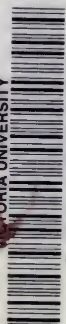
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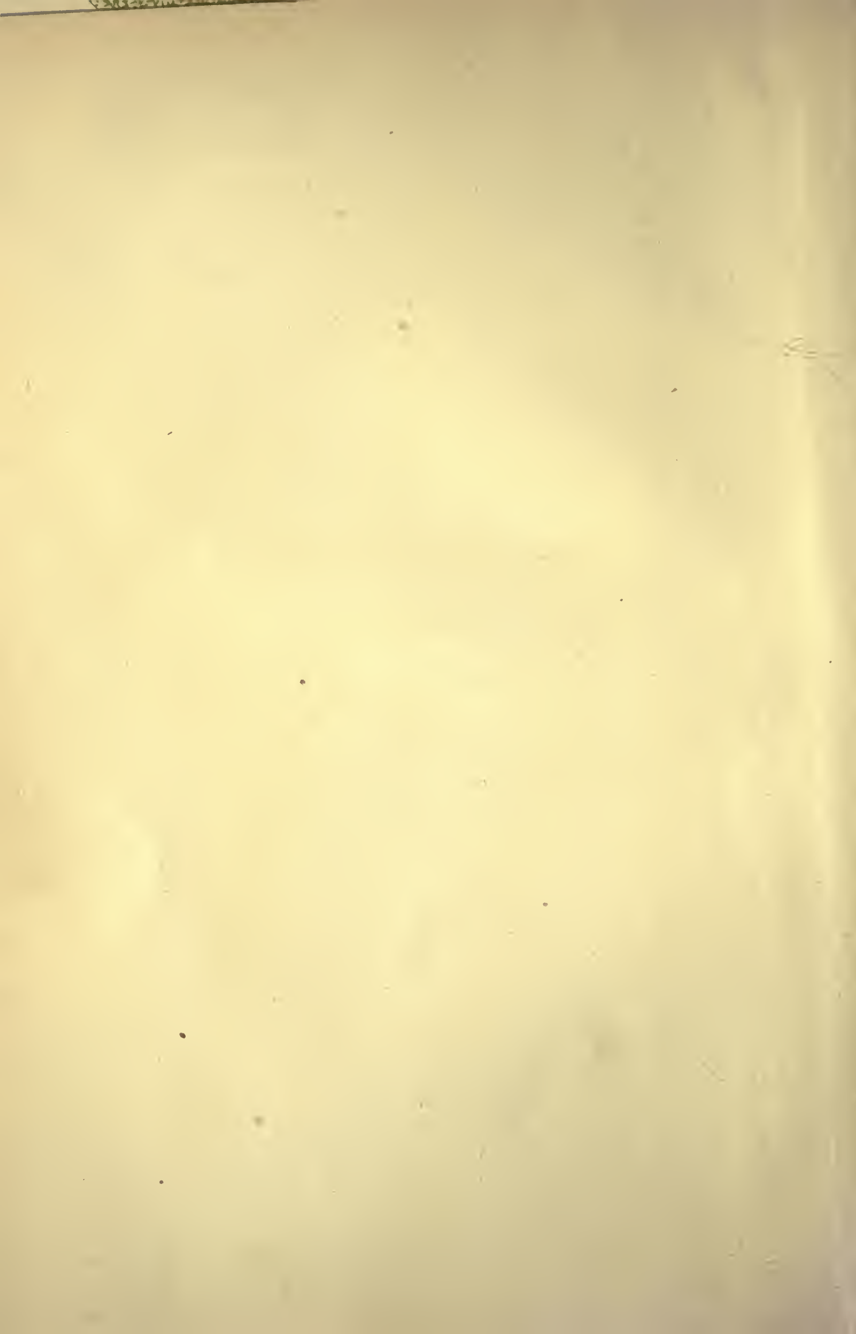

LES MISERABLES

JEAN VALJEAN

VOL. V

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Edition De Luxe

LES MISÉRABLES

BY

VICTOR HUGO

Volume 5

JEAN VALJEAN

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JEAN VALJEAN

BOOK I

WAR WITHIN FOUR WALLS

CHAPTER I

THE CHARYBDIS OF THE FAUBOURG ST. ANTOINE AND THE SCYLLA OF THE FAUBOURG DU TEMPLE

THE two most memorable barricades which the observer of social diseases can mention do not belong to the period in which the action of this book is laid. These two barricades, both symbols, under different aspects, of a terrible situation, rose from the earth during the fatal insurrection of June, 1848,— the greatest street-war known to history.

It sometimes happens that the rabble, that great and desperate mass, even contrary to principles, even contrary to liberty, equality, and fraternity, even contrary to the universal vote, to the government of all by all, protests, from the depths of its agony, its discouragement, its deprivations, its fevers, its distresses, its miasmas, its ignorance, and its darkness, and the populace offers battle to the people.

Beggars attack the common right; ochlocracy rises in revolt against demos.

I

Those are mournful days; for there is always a certain amount of right even in this mania, there is suicide in this duel, and those words, intended to be insults,— such as beggars, rabble, ochlocracy, the populace,— prove alas! rather the fault of those who reign than the fault of those who suffer; rather the fault of the privileged than the fault of the disinherited.

For our own part, we never pronounce those words without pain and without respect; for when philosophy fathoms the facts to which they correspond, it often finds much grandeur by the side of misery. Athens was an ochlocracy; beggars made Holland; the populace more than once saved Rome; and the rabble followed Jesus Christ. There is no thinker who has not at times contemplated the magnificence below.

Saint Jerome was doubtless thinking of this rabble, of all these poor people, all these vagabonds, and all the wretches whence the apostles and martyrs sprang, when he uttered the mysterious words: *Fæ urbis, lex orbis.*

The exasperations of this mob, which suffers and which bleeds; its mistaken violence directed against the principles which are its life; its assaults upon the right,— are popular revolutionary measures, and must be repressed. The honest man devotes himself to the work, and out of his very love for this mob, combats it. But how excusable he finds it, while he resists it! How he venerates it, even while he opposes it! This is one of those rare moments, when a man, while doing his duty, feels something that disconcerts him and almost dissuades him from going further. He persists, for he must; but conscience, though satisfied, is sad, and the accomplishment of duty is complicated by a heavy heart.

June, 1848, was, let us hasten to say, an exceptional fact, and almost impossible to classify in the philosophy of history. All the words we have just uttered must be laid aside when we come to deal with this extraordinary riot, in which we are conscious of the holy anxiety of labour claiming its rights. It had to be combated; this was a duty, for it attacked the

republic. But in reality, what was June, 1848? A revolt of the people against itself.

Where the subject is not lost sight of, there is no digression; hence we may be permitted to concentrate the reader's attention momentarily upon the two absolutely unique barricades to which we have alluded, and which characterized that insurrection.

The one blocked the entrance to the Faubourg St. Antoine; the other defended the approach to the Faubourg du Temple. Those before whom these two frightful masterpieces of civil war were raised in the bright blue sky of June will never forget them.

The St. Antoine barricade was monstrous; it was three stories high and seven hundred feet in width. It barred from one corner to the other the vast mouth of the Faubourg, that is to say, three streets; ravined, slashed, serrated, cut up, surmounted by an immense jagged line, supported by heaps which were themselves bastions, pushing out capes here and there, and powerfully reinforced by the two great promontories of the houses of the Faubourg, it rose like a Cyclopean embankment at the end of the fearful square which had seen July 14. There were nineteen barricades erected in the streets behind this mother barricade. Merely by looking at it, you felt the immense agonizing suffering in the faubourg which had reached that extreme point where misery desires to become a catastrophe. Of what was this barricade made? Of the ruins of three six-story houses demolished expressly, say some. Of the prodigy of all anger, say others. It possessed the lamentable aspect of all the structures of hatred,—ruin. You might ask: "Who built this?" and you might also ask, "Who destroyed this?" It was the improvisation of the ebullition. Here! Take that door! that grating! that awning! that chimney! that broken stove! that cracked stewpan! Give us anything! throw everything in! push, roll, pick, dismantle, overthrow and pull down everything. It was a collaboration of paving-stones, beams, iron bars, planks, broken windows, scraps, unseated chairs, cabbage-stalks, rags,

tatters, and curses. It was great and it was little. It was the abyss parodied in the public square by formless chaos. It was the mass side by side with the atom,— a bit of crumbling wall and a broken pipkin; a menacing fraternization of all fragments, into which Sisyphus had cast his rock and Job his potsherd. Altogether, it was terrible. It was the acropolis of the barefooted. Overturned carts studded the slope; an immense wain spread out across it, its axletree pointing to the sky, and looked like a scar on that tumultuous façade; an omnibus, gayly hoisted by main strength to the very top of the pile, as if the architects of this savage edifice had wished to add mockery to the horror, offered its bare pole to the horses of the air. This gigantic mound, the alluvium of the riot, represented to the mind an Ossa upon Pelion of all revolutions,—'93 upon '89, the 9th Thermidor upon the 10th August, the 18th Brumaire upon January 21, Vendemiaire upon Prairial, 1848 upon 1830. The place was worth the trouble, and this barricade was worthy to appear upon the very spot whence the Bastille had disappeared. If the ocean made dykes, it would build them in this way. The fury of the flood was stamped on this shapeless mass. What flood? The people. You fancied that you saw riot petrified. You heard the huge dark bees of violent progress humming about this barricade as if they had their hive there. Was it a thicket? Was it a Bacchanalian feast? Was it a fortress? Vertigo seemed to have built it with the flapping of its wings. There was somewhat of the sewer in that redoubt, and something Olympian in that confusion. You saw there pell-mell, full of desperation, gables of roofs, pieces of garret walls with their flowered paper, window-frames with all their panes, planted in the mass awaiting the cannon, pulled down mantelpieces, chests of drawers, tablets, benches, a howling topsy-turvy, and those thousand wretched things cast away even by the beggar, which contain at once fury and nothingness. It may be said that it was the rags of a people,— rags of wood, of iron, of bronze, of stone; that the Faubourg St. Antoine had swept them out at its door with a gigantic flour-

ish of the broom, making a barricade of its misery. Logs resembling executioners' blocks, broken chains, anvil frames of the shape of gallows, horizontal wheels emerging from the rubbish-heap produced on this edifice of anarchy a sombre image of the tortures suffered by the people of old. The St. Antoine barricade made a weapon of everything; all that civil war can throw at the head of society came from it; it was not a fight, but a paroxysm; the muskets which defended this redoubt, among which were several blunderbusses, discharged bits of crockery, bones, coat-buttons, and even the casters of night-stands,— dangerous missiles, being made of brass. This barricade was furious; it hurled an indescribable clamour into the clouds. At certain moments, when challenging the army, it was covered with a crowd and a tempest; a mob of flaming heads crowned it; it swarmed like an ant-hill; it had a prickly crest of guns, sabres, sticks, axes, pikes, and bayonets; a mighty red flag fluttered upon it in the breeze; cries of command, songs of attack, the rolling of the drum, the sobs of women, and the sardonic laughter of men dying of starvation were heard there. It was immeasurable and living; and the crackling of thunder issued from it as from the back of an electric animal. The spirit of revolution covered with its cloud this summit, where that voice of the people which resembles the voice of God, rumbled; a strange majesty arose from this Titanic basketful of rubbish. It was a dung-heap, and it was Sinai.

As we said above, it attacked in the name of the revolution, what? The revolution. It — this barricade, an accident, disorder, misunderstanding, the unknown — had facing it the Constituent Assembly, the sovereignty of the people, universal suffrage, the nation, the republic; and it was the "Carmagnole" defying the "Marseillaise."

It was a mad but heroic challenge, for this old Faubourg is a hero.

The Faubourg and its redoubt supported each other. The Faubourg formed the epaulement of the redoubt, and the redoubt rested upon the Faubourg. The vast barricade was

like a cliff against which the strategy of generals who had fought in Africa was broken. Its caverns, its excrescences, its warts, its humps, grimaced, if we may employ the expression, and grinned behind the smoke. The grape-shot vanished in the shapeless heap; shells buried themselves in it, were swallowed up, engulfed; cannon-balls only succeeded in making holes in it (what use is it to bombard chaos?); and regiments, accustomed to the sternest visions of war, gazed with anxious eye at this sort of redoubt,— a wild beast in its boar-like bristling, and a mountain in its enormity.

A quarter of a league farther on, at the corner of the Rue du Temple, which opens into the boulevard near the Château d'Eau, if you boldly advanced your head beyond the point formed by the front of Dallemagne's shop, you could see in the distance, across the canal, and at the highest point of the hilly street leading to Belleville, a strange wall rising to the second-floor of the houses,— a sort of connecting link between the houses on the right and those on the left, as if the street had folded back its highest wall in order to close itself up abruptly. This wall was built of paving-stones. It was straight, correct, cold, perpendicular, levelled with the plumb-line and the square. Of course, there was no cement; but, as in some Roman walls, this in no way disturbed its rigid architecture.

From its height, its thickness could be guessed. The entablature was mathematically parallel with the base. At regular distances almost invisible loopholes, resembling black threads, could be distinguished in the gray wall, separated from each other by equal intervals. The street was deserted as far as the eye could reach. All the windows and doors were closed. In the background rose this barrier, which converted the street into a blind alley; it was a motionless and tranquil wall; — no one was seen, nothing was heard; not a cry, nor a sound, nor a breath. It was a sepulchre.

The dazzling June sun inundated this terrible thing with light.

It was the barricade of the Faubourg du Temple.

So soon as you reached the ground and perceived it, it was impossible, even for the boldest, not to become thoughtful in the presence of this mysterious apparition. It was adjusted, clamped, imbricated, rectilinear, symmetrical, and funereal. Science and darkness were both there. You felt that the chief of this barricade was a geometrician or a spectre. As you gazed, you spoke in a whisper.

From time to time, if any one, private, officer, or representative of the people, ventured to cross the solitary road, a low, shrill whistle was heard, and the passer-by fell wounded or dead, or, if he escaped, a bullet, perhaps a shell, buried itself in some shutter, in the crevice between two blocks of stone, or in the stucco of some wall. The men on the barricade had made two small cannon out of two bits of gas-pipe, stopped up at one end with tow and clay. There was no useless expenditure of gunpowder. Nearly every shot told. There were a few corpses here and there, and pools of blood on the pavement. I remember a white butterfly that fluttered up and down the street. Summer does not abdicate.

All the gate-ways in the vicinity were crowded with wounded. You felt in this street that you were covered by some one whom you could not see, and you understood that the whole street was under the marksman's aim.

The soldiers of the attacking column, massed behind the sort of sloping ridge which the canal-bridge forms at the entrance to the Faubourg du Temple, gravely and thoughtfully watched this mournful redoubt, this immobility, this impassiveness, from which death issued. Some crawled on their stomachs to the top of the arch of the bridge, taking care not to let their shakos pass beyond it. Brave Colonel Monteynard admired this barricade with a shudder. "How it is built!" he said to a Representative. "Not a single paving-stone projects beyond the other. It is like a dainty bit of china." At this moment a bullet smashed the cross on his breast, and he fell.

"Cowards!" shouted the troops. "Why do they not show themselves? They dare not! They hide!" The barricade

of the Faubourg du Temple, defended by eighty men, attacked by ten thousand, held out for three days. On the fourth day the troops acted as at Zaatcha and Constantine,—they broke through houses, passed along roofs, and the barricade was taken. Not one of the eighty cowards dreamed of flight; all were killed except Barthélemy, their chief, of whom we shall speak presently.

The barricade of St. Antoine was the tumult of the thunder; the barricade of the Temple was the silence. There was between the two barricades the same difference as exists between the formidable and the sinister. The one seemed a maw, the other a mask.

Admitting that the gigantic and dark insurrection of June was composed of a fury and an enigma, the dragon was seen in the first barricade, and the sphinx behind the second.

These two fortresses were built by two men, Cournet and Barthélemy. Cournet made the St. Antoine barricade; Barthélemy the Temple barricade. Each was the image of the man who built it. Cournet was a man of tall stature; he had broad shoulders, a red face, a smashing fist, a brave heart, a loyal soul, a sincere and terrible eye. He was intrepid, energetic, irascible, and stormy; the most cordial of men, and the most terrible of combatants. War, contest, strife, were the very air he breathed, and put him in a good humour. He had been an officer in the navy, and from his gestures and his voice you divined that he issued from the ocean and came from the tempest; he continued the hurricane in battle. Omitting the genius, there was in Cournet something of Danton, as, omitting the divinity, there was in Danton something of Hercules.

Barthélemy, thin, weak, pale, and taciturn, was a sort of tragic street-arab, who, having had his ears boxed by a policeman, watched for him, waited for him, and killed him, and at the age of seventeen was sent to the galleys. He came out and built this barricade.

At a later date, when both were exiles in London, Barthélemy killed Cournet. It was a melancholy duel. Some time

after that, Barthélemy, caught in the cog-wheels of one of those mysterious adventures in which passion is mingled,—catastrophes in which French justice sees extenuating circumstances, and English justice sees only death,—was hanged. The gloomy social edifice is so built that, owing to material destitution and moral darkness, this wretched being, who had an intellect, certainly firm and possibly great, began with the galleys in France and ended with the gibbet in England. Barthélemy, on these occasions, hoisted only one flag,—the black flag.

CHAPTER II

WHAT CAN ONE DO IN THE ABYSS, BUT TALK?

SIXTEEN years count in the subterranean education of revolt, and June, 1848, knew a great deal more than June, 1832. Hence the barricade in the Rue de la Chanvrerie was only a sketch and an embryo when compared with the two colossal barricades which we have just described; but for the period, it was formidable.

The insurgents, under the eye of Enjolras, for Marius no longer looked after anything, had turned the night to good account. The barricade had not only been repaired, but increased. It had been raised two feet. Iron bars planted in the paving-stones resembled lances in rest. All sorts of rubbish, brought and added from all sides, complicated the external confusion. The redoubt had been cleverly converted into a wall inside and a thicket outside.

The staircase of paving-stones, which allowed the top of the barricade to be reached like the wall of a citadel, was restored. The barricade was put in order, the tap-room was cleared out, the kitchen converted into an infirmary, the wounds were dressed, the powder scattered about the tables and floor was collected, bullets were cast, cartridges manufactured, lint

scraped, the fallen arms re-distributed, the interior of the redoubt cleaned, the rubbish swept up, the corpses removed. The dead were laid in a heap, in Mondétour Lane, of which the insurgents were still masters. The pavement remained for a long time red at that spot. Among the dead were four suburban National Guards. Enjolras ordered their uniforms to be laid on one side.

Enjolras had advised two hours' sleep. Advice from him was an order. Still, only three or four took advantage of it.

Feuilly employed these two hours in engraving this inscription on the wall, facing the wine-shop: —

"LONG LIVE THE NATIONS!"

These four words, carved in the stone with a nail, could still be read on this wall in 1848.

The three women took advantage of the respite of night to disappear entirely, which allowed the insurgents to breathe more freely. They contrived to find refuge in some neighbouring house.

Most of the wounded could and would still fight. There were, on a pile of mattresses and trusses of straw laid in the kitchen converted into an infirmary, five men seriously wounded, of whom two were Municipal Guards. The wounds of the latter were dressed first.

No one remained in the ground-floor room, save Mabœuf under his black cerecloth, and Javert fastened to the post.

"This is the charnel-house," said Enjolras.

In the interior of this room, which was dimly lighted by a solitary candle at the far end, the mortuary table being behind the post like a horizontal bar, a sort of large vague cross resulted from Javert standing and Mabœuf lying down.

Although the pole of the omnibus was mutilated by the bullets, sufficient remained for a flag to be attached to it. Enjolras, who possessed that quality of a chief which consists in always doing what he said, fastened to it the bullet-pierced and blood-stained coat of the murdered old man.

No meal was possible, for there was neither bread nor meat. The fifty men, during the sixteen hours they had stood at the barricade, speedily exhausted the scanty provisions of the inn. At a given moment, every barricade that holds out inevitably becomes the raft of the Medusa. The combatants must resign themselves to hunger. They had reached the early hours of that Spartan day, June 6, when, at the barricade of St. Merry, Joan, surrounded by insurgents who cried for bread, answered: "Why? It is three o'clock; at four we shall be dead."

As they could no longer eat, Enjolras prohibited drinking. He put the wine under an interdict, and served out the spirits in rations.

Some fifteen full bottles, hermetically sealed, were found in the cellar. Enjolras and Combeferre examined them. Combeferre on coming up again said: "It belongs to Father Hucheloup's stock at the time when he was a grocer." "It must be real wine," observed Bossuet. "It is lucky that Grantaire is asleep, for if he were up we should have difficulty in saving those bottles." Enjolras, in spite of the murmurs, put his veto on the fifteen bottles; and in order that no one might touch them, and that they should be to some extent sacred, he had them placed under the table on which Father Mabœuf lay.

About two o'clock in the morning they counted their strength. There were still thirty-seven of them. Day was beginning to appear. The torch, which had been returned to its stone socket, was extinguished. The interior of the barricade, that species of small yard taken from the street, was bathed in shadows, and resembled, through the vague twilight horror, the deck of a dismasted ship. The combatants moved about like black forms. Above this frightful nest of gloom, the various stories of the silent houses stood out lividly; above them again the chimney-pots were assuming a roseate hue. The sky had that charming, undecided tint which may be white and may be blue. Birds flew about in it with twitterings of joy. The tall house which formed the back of the

barricade faced the east, and had a rosy reflection on its roof. At the third-floor window, the morning breeze fluttered the gray hair on the head of the dead man.

"I am delighted that the torch is put out," said Courfeyrac to Feuilly. "That flame flickering in the breeze annoyed me. It seemed to be frightened. The light of torches resembles the wisdom of cowards: it gives a bad light because it trembles."

Dawn arouses minds as well as birds; all were talking. Joly, seeing a cat stalking along a gutter, extracted this philosophy from the fact.

"What is the cat?" he exclaimed. "It is a corrective. The good God, having made a mouse, said to himself: 'Hullo! I have done a foolish thing.' And so he made the cat. The cat is the erratum of the mouse. The mouse plus the cat is the revised and corrected proof of creation."

Combeferre, surrounded by students and workmen, was talking of the dead, of Jean Prouvaire, of Bahorel, of Mabœuf, and even of the Cabbage-head, and the stern sorrow of Enjolras. He said: —

"Harmodius and Aristogiton, Brutus, Chereas, Stephanus, Cromwell, Charlotte Corday, and Sand, all had their moment of agony after the blow was struck. Our heart is so tremulous, and human life is such a mystery, that even in the case of a civic murder, even in a murder which sets men free, if there be such a thing, the remorse at having struck down an individual, exceeds the joy of having benefited the human race."

And, such are the meanderings of conversation, a moment later, by a transition caused by Jean Prouvaire's verses, Combeferre was comparing the translators of the Georgics — Raux with Cournand, Cournand with Delille,— and pointing out the few passages translated by Malfilâtre, especially the marvels which occurred at the death of Cæsar; and at that word, *Cæsar*, the conversation reverted to Brutus.

"Cæsar," said Combeferre, "fell justly. Cicero was severe to Cæsar, and he was in the right. Such severity is not

a diatribe. When Zoilus insults Homer, when Mævius insults Virgil, when Visè insults Molière, when Pope insults Shakespeare, when Fréon insults Voltaire, an old law of envy and hatred is carried out; for genius attracts insult, and great men are all barked at more or less. But Zoilus and Cicero are different. Cicero is an arbiter with thought, just as Brutus is an arbiter with the sword. For my part, I blame that last justice, the sword; but antiquity accepted it. Cæsar, the violator of the Rubicon, conferring, as if they came from him, dignities that proceeded from the people, and not rising on the entrance of the senate, acted, as Eutropius said, like a king, and almost like a tyrant,— *regia ac pæne tyrannica.* He was a great man; so much the worse or so much the better; the lesson is the more elevated. His three-and-twenty wounds affect me less than the spitting on the brow of Christ. Cæsar is stabbed by the senators; Christ is buffeted by soldiers. The god is seen in the greater amount of outrage."

Bossuet, overlooking the speakers from the top of a pile of paving-stones, exclaimed, gun in hand: —

"Oh, Cydathenæum! oh, Myrrhinus! oh, Probalynthus! oh, graces of Æantides! Oh, who will give me the power to pronounce the verses of Homer like a Greek of Laurium or Edapteon?"

CHAPTER III

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS

ENJOLRAS had gone out to reconnoitre. He slipped out by Mondétour Lane keeping in the shadow of the houses.

The insurgents, we must state, were full of hope. The way in which they had repulsed the night attack almost made them disdain in advance the attack at daybreak. They waited for it, and smiled at it. They no more doubted their

success than their cause. Moreover, help was evidently about to reach them; they reckoned on it. With that facility of triumphant prophecy which is a part of the strength of the fighting Frenchman, they divided the day into three distinct phases,— at six in the morning, a regiment which had been "worked upon," would turn; at midday, insurrection all over Paris; at sunset, the revolution.

They heard the tocsin of St. Merry, which had not once ceased since the previous evening; this was a proof that the other barricade, the great one, Joan's, still held out.

All these hopes were interchanged by the various groups in a sort of gay and formidable hum, which resembled the war-like buzzing of a swarm of bees.

Enjolras re-appeared, returning from his gloomy flight into outer darkness. He listened for a moment to all this joy, with his arms folded. Then, fresh and rosy in the growing light of dawn, he said:

"The whole army of Paris is out. One-third of that army is preparing to attack the barricade behind which you now are. There is, too, the National Guard. I made out the shakos of the fifth regiment of the line, and the guidons of the sixth legion. You will be attacked in an hour. As for the people, they were in a state of ferment yesterday, but this morning they do not stir. There is nothing to wait for; nothing to hope. Neither a faubourg nor a regiment. You are abandoned."

These words fell on the buzzing groups, and produced the same effect that the first drops of a storm do on a swarm. All were dumb. There was a moment of inexpressible silence, in which death might have been heard flying past.

This moment was short. A voice shouted to Enjolras from the thickest of the crowd: —

"Be it so! Let us raise the barricade to a height of twenty feet, and let all remain within it. Citizens, let us offer the protest of corpses. Let us show that if the people abandon the republicans, the republicans do not abandon the people."

These words disengaged the thoughts of all from the pain-

ful cloud of individual anxieties. An enthusiastic shout greeted them.

The name of the man who spoke thus was never known; he was some unknown blouse-wearer, a stranger, a forgotten man, a passing hero, that great anonymous always mixed up in human crises and social geneses, who at the given moment utters the decisive word in a supreme fashion, and who fades away into darkness, after having represented for a minute, in a lightning flash, the people and God.

This inexorable resolution so filled the air of June 6, 1832, that almost at the selfsame hour the insurgents of the St. Merry barricade uttered the cry, which became historical, and was consigned to the documents in the case: "Whether they come to our help or whether they do not, what matter? Let us all die here, to the last man." As we see, the two barricades, though materially isolated, communicated.

CHAPTER IV

FIVE LESS AND ONE MORE

AFTER the man, whoever he might be, who decreed the "protest of corpses," had spoken, and given the formula of their common soul, a strangely satisfied and terrible cry issued from every mouth, funereal in its meaning and triumphant in its tone: —

"Long live death! Let us all remain here."

"Why all?" asked Enjolras.

"All, all!"

Enjolras continued: —

"The position is good; the barricade is fine. Thirty men are enough. Why sacrifice forty?"

They replied: —

"Because not one of us will consent to depart."

"Citizens," cried Enjolras, and there was an almost angry ring in his voice, "the republic is not rich enough in men to make an unnecessary outlay of them. Vainglory is foolish waste. If it be the duty of some to go, that duty must be performed like any other."

Enjolras, the man-principal, had over his co-religionists that sort of omnipotent power which emanates from the absolute. Still, however great that omnipotence might be, they murmured. A chief to the tips of his fingers, Enjolras, seeing that they murmured, insisted. He continued haughtily: —

"Let those who are afraid to be only thirty say so."

The murmurs were redoubled.

"Besides," remarked a voice in the throng, "it is easy to talk about going. The barricade is surrounded."

"Not on the side of the Markets," said Enjolras. "The Rue Mondétour is free, and the Marché des Innocents can be reached by the Rue des Prêcheurs."

"And there," another voice in the group remarked, "we should be caught. We should fall in with some sentry of the line or the National Guard. They will see a man passing in blouse and cap. 'Where do you come from? Don't you belong to the barricade?' and they will look at your hands. You smell of powder; you will be shot."

Enjolras, without answering, touched Combeferre's shoulder, and both entered the ground-floor room.

They came out again a moment after. Enjolras held in his outstretched hands the four uniforms which he had laid aside, and Combeferre followed him, carrying the cross-belts and shakos.

"In this uniform," said Enjolras, "you can easily mingle with the ranks and escape. Here are four, at any rate." And he threw the uniforms on the unpaved ground.

No one moved in the stoical audience. Combeferre resolved to make an appeal.

"Come," he said, "you must show a little pity. Do you know what the question is here? It is a question of women.

Look here, are there wives,— yes, or no? Are there children,— yes, or no? Are there mothers,— yes, or no,— who rock a cradle with their foot and have a heap of children around them? Let him among you who has never seen a nurse's breast hold up his hand. Ah, you wish to be killed? So do I too,— I who am speaking to you; but I do not wish to feel the ghosts of women twining their arms around me. Die,— very good, but do not make others die. Suicides like the one which is about to take place here are sublime, but suicide is restricted, and does not allow of extension; and so soon as it affects your neighbours, suicide becomes murder. Think of the little fair heads, and think, too, of the white hair. Listen to me. Enjolras tells me that just now he saw at the corner of the Rue du Cygne a candle at a poor window, on the fifth-floor, and against the panes the tremulous shadow of an old woman, who seemed to have spent the whole night in watching at the window and waiting. Perhaps she is the mother of one of you. Well, let that man go and hasten to say to his mother, 'Mother, here I am!' Let him be at ease; the work will be done here all the same. When a man supports his relatives by his toil, he has no longer any right to sacrifice himself. That is deserting his family. And then, too, those who have daughters, and those who have sisters, only think of them! You let yourselves be killed. You are dead; very good. And to-morrow? It is terrible when girls have no bread. Man begs, woman sells. Oh, those charming, graceful, gentle creatures with flowers in their caps, who fill the house with chastity, who sing, who prattle, who are like a living perfume, who prove the existence of angels in heaven by the purity of virgins on earth,— that Jane, that Lisa, that Mimi, those adorable and honest creatures who are your blessing and your pride,— ah, my God! they will starve. What shall I say to you? There is a human flesh-market; and it is not with your shadowy hands, fluttering around them, that you will prevent them entering. Think of the street, think of the pavement covered with strollers, think of the shops before which women, with necks all bare, come and go in the mud.

Those women, too, were once pure. Think of your sisters, you who have sisters. Misery, prostitution, the police, St. Lazare, that is where those delicate maidens, those fragile marvels of chastity, modesty, and beauty, fresher than the lilacs in May, will end. Ah, you have let yourselves be killed! Ah, you are no longer there! That is well; you wished to rescue the people from royalty, and you give your daughters to the police. My friends, take care; have pity. We are not wont to think much about women, hapless women. We trust to the fact that women have not received the education of men. We prevent them from reading, thinking, or occupying themselves with politics; but will you prevent them from going to-night to the Morgue and recognizing your corpses? Come, those who have families must be good fellows, and shake hands and go away, and leave us here to do this job alone. I am well aware that it takes some courage to go, that it is hard; but the harder it is, the more meritorious. You say: 'I have a gun. I am at the barricade. So much the worse, I shall remain.' 'So much the worse' is easily said. My friends, there is a morrow; that morrow you will not see, but your families will. And what sufferings! Stay, do you know what becomes of a healthy child with cheeks like an apple, who chatters, babbles, prattles, laughs, and smells sweet when you kiss him, when he is abandoned? I saw one, quite little, about so high. His father was dead. Poor people had taken him in out of charity, but they had not bread for themselves. The child was always hungry. It was winter-time. He did not cry. He would go close to the stove, in which there was never any fire, and whose pipe, you know, was puttied with yellow earth. The boy broke off a little of this earth with his fingers and ate it. His breathing was hoarse, his face livid, his legs soft, and his stomach swollen. He said nothing. When you spoke to him he made no answer. He is dead. He was brought to die at the Necker Hospital, where I saw him. I was house-surgeon there. Now, if there be any fathers among you, fathers who delight in taking a walk on Sunday, holding in their big, kind hand

a child's small fingers, let each of those fathers fancy this lad his own. I remember that poor brat perfectly. I can see him now, as he lay naked on the dissecting-table. His ribs stood out under his skin like the graves under the grass of a cemetery. We found a sort of mud in his stomach. He had ashes between his teeth. Come, let us examine our conscience and take counsel with our heart. Statistics prove that the mortality among deserted children is fifty-five per cent. I repeat, it is a question of wives, of mothers, of daughters, and babes. I say nothing of yourselves. I know very well what you are. I know that you are all brave. Zounds! I know that you all long in your hearts for the joy and the glory of laying down your lives for the great cause. I know very well that you feel yourselves chosen to die usefully and magnificently, and that each of you clings to his share of the triumph. Very good. But you are not alone in this world. There are others of whom you must think. You must not be selfish."

All hung their heads with a gloomy air. Strange contradictions of the human heart at its sublimest moments! Combeferre, who spoke thus, was not an orphan. He remembered the mothers of other men, and forgot his own. He was going to be killed. He was "selfish."

Marius, fasting and feverish, having successively given up all hopes, stranded in grief, the most mournful of shipwrecks, saturated with violent emotions, and feeling that the end was near, had buried himself deeper and deeper in that visionary stupor which ever precedes the fatal and voluntarily accepted hour.

A physiologist might have studied in him the growing symptoms of that febrile absorption which is known and classified by science, and which is to suffering what voluptuousness is to pleasure. Despair, also, has its ecstasy. Marius had attained that stage. He looked at everything from without. As we have said, things which occurred before him appeared to him remote. He distinguished the general effect, but did not perceive the details. He saw people coming and going before

him as in a glare of light. He heard voices speaking as if from the bottom of an abyss.

Still, this affected him. There was in this scene a point which reached even him, and aroused him. He had but one idea now,— to die, and he did not wish to be turned from this; but he thought, in his gloomy somnambulism, that in destroying himself, he was not prohibited from saving some one else. He raised his voice: —

"Enjolras and Combeferre are right," he said; "let us have no useless sacrifice. I join them; and we must make haste. Combeferre has told you decisive things. There are men among you who have families,— mothers, sisters, wives, and children. Let all such leave the ranks."

Not a soul stirred.

"Married men and supporters of families, leave the ranks!" repeated Marius.

His authority was great. Enjolras was really the chief of the barricade, but Marius was its saviour.

"I command you!" cried Enjolras.

"I implore you!" said Marius.

Then those heroic men, stirred by Combeferre's speech, shaken by Enjolras's order, and moved by Marius's entreaty, began to denounce one another. "It is true," said one young man to an older man. "You are the father of a family; begone!" "No; you ought rather to do so," replied the man, "for you have two sisters to support." And an unheard-of contest broke out. Each struggled lest he should be thrust out of the tomb.

"Make haste!" said Combeferre; "in a quarter of an hour it will be too late."

"Citizens," added Enjolras, "this is the republic, and universal suffrage reigns. Point out yourselves the men who are to leave us."

They obeyed. In a few minutes five were unanimously pointed out and left the ranks.

"There are five of them!" exclaimed Marius.

There were only four uniforms.

"Well," replied the five, "one must stay behind."

And then they quarrelled as to who should remain, and each found reasons why the others should not stay. The generous struggle began again.

"You have a wife who loves you."—"You have your old mother,"—"You have neither father nor mother; what will become of your three little brothers?"—"You are the father of five children."—"You have a right to live, you are only seventeen; it is too early for you to die."

These great revolutionary barricades were meeting-places for heroism. The improbable was simple there. Those men did not astonish each other.

"Make haste!" repeated Courfeyrac.

Cries to Marius came from the groups:—

"You must point out the one who is to remain."

"Yes!" said the five; "do you choose. We will obey you."

Marius had not believed himself capable of any further emotion; and yet, at this idea of choosing a man for death, all the blood flowed back to his heart. He would have turned pale, could he have grown paler. He stepped up to the five, who smiled upon him, and each, with his eyes full of that grand flame which gleams through history over those who died at Thermopylæ, cried to him:—

"Me! Me! Me!"

And Marius stupidly counted them. There were still five! Then his eyes settled on the four uniforms.

All at once a fifth uniform fell, as if from heaven, on the other four.

The fifth man was saved.

Marius raised his eyes, and recognized M. Fauchelevent.

Jean Valjean had just entered the barricade.

Whether by asking questions, by instinct, or by accident, he had arrived by way of Mondétour Lane. Thanks to his National Guard uniform, he passed without difficulty.

The sentinel stationed in the Rue Mondétour by the insurgents saw no cause to give the alarm for a single National Guard, and had let him enter the street, saying to himself:

"He is probably a reinforcement, or at the worst a prisoner." The moment was too serious for a sentry to turn from his duty or his post of observation.

At the moment when Jean Valjean entered the redoubt, no one noticed him, for all eyes were fixed on the five chosen men and the four uniforms. Jean Valjean, however, had seen and heard, and silently took off his coat and threw it on the pile formed by the other coats. The emotion was indescribable.

"Who is this man?" asked Bossuet.

"He is a man," replied Combeferre, "who saves his fellow-men."

Marius added in a grave voice: —

"I know him."

This security was sufficient for all. Enjolras turned to Jean Valjean: "Citizen, you are welcome." And he added: "You know that we are about to die."

Jean Valjean, without answering, helped the insurgent whom he was saving, to put on his uniform.

CHAPTER V

THE VIEW FROM THE TOP OF A BARRICADE.

THE situation of the whole party in that fatal hour, and at that inexorable spot, had as result and culminating point the supreme melancholy of Enjolras.

Enjolras had within him the plenitude of the revolution. He was imperfect, however, so far as the absolute can be so. He had too much of St. Just and not enough of Anacharsis Clootz; still, his mind, in the society of the Friends of the A. B. C., had eventually received a certain magnetic influence from Combeferre's ideas. For some time past he had been gradually emerging from the narrow form of dogmatism, and yielding to the broadening effect of progress;

and in the end, he had accepted, as a definitive and magnificent evolution, the transformation of the great French Republic into the immense human republic. As for the immediate means, given a violent situation, he wished them to be violent. On that point he did not vary; and he still belonged to that epic and terrible school which is summed up in the words "'93."

Enjolras stood on the paving-stone steps, one elbow on the barrel of his gun. He was thinking; he trembled, as men do when a blast passes. Spots where death lurks produce this tripod effect. A sort of stifled fire flashed from his eyes, which were filled with an inward glance. All at once he raised his head, his light hair fell back like that of the angel on the dark chariot made of stars. It was like the mane of a startled lion surrounded by a fiery halo, and he cried: —

"Citizens, do you think of the future? The streets of towns bathed in light; green branches on the thresholds; all nations sisters; men just; old men blessing children; the past loving the present; perfect liberty of thought; believers enjoying perfect equality; for religion, heaven; God the direct priest; the human conscience converted into an altar; no more hatred; the fraternity of the workshop and the school; notoriety the sole punishment and reward; work for all, right for all, peace for all; no more bloodshed, no more wars; happy mothers! To subdue matter is the first step; to realize the ideal is the second. Reflect on what progress has already done. Formerly, the first human races saw with terror the hydra that breathed upon the waters, the dragon that vomited fire, the griffin which was the monster of the air, and which flew with the wings of an eagle and the claws of a tiger, pass before their eyes,— frightful beasts which were superior to man. Man, however, set his snares,— the sacred snares of intellect,— and at last captured the monsters. We have subdued the hydra, and it is called the steamboat. We have tamed the dragon, and it is called the locomotive; we are on the point of taming the griffin, we already hold it in our

grasp, and it is called the balloon. The day when that Promethean task is terminated, when man has definitely harnessed to his will the triple chimera of antiquity,— the dragon, the hydra, and the griffin,— he will be master of water, fire, and air, and he will be to the rest of animated creation what the ancient gods formerly were to him. Courage, and forward! Citizens, whither are we going? To science made into government, to the strength of things converted into the sole public strength, to the natural law having its sanction and penalty in itself, and promulgating itself by evidence, to a dawn of truth corresponding with the dawn of day. We are advancing toward the union of all peoples; we are advancing to the unity of man. No more fictions; no more parasites. The real governed by the true, that is our object. Civilization will hold its assizes at the summit of Europe, and eventually, at the centre of continents, in a great parliament of intellect. Something like this has been seen already. The Amphictyons held two sessions a year, one at Delphi, the abode of the gods, the other at Thermopylæ, the home of heroes. Europe will have her Amphictyons, the globe will have its Amphictyons; France bears this sublime future within her. This is the gestation of the nineteenth century. What Greece sketched out is worthy to be finished by France. Listen to me, you, Feuilly, valiant workman, man of the people, man of the peoples! I revere you. Yes, you see the future clearly; yes, you are right. You have neither father nor mother, Feuilly; you have adopted Humanity as your mother and Right as your father. You are about to die here,— that is to say, to triumph. Citizens, whatever may happen to-day, we are about to make a revolution, by our defeat as well as by our victory. As fires light up a whole city, so revolutions light up the whole human race. And what is the revolution which we shall make? I have just told you, the Revolution of the True. From a political point of view, there is but one principle,— the sovereignty of man over himself. This sovereignty of myself over myself is called Liberty. Where two or three of these sovereignties are united, the State be-

gins. But in this association there is no abdication. Each sovereignty freely yields a certain amount to form the common right. This quantity is the same for all. This identity of concession which each makes to all is called Equality. Common right is nought but the protection of all radiating over the right of each. This protection of all over each is termed Fraternity. The point of intersection of all these aggregated sovereignties is called Society. This intersection being a junction, this point is a knot. Hence comes what is called the social tie. Some say the social contract, which is the same thing, as the word contract is etymologically formed with the idea of a tie. Let us come to an understanding about equality; for, if liberty be the summit, equality is the base. Equality, citizens, is not the whole of society on a level,— a society of tall blades of grass and small oaks, or a number of entangled jealousies. It is, legally speaking, every aptitude having the same opportunity for a career; politically, all votes having the same weight; religiously, all consciences having the same right. Equality has an organ, — gratuitous and compulsory education. We must begin with the right to the alphabet. The primary school imposed on all, the secondary school offered to all,— such is the law. From the identical school issues an equal society. Yes, instruction! light! light! Everything comes from light, and everything returns to it. Citizens, the nineteenth century is great, but the twentieth century will be happy. Then there will be nothing left resembling ancient history. There will be no longer cause to fear, as now, conquest, invasion, usurpation, armed rivalry of nations, an interruption of civilization depending on a marriage of kings, on a birth in hereditary tyrannies, a division of peoples by a congress, a dismemberment by the collapse of a dynasty, a combat of two religions, meeting face to face, like two goats in the darkness, on the bridge of infinity. There will be no longer cause to fear famine, sweating, prostitution through distress, misery through stoppage of work, and the scaffold and the sword, and battles, and all the brigandage of chance in the forest of

events. We might almost say: There will be no more events. We shall be happy. The human race will accomplish its law as the terrestrial globe does its law; harmony will be restored between the soul and the star. The soul will gravitate round the truth, as the planet does round light. Friends, the present hour is a gloomy one; but there are such terrible purchases of the future. A revolution is a toll. Oh, the human race will be delivered, lifted up, and consoled! We affirm it on this barricade. Where should the cry of love be raised, if not on the heights of sacrifice? Oh, my brothers, this is the meeting-point of those who think and those who suffer. This barricade is not made of paving-stones, beams, and iron bars; it is made of two things,— of ideas and of sufferings. Here misery meets the ideal. Here day embraces night, and says to it: 'I die with thee, and thou shalt be born again with me.' Faith springs from the embrace of all desolations. Sufferings bring hither their agony, and ideas their immortality. This agony and this immortality are about to mingle and constitute our death. Brothers, the man who dies here, dies in the radiance of the future; and we shall enter a tomb flooded with dawn."

Enjolras paused, rather than became silent. His lips still moved silently, as if he were talking to himself, which attracted his hearers; and hoping still to hear him, they gazed at him. There was no applause, but they whispered together for a long time. Language being a breath, the rustling of intellects resembles the rustling of leaves.

CHAPTER VI

MARIUS HAGGARD, JAVERT LACONIC

LET us describe what was going on in Marius's thoughts. Our readers will remember his state of mind. As we just said, everything was a vision to him now. His judgment was disturbed. He was (we urge the fact) beneath

the shadow of the great shadowy wings opened above the dying. He felt that he had entered the tomb; he fancied that he was already on the other side of the wall, and he no longer saw the faces of the living save with the eyes of a dead man.

How had M. Fauchelevent come there? Why was he there, and what did he come to do? Marius did not ask himself all these questions. Moreover, as our despair has this peculiar thing about it, that it envelops others as it does ourselves, it appeared to him logical that everybody should come there to die. Only he thought of Cosette with a pang. However, M. Fauchelevent did not speak to him, did not look at him, and did not even seem to hear Marius when he raised his voice, saying: "I know him."

As for Marius, this attitude of M. Fauchelevent relieved him; and if such a word be permissible for such impressions, we might say that it pleased him. He had always felt the absolute impossibility of addressing this enigmatical man, who struck him as both equivocal and imposing. It was a very long time, too, since he had seen him; and this increased the impossibility for a timid and reserved nature like that of Marius.

The five men selected left the barricade by Mondétour Lane, perfectly resembling National Guards. One of them wept as he went away. Before they left, they embraced those who remained.

When the five men sent back to life had gone, Enjolras thought of the one condemned to death.

He went to the bar-room. Javert, tied to the post, was reflecting.

"Do you want anything?" asked Enjolras.

Javert answered: —

"When will you kill me?"

"Wait. We want all our cartridges just now."

"Then give me a drink," said Javert.

Enjolras himself offered him a glass of water, and as Javert was bound, helped him to drink.

"Is that all?" resumed Enjolras.

"I am uncomfortable at this post," replied Javert. "You did not act kindly in leaving me fastened to it all night. Bind me as you please, but you might surely lay me on a table, like that other man." And with a movement of his head, he pointed to M. Mabœuf's corpse.

It will be remembered that there was, at the end of the room, a long broad table, on which bullets had been run and cartridges made. All the cartridges being made, and all the powder used, this table was free.

By Enjolras's order four insurgents unfastened Javert from the post. While they did so, a fifth held a bayonet to his breast. His hands remained fastened behind his back; a strong slender cord was attached to his feet, which enabled him to take steps some fifteen inches long, like those who are about to mount the scaffold, and he was forced to walk to the table at the end of the room, on which they laid him, securely fastened round the waist. For greater security they added to the system of ligatures, by means of a rope tied to his neck, which rendered escape impossible, the sort of knot called in prisons a martingale, which starts from the nape of the neck, crosses on the stomach, and meets round the hands, after passing between the legs.

While Javert was being bound, a man standing in the doorway regarded him with singular attention; and the shadow this man cast caused Javert to turn his head. He raised his eyes, and recognized Jean Valjean. He did not even start; he merely looked down haughtily and said: "It is quite natural."

CHAPTER VII

THE SITUATION BECOMES WORSE

DAY dawned rapidly. Not a window opened, not a door was ajar. It was the dawn, not the awaking. The end of the Rue de la Chanvrerie, opposite the barricade, had been evacuated by the troops, as we stated. It appeared to

be free, and lay open for passers-by with sinister tranquillity. The Rue St. Denis was dumb as the Avenue of Sphinxes at Thebes. There was not a living being at the cross-roads, which a sunbeam illumined. Nothing is so melancholy as this brightness of deserted streets.

Nothing could be seen, but something could be heard. There was a mysterious movement at a certain distance. It was evident that the critical moment was at hand. As on the previous evening, the sentries fell back; but now all did so.

The barricade was stronger than at the first attack. Since the departure of the five, it had been raised still higher.

By the advice of the sentinel who had been watching the region of the Markets, Enjolras, for fear of a surprise in the rear, formed a serious resolution. He barricaded the small passage of Mondétour Lane, which had hitherto remained free. For this purpose, a further portion of the street was unpaved. In this way the barricade, walled up on three sides, — in front on the Rue de la Chanvrerie, on the left on the Rue du Cygne and the Petite Truanderie, and on the right on the Rue Mondétour,— was truly almost impregnable; it is true that they were fatally enclosed within it. It had three fronts but no outlet. It was a fortress, but a mouse-trap, too, as Courfeyrac said with a laugh.

Enjolras had some thirty paving-stones piled up by the door of the inn, which, as Bossuet said, had been "torn up over and above."

The silence was now so profound in that direction whence the attack must come, that Enjolras ordered all his men to return to their posts. A ration of brandy was distributed to each one.

Nothing is more curious than a barricade preparing for an assault. Every man chooses his place, as at the theatre. They crowd, elbow, and shoulder one another. Some make stalls of paving-stones. Here an angle of the wall is in the way; they leave it. Here is a redan which may afford protection; they seek shelter in it. Left-handed men are precious; they take places inconvenient for others. Many

arrange to fight seated. They wish to be at their ease to kill, and to die comfortably. In the fatal war of June, 1848, an insurgent, who was a wonderful marksman, and who fought from a terraced roof, had a reclining chair brought out, and was knocked over in it by a volley of grape-shot.

So soon as the chief has given the signal for action, all disorderly movements cease. There is no longer any sharp-shooting, any conversation or side speech. All that their minds contain converges, and is changed into the waiting for the assailant. A barricade before danger comes is chaos; in danger, it is discipline. Peril produces order.

So soon as Enjolras had taken his double-barrelled gun, and placed himself at a sort of embrasure which he had reserved for himself, all were silent. A sharp crackling ran confusedly along the wall of paving-stones; it was the men cocking their muskets.

Moreover their attitudes were haughtier, more confident than ever; excess of sacrifice strengthens. They no longer had hope, but they had despair,— despair, that last weapon which sometimes gives victory, as Virgil tells us. Supreme resources spring from extreme resolutions. To embark in death is sometimes the means of escaping shipwreck, and the lid of the coffin becomes a plank of safety.

As on the previous evening, all attention was turned — we might almost say rested — upon the end of the street, which was now lighted up and visible.

They had not long to wait. The movement began again distinctly in the direction of St. Leu, but it did not resemble the sound of the first attack. A rattling of chains, the alarming jolt of a heavy weight, a clangor of cannon leaping over the pavement, and a sort of solemn uproar announced that a sinister engine of war was approaching. There was a tremor in the entrails of those peaceful old streets, pierced and built for the fruitful circulation of interests and ideas, and not made for the monstrous roll of the wheels of war. All eyes turned toward the end of the street and became fierce.

A cannon appeared.

The gunners pushed the gun. It was in fighting trim,—the limber was detached; two men supported the carriage; four were at the wheels; others followed with the tumbrel. The lighted match smoked.

"Fire!" shouted Enjolras.

The whole barricade burst into flame; the report was frightful. An avalanche of smoke covered and concealed the gun and the men. A few seconds after, the cloud dispersed, and the gun and the men re-appeared; the gunners brought it up to the front of the barricade, slowly, correctly, and without haste. Not one had been wounded. Then the captain of the gun, hanging with his whole weight on the breech to elevate the muzzle, began to point the cannon, with the gravity of an astronomer setting a telescope.

"Bravo for the artillery!" cried Bossuet.

And all the men at the barricade clapped their hands.

A moment later, the gun squarely planted in the very centre of the street, across the gutter, was in position. A formidable mouth yawned on the barricade.

"Come, cheerily, boys!" said Courfeyrac. "This is the brutal part of it. After the fillip on the nose, the blow with the fist. The army is stretching its heavy paw toward us. The barricade is going to be seriously shaken up. The musketry fire feels the way, the cannon captures."

"It is an eight-pounder, of the new pattern, in bronze," added Combeferre. "Those guns, if the proportion of ten parts of tin to one hundred of copper is exceeded, are liable to burst; for the excess of tin renders them too soft. It thus happens that they have holes and cavities in the vent. In order to obviate this danger, and to enable one to increase the charge, it would perhaps be advisable to return to the process of the fourteenth century, circling and reinforcing the gun with a series of steel rings, without any welding, from the breech to the trunnions. In the meanwhile, they remedy the defect as well as they can; they manage to discover where the holes are in the vent of the gun by means of

a searcher. But there is a better method,— Gribeauval's movable star."

"In the sixteenth century," observed Bossuet, "guns were rifled."

"Yes," replied Combeferre, "that adds to the projectile force, but lessens the correctness of aim. At short range, the trajectory has not all the desirable rigidity, the parabola is exaggerated, the path of the projectile is not sufficiently rectilinear for it to hit intermediate objects, though that is a necessity of battle, whose importance grows with the proximity of the enemy and the precipitation of the discharge. This defective tension of the curve of the projectile in rifled cannon of the sixteenth century emanated from the weakness of the charge. Weak charges for such engines are imposed by the ballistic necessities,— such, for instance, as the preservation of the gun-carriage. After all, that despot, the cannon, cannot do all that it wishes; strength is a great weakness. A cannon-ball only travels six hundred leagues an hour; light travels seventy thousand leagues a second. Such is the superiority of Jesus Christ over Napoleon."

"Reload your guns!" said Enjolras.

How would the casing of the barricade behave under the cannon-balls? Would a breach be made? That was the question.

While the insurgents were reloading their guns, the artillery-men loaded their cannon.

The anxiety within the redoubt was profound.

The shot was fired, and the report burst forth.

"Present!" cried a joyous voice.

And as the cannon-ball struck the barricade, Gavroche bounded inside it.

He came from the direction of the Rue du Cygne, and nimbly clambered over the collateral barricade which fronted the labyrinth of the Rue de la Petite Truanderie.

Gavroche produced a greater effect in the barricade than the cannon-ball did. The ball was lost in the heap of rubbish. The most it did was to break an omnibus wheel

and finish off the old truck. On seeing this, the insurgents burst into a laugh.

"Go on!" shouted Bossuet to the gunners.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ARTILLERY-MEN SET TO WORK IN EARNEST

GAVROCHE was surrounded.

But he had no time to tell anything. Marius, shuddering, drew him aside.

"What are you here for?"

"What a question!" said the boy; "and you, pray?" And he gazed fixedly at Marius with his epic effrontery. His eyes grew larger with the proud light within them.

It was with a stern accent that Marius continued:

"Who told you to return? At least, I hope that you delivered my letter at its address."

Gavroche felt some degree of remorse in the matter of that letter. In his haste to return to the barricade, he had got rid of it rather than delivered it. He was forced to confess to himself that he had confided it somewhat too lightly to that stranger, whose face he had not even been able to make out. It is true that this man was bareheaded, but that was not enough. In short, he reproached himself silently for his conduct, and he feared Marius's reproaches. He took the simplest way to get out of the scrape,— he told an abominable falsehood.

"Citizen, I delivered the letter to the porter. The lady was asleep. She will have the letter when she wakes."

Marius had two objects in sending the letter,— to bid Cosette farewell and to save Gavroche. He was obliged to satisfy himself with one-half of what he wanted.

The connection between the sending of that letter and

M. Fauchelevent's presence at the barricade occurred to his mind, and he pointed him out to Gavroche.

"Do you know that man?"

"No," said Gavroche.

Gavroche, in truth, as we are aware, had seen Jean Valjean only by night.

The anxious, morbid conjectures formed in Marius's mind were dissipated. Did he know M. Fauchelevent's opinions? Perhaps he was a republican. Hence his presence in this conflict would be perfectly natural.

Meantime, Gavroche had run to the other end of the barricade, crying: "My gun!"

Courfeyrac ordered it to be given to him.

Gavroche warned "his comrades," as he called them, that the barricade was invested. He had found great difficulty in reaching it. A battalion of the line, with their arms stacked in the Petite Truanderie, was on the alert in the direction of the Rue de Cygne. On the opposite side, the Municipal Guard occupied the Rue des Prêcheurs, while in front of them was the main body of the army. This information given, Gavroche added: —

"I give you leave to dust their jackets well for 'em."

Enjolras was in the mean while straining his ears at his loophole.

The assailants, doubtless dissatisfied with their shot, had not repeated it.

A company of infantry of the line had come up to occupy the end of the street, behind the cannon. The soldiers tore up the pavement, and built with the stones a small, low wall, — a sort of epaulement, only eighteen inches high, and facing the barricade. At the left-hand corner of this work could be seen the head of the column of a battalion from the suburbs, massed in the Rue St. Denis.

Enjolras, from his post, fancied he could hear the peculiar sound produced by canister when taken out of the caissons; and he saw the captain of the gun change his aim and turn the mouth of the cannon slightly to the left. Then the

gunners began to load. The captain of the gun himself took the port-fire and lowered it to the vent.

"Down with your heads! Hug the wall!" shouted Enjolras. "To your knees all along the barricade!"

The insurgents, scattered in front of the wine-shop, who had left their posts on Gavroche's arrival, rushed pell-mell toward the barricade; but before Enjolras's order could be executed, the discharge took place with the frightful rattle of a round of grape-shot. It was one, in fact.

The shot was aimed at the opening in the redoubt, and ricocheted against the wall, killing two men and wounding three.

If this continued, the barricade would be no longer tenable. The grape-shot entered it. There was a murmur of consternation.

"At least let us prevent a second round," said Enjolras; and, lowering his rifle, he aimed at the captain of the gun, who at that moment was leaning on the breech, correcting and fixing the aim. The captain was a handsome young sergeant of artillery, fair, with a gentle face and the intelligent look peculiar to that predestined and terrible weapon which, by dint of perfecting itself in horror, must end by killing war.

Combeferre, who was standing beside Enjolras, gazed at this young man.

"What a pity!" said Combeferre. "What a hideous thing such butchery is! Well, when there are no more kings, there will be no more war. Enjolras, you are aiming at that sergeant; you are not looking at him. Just reflect that he is a handsome young man. He is intrepid; it is evident that he is a thinker. These young artillery-men are well educated. He has a father, a mother, and a family; he is probably in love; he is but twenty-five years of age at the most; he might be your brother."

"He is," said Enjolras.

"Yes," added Combeferre, "and mine too. Do not kill him."

"Let me alone. What must be, must be."

And a tear slowly coursed down Enjolras's marble cheek.

At the same time he pulled the trigger. The fire flashed forth. The artillery-man turned twice on his heel, his arms stretched out before him, and his head raised as if to breathe the air; then he fell across the cannon and lay there motionless. They could see his back, from the middle of which a jet of blood gushed forth. The bullet had gone right through his chest. He was dead. He was borne away, and his place was filled up. Several minutes were thus gained.

CHAPTER IX

THE POACHER'S SKILL, AND THE UNERRING SHOT WHICH INFLUENCED THE SENTENCE IN 1796

OPINIONS varied in the barricade. The firing of the cannon was about to begin again. The barricade could not hold out for a quarter of an hour against that grape-shot. It was absolutely necessary to deaden the blows. Enjolras gave the command: —

"We must put a mattress there."

"We have none," said Combeferre; "the wounded are lying on them."

Jean Valjean, seated apart on a stone post at the corner of the wine-shop, with his gun between his legs, had not, up to the present moment, taken any part in what was going on. He did not seem to hear the combatants saying around him: "There is a gun that does nothing." On hearing the order given by Enjolras, he rose.

It will be remembered that on the arrival of the insurgents in the Rue de la Chanvrerie, an old woman, in her terror of the bullets, placed her mattress in front of her window. This window, a garret window, was on the roof of a six-story house, situated just beyond the barricade. The mattress,

placed crosswise, resting at the bottom upon two clothes-props, was held at the top by two ropes, which, in the distance, looked like two pieces of pack-thread, and which were fastened to nails driven into the window-frames. These ropes could be distinctly seen, like hairs against the sky.

