nice?"

Father Fauchelevent, in addition to the glory we have described and of which he was ignorant, was rewarded for his good deed; in the first place, he was happy, and, in the second place, he had much less to do, owing to the division of labor. Lastly, as he was very fond of snuff, he had from M. Madeleine's presence the advantage that he took thrice as much as before, and in a far more voluptuous manner, because M. Madeleine paid for it.

The nuns did not adopt the name of Ultime; they called Jean Valjean "the other Fauvent." Had these holy women had any of Javert's temper about them, they must have noticed that when anything had to be procured from outside for the garden it was always the elder Fauvent, the cripple, who went out, and never the other; but either because eyes constantly fixed on God know not how to spy, or because they preferred to watch one another, they paid no attention to the fact. However, Jean Valjean did quite right in keeping shy and not stirring, for Javert watched the quarter for a whole month.

This convent was to Jean Valjean like an island surrounded by gulfs, and these four walls were henceforth the world for him; he saw enough of the sky there to be secure, and enough of Cosette to be happy. He lived with old Fauchelevent in the hovel at the end of the garden. This lath and plaster tenement, which still existed in 1825, was composed of three rooms which had only the bare walls. The largest room was surrendered by force, for Jean Valjean resisted in vain, by Father Fauchelevent to M. Madeleine. The wall of this room had for ornament, in addition to the two nails for hanging up the knee-cap and the basket, a Royalist note for ten livres, date '93, fastened above the mantel-piece. This Vendéan assignat had been nailed to the wall by the previous gardener, an ex-chouan, who died in the convent, and was succeeded by Fauchelevent.

Jean Valjean worked daily in the garden, and was very useful. As he had once been a pruner, he was glad to become a gardener. It will be remembered that he had a great number of receipts and secrets which he turned to a profit. Nearly all the trees in the orchard were wild stocks; but he grafted them, and made them produce excellent fruit.

Cosette had permission to spend an hour daily with him; and as the sisters were sad and he was kind, the child compared them and adored him. At the fixed hour she ran to the cottage, and when she entered it filled it with paradise. Jean Valjean expanded, and felt his own happiness grow with the happiness which he caused Cosette. The joy which we inspire has this charming thing about it, that far from being weakened, like ordinary reflections, it returns to us more radiant than before. Ia her hours of recreation Jean Valjean watched her from a distance, playing and running, and distinguished her laugh from that of the others, for Cosette now laughed. Her face had also changed to a certain extent; for laughter is the sun which drives winter from the human face. When Cosette returned to her studies Jean Valjean watched the windows of her school-room, and at night would rise to gaze at the windows of her dormitory.

God has His inscrutable designs; and the convent contributed, like Cosette, to maintain and complete the Bishop's work in Jean Valjean. It is certain that one of the sides of virtue leads to pride, and there is a bridge built there by the demon. Jean Valjean was perhaps unconsciously very near this bridge when Providence threw him into the convent of the Little Picpus. So long as he had only compared himself with the Bishop, he had found himself unworthy, and had been humble; but for some time past he had been beginning to compare himself with men, and pride was growing up. Who knows whether he might not have ended by gently returning to hatred?

The convent checked him on this slope; it was the second place of captivity which he had seen. In his youth, in what had been to him the commencement of life, and again very recently, he had seen another, a frightful spot, a terrible spot, whose severities had ever appeared to him to be the iniquity of justice and the crime of the law. At the present day, after the hulks he saw the convent, and reflecting that he had been a member of the galleys and was now, so to speak, a spectator of the convent, he anxiously confronted them in his thoughts.

At times he leaned on his spade, and fell into a profound reverie. He recalled his old comrades; how wretched they were! They rose at dawn and worked till night; they were scarce granted time to sleep; they lay down on camp-beds and were only allowed mattresses two inches thick; their rooms were only warmed in the severest months of the year; they were dressed in hideous red jackets; they were allowed, as an indulgence, canvas trousers in the great heat, and a woollen bandage on their back in the severe cold; they only ate meat and drank wine when they worked on fatigue parties; they lived without names, solely designated by numbers, lowering their eyes, lowering their voice, with shorn hair, under the stick, and in disgrace.

Then his thoughts turned to the beings whom he had before him. These beings also lived with cropped hair, downcast eyes, and a low voice, not in disgrace, but amid the mockery of the world; and if their

backs were not bruised by a stick, their shoulders were lacerated by the discipline. Their names had vanished too among human beings, and they only existed under severe appellations. They never ate meat nor drank wine; they often remained without food till night; they were dressed, not in a red jacket, but in a black woollen pall, heavy in summer and light in winter, and were unable to reduce it or add to it at all; and they wore for six months in the year serge chemises, which caused them a fever. They slept not in rooms warmed merely in the severe cold, but in cells in which fires were never kindled; they slept not on mattresses two inches thick, but on straw; lastly, they were not even allowed to sleep,—every night, after a day of labor, they were compelled to get up, dress themselves, and go and pray in a freezing dark chapel, with their knees upon the stones. On certain days, moreover, each of these beings was obliged, in turn, to remain for twelve hours prostrate on the ground, with her arms extended like a cross.