"Can any one lend me a double-barrelled gun?" asked Jean Valjean.

Enjolras, who had just reloaded his, handed it to him.

Jean Valjean aimed at the garret-window and fired. One of the two ropes of the mattress was cut. It hung by one thread only. Jean Valjean fired the second shot. The second rope lashed the panes of the garret-window. The mattress glided between the two poles and fell into the street. The insurgents applauded, and every voice cried: —

"There is a mattress!"

"Yes," said Combeferre; "but who will go and fetch it?"

The mattress, in truth, had fallen outside the barricade, between the besiegers and the besieged. Now, as the death of the sergeant of artillery had exasperated the troops, the soldiers had for some moments been lying flat on their stomachs behind the line of paving-stones, which they had raised; and to make up for the enforced silence of the cannon, which was hushed until its crew could be reorganized, they had opened fire on the barricade. The insurgents, wishing to save their ammunition, did not return this musketry. The fusillade was broken by the barricade; but the street, which it filled with bullets, was terrible.

Jean Valjean stepped out of the gap, entered the street, traversed the hail of bullets, went to the mattress, picked it up, placed it on his back, and, re-entering the barricade, himself placed the mattress in the gap, and fixed it against the wall in such fashion that the gunners should not see it.

This done, they awaited the next round. It was not long in coming.

The cannon belched forth its canister with a hoarse roar. But there was no ricochet. The grape-shot was checked by

the mattress. The expected result was obtained. The barricade was saved.

"Citizen," said Enjolras to Jean Valjean, "the republic thanks you."

Bossuet admired and laughed. He exclaimed:—

"It is immoral for a mattress to have so much power. It is the triumph of that which yields over that which hurls thunder-bolts. But no matter, glory to the mattress that annuls a cannon!"

CHAPTER X

DAWN

AT this moment Cosette awoke.

Her bedroom was narrow, neat, modest, with a long window on the east side, looking out into the rear courtyard of the house.

Cosette knew nothing of what was going on in Paris. She had not been there the evening before, and she was in her room when Toussaint said: "It seems there is a row."

Cosette had slept only a few hours, but well. She had had sweet dreams, which resulted, perhaps, from the fact that her small bed was very white. Somebody, who was Marius, appeared to her in a flood of light. She awoke with the sun in her eyes, which at first produced the effect of a continuation of her dream. Her first thought on coming out of this dream was of a smiling nature. She felt quite reassured. Like Jean Valjean a few hours before, she was passing through that reaction of the soul which absolutely refuses to accept misfortune. She began to hope with all her might, without knowing why. Then her heart ached. She had not seen Marius for three days; but she said to herself that he must have received her letter, that he knew where she was, and that he was so clever that he would find means of reaching

her,— and that most certainly to-day, and perhaps that very morning. It was bright daylight; but the sunbeams were nearly horizontal, so she thought that it must be very early, but that she must rise, in order to receive Marius.

She felt that she could not live without Marius, and that, consequently, that was enough, and Marius would come. No objection was admissible. All this was certain. It was monstrous enough to have suffered for three days! Marius absent for three days! that was horrible on the part of Providence. Now this cruel suspense, sent from on high, was over and past, Marius would come and would bring good news. Thus is youth constituted; it wipes away its tears quickly, and, finding sorrow useless, does not accept it.

Youth is the smile of the future in the presence of an unknown quantity, which is itself. It is natural to it to be happy. It seems as if its very breath were made of hope.

However, Cosette could not succeed in recalling to mind what Marius had said to her on the subject of this absence, which was to last only one day, and what explanation he had given her of it. Every one has noticed with what skill a coin let fall on the ground runs away and hides, and what art it has in making itself invisible. There are thoughts which play us the same trick. They conceal themselves in a corner of our brain; that is the end of them. They are lost; it is impossible to recall them to memory. Cosette felt somewhat vexed at the useless little effort which her memory made. She said to herself that it was very wrong and very wicked of her to forget any words uttered by Marius.

She left her bed, and performed the two ablutions of soul and body,— her prayers and her toilet.

One may, if absolutely necessary, introduce a reader into a nuptial chamber, but not into a virgin's room. Verse could scarcely venture it; prose durst not do so.

It is the interior of a still closed flower; it is whiteness in the gloaming, the inner cell of the lily-bud, which must not be seen by man till it has been seen by the sun. Woman in the bud is sacred. That innocent bed which is disclosed,

that adorable semi-nudity which is afraid of itself, that white foot which takes refuge in a slipper, that throat which veils itself before a mirror as if the mirror were an eye, that chemise which hurriedly rises and hides the shoulder at the sound of a creaking piece of furniture or a passing vehicle, those knotted strings, those clasps fastened, that stay-lace drawn, those tremors, those shudders of cold and shame, that exquisite shyness of every movement, that almost winged anxiety where there is nothing to fear, the successive phases of dressing, as charming as the clouds of dawn,— it is not fitting that all this should be described, and it is too much to have even indicated it.

The eye of man must be yet more religious before the rising of a maiden than before the rising of a star. The possibility of injury should lead to increased respect. The down on the peach, the bloom on the plum, the starry crystal of the snow, the butterfly's wing powdered with feathers, are but coarse things compared to this chastity, which does not even know that it is chaste. The maiden is only the flash of a dream, and is not yet a statue. Her chamber is hidden in the shadowy part of the ideal. The indiscreet touch of a look brutalizes this vague, transparent penumbra. In such a case, contemplation is profanation.

We will therefore say nothing of the sweet little bustle and stir of Cosette's awakening.

An Eastern fable tells us that the rose was made white by God, but that Adam having looked at it as it was opening, it felt ashamed and turned red. We are of those who feel abashed in the presence of maidens and flowers, for we think them worthy of veneration.

Cosette dressed herself very rapidly, combed and dressed her hair, which was a very simple matter at that day, when women did not swell their ringlets and plaits with cushions and pads, and placed no crinoline in their hair; then she opened her window and looked all around, hoping to see some part of the street, a corner of the house, a bit of the pavement, so that she might watch for Marius there. But noth-

ing could be seen of the outside. The courtyard was surrounded by rather lofty walls, and was bounded by other gardens. Cosette declared those gardens hideous; for the first time in her life, she considered flowers ugly. The paltriest street gutter would have suited her purpose better. She resolved to look up to heaven, as if she thought that Marius might possibly come thence.

Suddenly she burst into tears. Not through any fickleness of temperament; her situation consisted of hopes dashed with despondency. She was confusedly conscious of something horrible. In truth, things are in the air. She said to herself that she was sure of nothing, that to take herself out of sight was to be lost; and the idea that Marius might return to her from heaven appeared to her no longer charming, but lugubrious.

Then — for such these clouds are — calmness returned, and hope and a sort of unconscious smile, which trusted in God, however.

Everybody was still asleep in the house. A provincial silence prevailed. Not a shutter was open. The porter's lodge was still closed. Toussaint was not up, and Cosette naturally thought that her father was asleep. She must have suffered greatly, and must still be suffering, for she said to herself that her father had been unkind; but she reckoned on Marius. The eclipse of such a light was clearly impossible. At intervals she heard, some distance off, a sort of heavy shock; and she thought how singular it was that doors should be opened and shut at so early an hour. It was the cannon-balls battering the barricade.

There was a martin's nest a few feet below Cosette's window in the old smoke-blackened cornice; the mouth of the projected a little beyond the cornice, so that the interior of this little paradise could be seen from above. The mother was there, spreading her wings like a fan over her brood. The father bird fluttered round, flew away, and then returned, bringing in his bill food and kisses. The rising day gilded this happy thing; the great law, "In-

crease and multiply," was there fulfilled, smiling and august, and the sweet mystery was unfolded in the glory of the morn. Cosette, with her hair in the sunshine, her soul filled with chimeras, illumined by love within and the dawn without, bent forward mechanically; and, almost without daring to confess to herself that she was thinking at the same time of Marius, she began to gaze at these birds, this family, this male and female, this mother and her little ones, with all the profound trouble which the sight of a nest occasions a virgin.

CHAPTER XI

THE SHOT WHICH MISSES NOTHING AND KILLS NOBODY

THE fire of the assailants continued. Musketry and grape-shot alternated, though without doing much harm. The upper part of Corinth alone suffered; the first floor and garret windows, riddled by shot and shell, gradually lost their shape. The combatants posted there were compelled to withdraw. However, such are the tactics of an attack on a barricade; to skirmish for a long time, in order to exhaust the ammunition of the insurgents, if they commit the error of returning the fire. When it is discovered, by the slackening of their fire, that they have no powder or ball left, the assault is made. Enjolras did not fall into this trap; the barricade did not reply.

At each platoon fire, Gavroche thrust his tongue into his cheek,— a sign of supreme disdain.

"That's good," he said; "tear up the cloth. We want lint."

Courfeyrac reproached the grape-shot for its want of effect, and said to the cannon:—

"You grow diffuse, my good fellow."

A battle may have its mysteries as well as a ball. It is

probable that this silence of the redoubt was beginning to make the assailants uneasy, and led them to fear lest some unexpected incident had occurred. They felt the need of getting a clear view through that pile of paving-stones, and of knowing what was going on behind that impassive wall, which received shots without returning them. The insurgents suddenly perceived a helmet glistening in the sun upon an adjoining roof. A sapper was leaning against a tall chimney-pot and apparently acting as sentry there. He looked directly down into the barricade.

"That's a troublesome overseer," said Enjolras.

Jean had returned Enjolras his fowling-piece, but still had his own musket.

Without a word, he aimed at the sapper, and a second later, the helmet, struck by a bullet, fell noisily into the street. The terrified soldier disappeared with all possible haste. A second observer took his place. This one was an officer. Jean Valjean, who had reloaded his musket, aimed at the newcomer, and sent the officer's helmet to join the private's. The officer was not obstinate, but withdrew quickly. This time the hint was understood. No one again appeared on the roof, and the attempt to spy on the barricade was renounced.

"Why did you not kill the man?" Bossuet asked Jean Valjean.

Jean Valjean made no reply.

CHAPTER XII

DISORDER THE PARTISAN OF ORDER

BOSSUET muttered in Combeferre's ear: —

"He has not answered my question."

"He is a man who does kind actions with musket-shots," said Combeferre.

Those who have any recollection of this now distant epoch know that the suburban National Guards were valiant against insurrections. They were peculiarly brave and zealous in the days of June, 1832. A certain worthy landlord whose "establishment" the riots closed, became leonine on seeing his dance-hall deserted, and let himself be killed in order to preserve order as represented by the bar. At this time, which was at once heroic and commonplace, in the presence of ideas which had their knights, interests had their paladins. The prosiness of the motive took away none of the bravery of the movement. The decrease of a pile of crowns made bankers sing the "Marseillaise." Men shed their blood lyrically for the till. They defended the shop, that immense diminutive of the country, with Lacedæmonian enthusiasm.

Altogether, there was a good deal that was very serious in all this. Social elements were entering into contest, while awaiting the day when they should enter a state of equilibrium.

Another sign of the times was the anarchy mingled with governmentalism (the barbarous term for the orthodox party). Men were for order without discipline. The drum beat unexpectedly, at the command of any colonel of the National Guard; one captain went under fire through inspiration; some National Guards fought "for an idea," and on their own account. At critical moments on "the days," men took counsel less with their chiefs than with their own instincts. There were in the army of order, real guerrilleros,— some of the sword, like Fannicot, and others of the pen, like Henri Fonfrède.

Civilization, unhappily represented at this period rather by an aggregation of interests than by a group of principles, was, or believed itself to be, in danger; it sounded the alarm. Every man, constituting himself a centre, defended, succoured and protected it in his own way; and the first-comer took upon himself to save society.

Zeal sometimes extended to extermination. A platoon of National Guards constituted themselves, on their own au-

thority, a council of war, and tried and executed an insurgent prisoner in five minutes. It was an improvisation of this nature which killed Jean Prouvaire. It is that ferocious lynch-law with which no one party has a right to reproach the others, for it has been applied by the republic in America as well as by monarchy in Europe. This lynch-law was complicated by mistakes. On a day of riot a young poet, named Paul Aimé Garnier, was pursued on the Place Royale, at the bayonet's point, and only escaped by taking shelter under the gate-way at No. 6. "There's another of those St. Simonians!" they shouted; and they wished to kill him. Now, he had under his arm a volume of the Memoirs of the Duke de Saint Simon. A National Guard had read the words "Saint Simon," on the back and shouted, "Death to him!"

On June 6, 1832, a company of National Guards from the suburbs, commanded by Captain Fannicot, to whom we have already referred, was decimated in the Rue de la Chanvrerie, of their own good will and pleasure. This fact, singular though it is, was proved by the judicial report drawn up in consequence of the insurrection of 1832. Captain Fannicot, an impatient and bold fellow, a sort of *condottiere* of the order which we have just described, a fanatical and intractable governmentalist, could not resist the temptation to fire prematurely, and the ambition of taking the barricade unaided, — that is to say, with his company. Exasperated by the successive apparition of the red flag and the old coat, which he took for the black flag, he loudly blamed the generals and commanders of corps, who were holding councils, and did not think the moment for decisive assault had arrived, but "let the insurrection cook in its own gravy," according to the famous expression of one of them. As for him, he thought the barricade ripe; and as everything that is ripe is bound to fall, he made the attempt.

He commanded men as resolute as himself. "Mad-men," a witness called them. His company — the same which had shot Jean Prouvaire, the poet,— was the first of the battalion posted at the street corner. At the moment when it was

least expected, the captain dashed his men at the barricade. This movement, executed with more good-will than strategy, cost Fannicot's company dear. Before it had covered two-thirds of the street, a general discharge from the barricade greeted it. Four, the boldest men of all, running at the head, were shot down in point-blank range at the very foot of the redoubt; and this courageous mob of National Guards, very brave men, but not possessing military tenacity, was compelled to fall back after some hesitation, leaving fifteen corpses on the pavement. The momentary hesitation gave the insurgents time to reload their guns; and a second and most deadly discharge assailed the company before the men could regain their shelter at the corner of the street. In a moment they were caught between two fires, and received the volley from the cannon, which, having no orders to the contrary, did not cease firing. The intrepid and imprudent Fannicot was one of those killed by this round of grape-shot. He was laid low by the cannon,— that is to say, by order.

This attack, which was more furious than serious, enraged Enjolras.

"The asses!" he said. "They are killing their own men and spending our ammunition for nothing."

Enjolras spoke like the true general of a riot that he was. Insurrection and repression do not fight with equal arms. Insurrection, which is soon exhausted, has only a certain number of rounds to fire and of combatants to expend. An empty cartridge-box, a dead man, cannot be replaced. Repression, on the other hand, having the army, does not count its men, and having Vincennes, does not count its rounds. Repression has as many regiments as the barricade has men, and as many arsenals as the barricade has cartridge-boxes. Hence these are contests of one man against a hundred, which always end by the destruction of the barricade, unless revolution, suddenly rising up, casts into the balance its flashing archangel's sword. Such things happen. Then everything rises, paving-stones begin to seethe, popular redoubts swarm. Paris shudders supremely; the *quid divinum*

is evolved; August 10 or July 29 is in the air; a prodigious light appears; the yawning throat of force shrinks back, and the army, that lion, sees before it, erect and tranquil, that prophet, France.

CHAPTER XIII

PASSING GLEAMS

IN the chaos of feelings and passions which defend a barricade, there is a little of everything,— bravery, youth, the point of honour, enthusiasm, the ideal, conviction, the rage of the gambler, and, above all, intermittent gleams of hope.

One of these intermittent gleams, one of these vague quiverings of hope, suddenly ran along the Chanvrerie barricade at the most unexpected moment.

"Listen!" exclaimed Enjolras, who was ever on the watch; "it seems to me that Paris is waking up."

It is certain that, on the morning of June 6, the insurrection had for an hour or two a certain renewed vigour. The obstinacy of the alarm-bell of St. Merry aroused a few fancies. Barricades were begun in the Rue de Poirier and in the Rue de Gravilliers. In front of the Porte St. Martin, a young man armed with a gun, attacked a squadron of cavalry. Alone, unprotected, and on the open boulevard, he knelt down, raised his gun, fired, killed the leader of the squadron, and then turned away, saying: "There's another who will do us no more mischief." He was cut down. In the Rue St. Denis, a woman fired at the National Guard from behind a Venetian blind. The wooden slats trembled at every shot. A boy of fourteen was arrested in the Rue de la Cossonnerie, with his pockets full of cartridges. Several guard-houses were attacked. At the entrance to the Rue Bertin-Poirée a very sharp and quite unexpected fusillade

greeted a regiment of cuirassiers, at whose head rode General Cavaignac de Barague. In the Rue Planche Mibray, old crockery and household utensils were thrown from the roofs upon the troops: this was a bad sign; and when Marshal Soult was informed of the fact, Napoleon's old lieutenant became pensive, for he remembered Suchet's remark at Saragossa: "We are lost when old women empty their pots on our heads." These general symptoms manifested at a moment when the riots were supposed to be localized, this fever of anger which regained the upper hand, these will-o'-the-wisps flying here and there over those deep masses of combustible matter which are called the faubourgs of Paris,— all this, taken together, alarmed the leaders. They hastened to extinguish the first outbreak of the fire.

Until these sparks were quenched, the attacks on the barricades Maubuée, de la Chanvrerie, and St. Merry were deferred, so that they might have to deal with nothing but the barricades, and might finish all at one blow. Columns of troops were sent through the riotous streets, sweeping the large streets and probing the smaller ones, on the right and on the left, at one moment slowly and cautiously, at another at a quick march. The troops broke open the doors of houses whence there had been shots; at the same time, cavalry manœuvres dispersed the groups on the boulevards. This repression was not affected without turmoil, and without that tumultuous noise peculiar to collisions between the army and the people.

It was this that had attracted Enjolras's attention in the intervals between the cannonading and the platoon fire. Moreover, he had seen wounded men carried past the end of the street on litters, and he said to Courfeyrac:

"Those wounded do not belong to us."

Their hope lasted but a short time; the gleam was quickly eclipsed. In less than half an hour what was in the air vanished.

It was like a flash of lightning without thunder; and the insurgents felt that leaden pall, which the indifference

of the people casts over abandoned and obstinate men, fall over them once more.

The general movement, which seemed to have been obscurely designed, failed; and the attention of the minister of war and the strategy of the generals could now be concentrated on the three or four barricades that remained standing.

The sun rose on the horizon, and an insurgent addressed Enjolras: —

"We are hungry here. Are we really to die like this, without eating?"

Enjolras, still leaning on his parapet, nodded without taking his eyes off the end of the street.

CHAPTER XIV

WHERE WE READ THE NAME OF THE MISTRESS OF ENJOLRAS

COURFEYRAC, seated on a stone by the side of Enjolras, continued to insult the cannon; and each time that the gloomy shower of projectiles called grape-shot passed with its monstrous noise, he greeted it with a burst of irony.

"You waste your breath, my old poor brute. I feel sorry for you; your row is thrown away. That is not thunder; that's a cough."

And those around him laughed.

Courfeyrac and Bossuet, whose valiant good-humor increased with danger, made up for want of food, like Madame Scarron, with jests; and as wine was short, they poured out gayety for all.

"I admire Enjolras," said Bossuet. "His temerity amazes me. He lives alone, which, perhaps, renders him a little sad; Enjolras complains of his greatness which binds him to widowhood. We fellows have all, more or less, mis-

tresses, who drive us mad,— that is to say, make us brave. When a man is as much in love as a tiger, the least he can do is to fight like a lion. That is one way of avenging ourselves for the tricks which our girls play us. Roland gets killed to plague Angelica; all our heroism comes from our women. A man without a woman is like a pistol without a trigger; it is the woman who makes the man go off. Well, Enjolras has no woman. He is not in love, and yet he finds means to be intrepid. It is extraordinary that a man can be as cold as ice and as bold as fire."

Enjolras did not appear to listen; but any one who stood near him might have heard him murmur, in a low voice: "Patria."

Bossuet was still laughing, when Courfeyrac shouted:

"Here's something fresh."

And assuming the tone of a groom of the chambers announcing a visitor, he added: —

"Mr. Eight-pounder."

In fact, a new character had come upon the stage. It was a second piece of artillery.

The gunners rapidly got it into position in line with the first. This was the beginning of the end.

A few minutes later, both guns, actively served, were at work against the barricade; the platoon fire of the line and the soldiers from the suburbs supported the artillery.

Another cannonade was audible some distance off. At the same time that the two guns furiously assaulted the redoubt in the Rue de la Chanvrerie, two other pieces placed in position, one in the Rue St. Denis, the other in the Rue Aubrey-le-Boucher, were riddling the St. Merry barricade. The four guns echoed each other mournfully. The barking of these grim dogs of war responded to each other.

Of the two guns now pounding the barricade in the Rue de la Chanvrerie, one fired shell and the other solid shot. The gun which fired shot was pointed a little high, and the aim was so calculated that the ball struck the extreme edge of the topmost crest of the barricade, shot away fragments, and

crumbled the paving-stones on the heads of the insurgents, amid bursts of grape-shot. This mode of firing was intended to drive the combatants from the top of the redoubt, and to compel them to close up in the interior,— that is to say, it announced the assault. The combatants once driven from the top of the barricade by shot, and from the windows of the public-house by canister, the attacking columns might venture into the street without being picked off, perhaps without even being seen, might suddenly scale the redoubt, as on the previous evening, and, who knows? take it by surprise.

"We must absolutely reduce the annoyance of those guns," said Enjolras; and he shouted: "Fire at the artillery-men."

All were ready. The barricade, which had so long been silent, was belted with flame; seven or eight rounds succeeded each other with a sort of rage and joy. The street was filled with blinding smoke, and in a few minutes, through the mist, all streaked with flame, two-thirds of the artillery-men were vaguely seen lying under the gun-wheels. Those who remained standing continued to serve the guns with stern tranquillity, but the firing was slackened.

"Things are going well," said Bossuet to Enjolras. "Success!"

Enjolras shook his head, and replied: —

"Another quarter of an hour of such success and there will not be a dozen cartridges left in the barricade."

It appears that Gavroche heard this remark.

CHAPTER XV

GAVROCHE OUTSIDE

COURFEYRAC all at once perceived somebody in the street, at the foot of the barricade, amid the shower of bullets.

Gavroche had fetched a hamper from the pot-house, passed

through the gap, and was quietly engaged in emptying into his basket the full cartridge-boxes of the National Guards killed on the slope of the redoubt.

"What are you doing there?" said Courfeyrac.

Gavroche looked up:—

"Citizen, I am filling my hamper."

"Do you not see the grape-shot?"

Gavroche replied: "Well, it is raining. What then?"

Courfeyrac cried: "Come in!"

"Directly," said Gavroche. And with one bound he was in the street.

It will be borne in mind that Fannicot's company, in retreating, left behind it a trail of corpses. Some twenty dead bodies lay here and there on the pavement all along the street.

Twenty cartridge-boxes for Gavroche, and a stock of cartridges for the barricade.

The smoke lay in the street like a fog. Any one who has seen a cloud in a mountain gorge, between two steep cliffs, can form an idea of this smoke, compressed, and, as it were, condensed by two dark lines of tall houses. It rose slowly, and was incessantly renewed, whence came a gradual obscurity, which dimmed even broad daylight. The combatants could scarcely see each other from one end of the street to the other, short as it was.

This darkness, probably desired and calculated on by the leaders who were to direct the assault on the barricade, was useful to Gavroche. Under the cloak of the smoke, and thanks to his small size, he was enabled to advance a considerable distance along the street unnoticed. He plundered the first seven or eight cartridge-boxes without any great danger.

He crawled flat on his stomach, galloped on all-fours, took his hamper in his teeth, writhed, glided, undulated, wound from one corpse to another and emptied the cartridge-box as a monkey opens a nut.

No one shouted to him from the barricade, which was still

quite close, to return, for fear of attracting attention to him. On one corpse, that of a corporal, he found a powder-flask.

"For thirst," he said, as he put it in his pocket.

By dint of moving forward, he at length reached a point where the fog of the fire became transparent. The sharp-shooters of the line drawn up on the alert behind their parapet of paving-stones, and the sharp-shooters from the suburbs massed at the corner of the street, all at once pointed out to each other something stirring in the smoke.

At the moment when Gavroche was relieving a sergeant lying near a post of his cartridges, a bullet struck the corpse.

"Oh, for shame!" said Gavroche; "they are killing my dead for me."

A second bullet struck a spark from the paving-stones close to him. A third upset his hamper.

Gavroche looked and saw that it came from the National Guards. He sprang up, his hair floating in the breeze, his hands on his hips, his eyes fixed on the National Guards who were firing, and he sang:—

"You are ugly at Nanterre;
'Tis the fault of Voltaire.
And dull at Palaisseau,
'Tis the fault of Rousseau."

Then he picked up his hamper, replaced the cartridges which had fallen from it, without missing one, and advancing toward the firing party, began to plunder another cartridge-box. There a fourth bullet again missed him. Gavroche sang:—

"For law I do not care;
'Tis the fault of Voltaire.
I am a careless crow;
'Tis the fault of Rousseau."

A fifth bullet only succeeded in drawing from him a third couplet:—

"Misery's my daily wear;
'Tis the fault of Voltaire.
I laugh where'er I go;
'Tis the fault of Rousseau."

Thus it went on for some time.

The sight was at once terrific and charming. Gavroche, while fired at, ridiculed the firing. He seemed to be greatly amused. He was like a sparrow pecking at the sportsmen. He answered each discharge by a couplet. The troops fired at him incessantly, and always missed him. The National Guards and the soldiers laughed as they took aim at him. He lay down, then rose again, hid himself in a doorway, then bounded forth, disappeared, re-appeared, took to his heels, came back, replied to the grape-shot with his thumb at his nose and all the while, stole cartridges, emptied cartridge-boxes, and filled his hamper. The insurgents, panting with anxiety, followed him with their eyes. While the barricade trembled, he sang. He was not a child, he was not a man; he was a strange goblin imp. He seemed like the invulnerable dwarf of the combat. The bullets chased him, but he was more nimble than they. He played a frightful game of hide-and-seek with death. Every time that the snub-nosed face of the spectre approached, the gutter-snipe gave it a fillip.

One bullet, however, better aimed or more treacherous than the others, at length struck the will-o'-the-wisp lad. Gavroche was seen to totter and then sink. The whole barricade uttered a cry. But there was an Antæus in that pygmy; for a gutter-snipe to touch the pavement is the same as for a giant to touch the earth. Gavroche had only fallen to rise again. He remained in a sitting posture, a long stream of blood ran down his face, he raised both arms in the air, looked in the direction whence the shot had come, and began to sing:—

"I've fallen flat, I swear;
'Tis the fault of Voltaire.
My nose in the gutter, oh, ho!
'Tis the fault of —"

He did not finish. A second shot from the same marksman stopped him short. This time he fell face downward on the pavement, and moved no more. That great little soul had fled away.

CHAPTER XVI

HOW A BROTHER BECOMES A FATHER

AT this very same moment, in the Luxembourg garden,—for the eye of the drama must be everywhere present,—two children were holding each other by the hand. One might have been seven years old, the other five. As they were wet through with the rain, they walked along sunshiny paths. The elder led the younger; both were in rags and pale. They looked like wild birds. The younger said: "I am very hungry."

The elder, who had already a protecting air, led his brother with the left hand, and had a switch in his right.

They were alone in the garden, which was deserted, as the gates were closed by police order, on account of the insurrection. The troops who had bivouacked there had issued forth for the exigencies of the combat.

How came those children there? Perhaps they had escaped from some guard-room where the door was left ajar; perhaps in the vicinity, at the Barrière, l'Enfer, on the esplanade of the observatory, or at the neighbouring cross-roads overshadowed by the cornice, on which may be read, "Invenerunt parvulum pannis involutum," there was some mountebank's booth from which they had fled; perhaps they had on the previous evening evaded the eye of the keepers of the garden at the hour of closing, and had spent the night in one of those sentry-boxes where people read the papers. The fact is, that they were wandering about and seemed to be free. To be a wanderer, and to appear free, is to be lost. These poor little creatures were indeed lost.

These two children were the same concerning whom Gavroche had been so troubled, as the reader will remember. Sons of Thénardier let out to Magnon, attributed to M. Gillenormand, and now leaves fallen from all these rootless branches, and rolled along the ground by the wind.

Their clothes, clean in the time of Magnon, and which served her as a prospectus to M. Gillenormand, had become rags.

These beings henceforth belonged to the statistics of "abandoned children," whom the police pick up, take note of, lose, and find again on the pavements of Paris.

It needed the confusion of such a day as this for these two poor little wretches to be in this garden. If the keepers had noticed them, they would have driven out those rags. Poor little lads do not enter public gardens; yet we should remember that, as children, they have a right to flowers.

They were there, thanks to the locked gates. They were there contrary to rules. They had slipped into the garden and remained there. Though locked gates do not give a holiday to the keepers, and their watch is supposed to continue, it slackens and takes a rest; and the keepers, also affected by public alarms, and more busied about the outside than the inside, did not look at the garden, and had not seen the two delinquents.

It had rained on the previous evening, and even slightly in the morning. But in June, showers are of no great consequence. People hardly perceive, an hour after a storm, that the bright and beauteous day has wept. The earth in summer dries as rapidly as a child's cheek.

At this period of the solstice the full light of noon is, so to speak, all pervasive. It seizes everything. It clings to and spreads itself over the earth with a sort of suction. We might say that the sun is thirsty. A shower is a glass of water; a rain-storm is at once drunk up. In the morning everything was dripping; in the afternoon everything is dusty.

Nothing is so worthy of admiration as verdure washed

by the rain and dried by the sun; it is warm freshness. Gardens and fields, having water at their roots and sunshine on their flowers, become censers of incense, and steam with all their perfumes at once. Everything laughs, sings, and offers itself. We feel a sweet intoxication. Spring is a temporary paradise; the sun helps man to be patient.

There are beings who ask no more,— living creatures who, having the blue of heaven, say: "It is enough;" dreamers absorbed in the marvel, drawing from the idolatry of Nature indifference to good and evil, contemplators of the Cosmos, radiantly forgetful of man, who do not understand how people can trouble themselves about the hunger of one person, the thirst of another, the nudity of the poor man in winter, the lymphatic curvature of a small backbone, the truckle bed, the garret, the cell, and the rags of shivering young girls, when they can dream under the trees,— peaceful and terrible souls, pitilessly satisfied. Strange to say, infinitude suffices them. They ignore that great want of man, the finite, which admits of an embrace. They do not dream of the finite which admits of progress,— sublime toil. The indefinite, which springs from the divine and human combination of the infinite and the finite, escapes them. Provided that they can be face to face with immensity, they smile. They never feel joy, but always ecstasy. Their life is one of abstraction. The history of humanity is to them but a detail. All is not there; the true All lies outside.— Why trouble one's self about that item, man? Man suffers, it is possible; but just look at Aldebaran rising!— The mother has no milk, the new-born babe is dying. I know nothing of all that; but just look at this marvellous rosette made by a slice of hawthorn stem, seen through a microscope! Just compare the finest Mechlin lace with that!— These thinkers forget to love. The zodiac has such an attraction over them that it prevents their seeing the weeping child. God eclipses their souls. This is a class of minds at once great and small. Homer belonged to it, so did Goethe, and possibly La Fontaine,— magnificent egotists of the infinite,

calm spectators of sorrow, who do not see Nero if the weather be fine; from whom the sun hides the pyre; who would look on at a guillotining to seek for an effect of light; who hear neither cries nor sobs, nor the death-rattle, nor the tocsin; to whom everything is good, since there is a month of May; who so long as they have clouds of purple and gold above their heads declare themselves satisfied; and who are determined to be happy until the radiance of the stars and the song of the birds are exhausted.

These are dark radiances. They do not suspect that they are to be pitied, but they certainly are. The man who does not weep does not see. We must admire and pity them, as we would pity and admire a being at once night and day, who had no eyes under his brows, but a star in the centre of his forehead.

The indifference of these thinkers is, according to some, supreme philosophy. Be it so; but in this superiority there is infirmity. A man may be immortal and yet limp,— witness Vulcan. One may be more than man and less than man. There is immense incompleteness in Nature. Who knows whether the sun be not blind?

But in that case, whom are we to trust? "Solem quis dicere falsum audeat?" Thus, certain geniuses themselves, certain Very Lofty humans,— men-stars,— may be mistaken. That which is above, at the summit, at the zenith, which pours so much light on the earth, may see but little, see badly, see not at all. Is not this a desperate state of affairs? No. But what is there, then, above the sun? God.

On June 6, 1832, about eleven in the forenoon, the Luxembourg, solitary and depopulated, was delicious. The quincunxes and flower-beds sent balm and bewilderment into the sunlight. The branches, wild with the brilliancy of midday, seemed trying to embrace each other. There was in the sycamores a twittering of linnets, the sparrows were triumphant, and the woodpeckers crept along the chestnuts, giving little pecks to the holes in the bark. The flower-beds accepted the legitimate royalty of the lilies; the most august

of perfumes is that which issues from whiteness. The spicy odour of carnations filled the air. The old rooks of Marie de Medicis made love in the lofty trees. The sun gilded, crimsoned, and illumined the tulips, which are nothing but all the varieties of flame made into flowers. All around the tulip-beds hummed the bees,— the sparks of those flower-flames. All was grace and gayety, even the coming shower; that relapse, by which the lilies-of-the-valley and honey-suckles would profit, had nothing alarming about it. The swallows indulged in the delicious threat of flying low. Everything there breathed in happiness; life had a pleasant perfume; all Nature exhaled candour, help, assistance, paternity, caresses, and dawn. The thoughts that fell from heaven were as soft as a little child's hand when we kiss it.

The statues under the trees, white and bare, were robed in dresses of shadow shot with light; these goddesses were all ragged with sunshine. Rays hung from them on all sides. Around the great fountain the earth was already so dry as to be parched. There was sufficient breeze to create small riots of dust here and there. A few yellow leaves left over from last autumn, joyously pursued each other, and seemed to be sporting.

The abundance of light had something strangely reassuring about it. Life, sap, heat, and odours overflowed. The immensity of the source was perceptible beneath creation. In all these blasts, permeated with love, in these changing reflections and reverberations, in this lavish expenditure of rays, in this indefinite outpouring of liquid gold, the prodigality of the inexhaustible was felt; and behind this splendour, as behind a curtain of flame, glimpses of God, that millionaire of stars, were caught.

Thanks to the sand, there was not a speck of mud; thanks to the rain, there was not a grain of dust. The blossoms had just been bathed; and all the velvets, all the satins, all the varnish, and all the gold which issue from the earth in the shape of flowers, were irreproachable. This magnificence was free from stain. The grand silence of happy Na-

ture filled the garden,— a heavenly silence, compatible with a thousand strains of music, the cooing from the nests, the buzzing of swarms, and the flutter of the wind. The whole harmony of the season was blended into a gracious whole,— the entrances and exits of spring took place in the desired order; the lilacs were ending and the jessamine beginning; a few flowers were behindhand; a few insects before their time; the vanguard of the red butterflies of June fraternized with the rear-guard of the white butterflies of May; the plane-trees were putting on a fresh skin; the breeze made waves in the magnificent enormity of the chestnut-trees. It was splendid. A veteran from the adjoining barracks, who was looking through the railings, said: "Spring is presenting arms, in full-dress uniform."

All Nature was breakfasting; creation was at table. It was the hour. The great blue cloth was laid in heaven, and the great green cloth on earth. The sun shone brightly. God was serving the universal meal. Every being had its pasture or its pasty. The wood-pigeon found hemp-seed, the greenfinch found millet, the goldfinch found chickweed, the red breast found worms, the bee found flowers, the fly found infusoria, and the swallow found flies. They certainly devoured each other to some extent, which is the mystery of evil mingled with good; but not one of them all had an empty stomach.

The two poor abandoned boys had reached the great fountain, and somewhat confused by all this light, they tried to hide,— the instinct of the poor and the weak in the presence of magnificence, even when it is impersonal,— and they kept behind the swans' house.

Now and then at intervals, when the wind blew, confused shouts, a dull roar, a sort of noisy death-rattle, which was musketry, and dull blows, which were cannon-shots, could be heard. There was smoke above the roofs in the direction of the Markets. A bell, which seemed to be calling, rang in the distance.

The children did not seem to notice the noises. The lit-

tle one repeated every now and then, in a low voice: "I am hungry."

Almost simultaneously with the two boys, another couple approached the basin,— a man about fifty, leading by the hand a boy of six. It was doubtless a father with his son. The little man of six had a big cake.

At this period certain houses adjoining the river, in the Rue Madame and the Rue d'Enfer, had keys to the Luxembourg garden, by which the lodgers could let themselves in when the gates were locked; but this permission has since been withdrawn. This father and son evidently came from one of these houses.

The two poor little creatures saw "this gentleman" coming and hid themselves a little more.

He was a tradesman. Perhaps the same whom Marius, through his love-fever, one day heard near the same great basin, counselling his son "to avoid excesses." He had an affable and haughty air, and a mouth, which, as it did not close, always smiled. This mechanical smile, produced by too much jaw and too little skin, shows the teeth rather than the soul.

The boy with his cake, which he had bitten but not finished, seemed uncomfortably full. The boy was dressed in a National Guard's uniform, on account of the riots, and the father remained in civilian garb for the sake of prudence.

Father and son halted near the great basin, in which the two swans were disporting. This tradesman seemed to have a special admiration for the swans. He resembled them, in that he walked like them.

For the moment the swans were swimming, which is their principal talent, and they were superb.

Had the two poor little fellows listened, and been of an age to comprehend, they might have overheard the remarks of a serious man. The father said to his son: "The sage lives content with little. Look at me, my son. I do not care for luxury. You never see me in a coat glisten-

ing with gold and precious stones. I leave that false lustre to badly organized minds."

Here the deep shout which came from the direction of the Markets broke out, with redoubled bells and noise.

"What is that?" asked the lad.

The father replied:—

"That is the Saturnalia."

All at once he perceived the two ragged little boys standing motionless behind the green-painted house of the swans.

"There is the beginning," said he. And, after a pause, he added: "Anarchy has entered this garden."

Meantime, the boy bit his cake, spat it out again, and suddenly began to cry.

"Why are you crying?" asked the father.

"I am not hungry," said the boy.

The father's smile became more marked than ever.

"You need not be hungry to eat a cake."

"I am tired of cake. It is dry."

"Don't you want any more?"

"No."

The father showed him the swans.

"Throw it to those palmipeds."

The boy hesitated. If he did not want any more cake, that was no reason for giving it away.

The father continued:—

"Be humane. You ought to be kind to animals." And, taking the cake from his son, he threw it into the basin.

It fell quite near the bank. The swans were some distance off, at the centre of the basin, engaged with some prey. They had seen neither the man nor the cake.

The man, feeling that the cake ran a risk of being lost, and moved by this useless shipwreck, began a telegraphic agitation, which eventually attracted the attention of the swans.

They saw something floating on the surface, tacked, like the vessels that they are, and came toward the cake slowly, with the majesty that befits white creatures.

"Swans [1] understand signs," [2] said the tradesman, pleased at his own cleverness.

At this moment the distant tumult of the city was again suddenly increased. This time it was sinister. Some blasts of wind speak more distinctly than others. The one which blew at this moment distinctly brought on its wings the roll of drums, shouts, platoon fires, and the mournful replies of the tocsin and the cannon. This coincided with a black cloud which suddenly veiled the sun.

The swans had not yet reached the cake.

"Let us go home," said the father; "they are attacking the Tuileries."

He seized his son's hand again. Then he continued:

"From the Tuileries to the Luxembourg there is only the distance which separates royalty from the peerage; that is not far. It is going to rain musketry." He looked at the cloud. "And perhaps we shall have rain of another sort, too. Heaven is joining in. The younger branch is condemned. Let us make haste home."

"I should like to see the swans eat the cake," said the boy.

"That would be imprudent," answered the father. And he led away his little tradesman.

The son, regretting the swans, turned his head toward the basin, until an elbow of the quincunxes concealed it from him.

Meanwhile, the two little vagabonds had approached the cake at the same time as the swans. It was floating on the water. The smaller boy looked at the cake. The other looked at the retreating tradesman.

Father and son entered the labyrinth of paths that lead to the grand staircase by the clump of trees in the direction of the Rue Madame.

When they were no longer in sight, the elder boy hurriedly lay down flat on his stomach on the rounding edge of the basin, and, holding to it with his left hand, bending over

[1] Cygnes. [2] Signes.

the water till he all but fell in, he stretched out his switch toward the cake with the other hand. The swans, seeing the enemy, hastened up; and as they hastened, their breasts produced an effect favourable to the little fisher. The water flowed back in front of the swans, and one of these gentle, concentric waves softly impelled the cake toward the boy's switch. When the swans reached it, the stick touched the cake. The lad gave a quick blow, startled the swans, seized the cake, and sprang up. The cake was soaked; but they were hungry and thirsty. The elder boy divided the cake into two parts,— a large one and a small one,— kept the small one for himself, and gave the larger piece to his brother, saying:—

"Shove that into your bread-basket."

CHAPTER XVII

MORTUUS PATER FILIUM MORITURUM EXPECTAT

MARIUS rushed out of the barricade. Combeferre followed him. But it was too late. Gavroche was dead. Combeferre brought in the basket of cartridges. Marius carried the boy.

Alas! he thought, he was returning to the son what the father had done for his father,— only Thénardier had brought his father back alive. He brought the boy back dead.

When Marius re-entered the redoubt with Gavroche in his arms, his face was bathed with blood, like the boy's face.

At the instant when he stooped to pick up Gavroche, a bullet had grazed his skull; he had not noticed it.

Courfeyrac took off his neckcloth and bound Marius's forehead.

Gavroche was laid on the same table with Mabœuf, and

the black shawl was spread over both bodies. It was large enough for the old man and the child.

Combeferre distributed the cartridges which he had brought in. This gave each man fifteen rounds to fire.

Jean Valjean was still in the same place, motionless on his stone post. When Combeferre offered him his fifteen cartridges, he shook his head.

"That is a strange eccentric," said Combeferre, in a low voice to Enjolras. "He manages not to fight inside this barricade."

"Which does not prevent him from defending it," answered Enjolras.

"Heroism has its originals," resumed Combeferre.

And Courfeyrac, who overheard him, said:—

"He is a different sort from Father Mabœuf."

It is a thing worth mentioning, that the fire which struck the barricade scarcely disturbed the interior. Those who have never passed through the tornado of a warfare of this nature can form no idea of the singular moments of calm mingled with these convulsions. Men come and go; they talk, they jest, they idle. A friend of ours heard a combatant say to him, in the midst of the grape-shot: "This is like being at a bachelor's breakfast." The redoubt in the Rue de la Chanvrerie, we repeat, seemed very calm within. All changes and all phases were, or would shortly be, exhausted. From critical, the position had become menacing, and from menacing was probably about to become desperate. In proportion as the situation grew darker, a heroic light reddened the barricade more and more. Enjolras, who was grave, commanded it, in the attitude of a young Spartan, vowing his naked sword to the sombre genius, Epidotas.

Combeferre, an apron tied round his waist, was dressing the wounded. Bossuet and Feuilly were making cartridges with the powder-flask found by Gavroche on the dead corporal, and Bossuet was saying to Feuilly: "We shall soon take the stage-coach for another planet." Courfeyrac, seated on a few paving-stones which he had reserved for himself

near Enjolras, was preparing and arranging an entire arsenal,— his sword-cane, his gun, two holster-pistols, and a club,— with the minute care of a girl setting a small lace frill in order. Jean Valjean was silently staring at the opposite wall. A workman was fastening Mother Hucheloup's broad-brimmed straw bonnet on his head, with a piece of string, "for fear of sun-stroke," as he said. The young men of the Aix Cougourde were gayly chatting together, as if anxious to talk their native dialect for the last time. Joly, who had taken down Widow Hucheloup's mirror, was examining his tongue in it. A few combatants, who had discovered some mouldy crusts of bread in a drawer, were eating them greedily. Marius was anxious about what his father would say to him.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE VULTURE BECOMES THE VICTIM

WE must lay stress upon a psychological fact peculiar to barricades. Nothing which characterizes this surprising war of the streets should be omitted.

Whatever the strange inward tranquillity to which we have just referred may be, the barricade does not the less remain a vision for those who are inside it.

There is something of an apocalypse in civil war. All the mists of the unknown world are mingled with those fierce flashes. Revolutions are sphinxes, and any one who has stood behind a barricade believes that he has gone through a dream.

What is felt in these plots we have shown in the matter of Marius, and we shall see the consequences thereof. It is more and it is less than life. On leaving a barricade, a man no longer knows what he has seen there. He may have been

terrible, but he is ignorant of the fact. He has been surrounded there by conflicting ideas which possessed human faces; he has seen them in the light of futurity. There were corpses laid low, and phantoms standing upright. The hours were colossal, and seemed hours of eternity. Such a man has lived in death. Shadows have passed him by. What was it? He has seen hands on which there was blood. There war a deafening din, but at the same time a startling silence; there were open mouths that cried, and other open mouths which were silent, and men were surrounded by smoke, perhaps by night. He fancied he had touched the sinister ooze of unknown depths; he stares at something red on his nails. He no longer recollects anything.

Let us return to the Rue de la Chanvrerie.

Suddenly, between two discharges, the distant sound of a clock striking the hour was heard.

"It is midday," said Combeferre.

The twelve strokes had not died out when Enjolras drew himself up to his full height, and from the top of the barricade hurled the loud cry:—

"Take paving-stones into the house. Line the window-ledges with them. Half the men to the stones, the other half to their guns. There is not a moment to lose."

A party of sappers and miners, axe on shoulder, had just appeared in battle array at the end of the street.

This could only be the head of a column; and of what column? Evidently, the attacking column. The sappers and miners ordered to demolish the barricade always precede the troops told off to scale it.

It was plain that they were on the verge of that moment which M. Clermont-Tonnerre called in 1822, "the tug of war."

Enjolras's order was carried out with that correct haste peculiar to ships and barricades,—the only two battle-fields whence escape is impossible. In less than a minute two-thirds of the paving-stones which Enjolras had ordered to be piled up against the door of Corinth were carried to the

first-floor and attic; and before a second minute had passed, these paving-stones, artistically laid one on another, walled up the window on the first-floor and the windows in the roof to half their height. A few spaces, carefully arranged by Feuilly, the chief constructor, allowed the gun-barrels to pass through. This armament of the windows was the more easily effected because the grape-shot had ceased. The two cannon were now firing solid shot at the centre of the barricade, in order to make a hole, and, if possible, a breach for the assault.

When the stones intended for the final defence were in their place. Enjolras carried to the first-floor the bottles he had placed under the table on which Mabœuf lay.

"Who will drink that?" asked Bossuet.

"They will," answered Enjolras.

Then the ground-floor window was also barricaded and the iron cross bars which closed the door of the tavern at night were held in readiness.

The fortress was complete; the barricade was the rampart and the wine-shop the keep.

With the paving-stones left over, the exit was stopped up.

As the defenders of a barricade are always obliged to be sparing with their ammunition, and as the besiegers are aware of this fact, the latter make their arrangements with a sort of irritating leisure, expose themselves prematurely to the fire, though more apparently than in reality, and take their ease. The preparations for attack are always made with a certain methodical slowness; after that the thunder falls.

This slowness enabled Enjolras to revise and render everything perfect. He felt that since such men were about to die, their death must be a masterpiece.

He said to Marius:—

"We are the two chiefs. I will give the final orders inside. Do you remain outside and watch."

Marius posted himself on the alert on the crest of the barricade.

Enjolras had the door of the kitchen, which, it will be remembered, served as an ambulance, nailed up.

"No spattering of the wounded," he said.

He gave his final instructions in the ground-floor room in a curt, but wonderfully calm voice. Feuilly listened and answered in the name of all.

"Have axes ready on the first-floor to cut away the stairs. Have you them?"

"Yes," answered Feuilly.

"How many?"

"Two axes and a cleaver."

"Very good. Twenty-six fighting-men are left. How many guns are there?"

"Thirty-four."

"Eight too many. Keep those eight guns loaded like the others, and within reach. Place your sabres and pistols in your belts. Twenty men to the barricade. Six will lie in ambush in the garret and at the first-floor window, to fire on the assailants through the loop-holes in the paving-stones. Let not a single workman stand idle. Presently, when the drummer sounds the charge, let the twenty men below rush to the barricade. The first to arrive will be the best placed."

These arrangements made, he turned to Javert, and said:—

"I have not forgotten you."

And, laying a pistol on the table, he added:—

"The last man to leave this room will blow out that spy's brains."

"Here?" asked a voice.

"No, let us not mix his corpse with ours. It is easy to stride over the small barricade in Mondétour Lane. It is only four feet high. The man is securely bound. Lead him there and execute him."

Some one was at this moment even more unmoved than Enjolras; it was Javert.

Here Jean Valjean appeared. He had mingled with

the group of insurgents. He stepped forward and said to Enjolras:—

"Are you the commandant?"

"Yes."

"You thanked me just now."

"In the name of the republic. The barricade has two saviours,—Marius Pontmercy and yourself."

"Do you think that I deserve a reward?"

"Certainly."

"Well, then, I ask one."

"What is it?"

"To blow out that man's brains myself."

Javert raised his head, saw Jean Valjean, gave a scarcely perceptible start, and said: "That is fair."

As for Enjolras, he was reloading his gun. He looked around him.

"Any objections?"

And he turned to Jean Valjean: "Take the spy."

Jean Valjean took possession of Javert by seating himself on the end of the table. He seized the pistol, and a faint click showed that he had cocked it.

Almost at the same moment the bugle-call was heard.

"Mind yourselves!" shouted Marius from the top of the barricade.

Javert began to laugh that noiseless laugh peculiar to him, and looking intently at the insurgents, he said:

"You are no better off than I am."

"All out!" cried Enjolras.

The insurgents rushed tumultuously forth; and as they passed, Javert smote them on the back, so to speak, with the expression: "We shall meet again soon."

CHAPTER XIX

THE VENGEANCE OF JEAN VALJEAN

WHEN Jean Valjean was alone with Javert, he undid the rope which fastened the prisoner round the waist, the knot of which was under the table. After this he made him a sign to rise.

Javert obeyed with that indefinable smile, in which the supremacy of enchained authority is condensed.

Jean Valjean seized Javert by the martingale, as he might have taken a beast of burden by its halter, and dragging him after him, quitted the wine-shop slowly; for Javert, having his feet hobbled, could take only very short steps.

Jean Valjean held the pistol in his hand.

Thus they crossed the inner square of the barricade. The insurgents, intent on the immediate attack, turned their backs.

Marius alone, placed on one side, at the extreme left of the barricade, saw them pass. This group of the victim and his executioner was illumined by the sepulchral light which filled his own soul.

Jean Valjean, with some difficulty, forced Javert to climb over the barricade, but did not relax his hold. When they had crossed the barrier, they found themselves alone in Mondétour Lane. No one could now see them. The jog formed by the houses hid them from the insurgents. The corpses removed from the barricade, formed a horrible pile a few paces from them. Among the dead they distinguished a livid face, dishevelled hair, a pierced hand, and the half-naked bosom of a woman. It was Eponine.

Javert looked askance at this dead girl, and said with profound calmness:—

"I fancy I know that girl."

Then he turned to Jean Valjean, who put the pistol under

his arm and fixed on Javert a glance which needed no words to say, "Javert, it is I."

Javert answered: "Take your revenge."

Jean Valjean took a knife from his pocket and opened it.

"A clasp-knife!" exclaimed Javert. "You are right. That suits you better."

Jean Valjean cut the martingale which Javert had around his neck, then he cut the ropes on his wrists, and then, stooping down, those on his feet; then rising again, he said: "You are free!"

It was not easy to astonish Javert. Still, master of himself though he was, he could not suppress his emotion. He stood gaping and motionless.

Jean Valjean continued:—

"I do not believe that I shall leave this place alive. Still, if by accident I do, I live under the name of Fauchelevent, at No. 7, Rue de l'Homme Armé."

Javert gave a tigerish snarl, which opened one corner of his mouth, and muttered between his teeth:—

"Take care!"

"Go!" said Jean Valjean.

Javert added:—

"You said Fauchelevent, Rue de l'Homme Armé?"

"No. 7."

Javert repeated in a low voice: "No. 7."

He rebuttoned his frock-coat, resumed the military stiffness between his shoulders, made a half turn, crossed his arms, rested his chin on one hand, and walked off in the direction of the Markets. Jean Valjean looked after him. After going a few yards, Javert turned and shouted:—

"You annoy me. I would sooner you killed me."

"Begone!" said Valjean.

Javert withdrew slowly. A moment after, he turned the corner of the Rue des Prêcheurs.

When Javert had disappeared, Jean Valjean discharged the pistol in the air.

Then he returned to the barricade, saying:—

"It is done."

This is what had taken place meantime. Marius, more occupied with the outside than the inside, had not hitherto attentively regarded the spy bound in the dark background of the ground-floor room.

When he saw him in open daylight, bestriding the barricade, on his way to death, he recognized him, and a sudden memory entered his mind. He remembered the inspector of the Rue Pontoise, and the two pistols he had given him, which he, Marius, had employed at this very barricade; and he not only remembered his face, but his name.

This recollection, however, was foggy and disturbed, like all his ideas.

It was not an affirmation that he made, so much as a question which he asked himself: "Is not that the police inspector who told me that his name was Javert?" Perhaps there was still time to interfere in that man's behalf. But first he must know whether it really was that same Javert.

Marius shouted to Enjolras, who had just stationed himself at the other end of the barricade:—

"Enjolras!"

"Well?"

"What is that man's name?"

"Which man?"

"The police agent. Do you know his name?"

"Of course I do. He told us."

"What is it?"

"Javert."

Marius started, but at that moment the pistol-shot was heard. Jean Valjean re-appeared, saying, "It is done." A dark chill ran through Marius's heart.

CHAPTER XX

THE DEAD ARE RIGHT AND THE LIVING ARE NOT WRONG

THE death-agony of the barricade was about to begin.

Everything added to the tragical majesty of this supreme moment,— a thousand mysterious sounds in the air; the breathing of armed masses set in motion in streets which could not be seen; the intermittent gallop of cavalry; the heavy rumble of artillery on the march; the platoon firing and the cannonading crossing each other in the labyrinth of Paris; the smoke of battle rising golden above the roofs; distant and vaguely terrible cries; flashes of menace everywhere; the tocsin of St. Merry, which now had the sound of a sob; the mildness of the season; the splendour of the sky full of sunshine and clouds; the beauty of the day; and the fearful silence of the houses. For, since the previous evening the two rows of houses in the Rue de la Chanvrerie had become two walls,— ferocious walls, with closed doors, closed windows, and closed shutters.

At that day, so different from the present time, when the hour came when the people wished to put an end to a situation which had lasted too long, to a charter granted or a country defined by law, not by nature, when universal wrath filled all the air, when the city consented to an upheaving of paving-stones, when insurrection made the middle classes smile by whispering its watchword in their ear, then the inhabitant, impregnated with riot, so to speak, was the auxiliary of the combatant, and the house fraternized with the improvised fortress which it supported. When the situation was not ripe, when the insurrection was not decidedly accepted, when the masses disowned the movement, it was all over with the combatants; the town was changed into a desert round the revolt, spirits grew cold, refuges

were walled up, and the street was turned into a defile to help the army to take the barricade.

A people cannot be compelled through surprise to move faster than it wishes. Woe to the man who tries to force its hand! A people will not put up with it. It then abandons the insurrection to itself. The insurgents become lepers. A house is a precipice, a door is a refusal, and a façade is a wall. This wall sees, hears, and will not. It might open and save you, but no; that wall is a judge. It looks at you and condemns you. What gloomy things are these closed houses! They seem dead though they are alive. Life, which is, as it were, suspended, clings to them. No one has come out for the last four-and-twenty hours, but no one is absent. In the interior of that rock, people come and go, retire to bed and rise again. They are in the bosom of their family; they eat and drink; they are afraid,—a terrible thing! Fear excuses this dreadful lack of hospitality; alarm offers extenuating circumstances. Sometimes even, and this has actually been seen, fear turns to passion, fright may be changed into fury, as prudence into rage; hence the profound remark: "None so mad as the moderate." There are flashes of supreme terror, from which passion issues like mournful smoke. "What do these people want? They are never satisfied. They compromise peaceable men. As if we had not had enough revolutions of this sort! What are they here for? Let them get out of it as they can. So much the worse for them. It is their fault. They have only got what they deserve. It does not concern us. Look at our poor street torn to pieces by cannon. They are a pack of scamps. Above all things, don't open the door." And the house assumes the aspect of a tomb. The insurgent dies a lingering death before that door. He sees the grape-shot and naked swords draw near. If he cries out, he knows there are those who hear him, but will not help him; there are walls which might protect him, and men who might save him; and those walls have ears of flesh, and those men have bowels of stone.

Whom shall we accuse?

Nobody and everybody.

The imperfect times in which we live.

It is always at its own risk and peril that Utopia is converted into insurrection, and becomes an armed protest instead of a philosophic protest,— a Pallas and no longer a Minerva.

The Utopia which grows impatient and becomes riot knows what awaits it; it almost always comes too soon. Then it resigns itself, and stoically accepts catastrophe in lieu of triumph. It serves, without complaining, even excusing them, those who deny it; and its magnanimity is to consent to abandonment. It is indomitable in the face of obstacles, and gentle in the face of ingratitude.

Is it ingratitude, after all?

Yes, from the universal point of view.

No, from the individual point of view.

Progress is the fashion of man. The general life of the human race is called Progress; and the collective pace of the human race is also called Progress. Progress moves onward. It makes the great terrestrial and human journey toward the celestial and divine. It has its halting places where it rallies the straying flock; it has its stations where it meditates, in the presence of some splendid Canaan suddenly unveiling its horizon; it has its nights when it sleeps; and it is one of the poignant anxieties of the thinker that he sees the shadow resting on the human soul, and gropes in darkness for that slumbering Progress, without being able to awaken it.

"Perhaps God is dead," said Gerard de Nerval one day to the writer of these lines, confounding progress with God, and taking the interruption of movement for the death of Being.

The man who despairs is wrong. Progress infallibly reawakens, and we might say that it moves, even when asleep, for it has grown. When we see it upright once more, we find that it is taller. To be always at rest depends no more on progress than on the river. Raise no barriers, throw in

no rocks; obstacles make water bubble and humanity boil. Hence come troubles; but after these troubles are past, we see that way has been made. Until order, which is nought else than universal peace, is established, until harmony and unity reign, progress will have revolutions for its halting-places.

What, then, is progress? We have just declared it,— the permanent life of the masses.

Now, it sometimes happens that the momentary life of individuals offers resistance to the eternal life of the human race.

Let us admit, without bitterness, that the individual has his distinct interests, and can, without felony, stipulate for those interests and defend them. The present has its pardonable amount of egotism; momentary life has its claims, and cannot be expected to sacrifice itself incessantly to the future. The generation which is in its turn passing over the earth is not forced to abridge its life for the sake of the generations, its equals after all, whose turn will come later on. "I exist," murmurs that some one, whose name is All. "I am young and in love, I am old and wish to rest, I am the father of a family, I work, I prosper, I do a good business, I have houses to let, I have money in government bonds, I am happy, I have wife and children, I like all this, I wish to live; leave me in peace." Hence, at certain hours, a profound chill falls upon the magnanimous vanguard of the human race.

Utopia, moreover, we confess, deserts its radiant sphere when it wages war. It, the truth of to-morrow, borrows its process, battle, from the falsehood of yesterday. It, the future, acts like the past. It, the pure idea, becomes an assault. It complicates its heroism with a violence for which it is but fair that it should answer,— a violence of opportunity and expediency, contrary to principles, and for which it is fatally punished. Utopia, when in a state of insurrection, fights with the old military code in its fist. It shoots spies, executes traitors, suppresses living beings, and hurls

them into unknown darkness. It makes use of death,— a serious thing. It seems as if Utopia no longer put faith in radiance,— its irresistible and incorruptible strength. It strikes with the sword. Now, no sword is simple. Every sword has two edges; the man who wounds with the one is himself wounded with the other.

This reservation made, and made with all severity, it is impossible for us not to admire, whether they succeed or no, the glorious combatants of the future,— the confessors of Utopia. Even when they fail, they are venerable; and it is perhaps in failure that they possess most majesty. Victory, when in accordance with progress, deserves the applause of the people; but heroic defeat merits their tenderness. The one is magnificent, the other sublime. To us, who prefer martyrdom to success, John Brown is greater than Washington, and Pisacane greater than Garibaldi.

Some one must take part with the conquered.

We are unjust to these great essayers of the future when they fail.

Revolutionists are accused of sowing terror. Every barricade seems an outrage. Their theories are incriminated, their object is suspected, their afterthought is apprehended, and their conscience is denounced. They are reproached with raising, erecting, and heaping up against the reigning social fact, a pile of miseries, griefs, iniquities, wrongs, and despair, and with tearing from the lowest depths masses of dark shadows to barricade themselves and combat therein. People shout to them: "You are unpaving hell!" They might answer: "That is why our barricade is made of good intentions."

The best thing, certainly, is the pacific solution. In short, let us agree, when we see the pavement, we think of the bear; and it is a good-will which alarms society. But it depends on society to save itself. It is to its own good-will that we appeal. No violent remedy is necessary. Study the evil amicably, prove its existence, then cure it; that is all we desire.

However this may be, those men, even when fallen, and especially then, are august, who at all points of the universe, with their eyes fixed on France, are struggling for the great work with the inflexible logic of the ideal. They give their life a free offering to progress; they accomplish the will of Providence; they perform a religious act. At the appointed hour, with as much disinterestedness as an actor who takes up his cue, they enter the tomb in obedience to the divine stage manager. They accept this hopeless combat and this stoical disappearance in order to bring about the splendid and supreme universal consequences of the magnificent human movement irresistibly begun on July 14. These soldiers are priests; the French Revolution is a deed of God.

Moreover, there are,— and it is proper to add this distinction to the distinctions already indicated in another chapter,— there are accepted insurrections which are called revolutions; and there are rejected revolutions which are called riots.

An insurrection which breaks out is an idea passing its examination in the presence of the people. If the people drop a black-ball, the idea is dry fruit. The insurrection is a mere skirmish.

To wage war at every appeal, and every time that Utopia desires it, is not the thing for the people. Nations have not always, and at all hours, the temperament of heroes and martyrs.

They are positive. *A priori*, insurrection is repugnant to them, in the first place, because it frequently results in catastrophe, and in the second place, because it always starts from an abstraction.

For, and this is fine, those who sacrifice themselves, do so for the ideal, and the ideal alone. An insurrection is an enthusiasm. Enthusiasm may become fury; hence the appeal to arms. But every insurrection which aims at a government or an administration aims higher. Thus, for instance, let us lay stress on the fact, what the chiefs of the insurrection of 1832, and especially the young enthusiasts of

the Rue de la Chanvrerie combated was not precisely Louis Philippe. The majority, when speaking openly, did justice to the qualities of this king who stood between monarchy and revolution; not one of them hated him. But they attacked the younger branch of the right divine in Louis Philippe, as they had attacked the elder branch in Charles X.; and what they wished to overthrow in overthrowing royalty in France, was, as we have explained, the usurpation of man over man, and of privilege over right throughout the universe. Paris without a king has as its consequence the world without despots. They reasoned in this way. Their object was doubtless remote, vague perhaps, and it shrank before the effort; but it was grand.

So it is. And men sacrifice themselves for these visions, which are almost always illusions for the sacrificed; but illusions with which, after all, the whole of human certainty is mingled.

The insurgent poeticizes and gilds insurrection. Men hurl themselves into these tragic affairs, intoxicating themselves with what they are about to do. Who knows? Perhaps they will succeed. They are the minority. They have an entire army against them; but they are defending the right, natural law, the sovereignty of each over himself, which allows of no abdication, justice, and truth, and, if necessary, they die like the three hundred Spartans. They do not think of Don Quixote, but of Leonidas. And they go straight onward; and, once the battle has begun, they do not shrink, but dash forward, head foremost, hoping for unprecedented victory, revolution completed, progress set free again, the aggrandizement of the human race, universal deliverance,— at the worst, a Thermopylæ.

These passages of arms for progress frequently suffer shipwreck, and we have explained the cause. The mob is restive against the impulse of paladins. The heavy masses, the multitudes, fragile because of their very weight, fear adventures; and there is a touch of adventure in the ideal.

Moreover, we must not forget that there are interests in the

way which are no great friends of the ideal and the sentimental. Sometimes the stomach paralyzes the heart.

The greatness and beauty of France are due to the fact that she does not put on flesh so fast as other nations. She knots the rope round her loins with greater facility. She is the first to wake and the last to fall asleep. She goes forward. She seeks. This is because she is an artist.

The ideal is nought else than the culminating point of logic, just as the beautiful is only the summit of the true. Artistic people are also consistent people. To love beauty is to see light. This is why the torch of Europe — that is to say, of civilization — was first borne by Greece, who passed it on to Italy, who passed it on to France. Divine, illuminating nations! *Vitæ lampada tradunt.*

It is an admirable thing that the poesy of a people is the element of its progress. The amount of civilization is measured by the amount of imagination. Still, a civilizing people should remain a manly people. Corinth, yes; but Sybaris, no. The man who grows effeminate becomes a bastard. A man must be neither a dilettante nor a virtuoso; but he should be artistic. In the matter of civilization, he must not refine but sublime. On that condition, the pattern of the ideal is given to the human race.

The modern ideal has its type in art and its means in science. It is by science that the august vision of the poet — social beauty — will be realized. Eden will be restored by A + B. At the point which civilization has now reached, the exact is a necessary element of the splendid. An artistic feeling is not only served but completed by the scientific organ; the dream must calculate. Art, which is the conqueror, should have science, which is the motor, as its base. The strength of the steed is an important factor. The modern mind is the genius of Greece, with the genius of India as its vehicle,— Alexander mounted on the elephant.

Races petrified in dogma, or demoralized by lucre, are unfit to guide civilization. Genuflection before the idol or the dollar destroys the muscles which walk and the will that moves,

Hieratic or mercantile absorption reduces the radiation of a people, lowers its horizon by lowering its level, and deprives it of that appreciation, at once human and divine, of the universal goal which renders nations missionaries. Babylon has no ideal; Carthage has no ideal. Athens and Rome have, and retain, even through all the nocturnal destiny of ages, a halo of civilization.

France is of the same quality, as a people, as Greece and Italy. She is Athenian in her love of beauty, and Roman in her love of grandeur. Besides, she is good. She is more often than other nations in the humour for devotion and sacrifice,— only, this humour takes her and leaves her. This is the great danger for those who run when she wishes merely to walk, or who walk when she wishes to halt. France has her relapses into materialism; and at certain seasons the ideas which obstruct that sublime brain have nothing that recalls French grandeur, and are of the dimensions of a Missouri or a South Carolina. What is to be done? The giantess plays the dwarf; immense France takes a notion to pettiness. That is all.

To this, there is nothing to be said. People, like planets, have the right to be eclipsed. And all is well, provided that light return, and the eclipse does not degenerate into night. Dawn and resurrection are synonymous. The reappearance of light is identical with the persistence of the Ego.

Let us state these facts calmly. Death on a barricade, or a tomb in exile, is an acceptable occasion for devotion. The true name of devotion is disinterestedness. Let the abandoned submit to abandonment, let the exiled submit to exile, and let us confine ourselves to imploring great nations not to retreat too far when they do retreat. Under the pretext of a return to reason, we must not go too far down the incline. Matter exists, the moment exists, interests exist, the stomach exists; but the stomach must not be the sole wisdom. Momentary life has its rights, we admit, but so has permanent life. Alas! the fact that we are mounted does not prevent a fall. We see this in history more frequently than

we could wish. A nation is illustrious; it tastes the ideal, then it bites the mud and finds it good; and if we ask it why it abandons Socrates for Falstaff, it replies: "Because I love statesmen."

One word before returning to the barricade.

A battle like that which we are now describing is only a convulsive effort toward the ideal. Impeded progress is sickly; it has these tragic attacks of epilepsy. This malady of progress — civil war — we have met as we passed along. It is one of the fatal phases, at once an act and an interlude, in that drama whose pivot is a social condemnation, and whose true title is *Progress.*

Progress!

This cry, which we raise so frequently, is our entire thought; and at the point in our drama which we have now reached, the idea which it contains having more than one trial yet to undergo, we may, perhaps, be permitted, even if we do not raise the veil, at least to let its light shine through clearly.

The book which the reader has before him at this moment is, from one end to the other, as a whole and in its details, whatever its intermissions, exceptions, and shortcomings may be, a progress from evil to good, from injustice to justice, from falsehood to truth, from night to day, from appetite to conscience, from corruption to life, from bestiality to duty, from hell to heaven, and from nothingness to God. The starting-point is matter; the terminus, the soul. The hydra at the beginning, the angel at the end.

CHAPTER XXI

THE HEROES

SUDDENLY the drum beat the charge.

The attack was a hurricane. On the previous evening the barricade had been approached silently, in the darkness, as by a boa. Now, in broad daylight, within this broad street, surprise was clearly impossible; besides, the armed force was unmasked, the cannon had begun to roar, and the troops rushed upon the barricade. Fury was now skill. A powerful column of line infantry, intersected at regular intervals by National Guards and dismounted Municipal Guards, and supported by serried masses, which were heard but not seen, filed into the street in double quick time, with drums beating, bugles braying, bayonets levelled, the sappers in front, and, imperturbable under the shower of projectiles, dashed straight at the barricade with all the weight of a bronze battering-ram. The wall held firm.

The insurgents fired impetuously. The barricade once scaled, displayed a flashing mane. The attack was so violent that it was for a moment flooded with assailants: but it shook off the soldiers as the lion does the dogs, and it was only covered with besiegers as the cliff is with foam, to re-appear, a minute later, steep, black, and formidable.

The column, compelled to fall back, remained massed in the street, exposed but terrible, and answered the redoubt by a tremendous musketry-fire. Any one who has seen fireworks will remember the piece composed of a cross-fire of lightnings, which is called a bouquet. Imagine this bouquet, no longer vertical but horizontal, bearing at the end of each jet of flame, a bullet, a slug, or an iron shell, and scattering death from its clusters of lightning. The barricade was beneath it.

On either side, was equal resolution. The bravery shown there was almost barbarous, and was complicated by a sort of

heroic ferocity which began with self-sacrifice. It was the epoch when a National Guard fought like a Zouave. The troops desired to make an end of it; insurrection wished to prolong the struggle. The acceptance of death in the height of youth and health converts intrepidity into frenzy. Every man in this action felt the aggrandizement of the final hour. The street was strewed with corpses.

The barricade had Marius at one of its ends and Enjolras at the other. Enjolras, who carried the whole barricade in his head, reserved and sheltered himself; three soldiers fell one after the other, under his loop-hole, without even seeing him. Marius fought unprotected. He made himself a mark. More than half his body rose above the top of the redoubt. There is no greater spendthrift than a miser who takes the bit between his teeth; no man is more terrible in action than a dreamer. Marius was formidable and pensive. He moved through battle as through a dream. He seemed like a ghost handling a musket.

The cartridges of the besieged were exhausted; not so their sarcasms. In this tornado of the tomb in which they stood, they laughed.

Courfeyrac was bareheaded.

"What have you done with your hat?" asked Bossuet.

Courfeyrac answered: "They have carried it away at last with cannon-balls."

Or they made haughty comments.

"Can you understand," bitterly exclaimed Feuilly, "those men" (and he mentioned names, well-known and even celebrated names, some belonging to the old army) "who promised to join us and swore to aid us, and who pledged their honour, and who are our generals, and who abandon us?"

Combeferre contented himself with replying with a grave smile: —

"There are people who observe the rules of honour as men observe the stars,— from a great distance."

The interior of the barricade was so sown with torn cartridges that it seemed as if there had been a snowstorm.

The assailants had the advantage of numbers; the insurgents, of position. They were at the top of a wall, and overwhelmed at point-blank range the soldiers stumbling over the dead and wounded, and embarrassed by the steep ascent. This barricade, built as it was, and admirably buttressed, was really one of those situations where a handful of men may hold a legion in check. Still, the attacking column, constantly recruited and increasing beneath the shower of bullets, inexorably approached, and now, gradually, step by step, little by little, but surely, the army closed in upon the barricade as the screw does on the wine-press.

One assault followed another. The horror became constantly greater.

Then there broke out on that pile of paving-stones, in the Rue de la Chanvrerie, a struggle worthy of a wall of Troy. Those haggard, ragged, and exhausted men, who had not eaten for four-and-twenty hours, who had not slept, who had but a few more rounds to fire, who fumbled in their empty pockets for cartridges,— these men, nearly all wounded, with head or arm bound round with black blood-stained rags, with holes in their coats from which the blood flowed, scantily armed with wretched guns and old notched sabres, became Titans. The barricade was ten times approached, assaulted, scaled, and never captured. To form any idea of that contest, it would be necessary to imagine a heap of terrible courages set on fire, and then to watch the conflagration. It was not a combat; it was the interior of a furnace. Mouths breathed forth flames; faces were extraordinary. The human form seemed impossible there; the combatants flashed and flamed; and it was a fearful sight to see those salamanders of the fray flit to and fro in that red smoke.

The successive and simultaneous scenes of that tremendous butchery are beyond our power to depict. Epic poetry alone has the right to fill twelve thousand verses with a battle.

It seemed that inferno of Brahminism, the most terrible of the seventeen abysses, which the Veda calls the Forest of Swords.

They fought foot to foot, body to body; with pistol-shots, sabre-cuts, and fists; close by, at a distance, above, below, on all sides; from the roofs of the houses, from the windows of the wine-shop, and even from the trap-doors of the cellars into which some had slipped. The odds were sixty to one.

The front of Corinth, half demolished, was hideous. The window, tattooed with grape-shot, had lost glass and frame, and was only a shapeless hole, tumultuously stopped up with paving-stones. Bossuet was killed; Feuilly was killed; Courfeyrac was killed; Joly was killed; Combeferre, transfixed by three bayonet-stabs in the breast at the moment when he was raising a wounded soldier, had only time to look up to heaven, and expired.

Marius, still fighting, was so riddled with wounds, especially in the head, that his face was lost in blood, and looked as if it were covered by a red handkerchief.

Enjolras alone was not wounded. When he had no weapon, he held out his hand to the right or left, and an insurgent placed some weapon or other in his fist. He had only the fragments of four sword-blades left; one more than Francis I. had at Marignano.

Homer says: "Diomedes slays Axylus, son of Teuthras who dwelt in happy Arisba; Euryalus, son of Mecistaeus, kills Dresos and Opheltes, Æsepus, and that Pedasus whom the naïad Abarbarea bore to the blameless Bucolion; Ulysses overthrows Pidytes of Percosia; Antilochus, Ablerus; Polypaetes, Astyalus; Polydamas, Otus of Cyllene; and Teucer, Aretaon. Meganthius dies from the blows of the spear of Euripylus. Agamemnon, king of heroes, lays low Elatos, born in the rocky town which is laved by the sounding river Satniois." In our old poems of exploits, Esplandian attacks with a flaming twi-bill the giant Marquis Swantibore, who defends himself by stoning the knight with towers which he uproots. Our ancient mural frescoes show us the two Dukes of Brittany and Bourbon, armed, emblazoned and arrayed for war, on horseback, and approaching each other, battle-axe in hand, masked with steel, shod with steel, gloved with steel, one

caparisoned with ermine and the other draped in azure; Brittany with his lion between the two horns of his crown, Bourbon with an enormous *fleur-de-lis* at his visor. But, in order to be superb, it is not necessary to wear, like Yvon, the ducal morion; to have in one hand like Esplandian a living flame; or like Phylas, the father of Polydamas, to bring back from Ephyra a good suit of armour, a present from the king of men, Euphetes. It is sufficient to lay down one's life for a conviction or from loyalty. That simple little soldier, yesterday a peasant of Beauce or Limousin, who prowls about, clasp-knife by his side, round the nurse-maids in the Luxembourg garden, that pale young student bending over an anatomical study or a book, a fair-haired boy who shaves himself with a pair of scissors,— take them both, breathe duty into them, put them face to face in the Carrefour Boucherat or the Planche-Mibray blind alley, and let one fight for his flag and the other for his ideal, and let both imagine that they are fighting for their country. The struggle will be colossal; and the shadow cast by the raw recruit and the sawbones in conflict, on the great epic field where humanity is struggling, will be equal to that thrown by Megarion, King of Lycia, the land abounding in tigers, as he wrestles with the immense Ajax, the equal of the gods.

CHAPTER XXII

STEP BY STEP

WHEN there were no longer any leaders left alive save Enjolras and Marius at the two ends of the barricade, the centre, which had so long been supported by Courfeyrac, Bossuet, Joly, Feuilly, and Combeferre, yielded. The cannon, without making a practical breach, had severely injured the centre of the redoubt. There, the crest of the wall had

disappeared under the balls, and had crumbled away; and the fragments which had fallen, both inside and outside, had, as they accumulated, formed two slopes on the two sides of the barrier,— one on the outside and one on the inside. The outer one presented an inclined plane to the attack.

A final assault was attempted there; and this assault was successful. The mass bristling with bayonets and hurled forward at a run, came up irresistibly; and the dense battlement of the attacking column appeared in the smoke on the top of the scarp. This time, all was over. The band of insurgents defending the centre retreated pell-mell.

Then the gloomy love of life was rekindled in some. Covered by that forest of muskets, some did not wish to die. It is at such moments that the instinct of self-preservation utters yells, and the beast reappears in man. They were drawn up against the tall six-storied house which formed the back of the redoubt. This house might prove their salvation. This house was barricaded, and, as it were, walled up from top to bottom. Before the troops reached the interior of the redoubt there was time for a door to open and shut. The space of a lightning flash would suffice for that. And the door of that house suddenly thrown ajar and instantly closed again, meant life for those desperate men. At the back of the house there were streets, possible flight and space. They began to kick and knock at the door with the butts of their guns and their feet, calling, crying, imploring, and wringing their hands. No one opened. The head of the dead man looked down on them from the third-floor window.

But Marius, Enjolras, and seven or eight men who rallied round them, rushed forward, and protected them. Enjolras shouted to the soldiers: "Do not advance!" and as an officer declined to obey, he killed the officer. He was now in the little inner court of the redoubt, with his back to Corinth, his sword in one hand, a carbine in the other, holding open the door of the wine-shop, which he barred against the assailants. He shouted to the desperate men: "There is but one open door; this one." And covering them with his body,

and facing a battalion alone, he allowed them to pass in behind him. All rushed thither. Enjolras, whirling his musket about his head like a club, beat back the bayonets around and before him, and was the last to enter; and there was a frightful movement,— the troops trying to enter, the insurgents striving to bar them out. The door was closed with such violence that the five fingers of a soldier who had caught hold of the door-post were cut clean off, and remained glued to the frame.

Marius was left outside. A bullet had broken his collarbone; he felt himself fainting and falling. At this moment, when his eyes were already closed, he was conscious of a powerful hand seizing him; and the swoon into which he sank scarcely left him time for this thought, mingled with a last memory of Cosette:

"I am made prisoner, I shall be shot."

Enjolras, not seeing Marius among those who had sought shelter in the house, had the same idea. But they had reached that moment when each could think only of his own death. Enjolras put the bar across the door, bolted and double-locked it, while the soldiers beat it furiously with musket-butts and the sappers attacked it with their axes outside. The assailants were grouped round that door. The siege of the wine-shop now began.

The soldiers, let us add, were full of fury.

The death of the sergeant of artillery had enraged them; and then, more mournful still, during the few hours that preceded the attack, a whisper ran along the ranks that the insurgents were mutilating their prisoners, and that there was a headless body of a soldier in the tavern. This sort of fatal rumour is the usual accompaniment of civil war; and it was a false report of the same nature which, later on, produced the catastrophe of the Rue Transnonain.

When the door was secured, Enjolras said to the others: "Let us sell our lives dearly."

Then he went up to the table on which Mabœuf and Gavroche were stretched. Under the black cloth two forms could

be seen, straight and rigid, one tall, the other short; and the two faces were vaguely outlined beneath the cold folds of the winding-sheet. From under the shroud, a hand hung toward the ground. It was that of the old man.

Enjolras bent and kissed that venerable hand, as he had kissed the forehead on the previous evening.

These were the only two kisses which he had ever given in his life.

Let us be brief. The barricade had resisted like a gate of Thebes; the wine-shop resisted like a house of Saragossa. Such resistances are dogged. There is no quarter. No flag of truce is possible. Men are willing to die, provided that they can kill. When Suchet says: "Capitulate!" Palafox answers: "After the war with cannon, the war with the knife." Nothing was wanting in the attack on the Hucheloup wine-shop,— neither paving-stones raining from the windows and roof on the besiegers, and exasperating the troops by the frightful havoc that they committed, nor shots from the attics and cellar, nor the fury of attack, nor the rage of defence, nor, finally, when the door gave way, the frenzied madness of extermination. The assailants, rushing into the wine-shop, their feet entangled in the panels of the broken door which lay on the ground, found not a single combatant. The winding staircase, cut away with axes, lay in the middle of the room, a few wounded men were just expiring; all who were not killed were on the next floor, and a terrific fire was discharged thence through the hole in the ceiling which had formed the entrance to the staircase. These were their last cartridges. When they were expended, when those terrible men, at the point of death, had no powder or balls left, each seized a couple of the bottles reserved by Enjolras, as we have mentioned, and defended the stairs with those frightfully fragile weapons. They were bottles of aqua fortis.

We describe these gloomy details of carnage exactly as they are. The besieged, alas! make weapons of everything. Greek fire did not dishonour Archimedes; boiling pitch did

not dishonour Bayard. All war is a horror, and there is nothing to choose. The musketry-fire of the assailants, though impeded and discharged from below upward, was murderous. The brink of the hole in the ceiling was soon lined with heads of the dead, whence dripped long, red, steaming jets. The noise was indescribable: a close and burning smoke almost threw night over the combat. Words fail to describe horror when it has reached this stage. There were no longer men in this now infernal struggle. They were no longer giants contending against Titans. It resembled Milton and Dante rather than Homer. Demons attacked, spectres resisted.

It was a monstrous heroism.

CHAPTER XXIII

ORESTES FASTING AND PYLADES DRUNK

AT length, by climbing on one another's shoulders, using the skeleton of the staircase, climbing up the walls, clinging to the ceiling, and killing at the very edge of the trap-door the last who resisted, some twenty assailants, soldiers, National and Municipal Guards, pell-mell, most of them disfigured by wounds in the face during that dreadful ascent, blinded by blood, furious and savage, burst into the first-floor room. There was but one man left on his feet,—Enjolras. Without cartridges, without sword, he had nothing now in his hand but the barrel of his carbine, whose butt he had broken over the heads of those who entered. He had placed the billiard-table between himself and his assailants; he had retreated to the corner of the room, and there, with flashing eyes and head erect, that fragment of a weapon in his hand, he was still sufficiently alarming to create an empty space around him. A cry was raised: —

"It is the chief! It was he who killed the artilleryman. As he has placed himself there, it is well. Let him remain there. Shoot him on the spot."

"Shoot me," said Enjolras.

And throwing away the stump of his gun, and folding his arms, he offered his breast.

Courage to die bravely always moves men. So soon as Enjolras folded his arms, accepting the end, the din of strife ceased in the room, and that chaos was suddenly hushed into a sort of sepulchral solemnity. It seemed as if the menacing majesty of Enjolras, disarmed and motionless, produced an effect on the tumult, and as if by the mere authority of his tranquil glance, that young man, who alone was unwounded, superb, blood-stained, charming, and indifferent, like one invulnerable, constrained the sinister mob to kill him respectfully.

His beauty, heightened at this moment by his haughtiness, was dazzling; and, as if he could no more be fatigued than wounded, after the frightful four-and-twenty hours which had just elapsed, he was fresh and rosy. It was to him, possibly, that a witness referred when he said later, before the court-martial; "There was one insurgent whom I heard called Apollo." A National Guard who took aim at Enjolras, lowered his musket, saying: "I feel as if I were going to shoot a flower."

Twelve men formed into a platoon in the corner opposite Enjolras, and got their muskets ready in silence. Then a sergeant shouted: "Take aim!"

An officer interposed.

"Wait!"

And addressing Enjolras: —

"Do you wish to have your eyes bandaged?"

"No."

"Was it really you who killed the sergeant of artillery?"

"Yes."

Grantaire had waked some minutes before.

Grantaire, it will be remembered, had been sleeping since

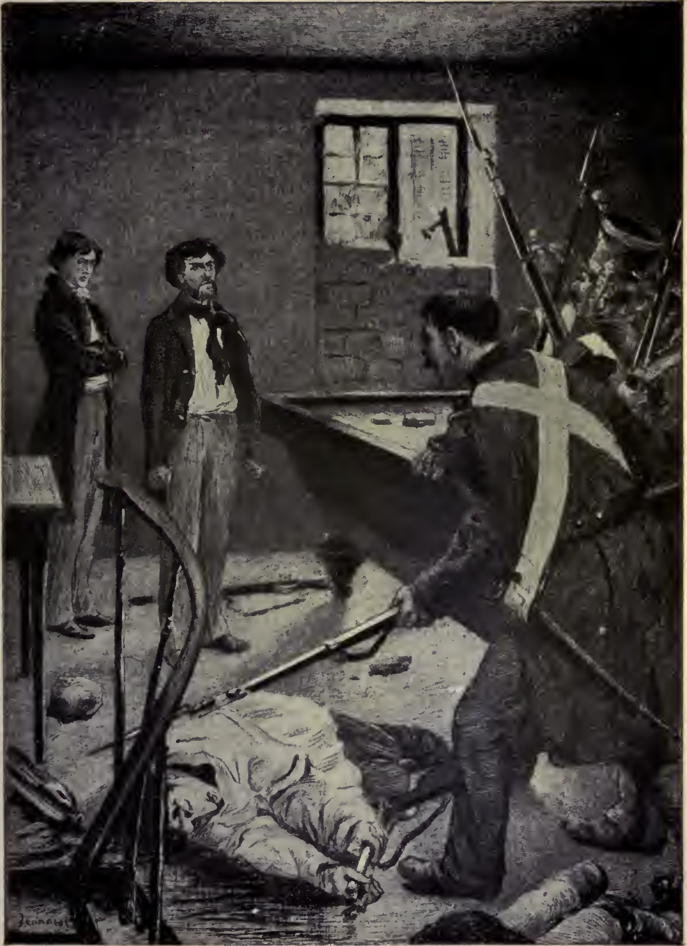
the previous evening in the upper room, sitting in a chair, with his head lying on a table.

He realized in its full force the old metaphor, "dead drunk." The hideous potion of absinthe, stout, and alcohol had thrown him into a lethargic state. As his table was small, and of no use at the barricade they had left it to him. He was still in the same posture,— his chest bent over the table, his head lying flat on his arms, surrounded by glasses, beer-mugs, and bottles. He was sleeping the heavy sleep of the torpid bear, or the sated leech. Nothing had roused him, — neither the platoon fire, nor the cannon-balls, nor the canister which made its way through the window into the room where he was, nor the prodigious noise of the assault. He merely responded to the cannon by an occasional snore. He seemed to be waiting for a bullet to save him the trouble of waking. Several corpses lay around him; and, at the first glance, there was nothing to distinguish him from those deep sleepers of death.

Noise does not wake a drunken man. Silence arouses him. This peculiarity has been more than once observed. The fall of everything about him increased Grantaire's lethargy; noise lulled him. The sort of halt which the tumult made before Enjolras was a shock to this heavy sleep. It was like the effect of a coach going at full speed, which stops short. The drowsy occupants awake. Grantaire started up, stretched his arms, rubbed his eyes, stared, yawned, and understood.

Intoxication wearing off resembles a curtain that is rent asunder. A man sees, as a whole, and at a single glance, all that was hidden. Everything appears suddenly to the memory; and the drunkard, who knows nothing of what has happened during the last twenty-four hours, has no sooner opened his eyes than he understands it all. His ideas return with abrupt clearness; the obliteration of intoxication, a sort of steam that blinded his brain, is dispersed, and makes way for a distinct and sharply outlined apprehension of reality.

Relegated, as he was, to a corner, and sheltered, so to speak, by the billiard-table, the soldiers, whose eyes were fixed on



"He repeated, 'Long live the republic!' crossed the room with a firm step, and placed himself before the muskets at Enjolras' side."

Les Miserables. Jean Valjean. Page 95

Enjolras, had not even seen Grantaire; and the sergeant was preparing to repeat the order, "Take aim!" when all at once a loud voice was heard close beside them:—

"Long live the republic! I belong to it."

Grantaire had risen. The infinite light of all the combat which he had missed, and in which he had had no part, appeared in the flashing glance of the transfigured drunkard.

He repeated, "Long live the republic!" crossed the room with a firm step, and placed himself before the muskets, at Enjolras's side.

"Kill us both at one blow," said he.

And turning gently to Enjolras, he asked:—

"Are you willing?"

Enjolras pressed his hand with a smile.

That smile had not faded when the report rang out.

Enjolras, pierced by eight bullets, remained leaning against the wall, as if nailed to it by the balls. He merely hung his head.

Grantaire fell dead at his feet as if struck by lightning.

A few minutes later, the soldiers dislodged the last insurgents, who had taken refuge at the top of the house. They fired through a partition in the garret. They fought under the very roof. They threw bodies, some of them still alive, out of the windows. Two light-infantry men, who were trying to raise the broken omnibus, were killed by two shots from the attic. A man in a blouse was flung out with a bayonet thrust in his stomach, and lay expiring on the ground. A private and an insurgent slipped together down the sloping tiles of the roof; and, as they would not loose their hold, they fell into the street, clasping each other in a ferocious embrace. There was a similar struggle in the cellar. Shouts, shots, and a fierce trampling; then silence. The barricade was captured.

The soldiers began to search the adjacent houses and to pursue the fugitives.

CHAPTER XXIV

PRISONER!

MARIUS was indeed a prisoner. A prisoner to Jean Valjean.

The hand which had clutched him from behind and whose grasp he felt at the moment when he fell and lost consciousness was Jean Valjean's hand.

Jean Valjean had taken no other part in the struggle than to expose himself in it. Had it not been for him, in that supreme phase of agony, no one would have thought of the wounded. Thanks to him, everywhere present in the carnage like a providence, those who fell were picked up, carried to the ground-floor room, and had their wounds dressed. In the intervals he repaired the barricade. But nothing that could resemble a blow, an attack, or even personal defence, proceeded from his hands. He was silent and succoured. Moreover, he had only a few scratches. The bullets had no billet for him. If suicide formed part of his purpose when he came to this sepulchre, he had not been successful. But we doubt whether he thought of suicide, which is an irreligious act.

Jean Valjean did not seem to see Marius in the thick cloud of combat; but in truth, he did not take his eyes off him. When a bullet laid Marius low, Jean Valjean sprang forward with the agility of a tiger, dashed upon him as on his prey, and carried him off.

The whirlwind of the attack was, at this moment, so violently concentrated on Enjolras and the door of the wineshop, that no one saw Jean Valjean, supporting the fainting Marius in his arms, cross the unpaved ground of the barricade, and disappear round the corner of Corinth.

Our readers will remember this corner, which formed a sort of cape in the street; it protected a few square feet of ground

from shot and shell, and from all eyes as well. There is thus at times a room which does not burn, in the heart of a conflagration, and in the most raging seas, beyond a promontory, or at the end of a reef, a little quiet nook. It was in this corner of the inner square of the barricade that Eponine drew her last breath.

Here Jean Valjean paused, let Marius slip to the ground, leaned against the wall, and looked around him.

The situation was frightful.

For the moment, for two or three minutes perhaps, this fragment of wall was a shelter; but how could he escape from this massacre? He recalled the agony he had endured in the Rue Polonceau, eight years before, and how he had succeeded in escaping; it was difficult then, but now it was impossible.

He had before him that deaf and implacable house, six-stories high, which seemed to be inhabited only by the dead man leaning out of his window; he had on his right the low barricade which closed the Petite Truanderie. To climb over this obstacle appeared easy, but a line of bayonets rose above the crest of the barrier. The troops of the line were posted beyond the barricade, and were on the watch. It was evident that to cross the barricade was to rush upon the line of the whole platoon, and that any head which ventured to lift itself above the wall of paving-stones, would serve as a mark for sixty muskets. He had on his left the battlefield. Death was behind the corner of the wall.

What was he to do?

A bird alone could have escaped from this place.

And he must decide at once, find an expedient, make up his mind. They were fighting a few paces from him. Fortunately, all were obstinately engaged at a single point,— the wine-shop door; but if it occurred to one soldier, one single soldier, to turn the corner of the house or to attack it on the flank, all was over.

Jean Valjean looked at the house opposite him; he looked at the barricade at his side; then he looked on the ground,

with the violence of the last extremity, desperate, and as if he longed to dig a hole with his eyes.

By dint of looking, something vaguely discernible in such an agony took shape and assumed a form at his feet, as if his eyes had the power to produce the thing demanded. He perceived, a few paces from him, at the foot of the small barricade so pitilessly guarded and watched from without, beneath a pile of paving-stones which partly concealed it, an iron grating, laid flat and flush with the ground. This grating, made of strong cross-bars, was about two feet square. The frame-work of paving-stones which supported it had been torn up, and it was, as it were, set free. Through the bars a glimpse could be caught of a dark opening, something like a chimney-flue or a drain pipe. Jean Valjean darted forward. His old skill at escape rose to his brain like a beam of light. To remove the paving-stones, tear up the grating, take Marius, who was inert as a dead body, on his shoulders, descend with this burden on his loins, helping himself with his elbows and knees, into this sort of well, which was fortunately of no great depth, to let the heavy iron grating over which the loose stones again rolled, fall into place over his head, to set foot on a paved surface, about ten feet below the earth, — all this was executed like something done in delirium, with the strength of a giant and the rapidity of an eagle; it occupied but a few minutes.

Jean Valjean found himself with Marius, who was still unconscious, in a sort of long subterranean corridor.

There, profound peace, absolute silence and night, prevailed.

The impression which he had formerly felt when he fell from the street into the convent, recurred to him. Only, what he now carried was not Cosette; it was Marius.

He could just hear, above his head, like a vague murmur, the fearful uproar of the wine-shop taken by assault.

BOOK II

THE BOWELS OF LEVIATHAN

CHAPTER I

THE EARTH IMPOVERISHED BY THE SEA

PARIS casts twenty-five millions of francs annually into the sea. We assert this without any metaphor. How, and in what way? By day and night.— For what purpose? For no purpose.— With what intention? Without intention.— Why? For no reason.— By means of what organ? Its bowels.— What are its bowels? Its sewers.

Twenty-five million francs are the most moderate of the approximate amounts given by the estimates of modern science.

Science, after groping for a long time, now knows that the most fruitful and effective of fertilizers is human manure. The Chinese, let us say it to our shame, knew this before we did. Not a Chinese peasant — it is Eckeberg who states the fact — goes to the city without bringing back, at either end of his bamboo-pole, a bucketful of what we call filth. Thanks to human manure, the soil in China is still as young as in the days of Abraham. Chinese wheat yields just one-hundred-and-twenty-fold of the sowing. There is no guano comparable in fertility to the detritus of a capital. A large city is the most mighty of dung-makers. Certain success would follow the experiment of employing the town to manure

the plain. If gold be dross, on the other hand, our dross is gold.

What is done with this golden dung? It is swept into the abyss.

We send, at great expense, fleets of ships, to collect the guano of petrels and penguins at the southern pole, and cast into the sea the incalculable element of wealth which we have under our hand. All the human and animal manure which the world wastes, if returned to the land, instead of being thrown into the sea, would suffice to nourish the world.

Those piles of ordure collected at street corners, those carts of mud jolted at night through the streets, those frightful barrels of the night-man, those fetid streams of subterranean mire which the pavement conceals from you,— do you know what they are? They are the flowering field, the green grass, the mint and thyme and sage, the game, the cattle, the satisfied lowing of fat oxen at night, the perfumed hay, the golden wheat, the bread on your table, the warm blood in your veins, health, joy, life. Such is the pleasure of that mysterious creation, which is transformation on earth and transfiguration in heaven.

Restore this to the great crucible; your abundance will flow from it. The nutrition of the plains produces the nourishment of men.

You are at liberty to waste this wealth, and to consider me ridiculous into the bargain. That would be the masterpiece of your ignorance.

Statistics have calculated that France alone pours every year a sum of half a milliard into the Atlantic, through the mouths of her rivers. Note this: these five hundred millions would pay one-quarter of the expenses of the budget. The cleverness of man is so great that he prefers to get rid of these five hundred millions in the gutter. The very substance of the people is borne away, here drop by drop, and there in streams, by the wretched vomiting of our sewers into the rivers, and the gigantic outpour of our rivers into the ocean. Every hiccough of our sewers costs us one thousand

francs. This has two results; the earth is impoverished and the water poisoned. Hunger rises from the furrow and sickness from the river.

It is notorious, for instance, that at this very hour the Thames poisons London.

As regards Paris, it has been found necessary of late, to remove most of the mouths of the sewers down the river, below the last bridge.

A double tubular apparatus, supplied with valves and sluices, sucking up and driving back,— a system of elementary drainage as simple as the human lungs, and which is already in full working order in several English parishes,— would suffice to bring the pure water of the fields into our towns, and to send back to the fields the rich water of the towns; and this easy ebb and flow, the simplest in the world, would retain among us the five hundred millions now thrown away. People's minds are fixed on other things.

The present process does mischief, while meaning well. The intention is good, but the result is melancholy. Meaning to drain the city, the population is destroyed. A sewer is a mistake. When drainage, with its double function, restoring what it takes, is everywhere substituted for the sewer, that simple and impoverishing scouring, then, this being also combined with the data of a new social economy, the products of the earth will be increased tenfold, and the problem of misery will be singularly lessened. Add the suppression of parasitic growths, and it will be solved.

Meantime, the public wealth flows into the river, and leakage takes place. Leakage is the right word. Europe is being ruined in this way by exhaustion.

As for France, we have given its figures. Now, as Paris contains one twenty-fifth of the whole French population, and as Parisian guano is the richest of all, we understate the truth when we estimate at twenty-five millions the loss of Paris in the half-milliard which France annually refuses. These twenty-five millions, employed in assistance and enjoyment, would double the splendour of Paris. The city ex-

pends them in sewers. So that we may say, the great prodigality of Paris, its marvellous holiday attire, its Folie Beaujon, its revels, its lavish expenditure of gold, its luxury, pomp, and magnificence, is its system of sewers.

It is in this way that in the blindness of a bad political economy we drain the well-being of all, and allow it to float down stream and be lost in the abyss. There ought to be St. Cloud nets to catch the public fortunes.

Economically considered, the fact may be summed up thus: Paris is a sieve. Paris, that model city, that pattern of well-conducted capitals, of which every nation strives to take a copy, that metropolis of the ideal, that august land of initiative impulse and experiment, that centre and abode of intellect, that nation-city, that hive of the future, that marvellous combination of Babylon and Corinth, would make a peasant of Fo-Kian shrug his shoulders, from the point of view which we have just indicated.

Imitate Paris, and you will be ruined. Moreover, and particularly in this immemorial and insensate squandering, Paris is itself an imitator.

These surprising follies are not new; this is no youthful nonsense. The ancients acted like the moderns. "The sewers of Rome," says Liebig, "absorbed the entire welfare of the Roman peasant." When the Campagna of Rome was ruined by the Roman sewers, Rome exhausted Italy; and when she had placed Italy in her cloaca, she poured in Sicily, then Sardinia, then Africa. The sewers of Rome swallowed up the world.

This cesspool offered its gaping maw to the city and to the universe,— *Urbi et orbi.* Eternal city, unfathomable sewer.

In these things, as in others, Rome sets the example.

This example, Paris follows with all the folly peculiar to cities of talent.

For the requirements of the operation which we have just explained, Paris has beneath it another Paris,— a Paris of sewers which has its streets, cross-roads, blind-alleys, its

squares, arteries, and its circulation, which is of mud, and minus the human form.

For nothing should be flattered, not even a great people. Where there is everything, ignominy exists side by side with sublimity; and if Paris contains Athens, the city of light, Tyre, the city of power, Sparta, the city of valour and virtue, Nineveh, the city of marvels, it also contains Lutetia, the city of mud.

Moreover, the stamp of its power is there too; and the Titanic sink of Paris realizes among its monuments that strange ideal realized in humanity by such men as Machiavelli, Bacon, and Mirabeau,— abject grandeur.

The subsoil of Paris, if the eye could pierce the surface, would present the aspect of a gigantic madrepore. A sponge has not more passages and holes than the heap of earth, six leagues in circumference, upon which the grand old city rests. To say nothing of the catacombs, which are a separate cellar, to say nothing of the inextricable net-work of gas-pipes, not to mention the vast tubular system for the distribution of fresh water, which leads to the pillar fountains, the drains alone form on either bank of the river a prodigious dark ramification, a labyrinth which has its incline for its clew.

In the damp mist of this labyrinth appears the rat, which seems the product to which Paris has given birth.

CHAPTER II

ANCIENT HISTORY OF THE SEWER

IF we imagine Paris lifted off like a cover, the subterranean net-work of drains, seen from a bird's-eye view, will represent on either bank a sort of large branch grafted upon the river. On the right bank, the encircling sewer will form

the trunk of this branch, the secondary pipes the branches, and those without issue the twigs.

This figure is only a summary one and half correct, as the right angle, which is the usual angle in subterranean ramifications of this kind, is very rare in Nature.

Our readers will form a better image of this strange geometric plan by supposing that they see some strange Oriental alphabet against a dark background, as intricate as a thicket, the shapeless letters welded together in apparent confusion, and, as if accidentally, now by their angles, and now by their ends.

Sewers and sinks played a great part in the Middle Ages, under the Lower Empire and in the ancient Orient. Plague sprang from them, and despots died of them. The masses regarded these beds of corruption, these monstrous cradles of death, with an almost religious awe. The vermin-ditch at Benares is not more productive of vertigo than the Lion's den at Babylon.

Tiglath-Pileser, according to the rabbinical books, swore by the sink of Nineveh. It was from the drain of Munster that John of Leyden produced his false moon; and it was from the cesspool-well of Kekhscheb that his Oriental double, Mokanna, the veiled prophet of Korassan, made his false sun emerge.

The history of men is reflected in the history of the sewers. The Gemoniæ [1] narrated the story of Rome. The drain of Paris is an old and fearful thing. It has been a sepulchre, and it has been an asylum. Crime, intellect, social protest, liberty of conscience, thought, theft, all that human laws pursue or have pursued, have hidden in this hole,— the Maillotins,[2] in the fourteenth century, the cloak-twitchers in the fifteenth, the Huguenots in the sixteenth, the Illuminati of

[1] Steps on the Aventine Hill, leading to the Tiber, from which the bodies of criminals were thrown into the river.

[2] A party who attacked the arsenal, armed with mallets (*maillots*), slew the jailers and freed the prisoners, in protest against additional taxes levied during the minority of Charles VI.

Morin[3] in the seventeenth, and the Chauffeurs[4] in the eighteenth. One hundred years ago the nocturnal dagger issued from it, the pickpocket in danger glided into it. The forest had its cave, Paris had its drain. The Truanderie (vagrancy), that Gallic *picareria*, accepted the drain as an annex of the Court of Miracles, and at night, cunning and ferocious, entered by the Maubuée outlet, as into a bed-chamber.

It was very natural that those who had for the scene of their daily toil the Vide-Gousset (empty pocket) lane, or the Rue Coupe-Gorge (cutthroat), should have for their nightly abode, the culvert of the Chemin-Vert, or the Hurepoix catch-basin. Hence a swarm of memories. All sorts of phantoms haunt those long, lonely corridors. On all sides are putridity and miasma; and here and there are traps through which Villon inside converses with Rabelais outside.

The drain, in old Paris, is the meeting-place of all exhaustions and of all experiments. Political economy regards it as detritus, and social philosophy as residuum.

The drain is the conscience of the city. Everything converges and is confronted there. In this livid spot there are shadows, but there are no secrets. Everything has its true form, or at least its final form. The pile of ordure has this in its favour, that it tells no lies. Simplicity has taken refuge there. Basile's mask is there; but you see the pasteboard, the threads, the inside as well as the out, and it is marked with honest filth. Scapin's false nose is its next neighbour. All the uncleanness of civilization, when no longer of service, fall into this trench of truth, where the vast social scale ends. They are swallowed up, but display themselves there. This random mixture is a confession. There no false appearances or plastering is possible; filth takes off its shirt. There is an absolute nudity, a rout of illusions and mirage; there is nothing but what actually exists, as-

[3] A French fanatic sentenced to be burned alive in 1663 for having prophesied the death of the king.

[4] A band of felons, who, about 1794–5, burned the soles of their victims' feet, to make them confess where they kept their money. Hence the name Chauffeur (Stoker).

suming the ill-omened aspect of that which is over and done with. Reality and disappearance. There, a bottle-heel confesses intoxication, a basket-handle tells of domesticity; there, the apple-core which has had literary opinions once again becomes an apple-core; the effigy on the double sou grows frankly verdigrised; the saliva of Caiaphas meets the vomit of Falstaff; the louis d'or which comes from the gambling hell jostles against the nail whence hangs the end of the suicide's rope; a livid fœtus rolls by wrapped in spangles which danced at the opera last Shrove Tuesday; a wig which has sentenced men, wallows by the side of a mass of rottenness which was once Margoton's petticoat. It is more than fraternity; it is the extremest familiarity. All that was painted is bedaubed. The last veil is torn away. A sewer is a cynic. It tells everything.

This sincerity of foulness pleases us, and rests the mind. When a man has spent his time upon the earth in enduring the lofty airs assumed by state reasons, the oath, political wisdom, human justice, professional probity, austerities of situation, and incorruptible robes, it is a relief to enter a sewer and see the mud which befits it.

This is at the same time instructive. As we said just now, history passes through the drain. The St. Bartholomews filter through there drop by drop, through the paving-stones. Great public assassinations, political and religious butcheries, traverse this subterranean passage of civilization, and thrust their corpses into it. The eye of the dreamer sees all historical murderers there, in the hideous gloom, on their knees, with a bit of their winding-sheet for an apron, mournfully sponging out their work. Louis XI. is there with Tristan; Francis I. is there with Duprat; Charles IX. is there with his mother; Richelieu is there with Louis XIII.; Louvois is there; Letellier is there; Hébert and Maillard are there, scratching the stones, and trying to efface the traces of their deeds. The brooms of those spectres are heard beneath those arches. The vast fetidness of social catastrophes fills the air. We see a red glimmer in corners. A terrible current flows there, in which blood-stained hands have been washed.

The social observer should enter these shadows. They are part of his laboratory. Philosophy is the microscope of thought. Everything strives to fly from it, but nothing escapes it. Subterfuge is useless. What side of himself does a man show in subterfuge and evasion? His shameful side. Philosophy pursues evil with its upright glance, and does not allow it to escape into nothingness. It recognizes everything in the effacement of things which disappear, and in the diminution of things which vanish. It reconstructs the purple from the rags, and the woman from the tatters. From the cesspool it reconstructs the town; from the mud it reconstructs manners. From the potsherd it infers the amphora or the jug. It recognizes from the mark of a finger-nail on a parchment the difference which separates the Jewry of the Juden-gasse from the Jewry of the Ghetto. It recovers in what is left that which has been,— good, evil, falsehood, truth, the spot of blood from the palace, the ink-stain from the cavern, the tallow-drop from the brothel, trials undergone, temptations welcomed, orgies vomited up, the shape which characters have assumed as they became abased, the traces of prostitution in souls whose coarseness rendered them capable of it, and on the vestment of the porters of Rome the mark of Messalina's familiarity.

CHAPTER III

BRUNESEAU

THE drain of Paris in the Middle Ages was legendary. In the sixteenth century, Henri II. attempted soundings which failed. Not a hundred years ago, as Mercier testifies, the sewer was abandoned to itself, and became what it could.

Such was that ancient Paris, given over to quarrels, indecisions, and groping. It was stupid enough for a long

time. Later on, '89 showed how cities acquire sense; but in the good old times, the capital had but little head. It did not know how to manage its affairs, either morally or materially, and could no more sweep away its filth than its abuses. Everything was an obstacle, everything raised a question. The sewer, for instance, was refractory to every itinerary. People could find their way under the city no better than they could in it. Above, everything was unintelligible; below, inextricable. Beneath the confusion of tongues was the confusion of cellars; Dædalus duplicated with Babel.

Sometimes the drain of Paris saw fit to overflow, as if this misunderstood Nile had suddenly fallen into a passion. There were, infamous to relate, inundations of the drain. At moments, this stomach of civilization digested badly, the sewer flowed back into the throat of the city, and Paris got an after-taste of her own filth. These resemblances of the drain to remorse had good points; they were warnings,—very badly received, however. The city was indignant that its mud should be so bold, and did not admit that filth should return. Get rid of it better.

The flood of 1802 is one of the actual memories of Parisians of eighty years of age. The mud spread across the Place des Victoires, where the statue of Louis XIV. stands; it entered the Rue St. Honoré by the two mouths of the Champs Elysées drain, Rue St. Florentin by the St. Florentin drain, Rue Pierre à Poisson by the Sonnerie drain, Rue Popincourt by the Chemin-Vert drain, and Rue de la Roquette by the Rue de Lappe drain. It rose above the curbstones of the Rue des Champs Elysées to a height of fourteen inches; and to the south, through the vomitory of the Seine, which performed its duties in a contrary sense, it entered Rue Mazarine, Rue de l'Echaudé, and Rue du Marias, where it stopped, after running on a hundred and twenty yards, just a few yards from the house where Racine once lived, respecting, in the seventeenth century, the poet more than the king. It reached its maximum depth in the Rue St. Pierre, where it rose three

feet above the gutter, and its maximum extent in the Rue St. Sabine, where it spread over a length of two hundred and fifty yards.

At the beginning of the present century the drain of Paris was still a mysterious spot. Mud can never enjoy good fame, but here the evil reputation extended almost to terror. Paris knew confusedly that it had beneath it a grewsome cave. People talked of it as of that monstrous cesspool of Thebes, in which centipedes fifteen feet long swarmed, and which might have served as a bathing-place for Behemoth. The heavy boots of the sewer-men never ventured beyond certain well-known points. It was still close upon the time when the scavengers' carts, from the top of which St. Foix fraternized with the Marquis de Créqui, were unloaded directly into the drain. As for the cleansing, that duty was intrusted to the showers, which choked up rather than swept away. Rome left some poetry to her cloaca, and called it the Gemoniæ; Paris insulted its own, and called it the stench-hole. Science and superstition were agreed as to the horror. The stench-hole was quite as distasteful to hygiene as to legend. The hobgoblin monk first saw the light under the fetid arches of the Mouffetard drain; the corpses of the Marmousets were thrown into the Barillerie drain. Fagon attributed the maligant fever of 1685 to the great hiatus in the Marais drain, which remained yawning until 1833 in the Rue St. Louis, nearly opposite the sign of the Gallant Messenger. The mouth of the drain in the Rue de la Mortellerie was celebrated for the pestilences which originated from it; with its iron-pointed grating that resembled a row of teeth, it gaped in that fatal street, like the throat of some dragon breathing hell on mankind. The popular imagination seasoned the gloomy Parisian sewer with some hideous mixture of infinitude. The drain was bottomless. The drain was a Barathrum. The idea of exploring those leprous regions never even occurred to the police. Who would have dared to cast a plummet into that darkness, to go on a voyage of discovery in that abyss? It was frightful. And yet

some one presented himself at last. The cloaca had its Christopher Columbus.

One day, in 1805, during one of the rare apparitions which the Emperor made in Paris, the Minister of the Interior, some Decrès or Crétet or other, attended his master's levee. In the courtyard clattered the swords of all those extraordinary soldiers of the great republic and the great empire; there was a swarm of heroes at Napoleon's gates,—men from the Rhine, the Scheldt, the Adige, and the Nile; comrades of Joubert, of Desaix, of Marceau, Hoche, and Kleber; aeronauts from Fleurus, grenadiers from Mayence, pontoon builders from Genoa, hussars on whom the Pyramids had looked down, artillery-men who had been bespattered by Junot's cannon-balls, cuirassiers who had taken by assault the fleet anchored in the Zuyder-Zee; some had followed Bonaparte upon the bridge of Lodi; others had accompanied Murat in the trenches of Mantua, while others had outstripped Lannes in the sunken road of Montebello. The whole army of that day was there, in the court of the Tuileries, represented by a squadron or a company, and guarding Napoleon in repose; and that was the splendid period when the great army had Marengo behind it and Austerlitz before it. "Sire," said the Minister of the Interior to Napoleon, "I saw yesterday the most daring man in your empire." "What man was that?" asked the Emperor sharply, "and what has he done?" "He wishes to do something, sire." "What?" "To visit the Paris sewers."

That man existed, and his name was Bruneseau.

CHAPTER IV

UNKNOWN DETAILS

THE visit took place. It was a fearful campaign,—a nocturnal battle against asphyxia and plague. It was at the same time a voyage of discovery. One of the survivors of this expedition, an intelligent workman, very young at that time, still recounted a few years ago curious details which Bruneseau thought it right to omit in his report to the Prefect of Police, as unworthy of official style. Disinfecting processes were extremely rudimentary at that day. Bruneseau had scarcely passed the first articulations of that subterranean net-work, when eight workmen out of twenty refused to go farther. The operation was complicated; the visit entailed cleansing. It was therefore necessary to cleanse and at the same time to take measurements; to note the water entrances, count the traps and outlets, trace the branches, indicate the currents at points where they divided, define the respective dimensions of the different basins, sound the small sewers grafted on the main sewer, measure the height under the key-stone of each passage, and the width both at the bottom and the top, in order to determine the arrangements in regard to the level for each affluent from the sewer and from the street. They advanced with difficulty. It was not rare for the ladders to sink into three feet of mud. The lanterns burned dim in the mephitic atmosphere. From time to time, a sewer-man was carried away in a fainting state. At certain spots there was a precipice. The soil had given way, the flag-stones had crumbled, and the drain was converted into a bottomless pit; nothing solid could be found. A man disappeared suddenly and they had great difficulty in dragging him out. By the advice of Fourcroy, large cages filled with tow saturated with resin were set on fire, at regular intervals, in spots sufficiently disinfected. The wall was cov-

ered in places with shapeless fungi which might have been called tumors; the stone itself seemed sick in this unbreathable atmosphere.

Bruneseau, in his exploration, proceeded down-hill. At the point where the two water-pipes of the Grand Hurleur separate he deciphered on a projecting stone the date 1550; this stone indicated the limit where Philibert Delorme charged by Henri II. to inspect the subterranean sewers of Paris, stopped. This stone was the mark of the sixteenth century in the drain. Bruneseau found the handiwork of the seventeenth century in the Ponceau conduit and in that of the Rue Vieille du Temple, which were arched between 1600 and 1650, and the handiwork of the eighteenth century in the west section of the collecting canal, enclosed and arched in 1740. These two arches, especially the more recent one, that of 1740, were more decrepit and cracked than the masonry of the belt drain, which dated from 1412,— the period when the Menilmontant stream of fresh water was raised to the dignity of the Great Sewer of Paris, a promotion analogous to that of a peasant who should become first valet to the king; something like Gros-Jean transformed into Lebel.

They fancied they recognized here and there, especially under the Palais de Justice, the hollows of antique dungeons dug out of the drain itself,— hideous *in pace*. An iron collar hung in one of these cells. They were all bricked up. A few of the things found were peculiar; among others, the skeleton of an ourang-outang, which disappeared from the Jardin des Plantes in 1800,— a disappearance probably connected with the famous and indisputable apparition of the devil in the Rue des Bernardins, in the last year of the eighteenth century. The poor animal was finally drowned in the drain.

Under the long vaulted passage leading to the Arche-Marion, a rag-picker's basket in a perfect state of preservation excited the admiration of connoisseurs. Everywhere, the mud, which the sewer-men had learned to handle boldly, abounded in precious objects,— gold and silver, jewelry,

precious stones, coins. A giant who had filtered this cloaca would have found in his sieve the wealth of centuries. At the point where the two branches of the Rue du Temple and the Rue St. Avoye divide, a singular Huguenot medal made of copper was picked up, bearing on one side a pig wearing a cardinal's hat, and on the other a wolf with the tiara on its head.

The most surprising discovery was at the entrance of the Great Sewer. This entrance was formerly closed by a grating of which only the hinges now remained. From one of these hinges hung a filthy, shapeless rag, which doubtless caught there as it passed, floated in the shadow, and gradually mouldered away. Bruneseau raised his lantern and examined this fragment. It was a very fine cambric, and in one corner, less tattered than the rest, they made out a heraldic coronet embroidered above these seven letters, LAUBESP. The coronet was that of a marquis, and the seven letters signified *Laubespine*. They recognized that they had before them a piece of Marat's winding-sheet. Marat, in his youth, had love affairs, at the time when he was attached to the household of the Count d'Artois in the capacity of physician to the stables. Of these love affairs with a great lady, which are historically notorious, he retained this sheet as a waif or a souvenir. On his death, as it was the only fine linen in his possession, he was buried in it. Old women wrapped the tragic friend of the people for the tomb in this sheet wherein he had known pleasure. Bruneseau passed on. The rag was left where it was. It was not destroyed. Was it through contempt or respect? Marat deserved both. And then, destiny was so stamped upon it that they hesitated to touch it. Moreover, things of the sepulchre should be left in the resting-place which they select. Altogether, the relic was a strange one. A marchioness had slept in it; Marat had rotted in it; it had passed through the Pantheon to end with the sewer-rats. This rag from an alcove, every crease in which Watteau would once have joyfully painted, ended by becoming worthy of the intent gaze of Dante.

The whole visit to the loathsome subways of Paris lasted seven years,— from 1805 to 1812. As he advanced, Bruneseau designed, directed, and carried out considerable operations. In 1808, he lowered the floor of the Ponceau drain, and creating new lines everywhere, he carried the sewer, in 1809, under the Rue St. Denis as far as the Fountain of the Innocents; in 1810, under the Rue Froidmanteau and the Salpetrière; in 1811, under the Rue Neuve des Petits Pères, under the Rue du Mail, the Rue de l'Echarpe and the Place Royale; in 1812, under the Rue de la Paix and the Chaussée d'Antin. At the same time, he disinfected and cleansed the entire network. In the second year he called his son-in-law Nargaud to his assistance.

It was thus that, at the beginning of this century, ancient society flushed its subway and performed the toilet of its drain. It was so much cleaned, at any rate.

Winding, cracked, unpaved, full of pits, intersected by fissures, jolted by odd elbows, rising and falling illogically, fetid, savage, ferocious, submerged in darkness, with cicatrices on its stones and scars on its walls, grewsome,— such was the old sewer of Paris, retrospectively regarded. Ramifications in all directions, crossings of trenches, branches, crows-feet, stars as in military mines, blind guts and alleys, arches covered with saltpetre, pestiferous pools, scabby exudations on the walls, drops falling from the roof, darkness,— nothing could equal the horror of this old excremental crypt; the digestive apparatus of Babylon, a den, a ditch, a gulf pierced with streets, a Titanic mole-hill, in which the mind fancies that it sees, crawling in the shadows, amid the ordure which once was splendour, that enormous blind mole, the past.