The former were men; the latter were women. What had the men done? They had robbed, violated, plundered, killed, assassinated; they were bandits, forgers, poisoners, incendiaries, murderers, and parricides. What had these women done? Nothing. On one side, brigandage and fraud, cozening, violence, lubricity, homicide, every sort of sacrilege, every variety of crime; on the other, only one thing,—innocence, perfect innocence, which was still attached to the earth by virtue, and already attached to heaven by holiness. On one side, confessions of crimes made in a whisper; on the other, confessions of faults made aloud. And what crimes, and what faults! On one side miasmas, on the other an ineffable perfume; on one side a moral pestilence, closely guarded, held down by cannon, and slowly devouring its plague-sufferers; on the other, a chaste kindling of all the souls on the same hearth. There darkness, here shadow, but a shadow full of light, and light full of radiance.

They were two places of slavery; but in the former there was a possible deliverance, a constantly visible legal limit, and besides, escape; in the second, perpetuity, the only hope being that gleam of liberty which men call death, upon the extreme horizon. In the former, people were only held by chains, in the latter, by faith. What emerged from the former? An immense curse, gnashing of teeth, hatred, desperate wickedness, a cry of rage against human society, and sarcasms hurled at heaven. What issued from the latter? Blessings, love. And in these two places, which were so similar and yet so varying, these two so different species of beings accomplished the same work of expiation.

Jean Valjean perfectly understood the expiation of the former, as personal; but he did not understand the expiation of the others, of these creatures who were without reproach or stain, and he asked himself with trembling: Expiation for what? A voice answered in his conscience: The most divine proof of human generosity, expiation for others.

Here we lay aside any and every personal theory; we are only the narrator, we are standing in Jean Valjean's place, and transferring his impressions. He had before his eyes the sublime summit of abnegation, the highest pinnacle of possible virtue, that innocence which forgives men their faults, and expiates them in their place; servitude endured, torture accepted, punishment demanded by souls which have not sinned, that they may absolve souls which have erred; the love of humanity swallowed up in the love of God, but remaining distinct and suppliant in it; gentle, feeble beings who have the wretchedness of those who are punished and the smile of those who are rewarded.

And he remembered that he had dared to complain. He often rose in the middle of the night to listen to the grateful song of these innocent creatures, weighed down by severity; and his blood ran cold when he thought that men who were justly chastised only raised their voices to heaven to blaspheme, and that he, wretch as he was, had threatened God. It was a striking thing, which made him reflect deeply, and imagine it a warning of Providence, that all the things he had done to escape from the other place of expiation,—such as climbing walls, difficulties, dangerous adventures, and risks of death,—he had gone through again, in entering the present place. Was it a symbol of his destiny?

This house was a prison too, and bore a mournful likeness to the other abode from which he had fled, and yet he had never had such an idea here. He saw again the bars, bolts, and iron bars, to guard whom? Angels. The lofty walls which he had seen around tigers he saw again around lambs.

It was a place of expiation, and not of punishment, and yet it was even more austere, gloomy, and pitiless than the other. These virgins were more harshly bowed than the galley slaves. A rough cold wind, the wind which had chilled his youth, blew through the barred and padlocked cage of the vultures; but a sharper and more painful wind passed through the cotes of these doves.

Why was this?

When he thought of these things, all within him bowed down before this mystery of sublimity. In these meditations pride vanished: he felt himself insignificant, and wept many times: all that had entered his life during the past six months, led him back to the Bishop's holy injunctions,—Cosette by love, the convent by humility.

At times, in those hours of the night when the garden was deserted, he might have been seen kneeling in front of that window through which he had gazed on the night of his arrival, turned toward the spot where he knew that the sister who was making reparation was prostrated in prayer. He prayed thus, kneeling before this sister,—it seemed as if he dared not kneel directly to God.

All that surrounded him—this peaceful garden, these fragrant flowers, these children uttering merry cries, these grave and simple women, these silent cloisters;—slowly penetrated him and gradually his soul was composed of silence like this cloister, of perfume like these flowers, of peace like this garden, of simplicity like these women, and of joy like these children. And then he thought how two houses of God had in turn received him at the two critical moments of his life,—the first when all doors were closed and human society repulsed him, the second at the moment when human society was beginning to hunt him down again, and the hulks were yawning for him; and that, had it not been for the former, he would have fallen back into crime; and but for the latter, into punishment. All his heart melted into gratitude, and he loved more and more.

Several years passed thus, and Cosette grew.

**END OF PART SECOND.**