Such, we repeat, was the sewer of the olden time.

CHAPTER V

PRESENT PROGRESS

TO-DAY the sewer is clean, cold, straight, correct. It almost realizes the ideal of what is understood in England by the word "respectable." It is neat and gray; built with the plumb-line. We might almost say it looks as if it had just come out of a bandbox. It resembles a contractor who has become a Councillor of State. You almost see distinctly there. The mud behaves itself decently. At the first glance, you might be inclined to take it for one of those subterranean passages once so common, and so useful for the flights of monarchs and princes, in the good old times "when the people loved their kings." The present sewer is a handsome sewer; pure style prevails there; the classic rectilinear Alexandrine, which, expelled from poetry, appears to have taken refuge in architecture, seems blended with all the stones of that long, dark, and whitish vault; each outlet is an arcade; the Rue de Rivoli sets the fashion even in the sewer. However, if the geometric line be in place anywhere, it is assuredly so in the sewerage pipe of a great city, where everything should be subordinated to the shortest road. The sewer has, at the present day, assumed a certain official aspect. The very police reports, of which it sometimes forms the subject, are no longer lacking in respect for it. The words which characterize it in administrative language are lofty and dignified: what used to be called a gut is now a gallery, and what used to be a hole is now an orifice. Villon would no longer recognize old temporary lodgings. This net-work of cellars still has its population of rodents swarming more thickly than ever. From time to time, a rat, an old veteran, ventures his head at the opening of the drain and examines the Parisians; but even these vermin are growing tame, so satisfied are they with their subterranean palace. The cloaca no longer retains its

primitive ferocity. The rain, which in olden times sullied the drain, now washes it. Still, do not trust to it too much. Miasmas still inhabit it. It is hypocritical rather than irreproachable. In spite of all the prefecture of police and the board of health have done, in spite of disinfecting processes, it exhales a vague, suspicious odour, like Tartuffe after confession.

Still, we must allow that, taking it all together, this sweeping and cleaning is an homage which the sewer pays to civilization; and as from this point of view Tartuffe' conscience is an improvement upon the Augean stables, it is certain that the Paris sewers have been improved.

It is more than progress; it is transmutation. Between the old and the new sewer there is a revolution.

Who affected this revolution? The man whom every one forgets, and whom we have named,— Bruneseau.

CHAPTER VI

FUTURE PROGRESS

TO dig the sewer of Paris was no small task. The last ten centuries have toiled at it without being able to finish it, any more than they have succeeded in finishing Paris. The sewer, in fact, receives all the consequences of the growth of Paris. It is, within the earth, a sort of dark polypus with a thousand antennæ, which grows below, as the city expands above. Every time that the city builds a street, the sewer stretches out an arm. The old monarchy constructed only twenty-three thousand three hundred metres of drain; Paris reached that point on January 1, 1806. Beginning with this period, to which we shall presently revert, the work was usefully and energetically taken up and continued. Napoleon built — the figures are curious — four thousand eight hun-

dred and four metres; Charles X., ten thousand eight hundred and thirty-six; Louis Philippe, eighty-nine thousand and twenty; the Republic of 1848, twenty-three thousand three hundred and eighty-one; the present government, seventy thousand five hundred; altogether, two hundred and twenty-six thousand six hundred metres, or sixty leagues, of sewer,— the enormous entrails of Paris; an obscure ramification constantly at work; an unknown and immense construction.

As we see, the subterranean labyrinth of Paris is, at the present day, more than tenfold what it was at the beginning of the century. It is not easy to conceive all the perseverance and all the efforts required to raise this cesspool to the point of relative perfection at which it now is. It was with great difficulty that the old monarchical provosts, and, during the last ten years of the eighteenth century, the revolutionary mayors, succeeded in boring the five leagues of drains which existed prior to 1806. All sorts of obstacles impeded this operation,— some peculiar to the nature of the soil, others inherent in the prejudices of the working population of Paris. Paris is built on a soil which is strangely rebellious to the pick, the hoe, the borer, and to human manipulation. Nothing is harder to pierce and penetrate than the geological formation on which the marvellous historical formation called Paris is superposed; so soon as labour in any shape is attempted and ventures into this layer of alluvium, subterranean resistances abound. There are liquid clays, running springs, hard rocks, and those soft, deep quagmires which special science calls "mustard." The pick advances laboriously through the calcareous layers alternating with very thin veins of clay and schistose strata incrusted with oyster-shells, contemporaries of the pre-Adamite oceans. Sometimes a rivulet suddenly bursts into a tunnel just begun, and inundates the workmen; or a bed of marl is exposed and rushes forward with the fury of a cataract, breaking the strongest supporting beams like glass. Very recently, at La Villette, when it was found necessary to carry the collecting sewer under the St. Martin canal without interrupting navigation

or letting off the water, a fissure formed in the bed of the canal, and water poured suddenly into the tunnel, mocking at all the efforts of the draining pumps; it was found necessary to employ a diver to seek for the fissure, which was in the mouth of the great basin; and it was with great difficulty stopped up. Elsewhere, near the Seine, and even at some distance from the river, as, for instance, at Belleville, Grand Rue, and the Passage Lunière, quick-sands are found, in which men have been swallowed up. Add suffocation by miasmas, burial by slides, and sudden crumbling of the soil. Add typhus, too, with which the workmen are slowly impregnated. In our day, after having dug the gallery of Clichy, with a foot-path to receive the main water-conduit of the Ourque, a job executed in a trench ten metres in depth; after having arched the Bièvre from the Boulevard de l'Hôpital to the Seine, in the midst of earth-slips and by the aid of excavations, often through putrid matter, and of shores; after having, in order to deliver Paris from the torrent-like waters of Montmarte, and to provide an outlet for the river-like pond twenty-three acres in extent, which stagnated near the Barrière des Martyrs; after having, we say, constructed the line of sewers from the Barrière Blanche to the Aubervilliers road, in four months, by working day and night, at a depth of eleven metres; after having made a subterraneous sewer, in the Rue Barre du Bec, at a depth of six metres without a cutting — a thing unknown before,— the surveyor, Monnot, died. After arching three thousand metres of sewer in all parts of the city, from the Rue Traversière Saint Antoine to the Rue de l'Ourcine; after having by means of the Arbalète branch, freed the Censier-Mouffetard cross-roads from pluvial inundations; after having constructed the St. George's drain in liquid sand upon rubble and concrete; and after having directed the tremendous task of lowering the floor of the Notre Dame de Nazareth branch,— the engineer, Duleau, died. There are no bulletins for such acts of bravery as these, which are more useful, however, than the brutal butchery of battle-fields.

The sewers of Paris, in 1832, were far from being what they now are. Bruneseau had given the impulse, but the cholera was required to bring about the vast reconstruction which has taken place since. It is surprising to learn, for instance, that in 1821 a portion of the belt-sewer, called the Grand Canal, as at Venice, still stood stagnating, open to the sky, in the Rue des Gourdes. It was not till 1823 that the city of Paris found in its pocket the two hundred and sixty-six thousand and eighty francs, and six centimes, needed to cover in this turpitude. The three absorbing wells of the Combat, La Cunette, and St. Mandè with their drains, machinery, cesspools, and ventilating pipes, merely date from 1836. The intestinal canal of Paris has been remade, and, as we said, augmented more than tenfold during the last quarter of a century.

Thirty years ago, at the period of the insurrection of June 5 and 6, it was still, in many parts, almost the same old sewer. A great number of streets, now convex, were at that time broken causeways. There were frequently seen, at the foot of a hill where tributaries of streets and squares ended, large square gratings, whose iron glistened, polished by the constant passage of the crowd, dangerous and slippery for vehicles, and throwing horses down. The official language of the department of Roads and Bridges gave to these gratings the expressive name of *Cassis*.[1] In 1832, in a number of streets — Rue de l'Etoile, Rue St. Louis, Rue du Temple, Rue Vieille du Temple, Rue Notre Dame de Nazareth, Rue Folie Méricourt, Quai aux Fleurs, Rue du Petit Musc, Rue de Normandie, Rue Pont aux Biches, Rue des Marais, Faubourg St. Martin, Rue Notre Dame des Victoires, Faubourg Montmarte, Rue Grange Batelière, in the Champs Elysées, the Rue Jacob, and the Rue de Tournon — the old Gothic cloaca still cynically displayed its throats. They were enormous stone orifices sometimes surrounded by stone posts, with monumental effrontery.

Paris, in 1806, was much in the same state as regards

[1] Neck-breakers.

drains as in May, 1663; five thousand three hundred and twenty-eight fathoms. After Bruneseau, on January 1, 1832, there were forty thousand three hundred metres. From 1806 to 1831 seven hundred and fifty metres were, on an average, constructed annually; since then, eight and even ten thousand metres have been built every year, in masonry of rubble with a coating of hydraulic mortar, which hardens under water, on a concrete foundation. At two hundred francs the metre, the sixty leagues of sewers in the Paris of to-day represent forty-eight million francs.

In addition to the economic progress to which we alluded at the outset, serious considerations as to the public health are connected with that immense question,— the drainage of Paris.

Paris lies between two sheets,— a sheet of water and a sheet of air. The sheet of water, lying at a tolerably great depth under ground, but already tapped by two borings, is supplied by the stratum of green sandstone situated between the chalk and the Jurassic limestone; this stratum may be represented by a disk with a radius of twenty-five leagues. A multitude of rivers and streams drip into it. We drink the Seine, the Marne, the Yonne, the Oisin, the Aisne, the Cher, the Vienne, and the Loire in a glass of water from the Grenelle well. The sheet of water is salubrious; it comes from the sky first, and then from the earth. The sheet of air is unwholesome; it comes from the sewer. All the miasmas of the cesspool are mingled with the breath of the city; hence this bad breath. The atmosphere taken from above a dungheap, as has been scientifically proved, is purer than the atmosphere taken from over Paris. Within a given time, by the aid of progress, machinery being perfected, and enlightenment increasing, the sheet of water will be employed to purify the sheet of air,— that is to say, to wash the sewer. It is understood that, by washing the sewer, we mean restoring the ordure to the earth,— returning dung to the arable lands, and manure to the fields. This simple act will cause diminution of wretchedness and an augmentation of health for the whole social

community. At the present hour the radiation of disease from Paris extends for fifty leagues round,— the Louvre taken as the hub of this pestilential wheel.

We might say that, for the last ten centuries, the cesspool has been the disease of Paris. . The sewer is the defect which the city has in its blood. The popular instinct has never been deceived. The trade of the sewer-man was formerly almost as dangerous and almost as repulsive to the people as that of the knacker, which was so long regarded with horror and left to the hangman. High wages were required to induce a bricklayer to disappear in that fetid mire; the ladder of the well-digger hesitated to plunge into it; it was said, proverbially, " Going into the sewer is entering the tomb;" and all sorts of hideous legends, as we have said, clothed this colossal sink with terrors. It is a fearful sink-hole which bears traces of the revolutions of the globe as well as the revolutions of man, and where vestiges may be found of every cataclysm, from the shells of the Deluge to the ragged sheet of Marat.

BOOK III

MUD, BUT SOUL

CHAPTER I

THE SEWER AND ITS SURPRISES

IT was in the sewer of Paris that Jean Valjean found himself.

There is a further resemblance between Paris and the sea. As in the ocean, the diver may disappear there.

The transition was extraordinary. In the very heart of the city Jean Valjean had left the city, and, in a twinkling, in the time required to lift a trap and let it fall again, he had passed from broad daylight to complete darkness, from midday to midnight, from noise to silence, from the roar of thunder to the stagnation of the tomb, and, by a sudden change of fortune, far more marvellous even than that of the Rue Polonceau, from the extremest peril to the most absolute security.

A sudden fall into a cellar; disappearance into the secret dungeon of Paris; leaving that street where death was imminent on every hand, for this sort of sepulchre where there was life: it was a strange moment. He stood for some seconds as if stunned; listening, bewildered. The waste-trap of safety had suddenly opened beneath him. The bounty of heaven had, to some extent, taken him captive by treachery. Admirable ambuscades of Providence!

Still, the wounded man did not stir, and Jean Valjean did

not know whether that which he had carried into this tomb were alive or dead.

His first sensation was one of blindness. All at once, he could see nothing. He felt too, that in a moment he had become deaf. He could hear nothing more. The frenzied storm of murder let loose a few yards above him, reached him confusedly and indistinctly, as we said, thanks to the thickness of the earth which lay between him and it. It was like an echo in a deep place. He felt that the ground was solid under his feet,— that was all; but that was enough. He stretched out one arm, then the other; he touched the wall on both sides, and found that the passage was narrow. His foot slipped, and he thus learned that the pavement was damp. He advanced one foot cautiously, fearing a hole, a cesspool, or some gulf; he satisfied himself that the pavement continued. A fetid gust told him where he was.

At the expiration of a few minutes he was no longer blind. A little light fell through the man-hole by which he had descended, and his eye grew used to this cavern. He began to distinguish something. The passage in which he had run to earth — no other word expresses the situation better — was walled up behind him. It was one of those blind alleys, called in official language, branches. Before him was another wall,— a wall of night. The light from the man-hole expired ten or twelve feet from the spot where Jean Valjean stood, and scarcely cast a livid pallor on a few yards of the damp walls of the sewer. Beyond that, the darkness was dense; to penetrate it seemed horrible, and to enter it was like being swallowed up. Yet it was possible to bury one's self in that wall of fog; and it must be done. It must even be done quickly. Jean Valjean thought that the grating which he had seen under the stones might also be seen by the troops, and that all depended on this chance. They also might descend into the well and search it. There was not a minute to be lost. He had laid Marius on the ground; he now picked him up,— that is the right word for it,— put him on his shoulders, and set out. He resolutely entered the darkness.

The truth is, that they were less safe than Jean Valjean believed. Perils of another nature, but equally great, perhaps awaited them. After the flashing whirlwind of combat, came the cavern of miasmas and snares; after chaos, the cloaca. Jean Valjean had fallen from one circle of the Inferno into another.

When he had gone fifty yards, he was obliged to stop. A problem presented itself. The passage ran into another gut, which he encountered across his path. Two roads offered themselves. Which should he take? Should he turn to the left or the right? How was he to find his way in this black labyrinth? Ths labyrinth, as we said, has a clew,— that is, its slope. To follow the slope, is to reach the river.

Jean Valjean understood this at once.

He said to himself that he was probably in the sewer of the Markets; that if he turned to the left and followed the incline, he would arrive in a quarter of an hour at some opening on the Seine between the Pont au Change and the Pont Neuf,— that is to say, he would appear in broad daylight in the most crowded part of Paris. Perhaps he might come out at some man-hole at the intersection of streets. Passers-by would be stupefied at seeing two blood-stained men emerge from the ground at their feet. The police would come up; they would be carried off to the nearest guard-room. They would be captured before they had escaped. It would be better, therefore, to plunge into the labyrinth, to confide in the darkness, and leave the issue to Providence.

He went up the incline and turned to the right.

When he had turned the corner of the gallery, the distant glimmer of light from the trap disappeared, the curtain of darkness again fell on him, and he became blind once more. For all that, he advanced as rapidly as he could. Marius's arms were passed around his neck, and his feet hung down behind. Jean Valjean held both of Marius's arms with one hand, and groped along the wall with the other. Marius's cheek touched his and was glued to it, as it was bloody. He felt a warm stream which came from Marius drip on him and soak

through his clothing. But a moist warmth on his ear, which touched the wounded man's mouth, indicated respiration, and consequently life. The passage along which Jean Valjean was now walking was not so narrow as the first. He advanced with some difficulty. The rain of the previous night had not yet run off, and formed a small torrent in the centre of the floor; and he was forced to hug the wall in order to keep his feet out of water.

He went on thus darkly, resembling some being of the night groping in the invisible, and lost below the earth in veins of gloom.

Still, by degrees, whether because distant gratings sent a little flickering light into this opaque mist, or because his eyes had grown accustomed to the obscurity, he regained some vague vision, and began to get a confused glimpse now of the wall which he touched, and now of the vault under which he was passing. The pupil dilates in the dark, and eventually finds daylight there, just as the soul dilates in misfortune and eventually finds God there.

To direct his course was difficult.

The line of the sewers repeats, as it were, the line of the streets which lie above them. There were in Paris, at that day, two thousand two hundred streets. Picture to yourself beneath them that forest of dark branches called the sewer. The system of drains existing at that time, if placed end to end, would have given a length of eleven leagues. We have already said that the present net-work, owing to the special activity of the last thirty years, is no less than sixty leagues in length.

Jean Valjean began by making a mistake. He fancied that he was under the Rue St. Denis, and it was unlucky that he was not. Under that street there is an old stone drain, dating from the time of Louis XIII., which runs straight to the collecting sewer, called the Great Sewer, with only one turn, on the right, on the level of the old Court of Miracles, and a single branch, the St. Martin sewer, whose four arms form a cross. But the gut of the Petite Truanderie, whose en-

trance was near the Corinth wine-shop, never communicated with the sewer of the Rue St. Denis; it ends at the Montmartre drain, and that was where Jean Valjean now was. There, opportunities for getting lost abound. The Montmarte drain is one of the most labyrinthine of the ancient network. Luckily, Jean Valjean had left behind him the drain of the Markets, whose geometrical plan presents the appearance of a number of entangled topmasts; but he had before him more than one embarrassing encounter, and more than one street-corner — for they are streets — appearing in the darkness like a note of interrogation; first, on his left, the vast Plâtrière sewer, a sort of Chinese puzzle, thrusting forth and intermingling its chaos of *T's* and *Z's* under the Post Office, and under the rotunda of the Corn Market, as far as the Seine, where it terminates in a *Y;* secondly, on his right, the crooked passage of the Rue du Cadran, with its three teeth, which are so many blind alleys; thirdly, on his left, the Mail branch, complicated, almost at the beginning, by a species of fork, and running with repeated zigzags to the great cesspool of the Louvre, which is lopped short and ramified in every direction; and lastly, on his right the blind alley of the Rue des Jeûneurs, to say nothing of other little nooks here and there, before he reached the belt sewer, which alone could lead him to some issue sufficiently distant to be safe.

Had Jean Valjean had any notion of all that we have just stated, he would quickly have perceived, merely by feeling the wall, that he was not in the subterranean gallery of the Rue St. Denis. Instead of the old freestone, instead of the old architecture, haughty and royal even in the sewer, with its floor and string courses of granite and mortar, costing eight hundred livres the fathom, he would have left under his hand modern cheapness, economical expedients, porous stone with hydraulic mortar on a concrete foundation, which costs two hundred francs the metre,— that coarse masonry known as rubble; but he knew nothing of all this.

He advanced anxiously but calmly, seeing nothing, hearing

nothing, plunged into chance,— that is to say, swallowed up in Providence.

By degrees, however, we confess, a certain horror beset him. The shadow which enveloped him took possession of his soul. He walked in an enigma. This aqueduct of the sewer is fearful; it crosses and intersects in a bewildering way. It is a melancholy thing to be caught in this Paris of darkness. Jean Valjean was obliged to find, almost to invent, his road without seeing it. In this unknown region each step that he ventured might be his last. How was he to get out? Should he find an issue? Should he find it in time? Could he pierce and penetrate this colossal subterranean sponge with its channels of stone? Should he meet there some unexpected knot of darkness? Should he come to something inextricable and impassible? Would Marius die of hemorrhage, and himself of hunger? Should they both end by getting lost, and forming two skeletons in a corner of this night? He did not know. He asked himself all these questions, and could not answer them. The intestines of Paris are a precipice. Like the prophet, he was in the monster's belly.

Suddenly he had a surprise. At the most unexpected moment, and without having ceased to walk in a straight line, he perceived that he was no longer ascending; the water of the gutter splashed against his heels instead of coming to his toes. The sewer was now descending; Why? Was he about to reach the Seine suddenly? That danger was great, but the peril of turning back was greater still. He continued to advance.

He was not proceeding toward the Seine. The ridge which the soil of Paris makes on the right bank of the river, empties one of its water-sheds into the Seine, and the other into the Great Sewer. The crest of this ridge, which determines the division of the waters, describes a most capricious line. The highest point, which is at the spot where the drainage separates, is in the St. Avoye sewer, beyond the Rue Michel-le-comte, in the Louvre sewer, near the boulevards, and in the Montmartre drain near the Markets. This highest point Jean

Valjean had reached. He was proceeding toward the belt sewer; he was on the right road. But he knew it not.

Every time that he came to a branch, he felt its corners, and if he found the opening narrower than the passage in which he was, he did not enter, but continued his march, correctly judging that any narrower way must end in a blind alley, and could only lead him farther from his goal,— that is to say, an outlet. He thus avoided the fourfold snare laid for him in the darkness by the four labyrinths which we have enumerated.

At a certain moment he discovered that he was passing from under that part of Paris petrified by the riot, where the barricades had suppressed circulation, and was coming under living and normal Paris. He suddenly heard above his head a sound like thunder, distant but continuous. It was the rumble of vehicles.

He had been walking about half an hour (at least that was the calculation he made), and he had not thought of resting; he had merely changed the hand which supported Marius. The darkness was more profound than ever; but this darkness reassured him.

All at once he saw his shadow before him. It stood out against a faint and almost indistinct red glow which vaguely crimsoned the road-way at his feet and the vault above his head, and glided along the slimy walls of the passage on either hand. He turned his head in amazement, and saw behind him, glistening at a distance which appeared immense, piercing the thick darkness, a sort of horrible star that seemed to be looking at him.

It was the gloomy star of the police rising in the sewer.

Behind this star, nine or ten black, upright, indistinct, and terrible forms moved confusedly.

CHAPTER II

EXPLANATION

ON the day of June 6, a battue of the sewers was ordered. It was feared that the conquered might take refuge in them, and Prefect Gisquet was ordered to search occult Paris, while General Bugeaud swept public Paris,— a double and connected operation, which required double strategy on the part of the public force, represented above by the army and below by the police. Three squads of police agents and sewer-men explored the subway of Paris,— the first, the right bank, the second, the left bank, and the third, the city itself. The police were armed with carbines, bludgeons, swords, and daggers.

That which was at this moment pointed at Jean Valjean was the lantern of the patrol of the right bank.

This patrol had just inspected the winding gallery and the three blind alleys which lie under the Rue du Cadran. While they were throwing their light about those blind alleys, Jean Valjean had encountered the entrance to the gallery, had found that it was narrower than the main gallery, and had not entered it. He passed on. The police, on leaving the Cadran gallery, had fancied that they heard the sound of footsteps in the direction of the belt sewer. They were, indeed, the steps of Jean Valjean. The sergeant in command raised his lantern, and the squad began to peer into the mist in the direction whence the noise came.

This was an indescribable moment for Jean Valjean.

Luckily, if he saw the lantern well, the lantern saw him but ill. It was light, and he was darkness. He was far off, and blended with the darkness of the spot. He hugged the wall and stood still. However, he did not fully understand what it was that moved behind him. Want of sleep and food, and strong emotion, had thrown him into a visionary

state. He saw a flash, and around that flash, spectres. What was it? He did not understand.

When Jean Valjean stopped, the noise ceased.

The police listened, and heard nothing; they looked, and saw nothing. They consulted together.

There was at that period, at this point in the Montmartre drain, a sort of temporary cross-roads, since removed on account of the small inner lake which the torrents of rain formed there in heavy storms. The squad clustered together in this open space. Jean Valjean saw those spectres form a sort of circle. Their bull-dog heads came together and whispered.

The result of this council held by the watch-dogs was, that they were mistaken, that there had been no noise, that there was nobody there, that it was useless to enter the belt sewer, that it would only be a waste of time, but that they must hasten toward St. Merry; for if there was anything to be done and any "bousingot" [1] to be tracked, it would be there.

From time to time parties new-sole there old insults. In 1832, the word *bousingot* formed the transition between the word *jacobin*, no longer current, and the word *demagogue*, then almost unused, and which has since done such excellent service.

The sergeant gave the orders to left-wheel toward the water-shed of the Seine.

Had it occurred to him to divide his men into two squads and go in both directions, Jean Valjean would have been caught. It all hung on that thread. It is probable that the instructions from the Prefecture, foreseeing a chance of a fight with a large body of insurgents, forbade the patrol to part company. The squad set out again, leaving Jean Valjean behind. Of all this movement, he perceived nothing, except the eclipse of the lantern, which was suddenly turned away from him.

[1] *Bousingot:* "a sailor's cap." Name given after the July revolution, to those who affected careless dress and democratic opinions. Also, one who "kicks up a row," "a come-outer."

Before leaving, the sergeant, to satisfy his police conscience, discharged his carbine in the direction of Jean Valjean. The report rolled echoing along the crypt, like the rumbling of those Titanic bowels. A piece of plaster which fell into the gutter and splashed up the water a few yards from Jean Valjean, warned him that the bullet had struck the vault above his head.

Slow and measured steps echoed for some time along the causeway, growing fainter and fainter in the distance; the group of black forms disappeared; a light flickered and floated on the arched roof, forming a ruddy circle, which decreased and disappeared. The silence again became profound, the darkness again became complete, blindness and deafness again took possession of the gloom; and Jean Valjean, not daring to stir, remained for a long time leaning against the wall, with straining ears and dilated pupils, watching the vanishing of that phantom patrol.

CHAPTER III

THE MAN WHO MADE OFF

WE must do the police of that period the justice to say that, even in the gravest public junctures they imperturbably accomplished their duties as inspectors and watchmen. A riot was not, in their eyes, a pretext to give malefactors a loose rein, and to neglect society for the reason that the government was in danger. Their ordinary duties were performed correctly, in addition to the extraordinary duties, and were in no way disturbed thereby. In the midst of an incalculable political event, under the pressure of a possible revolution, a police agent, not allowing himself to be affected by the insurrection and the barricade, would "nose" a thief.

Something very like this occurred on the afternoon of June 6, on the right bank of the Seine, a little beyond the Pont des Invalides.

There is no bank there now. The appearance of the spot has been altered.

On that slope, two men, a certain distance apart, seemed to be watching each other, each avoiding the other. The one in front was trying to get away, while the one behind wanted to overtake him.

It was like a game of chess played at a distance and in silence. Neither of them seemed to be in a hurry, and both walked slowly, as if each of them feared by increased speed to make his partner redouble his pace.

It might have been called an appetite following a prey, without appearing to do so purposely. The prey was crafty, and on its guard.

The proper relations between the hunted weasel and the hunting mastiff were observed. The one trying to escape was narrow chested and mean-looking; the one trying to catch him, was a tall fellow, rude of aspect, and evidently a rough customer.

The first, feeling himself the weaker, avoided the second, but did so with deep fury; any one who observed him would have seen in his eyes the gloomy hostility of flight, and all the threat which lies in fear.

The shore was deserted; there were no passers-by,— not even a boatman or lighter-man in the barges moored here and there.

It was not easy to see the two men, except from the opposite quay; and any one who had watched them at that distance would have seen that the man in front appeared a bristling, ragged, shambling fellow, anxious and shivering under a torn blouse, while the other was a classic and official personage, wearing the frock-coat of authority buttoned up to the chin.

The reader would probably recognize those two men, were he to see them more closely.

What was the object of the last one?

Probably he wished to clothe the other man more warmly.

When a man dressed by the State pursues a man in rags, it is in order to make of him, also, a man dressed by the State. The difference of colour is the sole question,— to be dressed in blue is glorious; to be dressed in red is disagreeable.

There is a purple of the lower classes.

It was probably some unpleasantness and some purple robe of this sort which the first man desired to shirk.

If the other allowed him to go on ahead, and did not yet arrest him, it was, to all appearance, in the hope of seeing him lead up to some significant rendezvous and some group worth capturing. This delicate operation is called "nosing."

What renders this conjecture highly probable is the fact that the buttoned-up man, perceiving from the shore an empty cab passing along the quay, made a sign to the driver; the driver understood, evidently recognized with whom he had to deal, turned about, and began to follow the two men at a foot-pace along the quay. This was not noticed by the ragged, shambling fellow in front.

The hackney-coach rolled along under the trees of the Champs Elysées. The shoulders of the driver, whip in hand, could be seen above the parapet.

One of the secret instructions of the police to their agents is: "Always have a hackney-coach at hand, in case of need."

While these men manœuvred with irreproachable strategy, each on his own side, they approached an incline in the quay, which allowed cab-drivers coming from Passy, to water their horses in the river. This incline has since been suppressed for the sake of symmetry,— horses die of thirst, but the eye is pleased.

It is probable that the man in the blouse meant to ascend by this incline, in order to try and escape into the Champs Elysées,— a place adorned with trees, but, to make up for

that, much frequented by police agents, where the other could easily procure assistance.

This point of the quay is not far distant from the house brought from Moret to Paris, in 1824, by Colonel Brack, and known as "the house of Francis I." A guard-house is close by.

To the great surprise of his watcher, the tracked man did not turn up the road to the watering-place. He continued to advance along the bank parallel with the quay.

His position was clearly becoming critical.

Unless he threw himself into the Seine, what could he do?

There were now no means left him of returning to the quay,— no incline or steps; and they were close to the spot marked by the bend in the Seine, near the Pont de Jena, where the bank, gradually narrowing, ended in a slender strip and was lost in the water. There he must inevitably find himself blockaded between the perpendicular wall on his right, the river on his left and facing him, and the authorities at his heels.

It is true that this termination of the bank was hidden from sight by a pile of rubbish, six or seven feet high,— the result of some demolition or other. But did this man hope to conceal himself effectually behind that heap of rubbish, which one need but walk around? The expedient would have been childish. He evidently did not dream of it. The innocence of robbers does not reach so far.

The pile of rubbish formed a sort of eminence on the waterside, extending in a promontory to the quay wall.

The pursued man reached this small mound and went round it, so that he was no longer seen by the other.

The latter, not seeing, was not seen; he took advantage of this to give up all dissimulation and walk very fast. In a few minutes, he reached the rubbish heap and passed round it. There he stood stupefied.

The man he was pursuing was not there.

Total eclipse of the man in the blouse.

The bank did not run more than thirty yards beyond the

rubbish heap, and then plunged under the water, which washed the quay wall. The fugitive could not have thrown himself into the Seine or have climbed up the quay without being seen by his pursuer. What had become of him?

The man in the buttoned-up coat walked to the end of the bank and stood there for a moment, lost in thought, with clenched fists and scowling eye. All at once he smote his forehead. He had just perceived, at the point where the ground ended and the water began, a broad, low, arched, iron grating, provided with a heavy lock and three massive hinges. This grating,—a sort of grate pierced at the bottom of the quay,— opened on the river as well as on the bank. A black stream poured from under it into the Seine.

Beyond the heavy rusty bars a sort of arched and dark passage could be seen. The man folded his arms and looked at the grating reproachfully.

This look not being sufficient, he tried to push open the grating; he shook it, but it offered a sturdy resistance. It was probable that it had just been opened, although no sound had been heard,— a singular thing with so rusty a gate; but it was certain that it had been closed again. This indicated that the man who had opened the gate, had not a picklock but a key!"

This evidence at once burst on the mind of the man who was trying to open the grating, and drew from him this indignant apostrophe:—

"Come, now! that's going it rather strong. A government key!"

Then, calming himself immediately, he expressed a whole world of inward ideas by this outburst of monosyllables, marked by an almost ironical accent:—

"So! so! so! so!"

This said, hoping we know not what,— either to see the man come out or others enter,— he posted himself on the watch behind the heap of rubbish, with the patient rage of a pointer.

In its turn the hackney-coach, which regulated all its movements by his, stopped just above him near the parapet. The driver, foreseeing a long halt, encased his horses' muzzles in the nose-bag full of oats, damp at the bottom and so well known to Parisians, to whom the government, be it said, in parenthesis, sometimes applies it. The few passers over the Pont de Jena, before going on, turned their heads to look for a moment at those two motionless details in the landscape,— the man on the bank and the hackney-coach on the quay.

CHAPTER IV

HE TOO BEARS HIS CROSS

JEAN VALJEAN had resumed his march, and had not again paused.

This march grew more and more laborious. The level of these passages varies; the average height is about five feet six inches, and was calculated for the stature of a man. Jean Valjean was compelled to stoop in order to avoid dashing Marius against the roof; he was forced at each moment to bend, then to draw himself up, and to feel the wall incessantly. The dampness of the stones and the sliminess of the flooring rendered them bad supports, either for hand or foot. He stumbled in the hideous dungheap of the city. The intermittent flashes from the street-gratings appeared only at long intervals, and were so faint that the bright sunshine seemed like moonlight; all else was fog, miasma, opaqueness, blackness. Jean Valjean was hungry and thirsty,— especially thirsty; and it was like the sea,— there was water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink. His strength, which, as we know, was prodigious, and but slightly diminished by age, owing to his chaste and sober life, was however beginning to give way. Fatigue assailed him; and

his decreasing strength increased the weight of his burden. Marius, who perhaps was dead, was heavy, like all inert bodies. Jean Valjean held him so that his own chest was not oppressed, and he could breathe as freely as possible. He felt the rapid gliding of rats between his legs. One was so frightened that it bit him. From time to time a gush of fresh air blew through the gratings, and revived him.

It might have been about three o'clock in the afternoon when he reached the belt sewer.

He was at first amazed by this sudden widening. He unexpectedly found himself in a gallery whose two walls his outstretched arms could not reach, and under an arch which his head did not touch. The Great Sewer is, in fact, eight feet in width by seven high. At the point where the Montmartre drain joins the Great Sewer, two other subterranean galleries,— that of the Rue de Provence and that of the Slaughter-House,— form cross-roads. Between these four ways a less sagacious man would have been puzzled. Jean Valjean selected the widest,— that is to say, the belt sewer. But here the question again came up: Should he ascend or descend? He thought that the situation was pressing, and that he must now reach the Seine at any risk,— in other words he must descend. He turned to the left.

It was fortunate that he did so, for it would be an error to suppose that the belt sewer has two outlets,— one toward Bercy, the other toward Passy,— and that it is, as its name indicates, the subterranean belt of Paris on the right bank. The Great Sewer, which is nought else, it must be borne in mind, than the old Menilmontant brook, leads, if you ascend it, to a blind alley; that is to say, to its original starting-point,— its source at the foot of the Menilmontant mound. It has no direct communication with the branch which collects the waters of Paris after leaving the Popincourt quarter, and which falls into the Seine by the Amelot sewer above the old Isle Louviers. This branch, which completes the collecting sewer, is separated from it under the Rue Menil-

montant itself, by masonry-work which marks the point where the waters from up stream and down stream divide. If Jean Valjean had remounted the gallery he would have reached, after countless efforts, exhausted by fatigue and in a dying condition, a wall. He would have been lost.

Strictly speaking, by going back a little way, entering the passage of the Filles du Calvaire, on condition that he did not hesitate at the subterranean maze of the Boucherat cross-roads, by taking the St. Louis passage, then, to the left, the St. Gilles gut, then by turning to the right and avoiding the St. Sebastian gallery, he might have reached the Amelot sewer; and thence, if he did not lose his way in the sort of *F* which underlies the Bastille, he might have reached the outlet on the Seine near the Arsenal. But to do this, he must have been thoroughly acquainted with the enormous madrepore of the sewer in all its ramifications and openings. Now, we must dwell on the fact, he knew nothing of this frightful labyrinth through which he was moving; and, had he been asked where he was, he would have replied: "In night."

His instinct served him well. To descend, was, in fact, the only salvation possible.

He left on his right the two passages which ramify in the shape of a claw under the Rue Laffitte and the Rue St. Georges, and the long bifurcated corridor of the Chaussée d'Antin.

A little beyond an affluent (which was, most likely, the Madeleine branch) he paused. He was very weary. A tolerably large grating,— probably the opening in the Rue d'Anjou,— afforded an almost bright light. Jean Valjean, with the gentleness of movement which a brother would bestow on a wounded brother, laid Marius on the foot-path of the drain. His blood-stained face gleamed under the white light of the trap as at the bottom of a tomb. His eyes were closed, his hair was plastered to his temples like a painter's brushes dried in red-wash, his hands were limp and dead, his limbs cold, blood was clotted at the corners of his lips.

Coagulated blood had collected in his cravat-knot; his shirt stuck in his wounds, the cloth of his coat chafed the gaping edges of the living flesh. Jean Valjean, removing the clothes with the tips of his fingers, laid his hand on the breast,— the heart still beat. Jean Valjean tore up his shirt, bandaged the wounds as well as he could, and stopped the blood that flowed; then, stooping over Marius, in this half daylight, as he still lay unconscious, and almost breathless, he gazed at him with indescribable hatred.

In disarranging Marius's clothes, he had found in his pockets, two things,— the loaf, which he had forgotten on the previous evening, and his pocket-book. Valjean ate the bread and opened the pocket-book. On the first page he found the lines written by Marius. The reader will remember them:—

"My name is Marius Pontmercy. Carry my body to my grandfather, M. Gillenormand, No. 6 Rue des Filles du Calvaire, in the Marais."

Jean Valjean read these lines by the light from the grating, and remained for a time absorbed, as it were, in himself, repeating in a low voice, "Rue des Filles du Calvaire,— No. 6,— M. Gillenormand." He returned the pocket-book to Marius's pocket. He had eaten, and his strength had returned to him; he again raised Marius, carefully laid his head on his own right shoulder, and continued his descent of the sewer.

The Great Sewer, running along the channel of the valley of Menilmontant, is nearly two leagues in length. It is paved for a considerable portion of the distance.

This torch, formed of the names of the streets of Paris, with which we enlighten for the reader Jean Valjean's subterranean march, Jean Valjean himself did not possess. There was nothing to tell him what zone of the city he was traversing, nor what distance he had gone. Only the growing pallor of the flakes of light, which he met from time to time, indicated to him that the sun was leaving the pave-

ments, and that day would soon be over; and the roll of vehicles over his head, which became intermittent instead of continuous, and then almost ceased, proved to him that he was no longer under central Paris, and that he was approaching some solitary region near the outer boulevards, or the most distant quays. Where there are fewer houses and streets, the drain has fewer openings. The darkness thickened around Jean Valjean. Still, he continued to advance, groping his way in the shadow.

This shadow suddenly became terrible.

CHAPTER V

SAND, LIKE WOMAN, MAY BE SO FINE AS TO BE PERFIDIOUS

HE felt that he was entering water, and that he had no longer stone, but mud, beneath his feet.

It sometimes happens, on certain coasts of Brittany or Scotland, that a man, whether traveller or fisherman, walking, at low tide, on the sands some distance from the shore, suddenly perceives that for several minutes past he has found some difficulty in walking. The beach beneath his feet is like pitch; his soles stick to it; it is no longer sand, it is bird-lime. The beach is perfectly dry, but at every step that he takes, so soon as his foot is raised, the imprint that it leaves is filled with water. The eye, however, has perceived no change; the immense expanse is smooth and calm, all the sand looks alike; there is nothing to distinguish the soil which is solid from that which is no longer so. The merry little swarm of sand-fleas continues to leap tumultuously about the feet of the wayfarer. The man goes his way, turns toward the land, and tries to approach the shore. Not that he is alarmed. Alarmed at what? Still, he feels as if the heaviness of his feet increased at every step he takes.

All at once, he sinks in. He sinks in two or three inches. Decidedly, he is not on the right road; he stops to get his bearings. Suddenly he looks at his feet. His feet have disappeared. The sand covers them. He draws his feet out of the sand, he tries to retrace his steps, he turns back, but he sinks in deeper still. The sand comes up to his ankle; he tears himself loose and flings himself to the left,— the sand comes to his knee; he turns to the right,— the sand comes up to his thigh. Then he recognizes, with indescribable terror, that he is caught in a quicksand, and that he has beneath him that frightful medium in which a man can no more walk than a fish can swim. He throws away his load, if he have one,— he lightens himself like a ship in distress; it is too late: the sand is already above his knees.

He calls out, he waves his hat or his handkerchief; but the sand gains on him more and more. If the shore is deserted, if land is too distant, if the quicksand is too ill-famed, if there is no hero at hand, it is all over with him,— he is doomed to be swallowed up. He is condemned to that terrible burial, long, awful, implacable, impossible to delay or to hasten, which lasts for hours; which never ends; which seizes you when erect, free, and in perfect health; which drags you down by the feet; which, at every effort you attempt, every cry you utter, drags you a little deeper; which seems to punish you for your resistance by a redoubled clutch; which forces a man to return slowly to the earth, while allowing him ample time to survey the houses, the trees, the green fields, the smoke from the villages on the plain, the sails of the vessels on the sea, the birds that fly and sing, the sun, and the sky. A quicksand is a tomb that becomes a tide, and rises from the depths of the earth toward a living man. Each minute is an inexorable grave-digger. The poor wretch tries to sit, to lie down, to climb, to crawl; every movement that he makes, buries him deeper; he draws himself up, and only sinks the more; he feels himself swallowed up; he yells, implores, cries to the clouds, wrings his hands, grows desperate. He is in the sand up to

his waist; the sand reaches to his breast,— he is but a bust. He lifts his hands, utters furious groans, digs his nails into the sand, tries to cling to that dust, raises himself on his elbows to tear himself from that soft sheath, and sobs frantically: the sand mounts higher. It reaches his shoulders, it reaches his neck; his face alone is visible. The mouth cries out; the sand fills it: silence. The eyes still look forth; the sand closes them: night. Then the forehead sinks; a little hair waves above the sand; a hand emerges, pierces through the sand, quivers, and disappears. Sinister effacement of a man.

Sometimes a rider is swallowed up with his horse; sometimes the carter is swallowed up with his cart. Everything founders beneath that strand. It is shipwreck elsewhere than in the water. It is the earth drowning a man. The earth, permeated by the ocean, becomes a snare. It presents itself as a plain, and opens like a wave. The abyss is subject to these acts of treachery.

This mournful fate, always possible on certain seashores, was also possible, some thirty years ago, in the sewers of Paris.

Before the important works, undertaken in 1833, the subway of Paris was subject to sudden breakings-in.

The water filtered through certain subjacent and peculiarly friable strata; the roadway, whether of paving-stones, as in the ancient drains, or of cement on concrete, as in the new galleries, having no support, gave way. A sinking in a road of this nature means a crack, and a crack means a crumbling away. The road-way broke away for a certain distance. Such a gap, a gulf of mud, was called, in the special language of the sewer-men, "a break." What is "a break"? It is the quicksand of the seashore suddenly met with under ground; it is the beach of Mount St. Michael in a sewer. The moistened soil is in a state of fusion, as it were; all its particles are held suspended in a shifting medium. It is not solid earth and it is not water. The depth is at times very great. Nothing can be more terrible than such an en-

counter. If water predominate, death is quick,— the man is swallowed up; if earth predominate, death is slow,— he is sucked in.

Can our readers imagine such a death? If it be frightful to sink in a quicksand on the seashore, what is it in a cesspool? Instead of fresh air, broad daylight, that clear horizon, those vast sounds, those free clouds from which life rains, those barks seen in the distance, that hope under every form, of possible passers-by, of help possible up to the last minute,— instead of all this, deafness, blindness, a black archway; the interior of a ready made tomb; death in the mud beneath a tombstone; slow suffocation by filth; a sarcophagus where asphyxia opens its claws in the mire and clutches you by the throat; fetidness mingled with the death-rattle; slime instead of sand; sulphureted hydrogen in lieu of the hurricane; a dunghill in place of the ocean; and to call, to gnash your teeth, to writhe and struggle and expire, with that enormous city which knows nothing of it all, above your head.

Inexpressible is the horror of dying thus! Death sometimes expiates its atrocity by a certain terrible dignity. On the funeral pyre, in shipwreck, a man may be great; in the flames, as in the foam, a superb attitude is possible: a man may be transfigured in perishing. But not so here. This death is unclean. It is humiliating to expire. The last vague visions are abject. Mud is synonymous with shame. It is petty, ugly, infamous. To die in a butt of Malmsey, like Clarence,— so be it; in the ditch of the scavenger, like D'Escoubleau, is horrible. To struggle therein is hideous; at the same time that one dies, he wallows in the mud. There is enough darkness for hell, and enough mire for a mere slough, and the dying man does not know whether he is about to become a spectre or a frog.

Everywhere else, the sepulchre is sinister; here, it is deformed.

The depth of the breaks varied, as well as their length and density, according to the nature of the subsoil. Some-

times a break was three or four feet deep, sometimes eight or ten; sometimes it was bottomless. In one, the mud was almost solid; in another, almost liquid. In the Lunière break, it would have taken a man a day to disappear, while he would have been devoured in five minutes by the Phélippeaux slough. The mud bears more or less well according to its degree of density. A child may escape where a man must perish. The first law of safety is to throw away every sort of load. Every sewer-man who felt the ground give way beneath him, began by throwing away his bag of tools, his basket, or his hod.

The breaks were due to various causes,— the friability of the soil, some convulsion of the earth at a depth beyond the reach of man, violent summer storms, long continued winter rains, and steady drizzling showers. Sometimes the weight of the surrounding houses upon a marshy or sandy soil broke the roofs of the subterranean galleries and warped them; or else it chanced that the road-way burst and split asunder under this terrific pressure. The pile of the Pantheon destroyed in this way, about a century ago, a portion of the vaults under Mount St. Geneviève. When a sewer gave way under the weight of the houses, the mischief was sometimes revealed in the street above by a sort of saw-toothed space between the paving-stones. This fissure was continued in a serpentine line along the whole length of the cracked drain; and in such a case, the evil being visible, the remedy could be promptly applied. It often happened also that the inward ravages were not revealed by any scar outside. And, in that case, woe to the sewer-men! Entering the injured drain incautiously, they might be lost in it. The old registers mention several sewer-men buried in this manner in a break. They give various names; among others, that of the sewer-man swallowed up in a slough under the man-hole in the Rue Carême-Prenant,— one Blaise Poutrain. This Blaise was a brother of Nicholas Poutrain, who was the last grave-digger of the cemetery called the Charnier des Innocents,[1] in 1785, when that cemetery expired.

[1] Charnel House of the Innocents.

There was also that young and charming Viscount d'Escoubleau, to whom we just alluded,— one of the heroes of the Siege of Lerida, where the assault was made in silk stockings, with violins at the head of the column. D'Escoubleau, surprised one night with his cousin, the Duchess de Sourdis, was drowned in a quagmire of the Beautreillis sewer, where he had taken refuge to escape the duke. Madame de Sourdis, when informed of his death, asked for her smelling-bottle, and forgot to weep, in smelling her salts. In such cases, no love can hold out; the cesspool extinguishes it. Hero refuses to wash the corpse of Leander. Thisbe stops her nose in the presence of Pyramus, and says: "Phew!"

CHAPTER VI

THE BREAK

JEAN VALJEAN found himself in the presence of a break.

This sort of quagmire was frequent at that day in the subsoil of the Champs Elysées, where it was difficult to carry on hydraulic works, and which was most injurious to underground drains, owing to its extreme fluidity. This fluidity exceeds even the inconsistency of the sands of the Quartier St. Georges, which could only be overcome by laying rubble on concrete, and of the gas-infected clay strata in the Quartier des Martyrs, which are so liquid that a passage could only be effected under the Galerie des Martyrs by means of a cast-iron pipe. When, in 1836, the authorities demolished and rebuilt the old stone sewer under the Faubourg St. Honoré, in which Jean Valjean was now engaged, the shifting sand which forms the subsoil of the Champs Elysées as far as the Seine, presented such an obstacle that the operation lasted nearly six months, to the great annoyance of those

living on the water-side,— especially such as owned mansions and coaches. The work was more than difficult,— it was dangerous. It is true that it rained for four and a half months, and the Seine overflowed three times.

The break which Jean Valjean came across was occasioned by the shower of the previous evening. The pavement, which was badly sustained by the subjacent sand, had given way, and produced a deposit of rainwater. Infiltration having taken place, the ground yielded. The road-bed, being displaced, sank into the mud. How far? Impossible to say. The darkness was denser there than anywhere else. It was a slough of mud in a cavern of night.

Jean Valjean felt the pavement vanish under his feet. He entered the slough. There was water on top and mud underneath. He must pass it. It was impossible to turn back. Marius was dying, and Jean Valjean worn out. Where else could he go? Jean Valjean advanced. The slough appeared shallow for the first few steps. But as he advanced, his feet sank deeper. Soon he had slime up to his calves, and water above his knees. He walked on, raising Marius in both arms as high above the water as he could. The slime now came up to his knees and the water to his waist. He could no longer retreat. He sank deeper and deeper. This mud, firm enough to bear the weight of one man, could not, clearly, bear two. Marius and Jean Valjean might have had a chance of getting out separately. Jean Valjean continued to advance, carrying the dying man, who was, perhaps, a corpse.

The water came up to his armpits; he felt himself drowning; he could scarcely move in the depth of mud in which he was standing. The density which was his support, was also an obstacle. He still held Marius up, and advanced with an extraordinary expenditure of strength; but he was sinking. He had only his head out of water now, and his two arms sustaining Marius. In old paintings of the Deluge there is a mother holding her child in the same way.

He still sank; he threw back his face to escape the water

and to breathe. Any one who saw him in that darkness might have fancied that he saw a mask floating on the gloomy waters. He vaguely perceived above him Marius's hanging head and livid face; he made a desperate effort, and thrust his foot forward; it struck something solid,— a point of support. It was high time.

He drew himself up, and writhed and rooted himself with a sort of fury upon that support. It produced on him the effect of the first step of a staircase leading back to life.

This support, met with in the mud, at the supreme moment, was the beginning of the other side of the roadway, which had bent without breaking, and curved under the weight of water like a plank, in a single piece. A well-constructed pavement forms a curve and possesses this firmness. This fragment of road-way, partly submerged, but solid, was a veritable rail of safety; once upon it, they were saved. Jean Valjean ascended it, and gained the other side of the slough.

As he left the water his foot struck against a stone, and he fell on his knees. He considered that this was only right, and remained on them for some time, his soul absorbed in words addressed to God.

He rose, shivering, chilled, foul smelling, bent beneath the dying man, whom he dragged after him, dripping with filth, his soul full of strange brightness.

CHAPTER VII

WRECKED IN SIGHT OF PORT

HE set out once again.

However, if he had not left his life in the break, he seemed to have left his strength there. That supreme effort had exhausted him. His fatigue was now so great that he was obliged, every three or four paces, to pause for breath,

and to lean against the wall. Once, he had to sit down on the foot-path in order to alter Marius's position, and he thought that he should have to remain there. But if his vigour were dead, his energy was not. He rose again.

He walked on desperately, almost quickly, went thus for a hundred yards, without raising his head, almost without breathing, and, all at once, ran against the wall. He had reached a turn in the drain, and reaching it with head down, struck against the wall. He raised his eyes, and at the end of the passage, far, very far away, he saw a light. This time it was no terrible light: it was fair white light,— it was daylight.

Jean Valjean saw the outlet.

A condemned soul that suddenly saw, from the middle of the furnace, the outlet from Gehenna, might feel as Jean Valjean felt. It would fly wildly with the stumps of its burned wings toward that radiant portal. Jean Valjean no longer felt fatigue, he no longer felt Marius's weight, his muscles were of steel once more; he ran rather than walked. As he drew nearer, the outlet became more and more distinct. It was a pointed arch, not so high as the roof, which gradually sank, and not so wide as the gallery, which grew narrower at the same time that the roof became lower. The tunnel ended like the inside of a funnel,— a faulty construction, imitated from the wickets of houses of correction, logical in a prison, but illogical in a drain, and which has since been corrected.

Jean Valjean reached the outlet.

There, he stopped.

It was certainly the outlet, but he could not get out.

The arch was closed by a strong grating; and this grating, which apparently rarely swung on its rusty hinges, was fastened to the stone wall by a heavy lock, which, red with rust, looked like an enormous brick. The keyhole was visible, as well as the bolt, deeply sunk in its iron staple. It was one of those Bastille locks of which ancient Paris was so prodigal.

Beyond the grating were the open air, the river, daylight,

the bank, very narrow, but sufficient for escape. The distant quays, Paris,— that gulf in which a man hides so easily, — the wide horizon, liberty. On the right could be distinguished, down the river, the Pont de Jena; and on the left, upstream, the Pont des Invalides. The spot would have been a favourable one in which to await night, and to escape.

It was one of the most solitary points in Paris,— the bank facing the Gros-Caillou. The flies went in and out through the grating-bars.

It might have been about half-past eight in the evening. Day was dying.

Jean Valjean laid Marius along the wall on the dry part of the way, then he approached the grating, and clenched the bars with both hands; he gave a frantic shake, but it produced absolutely no effect. The grating did not stir. Jean Valjean seized the bars one after the other, hoping he might be able to break away the least substantial one, and employ it as a lever to lift the gate off its hinges or break the lock.

Not a bar stirred. A tiger's teeth are not more solidly set in their sockets. Without a lever it was impossible to pry open the grating. The obstacle was invincible. There was no way of bursting the gate.

Must he, then, stop there? What was he to do? What was to become of him? He had not the strength to turn back, to recommence the frightful journey which he had already taken. Moreover, how was he to again cross that slough from which he had only escaped as by a miracle? And after the slough, was there not that police squad, which assuredly was not to be escaped twice? And then, where should he go? What direction should he take? To follow the slope would not lead to his goal. If he reached another outlet he would find it obstructed by an iron plate or a grating. All the issues were undoubtedly closed in that way. Accident had left the grating by which they entered, open; but it was plain that all the other mouths of the sewer were closed. He had only succeeded in escaping into a prison.

All was over. All that Jean Valjean had done was useless. Exhaustion had led to failure.

They were both caught in the immense dark web of death, and Jean Valjean felt the fearful spider already running along the black threads quivering in the darkness.

He turned his back on the grating, and fell on the pavement,— struck down rather than seated,— near Marius, who was still motionless, and his head sank upon his knees. There was no outlet. That was the last drop of agony.

Of whom did he think in this profound despondency? Neither of himself nor of Marius. He thought of Cosette.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TORN COAT-TAIL

IN the midst of this utter exhaustion a hand was laid on his shoulder, and a low voice said:—

"Half shares."

Some one in that shadow? As nothing so resembles a dream as despair, Jean Valjean fancied that he was dreaming. He had not heard a footstep. Was it possible? He raised his eyes.

A man stood before him.

This man was dressed in a blouse; his feet were naked; he held his shoes in his left hand. He had evidently taken them off in order to reach Jean Valjean without letting his footsteps be heard.

Jean Valjean did not hesitate for a moment. However unexpected the meeting might be, the man was known to him. It was Thénardier.

Although aroused, so to speak, with a start, Jean Valjean, accustomed to alarms and inured to unexpected blows, which must be parried promptly, at once regained possession of

all his presence of mind. Besides, the situation could not be worse. A certain degree of distress ceases to be capable of any crescendo, and Thénardier himself could add no blackness to this night.

There was a moment's pause.

Thénardier, raising his right hand to the level of his forehead, made a screen of it. Then he drew his eyebrows together with a frown, which, with a slight contraction of the lips, characterizes the sagacious attention of a man who is striving to recognize another. He did not succeed. Jean Valjean, as we said, had his back to the light, and was besides so disfigured, so filthy, and so blood-stained, that he would not have been recognized in broad daylight. On the other hand, Thénardier, his face lit up by the light from the grating,— a cellar-like light, it is true, livid, but exact in its lividness,— was as "plain as the nose on your face," to use a vigorous popular metaphor. This inequality of conditions sufficed to insure some advantage to Jean Valjean in the mysterious duel which was about to begin between the two situations and the two men. The encounter took place between Jean Valjean veiled and Thénardier unmasked.

Jean Valjean at once perceived that Thénardier did not recognize him.

They studied each other silently in that gloom, as if taking each other's measure. Thénardier was the first to break the silence.

"How do you mean to get out?"

Jean Valjean made no reply. Thénardier continued:

"It is impossible to pick the lock. And yet you must get out of this."

"That is true," said Jean Valjean.

"Well, then, half shares."

"What do you mean?"

"You have killed the man; very good. I have the key."

Thénardier pointed to Marius. He resumed: "I don't know you, but I'm willing to help you. You must be a friend."

Jean Valjean began to understand. Thénardier took him for an assassin. The latter went on:—

"Listen, mate. You didn't kill that man without looking to see what he had in his pockets. Give me my half. I will open the gate." And half drawing a huge key from under his ragged blouse, he added: "Would you like to see how the 'key to liberty' looks? See here."

Jean Valjean was so astounded that he doubted whether what he saw was real. It was Providence appearing in a horrible form, and his good angel rising from the ground in the shape of Thénardier.

The latter thrust his hand into a big pocket hidden under his blouse, drew out a rope, and handed it to Jean Valjean.

"There," he said, "I'll give you the rope into the bargain."

"What am I to do with the rope?"

"You also want a stone, but you will find that outside. There is a heap of rubbish there."

"What am I to do with a stone?"

"Why, you ass, as you are going to throw the flat into the river, you want a rope and a stone, or else the body will float on the water."

Jean Valjean took the rope. There is no one who has not sometimes accepted a thing in this mechanical way.

Thénardier snapped his fingers as if a sudden idea had occurred to him:—

"Hullo, mate, how did you manage to get through that slough? I did not dare to venture into it. Phew! you don't smell good."

After a pause, he added:—

"I ask you questions, but you are quite right not to answer. It is an apprenticeship for that ugly quarter of an hour before the beak. And then, by not talking at all, a man runs no risk of talking too loud. No matter, though I cannot see your face and do not know your name, you are wrong to suppose that I do not know who you are and what you want. I twig. You have smashed that swell a bit; and

now you want to tuck him away somewhere. You'd better try the river, that great nonsense-hider. I will help you out of your hobble. It is my delight to aid a good fellow out of a scrape."

While commending Jean Valjean for his silence, it was plain that he was trying to make him speak. He nudged his shoulder, in an attempt to get a look at his profile, and he exclaimed, though without raising the pitch of his voice:—

"Talking of the slough,—you are a smart one! Why didn't you throw the man into it?"

Jean Valjean preserved silence.

Thénardier continued, raising his rag of a cravat to his Adam's apple, a gesture which completes the capable air of a serious man:—

"Really, perhaps you were wise. The workmen coming in to-morrow to stop up the hole would certainly have found the swell, and they might have picked up the scent, thread by thread, bit by bit, and nabbed you. Some one has passed through the sewer. Who? How did he get out? Was he seen? The police are full of sense. The drain is a traitor, and denounces you. Such a find is a rarity; it attracts attention, for few people employ the sewer for their little business, while the river belongs to everybody. The river is the true grave. At the end of a month your man is fished up in the nets at St. Cloud. Well, who cares for that? It's carrion,—that's all. Who killed that man? Paris. And justice makes no inquiries. You were wise."

The more loquacious Thénardier became, the more silent was Jean Valjean. Thénardier shook him by the shoulder again.

"Now, let's settle this business. Shares. You have seen my key, show me your money."

Thénardier was haggard, fierce, suspicious, slightly menacing, but friendly. There was one strange fact: Thénardier's manner was not simple; he did not seem entirely at his ease; while not affecting any air of mystery, he spoke in a low voice; every now and then he laid his finger on his lip,

and muttered, "Hush!" It was difficult to guess why. There was no one present but themselves. Jean Valjean thought that other ruffians were possibly hidden in some corner, no great distance off, and that Thénardier was not anxious to share with them. The latter continued:—

"Now for a finish. How much had the cove about him?"

Jean Valjean felt in his pockets.

It was his habit, as will be remembered, always to have money about him. The gloomy life of expedients to which he was condemned rendered this a necessity. This time, however, he was unprovided. In putting on his National Guard uniform upon the previous evening he forgot, painfully absorbed as he was, to take his pocket-book. He had only some small change in his waistcoat-pocket. He turned out his pocket, which was saturated with slime, and laid on the footpath a louis d'or, two five-franc pieces, and five or six double sous.

Thénardier thrust out his lower lip with a significant twist of the neck.

"You killed him cheap," he said.

He began to feel in the pockets of Jean Valjean and Marius with the utmost familiarity. Jean Valjean, who was chiefly anxious to keep his back to the light, allowed him to do so.

While handling Marius's coat, Thénardier, with the dexterity of a conjuror, managed to tear off a strip, without Jean Valjean perceiving the fact; this he concealed under his blouse, probably thinking that the bit of cloth might serve hereafter to identify the assassinated man and the assassin. However, he found no more than the thirty francs.

"It is true," said he; "both of you together have no more than that." And, forgetting his motto: "half shares," he took all.

He hesitated a little over the double sous, but on reflection, he took them too, muttering: "I don't care! You stick people too cheaply."

This done, he again drew the key from under his blouse.

"Now, my friend, you must be off. It is like a fair here; you pay when you go out. You have paid, now go." And he began to laugh.

We may be permitted to doubt whether he had a pure and disinterested desire to save an assassin, when he lent a stranger the aid of his key, and allowed any other than himself to pass through that gate.

Thénardier helped Jean Valjean to replace Marius on his back, then he proceeded to the grating on the tips of his bare toes, making Jean Valjean a sign to follow him. He looked outside, placed his finger on his lip, and remained for some seconds as if in suspense; his inspection over, he put the key in the lock. The bolt slid back, and the gate turned on its hinges without grating or creaking. It moved very softly.

It was plain that this grating and those hinges, carefully oiled, were opened more frequently than might be supposed. This ease was ominous; it spoke of furtive comings and goings, of silent entrances and exits of men by night, and of the crafty footfall of crime.

The sewer was evidently an accomplice of some mysterious band. This taciturn grating was a receiver of stolen goods.

Thénardier held the door ajar, left just room for Jean Valjean to pass, reclosed the gate, gave the key a double turn in the lock, and plunged back into the darkness, making no more noise than a breath. He seemed to walk with the velvety pads of a tiger.

A moment later that hideous providence has disappeared. Jean Valjean found himself outside.

CHAPTER IX

MARIUS APPEARS DEAD TO AN EXPERT

HE let Marius slip down upon the bank.

They were outside; miasmas, darkness, horror, lay behind him. The healthy, pure, living, joyous, freely respirable air inundated him. All around him was silence, but it was the charming silence of the sun setting in unclouded azure. Twilight had come; night, the great liberator, the friend of all those who need a mantle of darkness to escape from an agony, was at hand. The sky presented itself on all sides like an enormous calm. The river rippled up to his feet with the sound of a kiss. The aerial dialogue of the nests bidding each other good-night in the elms of the Champs Elysées was audible. A few stars, faintly studding the pale blue of the zenith, and visible to revery alone, formed imperceptible little splendours in the immensity. The evening unfolded all the sweetness of infinitude over Jean Valjean's head.

It was the exquisite and undecided hour which says neither yes nor no. Night was already sufficiently advanced for a man to disappear in it a short distance off, and yet there was sufficient daylight to allow of recognition close by.

For a few seconds Jean Valjean was irresistibly overcome by all this august and caressing serenity; there are such minutes of oblivion: suffering ceases to harass the unhappy wretch; all is eclipsed in thought; peace covers the dreamer like night; and, under the gleaming twilight the soul shines starry, in imitation of the sky which is lighting its lamps. Jean Valjean could not refrain from contemplating that vast clear shade which hung above him; meditatively he took a bath of ecstasy and prayer in the majestic silence of the eternal heavens. Then, as if a sense of duty had returned to him he eagerly bent over Marius, and lifting some water

in the hollow of his hand, softly threw a few drops into his face. Marius's eyelids did not open, but he still breathed through his parted lips.

Jean Valjean was again about to plunge his hand into the river, when he suddenly felt that strange sensation which we feel when there is some one behind us whom we do not see. We have already alluded elsewhere to this sensation, with which we are all familiar.

He turned round. There was really some one behind him, and there had been just before.

A man of lofty stature, wrapped in a long coat, with folded arms, and holding in his right hand a cudgel, whose leaden knob was visible, was standing a few paces behind Jean Valjean, as he leaned over Marius.

It was, with the help of the darkness, a species of apparition. Any ordinary man would have been frightened because of the twilight, and a thoughtful man on account of the bludgeon.

Jean Valjean recognized Javert.

The reader has doubtless guessed that Thénardier's pursuer was no other than Javert. Javert, after his unhoped-for escape from the barricade, went to the prefecture of police, made a verbal report to the prefect, in person, in a short audience, and then immediately returned to duty, which implied — the note found on him will be remembered — a certain surveillance of the right bank of the river near the Champs Elysées, which had, for some time past, attracted the attention of the police.

There he saw Thénardier, and followed him. We know the rest.

It will also be understood that the grating, so obligingly opened for Jean Valjean, was a clever trick on the part of Thénardier. He felt that Javert was still there; the man who is watched has a scent which never deceives him. It was necessary to throw a bone to that bloodhound. An assassin — what a windfall! It was a legacy which must never be refused. Thénardier, by putting Jean Valjean out-

side in his stead, offered the police a prey, threw them off the scent, led them to forget him in a greater adventure, recompensed Javert for his loss of time (which always flatters a spy), gained thirty francs, and fully intended, for his own part, to escape by the help of this diversion.

Jean Valjean had passed from one shoal to another.

These two meetings, one after the other, falling from Thénardier upon Javert, were rather severe.

Javert did not recognize Jean Valjean, who, as we have said, no longer resembled himself. He did not unfold his arms, but took a firmer grasp of his "life-preserver," by an imperceptible movement, and said in a curt, calm voice:—

"Who are you?"

"I."

"Who is 'I'?"

"Jean Valjean."

Javert placed his life-preserver between his teeth, bent his knees, bowed his back, laid his two powerful hands on Jean Valjean's shoulders, which they held as in two vises, examined and recognized him. Their faces almost touched.

Javert's glance was terrific.

Jean Valjean remained inert under Javert's grip, like a lion submitting to the claws of a lynx.

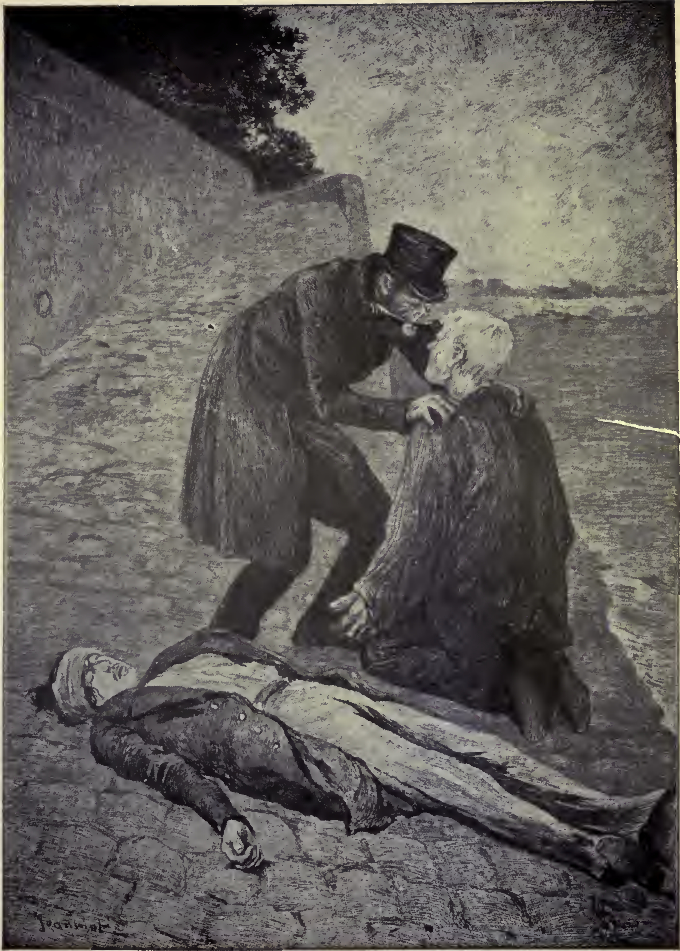
"Inspector Javert," said he, "you have me in your power. Besides, I have considered myself your prisoner ever since this morning. I did not give you my address in order to try and escape you. Take me. But grant me one thing."

Javert did not seem to hear. He kept his eyes fixed on Jean Valjean. His wrinkled chin thrust up his lips toward his nose,— a sign of savage revery. At length he loosed his hold of Jean Valjean, drew himself up stiffly, clutched his life-preserver, and, as if in a dream, muttered rather than uttered this question:—

"What are you doing here? Who is that man?"

Jean Valjean replied, and the sound of his voice seemed to awaken Javert:—

"It is of him that I wished to speak. Do with me as



"Javert placed his life-preserver between his teeth,—laid his two powerful hands on Jean Valjean's shoulders,—examined and recognized him."

Les Miserables. Jean Valjean. Page 158.

you please; but first help me to carry him home. That is all I ask of you."

Javert's face contracted as it always did when any one seemed to believe him capable of a concession. Still, he did not say no.

He stooped again, took from his pocket a handkerchief, which he dipped in the water, and wiped Marius's bloody brow.

"This man was at the barricade," he said in a low voice, and as if speaking to himself. "He is the one whom they called Marius."

He was a first-class spy, who observed everything, listened to everything, heard everything, and picked up everything, even when he believed himself about to die; who, even in his death agony, was a spy; and who, standing on the first step of the sepulchre, took notes.

He seized Marius's hand and felt for his pulse.

"He is wounded," said Jean Valjean.

"He is a dead man," said Javert.

Jean Valjean replied:—

"No. Not yet."

"Then you brought him here from the barricade?" observed Javert.

His preoccupation must have been great for him not to dwell on that alarming escape through the sewers, and for him not even to remark Jean Valjean's silence after his question.

Jean Valjean, on his side, seemed to have but a single thought. He continued:—

"He lives in the Marias, in the Rue des Filles du Calvaire, with his grandfather,—I have forgotten his name."

He fumbled in Marius's pocket, pulled out the pocket-book, opened it at the page on which Marius had written in pencil, and offered it to Javert.

There was still sufficient light hovering in the air to admit of reading. Javert, besides, had in his eye the feline phosphorescence of night-birds. He deciphered the few lines

written by Marius, and growled: "Gillenormand, No. 6, Rue des Filles du Calvaire."

Then he cried, "Driver!"

Our readers will remember the coachman waiting above in case of need.

Javert kept Marius's pocket-book.

A moment after, the hackney coach, which drove down the incline leading to the watering-place, was on the bank. Marius was deposited on the back seat, and Javert sat down by Jean Valjean's side on the front seat.

The door was closed, the cab started off rapidly along the quays, in the direction of the Bastille.

They quitted the quays and turned into the streets. The driver, a black outline on his box, lashed his lean horses. An icy silence reigned in the hackney coach. Marius, motionless, his body reclining in one corner, his head on his breast, his arms hanging, his legs stiff, appeared to be only waiting for a coffin. Jean Valjean seemed made of gloom, and Javert of stone; and in that carriage full of night, whose interior, every time that it passed a street-lantern, seemed to be lividly lit up, as if by an intermittent flash of lightning, accident had united and seemed to bring face to face the three forms of tragic immobility,— the corpse, the spectre, and the statue.

CHAPTER X

RETURN OF THE SON PRODIGAL OF HIS LIFE

AT every jolt over the pavement a drop of blood fell from Marius's hair.

It was after dark when the hackney coach reached No. 6, Rue des Filles du Calvaire.

Javert got out first, made sure, with one glance, of the

number over the gateway, and raising the heavy wrought-iron knocker, adorned in the old style with a goat and a satyr contending, gave a violent knock. The door opened slightly, and Javert gave it a push. The porter half-showed himself, yawning, and scarce awake, candle in hand.

Every one in the house was asleep. People go to bed early in the Marais, especially on days of rioting. This good old district, terrified by revolution, takes refuge in sleep, like children who, when they hear old Bogey coming, quickly hide their heads under the counterpane.

In the mean time, Jean Valjean and the driver removed Marius from the hackney coach,— Valjean holding him under the arm-pits, and the coachman under the knees.

As they carried Marius in this way, Jean Valjean slipped his hand under his clothes, which were terribly torn, felt his chest, and assured himself that his heart still beat. It even beat a little less feebly, as if the motion of the vehicle had produced a certain return of life.

Javert addressed the porter in the tone which becomes the government in the presence of the porter of a man who belongs to a party faction.

"Any one live here of the name of Gillenormand?"

"Yes. What do you want with him?"

"We have brought his son home."

"His son?" asked the porter in amazement.

"He is dead."

Jean Valjean, who followed, ragged and filthy, behind Javert, and whom the porter regarded with some horror, made him a sign that it was not so.

The porter seemed to understand neither Javert's remark nor Jean Valjean's motion. Javert continued:—

"He has been to the barricade, and here he is."

"To the barricade!" exclaimed the porter.

"He was killed. Go and wake his father."

The porter did not stir.

"Go!" continued Javert. And he added, "There will be a funeral here to-morrow."

For Javert, the ordinary incidents of the street were classified categorically, which is the beginning of foresight and oversight, and each contingency had its own compartment; possible facts were, as we may say, kept in drawers, whence they issued on occasion, in variable quantities. Under the head of street, came disturbance, riot, carnival, and funeral.

The porter contented himself with waking Basque. Basque woke Nicolette; Nicolette woke Aunt Gillenormand.

As for the grandfather, they let him sleep on, thinking that he would find it out quite soon enough, anyhow.

Marius was carried to the first-floor, no one in the other parts of the house knowing anything about it, and he was laid on an old sofa in M. Gillenormand's ante-room; and while Basque went to fetch a physician and Nicolette opened the linen-presses, Jean Valjean felt Javert touch his shoulder. He understood, and went down-stairs, Javert following close at his heels.

The porter saw them go, as he had seen them come, with startled sleepiness.

They got into the hackney coach, and the driver mounted his box.

"Inspector Javert," said Jean Valjean, "grant me one thing more."

"What is it?" answered Javert, roughly.

"Let me go home for a moment. Then you can do with me what you please."

Javert was silent for a few moments, with his chin thrust into the collar of his long coat; then he let down the front window.

"Driver," he said, "No. 7, Rue de l'Homme Armé."

CHAPTER XI

A SHOCK TO THE ABSOLUTE

THEY did not speak again during the entire drive.

What did Jean Valjean want? To finish what he had begun; to warn Cosette, tell her where Marius was, perhaps give her some useful information, and make, if he could, certain final arrangements. For his own part, so far as he personally was concerned, all was over; he had been arrested by Javert, and had not resisted. Any other man, in such a situation, would perhaps have thought vaguely of the rope which Thénardier had given him, and of the bars of the first cell he might enter; but since his meeting with the bishop, Jean Valjean had felt within him a profound religious hesitation against all violence, even against himself.

Suicide, that mysterious act of violence against the unknown, which may contain, to a certain extent, the death of the soul, was impossible to Jean Valjean.

On entering the Rue de l'Homme Armé the coach stopped, as the street was too narrow for vehicles to enter it. Jean Valjean and Javert got out.

The driver humbly represented to "Mr. Inspector" that the plush of his coach was quite spoiled by the blood of the assassinated man and the filth of the assassin (that is how he understood the affair), and he added that an indemnity was due to him. At the same time, taking his license-book from his pocket, he begged "Mr. Inspector" to be so kind as to write him "a little bit of a certificate." Javert thrust back the book which the driver offered him, and said:—

"How much do you want, including the time you waited and the journey?"

"It's seven hours and a quarter," answered the driver; "and my plush was brand-new. Eighty francs, 'Mr. Inspector.'"

Javert drew four napoleons from his pocket, and dismissed the hackney coach.

Jean Valjean thought that it was Javert's intention to take him on foot to the Blancs Manteaux police station, or the station near the Archives, both of which were close by.

They entered the street. It was, as usual, deserted.

Javert followed Jean Valjean. They reached No. 7. Valjean rapped. The door opened.

"Very good," said Javert. "Go up." He added, with a strange expression, and as if making an effort to speak as he was doing: "I will wait for you here."

Jean Valjean looked at Javert. This mode of conduct was not at all in accord with Javert's habits. Still, it could not surprise him greatly that Javert should now place in him a sort of haughty confidence,— the confidence of the cat which grants the mouse liberty to the length of its claws. Resolved, as he was, to surrender and have done with it all, this could not surprise him. He thrust open the door, entered the house, called to the porter, who was in bed and had pulled the string: "It is I!" and mounted the stairs.

On reaching the first-floor, he paused. Every Via Dolorosa has its stations. The window on the landing — a sash-window — was open. As is the case in many old houses, the staircase obtained light from, and looked out on, the street. The street-lantern, situated directly opposite, threw some little light on the stairs,— which saved the expense of a lamp.

Jean Valjean, either to breathe the air, or mechanically, thrust his head out of this window. He leaned into the street. It is short, and the lantern lit it from one end to the other. Jean Valjean was overwhelmed with amazement; there was no one there.

Javert had gone.

CHAPTER XII

THE GRANDFATHER

BASQUE and the porter had carried Marius, who still lay motionless on the sofa on which he had been placed on his arrival, into the drawing-room. The physician, who had been sent for, came hurriedly. Aunt Gillenormand had risen.

Aunt Gillenormand came and went, terrified, clasping her hands, and incapable of doing anything but saying, "Good heavens! Can it be possible?" She added, at intervals: "Everything will be covered with blood." When her first horror had passed off, a certain philosophy of the situation took possession of her, and was translated by the exclamation: "It was bound to end in this way!" She did not go so far as "I told you so!" which is usual on occasions of this nature.

By the surgeon's orders, a cot-bed was put up near the sofa. He examined Marius; and after satisfying himself that his pulse still beat, that the patient had no deep wound in the chest, and that the blood at the corners of the lips came from the nostrils, he had him laid flat on the bed, without a pillow, the head level with the body, and even a little lower, and with naked chest, in order to facilitate breathing. Mademoiselle Gillenormand, seeing that Marius was being undressed, withdrew. She fell to telling her beads in her bedroom.

There was no internal injury; a ball, deadened by the pocket-book, had turned aside and passed around the ribs with a frightful gash; but as it was not deep, it was, therefore, not dangerous. The long subterranean march had completed the dislocation of the broken collar-bone, and there were serious injuries there. The arms were covered with sabre-cuts. No scar disfigured the face, but the head was covered all over with cuts. What would be the result of these

wounds on the head? Did they stop at the scalp, or did they reach the brain? It was impossible to say, as yet. It was a serious symptom that they had caused this swoon, and people do not always wake from such fainting-fits; moreover, the hemorrhage had exhausted the wounded man. From the waist downward, his body had been protected by the barricade.

Basque and Nicolette tore up linen and prepared bandages; Nicolette sewed them, Basque rolled them. As they had no lint, the physician checked the effusion of blood temporarily with sheets of wadding. Beside the bed, three candles burned on the table where the surgeon's case of instruments lay open. The doctor bathed Marius's face and hair with cold water; a bucketful was reddened in an instant. The porter, candle in hand, lighted him.

The surgeon seemed to be meditating sadly. From time to time he shook his head, as if answering some question which he had mentally addressed to himself.

Such mysterious dialogues of the physician with himself are a bad sign for the patient.

As the surgeon was wiping Marius's face and gently touching his still closed eyelids with his finger, a door opened at the end of the room, and a tall, pale figure appeared.

It was the grandfather.

The riot had for two days past greatly agitated, offended, and absorbed M. Gillenormand. He had not been able to sleep on the previous night, and he had been in a fever all day. At night he went to bed very early, bidding his people bar up the house, and dozed off from sheer fatigue.

Old men sleep lightly. M. Gillenormand's bedroom joined the drawing-room, and, in spite of the precautions that had been taken, the noise awoke him. Surprised by the ray of light which he saw under his door, he got out of bed and groped his way thither.

He stood on the threshold, one hand on the handle of the half-open door, his head slightly bent forward and shaking, his body wrapped in a white dressing-gown, as straight and

creaseless as a winding-sheet. He was astounded; and he looked like a ghost peering into a tomb.

He saw the bed, and on the mattress, that young man bleeding, waxy pale, with closed eyes, open mouth, livid lips, naked to the waist, slashed all over with scarlet wounds, motionless, and brightly illumined.

The grandfather shuddered from head to foot as violently as his stiff limbs would let him; his eyes, whose cornea was yellow owing to his great age, were veiled by a sort of glassy stare; his entire face assumed in an instant the earthly angles of a fleshless skull; his arms fell limp, as if a spring had broken; and his stupor was displayed by the outspreading of the fingers of his trembling old hands; his knees formed a salient angle, displaying, through the opening of his dressing-gown, his poor bare legs bristling with white hairs, and he murmured: —

"Marius!"

"He has just been brought here, sir," said Basque. "He went to the barricade, and —"

"He is dead!" exclaimed the old gentleman, in a terrible voice. "Oh, the rascal!"

Then a sort of sepulchral transfiguration drew up this centenarian as straight as a young man.

"You are the surgeon, sir," he said. "First tell me one thing: he is dead, is he not?"

The surgeon, who was frightfully anxious, was silent.

M. Gillenormand wrung his hands with a burst of dreadful laughter.

"He is dead! He is dead! He let them kill him at the barricade! out of hatred to me! It was to spite me that he did it! Ah, the blood-drinker! this is the way he returns to me. Woe's my life, he is dead!"

He went to the window, threw it wide open, as if he were stifling, and standing there facing the darkness, he began talking into the street to the night.

"Stabbed, sabred, massacred, exterminated, slashed, cut to pieces! Only look at him, the beggar! He knew very well

that I expected him, and that I had his room ready, and that I had placed at my bed-head his portrait taken when he was a child! He knew very well that he had only to return, and that for years I had been recalling him, and that I sat at night by my fireside with my hands on my knees, not knowing what to do, and that he had driven me mad! You knew very well that you had only to return and say, 'It is I,' and you would be the master of the house, and I would obey you, and you could do anything you liked with your old ass of a grandfather! You knew it very well, and you said, 'No, he is a royalist; I will not go!' and you went to the barricades, and you let them kill you out of spite, to revenge yourself for what I said to you about the Duke de Berry! Is not that infamous? Go to bed and sleep quietly! He is dead. This is my awaking."

The surgeon, who was beginning to be anxious for both, left Marius for an instant, and going up to M. Gillenormand, took his arm. The grandfather turned, looked at him with eyes that seemed distended and bloodshot, and said calmly: —

"I thank you, sir; I am calm! I am a man; I saw the death of Louis XVI.; I know how to endure events. There is one thing terrible,— it is to think that it is your newspapers which do all the mischief. You must have scribblers, speakers, lawyers, orators, tribunes, discussions, progress, enlightenment, the rights of man, liberty of the press; and this is the way your children are brought home to you. Oh, Marius, it is abominable! Killed! dead before me! a barricade! oh, the villain! Doctor, you live in this quarter, I believe? Oh, yes, I know you well. I see your cab pass from my window. Well, I will tell you. You would do wrong to believe that I am in a passion. People do not fly into a passion with a dead man. That would be foolish. I brought this boy up. I was already old when he was still quite little. He played in the Tuileries garden with his little spade and his little chair; and in order that the inspectors should not scold, I used to fill up the holes which he made with his

spade with my cane. One day he cried, 'Down with Louis XVIII.!' and went off. It is not my fault. He was all pink and white. His mother is dead. Did you ever notice that all little children have fair hair? What do you think is the reason? He is a son of one of those brigands of the Loire, but children are not to blame for the crimes of their fathers. I remember him when he was so high. He could not manage to pronounce his *d*'s. He chattered so sweetly and so incomprehensibly that you might have fancied him a bird. I remember one day a circle was formed in front of the Farnese Hercules to admire that child, and marvel at him, he was so lovely. He had a head such as you see in pictures. I used to shout at him, and threaten him with my cane; but he knew very well that it was a joke. In the morning, when he entered my room, I scolded; but he was like the sunshine itself to me. You cannot defend yourself against these brats. They take possession of you, they hold you fast, they never let you go again. It is a fact that there never was a Cupid like that child. Now what have you to say for your Lafayette, your Benjamin Constant, and your Tirecuir de Corcelles, who have killed him for me? Such things cannot be permitted, I tell you."

He went up to Marius, who was still livid and motionless, and to whom the surgeon had returned and he began to wring his hands once more. The old man's white lips moved as if mechanically and allowed indistinct sentences to pass, which were scarcely audible: "Ah, heartless boy, ah, clubbist! ah, scoundrel! ah, Septembrist!"

Reproaches uttered in a low voice by a dying man to a corpse.

By degrees, as internal eruptions must always burst forth, the flood of words returned, but the grandfather seemed no longer to have the strength to utter them; his voice was so hollow and choked that it seemed to come from the other side of an abyss: —

"I do not care a bit; I will die too, I say. And to think that there is not a jade in Paris who would not have been delighted to make that scoundrel happy! — a scamp, who,

instead of amusing himself and enjoying life, went off to fight, and let himself be shot like a brute, and for whom? For what? For the republic, instead of going to dance at the Chaumière, as is the duty of young men! What's the use of being twenty years old? The Republic, a fine absurdity! Poor mothers, is that what you bring pretty boys into the world for! Well, he is dead. That will make two hearses at one door. So you have got yourself served like that for love of General Lamarque's fine eyes! What did General Lamarque ever do for you? A slasher! a chatterbox! To get one's self killed for a dead man! — is it not enough to drive one mad? Just think of it,— at twenty! and without once turning his head to see whether he had left anything behind him! The poor old fellows are obliged to die all alone nowadays. Rot in your corner, owl! Well, after all, so much the better. It is what I hoped for. This will kill me right off. I am too old; I am one hundred, I am a hundred thousand, and I ought by rights to have died long ago. Well, this blow settles it. It is all over,— what happiness! What is the use of making him inhale ammonia and all that pile of drugs? You ass of a doctor, you are wasting your time! There, he's dead,— quite dead. I know all about it, for I am dead too. He did not do the thing by halves. Yes, this age is infamous, infamous, infamous; and that is what I think of you, your ideas, your systems, your masters, your oracles, your doctors, your blackguards of writers, your rogues of philosophers, and all the revolutions which have startled the ravens of the Tuileries for the last sixty years! And since you were pitiless in letting yourself be killed like this, I will not even grieve at your death; do you hear, assassin?"

At this moment, Marius slowly opened his eyes, and his glance, still dim with lethargic wonder, rested on M. Gillenormand.

"Marius!" cried the old man. "Marius! my little Marius! my child! my beloved son! you open your eyes; you look at me; you are alive; thanks!"

And he fell fainting.

BOOK IV

JAVERT DERAILED

CHAPTER I

JAVERT OFF THE TRACK

JAVERT walked very slowly away from the Rue de l'Homme Armé.

He hung his head, for the first time in his life; and, also for the first time in his life, he held his hands behind his back.

Up to that day, Javert had copied, of Napoleon's two attitudes, only the one which expresses resolution, with arms folded on his breast; the one indicative of uncertainty — the hands behind the back — was unknown to him. Now a change had taken place; his whole person, slow and sombre, was stamped with anxiety.

He plunged into the silent streets.

But he followed a given direction.

He took the shortest cut to the Seine, reached the Quai des Ormes, walked along it, passed the Grêve, and paused not far from the Place du Châtelet, at the corner of the Pont Notre-Dame. Between that bridge and the Pont-au-Change on one side and the Quai de la Mégisserie and the Quai aux Fleurs on the other, the Seine forms a sort of square lake, traversed by a rapid.

This point of the Seine is feared by barge-men. Nothing is more dangerous than this rapid, hemmed in at this period, and irritated by the piles of the mill on the bridge, since

demolished. The two bridges, so close to each other, heighten the danger, for the water rushes terribly through the arches. It rolls up vast and angry waves; it is heaped and piled up; the stream strives to tear away the piles of the bridges with its strong liquid ropes. Men who fall in there do not reappear; the best of swimmers are drowned.

Javert leaned both elbows on the parapet, his chin on his hand, and while his hands were mechanically clenched in his thick whiskers, he mused.

A novelty, a revolution, a catastrophe had just taken place within him, and he must examine into it.

Javert was suffering horribly.

For some hours past, Javert had ceased to be simple. He was troubled: that brain, so limpid in its blindness, had lost its transparency; that crystal was clouded. Javert felt a divided duty, and he could not hide the fact from himself. When he met Jean Valjean so unexpectedly on the shore of the Seine, he felt something within him of the wolf who recaptures his prey and the dog who again finds his master.

He saw before him two roads, both equally straight,— but he saw two; and this terrified him, as he had never in his life known but one straight line. And — poignant agony — these two roads ran contrary to each other. One of these straight lines excluded the other. Which of the two was the true one?

His situation was indescribable.

To owe his life to a malefactor; to accept this debt and repay it; to be, in spite of himself, on the same footing with an escaped convict, and to requite his service with another service; to hear the words, "Be off!" and to say in his turn, "You are free!" to sacrifice to personal motives duty, that general obligation, and to feel in these personal motives something general too, and perhaps superior; to betray society in order to remain true to his conscience,— that all these absurdities should be realized, and should be heaped upon him, that was what overwhelmed him.

One thing astonished him,— that Jean Valjean had shown

him mercy; and one thing petrified him,—that he, Javert, had shown mercy to Jean Valjean.

How did he stand? He questioned his soul and found no answer.

What was he to do now? To deliver up Jean Valjean was bad; to leave Jean Valjean at liberty was bad. In the former case, the man of authority fell lower than the man of the galleys; in the second, a convict rose higher than the law, and set his foot upon it. In either case there was dishonour for him, Javert. Whatever resolution he might form, a fall was entailed. Destiny has certain extremities which rise perpendicularly from the impossible, beyond which life is only a precipice. Javert had reached one of these extremities.

One of his anxieties lay in being constrained to think. The very violence of all these contradictory emotions compelled him to do so. Now, thought was an unusual thing with him, and singularly painful. There is always in thought a certain amount of internal rebellion; and it irritated him to have that within him.

Thought no matter on what subject, outside the narrow circle of his duties, would in any case have been useless and wearisome to him; but to think about the day which had just passed was torture. And yet he must look into his conscience after such shocks, and render to himself an account of himself.

What he had just done made him shudder. He, Javert, had seen fit to decide upon a release contrary to all police regulations, contrary to the whole social and judicial organization, contrary to the entire code; that had suited him. He had substituted his own affairs for public affairs: was not this unjustifiable? Every time that he stood face to face with the nameless deed which he had done, he trembled from head to foot. What should he resolve on? Only one resource was left to him: to return at full speed to the Rue de l'Homme Armé and lock up Jean Valjean. It was clear that this was what he ought to do. He could not do it.

Something barred the way in that direction.

Something? What! is there anything in the world besides courts of justice, sentences, the police, and the authorities? Javert was overwhelmed.

A galley-slave sacred; a convict impregnable by justice; and this through the deed of Javert!

Was it not frightful that Javert and Jean Valjean,— the man made to punish, the man made to endure,— that these two men, who were both the property of the law, should have come to such a pass that both of them placed themselves above the law?

What! could such enormities happen and no one be punished? Should Jean Valjean, stronger than the whole social order, go free, and he, Javert, still eat the bread of the government?

His revery gradually became terrible.

He might also, through this revery have reproached himself on the subject of the insurgent carried home to the Rue des Filles du Calvaire; but he did not think of it. The lesser fault was lost in the larger. Besides, that insurgent was evidently a dead man; and, legally, death ends prosecution.

Jean Valjean,— that was the weight which he had on his mind.

Jean Valjean disconcerted him. All the axioms which had been the support of his whole life crumbled away before this man. The generosity of Jean Valjean to him, Javert, overwhelmed him. Other facts, which he now recalled, and which he had formerly treated as falsehoods and folly, now returned to his mind as realities. M. Madeleine re-appeared behind Jean Valjean, and the two figures were blended into one, which was venerable. Javert felt that something horrible — admiration for a convict — had entered his soul. Respect for a galley-slave,— is such a thing possible? He shuddered at it, and could not escape from it. He struggled in vain; he was reduced to admit, in his inmost heart, the sublimity of that villain. This was odious.

A benevolent malefactor, a compassionate, gentle, helpful,

and merciful convict, returning good for evil, pardon for hatred, preferring pity to vengeance, ready to destroy himself rather than his enemy, saving the man who smote him, kneeling on the pinnacle of virtue, and nearer akin to angels than to man,— Javert was constrained to confess to himself that this monster existed.

This could not last.

Assuredly — and we lay stress on this fact — he had not yielded without resistance to this monster, to this infamous angel, to this hideous hero, who enraged almost as much as he amazed him. Twenty times, as he sat in that hackney coach face to face with Jean Valjean, the legal tiger had roared within him. Twenty times he had felt tempted to hurl himself on Jean Valjean, to seize and devour him,— that is to say, arrest him. What more simple, in fact? To shout to the first police station which they passed, "Here is a convict who has broken his ban!" to call the police and say, "This man is yours!" then to go away, leaving the condemned man there; to know nothing more, and interfere no further. This man is forever the prisoner of the law; let the law do with him what it will. What could be fairer? Javert had said all this to himself; he had wished to carry it out, to act, to arrest the man, and then, as now, he was unable; and every time that his hand was raised convulsively to Jean Valjean's collar, it fell back as if under an enormous weight, and in the bottom of his heart he heard a voice, a strange voice, crying to him: "It is well. Deliver up your saviour; then send for Pontius Pilate's basin, and wash your claws."

Then his thoughts reverted to himself, and side by side with Jean Valjean aggrandized, he saw himself degraded.

A convict was his benefactor!

But why had he allowed that man to let him live? He had the right to be killed at that barricade. He should have asserted that right. It would have been better to call the other insurgents to his aid against Jean Valjean, and to be shot by main force.

His supreme agony was the disappearance of certainty.

He felt himself uprooted. The code was now a mere stump in his hand. He had to deal with scruples of an unknown species. A sentimental revelation had taken place within him, entirely distinct from legal affirmation, hitherto his sole standard of measure. It was not enough to remain in his old honesty. A whole order of unexpected facts arose and subjugated him. An entire new world appeared to his soul, — benefits accepted and returned; devotion, mercy, indulgence; violence done by pity to austerity; respect for persons; no final condemnation; no damnation; the possibility of a tear in the eye of the law; perhaps justice according to God, acting in inverse ratio to justice according to man. He perceived in the darkness the awful dawn of an unknown moral sun; he was horrified and dazzled. He was an owl forced to gaze with the eye of an eagle.

He said to himself that it was true, then, that there were exceptions; that authority might be put out of countenance; that the law might be inadequate to a fact; that everything was not contained within the text of the code; that the unforeseen must be obeyed; that the virtue of a convict might set a snare for the virtue of an official; that the monstrous might be divine; that destiny had such ambuscades; and he thought with despair that he himself had not been proof against surprise.

He was compelled to acknowledge that goodness existed. This galley-slave had been good and he, himself, strange to say, had also been good. Thus he had deteriorated.

He felt that he was a coward. He was horrified. It was not Javert's ideal to be human, grand or sublime; it was to be irreproachable. Now he had failed.

How had he reached this stage? how had all this happened? — he could not have told. He took his head between his hands — but in vain; he could not succeed in explaining it.

He had certainly always intended to deliver Jean Valjean over to the law, whose captive Jean Valjean was and whose slave he,— Javert, was. He had not confessed to himself for a single instant, while he held him in his grasp, that he had

a thought of letting him go. It was to some extent unconsciously that his hand had opened and allowed him to escape.

All sorts of puzzling questions passed before his eyes. He questioned himself and answered himself; and his answers terrified him. He asked himself: "What has this convict done, this desperate man, whom I pursued even unto persecution, and who had me under his heel, and could have avenged himself, and owed it, both to his rancour and to his security to do so,— what has he done in leaving me my life, and showing me mercy? His duty? No. Something more. And what have I done in showing him mercy in my turn — my duty? No. Something more. Is there, then, something higher than duty?" Here, he took fright; he was thrown off his balance. One scale sank into the abyss, the other rose toward heaven; and Javert felt no less terror for the one which rose than for the one which sank. Without being the least in the world what is called a Voltairean, or a philosopher, or an unbeliever, on the contrary, instinctively respectful toward the Established Church, he knew it only as an august fragment of the social whole; order was his dogma, and sufficed for him.

Since he had attained to man's estate and to office, he had set nearly all his religion in the police. He was — and we use the words without the slightest irony, and in their most serious sense,— he was, as we have said, a spy as another man is a priest. He had a superior,— M. Gisquet; but up to this day he had never thought of that other superior — God.

He became unexpectedly aware of the presence of this new Chief, God, and was embarrassed by him.

This unforeseen presence threw him off his balance. He knew not what to do with this Superior, for he was well aware that a subordinate is always bound to bow his head; that he must neither disobey, nor blame, nor discuss; and that, with a superior who astonishes him too much, an inferior has no resource but to hand in his resignation.

But how could he manage to hand in his resignation to God?

However this might be, and it was to this that he constantly returned, one fact towered above everything else,— he had just committed a frightful infraction of the law. He had closed his eyes to an escaped convict who had broken his ban; he had set a galley-slave at liberty; he had robbed the laws of a man who belonged to them: he had done this. He no longer understood himself; he was not certain of being himself. The very reasons for his deed eluded him; the dizziness that they produced was left to him. Up to this moment he had lived in that blind faith which a gloomy probity engenders. This faith had quitted him; this probity had failed him. All that he had believed in had vanished. Truths which he did not desire inexorably besieged him. He must hence forth be another man. He suffered the strange pangs of a conscience suddenly operated on for a cataract. He saw what he loathed to see. He felt that he was spent, useless, out of joint with his past life, discharged, dissolved. Authority was dead within him. He had no longer any reason for living.

Terrible situation,— to feel emotion!

To be made of granite, and to doubt; to be the statue of Punishment cast in one solid piece in the mould of the law, and suddenly to perceive that you have within your bosom of bronze something absurd and disobedient, which almost resembles a heart; to come to the pass of returning good for good, though you have always said to yourself that such good is evil; to be the watch-dog, and to fawn; to be ice, and melt; to be a pair of pincers, and become a hand; to feel your fingers suddenly open; to lose your hold,— what a frightful thing!

The man-projectile, no longer knowing his course, and retreating!

To be obliged to confess this: infallibility is not infallible, there may be an error in dogma, all is not said when a code has spoken, society is not perfect, authority is com-

plicated with vacillation, there may be a flaw in the immutable, judges are men, the law may err, courts may make a mistake! — to see a rift in the immense blue window of the firmament!

That which had taken place in Javert was the Fampoux of a rectilinear conscience, the derailment of a soul, the crushing of a probity irresistibly hurled in a straight line, and breaking itself against God. It was certainly strange that the stoker of order, the engineer of authority mounted on the blind iron horse, on the unyielding course, could be unseated by a flash of light! That the immutable, the direct, the correct, the geometrical, the passive, the perfect, could bend! That there should be for the locomotive a road to Damascus!

God, ever within man, and himself the true conscience, refractory to the false; the spark forbidden to expire; the ray ordered to remember the sun; the soul enjoined to recognize the true absolute when confronted with the fictitious absolute; imperishable humanity; the immortal human heart, — did Javert comprehend this splendid phenomenon, the most glorious, perhaps, of all our inner marvels? Did he penetrate it? Did he explain it to himself? Evidently not; but under the pressure of this undoubted incomprehensibility he felt his brain cracking.

He was less transfigured by, than a victim to, this prodigy. He endured it, with exasperation. He saw in all this only the vast difficulty of existence. It seemed to him as if henceforth his breathing would be eternally impeded. He was not accustomed to have something unknown hanging over his head.

Hitherto everything above him had been, to his gaze, a smooth, simple, limpid surface; there was nothing unknown or obscure; nothing but what was defined, arranged in order, connected, precise, exact, circumscribed, limited, closed; everything foreseen; authority was a flat surface; there was no irregularity about it, no dizziness in its presence. Javert had never seen the unknown except below him. The irregular, the unexpected, the disorderly opening of chaos, the possible

slip over a precipice,— all this was peculiar to the lower regions, rebels, the wicked, and the wretched. Now Javert threw himself back, and was suddenly startled by this extraordinary apparition,— a gulf above him!

What! was the world dismantled from top to bottom? Absolutely disconcerted! In what could men trust! All conventions were giving way! What! the flaw in the cuirass of society could be discovered by a magnanimous scoundrel? What! an honest servant of the law could suddenly find himself caught between two crimes,— the crime of letting a man escape and the crime of arresting him. All was not certain, then, in the orders given by the State to the official; there might be blind alleys in duty! What! was all this real? Was it true that an ex-ruffian, weighed down with criminal sentences, could draw himself up and end by being in the right? Was this credible? Were there, then, cases where the law must retire before transfigured crime, and stammer its apologies? Yes, it was so; and Javert saw it; and Javert touched it; and not only could he not deny it, but he had a share in it. These were realities. It was abominable that actual facts could attain to such deformity. If facts did their duty, they would confine themselves to being proofs of the law; for facts are sent by God. Was anarchy, then, about to descend from on high?

Thus,— and in the exaggeration of agony, and the optical illusion of consternation, everything which might have limited and corrected his impression faded away, and society, the human race, the universe, were henceforth contained for his eyes in one simple and hideous feature,— thus the penal law, the thing judged, the force due to legislation, the decrees of sovereign courts, the magistracy, the government, prevention and repression, official wisdom, legal infallibility, the principle of authority, all the dogmas on which rest political and civil security, sovereignty, justice, the logical consequences of the code, public truth,— all this was rubbish, ruins, chaos; he himself, Javert, the night-watchman of order, incorruptibility in the service of the police, the bull-dog providence of

society, conquered and hurled to the ground; and on the summit of all this ruin stood a man in a green cap, with a halo about his brow,— such was the state of overthrow he had reached; such the frightful vision which he had in his soul.

Was this to be endured? No.

It was a violent state, if ever there was one. There were only two ways of escaping from it. One, was to go resolutely to Jean Valjean, and to restore to his dungeon the man of the galleys. The other —

Javert left the parapet, and, with head now held high, went with firm step toward the station house, indicated by a lantern at one corner of the Place du Châtelet.

On reaching it, he saw through the window a police-sergeant, and went in. Policemen recognize each other merely by the way in which they push open the door of a station house. Javert mentioned his name, showed his card to the sergeant, and sat down at the table, on which a candle burned. On the table lay a pen, a leaden inkstand, and paper, in case it should be necessary to draw up a report, and the assignments of the night patrols. This table, always completed by a straw chair, is an institution; it exists in all police stations. It is always adorned with a boxwood saucer full of sawdust, and a pasteboard box filled with red wafers, and it is the lowest stage of official style. It is here that the literature of the State begins.

Javert took the pen and a sheet of paper and began to write. This is what he wrote:—

A FEW REMARKS FOR THE GOOD OF THE SERVICE.

1. I beg Me le Préfet to cast his eyes on this.

2. Prisoners, on their return from examination at the magistrate's office, take off their shoes and remain barefoot on the flagstones while they are being searched. Many cough when they return to prison. This entails hospital expenses.

3. It is all very well to follow a criminal with relays of men

at regular intervals; but on important occasions, two policemen, at the least, should keep each other in sight, because, if for any reason one man should weaken, the other would watch him and take his place.

4. It is inexplicable that the special rules of the prison of the Madelonnettes should forbid a prisoner to have a chair, even if he pay for it.

5. At the Madelonnettes there are only two iron bars to the canteen, which allows the canteen woman to touch hands with the prisoners.

6. The prisoners called "barkers," who summon other prisoners to the visitors' parlour, demand two sous of each prisoner for calling his name distinctly. This is robbery.

7. Ten sous are stopped from a prisoner working in the weaving-room for every loose thread. This is an abuse on the part of the superintendent, as the cloth is none the worse.

8. It is annoying for visitors to La Force to be obliged to pass through the boy's court in order to reach the parlour of St. Marie l'Egyptienne.

9. It is a fact that officers are daily heard repeating in the courtyard of the prefecture, the questions put to prisoners by magistrates. For an officer, who ought to be sworn to secrecy, to repeat what he has heard in the office, is a serious breach of duty.

10. Madame Henry is an honest woman; her canteen is very clean; but it is bad to have a woman hold open the door of the mousetrap that leads to prison. It is unworthy of the Conciergerie of a great civilization.

Javert wrote these lines in his calmest and most correct handwriting, not omitting a single comma, and making the paper creak beneath his pen. Below the last line he signed,—

JAVERT,

Inspector of the 1st class,
Station in the Place du Châtelet, June 7, 1832, about
one in the morning.

Javert dried the fresh ink on the paper, folded it like a letter, sealed it, wrote on the back: *Note for the Administration*, left it on the table, and quitted the guard-room. The glass door closed behind him.

He again crossed the Place du Châtelet diagonally, regained the quay, and went back with automatic precision to the same spot which he had left a quarter of an hour previously, leaned on his elbows again; found himself in the same attitude on the same parapet slab. It seemed as if he had not stirred.

The darkness was complete. It was the sepulchral moment which follows midnight. A ceiling of clouds hid the stars. The sky hung heavy overhead. The houses in the city did not display a single light; no one passed; all the streets and quays in sight were deserted; Notre-Dame and the towers of the Palais de Justice seemed features of the night. A street-lamp reddened the edge of the quay. The outline of the bridges looked shapeless in the mist, one behind the other. Rains had swollen the river.

The spot where Javert was leaning was, it will be remembered, exactly over the rapids of the Seine, perpendicularly above that fearful ring of whirlpools which open and close again like an endless screw.

Javert bent his head and looked. All was dark. Nothing could be made out. A sound of spray was audible, but the river was invisible. At moments, in that dizzy depth, a gleam appeared and undulated vaguely, for water has the power, even in the darkest night, of obtaining light, no one knows whence, and changing it into a snake. The gleam faded away, and all became indistinct again. Immensity seemed to yawn before him. That which lay below him was not water, but an awful gulf. The quay-wall, abrupt, confused, mingled with vapours, then hidden, produced the effect of an infinite precipice. Nothing could be seen, but the hostile chill of the water and the sickly smell of the damp stones could be felt. A fierce breath rose from this abyss. The swelling of the river, divined rather than perceived, the tragic

murmur of the waves, the mournful vastness of the bridge arches, a possible fall into that gloomy space,—all that shadow was full of horror.

Javert remained for some moments motionless, gazing at this opening into darkness; he studied the invisible with an intentness which resembled attention. The water roared. All at once he took off his hat and placed it on the edge of the quay. A moment after, a tall, black figure, which a belated passer-by might have taken at a distance for a ghost, appeared, standing on the parapet, stooped toward the Seine, then drew itself up, and fell straight down into the darkness: there was a dull splash; and the shadows alone were in the secret of the convulsions of that dark form which had disappeared beneath the water.

BOOK V

GRANDSON AND GRANDFATHER.

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH THE TREE WITH THE ZINC PLASTER APPEARS AGAIN

SOME time after the events which we have just recorded, the Sieur Boulatruelle experienced a lively emotion.

The Sieur Boulatruelle is the road-mender of Montfermeil of whom we have already caught a glimpse in the dark portions of this book.

Boulatruelle, it will perhaps be remembered, was a man occupied with various and troubled things. He broke stones and damaged travellers on the highway. Road-mender and robber as he was, he had a dream,— he believed in the treasures buried in the forest of Montfermeil. He hoped some day to find money in the ground at the foot of a tree; meantime he readily sought it in the pockets of passers-by.

Still, for the present, he was prudent. He had just had a narrow escape. He was, as we know, picked up with the other ruffians in Jondrette's garret. Vice is some times useful: his drunkenness saved him. It was never decided whether he was there as a robber or as a victim. He was set at liberty on account of his well-proven intoxication on the night of the attack. He took to his heels, and went back to his road from Gagny to Lagny, to break stones for the State, under government supervision, with hanging head, in pensive mood, his ardour for theft somewhat cooled by his narrow

escape, but turning with all the more tenderness to the wine which had saved him.

As for the lively emotion which he had experienced a short time after his return to his turf-thatched cabin, it was this: One morning, Boulatruelle, going as usual to his work and perhaps to his lurking-place, just before daybreak, saw among the branches a man, whose back alone was visible, but whose shoulders, so it seemed to him through the mist and darkness, were not entirely unknown to him. Boulatruelle, though a drunkard, had a correct and lucid memory,— a weapon of defence indispensable to any man who is at all on bad terms with legal order.

"Where the deuce have I seen some one like that man?" he asked. But he could give himself no answer, save that the fellow resembled somebody of whom he had a confused recollection.

Boulatruelle, however, made his guesses and calculations, though he was unable to settle the identity. This man did not belong to those parts. He had just come there. Evidently afoot. No public conveyance passes through Montfermeil at that hour. He must have been walking all night.

Where did he come from? No great distance; for he had neither haversack nor bundle. Doubtless from Paris. Why was he in this wood? Why was he here at such an hour? What did he want here?

Boulatruelle thought of the treasure. By dint of racking his memory, he vaguely remembered having had, several years previous, a similar alarm in connection with a man, who might very well be this man.

While meditating, he had, under the very weight of his meditation, hung his head, a natural but not a clever thing to do. When he raised it again, the man had disappeared in the forest and the mist.

"The devil!" said Boulatruelle. "I will find him again. I'll ferret out the parish of that parishioner. This straggler from Patron-Minette has a motive, and I'll know it. No

one shall have a secret in my forest without my having 'a finger in the pie.'"

He took up his pick, which was very sharp.

"Here's something," he growled, "with which to search the ground and a man."

And as one thread is knotted to another thread, he began to stride through the coppice as fast as he could, in the direction which the man must have followed.

When he had gone about a hundred yards, day, which was beginning to break, aided him. Footprints on the sand, here and there, trampled grass, broken heather, young branches in the bushes bent and rising with graceful deliberation, like the arms of a pretty woman who stretches herself on waking, gave him a sort of trail. He followed it, then he lost it. Time was slipping away. He plunged deeper into the wood, and came to a sort of eminence. An early sportsman passing in the distance along a path, and whistling the air of "Guillery," gave him the idea of climbing up a tree. Although old, he was agile. There was, close by, a very large beech, worthy of Tityrus and Boulatruelle. Boulatruelle climbed the beech as high as he could.

The idea was a good one. While exploring the solitude on the side where the wood is most entangled, and wild, Boulatruelle suddenly caught sight of the man.

No sooner had he seen him than he lost sight of him.

The man entered, or rather glided into, a clearing somewhat remote and masked by large trees, but which Boulatruelle knew very well, because he had noticed, near a large heap of stones, a sickly chestnut-tree, bandaged with a zinc belt nailed directly upon the bark. This clearing is what was formerly called the Blaru glade. The pile of stones, intended for no one knows what purpose, which lay there thirty years ago, is doubtless there still. Nothing equals the longevity of a heap of stones, except that of a plank boarding. It is there temporarily. What a reason for lasting!

Boulatruelle, with the rapidity of joy, tumbled off the tree, rather than came down from it. The lair was found, and

now he had only to seize the wild beast. The famous treasure he had dreamed of was probably there.

It was no small undertaking to reach the clearing. By beaten paths, which made a thousand annoying zigzags, it would take a good quarter of an hour. In a bee-line through the underbrush, which is singularly dense, very thorny, and most aggressive just there, it would take half an hour at least. Boulatruelle was wrong in not understanding this; he believed in the straight line,— a respectable optical illusion, but one which has ruined many men. The underbrush, bristling though it was, appeared to him the right road.

"Let us go by the Rue de Rivoli of the wolves," said he.

Boulatruelle, accustomed to crooked paths, now made the mistake of going straight.

He plunged resolutely into the bushes. He had to contend with holly, nettles, hawthorns, briers, thistles, and most irascible brambles. He was fearfully scratched.

At the bottom of the ravine he came to a stream, which he was obliged to cross.

At last he reached the Blaru glade, after the lapse of forty minutes, perspiring, wet through, breathless, scratched, and ferocious.

There was no one in the clearing.

Boulatruelle hurried to the heap of stones. It was still in its place. It had not been carried off.

As for the man, he had vanished in the forest. He had escaped. Where? In what direction? Into which clump of trees? Impossible to guess.

And, heartrending to relate, there, behind the heap of stones, in front of the zinc-banded tree, was freshly turned earth, a pick, forgotten or abandoned, and a hole.

The hole was empty.

"Thief!" cried Boulatruelle, shaking his fists at space.

CHAPTER II

MARIUS, QUITTING CIVIL WAR, PREPARES FOR DOMESTIC WAR

MARIUS was for a long time neither dead nor alive. He had, for several weeks, a fever accompanied by delirium, and by very serious cerebral symptoms, caused by the shock of the wounds on the head rather than by the wounds themselves.

He repeated Cosette's name for whole nights with the lugubrious loquacity of fever and the gloomy obstinacy of agony. The extent of certain wounds presented a serious danger; for the suppuration of large wounds is always liable to be re-absorbed into the system, and, consequently, to kill the patient, under certain atmospheric influences. At each change in the weather, at the slightest storm, the physician became anxious. "Mind that the patient suffers from no emotion," he repeated. The dressings were complicated and difficult, for the fixing of bandages and lint by sticking-plaster had not been invented at that period. Nicolette used up for lint a sheet "as big as the ceiling," as she said. It was not without difficulty that chlorureted lotions and nitrate of silver conquered the gangrene. So long as there was danger, M. Gillenormand, broken-hearted by the bedside of his grandson, was, like Marius, neither dead nor alive.

Every day, and sometimes twice a day, a white-haired, well-dressed gentleman — such was the description given by the porter — came to inquire after the wounded man, and left a large parcel of lint for the dressings.

At length, on September 7, four months to a day from the sad night on which he was brought home to his grandfather dying, the physician declared that he would answer for him. Convalescence set in. Marius, however, was obliged to lie for two months longer on a couch, on account of his broken collar-bone. There is always a last wound which will not

close, and which prolongs the dressings indefinitely, to the great annoyance of the patient. This long illness and lengthened convalescence, however, saved him from prosecution. In France, there is no anger, even public, which six months does not extinguish. Riots, in the present state of society, are so much the fault of every one that they are followed by a certain necessity for closing the eyes.

Let us add that Gisquet's unjustifiable decree, which compelled physicians to denounce their patients, having outraged opinion,— and not merely opinion, but the king himself,— the wounded were covered and protected by this indignation; and, with the exception of those taken prisoners in the act of fighting, the courts-martial did not dare to molest any one. Hence Marius was left in peace.

M. Gillenormand first passed through every form of agony and then through every form of ecstasy. Great difficulty was found in keeping him from watching every night with the wounded man, he had his large easy-chair brought to the bedside; he insisted that his daughter should take the finest linen in the house for compresses and bandages. Mlle. Gillenormand, like a sensible and elderly lady, managed to save the fine linen, while allowing her father to believe that he was obeyed. M. Gillenormand would not permit any one to explain to him that, for the purpose of making lint, fine linen is not so good as coarse, or new so good as worn. He was present at all the dressings, from which Mlle. Gillenormand modestly absented herself. When the dead flesh was cut away with scissors, he said, "Ow! ow!" Nothing was so touching as to see him hand the wounded man a cup of broth with his gentle, trembling old hand. He overwhelmed the surgeon with questions, and did not perceive that he constantly repeated the same ones.

On the day when the physician informed him that Marius was out of danger, he was beside himself. He gave his porter three louis d'or, and at night, when he went to his bedroom, he danced a gavotte, making castanets of his thumb and forefinger, and sang a song something like this:—

"Jane was born at Fougère,—
True nest of a shepherdess fair:
I gaze with loving eye
At her petticoat sly.

"Cupid dwells within her heart.
And he hides his dart
In her eye;
Archer sly!

"I sing her praises, and I love,
Chaste Diana e'en above,
My Jenny and her eye
So sly."

Then he knelt on a chair, and Basque, who was watching him through the crack of the door, was sure that he was praying.

Up to that day he had never believed in God.

At each new phase of improvement, which became more and more decided, the grandfather went almost mad. He performed a multitude of mechanical actions full of delight; he went up and down stairs without knowing why. A neighbour's wife (who was very pretty, by the way) was amazed one morning at receiving a large bouquet; M. Gillenormand sent it to her. Her husband got up a jealous scene. M. Gillenormand tried to draw Nicolette on his knees. He called Marius "Monsieur le Baron." He shouted, "Long live the Republic!"

He asked the doctor again and again: "There is no danger now, is there?" He looked at Marius with the eyes of a grandmother. He gloated over him while he ate. He no longer knew himself, no longer took himself into account. Marius was the master of the house; there was abdication in his joy,— he was the grandson of his grandson.

In his present state of merriment he was the most venerable of children. For fear of wearying or annoying the convalescent, he would step behind him to smile upon him. He was content, joyous, enchanted, charming, young. His white hair added a gentle majesty to the gay radiance of his

face. When grace is mingled with wrinkles, it is adorable. There is a peculiar light of dawn in blooming old age.

As for Marius, while he allowed them to nurse and pet him, he had one fixed idea,— Cosette.

Since the fever and delirium had left him, he had ceased to utter her name, and it might have been supposed that he had forgotten her. He was silent, just because his soul was fixed on her.

He knew not what had become of Cosette; the whole affair of the Rue de la Chanvrerie was like a cloud in his memory; shadows, almost indistinct, floated through his mind. Eponine, Gavroche, Mabœuf, the Thénardiers, all his friends, mournfully mingled with the smoke of the barricade; the strange passage of M. Fauchelevent through that blood-stained adventure produced upon him the effect of an enigma in a tempest. He understood nothing of his own life, he knew not how or by whom he had been saved, and no one about him knew it either; all they were able to tell him was that he had been brought there at night in a hackney coach. Past, present, and future,— all this was to him like the mist of a vague idea; but in this mist there was one immovable point, one clear and precise feature, one thing made of granite, a resolution, a will,— to find Cosette once more. For him, the idea of life was not distinct from the idea of Cosette. He had decreed in his heart that he would not accept the one without the other, and he was unalterably determined to demand of whosoever should desire to force him to live,— of his grandfather, of destiny, of fate, of hell itself,— the restitution of his lost Eden.

He did not disguise the obstacles.

Here let us emphasize one fact: he was not won over or greatly softened by all the anxiety and all the tenderness of his grandfather. In the first place, he was not in the secret of them all; then, in his sick man's reveries, which were, perhaps, still feverish, he distrusted this gentleness as a strange and novel thing intended to subdue him. He remained cold to it. The poor grandfather lavished his smiles in vain.

Marius said to himself that it was all very well, so long as he (Marius) did not speak, and let matters rest; but that when it came to talking of Cosette, he should find another face, and his grandfather's real attitude would be unmasked. Then there would be a scene, a revival of family questions, a comparison of positions, all manner of sarcasms and objections at once,— Fauchelevent, Coupelevent, fortune, poverty, wretchedness, a stone about his neck, the future. Violent resistance; the conclusion: a refusal. Marius stiffened himself against it in advance.

And then, in proportion as he regained life, his old wrongs re-appeared, the old ulcers of his memory re-opened. He again thought of the past; Colonel Pontmercy placed himself once more between M. Gillenormand and him, Marius, and he said to himself that he had no real kindness to hope for from a man who had been so unjust and harsh to his father. And with health, there returned a sort of bitterness toward his grandfather, from which the old man suffered silently.

M. Gillenormand, without letting it be seen, noticed that Marius, since he had been brought home and had regained consciousness, had never once called him father. He did not say "sir," it is true; but he managed to say neither the one nor the other, by a certain way of turning his sentences.

A crisis was evidently approaching.

As almost always happens in such cases, Marius, in order to test himself, skirmished before offering battle. This is called "feeling the ground." One morning, it happened that M. Gillenormand, alluding to a newspaper which he had come across, spoke lightly of the Convention, and let fly a royalist epigram at Danton, St. Just, and Robespierre. "The men of '93 were giants," said Marius, sternly. The old man was silent, and did not utter another syllable all day.

Marius, the inflexible grandfather of his early years ever present to his mind, saw in this silence a profound concentration of anger, augured from it an obstinate struggle, and made increased preparations for a contest in his innermost mind.

He determined that in case of refusal, he would tear off his bandages, dislocate his collar-bone, lay bare all the wounds still unhealed, and refuse all food. His wounds were his ammunition. He must have Cosette or die.

He awaited the favourable moment with the crafty impatience of sick persons. The moment came.

CHAPTER III

MARIUS ATTACKS

ONE day M. Gillenormand, while his daughter was arranging the phials and cups on the marble slab of the chest of drawers, leaned over Marius, and said in his most tender tones:—

"See here, my little Marius, if I were you, I would rather eat meat than fish now. A fried sole is excellent at the beginning of convalescence, but a good cutlet is the thing to put a sick man on his legs."

Marius, whose strength had almost wholly returned, summoned it all, sat up, rested his two clenched fists on the sheets, looked his grandfather in the face, assumed a terrible air, and said:—

"That leads me to say something to you."

"What is it?"

"That I wish to marry."

"All settled," said the grandfather, bursting into a laugh.

"How settled?"

"Yes, settled. You shall have your little maid."

Marius, amazed and bewildered, trembled in every limb. M. Gillenormand continued:—

"Yes, you shall have the pretty little dear. She comes every day in the form of an old gentleman to ask after you. Ever since you were wounded she has spent her time in cry-

ing and making lint. I made inquiries. She lives at No. 7, Rue de l'Homme Armé. Ah, there we are! Ah, you want her, do you? Well, you shall have her. I've got you there! You had laid your little plot. You said to yourself: 'I will put it point-blank to that grandfather of mine, that mummy of the Regency and the Directory, that old beau, that Dorante turned Géronte. He has had his frolics too, and his love affairs, and his shop-girls, and his Cosettes; he has had his fling, he has had his fly, he has eaten the bread of spring; he must surely remember it. We shall see. Battle!' Ah, you take the bull by the horns. All right. I offer you a cutlet, and you answer me, 'By the by, I wish to marry.' By Jupiter Ammon, that is a transition! Ah, you made up your mind for a quarrel! You did not know that I was an old coward. What do you say to that? You are sold. You did not expect to find your grandfather sillier than yourself. You have. The speech you meant to make me is wasted, master lawyer; and that is a pity. Well, so much the worse; rage away. I'll do what you wish, and that cuts your speech short, simpleton. Listen! I have made my inquiries, for I am cunning too; she is charming, she is virtuous, the lancer does not speak the truth, she has made heaps of lint. She is a jewel; she adores you. If you had died, there would have been three of us. Her coffin would have accompanied mine. I had an idea, so soon as you were better, of just planting her there by your bedside; but it is only in novels that girls are brought right to the beds of handsome young wounded men in whom they take an interest. That would not do. What would your aunt say? You were quite naked three-quarters of the time, sir. Ask Nicolette, who never left you for a moment, whether it was possible to have a woman here. And then, what would the doctor have said? A pretty girl does not tend to cure a fever. Well, say no more about it; it is settled and done; it's fixed; take her. Such is my cruelty. Look here; I saw that you did not love me, and I said: 'What can I do to make that creature love me?' I said, 'Stay! I have my little Cosette right at hand.

I will give her to him, and then he must love me a little, or tell the reason why.' Ah, you thought that the old man would storm, talk big, cry 'No,' and lift his cane against all this day-dawn. Not at all. Cosette,— so be it; love,— so be it; I ask for nothing better. Pray, take the trouble, sir, to marry. Be happy, my beloved child!"

So saying, the old man burst into sobs.

He took Marius's head and pressed it to his old bosom, and both began to weep. That is one of the forms of supreme happiness.

"My father!" exclaimed Marius.

"Ah, you love me then?" said the old man.

There was an ineffable moment. They were choking and could not speak. At length the old man stammered:

"Come! the stopper is taken out of him. He called me father."

Marius freed his head from his grandfather's arms, and said gently:—

"Now that I am well, father, I think I might see her."

"Settled, too; you shall see her to-morrow."

"Father!"

"Well, what?"

"Why not to-day?"

"Well, to-day. To-day it shall be. You have called me father thrice, and it's worth that. I will see about it. She shall be brought here. Settled, I tell you. It has already been put into verse. It is the end of André Chénier's elegy, the 'Jeune malade,'— André Chénier, who was butchered by the vill — by the giants of '93."

M. Gillenormand fancied he could see a slight frown on Marius's face, though(truth to tell, he was not listening, as he had flown away into ecstasy, and was thinking much more of Cosette than of 1793.

The grandfather, trembling at having introduced André Chénier so inopportunely, hurriedly continued:

"Butchered is not the word. The fact is, that the great revolutionary geniuses, who were not wicked (that is incon-

testable,— who were heroes, by Jove!), found that André Chénier was slightly in their way, and they had him guillo — That is to say, those great men, on the 7th Thermidor, begged André Chénier, in the interests of public safety, to be kind enough to go —"

M. Gillenormand, garroted by his own sentence, could not continue. Unable to end it or to retract it, while his daughter arranged the pillows behind Marius, who was exhausted by his emotions, the old man rushed, with all the speed which his age allowed, out of the bedroom, shut the door after him, and purple, choking, and foaming, with his eyes starting from his head, found himself nose to nose with honest Basque, who was cleaning boots in the anteroom. He seized Basque by the collar, and shouted furiously in his face: "By the hundred thousand Javottes of the devil, those scoundrels did assassinate him!"

"Who?"

"André Chénier."

"Yes, sir," said Basque in alarm.

CHAPTER IV

MLLE. GILLENORMAND CEASES TO THINK IT A BAD THING THAT M. FAUCHELEVENT SHOULD COME IN WITH SOMETHING UNDER HIS ARM.

COSETTE and Marius saw each other once more.

We will not attempt to describe the interview. There are things which one must not attempt to paint; the sun is of the number.

The whole family, Basque and Nicolette included, were assembled in Marius's chamber at the moment when Cosette entered.

She appeared in the doorway; she seemed to him to be surrounded by a halo.

At that very moment the grandfather was about to blow his nose; he stopped short, holding his nose in his handkerchief and looking over it at Cosette:—

"Adorable!" he cried.

And then he blew a sonorous blast.

Cosette was intoxicated, enchanted, frightened, in heaven. She was as timid as one may be made by happiness. She stammered, turned pale, then flushed, longed to throw herself into Marius's arms, and dared not. She was ashamed of loving before so many people. The world is merciless to happy lovers; people always remain when the latter most long to be alone. And yet lovers need no other company than their own.

With Cosette, and behind her, entered a white-haired man, serious, yet smiling, though his smile was vague and heartrending. It was "Monsieur Fauchelevent,"—it was Jean Valjean.

He was "very well dressed," as the porter had said, in a new black suit and a white cravat.

The porter was a thousand leagues from recognizing in this correct citizen, this probable notary, the frightful corpse-bearer who had appeared at the door on the night of June 7, ragged, filthy, hideous, haggard, with a mask of blood and mud on his face, holding in his arms the unconscious Marius; still, his porter's instincts were aroused. When M. Fauchelevent arrived with Cosette, the porter could not refrain from confiding this aside to his wife: "I don't know why, but I fancy that I have seen that face before."

M. Fauchelevent in Marius's room stood apart by the door. He had under his arm a packet closely resembling an octavo volume wrapped in paper. The paper was of a greenish hue, and seemed mouldy.

"Does this gentleman always carry a book under his arm like that?" Mlle. Gillenormand, who was not fond of books, asked Nicolette in a whisper.

"Well," replied M. Gillenormand, who had overheard her, in the same key, "he is a learned man. What then? Is

that his fault? Monsieur Boulard, whom I once knew, never went out without a book either, and always had some old volume hugged to his heart like that."

Then bowing, he said aloud:—

"Monsieur Tranchelevent [Father Gillenormand did not do it purposely, but inattention to proper names was an aristocratic way of his], Monsieur Tranchelevent, I have the honour to ask you for this lady's hand, for my grandson, Baron Marius Pontmercy."

Monsieur "Tranchelevent" bowed.

"All right," said the grandfather.

And turning to Marius and Cosette, with both arms extended to bless them, he cried:—

"You have leave to adore each other."

They did not wait to be told twice. The billing and cooing began. They talked in a whisper, Marius reclining on his couch, Cosette standing beside him.

"Oh, heavens!" murmured Cosette, "I see you once again! It is you,—it is really you! To go and fight like that! But why? It is horrible! For four months I have been dead. Oh, how wicked it was of you to join in that battle! What had I done to you? I forgive you, but you must never do so again. Just now, when they came to tell us to come to you, I thought again that I was going to die, but it was of joy. I was so sad! I did not take the time to dress myself; I must look frightful. What will your relatives say to see me with a tumbled collar? But speak! You make me do all the talking. We are still in the Rue de l'Homme Armé. It seems that your shoulder was terrible. I was told that I could put my fist in it. And then it seems that your flesh was cut with scissors. How frightful that is! I cried so that I have no eyes left. It is strange that a person can suffer like that. Your grandfather looks very kind. Don't move; don't lean on your elbow like that. Take care, or you will do yourself an injury. Oh, how happy I am! So our misfortunes are ended! I am quite foolish. There were things I wanted to say to you and now I have

quite forgotten what they were. Do you love me still? We live in the Rue de l'Homme Armé. There is no garden there. I made lint the whole time; look here, sir, it is your fault, my fingers are quite rough."

"Angel!" said Marius.

Angel is the only word in the language which cannot be worn out. No other word could resist the pitiless use which lovers make of it.

Then, as there were spectators, they broke off, and said not another word, contenting themselves with softly pressing each other's hands.

M. Gillenormand turned to all the rest in the room and cried:—

"Do talk louder, good people. Make a noise, behind the scenes there. Come, a little row, hang it all! so that these children may chatter at their ease."

And going up to Marius and Cosette, he whispered: "Go on. Don't stand on ceremony."

Aunt Gillenormand looked on in amazement at this irruption of light into her antiquated household. This amazement was not at all aggressive; it was not in the least like the scandalized and envious glance of an owl at two turtle-doves, — it was the stupid eye of a poor innocent fifty-seven years old; it was a ruined life gazing at that triumph, love.

"Mlle. Gillenormand the elder," said her father, "I told you that this would happen."

He was silent for a moment, then added:—

"Look at the happiness of others."

Then he turned to Cosette.

"How pretty she is! How pretty she is! She is a regular Greuze! So you are going to have all that to yourself, scamp? Ah, my boy, you have had a lucky escape from me; if I were fifteen years younger, we would fight with swords to see which of us should have her. There! I am in love with you myself, mademoiselle. That's very natural. It is your right. Oh, what a famous, charming little wedding we will have! St. Denis du St.-Sacrament

is our parish church; but I will get a dispensation, so that you may be married at St. Paul. It is a better church. It was built for the Jesuits. It is more coquettish. It is opposite Cardinal de Birague's fountain. The masterpiece of Jesuit architecture is at Namur. It is called St. Loup. You must go there when you are married. It is worth the journey. Mademoiselle, I am entirely of your opinion; I think girls ought to marry,— that is what they are made for. There is a certain Saint Catherine whom I should always like to see uncoifed.[1] To remain a maid is fine, but it is cold. Multiply, says the Bible. To save the people, a Joan of Arc is wanted; but to make a people, we want Mother Gigogne. So marry, my darlings. I really do not see the use of remaining a maid. Of course I know that they have a separate chapel in the church, and that they fall back on the Confraternity of the Virgin; but, dear me! a handsome young husband, an honest lad, and at the end of a year a bouncing baby, who sucks at you lustily, and who has fine rolls of fat on his thighs, and who clutches your bosom in handfuls with his pink paws, smiling like the rosy morn,— that's a good deal better, after all, than holding a candle at vespers and singing *Turris Eburnea*."

The grandfather pirouetted on his ninety-year-old heels, and began to talk again, like a spring which has been wound up:—

> "Thus, ceasing thy moody musings,
> Alcippe, 'tis true, that ere long, thou wilt wed."

"By the by!"

"What, father?"

"Had you not an intimate friend?"

"Yes; Courfeyrac."

"What has become of him?"

"He is dead."

[1] An allusion to a French idiom: *coiffer Sainte Catherine*,—"To remain unmarried."

"That is well."

He sat down by them, made Cosette take a seat, and took their four hands in his wrinkled old palms.

"What a dainty darling. This Cosette is a masterpiece! She is a very little girl and a very great lady. She will be only a baroness, and that is coming down in the world, for she was born to be a marchioness. What eyelashes she has! My children, get it well fixed in your noddles that you are on the right road. Love each other. Be foolish about it. Love is the folly of men and the wisdom of God. So adore each other,— only," he added, his face suddenly clouding, "what a pity! more than half that I possess is sunk in annuities. So long as I live, it will be all right; but when I am dead, twenty years hence, ah, my poor children, you will not have a sou. Your pretty white hands, Madame la Baronne, will do the devil the honour to pull him by the tail." [1]

Here a calm, grave voice was heard:—

"Mlle. Euphraise Fauchelevent has six hundred thousand francs."

It was Jean Valjean's voice.

He had not yet uttered a syllable; no one seemed to remember that he was present, and he stood motionless behind all those happy people.

"What has Mlle. Euphrasie to do with the question?" asked the startled grandfather.

"He means me," said Cosette.

"Six hundred thousand francs!" repeated M. Gillenormand.

"Less fourteen or fifteen thousand perhaps," said Jean Valjean.

And he laid on the table the parcel which Aunt Gillenormand had taken for a book.

Jean Valjean himself opened the packet; it was a bundle of bank-notes. They were turned over and counted. There

[1] *Tirer le diable par le queue,*—"To have a terribly hard time of it."

were five hundred bank-notes for a thousand francs each, and one hundred and sixty-eight for five hundred. In all, five hundred and eighty-four thousand francs.

"That's a famous book," said M. Gillenormand.

"Five hundred and eighty-four thousand francs!" murmured the aunt.

"That arranges a good many things, does it not, Mlle. Gillenormand the elder?" continued the grandfather. "That devil of a Marius has found a millionaire grisette upon the tree of dreams! Just trust to the love affairs of young people. Students find studentesses with six hundred thousand francs. Cherubino works better than Rothschild."

"Five hundred and eighty-four thousand francs!" repeated Mlle. Gillenormand. "Five hundred and eighty-four thousand francs! We may as well call it six hundred thousand, eh?"

As for Marius and Cosette, they were looking at each other. They hardly heeded this trifling circumstance.

CHAPTER V

BETTER PLACE YOUR MONEY IN A FOREST THAN WITH A NOTARY

Of course, our readers have understood, and no lengthy explanations will be required, that Jean Valjean, after the Champmathieu affair, was enabled, by his first escape for a few days, to come to Paris and withdraw, in season, from Lafitte's bank the sum he had earned under the name of M. Madeleine at Montreuil sur Mer; and that, fearing he might be recaptured, which actually happened shortly after, he buried and hid that sum in the forest of Montfermeil, in the place known as Blaru glade. The sum, six hundred and thirty thousand francs, all in bank-notes, occupied but

little space, and was contained in a box; but in order to protect the box from the damp, he placed it in an oak coffer filled with shavings of chestnut-wood. In the same coffer he placed his other treasure,— the bishop's candlesticks. It will be remembered that he carried off these candlesticks in his escape from Montreuil sur Mer. The man seen one evening for the first time by Boulatruelle was Jean Valjean. Afterward, whenever, Jean Valjean required money, he fetched it from the Blaru clearing,— hence the absences to which we have referred. He had a pick concealed somewhere in the heather, in a hiding-place known to himself alone. When he found Marius was convalescent, feeling that the hour was at hand when this money might prove useful, he went to fetch it; and it was again he whom Boulatruelle saw in the wood, but this time in the morning, and not at night. Boulatruelle inherited the pickaxe.

The real sum was five hundred and eighty-four thousand five hundred francs; Jean Valjean kept back the five hundred francs for himself. "We shall see later," he thought.

The difference between this sum and the six hundred and thirty thousand francs withdrawn from Lafitte, represented his expenditure for ten years, from 1823 to 1833. The five years' stay in the convent had only cost five thousand francs.

Jean Valjean put the two silver candlesticks on the mantelpiece, where they glistened, to the great admiration of Toussaint.

Moreover, Jean Valjean knew that he was set free from Javert. It had been stated in his presence, and he verified the fact in the "Moniteur," which had published it, that a police inspector named Javert had been found drowned under a washer-woman's boat between the Pont-au-Change and the Pont-Neuf and that a letter left by this man, hitherto considered blameless, and highly esteemed by his superiors, pointed to an attack of dementia and to suicide. "In truth," thought Jean Valjean, "since he let me go, when he had me in his power, he must have been mad even them."

CHAPTER VI

THE TWO OLD MEN, EACH IN HIS WAY, DO ALL THEY CAN TO MAKE COSETTE HAPPY

ALL preparations were made for the marriage. The physician, on being consulted, declared that it might take place in February. It was now December. A few ravishing weeks of perfect happiness slipped away.

The grandfather was by no means the least happy of them all. He sat for a whole quarter of an hour at a time contemplating Cosette.

"What wonderfully pretty girl!" he would exclaim, "and she looks so sweet and good! She is the most charming creature I have ever seen in my life. Pretty soon she'll be having virtues with a violet scent. She is one of the Graces, on my faith! A man could not help leading a noble life with such a creature. Marius, my lad, you are a baron, you are rich; don't go to pettifogging, I implore you."

Cosette and Marius had passed abruptly from the sepulchre into paradise. The transition had not been softened, and they would have been stunned if they had not been dazzled.

"Do you understand anything of all this?" Marius would say to Cosette.

"No," answered Cosette; "but it seems to me as if God were looking out for us."

Jean Valjean did everything, smoothed away every difficulty, reconciled everything, and rendered everything easy. He hastened toward Cosette's happiness with as much eagerness, and apparently with as much joy, as Cosette herself.

As he had been mayor, he knew how to solve a delicate problem, the secret of which he alone possessed,— the civil status of Cosette. To tell her origin openly might have

prevented the marriage; but he got Cosette out of all her difficulties. He arranged for her a family of dead people, — a sure way to incur no objections. Cosette was the only remaining member of an extinct family; Cosette was not his daughter, but the daughter of another Fauchelevent. Two brothers Fauchelevent had been gardeners at the convent of the Little Picpus. Inquiries were made there; the best testimonials and most satisfactory references were given, for the good nuns, little suited and little inclined to solve questions of paternity, and attaching no importance to the matter, had never known exactly of which of the two Fauchelevents Cosette was the daughter. They said what was wanted, and said it zealously. A notary's deed was drawn up, and Cosette became, in the eyes of the law, Mademoiselle Euphrasie Fauchelevent. She was declared an orphan both on the father's and mother's side. Jean Valjean so managed as to be appointed, under the name of Fauchelevent, as guardian of Cosette, with M. Gillenormand as surrogate guardian.

As for the five hundred and eighty-four thousand francs, they were a legacy left to Cosette by a dead person who wished to remain unknown. The original legacy had been five hundred and ninety-four thousand francs, but ten thousand had been spent in the education of Mademoiselle Euphrasie, five thousand of which had been paid to the convent. This legacy, deposited in the hands of a third party, was to be handed over to Cosette upon her majority, or at the period of her marriage. All this was highly acceptable, as we see, especially when backed up by more than half a million francs. There were certainly a few singular points here and there, but they were not noticed; one of the persons interested had his eyes blindfolded by love, and the others by the six hundred thousand francs.

Cosette learned that she was not the daughter of the old man whom she had so long called father. He was only a relative; another Fauchelevent was her real father. At any other moment this would have broken her heart; but at the ineffable hour she had now reached it was only a slight

shadow, a passing cloud, and she had so much joy that this cloud did not last long. She had Marius. The young man came, the old man disappeared,— such is life.

And then, Cosette had for many long years been accustomed to see enigmas around her. Every being who has had a mysterious childhood is ever ready for certain renunciations.

Still, she continued to call Jean Valjean "father."

Cosette, who was in paradise, was enthusiastic over Father Gillenormand. To be sure, he overwhelmed her with compliments and presents. While Jean Valjean was constructing for Cosette a normal position in society and an unimpeachable status, M. Gillenormand looked after the wedding outfit. Nothing amused him so much as to be magnificent. He had given Cosette a gown of Binche guipure, which he inherited from his own grandmother. "These fashions spring up again," said he; "antiquities are all the rage, and the young women of my old days dress like the old ladies of my youth."

He plundered his respectable round-bellied chests of drawers, made of Coromandel lacquer, which had not been opened for years. "Let us shrive these dowagers," he said, "and see what they have in their corporation." He noisily violated pot-bellied drawers, full of the dresses of all his wives, all his mistresses, and all his female ancestry. He lavished on Cosette, Chinese satins, damasks, brocades, flowered moires, rich gros-grain silks, India handkerchiefs embroidered with gold that could be washed, Genoa and Alençon point-lace, sets of old jewelry, ivory bonbon boxes adorned with microscopic battles, gewgaws, and ribbons. Cosette, astounded, head over heels in love with Marius and wild with gratitude to M. Gillenormand, dreamed of an unbounded happiness, clothed in satin and velvet. Her wedding outfit seemed to her to be borne by seraphim. Her soul floated in azure depths, on wings of Mechlin lace.

The intoxication of the lovers was only equalled, as we said, by the ecstasy of the grandfather. There was some-

thing like a flourish of trumpets in the Rue des Filles du Calvaire.

Each morning there was a fresh offering of *bric-à-brac* from the grandfather to Cosette. All sorts of finery was spread splendidly before her.

One day, Marius, who was fond of talking seriously amid his happiness, said, with reference to some incident which I have forgotten:—

"The men of the Revolution are so great that they already possess the prestige of centuries, like Cato and like Phocion, and each one of them seems an antique memory."

"'Moire antique!" exclaimed the old gentleman. "Thank you, Marius, that is the very idea for which I was seeking."

And on the morrow, a splendid tea-coloured moire antique dress was added to Cosette's outfit.

The grandfather extracted wisdom from these fripperies:—

"Love is all very well; but there must be something else to go with it. There must be something useless in happiness. Happiness is only what is necessary. But season it, say I, with a vast amount of superfluity. A palace and her heart. Her heart and the Louvre. Her heart and the fountains of Versailles. Give me my shepherdess, and take care that she be a duchess. Bring me Phillis crowned with corn-flowers, and add one hundred thousand francs a year. Open for me an endless Bucolic under a marble colonnade. I consent to the Bucolic, and also to the fairy spectacle of marble and gold. Dry happiness is like dry bread,— you eat, but you do not dine. I wish for superfluity, for the useless, the extravagant, that which serves no earthly use. I remember seeing, in Strasburg Cathedral, a clock as tall as a three-story house, which marked the hour, which had the kindness to mark the hour, but did not look as if it were made for that purpose; and which, besides striking midday or midnight,— midday, the hour of the sun, and midnight, the hour of love,— or any other hour you please,— gave you the

moon and the stars, earth and sea, birds and fishes, Phœbus and Phœbe, and a host of things that came out of a niche, and the twelve apostles, and the Emperor Charles V., and Eponina, and Sabinus, and a lot of little gilt men, who played the trumpet, into the bargain, not to mention the enchanting chimes which it scattered on the air on every possible occasion, without your knowing why. Is a wretched, naked clock which only marks the hours, worth all that? I am of the opinion of the great clock of Strasburg, and I prefer it to the Black Forest cuckoo clock."

M. Gillenormand talked all sorts of nonsense about the marriage; and all the ideas of the eighteenth century passed pell-mell into his dithyrambs.

"You are ignorant of the art of festivals. You do not know how to get up a day's pleasure in these times," he exclaimed. "Your nineteenth century is soft. It lacks excess. It ignores the rich, it ignores the noble. In everything it is close-shorn. Your third estate is insipid; it has no colour, no smell, no shape. The dream of your tradesmen who establish themselves, as they call it, is a pretty boudoir freshly decorated with rosewood and chintz. Make way there! the Sieur Curmudgeon marries the Demoiselle Clutchpenny. Sumptuousness and splendour. A louis d'or is stuck to a wax candle. Such is the age. I insist on fleeing from it beyond the Sarmatians. Ah, so far back as 1787 I predicted that all was lost on the day when I saw the Duke de Rohan, Prince de Léon, Duke de Chabot, Duke de Montbazon, Marquis de Soubise, Viscount de Thouars, and Peer of France, go to Longchamps in a spanker;[1] that has borne its fruits. In this century, men do business, gamble on the Stock Exchange, win money, and are mean. They take care of and varnish their surface; they are carefully dressed, washed, soaped, shaved, combed, rubbed, brushed, and cleaned on the outside; irreproachable; as polished as a pebble, discreet, neat, and trim, and at the same time, death

[1] Springless carriage.

of my life! they have in the depths of their conscience dung-heaps and cesspools which would make a milkmaid who blows her nose with her fingers shrink. I grant the present age this motto, 'Dirty propriety.' Marius, do not be annoyed; give me leave to speak; I say no harm of the people, as you see. I'm always talking of your people, but do let me give the tradespeople a slap. I'm one of them. He who loves lays on the lash. I tell you plainly people marry nowadays, but they no longer know how to marry.

"Ah, it is true, I regret the grace of ancient manners; I regret everything about them,—that elegance, that chivalry, those courteous and dainty ways, that joyous luxury which every one possessed, music forming part of the wedding, symphony above stairs and tabors below, the joyful faces round the table, the highflown compliments, the songs, the fireworks, the hearty laugh, the devil and his train, and the big knots of ribbon. I regret the bride's garter. It is first cousin to the girdle of Venus. On what does the siege of Tory turn? On Helen's garter, to be sure. Why did they fight? Why did Diomedes the divine break over the head of Meriones that great brazen helmet with its ten points? Why did Achilles and Hector tickle each other with lances? Because Helen let Paris take her garter. With Cosette's garter, Homer would write the Iliad. He would put an old chatterer like me in his poem, and call him Nestor. My friends, in former times, in those good old times, people married wisely; they made a good contract, and then they had a good lay-out. So soon as Cujas had gone out Gamacho came in. Hang it all! the stomach is an agreeable beast that demands its due, and wants to have its wedding too. We supped well, and had at table a pretty neighbour without a neckerchief, who only half hid her throat. Oh, the wide laughing mouths; and how gay we were in those days! Youth was a bouquet; every young man was a branch of lilac or a posy of roses. If he were a warrior, he was still a shepherd; and if, by chance, he were a captain of dragoons, he managed to call himself Florian. All were anxious to

look well. They wore embroidery and rouge. A tradesman looked like a flower, a marquis like a precious stone. They did not wear straps; they did not wear boots. They were spruce, shining, lustrous, airy, dainty, and coquettish, but it did not prevent their wearing a sword at their side; the humming-bird has beak and claws. It was the time of the 'gallant Indies.' One side of that age was delicate, the other magnificent; and, by jingo! people amused themselves. Nowadays folks are serious. Tradesmen are miserly, their wives are prudish; your age is out of joint. The Graces would be expelled because their dresses were cut too low in the neck! Alas! beauty is concealed as if it were ugliness. Since the Revolution all wear trousers, even the ballet-girls. A ballet-girl must be serious; your rigadoons are doctrinarian. A man must be majestic. He would feel very much annoyed if his chin were not held in his cravat. The ideal of every scamp of twenty when he marries is to resemble Royer-Collard. And do you know what people arrive at by this majesty? At being petty. Learn this: joy is not merely joyous; it is great. Be in love gayly, then, hang it all! marry, when you do marry, with fever and giddiness and noise and an uproar of happiness. Be grave in church, if you will; but so soon as the Mass is over,— the devil! you should make a dream whirl round the bride. A marriage should be royal and chimerical; it should exhibit its ceremony from the cathedral of Rheims to the Pagoda of Chanteloup. I have a horror of a scrubby wedding. Confound it! be in Olympus for that one day at least; be gods. Ah, people might be sylphs and water-nymphs, and revel in games and laughter; but they are scrubs. My friends, every newly-married man should be Prince Aldobrandini. Take advantage of this unique moment of life to soar into the empyrean with the swans and the eagles, even if you do fall back to-morrow into the commonplaceness of frogs. Do not economize on the hymeneal rites; do not prune them of their splendour, nor split farthings on the day when you are radiant. A wedding is not house-keeping. Oh, if I had my

way, it should be a gallant affair,— violins should be heard under the trees. Here is my programme: sky-blue and silver. I would mingle rustic divinities with the feast; I would convene the Dryads and the Nereids. The wedding of Amphitrite, a pink cloud, nymphs with their hair carefully dressed and quite naked, an Academician offering quatrains to the goddess, a car drawn by marine monsters.

'Triton trotted on before and drew from his conch shell
Such ravishing sounds, that all sank ravished 'neath his magic spell.'

There is a programme for a feast; there's a good one, or I'm no judge, egad!"

While the grandfather, in the heat of his lyric effusion, was listening to himself, Cosette and Marius grew intoxicated by gazing freely at each other.

Aunt Gillenormand regarded all this with her imperturbable placidity. She had, during the last five or six months, experienced a certain amount of emotions. Marius returned, Marius brought back bleeding, Marius brought back from a barricade, Marius dead, Marius living, Marius reconciled, Marius affianced, Marius marrying a poor girl, Marius marrying a millionaire. The six hundred thousand francs had been her last surprise. Then the indifference of a girl taking her first communion returned to her. She went regularly to Mass, told her beads, read her prayer-book, murmured her *Aves* in one corner of the house, while *I love you* was murmured in another, and saw Marius and Cosette vaguely, like two shadows. The shadow was herself.

There is a certain state of inert asceticism in which the mind, neutralized by torpor, and a stranger to what might be called the business of living, receives no human impressions, either pleasant or painful, with the exception of earthquakes and catastrophes. "This devotion," Father Gillenormand would say to his daughter, "is like a cold in the head. You smell nothing of life. Not a bad odour, but no good one either."

However, the six hundred thousand francs had settled the old maid's indecision. Her father was so little accustomed to take her into account that he had not consulted her in the matter of consent to Marius's marriage. He had acted impetuously, according to his wont, having, like all despots become slaves, but one thought,— to please Marius. As for the aunt, he had scarcely remembered that the aunt existed, and that she might have an opinion of her own; and, sheep though she was, this had offended her. Somewhat angry inwardly, but outwardly unmoved, she said to herself, "My father has settled the marriage question without reference to me. I will settle the question of the inheritance without consulting him." She was rich, in fact, and her father was not. It is probable that if the match had been a poor one, she would have left it poor. "So much the worse for my nephew! If he choose to marry a beggar, he may be a beggar too." But Cosette's half million francs pleased the aunt, and changed her feelings with respect to the loving couple. Some consideration is due to six hundred thousand francs, and it was evident that she could not do otherwise than leave her fortune to these young people, since they no longer required it.

It was arranged that the couple should live with M. Gillenormand. The grandfather insisted on giving up to them his own bedroom,— the finest room in the house. "It will make me young again," he declared. "It is an old plan of mine. I always had an idea of having a wedding in my room."

He furnished this room with a quantity of antique trifles.

He had hung it with an extraordinary stuff, which he had in the piece, and believed came from Utrecht,— a gold satin ground with velvet auriculas. "It was with that stuff," he said, "that the bed of the Duchess d'Anville, at La Rocheguyon, was hung." He placed on the mantelpiece a little figure in Saxony porcelain holding a muff against its naked stomach.

M. Gillenormand's library became the office which Marius required; for an office, it will be borne in mind, is a necessity for every member of the bar.

CHAPTER VII

THE EFFECTS OF DREAMS MINGLED WITH HAPPINESS

THE lovers met daily. Cosette came with M. Fauchelevent. "It is turning things topsy-turvy," said Mlle, Gillenormand, "for the bride to come to the house to be courted like this." But Marius's convalescence had led to the habit at first, and the easy chairs of the Rue des Filles du Calvaire, more convenient for a *tête-à-tête* than the straw-bottomed chairs of the Rue de l'Homme Armé, had decided it. Marius and M. Fauchelevent saw each other, but did not speak. It seemed as though this had been agreed on. Every girl needs a chaperon. Cosette could not have come without M. Fauchelevent. To Marius, M. Fauchelevent was the condition of Cosette's presence. He accepted him. By discussing vaguely, and without any precision, political matters, from the point of view of universal improvement, they at last came to say a little more than Yes and No. Once, on the subject of education, which Marius wished to have free and obligatory, multiplied in every form, lavished upon all like light and air, and, in a word, respirable by the entire people, they were agreed, and they almost conversed. Marius remarked on this occasion that M. Fauchelevent spoke well, and even with a certain elevation of language. Still, something was wanting. M. Fauchelevent had something less than a man of the world, and something more. Marius, in his innermost thoughts, surrounded with all sorts of mute questions this M. Fauchelevent, who was to him simply kind and cold. Sometimes, doubts as to his own recollections oc-

curred to him. There was a gap in his memory,— a black spot, an abyss dug by four months of agony. Many things were lost therein. He began to ask himself whether it was really true that he had seen M. Fauchelevent, a man so serious and so calm, at the barricade.

This was however not the sole surprise which the appearances and disappearances of the past had left in his mind. We must not suppose that he was delivered from all those promptings of memory which compel us, even when happy and content, to take a melancholy backward glance. The head which does not turn back to vanished horizons contains neither thought nor love. At moments, Marius buried his face in his hands, and the vague and tumultuous past traversed the twilight which held possession of his brain. Again he saw Mabœuf fall, he heard Gavroche singing under the grape-shot, and he felt beneath his lips the icy chill of Eponine's brow; Enjolras, Courfeyrac, Jean Prouvaire, Combeferre, Bossuet, Grantaire,— all his friends rose before him, and then disappeared. Were all these dear, dolorous, valiant, charming, or tragic beings merely dreams? Had they actually existed? The riot had wrapped everything in its smoke. These great fevers have great dreams. He questioned himself; he felt himself; all these vanished realities made him dizzy. Where were they all, then? Was it really true that all were dead? A fall into the darkness had carried away everything, except himself. All seemed to have disappeared, as if behind the curtain of a theatre. There are such curtains which drop in our life; God passes on to the next act. And he himself, was he really the same man? He, the poor man, was rich; he, the abandoned man, had a family; he, the desperate man, was about to marry Cosette. It seemed to him that he had passed through a tomb, and that he had gone in black and come out white; and in that tomb the others had remained. At certain moments all these beings of the past, returned and present, formed a circle around him, and overshadowed him; then he thought of Cosette, and became serene once more; but nothing

less than this felicity was required to efface that catastrophe.

M. Fauchelevent almost had a place among those vanished beings. Marius hesitated to believe that the Fauchelevent of the barricade was the same as this Fauchelevent in flesh and blood, so gravely seated beside Cosette. The first was, probably, one of those nightmares brought to him, and borne away by his hours of delirium. However, as their two natures were widely sundered, it was impossible for Marius to question M. Fauchelevent. The idea had not even occurred to him. We have already indicated this characteristic detail.

Two men who have a common secret, and who by a sort of tacit agreement never exchange a syllable on the subject, are not so rare as may be supposed.

Once, only, Marius made an effort. He turned the conversation on the Rue de la Chanvrerie, and, turning to M. Fauchelevent, he said:—

"Do you know that street well?"

"What street?"

"The Rue de la Chanvrerie."

"I never heard the name of that street," said M. Fauchelevent, in the most natural tone in the world.

The answer, which referred to the name of the street, and not to the street itself, seemed to Marius more conclusive than it really was.

"Decidedly," thought he, "I must have been dreaming. I had an hallucination. It was some one that resembled him. M. Fauchelevent was not there."

CHAPTER VIII

TWO MEN IMPOSSIBLE TO DISCOVER

HIS rapture, great though it was, did not drive all other thoughts from Marius's mind.

While the marriage was in preparation, and while he awaited the appointed day, he made some difficult and scrupulous retrospective researches.

He owed gratitude in several quarters; he owed it for his father, and he owed it for himself.

There was Thénardier, and there was the stranger who had brought him, Marius, back to M. Gillenormand's house.

Marius was anxious to find these two men, as he did not wish to marry, be happy, and forget them, and feared lest these unpaid debts of honour might cast a shadow over his life, which would henceforth be so bright.

It was impossible for him to leave all these arrears of suffering behind him; and he wished, before he entered joyously into the future, to obtain a receipt from the past.

That Thénardier was a villain took nothing from the fact that he had saved Colonel Pontmercy. Thénardier was a scoundrel in the eyes of everybody except Marius.

And Marius, ignorant of the real scene on the battle-field of Waterloo, did not know this peculiar fact, that his father stood to Thénardier in the strange position of owing him life without owing him gratitude.

Not one of the various agents whom Marius employed succeeded in finding any trace of Thénardier. He seemed to have completely vanished. Mother Thénardier had died in prison before the trial. Thénardier and his daughter Azelma, the only two left of that lamentable group, had again plunged into the shadow. The gulf of the social unknown had silently closed above them. There could no longer

be seen on the surface even that quiver, that tremor, and those obscure concentric circles which announce that something has fallen in, and that a grappling-iron may be used.

Mother Thénardier being dead, Boulatruelle being discharged, Claquesous having disappeared, and the principal persons accused having escaped from prison, the trial of the affair for the Gorbeau House had pretty nearly failed.

The affair had remained rather dark. The assize court was compelled to satisfy itself with two subordinates, Panchaud, *alias* Printanier, *alias* Bigrenaille, and Demi-Liard, *alias* Deux Milliards, who were inconsistently condemned to fourteen years at the galleys. Penal servitude for life was the sentence passed against their accomplices who escaped.

Thénardier, the chief and ring-leader was condemned to death, also in default.

This sentence was the only thing that remained of Thénardier, casting on that buried name its lurid light, like a candle beside a bier.

Moreover, this sentence, by thrusting Thénardier back into the lowest depths, through the fear of being recaptured, added to the dense gloom which covered this man.

As for the other,— the unknown man who had saved Marius,— the researches had at first some result, then stopped short. They succeeded in finding the hackney coach which brought Marius to the Rue des Filles du Calvaire on the night of June 6.

The driver declared that, on the 6th of June, by the order of a police officer, he had stood from three o'clock in the afternoon till night-fall on the quay of the Champs Elysées, above the opening of the Great Sewer; that, at about nine in the evening, the gate of the sewer which opens upon the river bank opened; that a man came out, bearing on his shoulders another man, who appeared to be dead; that the policeman, who was watching at that point had arrested the living man, and seized the dead man; that by order of the

police, he, the coachman, had taken "all those people" into his carriage; that they drove first to the Rue des Filles du Calvaire, and deposited the dead man there; that the dead man was M. Marius, and that he, the coachman, recognized him perfectly, though he was alive "this time;" that afterward they got into his coach again; that he had whipped up his horses; that a few yards from the gate of the Archives they shouted to him to stop; that he was paid there, in the street, and discharged, and the policeman took away the other man; that he knew nothing more; and that the night was very dark.

Marius, as we said, remembered nothing. He merely remembered that he had been seized from behind by a strong hand at the moment when he fell backward in the barricade; then everything vanished from his memory.

He had only regained his senses when he was at M. Gillenormand's.

He lost himself in conjectures.

He could not doubt his own identity. But how was it that he, who had fallen in the Rue de la Chanvrerie, had been picked up by the police officer on the bank of the Seine, near the Pont des Invalides?

Some one had carried him from the quarter of the Markets to the Champs Elysées. And how? Through the sewer. Extraordinary devotion!

Some one? Who?

It was this man who Marius sought.

Of this man, who was his saviour, he could find nothing, — not a trace, not the slightest sign.

Marius, though compelled to exercise great reserve, pushed his inquiries as far as the prefecture of police, but there the information which he obtained led to no better result than elsewhere.

The prefecture knew less about the matter than the driver of the hackney coach. They had no knowledge of any arrest having taken place at the outlet of the Great Sewer on June 6.

They had received no report from any officer about this matter, which, at the prefecture, was regarded as a fable. The invention of this fable was attributed to the driver.

A driver anxious for drink money is capable of anything, — even of imagination. The fact, however, was certain, and Marius could not doubt it, unless he doubted his own identity, as we have just said.

Everything about this strange enigma was inexplicable.

That man, that mysterious man, whom the driver had seen emerge from the grating of the Great Sewer, bearing the fainting Marius on his back, and whom the police officer had arrested in the very act of saving an insurgent,— what had become of him? What had become of the officer himself.

Why had he kept silence? Had the man succeeded in making his escape? Had he bribed the officer? Why did this man give no sign of life to Marius, who owed everything to him? His disinterestedness was no less wonderful than his devotion. Why had not this man re-appeared? Perhaps he was above reward, but no man is above gratitude. Was he dead? Who was the man? What did he look like? No one could tell.

The driver replied, " The night was very dark." Basque and Nicolette, in their sudden alarm, had only looked at their young master, who was covered with blood.

The porter, whose candle had lit up Marius's tragic arrival, had alone remarked the man in question, and this was the description he gave of him: " The man was frightful."

In the hope that it might throw some light on his researches, Marius kept the blood-stained clothes which he wore when he was brought to his grandfather's.

On examining the coat, it was found that the skirt was strangely torn. A piece was wanting.

One evening, Marius was speaking in the presence of Cosette and Jean Valjean of all this singular adventure, of the countless inquiries he had made, and the fruitfulness of his efforts. Monsieur Fauchelevent's cold face offended him.

He exclaimed with a vivacity which had almost the ring of anger: —

"Yes, that man, whoever he may be, was sublime! Do you know what he did sir? He intervened like an archangel. He must have thrown himself into the thick of the battle, and have carried me away, have opened the sewer, have dragged me into it, and carried me through it. He must have travelled more than a league and a half through frightful subterranean galleries, bent over and weighed down.,— in the darkness, in the sewer, more than a league and a half, sir, with a corpse on his back! And to what end? For the sole obect of saving that corpse. And that corpse was myself. He said to himself: 'Perhaps there is still a gleam of life; I will risk my own existence for that wretched spark!' and he risked his existence not once, but twenty times! and every step was a danger. The proof is, that on leaving the sewer, he was arrested. Do you know, sir, that that man did all this, and he had no reward to expect? Who was I? An insurgent. What was I? A conquered man. Oh, if Cosette's six hundred thousand francs were mine —"

"They are yours," interrupted Jean Valjean.

"Well, then," continued Marius, "I would give them to find that man."

Jean Valjean was silent.

BOOK VI

THE SLEEPLESS NIGHT

CHAPTER I

FEBRUARY 16, 1833.

THE night of February 16 was a blessed night. Above its shadows was the open sky. It was the wedding-night of Marius and Cosette.

The day had been adorable.

It was not the grand feast dreamed of by the grandfather, — a fairy scene, with a confusion of cherubim and cupids above the heads of the bridal couple, a marriage worthy of being painted over a door,— but it was sweet and smiling.

The fashion of marriage in 1833 was not at all what it is now. France had not yet borrowed from England that supreme delicacy of carrying off one's wife, of fleeing on leaving the church, of hiding one's self as if ashamed of one's happiness, and of combining the manœuvres of a bankrupt with the raptures of the Song of Songs. We had not yet grasped to the full how chaste, how exquisite and how decent it is to jolt our paradise in a post-chaise, to intersperse the mystery with the crack of the whip; to take an inn bed for nuptial couch, and to leave behind in a commonplace chamber, at so much per night, the most sacred recollection of life, pell-mell with the interviews of the driver of the coach and the maid of the inn.

In this second half of the nineteenth century, the mayor

and his scarf, the priest and his chasuble, the law and God, are no longer sufficient; they must be eked out by the postilion of Longjumeau, blue jacket with red facings and bell buttons, a leathern badge, buckskin breeches, oaths to the Norman horses with their knotted tails, imitation lace, oilskin hat, long powdered locks, an enormous whip, and high boots. France does not yet carry elegance to such a length as to shower on the post-chaise, as the English nobility do, worn-out shoes and trodden down slippers in memory of Churchill, afterward Marborough or Malbrouck, who was assailed on his wedding-day by the anger of an aunt, which brought him good luck. Shoes and slippers do not yet form part of our nuptial celebrations; but patience, with the spread of good taste we shall yet come to it.

In 1733,— that is to say, one hundred years ago,— marriage was not performed at a smart trot.

Whimsically enough, people still imagined at that epoch that a marriage was a private and social festival; that a patriarchal banquet did not spoil a domestic solemnity; that gayety, even, even if excessive, so long as it was decent, did happiness no harm; and that, in short, it was a good and admirable thing that the fusion of those two destinies from which a family was fated to spring should begin at home, and that the household should in future have its nuptial chamber as a witness.

And people were so immodest as to marry in their own home.

The wedding took place, then, according to this new superannuated fashion, at M. Gillenormand's house.

Natural and simple as this matter of marrying is, the publication of the bans, drawing up the deeds, the mayoralty, and the church always cause some complication. Things could not be got ready before February 16.

Now — we note this detail for the pure satisfaction of being exact — it happened that the 16th was Shrove Tuesday. There were hesitations and scruples, especially on the part of Aunt Gillenormand.

"Shrove Tuesday!" exclaimed the grandfather; "so much the better. There is a proverb that,—

'Shrove Tuesday weddings are the ones
That never have ungrateful sons.'

All right. Here goes for the 16th. Do you want to put it off, Marius?"

"Certainly not," said the lover.

"Then let's be married," said the grandfather.

The marriage, therefore, took place on the 16th, in spite of the public holiday. It rained that day; but there is always a little blue patch in the sky at the service of happiness, which lovers see, even when the rest of creation is under an umbrella.

On the previous day Jean Valjean handed over to Marius, in the presence of M. Gillenormand, the five hundred and eighty-four thousand francs.

As the property was to be held in common the deeds were very simple.

Toussaint would henceforth be of no use to Jean Valjean; Cosette inherited her, and promoted her to the rank of lady's-maid.

As for Jean Valjean, a nice room was furnished expressly for him at M. Gillenormand's, and Cosette said to him so irresistibly: "Father, I implore you," that she almost made him promise that he would come and occupy it.

A few days before that fixed for the marriage, an accident happened to Jean Valjean,—he slightly injured the thumb of his right hand. It was not serious, and he had not allowed any one to poultice it, or even to look at it,—not even Cosette. Still, it compelled him to wrap his hand in a bandage and wear his arm in a sling, and this of course prevented him from signing anything. M. Gillenormand, as surrogate guardian to Cosette, took his place.

We will not take the reader either to the mayor's office or the church. Two lovers are not usually followed so far, and

we are wont to turn our back on the drama so soon as it puts a wedding-favour in its button-hole. We will content ourselves with noting an incident which, though unnoticed by the bridal party, marked the drive from the Rue des Filles du Calvaire to St. Paul's church.

The Rue St. Louis was being repaired at the time and it was blocked from the Rue du Parc Royal. Thus, it was impossible for the carriage to go direct to St. Paul's. As they were obliged to change their course, the simplest way was to turn into the boulevard. One of the guests observed that as it was Shrove Tuesday, there would be a crowd of vehicles. "Why so?" asked M. Gillenormand. "On account of the masks." "Capital!" said the grandfather; "we will go that way. These young people are going to be married. They are about to see the serious side of life. A bit of masquerade will be a good preparation for it."

They turned into the boulevard. The first of the wedding-coaches contained Cosette and Aunt Gillenormand, M. Gillenormand and Jean Valjean. Marius, still separated from his bride according to custom, was in the second. The nuptial procession, on turning out of the Rue des Filles du Calvaire, became entangled in a long file of vehicles reaching from the Madeleine to the Bastille, and from the Bastille to the Madeleine. Masks abounded on the boulevard. Though it rained every now and then, Harlequin, Pantaloon, and Clown persisted. In the good humour of that winter of 1833, Paris disguised itself as Venice. We do not see such Shrove Tuesdays nowadays. As everything existing is a widespread Carnival, there is no Carnival left.

The sidewalks were thronged with pedestrians, and the windows with curious gazers. The terraces crowning the peristyles of the theatres were lined with spectators. In addition to the masks, they watched the procession (peculiar to Shrove Tuesday as to Longchamp) of vehicles of every description,— furniture vans, curricles, cabs, carts, marching in order, rigorously riveted to each other by police regulations, and, as it were. running on rails. Any one who happens to

be in one of these vehicles is at once spectator and spectacle. Policemen standing at each side of the boulevard kept in place these two interminable parallel lines, moving in contrary directions, and watched that nothing should interfere with that double current, one flowing up stream, the other down,— one toward the Chausée d'Antin, the other toward the Faubourg St. Antoine. The escutcheoned carriages of Peers of France and Ambassadors held the middle of the road, coming and going freely. Certain magnificent and joyous processions — notably that of the fat ox — had the same privilege. In this Parisian gayety, England cracked his whip; for the post-chaise of Lord Seymour, at which a popular nickname was hurled, passed by with a great noise.

In the double file, along which Municipal Guards galloped like sheep-dogs, honest family arks, crowded with great-aunts and grandmothers, displayed at their windows, healthy groups of children in disguise, clowns of seven, and Columbines of six,— ravishing little creatures, feeling that they formed an official part of the public merriment, imbued with the dignity of their harlequinade, and displaying the gravity of functionaries.

From time to time a block occurred somewhere in the procession of vehicles; one or other of the two side files stopped until the knot was untied (one vehicle delayed was enough to paralyze the entire line), then they started again.

The wedding-carriages were in the file going toward the Bastille on the right-hand side of the boulevard. Opposite the Rue du Pont-aux-Choux there was a stoppage. Almost at the same moment the file on the other side, proceeding toward the Madeleine, stopped too. At this point in the procession there was a carriage-load of masks.

These carriages, or, to speak more correctly, these cart-loads of masks, are a familiar sight to Parisians. If they failed on a Shrove Tuesday or at mid-lent, it would be taken in bad part; and people would say: "There's something behind it. Probably we are going to have a change of ministry." A heap of Cassandras, Harlequins and Columbines jolted by

high above the heads of the passers; all sorts of grotesques, from the Turk to the savage; Hercules supporting a marchioness; fish-fags who would make Rabelais stop his ears, as well as Mænads who would make Aristophanes blush; tow perukes, pink fleshings, swell hats, pantaloons, spectacles, shouts directed to pedestrians, arms akimbo, bold postures, naked shoulders, masked faces, and immodesty unmuzzled; a chaos of effronteries driven by a coachman crowned with flowers,—such was this institution.

Greece felt the want of Thespis's cart, and France needs Vadé's cab.

All may be parodied, even parody. The Saturnalia, that grimace of antique beauty, ends by exaggeration upon exaggeration with Shrove Tuesday; and the Bacchanal, formerly crowned with vine-leaves, bathed in sunshine, and displaying her marble breasts in a divine semi-nudity, which is now flabby under the drenched rags of the north, has at last come to be known as Jack-Pudding.

The tradition of coach-loads of masks dates back to the oldest times of the monarchy. The accounts of Louis XI. allow the palace steward "twenty sous Fournois for three coaches of mascarades at the cross-roads." In our day, these noisy loads of creatures generally ride in some old fly of which they encumber the roof, or overwhelm with their tumultuous group a hired landau with the hood thrown back. There are twenty where there is only room for six. They cling to the seat, to the rumble, to the hood, to the pole, and they even straddle across the lamps. They stand, sit, lie, cross-legged, or with hanging legs. The women occupy the knees of the men, and their wild pyramid is seen for a long distance over the heads of the crowd. These vehicles form mountains of merriment in the midst of the mob. Collé, Panard, and Piron flow from them, enriched with slang. The fish-fag's catechism is expectorated from above upon the people. This cab, which has grown colossal through its burden, has an air of conquest. Uproar sits in front and confusion worse confounded rides behind. People shout, sing, yell, and writhe

with happiness in it; gayety roars; sarcasm flashes; joviality is flaunted like a red flag; two nags drag farce expanded into an apotheosis! it is the triumphal car of Laughter, — a laughter too cynical to be frank. In truth, this laughter is suspicious. Its mission is to prove to the Parisians the existence of Carnival.

These fish-fag vehicles, in which some strange darkness is perceptible, cause the philosopher to reflect. There is something of the government in them. You lay your finger there on a curious affinity between public men and public women.

It is certainly a sorry thought that heaped-up turpitudes should give a sum total of gayety; that people should be amused by piling ignominy upon opprobrium; that espionage, acting as a caryatid to prostitution, should amuse the mob at the same time that it affronts it; that the crowd should love to see this monstrous living pile of spangled rags, half ordure, half light, roll by on four wheels barking and singing; that they should clap their hands at this glory compounded of all shame; and that no festival should be possible for the people unless the police parade in the midst of these twenty-headed hydras of joy. Most sad this certainly is. But what is to be done about it? These tumbrels of beribboned and beflowered slime are insulted and forgiven by the laughter of the public. The laughter of all is the accomplice of universal degradation. Certain unhealthy festivals disintegrate the people and convert them into the populace; and populaces, like tyrants, require buffoons. The king has his jester, and the populace its Merry-Andrew. Paris is a great, mad city, whenever it is not a great, sublime city. The carnival there is political. Paris, let us confess it, willingly allows infamy to furnish it with a comedy. She only asks of her masters — when she has masters — one thing: "Paint the mud for me." Rome was of the same humour. She loved Nero; and Nero was a Titantic longshoreman.[1]

Accident ordained, as we have just said, that one of these

[1] A favourite character for fancy balls.

shapeless groups of masked men and women lugged about in a vast barouche, should halt on the left of the boulevard, while the wedding-party halted on the right. The carriage-load of masks caught sight, across the road, of the carriage in which was the bride.

"Hullo!" said a mask, "a wedding."

"A mock wedding," retorted another; "we are the genuine article."

And, as they were too far off to address the wedding-party, and as they also feared the interference of the police, the two masks looked elsewhere.

The whole carriage-load had plenty of work a moment after, for the mob began to hoot at them, which is the crowd's caress to masquerades; and the two masks who had just spoken were obliged to face the mob with their comrades, and found the whole stock of projectiles from the arsenal of the fish-markets scarcely sufficient to reply to the enormous yells from the popular throat. A frightful exchange of metaphors took place between the masks and the crowd.

Meantime, two other masks in the same carriage,— a Spaniard with an exaggerated nose, an elderly air, and enormous black mustaches, and a thin and very youthful fish-wife, wearing a half mask,— had also noticed the wedding, and while their companions and the spectators were insulting each other, held a conversation in a low voice.

Their aside was covered by the tumult, and was lost in it. Showers of rain had drenched the open carriage. The winds of February are not warm; as the fish-wife answered the Spaniard, she shivered, laughed, and coughed.

This was the dialogue: —

"Look here."

"What is it, dad?"

"Do you see that old cove?"

"What old cove?"

"There in the first go-cart, in the wedding-party, on the side next us."

"With his arm in a sling?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"I'm sure I know him."

"Ah!"

"May my scrag be cut, and I never have said 'you,' 'thou,' or 'I' in my life if I do not twig that bloke."

"To-day Paris is Pantin." [1]

"Can you see the bride if you stoop down?"

"No."

"And the bridegroom?"

"There is no bridegroom in that trap."

"Nonsense!"

"Unless it be that other old cove."

"Come, try to get a look at the bride by stooping very low."

"I can't."

"No matter; I know that old bloke with the lame paw, that's dead sure."

"And what good will it do you, your knowing him?"

"I don't know. You never can tell!"

"I don't care a hang for any old bloke, I don't."

"I know him."

"Know him as much as you like."

"How the deuce does he come to be at the wedding?"

"Why, we are there too."

"Where does the wedding come from?"

"How do I know?"

"Listen."

"Well, what is it?"

"You must do something."

"What is it?"

"Get out of our trap and nose that wedding."

"What for?"

"To find out where it goes, and what it is. Hurry up! jump down; leg it, my girl, for you are young."

[1] Slang term for Paris.

"I can't leave the carriage."

"Why not?"

"I am hired."

"Oh, the devil!"

"I owe the prefecture a full day's work."

"That's true."

"If I leave the carriage, the first policeman who sees me will arrest me. You know that well enough."

"Yes, I know."

"I am bought by the High Cockalorums [the government], for the day."

"No matter. That old fellow bothers me."

"Old men bother you! Yet you are no spring chicken."

"He is in the first carriage."

"Well?"

"In the bride's trap."

"What of it?"

"So he is the father."

"What do I care?"

"I tell you he is the father."

"He's not the only father."

"Listen."

"Well, what?"

"I can't go out unless I am masked. Here I am hidden; no one knows I am here. But to-morrow there will be no more masks. It is Ash Wednesday. I run a risk of being nailed. I must crawl back to my hole. But you are free."

"Not quite."

"Well, more than I am, anyhow."

"Well, what then?"

"You must try and find out where that wedding-party goes."

"Goes?"

"Yes."

"Oh, I know."

"Where is it going, then?"

"To the Cadran Bleu."

"But it is not in that direction."

"Well, then, to La Rapée."

"Or somewhere else."

"They can do as they like,— weddings are free."

"That is not the point. I tell you that you must try and find out for me what that wedding is, who that old bloke belongs to, and where those folks come from."

"Oh, I say, ain't you smart! It's so jolly easy to find out a week afterward where a wedding-party has gone that passed through Paris on Shrove Tuesday. A needle in a bundle of hay. It ain't possible!"

"No matter, you must try. Do you hear, Azelma?"

The two files resumed their movement on both sides of the boulevard, in opposite directions, and the carriage of masks lost sight of the bride's "go-cart."

CHAPTER II

JEAN VALJEAN STILL HAS HIS ARM IN A SLING

TO realize one's dream,— to whom is this granted? There must be elections for this in heaven; we are all unconscious candidates; the angels vote. Cosette and Marius had been elected.

Cosette, both at the mayor's office and at church, was brilliant and touching. Toussaint, helped by Nicolette, had dressed her.

Cosette wore her dress of Binche lace over a white silk skirt, a veil of English point, a necklace of fine pearls, and a wreath of orange blossoms; all this was white, and in this whiteness she was radiant. It was an exquisite candour expanding and becoming transfigured in light. She looked like a virgin on the point of becoming a goddess.

Marius's beautiful hair was shining and perfumed; here

and there under the thick curls were pale lines,— the scars of the barricade.

The grandfather, superb, with head erect, combining in his toilet and his manners all the elegances of the time of Barras, gave his arm to Cosette. He took the place of Jean Valjean, who, his arm being still in a sling, could not give his hand to the bride.

Jean Valjean, dressed all in black, followed them with a smile.

"Monsieur Fauchelevent," said the grandfather, "this is a glorious day. I vote for the end of afflictions and cares. Henceforth there must be no sorrow anywhere. By heaven, I decree joy! Misfortune has no right to exist. It is a disgrace to the blue of heaven that there should be unhappy men. Evil does not come from man, who, at bottom, is good. All human miseries have their capital and central government in hell, otherwise known as the Tuileries of the devil. There now, I am making demagogic remarks. For my part, I have no political opinions left; and all I stick to is, Let all men be rich,— that is to say, gay."

When, at the end of all the ceremonies,— after pronouncing before the mayor and before the priest every possible form of consent, after signing the register at the city hall and in the sacristy, after exchanging rings, after kneeling side by side under the canopy of white moire in the smoke of the censer,— they arrived, hand-in-hand, admired and envied by all (Marius in black, she in white), preceded by the beadle with the epaulets of a colonel, striking the flag-stones with his halbert, between two rows of dazzled spectators, at the church doors, which were thrown wide open, ready to get into their carriage,— and all was over. Cosette could not yet believe that it was real. She looked at Marius, she looked at the crowd, she looked at heaven; it seemed as if she were afraid of awaking, her astonished and anxious air adding something strangely enchanting to her beauty. Going home they both rode in the same carriage, Marius seated by Cosette, M. Gillenormand and Jean Valjean opposite.

Aunt Gillenormand had fallen back a step, and was in the second carriage.

"Well, children," said the grandfather, "here you are now, a baron and a baroness, with thirty thousand livres a year."

And Cosette, nestling close to Marius, caressed his ear with the angelic whisper: "It is true, then. My name is Marius, and I am Madame Thou."

These two beings were resplendent. They had reached the irrevocable and irrecoverable moment,— the dazzling point of intersection of all youth and all joy. They realized Jean Prouvaire's verses,— together they did not count forty years. It was marriage sublimated; these two children were two lilies. They did not see each other, but contemplated each other. Cosette saw Marius with a halo round his head; Marius saw Cosette upon an altar. And upon that altar, and beneath that halo, the two apotheoses blending in the background, behind a cloud for Cosette, in a flash of light for Marius, there was the ideal thing, the real thing, the meeting-place of kisses and of dreams,— the nuptial pillow.

All the torments they had gone through returned to them in intoxication. It seemed to them as if their griefs, their sleepless nights, their tears, their anguish, their terrors, and their despair, converted into caresses and sunbeams, rendered more charming still the charming hour which was approaching; and that their sorrows were so many handmaidens who performed the toilet of joy. How good it is to have suffered! Their misfortunes made a halo round their happiness. The long agony of their love ended in an ascension.

There was the same enchantment in these two souls,— tinged with voluptuousness in Marius and with modesty in Cosette. They said to each other in a whisper: "We will go back and look at our little garden in the Rue Plumet." The folds of Cosette's dress lay across Marius's feet.

Such a day is an ineffable mixture of dream and reality. We possess and we suppose. We still have time before us to divine. It is an indescribable emotion on that day to be

at midday and dream of midnight. The delights of those two hearts overflowed upon the crowd, and imparted joy to the passers-by.

People stopped in the Rue St. Antoine, in front of St. Paul's to look through the carriage window at the orange flowers trembling on Cosette's head.

Then the wedding party returned to the Rue des Filles du Calvaire,— home. Marius, side by side with Cosette, ascended, triumphant and radiant, that staircase up which he had been dragged in a dying state. The beggars collected before the gate, and, dividing the contents of their purses, blessed them. There were flowers everywhere. The house was no less fragrant than the church: after the incense, roses. They fancied they could hear voices singing in infinitude; they had God in their hearts; destiny appeared to them like a ceiling of stars; they saw above their heads the light of dawn. Marius gazed at Cosette's charming bare arm and the rosy visions vaguely seen through the lace of her bodice; and Cosette, catching Marius's glance, blushed up to her eyes.

A number of old friends of the Gillenormand family had been invited; they thronged round Cosette, outvying each other in calling her Baroness.

The officer, Théodule Gillenormand, now a captain, had come from Chartres, where he was stationed, to be present at his cousin Pontmercy's marriage. Cosette did not recognize him.

He, on his side, accustomed to be thought a fine fellow by the women, remembered Cosette no more than any other girl.

"How right I was in not believing that story of the lancer's!" said Father Gillenormand to himself.

Cosette had never been more affectionate to Jean Valjean. She was in unison with Father Gillenormand; while he turned his joy into aphorisms and maxims she breathed forth love and beauty like a perfume. Happiness wishes everybody else to be happy.

As she talked to Jean Valjean she recalled inflections of

her voice belonging to the time when she was a little girl. She caressed him with a smile.

A banquet had been prepared in the dining-room.

An illumination *à giorno* is the necessary seasoning of great joy. Mist and darkness are not accepted by the happy. They do not consent to be black. Night, yes; darkness, no. If there be no sun one must be made. The dining-room was a garden of gay things. In the centre, above the white and glittering table, hung a Venetian chandelier, with all sorts of coloured birds — blue, violet, red, and green — perched among the candles; round the chandelier were girandoles, and on the walls were scones with three and four branches; mirrors, glasses, crystal, plate, china, crockery, gold, and silver,— all was sparkling and bright. The spaces between the candelabra were filled in with bouquets, so that where there was not a light there was a flower.

In the anteroom three violins and a flute played softly quartets by Haydn.

Jean Valjean had seated himself on a chair in the drawing-room, behind the door, which, being thrown back, almost concealed him. A few minutes before they sat down to table, Cosette came, as if inspired by a sudden whim, made him a low courtesy, spreading out her wedding-dress with both hands, and with a tenderly mocking look asked: —

"Father, are you satisfied?"

"Yes," said Jean Valjean, "I am content."

"Well, then, laugh."

Jean Valjean began to laugh. A few minutes later, Basque came in to announce that dinner was served.

The guests, preceded by M. Gillenormand, with Cosette on his arm, entered the dining-room, and collected round the table in proper order.

There was a large easy-chair on either side of the bride,— one for M. Gillenormand, the other for Jean Valjean. M. Gillenormand seated himself. The other chair remained empty. All looked round for Monsieur Fauchelevent. He was no longer there.

M. Gillenormand hailed Basque.

"Do you know where M. Fauchelevent is?"

"Yes sir, I do," replied Basque. "Monsieur Fauchelevent requested me to tell you, sir, that his hand pained him, and that he could not dine with the Baron and Baroness. He begged to be excused, but would call to-morrow. He has just left."

This empty chair chilled the effusion of the wedding-feast for a moment. But though M. Fauchelevent was absent, M. Gillenormand was present, and the grandfather shone for two. He declared that M. Fauchelevent was quite right to go to bed early if he were in pain, but that it was only a small hurt. This declaration was sufficient. Besides, what is one dark corner in such a flood of joy? Cosette and Marius were in one of those selfish and blessed moments, when people possess no other faculty than that of perceiving joy. And then, M. Gillenormand had an idea. "By Jupiter! this chair is empty. Come hither, Marius. Your aunt, though she has a right to you, will excuse you. This chair is for you. It is legal, and it is pretty,—Fortunatus by the side of Fortunata." All the guests applauded. Marius took Jean Valjean's place by Cosette's side, and things were so arranged that Cosette, who was at first saddened by the absence of Jean Valjean, ended by being pleased at it. From the moment that Marius became his substitute, Cosette would not have regretted God. She set her sweet little white satin-slippered foot upon Marius's foot.

When the easy-chair was occupied, M. Fauchelevent was effaced; and nothing was wanting.

And, five minutes later, all the guests were laughing, from one end of the table to the other, in utter forgetfulness.

At dessert, M. Gillenormand rose, with a glass of champagne in his hand, only half full, so that the palsy of his ninety-two years might not cause it to overflow, and proposed the health of the bridal pair.

"You shall not escape two sermons," he exclaimed.

"This morning you had one from the priest, and this evening you shall have one from grandpapa. Listen to me; I will give you a piece of advice: Adore each other. I do not beat about the bush, I go straight to the point: be happy! There are no sages in creation but the turtle-doves. Philosophers say, 'Moderate your joys;' but I say, 'Give free vent to your joys.' Love like fiends. Be fools. The philosophers are in their dotage. I should like to stuff their philosophy down their throats. Can we have too many perfumes, too many open rose-buds, too many singing nightingales, too many green leaves, and too much dawn in life? Can we love one another too much? Can we please one another too much? Take care, Estella, you are too pretty. Take care, Nemorino, you are too handsome! What jolly nonsense! Can people enchant each other, coax each other, and charm each other too much? Can they be too much alive? Can they be too happy? Moderate your joys,— oh, stuff! Down with the philosophers! Wisdom consists in rejoicing. Rejoice; let us rejoice. Are we happy because we are good, or are we good because we are happy? Is the Sancy diamond called the Sancy because it belonged to Harlay de Sancy, or because it weighs one hundred and six carats? I do not know. Life is full of such problems: the important point is to have both the Sancy and happiness. Be happy without picking flaws. Let us blindly obey the sun. What is the sun? It is love. And when I say love, I mean woman. Ah, ah! woman is omnipotent. Ask that demagogue, Marius, if he is not the slave of that little tyrant, Cosette. And gladly too, the coward. Woman! There is no Robespierre who can hold his own. Woman reigns. I am no longer royalist save toward that royalty. What is Adam? The kingdom of Eve. No '89 for Eve. There was the royal sceptre surmounted by the *fleur-de-lis*, there was the imperial sceptre surmounted by a globe, there was Charlemagne's sceptre of iron, and the sceptre of Louis the Great, which was of gold,— the Revolution twisted them between its thumb and forefinger like paltry straws; they are done

for, they are broken, they lie on the ground; there is no sceptre left. But just make me a revolution against that little embroidered handkerchief which smells of patchouly! I should like to see you do it. Try. Why is it so solid? Because it is a mere rag. Ah! you are the nineteenth century. Well, what then? We were the eighteenth! — and we were as foolish as you. Do not suppose that you have effected any vast change in the world because your epidemic is called cholera morbus, and your jig a cachucha. After all, woman must always be loved. I defy you to get out of that. Those devils are our angels. Yes; love, woman, and a kiss form a circle from which I defy you to escape; and for my own part I should be very glad to re-enter it. Who among you has seen the planet Venus, the great coquette of the abyss, the Célimène of ocean, rise in infinite space, calming all below her, looking down on the waves like any woman? The ocean is a rude Alcestis. Yet, grumble as he may, when Venus appears, he is forced to smile. That brute-beast submits. So do all. Anger, tempest, thunderbolts, foam up to the very ceiling: a woman comes upon the scene, a star arises,— down on your faces in the dust! Marius was fighting six months ago; to-day he is married. That is well done. Yes, Marius, yes, Cosette, you are right. Exist boldly one for the other, make us burst with rage because we cannot do the same, idolize each other. Take in both your beaks the little straws of felicity which exist on the earth, and make of them a nest for life. By jove! to love, to be loved,— what a splendid miracle when a man is young! Do not suppose that you invented it. I too have dreamed, and thought, and sighed; I too have had a moonlit soul. Love is a child six thousand years old. Love has a right to a long white beard. Methuselah is a baby beside Cupid. For sixty centuries, men and women have got out of the scrape by loving. The devil, who is cunning, took to hating man; but man, who is more cunning still, took to loving woman. In this way, he did himself more good than the devil did him harm. That trick was discovered at the same time with the earthly paradise.

My friends, the invention is old, but it is bran-new. Take advantage of it. Be Daphnis and Chloe, until you become Philemon and Baucis. Manage so that, when you are together, you may want for nothing, and that Cosette may be the sun to Marius, and Marius the whole world to Cosette. Cosette, let your fine weather be your husband's smiles; Marius, let your wife's tears be your rain. And never let it rain in your household. You have cribbed the lucky number in the lottery,— consecrated love. You have drawn a prize; keep it carefully, put it under lock and key, do not squander it, adore each other, and a fig for the rest. Believe what I tell you. It is good common-sense. Good sense cannot lie. Be a religion to each other. Every man has his own way of adoring God. But, zounds! the best way to adore God is to love one's wife. 'I love you'— that is my catechism. Whoever loves is orthodox. The favourite oath of Henri IV. places sanctity somewhere between guzzling and intoxication. *Ventre Saint Gris!* I do not belong to the religion of that oath. Woman is left out in it. That surprises me on the part of Henri IV.'s oath. My friends, long live woman! I am old, they say; it is amazing how much I feel like being young. I should like to go and listen to the bagpipes in the woods. Those children yonder, who succeed in being both beautiful and contented, intoxicate me. I am quite ready to marry if anybody will have me. It is impossible to imagine that God has made us for anything else than this: to idolize, to bill and coo, to preen our plumage, to be pigeons, to be cocks, to caress our loves from morning til night, to see ourselves reflected in our little wife, to be proud, to be triumphant, and to cut a dash,— such is the object of life. That, without offence, is what we thought in our day, when we were young. Oh, heavens! What charming women there were in those days, what ducks, and what daisies! I had my fling among them. So love each other. If we did not love each other, I really do not see what use there would be in having any springtime; and, for my own part, I should pray the good God to lock up all the fine things he

shows us, to take them from us, and to put back in his box the flowers, the birds, and the pretty girls. My children, receive the blessing of an old man."

The evening was lively, gay, and pleasant. The grandfather's sovereign good-humour was the key-note to the whole festivity, and every one caught the spirit of that almost centenarian cordiality. There was a little dancing, and a good deal of laughter; it was a merry wedding. That worthy old fellow "Once on a time" might well have been invited. However, he was present in the person of Father Gillenormand.

There was a tumult, and then silence.

The married couple disappeared.

Soon after midnight the Gillenormand mansion became a temple.

Here we pause. An angel stands on the threshold of wedding-nights, smiling, with his finger on his lip.

The soul is lost in contemplation before that sanctuary where the celebration of love is held.

There must be rays of light above such houses. The joy which they contain must escape through the walls in brilliancy, and vaguely irradiate the darkness. It is impossible that this sacred and fatal festival should not shed a celestial radiance into infinitude. Love is the sublime crucible in which the fusion of man and woman takes place; the one being, the triple being, the final being, the human trinity, issue from it. This birth of two souls in one must move darkness itself. The lover is the priest; the transported virgin shrinks in awe. Something of that joy ascends to God. Where true marriage is,— that is to say, where love exists,— the ideal enters in. A nuptial couch makes a nook of dawn in the darkness. If it were given to the eye of flesh to see the terrible and charming visions of higher life, it is probable that we should see the forms of night, unknown winged beings, blue wayfarers of the invisible, bending down,— a throng of sombre heads, round the luminous house, — satisfied, showering blessings, pointing out to each other the virgin bride, in her sweet alarm, a reflection of human

felicity on their divine countenances. If at that supreme hour the wedded pair, dazzled with pleasure, and believing themselves alone, were to listen, they would hear in their chamber a confused rustling of wings. Perfect happiness implies fellowship with angels. This dark little room has all heaven for its roof. When two mouths, made sacred by love, approach to create, it is impossible that there is not a tremor throughout the immense mystery of the stars above that ineffable kiss.

These felicities are the genuine ones. There is no joy beyond these joys. Love is the only ecstasy. All others weep.

To love or to have loved, that is enough. Ask nothing more after that. There is no other pearl to be found in the dark folds of life. To love is a consummation.

CHAPTER III

THE INSEPARABLE

WHAT had become of Jean Valjean?

Directly after he had laughed, at Cosette's loving command, as no one was paying any attention to him, Jean Valjean rose, and reached the anteroom unnoticed. It was the same room which he had entered, eight months before, black with mud and blood and gunpowder, bringing back the grandson to the grandfather. The old wainscoting was garlanded with flowers and leaves; the musicians were seated on the sofa upon which Marius had been laid. Basque, in black coat, knee-breeches, white stockings, and white gloves, was placing wreaths of roses round each of the dishes that was to be served up. Jean Valjean showed him his arm in its sling, bade him explain his absence, and quitted the house.

The long windows of the dining-room looked out on the

street. Valjean stood for some minutes motionless in the darkness under those radiant windows. He listened. The confused sounds of the banquet reached his ears. He heard the grandfather's loud and magisterial tones, the violins, the clatter of plates and glasses, the bursts of laughter; and through all that gay uproar he distinguished Cosette's soft, happy voice.

He left the Rue des Filles du Calvaire and returned to the Rue de l'Homme Armé.

To reach home, he went along the Rue St. Louis, the Rue Culture-St.-Catherine, and the Blancs Manteaux; it was a little longer, but it was the road by which he had been accustomed to come with Cosette for the last three months in order to avoid the crowd and the mud in the Rue Vieille du Temple.

This road, over which Cosette had passed, excluded the idea of any other course for him.

Jean Valjean returned home, lit his candle, and went upstairs. The apartments were empty. Not even Toussaint was there now. Jean Valjean's footsteps made more noise in the rooms than usual. All the wardrobes stood open. He entered Cosette's room. There were no sheets on the bed. The pillow, made of ticking, without a case or lace, was laid on the blankets folded at the foot of the bed, in which no one was to sleep again. All the small feminine articles which Cosette loved had been removed; only the heavy furniture and the four walls remained. Toussaint's bed was also unmade. The only bed made up and seeming to expect an occupant was his own.

He looked at the walls, closed some of the wardrobe drawers, and went and came from one room to another.

Then he returned to his own room and placed his candle on a table.

He had taken his arm out of the sling, and used his right hand as if he had no pain in it.

He went up to his bed, and his eyes fell — was it by accident, or was it purposely? — on the *inseparable,* of which

Cosette had been jealous, on the little valise which never left him. On June 4, when he came to the Rue de l'Homme Armé, he laid it on a round table by his bed. He now went to this table with some eagerness, took the key out of his pocket, and opened the portmanteau.

He slowly drew out of it the clothes in which, ten years before, Cosette had left Montfermeil; first, the little black gown, then the black neckerchief, then the stout shoes, which Cosette could almost have worn still, so small was her foot; next, the petticoat, then the apron, with pockets, and lastly, the woollen stockings. These stockings, which still showed the shape of a dainty little leg, were no longer than Jean Valjean's hand. All these articles were black. It was he who took them to Montfermeil for her. He laid each article on the bed as he took it out. He mused and he remembered. It was in winter, in a very cold December; she shivered, half-naked under her rags; her poor feet were quite red in her wooden shoes. He, Jean Valjean, had made her take off these rags and put on this mourning garb. Her mother must have been pleased in her grave to see her daughter wearing mourning for her, and, above all, to see that she was well clothed and was warm. He thought of that forest of Montfermeil; they had traversed it together, Cosette and he; he thought of what the weather was, of the leafless trees, of the wood without birds, and the sky without sun; it mattered not, it was charming. He arranged the little clothes on the bed, the handkerchief next the petticoat, the stockings along with the shoes, the apron beside the dress, and he looked at them, one after the other. She was not much taller than that, she had her big doll in her arms, she had put her louis d'or in the pocket of this apron, she laughed, they walked along hand-in-hand, she had no one in the world but him.

Then his venerable white head fell on the bed, his stoical old heart broke; his face was buried in Cosette's clothes, and had any one passed upstairs at that moment he would have heard dreadful sobs.

CHAPTER IV

IMMORTALE JECUR.[1]

THE old, terrible struggle, of which we have already seen several phases, began again.

Jacob wrestled with the angel only one night. Alas! how many times have we seen Jean Valjean fighting hand-to-hand in the darkness with his conscience, and struggling frantically against it!

Extraordinary struggle! Sometimes the foot slips; again, the ground gives way. How many times had that conscience, clinging to the right, strangled and overthrown him! How many times had inexorable truth set its knee upon his breast! How many times had he, felled by the light, begged for mercy! How many times had that implacable spark kindled within and above him by the bishop, dazzled him when he by force would fain have been blind! How many times had he risen again in the contest, clung to the rock, supported himself by a sophistry, and been dragged in the dust, now getting the upper hand of his conscience, and again, overthrown by it! How many times, after a slip, after some specious and treacherous reasoning of egotism, had he heard his angry conscience cry in his ear: "A trip! scoundrel!" How many times had his refractory thoughts expired convulsively, under the evidence of duty! Resistance to God! Funereal sweats. How many secret wounds, which he alone felt bleeding! How many bruises in his lamentable existence! How many times had he risen, bleeding, bruised, crushed, enlightened, despair in his heart, serenity in his soul! and, though vanquished, he felt himself the victor. And having dislocated, tortured, and broken him, his conscience stood over him, terrible, tranquil, and luminous, and said to him: "Now, go in peace!"

[1] See the story of Prometheus.

What a mournful peace, alas! after so dark a contest.

That night, however, Jean Valjean felt that he was fighting his last battle.

An agonizing question presented itself.

Predestinations are not all direct: they do not open up in a straight line before the predestined man; they have blind alleys, zigzags, awkward turns, and perplexing cross-roads offering a choice between various ways. Jean Valjean had halted at the most dangerous of these cross-roads.

He had reached the final crossing of good and evil. That gloomy intersection lay before his eyes. This time again, as had already happened in other painful interludes, two roads opened before him, one tempting, the other terrifying. Which should he take?

He was counselled to the one which terrified him by the mysterious index finger which we all see every time that we fix our eyes upon the darkness.

Jean Valjean had once again to choose between the terrible haven and the smiling snare.

Is it true, then, the soul may be healed, destiny never? What a frightful thing,— an incurable destiny!

The question which presented itself was this: How was Jean Valjean going to behave with regard to the happiness of Cosette and Marius? That happiness he had willed, he had made; he had himself plunged it into his vitals; and now as he gazed at it he felt the sort of satisfaction which a cutler might feel who recognized his trade-mark upon a knife when he drew it reeking from his own breast.

Cosette had Marius; Marius possessed Cosette. They had everything, even wealth. And it was his doing.

But, now that this happiness existed, now that it was there, how was he, Jean Valjean, to treat it? Should he force himself upon it? Should he treat it as if it belonged to him? Doubtless, Cosette belonged to another; but should he, Jean Valjean, retain of Cosette all that he could retain? Should he remain the sort of father, scarcely seen but respected, which he had hitherto been; should he introduce

himself quietly into Cosette's house; should he carry his past to that future without saying a word; should he present himself there as one having a right, and should he sit down, veiled, at that luminous hearth? Should he take the hands of those innocent creatures in his two tragic hands with a smile; should he warm at the peaceful fire of the Gillenormand drawing-room the feet which dragged after them the degrading shadow of the law; should he join company with Cosette and Marius; should he render the obscurity on his brow and the cloud on theirs heavier yet; should he join his catastrophe to their two felicities; should he continue to be silent,— in a word, should he be the ominous mute of destiny beside those two happy beings?

We must be accustomed to fatality and to meeting it before we dare to raise our eyes when certain questions appear to us in their terrible nakedness. Good or evil hide behind this stern note of interrogation. "What will you do?" asks the sphinx.

Jean Valjean had been tried and tested. He looked the sphinx in the eye.

He studied the pitiless problem from all sides.

Cosette, that charming existence, was the raft of this shipwrecked man. What should he do? Cling to it or let it go?

If he clung to it, he emerged from disaster, he returned to sunshine, he let the bitter water drip from his clothes and his hair,— he was saved, he lived.

Suppose he let it go?

Then the bottomless gulf.

He thus held sad counsel with his thoughts; or, to speak more correctly, he fought. He rebelled furiously within himself, at one moment against his will, at another against his conviction.

It was fortunate for Jean Valjean that he was able to weep. That enlightened him, perhaps. Still, the beginning was fierce. A tempest, more furious than that which had formerly driven him to Arras, was let loose within him.

The past came back to him face to face with the present; he compared them and sobbed. The sluice of tears once opened, the despairing man writhed.

He felt himself stopped short.

Alas! in the deadly fight between our egotism and our duty, when we thus retreat inch by inch before our incommutable ideal, bewildered, desperate, exasperated at having to yield, disputing the ground, hoping for possible flight, seeking to escape, what a sudden and sinister resistance the foot of a wall behind us offers!

To feel the sacred shadow which forms an obstacle!

The inexorable invisible, what a crushing force!

Thus we have never done with conscience. Take your choice, Brutus; take your choice, Cato. It is bottomless, being God. You may cast into this pit the labour of your whole life, your fortune, your wealth, your success, your liberty or your country, your comfort, your repose, your joy. More! more! more! empty the vase! tip the urn! you must end by casting in your heart.

There is a tun like this somewhere in the midst of the hells of old.

Are we not pardonable if we refuse at last? Can that which is inexhaustible have any claim? Are not endless chains too much for human strength? Who then, would blame Sisyphus and Jean Valjean for saying, "It is enough!"

The obedience of matter is limited by friction. Is there no limit to the obedience of the soul? If perpetual motion be impossible, can perpetual sacrifice be required?

The first step is nothing; it is the last that is hard. What was the Champmathieu affair compared to Cosette's marriage and what it entailed? What is a return to the hulks compared to entrance into nothingness?

Oh, first step to be descended, how gloomy thou art! Oh, second step, how black thou art!

How could he help turning away his head now?

Martyrdom is sublimation,— corrosive sublimation. It is torture which consecrates. A man may consent to it for the

first hour; he sits on the throne of red-hot iron, he puts the crown of red-hot iron upon his head, he accepts the red-hot globe, he takes the red-hot sceptre, but he has still to don the mantle of flame; and is there not a moment when the miserable flesh revolts and the man abdicates from torment?

At length Jean Valjean entered the calmness of prostration.

He weighed, he pondered, he considered the alternatives, the mysterious balance of light and shadow.

Should he force his galleys on these two radiant children, or himself consummate his irremediable destruction? On one side was the sacrifice of Cosette, on the other his own.

Which solution did he accept?

What decision did he make? What was the final mental answer to the incorruptible interrogatory of fate? What door did he resolve to open? Which side of his life did he make up his mind to close and condemn? Amid all those unfathomable precipices that surrounded him, which did he choose? What extremity did he accept? To which of these gulfs did he nod his head?

His confusing revery lasted all night.

He remained there till day-break in the same position, bent double over the bed, prostrate beneath the enormity of fate, crushed perhaps, alas! his fists clinched, his arms stretched at right angles like a man who had been crucified unnailed, and thrown face downward on the ground. He remained thus for twelve hours,— the twelve hours of a long winter's night,— frozen, without raising his head or uttering a syllable. He was motionless as a corpse, while his thoughts wallowed on the earth or soared aloft, now like the hydra, and now like the eagle. To see him thus, you would have thought him dead. All at once he started convulsively, and his mouth, pressed to Cosette's clothes, kissed them; then one saw that he was alive.

One? Who? For Jean Valjean was alone, and there was no one there.

The *One* who is in the darkness.

BOOK VII

THE LAST DROP IN THE CUP

CHAPTER I

THE SEVENTH CIRCLE AND THE EIGHTH HEAVEN

THE day after a wedding is solitary. We respect the retirement of happy people, and to some extent their lengthened slumbers also. The confusion of visits and congratulations does not begin till later on. On the morning of February 17, it was a little past midday when Basque, with napkin and feather-duster under his arm, busily "clearing up the anteroom," heard a low tap at the door. There was no ring, which was discreet on such a day. Basque opened and saw M. Fauchelevent. He showed him to the drawing-room, which was still topsy-turvy, and looked like the battle-field of the previous day's joys.

"Really, sir," observed Basque, "we all overslept."

"Is your master up?" asked Jean Valjean.

"How is your hand, sir?" replied Basque.

"Better. Is your master up?"

"Which one? The old one or the new one?"

"Monsieur Pontmercy."

"The Baron!" said Basque, drawing himself up.

A baron is, above all, a baron to his servants; some share of the dignity falls to them, and they get what a philosopher would call a splash from the title, and that flatters them. Marius, be it said in passing, fighting republican

as he had proved, was now a baron, in spite of himself. A small revolution had taken place in the family with reference to this title. It was M. Gillenormand now who clung to it, and Marius who cared little for it. But Colonel Pontmercy had written, "My son will bear my title." Marius obeyed. And then Cosette, in whom the woman was beginning to bloom out, was delighted to be a baroness.

"The Baron?" repeated Basque; "I will go and see. I will tell him that Monsieur Fauchelevent is here."

"No; do not tell him it is I. Tell him that some one wishes to speak to him privately, and do not mention my name."

"Ah!" said Basque.

"I wish to surprise him."

"Ah!" repeated Basque, uttering his second "Ah!" to himself in explanation of the first.

And he left the room.

Jean Valjean remained alone.

The drawing-room, as we said, was all in disorder. It seemed as if, by listening, vague echoes of the wedding might still be heard. On the floor were all sorts of flowers which had fallen from garlands and head-dresses. The candles, burned down to the socket, added wax stalactites to the crystal drops of the chandeliers. Not an article of furniture was in its place. In the corners, three or four easy-chairs, drawn close together in a circle, looked as if they were continuing a conversation. The whole effect was joyous. A certain grace lingers about a dead festival. It was happy. Upon those disarranged chairs, amid those fading flowers, and under those extinguished lights people have thought of joy. The sun succeeded the chandelier, and made its way gayly into the drawing-room.

A few moments passed. Jean Valjean stood motionless in the spot where Basque left him. He was very pale. His eyes were hollow, and so sunk in their sockets by sleeplessness that they almost disappeared. His black coat had the weary creases of a garment which has been up all night. The

elbows were white with that lint which rubbing against linen leaves on cloth. Jean Valjean looked at the window outlined on the floor at his feet by the sun.

There was a noise at the door, he raised his eyes.

Marius came in with head erect, laughing mouth, a peculiar light on his face, a smooth forehead, and a flashing eye. He, too, had not slept.

"It is you, father!" he exclaimed, as he saw Jean Valjean. "Why, that fool of a Basque put on a mysterious air! But you are too early. It is only half-past twelve. Cosette is asleep."

That word "father" addressed to M. Fauchelevent by Marius meant "supreme felicity." There had always been, as we know, a gulf, a coldness, and constraint between them: ice to be melted or broken. Marius was so intoxicated that the gulf disappeared, the ice dissolved, and M. Fauchelevent was to him, as to Cosette, a father.

He went on; his words poured forth, as is usual in such divine paroxysms of joy:—

"How glad I am to see you! If you only knew how we missed you yesterday! Good-morning, father. How is your hand? Better, is it not?"

And, satisfied with the favourable answer which he gave to himself, he went on:—

"You may believe that we have talked of you, both of us. Cosette loves you so dearly. You must not forget that you have a room here. We will not hear a word about the Rue de l'Homme Armé. We will have no more of that. How could you go and live in a street like that, which is sickly, and mean, and poor, which has a barrier at one end, where you are always cold, and which no one can enter? You must come and settle yourself here, and this very day, or you will have to deal with Cosette. She intends to lead us all by the nose, I warn you. You have seen your room; it is close to ours and looks out on the garden. We have had the lock mended, the bed is made,—it is all ready; you have only to move in. Cosette has put a huge old plush easy-chair

close to your bed and she said to it, 'Open your arms to him.' Every spring a nightingale comes to the clump of acacias opposite your windows. It will be there in two months more. You will have its nest on your left, and ours on your right; at night it will sing, and by day Cosette will talk. Your room faces due south. Cosette will arrange your books, the 'Travels of Captain Cook,' and the other, 'Vancouver's Travels,' and all your things. I believe there is a little valise to which you are attached; I have arranged a corner of honour for it. You have won my grandfather's heart; you just suit him. We will live together. Do you play whist? You will overwhelm my grandfather with delight if you play whist. You will take Cosette for a walk on the days when I go to the courts; you will give her your arm, as you used to do, you know, in the Luxembourg garden. We are absolutely determined to be happy, and you shall share our happiness. Do you hear, papa? By the by, you will breakfast with us this morning?

"I have something to say to you, sir," said Valjean. "I am an ex-convict."

The limit of acute sounds perceptible may be exceeded for the mind as well as for the ear. Those words, "I am an ex-convict," coming from the mouth of M. Fauchelevent and entering the ear of Marius, passed the bounds of possibility. Marius did not hear. It seemed to him that something had just been said to him, but he knew not what. He stood with gaping mouth. Then he noticed that the man who spoke to him was frightful to behold. Absorbed in his own raptures, he had not up to this moment observed that terrible pallor.

Jean Valjean unfastened the black cravat that supported his right arm, undid the linen rolled round his hand, bared his thumb, and showed it to Marius.

"There is nothing the matter with my hand," said he.

Marius looked at the thumb.

"There never was anything the matter with it," added Jean Valjean.

There was, in fact, no sign of any injury.

Jean Valjean continued: "It was proper that I should be absent from your marriage. I absented myself so far as I could. I feigned this wound that I might not commit a forgery, and make the marriage-deeds, null and void,— that I might escape signing them."

Marius stammered:—

"What does this mean?"

"It means," replied Jean Valjean, "that I have been in the galleys."

"You are driving me mad!" cried Marius, horrified.

"Monsieur Pontmercy," said Jean Valjean, "I was nineteen years in the galleys for robbery. Then I was sentenced for life for robbery,— for a second offence. At the present moment I am an escaped convict."

In vain Marius shrank from the reality, refused the fact, and resisted the evidence; he was obliged to yield. He began to understand; and, as always happens in such cases, he understood too much. He shuddered inwardly at a hideous flash of enlightenment; an idea that made him shiver crossed his mind. He foresaw a frightful destiny for himself in the future.

"Say all! say all!" he exclaimed. "You are Cosette's father!" And he fell back two steps, with a movement of indescribable horror.

Jean Valjean threw up his head with such majesty of attitude that he seemed to rise to the ceiling.

"You must needs believe, me, sir, although the oath of men like us is not taken in a court of justice —"

Here he paused; then, with a sort of supreme and sepulchral authority he added, speaking slowly, and dwelling on each syllable:—

"You must believe me. I Cosette's father! Before Heaven, no, Baron Pontmercy. I am a peasant of Faverolles. I earned my livelihood by pruning trees. My name is not Fauchelevent, but Jean Valjean. I am nothing to Cosette. Reassure yourself."

Marius stammered:—

"Who will prove it to me?"

"I do, since I tell you so."

Marius looked at that man. He was calm and sad. No lie could come from such calm. That which is frozen is sincere. Truth was evident in that chill of the tomb.

"I believe you," said Marius.

Jean Valjean bowed his head as if to note the fact, and continued:—

"What am I to Cosette? A passer-by. Ten years ago I did not know that she existed. I love her, it is true. We love a child whom we have known as young when old ourselves. When we are old we have the feelings of a grandfather for all little children. You can, I suppose, imagine that I have something which resembles a heart. She was an orphan. Without father or mother. She needed me. That is why I came to love her. Children are so weak that the first-comer,— even a man like me,— may be their protector. I performed this duty to Cosette. I do not suppose that so small a thing can really be called a good action; but if it be a good action,— well, say that I did it. Write down that extenuating fact. To-day Cosette passes out of my life; our two roads part. Henceforth I can do nothing more for her. She is Madame Pontmercy. Her providence has changed. She has gained by the change. All is well. As for the six hundred thousand francs, you say nothing of them, but I will meet your thought half-way; they are a deposit. How did it come into my hands? No matter. I give up the deposit. Nothing more can be required of me. I complete the restitution by giving my real name. This too concerns myself. I am anxious that you should know who I am."

And Jean Valjean looked Marius in the face.

All that Marius felt was tumultuous and incoherent. Certain blasts of the wind of destiny produce these stormy waves in our soul.

We have all had these moments of trouble in which everything within us is dispersed; we say the first things that occur to us which are not always precisely those which we ought

to say. There are sudden revelations which we cannot bear, and which intoxicate like a potent wine. Marius was stunned by the new situation which presented itself to him, and spoke to this man almost as if he were angry with him for this avowal.

"But why," he exclaimed, "do you tell me all this? Who forces you to do so? You might have kept your secret to yourself. You are neither denounced, nor pursued, nor tracked. You have some motive for making such a revelation out of sheer wantonness. Conclude. There is something more. For what purpose do you make this confession? What is your motive?"

"My motive?" answered Jean Valjean, in a voice so low and dull that it seemed as if he were speaking to himself rather than to Marius. "From what motive, indeed, does this convict come here and say, 'I am a convict?' Well, yes! my motive is a strange one. It is out of honesty. It is my misfortune to have a thread in my heart which holds me fast. It is especially when a man is old that this sort of thread is most solid. A whole life falls in ruins about it; but it resists. Had I been able to tear away that thread, to break it, to untie or to cut the knot, go a long way off, I should have been safe. I had only to start. There are diligences in the Rue du Bouloy: you are happy; I am off. I tried to break that thread. I pulled at it; it held firm; it did not break; I tore my heart out with it. Then I said: I cannot live anywhere else. I must remain. Well, yes, you are right; I am a fool. Why not simply remain? You offer me a room in your house. Madame Pontmercy loves me dearly. She said to that arm-chair: 'Open your arms to him.' Your grandfather asks nothing better than to have me; I suit him. We will all live together, have our meals in common; I will give my arm to Cosette,— to Madame Pontmercy (forgive me, it is a habit); we will have but one roof, one table, one fire, the same chimney-corner in winter, the same walk in summer,— that is joy, that is happiness, that is everything. We will live as one family. One family!"

At that word Jean Valjean became fierce. He folded his arms, stared at the boards beneath his feet as if he wished to dig a pit in them, and his voice suddenly became loud:—

"As one family! No. I belong to no family; I do not belong to yours. I do not even belong to the human family. In houses where people are among themselves I am in the way. There are families, but none for me. I am an unfortunate wretch; I am left outside. Had I a father and mother? I almost doubt it. On the day when I gave that child in marriage, all was ended. I have seen her happy, and that she was with the man she loves; that there is a kind old man here, a household of two angels, and every joy in this house, and that it was well; and I said to myself: 'Do not enter.' I might lie, it is true, might deceive you all, and remain Monsieur Fauchelevent. So long as it was for her, I could lie; but now it would be for myself I must not. I had only to be silent, it is true, and all would go on. You ask me what compels me to speak? A strange thing,— my conscience. It would have been very easy, however, to hold my tongue. I spent the night in trying to persuade myself into it. You question me, and what I have just told you is so extraordinary that you have the right to do so. Well, yes, I spent the night in giving myself reasons. I gave myself excellent reasons; I did what I could. But there are two things in which I could not succeed: I could neither break the thread which holds me by the heart, fixed, sealed, and riveted here, nor silence some one who speaks to me softly when I am alone. That is why I have come to confess all to you this morning. — all, or nearly all. It is useless to tell what only concerns myself; I keep that to myself. You know the essentials. So I took my mystery and brought it to you. I ripped up my secret before your eyes. It was not an easy resolution to form. I debated the point all night long. Ah, you think I did not tell myself that this was no Champmathieu affair, that in hiding my name I did no one any harm, that the name of Fauchelevent was given me by Fauchelevent himself out of gratitude for a service rendered, and

that I might fairly keep it, and that I should be happy in that room which you offer me, that I should not be at all in the way, that I should keep to my own little corner, and that while you had Cosette I should have the idea that I was in the same house with her. Each would have his share of happiness. To continue to be Monsieur Fauchelevent would settle everything. Yes, except my soul. There would be joy all round me, but the depths of my soul would remain black. Thus I should have remained Monsieur Fauchelevent; thus I should have hidden my real face; thus in the presence of your happiness I should have had an enigma; thus in the midst of your broad sunshine I should have darkness; then, without crying 'Look out!' I should have quietly introduced the hulks to your hearth; I should have taken a seat at your table with the thought that if you knew who I was you would drive me away; I should have allowed myself to be served by servants who, had they known, would have said, 'How horrible!' I should have touched you with my elbow, which you have a right to consider an insult; I should have swindled you out of shakes of the hand. There would have been in your house a division of respect between venerable white locks and branded white locks; in your most intimate hours, when every heart seemed thrown wide open to every other heart, when we four were together,— the grandfather, you two, and I,— there would have been a stranger there. I should have lived side by side with you, shared your existence, my only anxiety to keep the lid closed tight upon my dreadful past. Thus I, a dead man, should have imposed myself upon you who are living. I should have sentenced her to endure me for life. You, Cosette, and I would have been three heads in the green cap! Do you not shudder? I am only the most crushed of men; I should have been the most monstrous. And that crime I should have committed daily! and that lie I should have told daily! and that face of night I should have worn daily! and I should have given you daily, daily, a share in my stigma! You, my well-beloved, you, my children, you, my innocent ones! Is it nothing to hold one's tongue. Is

it an easy matter to keep silent? No, it is not easy. There is a silence which lies. And my lie, and my fraud, and my indignity, and my cowardice, and my treachery, and my crime, I should have drained drop by drop; I should have spat it out, and then drunk it again; I should have ended at midnight and begun again at midday, and my 'good-morning' would have lied, and my 'good-night' would have lied, and I should have slept upon it; I should have eaten it with my bread; and I should have looked Cosette in the face, and answered the smile of the angel with the smile of the damned; and I should have been an abominable scoundrel! And to what end? To be happy! I happy! Have I the right to be happy? I stand outside of life, sir."

Jean Valjean paused; Marius listened. Such chains of ideas and agonies cannot be interrupted. Jean Valjean lowered his voice again, but it was no longer a dull voice; it was a sinister voice.

"You ask why I speak? I am neither denounced nor pursued nor tracked, you say. Yes, I am denounced! Yes, I am pursued! Yes, I am tracked! By whom? By myself. It is I who bar my own passage; and I drag myself along, and I push myself, and I arrest myself, and I execute myself; and when a man holds himself, he is securely held."

And seizing his own collar, and dragging it toward Marius, he continued:—

"Look at that fist. Do you not think that it holds that collar so that it will not let it go? Well! conscience is such another grasp! If you would be happy, sir, you must never understand duty; for, so soon as you have understood it, it is implacable. It seems as if it punished you for understanding it; but no, it rewards you; for it places you in a hell where you feel God by your side. A man has no sooner torn his very vitals than he is at peace with himself."

And in a heartrending tone, he added:—

"Monsieur Pontmercy, this is not common-sense; I am an honest man. It is by begrading myself in your eyes that I raise myself in my own. This has happened to me once be-

fore, but it was less painful; it was nothing. Yes, an honest man. I should not be one if, through my fault, you had continued to esteem me; now that you despise me, I am. This fatal doom hangs upon my head, that as I can never have any but stolen consideration, that consideration humiliates me, and crushes me inwardly, and in order that I may respect myself people must despise me. Then I straighten up again. I am a galley-slave who obeys his conscience. I know very well that this does not sound probable. But what would you have me do? It is so. I have made engagements with myself; I keep them. There are encounters which bind us. There are hazards which involve us in duties. You see, Monsieur Pontmercy, many things have happened to me in my life."

Jean Valjean made another pause, swallowing his saliva with an effort, as if his words had a bitter after-taste, then he continued:—

"When a man has such a horror hanging over him, he has no right to make others share it unconsciously, he has no right to communicate his plague to them, he has no right to make them slip over his precipice without their perceiving it, he has no right to drag his red blouse over their shoulders, and no right to craftily encumber the happiness of others with his misery. To approach those who are healthy and touch them in the darkness with an invisible ulcer is hideous. Fauchelevent may have lent me his name, but I have no right to use it; he could give it to me, but I must not take it. A name is a self. You see, sir, I have thought a little and read a little, though I am a peasant; and you see that I express myself properly. I explain things to myself. I have carried out my own education. Well, yes; to abstract a name and place one's self under it is dishonest Letters of the alphabet may be filched, like a purse or a watch. To be a forgery in flesh and blood, to be a living false key, to enter among honest folk by picking their lock, never to look straight, but always to squint, to be infamous within,— no! no! no! no! It is better to suffer, bleed, weep, tear one's flesh with one's nails, to pass nights writhing in agony, to devour one's self body and soul.

That is why I have come to tell you all this,— out of sheer wantonness, as you remarked."

He breathed painfully, and flung his final word:—

"I once stole a loaf in order to live; to-day, I will not steal a name in order to live."

"To live!" interrupted Marius. "You do not need that name in order to live."

"Oh, I understand," replied Jean Valjean, raising and drooping his head several times in succession. There was a silence. Both were speechless, each sunk in a gulf of thought. Marius was sitting near a table and supporting the corner of his mouth on one of his fingers, which was bent back. Jean Valjean walked backward and forward. He stopped before a glass and remained motionless. Then, as if answering some mental reasoning, he said, as he looked into this glass, in which he did not see himself: —

"While now I am relieved."

He took up his march again, and went to the other end of the room.. As he turned, he saw that Marius was watching his walk. Then he said in an indescribable tone: —

"I drag my leg a little. You understand why, now."

Then he turned fully round to Marius.

"And now, sir, imagine this: I have said nothing; I have remained Monsieur Fauchelevent; I have taken my place in your house; I am one of you; I am in my room; I come down to breakfast in the morning in my slippers; at night we go to the play, all three of us. I accompany Madame Pontmercy to the Tuileries and to the Place Royale; we are together, and you think me your equal. One fine day, I am here, you are here; we are talking and laughing. All at once you a hear a voice shout this name: 'Jean Valjean!' and lo! that fearful hand, the police, starts from the shadow, and suddenly tears off my mask!"

He was again silent; Marius had risen to his feet with a shudder. Jean Valjean resumed: —

"What do you say to that?"

Marius's silence answered

Jean Valjean continued: —

"You see very well that I am right in not holding my tongue. Be happy, be in heaven, be the angel of an angel; live in the sunshine and content yourself with it, and do not trouble yourself as to the way which a poor damned soul takes to open his heart and do his duty. You see before you, sir, a wretched man."

Marius slowly crossed the room, and when he was by Jean Valjean's side, he offered him his hand.

But Marius was compelled to take that hand, which was not offered. Jean Valjean let him have his way; and it seemed to Marius that he pressed a hand of marble.

"My grandfather has friends," said Marius; "I will obtain your pardon."

"It is useless," replied Jean Valjean. "I am supposed to be dead, and that is enough. The dead are not subjected to supervision. They are supposed to rot in peace. Death is the same thing as pardon."

And, freeing the hand which Marius held, he added with a sort of inexorable dignity: —

"Moreover, my duty is the friend to whom I have recourse; and I need but one pardon,— that of my conscience."

At that moment the door opened gently at the other end of the drawing-room, and Cosette's head appeared in the opening. Only her sweet face was visible. Her hair was in charming disorder, her eyelids were still swollen with sleep. She made the movement of a bird thrusting its head out of the nest, looked first at her husband, then at Jean Valjean, and cried to them laughingly,— they thought they saw a smile at the heart of a rose:

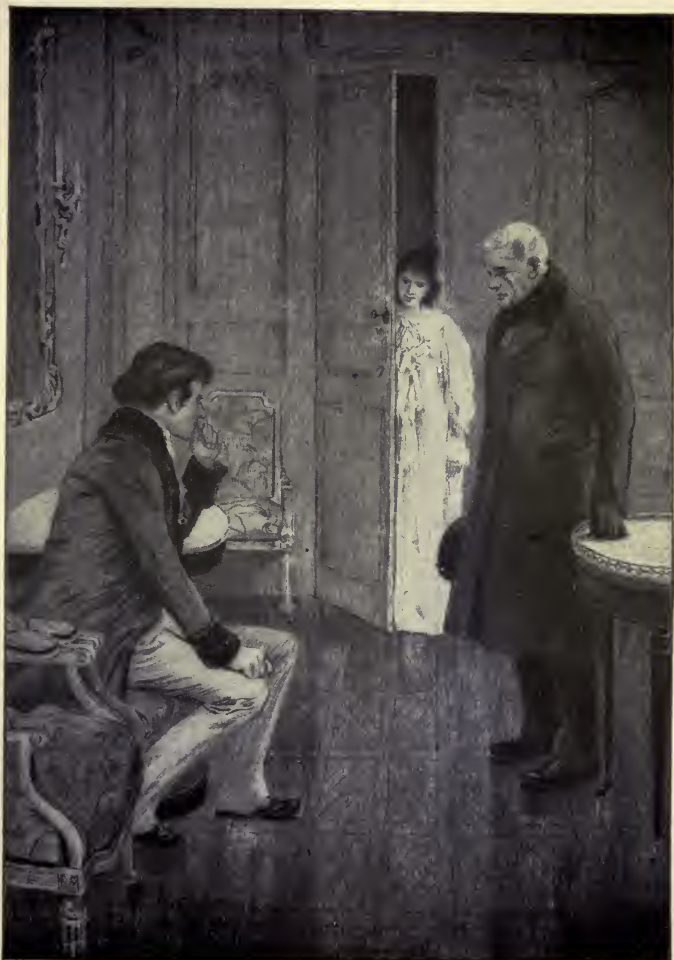
"I will wager that you are talking politics. How stupid that is, instead of being with me!"

Jean Valjean shuddered.

"Cosette," stammered Marius. And he paused.

They looked like two culprits.

Cosette, radiant, continued to look at them both. There were snatches of paradise in her eyes.



"At that moment the door opened gently at the other end of the drawing-room, and Cosette's head appeared in the opening."

Les Miserables. Jean Valjean. Page 262.

"I have caught you in the act," said Cosette; "I just heard Father Fauchelevent through the door, saying: 'Conscience . . . My duty.' That is politics, that is; I will have none of it. People must not talk politics on the very next day. It is not fair."

"You are mistaken, Cosette," replied Marius. "We are talking business. We are talking about the best way of investing your six hundred thousand francs."

"That's not it at all," interrupted Cosette. "I am coming in. Do you want me here?"

And, passing resolutely through the door, she entered the drawing-room. She wore a loose dressing-gown with a thousand folds and wide sleeves, which fell from her neck to her feet. In the golden skies of old Gothic paintings there are such charming sacks to dress an angel in.

She contemplated herself from head to foot in a large mirror, and then exclaimed, with an outburst of ineffable ecstasy: —

"There was once upon a time a king and queen. Oh, how happy I am!"

This said, she courtesied to Marius and Jean Valjean.

"There," said she, "I am going to install myself near you in an easy-chair; we shall breakfast in half an hour. You may say just what you please, for I know very well that men must talk. I will be very good."

Marius took her by the arm and said lovingly: —

"We are talking business."

"By the way," answered Cosette, "I opened my window; a flock of sparrows [1] has just entered the garden,— birds, not masks. To-day is Ash Wednesday,— but not for the birds."

"I tell you that we are talking business. Go, my little Cosette; leave us for a moment. We are talking figures. They would only bore you."

"You have put on a charming cravat this morning, Marius. You are very coquettish, my lord. No, it will not bore me."

[1] Pierrots.

"I assure you that it will."

"No,— since it is you. I shall not understand you, but I shall listen to you. When a woman hears voices that she loves, she does not need to understand the words they say. To be together, that is all I want. I shall stay with you,— there!"

"You are my beloved Cosette! Impossible."

"Impossible!"

"Yes."

"Very good," remarked Cosette. "I was going to tell you some news. I could have told you that grandpapa is still asleep, that your aunt is at Mass, that the chimney in my papa Fauchelevent's room smokes, that Nicolette has sent for the chimney-sweep, that Nicolette and Toussaint have already quarrelled, that Nicolette ridicules Toussaint's stammer. Well, you shall know nothing. Oh, it is impossible? You shall see, sir, in my turn I shall say, 'It is impossible.' Who will be caught then? I implore you, my little Marius, let me stay here with you two."

"I swear to you, we must be alone."

"Well, am I anybody?"

Jean Valjean had not uttered a word. Cosette turned to him: —

"In the first place, father, I insist on your coming and kissing me. What do you mean by saying nothing, instead of taking my part? Did one ever see such a father as that? You see what an unhappy match I have made. My husband beats me. Come and kiss me at once.

Jean Valjean approached her.

Cosette turned to Marius.

"As for you, I turn up my nose at you."

Then she offered her forehead to Jean Valjean.

He moved a step toward her.

Cosette started.

"Father, you are pale. Does your arm pain you?"

"It is cured," said Jean Valjean.

"Did you sleep badly?"

"No."

"Are you sad?"

"No."

"Kiss me. If you are well, if you slept soundly, if you are happy, I will not scold you." And she again offered him her forehead.

Jean Valjean set a kiss on that brow, upon which there was a heavenly reflection.

"Smile."

Jean Valjean obeyed. It was the smile of a ghost.

"Now, defend me against my husband."

"Cosette!—" said Marius.

"Be angry, father. Tell him I am to stay. You can surely talk before me. You must think me very foolish. Are you saying anything very astonishing, then! Business, putting money in the bank,—a great matter truly. Men make mysteries out of nothing. I mean to stay. I am very pretty this morning. Marius, look at me." And, with an adorable shrug of the shoulders and the exquisite pout, she looked at Marius.

Something like a flash passed between those two beings. It was nothing to them that a third party was present.

"I love you!" said Marius.

"I adore you!" said Cosette. And they fell irresistibly into each other's arms.

"And now," continued Cosette, as she smoothed a crease in her dressing-gown, with a triumphant little grimace, "I shall stay."

"No, not that," replied Marius, imploringly. "We have something to finish."

"Still no?"

Marius assumed a serious tone:—

"I assure you, Cosette, that it is impossible."

"Ah, you put on your man's voice, do you sir? Very good, I will go. You did not support me, father. So you, my hard husband, and you, my dear papa, are tyrants. I shall go and tell grandpapa. If you think that I intend to

return and talk platitudes to you, you are mistaken. I am proud. I intend to wait for you now. You will see how dull you will be without me. I am going; very good." And she left the room.

Two seconds later the door opened again, her fresh, rosy face was again thrust between the two leaves. and she cried: —

"I am very angry!"

The door again closed, and darkness returned.

It was like a straggling sunbeam which, without suspecting it, had suddenly traversed the night.

Marius assured himself that the door was really closed.

"Poor Cosette," he muttered, "when she learns —"

At these words Jean Valjean trembled in every limb. He fixed his haggard eyes on Marius.

"Cosette! Oh, yes, to be sure, you mean to tell Cosette. It is only fair. Stay! I did not think of that. A man has strength for one thing, but not for another. Sir, I implore you, I entreat you, sir, give me your most sacred word of honour, do not tell her. Is it not enough that you know it? I was able to tell it of my own accord, without being forced to do so, I could have told it to the universe, to the whole world, and I should not have cared; but she, she does not know what it is, and it would terrify her. A convict!

"What! you would be obliged to explain it to her,— to tell her it is a man who has been in the galleys. She saw the chain-gang once. Oh, my God!"

He sank into a chair and buried his face in his hands.

No sound was heard, but by the heaving of his shoulders it was plain that he was weeping. Silent tears, terrible tears.

There is suffocation in a sob. A sort of convulsion seized him; he threw himself back in his chair as if to gain breath, letting his arms hang, and revealing to Marius his face bathed in tears, and Marius heard him murmur, so low that his voice seemed to come from a bottomless abyss:—

"Oh, I wish I might die!"

"Rest easy," said Marius, "I will keep your secret to myself."

And less moved perhaps than he should have been, but compelled for the last hour to become familiar with unexpected horrors, gradually seeing a convict take M. Fauchelevent's place before his very eyes, gradually overcome by that painful reality, and led by the natural inclination of the situation to measure the space which separated this man and himself, Marius added: —

"It is impossible for me not to say a word about the trust money which you have so faithfully and honestly given up. That is an act of probity. It is but fair that some reward should be given you. Fix the sum yourself; it shall be paid you. Do not fear to fix it very high."

"I thank you, sir," replied Jean Valjean, gently.

He was lost in thought for a moment mechanically drawing the tip of his forefinger across his thumb-nails; then he raised his voice: —

"All is nearly over. There is but one thing left me."

"What is it?"

Jean Valjean struggled to conquer a final hesitation, and faintly, almost breathlessly, he stammered, rather than said: —

"Now that you know, do you think sir, you who are master, that I ought not to see Cosette again?"

"I think that it would be better," replied Marius, coldly.

"I will not see her again," murmured Jean Valjean. And he moved toward the door.

His hand was on the knob, the latch yielded, the door opened, Jean Valjean was about to pass out, when he suddenly closed it again, and returned to Marius.

He was no longer pale; he was livid. There was a sort of tragic flame in his eyes instead of tears. His voice had grown strangely calm again.

"Stay, sir," he said; "if you allow me, I will come to see her. I assure you that I desire it greatly. If I had not longed to see Cosette I should not have made you the confes-

sion that I have. I should have gone away; but wishing to remain in the place where Cosette is, and to continue to see her, I was obliged to tell you everything honestly. You follow my reasoning, do you not? It is a thing easily understood. You see I have had her with me for nine years. We lived at first in that hovel on the boulevard, then in the convent, and then near the Luxembourg. It was there that you saw her for the first time. You remember her blue plush hat. Next we went to the district of the Invalides, where there was a gate and a garden in the Rue Plumet. I lived in a little back court where I could hear her pianoforte. Such was my life. We were never parted. That lasted nine years and some months. I was like her father and she was my child. I do not know whether you understand me, M. Pontmercy, but it would be hard to go away now, to see her no more, speak to her no more, and have nothing left. If you have no objection, I will come and see Cosette every now and then. I will not come too often. I will not stay long. You can tell them to show me into the little room on the ground-floor. I could certainly come in by the back door which is used by the servants, but that might create surprise perhaps; it is better, I think, for me to come in by the front door. Indeed, sir, I should like to see Cosette a little,—as seldom as you please. Put yourself in my place; it is all I have left. And then, again, we must be careful. If I did not come at all it would have a bad effect, and look peculiar. For instance, what I can do is to come in the evening, when it is beginning to grow dark."

"You can come every evening," said Marius, "and Cosette will expect you."

"You are kind, sir," said Jean Valjean.

Marius bowed to Jean Valjean; happiness escorted despair to the door, and the two men parted.

CHAPTER II

OBSCURITIES WHICH A REVELATION CONTAINS

MARIUS was overwhelmed.

The sort of estrangement which he had always felt for the man with whom he saw Cosette was now explained. There was something mysterious about that person, of which his instinct warned him.

This mystery was the most hideous of shames,— the galleys. This M. Fauchelevent was Jean Valjean, the convict.

To suddenly find such a secret in the midst of his happiness was like discovering a scorpion in a nest of turtle-doves.

Was the happiness of Marius and Cosette in future condemned to this proximity? Was it an accomplished fact? Did the acceptance of this man form a part of the marriage now consummated? Could nothing else be done?

Had Marius married the convict as well?

Although a man may be crowned with light and joy, though he enjoy the supreme rosy hour of life,— happy love,— such shocks would force even the archangel in his ecstasy, even the demigod in his glory, to shudder.

As always happens in transformation-scenes of this sort, Marius asked himself whether he were in no way to blame? Had he failed in foresight? Had he lacked prudence? Had he been wilfully blind? Slightly so, perhaps. Had he entered upon this love-adventure, which resulted in his marriage with Cosette, without taking sufficient care to throw light upon all the surroundings? He admitted,— it is thus by a series of successive admissions of ourselves in regard to ourselves that life gradually corrects us,— he admitted the visionary and chimerical side of his nature, a sort of internal cloud peculiar to many organizations, and which, in paroxysms of passion and grief, grows as the temperature of the soul

changes, and invades the entire man to such an extent that he becomes nothing more than a conscience enveloped in a fog. We have more than once hinted at this characteristic element in Marius's individuality.

He remembered that during the intoxication of his love, in the Rue Plumet, during those six or seven ecstatic weeks, he had not even spoken to Cosette of that drama in the Gorbeau hovel, where the victim was so strangely silent during both the struggle and the final escape. How had it happened that he had not spoken of it to Cosette? and yet it was so closely connected with her, and so frightful! How was it that he had not even mentioned the Thénardiers, and, especially, on the day when he met Eponine? He now found it almost difficult to explain his silence at that period. Still, he was able to account for it. He remembered his absorption, his intoxication for Cosette, his love drowning everything else, that abduction of one by the other into the ideal world, and perhaps, too, as the imperceptible amount of reason mingled with that violent and charming state of mind, a vague, dull instinct to hide and efface in his memory that fearful adventure, contact with which he dreaded, in which he wished to play no part, from which he stood aloof, and of which he could not be narrator or witness without being an accuser.

Moreover, those few weeks had passed like a flash; they had had time for nothing except to love.

In short, having weighed, revolved, and examined everything, supposing that he had described the Gorbeau trap to Cosette, and mentioned the Thénardiers to her whatever the consequences might have been,— even if he had discovered that Jean Valjean was a convict,— would that have changed him, Marius? would it have changed her, Cosette? Would he have drawn back? Would he have adored her any the less? Would he have refused to marry her? No. Would it have made any change in what had happened? No. There was nothing then to regret, nothing with which to reproach himself. All was well. There is a deity for those drunkards who are called lovers. Marius had blindly followed the road

which he would have selected had his eyes been open. Love had bandaged his eyes to lead him, whither? — to paradise.

But this paradise was henceforth complicated by an infernal proximity.

The old estrangement of Marius for this man, for this Fauchelevent who had become Jean Valjean, was now mingled with horror.

In this horror, let us say, there was some pity, and even a certain degree of surprise.

This robber, this hardened offender, had given up a deposit. And what a deposit! Six hundred thousand francs!

He alone held the secret of that deposit. He might have kept it all, but he gave it all up.

Moreover, he had revealed his situation of his own accord. Nothing compelled him to do so. If it were known who he was, it was through himself. There was in that confession more than the acceptance of humiliation,— there was the acceptance of peril. For a condemned man, a mask is not a mask but a shelter. He had renounced that shelter. A false name is security, and he had thrown away that false name. He, the galley-slave, might have hidden himself forever in an honest family; he had resisted that temptation. And from what motive? Through a conscientious scruple. He himself explained this in the irresistible accents of truth. In short, whatever this Jean Valjean might be, his was undoubtedly a conscience which was awakening. Some mysterious rehabilitation had begun; and according to all appearances, scruples had been master of this man for a long time past. Such fits of justice and honesty do not characterize vulgar natures. An awakening of the conscience is greatness of soul.

Jean Valjean was sincere. This sincerity, visible, palpable, irrefragable, and evident even in the grief which it caused him, rendered all inquiries useless, and lent weight to all that this man said.

Here, for Marius, was a strange reversal of situations. What did M. Fauchelevent inspire? Distrust. What did Jean Valean lead him to feel? Confidence.

In the mysterious balance-sheet of this Jean Valjean which Marius drew up thoughtfully, he verified the credit, he verified the debit, and he tried to make them balance.

But all this was in a storm. Marius, striving to form a distinct idea of this man, and pursuing Jean Valjean, so to speak, in the depths of his thought, lost him, and again found him in a fatal mist.

The honest restoration of the trust money, the probity of the confession, were good. They formed, as it were, a break in the cloud; but then the cloud became black once more.

Confused as Marius's memories were, some shadow of them returned to him.

What, after all, was that adventure in the Jondrette garret Why, on the arrival of the police, did that man, instead of entering a complaint, escape?

Here Marius found the answer: because that man was a convict who had broken his ban.

Another question: Why did that man come to the barricade? For now Marius again distinctly saw that recollection which re-appeared in his emotions like writing in sympathetic ink held before the fire. That man was at the barricade. He did not fight. What did he want there? Before this question a spectre rose, and gave the answer: Javert.

Marius now remembered perfectly the mournful vision of Jean Valjean dragging Javert, bound out of the barricade; and he again heard behind the corner of the little Mondétour Lane the frightful pistol-shot. There was, probably, hatred between that spy and that galley-slave. One was in the other's way. Jean Valjean went to the barricade to revenge himself. He arrived too late. He was probably aware that Javert was a prisoner there. The Corsican Vendetta has penetrated certain lower strata of society, and has become a law with them; it is so simple that it does not astonish souls which are but half turned toward virtue; those hearts are so constituted that a criminal on the path of repentance may be scrupulous in regard to robbery and not in

regard to vengeance. Jean Valjean had killed Javert. At least, that seemed evident.

This was the last question of all, but it admitted of no reply. This question Marius felt like a pair of pincers. How was it that the existence of Jean Valjean had so long elbowed that of Cosette?

What gloomy sport of Providence was that which had brought this man and this child in contact? Are there chains for two forged in heaven, and does God take pleasure in coupling the angel with the demon? Can crime and innocence, then, be room-mates in the mysterious hulks of misery? In that procession of condemned men which is called human destiny may two brows pass along side by side, one ingenuous, the other fearful,— one all bathed in the divine whiteness of dawn, the other eternally branded. Who can have determined that inexplicable pairing off? How, in virtue of what miracle, could any community of life have been established between that celestial child and that old criminal?

Who could have bound the lamb to the wolf, and, more incomprehensible still, the wolf to the lamb? For the wolf loved the lamb,— the fierce creature adored the weak one; and for nine years the angel had leaned on the monster for support.

The childhood and maidenhood of Cosette, her advent in daylight, her virgin growth toward life and light, had been protected by that distorted devotion. Here questions branched out, if we may use the expression, into countless enigmas; abysses yawned at the bottom of abysses, and Marius could no longer bend over Jean Valjean without becoming dizzy. What could this man-precipice be?

The old symbols of Genesis are eternal. In human society, such as it now exists, until the day when greater light shall change it, there are ever two men, one superior, the other subterranean,— the one who holds to good is Abel, the one who holds to evil is Cain. What was this tender Cain? What was this ruffian religiously absorbed in the adoration of a virgin, watching over her, bringing her up, guarding her,

dignifying her, and, though himself impure, surrounding her with purity?

What was this cesspool which had worshipped that innocence so greatly as not to leave a spot upon it? What was this Valjean carrying on the education of Cosette? What was this figure of darkness, whose sole care it was to preserve the rising of a star from every shadow and from every cloud?

That was Jean Valjean's secret; that was also God's secret.

Marius shrank from this double secret. The one to some extent reassured him about the other. God was as visible in this venture as was Jean Valjean. God has his instruments. He uses whatever love he chooses. He is not responsible to man. Do we know how God sets to work? Jean Valjean had laboured over Cosette; he had in some sort formed her soul,— that was incontestable. Well, what then? The workman was horrible, but the work was admirable. God produces his miracles as seems good to him. He had constructed that charming Cosette, and he had employed Jean Valjean. It had pleased him to choose this strange assistant. What account can we require of him? Is it the first time that manure has helped the spring to create the rose?

Marius gave himself these answers, and declared to himself that they were good. He had not dared to press Jean Valjean on all the points which we have indicated, though he did not confess to himself that he dared not. He adored Cosette; he possessed Cosette; Cosette was splendidly pure. That was enough for him. What enlightenment did he require? Cosette was a light. Does light require enlightenment?

He had everything; what more could he desire? Everything,— is not that enough? Jean Valjean's personal affairs in no way concerned him.

And bending over the fatal shadow of that man, he clung to this solemn declaration of the unfortunate wretch: "I am nothing to Cosette. Ten years ago I did not know that she existed."

Jean Valjean was a passer-by. He had said so himself,

Well, he had passed. Whoever he might be, his part was played out.

Henceforth Marius would perform the functions of Providence toward Cosette. She had found in ether her equal, her lover, her husband, her celestial mate. As she soared aloft Cosette, winged and transfigured, left behind her on earth her empty, hideous chrysalis, Jean Valjean.

In whatever circle of ideas Marius might revolve, he always came back to a certain horror of Jean Valjean,— a sacred horror perhaps; for, as we have shown, he felt a *quid divinum* in this man. But do what he would, and seek whatever extenuating circumstances he might, he was always compelled to fall back on this: the man was a convict,— that is to say, a being who has not even a place on the social ladder, being lower than the very lowest rung. After the last of men comes the convict. The convict is no longer, so to speak, made in the likeness of his fellow-men. The law had stripped him of all the humanity of which it can deprive a man.

Marius, in penal matters, democrat though he was, still held to the inexorable system, and he entertained all the ideas of the law about those whom the law strikes. He had not yet made all the progress of which he was capable. He had not yet learned to distinguish between what is written by man and what is written by God,— between law and right. He had not examined and weighed the claim which man sets up to dispose of the irrevocable and the irreparable. He did not revolt at the word "vindictive." He considered it natural that certain breaches of the written law should be followed by eternal penalties, and he accepted social damnation as a civilizing process. He was still at this point, though infallibly certain to advance later on, since his nature was good and, at bottom, wholly made up of latent progress.

In this medium of ideas Jean Valjean appeared to him monstrous and repulsive. He was a reprobate, a convict. This word was to him like the sound of the trumpet on the Day of Judgment; and after studying Jean Valjean for a

long time his final gesture was to turn away his head,—*Vade retro.*

Marius,— we must recognize the fact, and even lay stress on it,— while questioning Jean Valjean to such an extent that Jean Valjean himself said, "You put me to confession," had, however, failed to ask him two or three decisive questions.

It was not that they had not presented themselves to his mind, but he had been afraid of them,— the Jondrette garret, the barricade, Javert. Who knows where the revelations might have stopped? Jean Valjean did not seem a man to shrink from anything; and who knows whether Marius, after urging him on, might not have wished to check him?

Has it not happened to all of us in certain supreme conjunctures to stop our ears after asking a question that we may not hear the answer? A man is especially liable to such acts of cowardice when he is in love. It is not wise to drive sinister situations into a corner, especially when the indissoluble side of our own life is fatally intermixed with them. What fearful light might spring from Jean Valjean's desperate explanations, and who knows whether that hideous glare might not be reflected upon Cosette? Who knows whether a sort of internal gleam might not remain on that angel's brow? The splash from a flash of lightning is also thunder. Fatality knows such partnerships, where innocence itself is branded with crime by the gloomy law of colouring reflections. The purest faces may forever retain the impression of a horrible vicinity. Whether rightly or wrongly, Marius was afraid. He already knew too much. He rather sought to close his ears than to gain further light.

Distractedly he bore Cosette off in his arms, closing his eyes upon Jean Valjean. That man belonged to the night, the living and terrible night. How could he dare to seek the end of it? It is a fearful thing to question the darkness. Who knows what its answer will be? The dawn might be eternally blackened by it.

In this state of mind it was a heartrending perplexity for

Marius to think that this man could henceforth come into any contact with Cosette.

He now almost reproached himself for not having asked those terrible questions from which he had shrunk, and which might have led to an implacable and definite decision. He felt that he had been too kind, too gentle, and, let us say it, too weak. That weakness had led him to make an imprudent concession. He had allowed himself to be moved. He was wrong. He should simply and purely have rejected Jean Valjean. Jean Valjean was like a devouring flame; he should have rid his house of the presence of that man.

He was angry with himself, he was angry with the force of that whirlwind of emotions which had deafened, blinded, and carried him away. He was dissatisfied with himself.

What was he to do now? Jean Valjean's visits were most deeply disagreeable to him. What was the use of letting that man come to his house? What did he want there? Here, he became bewildered. He refused to consider the matter further. He was unwilling to probe his own heart. He had promised, he had allowed himself to be drawn into a promise; Jean Valjean had his promise; he must keep his word even to a convict,— above all to a convict. Still, his first duty was to Cosette. In brief, an overpowering aversion took possession of him.

Marius confusedly revolved all these ideas in his mind, passing from one to the other, and shaken by all. Hence arose a deep trouble.

It was not easy to hide this trouble from Cosette; but love is a talent, and Marius succeeded in doing it.

However, without any apparent motive, he put a few questions to Cosette, who was as candid as a dove is white, and suspected nothing; he talked with her of her childhood and her youth, and he became more and more convinced that that convict had been to Cosette as good, paternal, and respectful as a man can be. All that Marius had dimly seen and surmised was real,— that sinister nettle had loved and protected that lily.

BOOK VIII

THE TWILIGHT DECLINE

CHAPTER I

THE GROUND-FLOOR ROOM

ON the morrow, at night-fall, Jean Valjean tapped at the carriage entrance of the Gillenormand mansion. It was Basque who received him. Basque was in the court-yard at the appointed time, as if he had had his orders. It sometimes happens that people say to a servant: "You will watch for Mr. So-and-so's arrival."

Basque, without waiting for Jean Valjean to approach him, said: —

"The Baron ordered me to ask you, sir, whether you wish to go upstairs or wait below."

"I will wait below," replied Jean Valjean.

Basque, whose manner, moreover, was perfectly respectful, opened the door of the lower room, and said: "I will go and tell my mistress."

The room which Jean Valjean entered was a damp, arched, basement-room, sometimes used as a store-room, looking out on the street, with a flooring of red tiles, and badly lighted by an iron-barred window.

This room was not one of those which are harassed by the broom, the feather-duster, and the pope's-head brush. The dust was left in peace. No persecution of the spiders had been set on foot. A fine web, spreading far and wide, quite black, and adorned with dead flies, formed a wheel on one of the window panes. The room, which was small and low, was

furnished with a pile of empty bottles heaped in one corner. The wall, daubed with a yellow-ochre wash, was scaling off in large patches. At one end was a wooden mantelpiece painted black, with a narrow shelf. A fire was lighted in it, which showed that Jean Valjean's reply, "Wait below," had been calculated on.

Two arm-chairs were placed, one at each side of the hearth. Between the chairs was spread, in lieu of carpet, an old bedroom rug, which was almost threadbare.

The room was lighted by the flickering of the fire and the twilight through the window.

Jean Valjean was very tired. For several days he had not eaten or slept. He sank into one of the arm-chairs.

Basque returned, placed a lighted candle on the mantelpiece, and withdrew. Jean Valjean, whose head was bent low, his chin resting on his breast, did not notice either Basque or the candle.

All at once, he started up. Cosette was behind him.

He had not seen her enter, but he felt that she was there.

He turned and gazed at her. She was adorably lovely. But what he studied with that profound gaze was not her beauty, but her soul.

"Well, father," exclaimed Cosette, "I knew that you were peculiar but I should never have expected this. What an idea! Marius told me that it was your wish to see me here."

"Yes, it is."

"I expected that answer. Very well. I warn you that I am going to have a scene with you. Let us begin at the beginning. Kiss me, father."

And she offered her cheek.

Jean Valjean did not move.

"You do not stir. I mark the fact! It is the attitude of a culprit. But I do not care; I forgive you. Christ said, 'Offer the other cheek;' here it is."

And she offered the other cheek.

Jean Valjean did not stir. It seemed as if his feet were riveted to the floor.

"This is getting serious," said Cosette. "What have I done to you? I own I am at a loss. You must make it up with me. You will dine with us."

"I have dined."

"That is not true. I will get M. Gillenormand to scold you. Grandfathers are made to lay down the law to fathers. Come. Come upstairs with me to the drawing-room. At once."

"Impossible."

Here Cosette lost a little ground. She ceased to command and began to question.

"But why? And you choose the ugliest room in the house to see me in. It is horrible here."

"You know,"— Jean Valjean broke off,—"you know, madame, that I am peculiar; I have my whims."

Cosette clapped her little hands.

"Madame! — *you* know! — more novelties! What does all this mean?"

Jean Valjean bent upon her that heartrending smile to which he sometimes had recourse: —

"You wanted to be 'Madame.' You have your wish."

"Not for you, father."

"Do not call me 'father.'"

"What?"

"Call me Monsieur Jean,— Jean, if you like."

"You are no longer my father? I am no longer Cosette? Monsieur Jean? Why, what does this mean? Why, these are sudden changes, are they not? What has happened? Look me in the face, if you can. And you will not live with us, and you will not have my room! What have I done to you? Oh, what have I done? Has anything happened?"

"Nothing."

"Well, then?"

"All is as usual."

"Why do you change your name?"

"You have changed yours."

He again smiled that same smile, and added: —

"Since you are Madame Pontmercy, I may surely be Monsieur Jean."

"I do not understand anything. All this is idiotic. I will ask my husband's leave for you to be Monsieur Jean. I hope that he will not consent. You make me very unhappy. You may have whims, but you have no right to grieve your little Cosette. That is wrong. You have no right to be naughty, you who are so good."

He made no reply.

She seized both of his hands eagerly, and with an irresistible movement, raising them to her face, she pressed them against her neck under her chin, which is a sign of profound affection.

"Oh," she said, "be good to me."

And she continued: —

"This is what I call being good: to be nice to come and live here,— there are birds here as well as in the Rue Plumet, — to live with us, leave that hole in the Rue de l'Homme Armé, give us no more riddles to guess, to be like everybody else, dine with us, breakfast with us, and be my father."

He removed her hands: —

"You no longer need a father, you have a husband."

Cosette lost her temper: —

"I no longer need a father! Things like that have no common-sense! I really don't know what to say."

"If Toussaint were here," continued Jean Valjean, like a man driven to seek authorities, and clinging to every branch, "she would be the first to allow that I have always had strange ways of my own. It is nothing new; I always loved my dark corner."

"But it is cold here. I cannot see distinctly. It is abominable for you to want to be Monsieur Jean. I will not allow you to call me 'madame.'"

"As I was coming along just now," replied Jean Valjean, "I say a very pretty piece of furniture in the Rue St. Louis, at a cabinet-maker's. If I were a pretty woman, I should treat myself to that piece of furniture. It is a very

nice toilet-table, in the present fashion. Made of rosewood, I think you call it, and inlaid. It has quite a large glass, and drawers. It is very pretty."

"Oh, you ugly bear!" replied Cosette.

And with supreme grace, setting her teeth, and parting her lips, she blew at Jean Valjean. It was a Grace copying a cat.

"I am furious," she went on. "Ever since yesterday you have made me mad, all of you. I am very cross. I do not understand. You do not defend me against Marius; Marius will not take my part against you,— I am all alone. I have prepared a nice room. If I could have put the God in it, I would have done so. My room is left on my hands. My lodger sends me into bankruptcy. I order Nicolette to prepare a nice little dinner,—'They will not touch your dinner, madame.' And my father Fauchelevent wants me to call him Monsieur Jean, and to receive him in a frightful, old, ugly, mildewed cellar, where the walls wear a beard, and where empty bottles represent the looking-glasses, and spiders' webs the curtains! I admit that you are a queer man,— it is your way; but a truce is always granted to newly married people.

"You ought not to have begun to be queer again so soon. You are going to be quite contented, then, in your horrible Rue de l'Homme Armé? Well, I was very wretched there! What have I done to offend you? You make me very unhappy. Fie!"

And growing suddenly serious, she looked intently at Jean Valjean, and added: —

"You are angry with me for being happy, is that it?"

Simplicity sometimes unconsciously penetrates deep. This question, natural for Cosette, was cruel for Jean Valjean. Cosette meant to scratch,— she tore.

Jean Valjean turned pale.

For a moment he did not answer, then he murmured in an indescribable tone, and speaking to himself: —

"Her happiness was the object of my life. Now God

may sign my discharge. Cosette, thou art happy, and my course is run."

"Ah! you said *thou* to me," exclaimed Cosette.

And she sprang into his arms.

Jean Valjean wildly strained her to his heart. It almost seemed as if he were taking her back.

"Thank you, father," said Cosette.

His emotion was getting too painful for Jean Valjean. He gently withdrew from Cosette's arms, and took up his hat.

"Well?" said Cosette.

Jean Valjean replied: —

"I will leave you, madame; you will be missed."

And on the threshold he added: —

"I said *thou* to you. Tell your husband that it shall not happen again. Forgive me."

Jean Valjean took his departure, leaving Cosette stunned by this enigmatical leave-taking.

CHAPTER II

ANOTHER BACKWARD STEP

NEXT day Jean Valjean came at the same hour.

Cosette asked him no questions, was no longer astonished, no longer exclaimed that she was cold, no longer alluded to the drawing-room; she avoided saying either father or Monsieur Jean. She allowed herself to be called madame. Only her delight was lessened. She would have been sad, had sorrow been possible to her.

It is probable that she had held with Marius one of those conversations in which the beloved man says what he pleases, explains nothing, and satisfies the beloved woman. The curiosity of lovers does not extend very far beyond their love.

The basement-room had been furbished up a little. Basque had suppressed the bottles, and Nicolette the spiders.

Every day which followed brought Jean Valjean back at the same hour. He came daily, as he had not the strength to take Marius's words otherwise than literally. Marius arranged to be absent at the hours when Jean Valjean came. The house grew accustomed to M. Fauchelevent's novel ways. Toussaint helped,—"my master was always so," she repeated. The grandfather issued this decree: "He is an original," and everything was said. Moreover, at the age of ninety, no new friendships are possible; everything is mere juxtaposition; a new-comer is in the way. There is no room for him; habits are unalterably formed. As for M. Fauchelevent M. Tranchelevent, Father Gillenormand desired nothing better than to get rid of "that gentleman." He added: "Nothing is more common than such originals. They do all sorts of strange things without any motive. The Marquis de Canoples did worse, for he bought a palace in order to live in the garret. Some people like to pass for oddities."

No one caught a glimpse of the sinister reality. Moreover, who could have guessed at such a thing? There are marches like this in India; the water seems extraordinary, inexplicable, rippling when there is no breeze, and agitated when it should be calm. People see this causeless ebullition on the surface; they do not suspect the hydra crawling at the bottom.

Many men have in this way a secret monster, an evil which they feed, a dragon that gnaws them, a despair that dwells in their night. Such a man looks like other men; he comes and goes. No one knows that there is within him a frightful parasitic pain with a thousand teeth which dwells in that wretch and destroys him. They do not know that that man is a gulf. He is stagnant but deep. From time to time a commotion which no one understands appears on his surface. A mysterious ripple forms, then fades away, then reappears; a bubble of air rises and bursts. It is a slight thing, but it is terrible. It is the breathing of the unknown beast.

Certain strange habits, such as arriving at the hour when others go away; hiding when others display themselves; wearing on all occasions what may be called a mantle of darkness; seeking the solitary walk; preferring the deserted street; never mixing in conversation; avoiding crowds and festivities; appearing to be comfortably off and living poorly; having, rich though one be, one's key in one's pocket, and one's candle in the porter's lodge; entering by the side door, and going up the back stairs,— all these insignificant peculiarities, ripples, air-bubbles, and fugitive marks on the surface, frequently come from a fearful depth below.

Several weeks passed thus. A new life gradually took possession of Cosette,— the relations which marriage creates, visits the management of the household, and pleasures, those important affairs. Cosette's pleasures were not costly; they consisted in one thing only: being with Marius. To go out with him, to be with him, was the great occupation of her life. It was for them an ever-novel joy to go out arm in arm, in the full sunshine, in the open streets, without hiding themselves, in the face of everybody, both alone.

Cosette had one vexation,— Toussaint could not agree with Nicolette; the welding of the two old maids was quite impossible, and Toussaint left. The grandfather was well; Marius had a few briefs now and then; Aunt Gillenormand peacefully lived with the married pair that side life which sufficed for her. Jean Valjean came every day.

The terms "Madame" and "Monsieur Jean," however, made him a wholly different person to Cosette. The care he had himself taken to wean her from him was successful. She was more and more gay, and less and less affectionate. Yet she loved him dearly still, and he felt it.

One day she said to him suddenly: "You were my father, you are no longer my father; you were my uncle, you are no longer my uncle; you were Monsieur Fauchelevent, you are Jean. Who are you, then? I do not like all this. If I did not know you to be so good, I should be afraid of you."

He still lived in the Rue de l'Homme Armé, as he could

not make up his mind to move from the district where Cosette lived.

At first he only stayed a few minutes with Cosette, and then went away.

By degrees he fell into the habit of making his visits longer. It seemed as if he took advantage of the lengthening days; he came earlier and went away later.

One day, the word "father," slipped from Cosette's lips. A gleam of joy lit up Jean Valjean's melancholy old face, but he chided her: "Say Jean."

"Oh, to be sure!" she replied, with a burst of laughter, "Monsieur Jean."

"That is right," said he. And he turned away that she might not see the tears in his eyes.

CHAPTER III

THEY REMEMBER THE GARDEN IN THE RUE PLUMET

THAT was the last time. After that last flash of light, total extinction took place. There was no more familiarity, no more good-morning with a kiss, and never again that word so deeply tender: "Father!" He was at his own request, and with his own complicity, expelled from all his joys in succession; and he underwent this misery, that, after losing Cosette wholly in a single day, he was then obliged to lose her again bit by bit.

The eye finally grows accustomed to the light of a cellar. In short, he found it enough to have a glimpse of Cosette once a day. His whole life was concentrated in that one hour.

He sat down by her, he gazed at her in silence, or else he talked to her of former years, her childhood, the convent, and her little friends of those days.

One afternoon,— it was one of the first days in April, al-

ready warm but still fresh, the moment of the sun's great gayety, the gardens that surrounded the windows of Marius and Cosette were rousing from their slumber, the hawthorn was just budding, a jewelled adornment of wall-flowers was displayed on the old walls, snapdragons gaped in the crevices between the stones, there was a fairy carpet of daisies and buttercups on the grass, the white butterflies were making their first appearance, and the wind, that minstrel of the eternal wedding-feast, was trying in the trees the first notes of that great auroral symphony which the old poets called the "renewal," (*le renouveau*),— Marius said to Cosette: "We said that we would go back and look at our garden in the Rue Plumet. Come. We must not be ungrateful." And they flew off like two swallows toward the spring. That garden in the Rue Plumet produced on them the effect of dawn. They already had behind them in life something that was like the springtime of their love. The house in the Rue Plumet, being held on a lease, still belonged to Cosette. They visited that garden and that house. There they found themselves again, and there they forgot themselves. In the evening, at the usual hour, Jean Valjean went to the Rue des Filles du Calvaire. "Mistress went out with master," said Basque, "and has not yet returned." He sat down silently, and waited an hour. Cosette did not return. He hung his head and went away.

Cosette was so intoxicated by the walk in "their garden," and so pleased at having "lived a whole day in her past," that she spoke of nothing else the next day. She did not remember that she had not seen Jean Valjean.

"How did you go there?" asked Jean Valjean.

"On foot."

"And how did you return?"

"In a cab."

For some time Jean Valjean had noticed the economical life which the young couple led. It troubled him. Marius's economy was severe, and that word had its absolute meaning with Jean Valjean. He hazarded a question: —

"Why don't you keep a carriage of your own? A pretty coupé would not cost you more than five hundred francs a month. You are rich."

"I don't know," answered Cosette.

"It is like Toussaint," continued Jean Valjean. "She has left. You have engaged no one in her place. Why not?"

"Nicolette is sufficient."

"But you ought to have a lady's-maid."

"Have I not Marius?"

"You ought to have a house of your own, servants of your own, a carriage, and a box at the opera. Nothing is too good for you. Why not take advantage of your riches? Wealth adds to happiness."

Cosette made no reply.

Jean Valjean's visits did not grow shorter,— far from it. When it is the heart that is slipping, we do not stop on the downward slope.

When Jean Valjean wished to prolong his visit and to make Cosette forget the hour, he sang the praises of Marius; he pronounced him handsome, noble, brave, witty, eloquent, and good. Cosette outdid him. Jean Valjean began again. They were never weary. MARIUS, that word was inexhaustible; there were volumes in those six letters. In this way Jean Valjean managed to stay a long time.

It was so sweet to see Cosette, to forget at her side! It healed his wounds. Basque often had to come twice to announce: "M. Gillenormand has sent me to remind the Baroness that dinner is waiting."

On those days Jean Valjean would return home very thoughtful.

Was there, then, any truth in that comparison of the chrysalis which had occurred to Marius's mind? Was Jean Valjean really an obstinate chrysalis, constantly paying visits to his butterfly?

One day he remained even longer than usual. The next day he noticed that there was no fire in the grate. "Hullo!" he thought. "No fire." And he explained it to himself

thus: "It is quite natural; it is April now. The cold weather is over."

"Good gracious, how cold it is here!" exclaimed Cosette, as she came in.

"Oh, no," said Jean Valjean.

"Then it was you who told Basque not to light a fire?"

"Yes, it will be May directly."

"But we have fires into June. In this cellar of a place there ought to be one all the year round."

"I thought it was unnecessary."

"That is just like one of your ideas," remarked Cosette.

The next day, there was a fire; but the two chairs were arranged on the other side of the door. "What is the meaning of that?" thought Jean Valjean.

He fetched the chairs and restored them to their usual place near the fire.

This rekindled fire, however, encouraged him. He made the conversation last even longer than usual. As he rose to leave, Cosette remarked to him: —

"My husband said a funny thing to me yesterday."

"What was it?"

"He said to me, 'Cosette, we have thirty thousand francs a year,—twenty-seven of yours, and three that my grandfather allows me.' I replied, 'That makes thirty.' He continued: 'Would you have the courage to live on the three thousand?' I answered, 'Yes, on nothing, provided that it be with you.' And then I asked him: 'Why do you ask me?' He replied: 'I only wanted to know.'"

Jean Valjean had not a word to say. Cosette probably expected some explanation, from him; he listened to her in sullen silence.

He returned to the Rue de l'Homme Armé; he was so profoundly abstracted that, instead of entering his own house, he went into the next one. It was not until he had gone up nearly two flights of stairs that he noticed his mistake, and came down again.

His mind was filled full with conjectures. It was evident

that Marius entertained doubts as to the origin of the six hundred thousand francs, that he feared some impure source; he might even — who knew? — have discovered that this money came from him, Jean Valjean; that he hesitated to touch this suspicious fortune, and was loath to use it as his own, preferring that Cosette and he should remain poor, rather than to be rich with dubious wealth.

Moreover, Jean Valjean was beginning to feel that he was being shown the door.

On the following day, he had a sort of shock on entering the basement-room. The arm-chairs had disappeared. There was not a seat of any sort.

" Dear me, no chairs!" exclaimed Cosette, as she entered. " Where are the chairs?"

" They are gone," replied Jean Valjean.

" That is rather too much!"

Jean Valjean stammered: —

" I told Basque to take them away."

" For what reason?"

" I shall only stay a few minutes to-day."

" Few or many, that is no reason for standing."

" I believe that Basque required the chairs for the drawing-room."

" Why?"

" You have company this evening, no doubt."

" Not a soul."

Jean Valjean had not another word to say.

Cosette shrugged her shoulders.

" To have the chairs taken away! The other day you ordered the fire to be put out! How queer you are!"

" Good-bye," murmured Jean Valjean.

He did not say, " Good-bye, Cosette," but he had not the strength to say, " Good-bye, madame."

He went away, overwhelmed.

This time he understood.

The next day he did not come. Cosette did not notice this until evening.

"Dear me," said she, "Monsieur Jean did not come to-day."

She felt a slight pang, but she scarcely noticed it, for her attention was at once diverted by a kiss from Marius.

The next day he did not come either.

Cosette paid no heed to this, spent the evening, and slept at night as usual, and only thought of it when she woke. She was so happy! She very soon sent Nicolette to Monsieur Jean's house to ask whether he were ill, and why he had not come to see her on the previous day. Nicolette brought back Monsieur Jean's answer. "He was not ill. He was busy. He would come soon,— as soon as he could; but he was going to take a little journey. Madame would remember that he was accustomed to take trips every now and then. She need not feel at all alarmed or trouble herself about him."

Nicolette, on entering Monsieur Jean's room, had repeated to him her mistress's exact words. "Madame sent to know 'why Monsieur Jean had not called on the previous day.'"

"I have not called for two days," said Jean Valjean, quietly.

But this remark escaped Nicolette's notice, and she did not repeat it to Cosette.

CHAPTER IV

ATTRACTION AND EXTINCTION

DURING the last months of spring and the early months of the summer of 1833 the few passers-by in the Marais, the shopkeepers, and the idlers in the doorways, noticed an old man, decently dressed in black, who every day, about the same hour, at nightfall, left the Rue de l'Homme Armé, went toward the Rue Sainte Croix de la Bretonnerie, passed in front of the Blancs Manteaux, reached the Rue Culture-St.-Catherine, and on coming to the Rue de l'Echarpe turned to his left and entered the Rue St. Louis.

There he walked slowly, with head stretched forward, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, with his eye steadily fixed on one spot, always the same, which seemed to be his magnet, and which was no other than the corner of the Rue des Filles du Calvaire. The nearer he came to this corner the more brightly his eyes flashed, a sort of joy illumined them like an inward dawn; he had a fascinated and affectionate look, his lips made obscure movements as if he were talking to some one whom he did not see, he smiled vaguely, and he advanced as slowly as he could. It seemed as if, while anxious to reach the goal, he yet dreaded the moment when he should be quite close to it. When he had only a few houses between himself and that street which seemed to attract him, his step became so slow that at moments he seemed not to move at all. The vacillation of his head and the fixity of his eye suggested the needle seeking the pole. However much he might delay the time of his arrival, he must needs arrive at last. He reached the corner of the Rue des Filles du Calvaire; then he trembled, thrust his head with a sort of mournful timidity round the corner of the last house and looked into that street, and there was in that tragic gaze something that resembled the dazzling light of the impossible and the reflection from a paradise which was closed to him. Then a tear, which had gradually gathered in his eye, having grown large enough to fall, trickled down his cheek, and sometimes stopped at his mouth. The old man tasted its bitter flavour. He stood thus for some minutes as if made of stone, then he returned by the same road at the same pace; and the farther he got, the more lustreless his eye became.

By degrees this old man ceased to go as far as the corner of the Rue des Filles du Calvaire; he stopped half-way in the Rue St. Louis,— sometimes a little farther off, sometimes a little nearer.

One day he halted at the corner of the Rue Culture-St.-Catherine, and gazed at the Rue des Filles du Calvaire from a distance. Then he silently shook his head, as if refusing himself something, and turned back.

Soon he did not even get as far as the Rue St. Louis. He went to the Rue Pavée, shook his head, and turned back; then he went no farther than the Rue des Trois Pavillons; and then he did not pass the Blancs Manteaux. He seemed like a clock which had run down, whose pendulum moves slower and slower till it stops.

Every day he left his house at the same hour, undertook the same trip, but he no longer accomplished it; and, though perhaps unconscious of the fact, he constantly shortened it. His whole countenance expressed this one idea: What is the use? His eyes were dim; there was no light in them. His tears were also dried up; they no longer gathered in the corner of his lids; that pensive eye was dry. The old man's head was still thrust forward; his chin moved at times; and the wrinkles in his thin neck were painful to behold. Sometimes, when the weather was bad, he had an umbrella under his arm, but he never opened it.

The good women of the district said: "He is a simpleton," and the children followed him with shouts of laughter.

BOOK IX

SUPREME DARKNESS, SUPREME DAWN

CHAPTER I

PITY THE UNHAPPY, BUT BE INDULGENT TO THE HAPPY

IT is a terrible thing to be happy! How satisfied people are! How all-sufficient they find it! How, when possessed of the false object of life, happiness, they forget the true object, duty!

We must admit, however, that it would be unjust to reproach Marius.

Marius, as we have explained, before his marriage asked no questions of M. Fauchelevent, and since then he had been afraid to ask any of Jean Valjean. He had regretted the promise which he had allowed to be drawn from him. He had repeatedly said to himself that he had done wrong in making that concession to despair. He had confined himself to gradually turning Jean Valjean out of his house, and to effacing him as far as possible from Cosette's mind. He had, in some sort, always placed himself between Cosette and Jean Valjean, feeling certain that in this way she would not see him or think of him. It was more than effacement; it was an eclipse.

Marius did what he considered necessary and just. He thought that he had serious reasons, which we have already seen, and others which we have yet to see, for getting rid of Jean Valjean, without harshness, but without weakness.

Chance having made him acquainted, in a case which he had argued, with a former clerk of Lafitte's bank, he had obtained without seeking it mysterious information, which he had not been able, it is true, to examine fully, out of respect for the secret he had promised to keep, and out of regard for Jean Valjean's perilous situation. He believed at this very moment that he had a serious duty to perform,—the restitution of the six hundred thousand francs to some one whom he was seeking as discreetly as he could. Meantime, he abstained from touching that money.

As for Cosette, she was not acquainted with any of these secrets; but it would be harsh to condemn her either.

Between Marius and her there existed an all-powerful magnetism, which made her do, instinctively and almost mechanically, whatever Marius wished. She was conscious of Marius's wish in the matter of Monsieur Jean; she conformed to it. Her husband was not obliged to say anything to her; she yielded to the vague but clear pressure of his tacit intentions, and obeyed blindly. Her obedience in this case consisted in not remembering what Marius forgot. It was no effort for her to do so. Without her knowing why, and without any ground for blame, her mind had become so wholly that of her husband that whatever was covered with a shadow in Marius's thoughts became obscured in hers.

Let us not go too far, however; as regards Jean Valjean, this effacement and this forgetfulness were only superficial. She was thoughtless rather than forgetful. In her heart she truly loved the man whom she had so long called her father; but she loved her husband more. It was this that had slightly disturbed the balance of her heart, which weighed down on one side only.

It sometimes happened that Cosette would speak of Jean Valjean, and express her surprise. Then Marius would calm her: "He is away, I think. Did he not say that he was going on a journey?" "That is true," thought Cosette; "he had a habit of disappearing, but not for so long a time." Twice or thrice she sent Nicolette to inquire in the

Rue de l'Homme Armé whether Monsieur Jean had returned from his journey. Jean Valjean sent answer in the negative.

Cosette asked no more, as she had but one want on earth,—Marius.

Let us also say that Marius and Cosette had been absent too. They went to Vernon. Marius took Cosette to his father's grave. Marius had gradually won Cosette away from Jean Valjean. Cosette had allowed it.

However, what is called, much too harshly in certain cases, the ingratitude of children is not always so reprehensible a thing as is supposed. It is the ingratitude of nature. Nature, as we have said elsewhere, "looks before her." Nature divides living beings into arrivals and departures. Those who are departing turn toward the darkness, those who are arriving toward the light; hence a breach which on the part of the old is fatal, on the part of the young is involuntary. This breach, at first insensible, increases slowly, like every separation of branches. The boughs grow away from the parent stem without detaching themselves from it. It is not their fault. Youth goes where there is joy; it seeks festivals, bright light, and love. Old age advances toward the end. They do not lose sight of each other, but there is no longer a close embrace. Young people feel the chill of life, old people that of the tomb. Let us not reproach these poor children.

CHAPTER II

THE LAST FLICKERINGS OF THE LAMP WITHOUT OIL

ONE day Jean Valjean went down his staircase, took three steps in the street, seated himself upon a stone post, the same one on which Gavroche had found him musing on the night of June 5; he stayed there a few minutes, and then went up again. This was the last swing of the pendulum.

Next day he did not leave his room; the day after that he did not leave his bed.

The porter's wife, who prepared his scanty meals for him, — some cabbage or a few potatoes and a little bacon,— looked at the brown earthenware plate and exclaimed: —

"Why, poor, dear man, you ate nothing yesterday!"

"Yes I did," answered Jean Valjean.

"The plate is quite full."

"Look at the water-jug. It is empty."

"That proves that you have drunk; it does not prove that you have eaten."

"Well," said Jean Valjean, "suppose that I only felt hungry for water?"

"That is called thirst; and if a man does not eat at the same time, it is called fever."

"I will eat to-morrow."

"Or on Trinity Sunday. Why not to-day? Whoever thought of saying, 'I will eat to-morrow'? The idea of leaving my dish without touching it! My lady's finger potatoes were so good!"

Jean Valjean took the old woman's hand.

"I promise you to eat them," he said, in his gentle voice.

"I am not pleased with you," replied the woman.

Jean Valjean never saw any other human creature but this good woman. There are streets in Paris through which people never pass, and houses which people never enter. He lived in one of those streets and one of those houses.

During the time when he still went out, he had bought of a coppersmith, for a few sous, a small copper crucifix, which he hung on a nail opposite his bed. That gibbet is always good to look on.

A week passed thus, and Jean Valjean still remained in bed. The porter's wife said to her husband: "The old fellow upstairs does not get up, he does not eat, he will not last long. That man has some sorrow, I know he has. No one will get it out of my head that his daughter has not made a bad match."

The porter replied, with the accent of marital supremacy: —

"If he is rich, let him call a doctor. If he is not rich, let him do without. If he has no doctor, he will die."

"And if he has one?"

"He will die," said the porter.

The porter's wife began to scrape away the grass from what she called her pavement, with an old knife; and as she pulled up the grass she grumbled: —

"It's a pity,— such a nice old man. He is as white as a spring chicken."

She saw a doctor who lived in the district passing at the foot of the street, and took it upon herself to ask him to go up.

"It's on the second floor," said she. "You can go right in. As the old fellow no longer leaves his bed, the key is always in the lock."

The doctor saw Jean Valjean and spoke with him.

When he came down again, the porter's wife was waiting for him: —

"Well, doctor?"

"He is very ill."

"What is the matter with him?"

"Everything and nothing. He is a man who, to all appearances, has lost some one whom he loved. People die of that."

"What did he say to you?"

"He told me that he was quite well."

"Will you call again, doctor?"

"Yes," replied the doctor. "But some one else must come too."

CHAPTER III

A PEN IS TOO HEAVY FOR HIM WHO LIFTED FAUCHELEVENT'S CART

ONE evening Jean Valjean found it hard to raise himself on his elbow; he felt his wrist, but could not find his pulse; his breathing was short, and stopped every now and then; he saw that he was weaker than he had ever been before. Then, doubtless under the pressure of some supreme preoccupation, he made an effort, sat up, and dressed himself. He put on his old workman's clothes. As he no longer went out, he had returned to them, and preferred them. He was compelled to pause several times while dressing himself; the perspiration poured off his forehead merely from the effort of putting his arms into his sleeves.

Since he had been alone, he had placed his bed in the anteroom, so as to occupy as little as possible of the deserted apartments.

He opened the valise and took out Cosette's clothes.

He spread them on his bed.

The bishop's candlesticks were in their place on the mantelpiece. He took two wax candles from a drawer and put them in the candlesticks. Then, although it was broad daylight,— it was summer,— he lit them. We sometimes see candles lighted thus in broad daylight in rooms where dead men are lying.

Every step that he took in going from one piece of furniture to another exhausted him, and he was obliged to sit down. It was not ordinary fatigue, which uses up the strength only to renew it; it was the remnant of possible motion; it was exhausted life drained drop by drop in tremendous efforts which will never be repeated.

One of the chairs on which he sank stood near the mirror, so fatal to him, so providential to Marius, in which he had

read Cosette's reversed writing on the blotting-book. He saw himself in that mirror, and did not know himself. He was eighty years old; before Marius's marriage he had looked scarcely fifty; this last year counted for thirty. What he bore on his brow was no longer the wrinkles of age, it was the mysterious mark of death. The dents of that pitiless nail could be traced there. His cheeks were flaccid; the skin of his face had that colour which leads to the belief that there is already earth on it; the corners of his mouth drooped as in that mask which the ancients sculptured on tombs; he gazed into space reproachfully; he resembled one of those grand tragic beings who have cause to complain of some one.

He had reached that stage, the last phase of dejection, in which grief no longer flows; it is, so to speak, coagulated; there is something on the soul like a clot of despair.

Night had set in. He laboriously dragged a table and the old easy-chair to the fireside, and laid on the table pen, ink, and paper.

This done, he fainted away. When he regained his senses, he was thirsty.

As he could not lift the water-jug, he tipped it to his lips with an effort, and drank a mouthful.

Then he turned to the bed, and still seated, for he was unable to stand, he gazed at the little black dress and all those loved objects.

Such contemplations last for hours, which appear minutes.

All at once he shuddered; he felt that the cold had struck him. He leaned his elbows on the table which was lighted by the bishop's candlesticks, and took up the pen.

As neither the pen nor the ink had been used for a long time, the nib of the pen was bent, the ink had dried up; he was, therefore, obliged to rise and add a few drops of water to the ink, which he did not do without stopping and sitting down two or three times, and he was forced to write with the back of the pen. He wiped his forehead from time to time.

His hand trembled as he slowly wrote the following lines: —

"Cosette, I bless you. I will now explain to you. Your husband was right to make me understand that I ought to go away; still, he was slightly mistaken in his belief, but he was right. He is a worthy man. Love him as much as ever when I am gone. Monsieur Pontmercy, always love my beloved child. Cosette, this paper will be found; this is what I want to say to you; you shall see the figures, if I have the strength to recall them; but listen to me: the money is really yours. This is the whole affair: white jet comes from Norway, black jet comes from England, and black glass beads come from Germany. Jet is lighter, more valuable, and dearer. Imitations can be made in France as well as in Germany. You only need a small anvil, two inches square, and a spirit-lamp to soften the wax. The wax used to be made with resin and lamp-black, and cost four francs the pound. I hit on the idea of making it of shellac and turpentine. It only costs thirty sous, and is much better. Buckles are made of violet glass fastened by means of this wax to a small black iron wire. The glass must be violet for iron ornaments and black for gilt ornaments. Spain buys large quantities. It is the country of jet —"

Here he stopped short, the pen slipped from his fingers, and he gave way to one of those despairing sobs which sometimes welled up from the very depths of his being; the poor man took his head between his hands and pondered.

"Oh!" he exclaimed mentally (lamentable cries, heard by God alone), "all is over. I shall never see her again. She is a smile which flashed across me. I am about to plunge into the night without even seeing her again. Oh, for one moment, for one instant, to hear her voice, to touch her gown, to see her,— her, the angel,— and then to die! Death is nothing; the frightful thing is to die without seeing her. She would smile on me, she would say a word to me; would that do any one any harm? No; all is over, forever. I am all alone. My God! my God! I shall see her no more."

At this moment there was a knock at his door.

CHAPTER IV

A BOTTLE OF INK WHICH ONLY WHITENS

THAT same day, or, to speak more correctly, that same evening, as Marius left the dinner-table and was withdrawing to his study, as he had a brief to get up, Basque handed him a letter, saying, "The person who wrote the letter is in the anteroom."

Cosette had taken her grandfather's arm, and was strolling round the garden.

A letter, like a man, may have an unprepossessing appearance. The mere sight of coarse paper, clumsily folded, is displeasing.

The letter which Basque brought was of that description.

Marius took it. It smelled of tobacco. Nothing arouses recollection so much as a smell. Marius recognized that tobacco. He looked at the address: "*To Baron Pommerci, At his house.*" The recognition of the tobacco led him to recognize the handwriting as well. We may say that astonishment has its lightning flashes.

Marius was, as it were, illuminated by one of these flashes. The sense of smell, that mysterious aid to memory, had revived a whole world within him. It was indeed the paper, the mode of folding, the pale ink; it was indeed the well-known handwriting, and, above all, it was the tobacco.

The Jondrette garret rose before him.

Thus — strange freak of fate! — one of the two trails which he had so long sought, the one for which he had latterly made so many efforts and which he believed forever lost, offered itself voluntarily to him.

He eagerly broke the seal and read: —

BARON,— If the Supreme Being had endowed me with the necessary talent, I might have been Baron Thénard, member of the Institute (academy of cienses), but I am not. I merely bear the same name,

and shall be happy if this reminisence recommends me to the excellense of your kindness. The benefits with which you may honour me will be reciprocal. I am in possession of a secret conserning an individual. This individual conserns you. I hold the secret at your disposal, as I desire to have the honour of being huseful to you. I will give you the simple means for expeling from your honourable family this individual who has no right in it, the Barroness being of high birth. The sanctuary of virtue cannot longer coabit with crime without abdicating.

I await in the anteroom the orders of the Baron.

Respectfully.

The letter was signed "THÉNARD."

This signature was not false. It was only slightly abridged.

However, the bombast and the bad spelling completed the revelation. The certificate of origin was perfect. No doubt was possible.

Marius's emotion was profound. After his first feeling of surprise, he had a feeling of happiness. Let him now find the other man he sought, the man who had saved him, Marius, and he would have nothing more to desire.

He opened a drawer in his bureau, took out several banknotes, put them in his pocket, closed the bureau again, and rang. Basque half opened the door.

"Show the man in," said Marius.

Basque announced:—

"M. Thénard."

A man entered.

A fresh surprise for Marius. The man he now saw was an utter stranger to him.

This man, who was old, by the way, had a large nose, his chin muffled in his cravat, green spectacles, with a double shade of green silk over his eyes, and his hair smoothed down and plastered on his forehead on a line with his eyebrows, like the wig of an English coachman in "high life." His hair was gray. He was dressed in black from head to foot,—a very seedy but decent black; a bunch of seals, hanging from his fob, led to the supposition that he had a watch. He held an old hat in his hand. He walked bent, and the curve in his spine added to the depth of his bow.

The most noticeable thing, at the first glance, was that this person's coat, too large, though carefully buttoned, had not been made for him.

A short digression is necessary here.

There was in Paris at that period, in a dingy old house in the Rue Beaütreillis, near the Arsenal, an ingenious Jew whose trade it was to convert a rogue into an honest man,— not for too long a period, as that might have been embarrassing to the rogue. The change was effected on sight, for one day or two, at the rate of thirty sous a day, by means of a costume resembling, as closely as possible, every-day honesty. This letter-out of costumes was called the "Lightning Change Artist." Parisian pick-pockets had given him that name, and knew him by no other. He had a tolerably complete wardrobe. The rags in which he rigged people out were almost possible. He had specialties and categories; from each nail in his shop hung a social condition, worn and threadbare,— here the magistrate's coat, there the priest's cassock and the banker's coat; in one corner the coat of an officer on half-pay, elsewhere the coat of a man of letters, and farther on the statesman's coat.

This creature was the costumer of the immense drama which rascality plays in Paris. His den was the green-room from which robbery emerged and whither swindling retreated. A ragged knave came to this dressing-room, laid down thirty sous, and selected, according to the part which he wished to play on that especial day, the dress which suited him; and when he went down stairs again, the scamp was somebody else. Next day, the clothes were faithfully returned; and the Lightning Change Artist, who trusted everything to the thieves, was never robbed. These garments had one inconvenience,— they did not fit; not having been made for those who wore them, they were tight for one, loose for another, and suited nobody. Any swindler who exceeded or fell short of the average mean was uncomfortable in the Lightning Change Artist's costumes. A man must be neither too stout nor too thin. The Artist had only provided for ordinary

mortals. He had taken the measure of the species in the person of the first thief who turned up, who was neither stout nor thin, nor tall, nor short. Hence arose adaptations which were sometimes difficult, and which the Artist's customers got over as best they could. So much the worse for the exceptions! The statesman's garments, for instance, black from head to foot, and consequently becoming, would have been too loose for Pitt and too tight for Castelcicala.

The statesman's suit was thus described in the Artist's catalogue; we copy: "A black cloth coat, black moleskin trousers, a silk waistcoat, boots, and white shirt." On the margin was written, "*Ex-Ambassador*," and a note which we will also transcribe: "In a separate box, a carefully dressed peruke, green spectacles, bunch of seals, and two little quills an inch in length, wrapped in cotton." All this belonged to the statesman, the ex-ambassador. The whole costume was, if we may so express it, exhausted; the seams were white; and a small button-hole gaped at one of the elbows; moreover, a button was missing off the front,— but this is a mere detail; as the hand of the statesman should always be thrust into his coat and laid upon his heart, it was its duty to hide the missing button.

Had Marius been familiar with the occult institutions of Paris, he would at once have recognized upon the back of the visitor whom Basque had just shown in the statesman's coat borrowed from the "hand-me-down" shop of the Lightning Change Artist.

Marius's disappointment on seeing a different man from the one whom he expected turned to the disadvantage of the new-comer.

He examined him from head to foot, while that personage made him an exaggerated bow, and asked curtly: "What do you want?"

The man replied with an amiable grin, of which the caressing smile of a crocodile might supply some idea:

"It seems to me impossible that I have not already had the honour of seeing you, Baron, in society. I have a pe-

culiar impression of having met you a few years back at the Princess Bagration's, and in the drawing-room of his Excellency Viscount Dambray, Peer of France."

It is always good tactics in swindling to pretend to recognize a person whom the swindler does not know.

Marius paid attention to the man's words. He studied his accent and gestures, but his disappointment increased; the pronunciation was nasal, and absolutely unlike the sharp, dry voice he expected.

He was utterly thrown off the track.

"I do not know," he said, "either Madame Bagration or Monsieur Dambray. I never in my life set foot in the house of either of them."

The answer was surly. The personage with undiminished affability continued: —

"Then it must have been at Châteaubriand's that I saw you! I know Châteaubriand intimately. He is a most affable man. He sometimes says to me: 'Thénard, my good friend, won't you drink a glass with me?'"

Marius's brow became sterner and sterner.

"I never had the honour of being introduced to M. de Châteaubriand. Come to the point. What do you want?"

The man bowed lower still before the harsh voice.

"Deign to listen to me, Baron. There is in America, in a region near Panama, a village called La Joya. This village is composed of a single house,— a large, square house, three stories high, built of bricks dried in the sun, each side of the square five hundred feet long, and each story retreating from the one below it for a distance of twelve feet, so as to leave a terrace in front which runs all round the house. In the centre is an inner court where provisions and ammunition are stored; there are no windows, only loop-holes; no doors, only ladders,— ladders to mount from the ground to the first terrace, and from the first to the second, and from the second to the third; ladders to descend into the inner court; no doors to the rooms, only traps; no staircases to the apartments, only ladders. At night the trap-doors are

closed, the ladders are drawn up, blunderbusses and carbines are placed in the loop-holes; there is no way of entering; it is a house by day, a citadel by night; eight hundred inhabitants,— such is that village. Why such precautions? Because the country is dangerous; it is full of cannibals. Then why do people go there? Because it is a marvellous country; gold is found there."

"What are you driving at?" interrupted Marius, who had passed from disappointment to impatience.

"To this, Baron. I am an old, worn-out diplomatist. I am sick of our old civilization. I want to try savages."

"What next?"

"Baron, egotism is the law of the world. The proletarian peasant wench who works by the day turns round when the diligence passes, but the peasant proprietress who is working on her own field does not turn. The poor man's dog barks at the rich; the rich man's dog barks at the poor. Every man for himself. Self-interest,— that is the object of mankind. Gold is the magnet."

"What next? Conclude."

"I should like to go and settle at La Joya. There are three of us. I have my wife and my daughter,— a very lovely girl. The voyage is long and expensive. I am short of funds."

"What is that to me?" asked Marius.

The stranger stretched his neck out of his cravat, a gesture characteristic of the vulture, and said, with a more affable smile than ever,—

"Have you read my letter, Baron?"

The fact is that the contents of the epistle had escaped Marius. He had seen the writing rather than read the letter. He scarcely remembered it. A fresh start had just been given him. He noticed that detail: "My wife and daughter."

He fixed a penetrating glance on the stranger. A magistrate could not have done it better. He confined himself to saying: —

"Come to the point."

He almost laid in wait for him.

The stranger thrust his hands into his waistcoat pockets, raised his head without straightening his backbone, but scrutinizing Marius in his turn with the green gaze of his spectacles.

"So be it, Baron. I will come to the point. I have a secret to sell you."

"A secret?"

"A secret."

"Which concerns me?"

"Slightly."

"What is this secret?"

Marius scanned the man more and more closely as he listened.

"I will begin gratis," said the stranger. "You will soon see that it is interesting."

"Speak."

"Baron, you have in your house a robber and an assassin."

Marius gave a start.

"In my house? No," said he.

The imperturbable stranger brushed his hat on his elbow, and went on: —

"An assassin and robber. Observe, Baron, that I am not speaking now of old, forgotten deeds,— deeds which might be outlawed by the lapse of time, and effaced by repentance before God. I speak of recent facts, actual facts, of facts still unknown to justice. I continue. This man has crept into your confidence, and almost into your family, under a false name. I will tell you his true name, and tell you for nothing."

"I am listening."

"His name is Jean Valjean."

"I know it."

"I will tell you, also for nothing, who he is."

"Speak."

"He is an ex-convict."

'I know it."

"You know it because I have had the honour to tell you."

"No, I knew it before."

Marius's cold tone, this double reply, "I know it," his laconic answers so inimical to dialogue, aroused some latent anger in the stranger. He shot a furious side-glance at Marius, which was immediately extinguished. Rapid though it was, the glance was one of those which are recognized if they have once been seen; it did not escape Marius. Certain flashes can only come from certain souls; the eye, that cellar-door of the soul, is lit up by them. Green spectacles conceal nothing; you might as well put a pane of glass over hell.

The stranger continued, smiling: —

"I will not venture to contradict you, Baron; but in any case you see that I am well informed. Now, what I have to tell you is known to myself alone. It affects the fortune of the Baroness. It is an extraordinary secret. It is for sale. I offer it you first. Cheap,— twenty thousand francs."

"I know that secret as I know the others," said Marius.

The personage felt the necessity of lowering his price a little.

"Come, Baron, say ten thousand francs, and I will speak."

"I repeat that you can tell me nothing. I know what you want to say to me."

There was a fresh flash in the man's eye. He exclaimed: —

"Still, I must dine to-day. It is an extraordinary secret, I tell you. Sir, I must speak. I will speak. Give me twenty francs."

Marius looked steadily at him.

"I know your extraordinary secret, just as I knew Jean Valjean's name, just as I know your name."

"My name?"

"Yes."

"That is not difficult, Baron. I had the honour of writing it to you and of mentioning it to you. Thénard."

"——dier."

"Eh?"

"Thénardier."

"Who's that?"

In danger the porcupine bristles, the beetle feigns death, the old guard form a square. This man began to laugh.

Then he flipped a grain of dust off his coat-sleeve.

Marius continued: —

"You are also Jondrette the workman, Fabantou the actor, Genflot the poet, Alvares the Spanish Don, and Madame Balizard —"

"Madame who?"

"— and you once kept a pot-house at Montfermeil."

"A pot-house! Never!"

"And I tell you that you are Thénardier."

"I deny it."

"And that you are a scoundrel. Take that!"

And Marius, drawing a bank-note from his pocket, threw it in his face.

"Thank you! Pardon me! Five hundred francs! Baron!"

And the man, overwhelmed, bowing, clutching the note, examined it.

"Five hundred francs," he continued, quite stunned. And he stammered half aloud: "A genuine rustler!" [1]

Then suddenly: —

"Well, be it so. Let us be at our ease."

And with monkey-like dexterity, throwing back his hair, tearing off his spectacles, and snatching the two quills to which we just now alluded, and which we have seen before in another part of this book, he took off his face as you or I take off our hat.

His eye grew bright; his forehead, uneven, scarred, lumpy, hideously wrinkled at top, was revealed, his nose became as sharp as a beak; the ferocious, cunning profile of the man of prey re-appeared.

"You are infallible, Baron," he said in a clear voice, from

1 Slang term for a bank-bill, derived from its rustling noise.

which all nasal twang had disappeared; "I am Thénardier."

And he drew up his crooked back.

Thénardier, for it was really he, was strangely surprised; he would have been troubled, had he been capable of such a thing. He had come to bring astonishment, and it was he who experienced it. He had been paid five hundred francs for his humiliation, and, taking it all in all, he was satisfied; but he was none the less bewildered.

He saw this Baron Pontmercy for the first time, and in spite of his disguise, this Baron Pontmercy recognized him, and recognized him thoroughly. And not only did this Baron know all about Thénardier, but he also seemed familiar with Jean Valjean.

Who was this almost beardless young man, so cold and so generous; who knew people's names, knew all their names, and opened his purse to them; who bullied rogues like a judge, and paid them like a dupe?

Thénardier, it will be remembered, though he had been Marius's neighbour, had never seen him, which is frequently the case in Paris; he had formerly vaguely heard his daughters speak of a very poor young man named Marius, who lived in the house. He had written him, without knowing him, the letter of which we know.

No connection between that Marius and Baron Pontmercy was possible in his mind.

As to the name Pontmercy, it must be remembered that on the field of Waterloo he had heard only the last two syllables, and for these he had always felt the legitimate scorn due to a mere expression of thanks.

However, he had managed, through his daughter Azelma, whom he had put on the track of the married couple on February 16, and by his own researches, to learn a good many things; and from the depths of his under-world, he had succeeded in seizing more than one mysterious clew. He had, by sheer industry, discovered, or at least, by dint of induction he had divined, who the man was whom he had met on a certain day in the Great Sewer. From the man he had easily

arrived at the name. He knew that the Baroness Pontmercy was Cosette. But on that point he intended to be discreet.

Who was Cosette? He did not exactly know himself. He certainly got a glimpse of some illegitimacy. Fantine's story had always seemed to him suspicious. But what was the use of talking about it? To get paid for his silence? He had, or fancied he had, something better to sell than that; and, in all probability, to go and make Baron Pontmercy, without further proof, this revelation: "Your wife is only a bastard," would simply result in attracting the husband's boot to the broadest part of his person.

To Thénardier's thinking, the conversation with Marius had not yet begun. He had been obliged to fall back, modify his strategy, quit his position and make a change of front; but nothing essential was as yet compromised, and he had five hundred francs in his pocket. Moreover, he had something decisive to say, and he felt himself strong even against this Baron Pontmercy, who was so well informed and so well armed. For men of Thénardier's nature, every dialogue is a combat. What was his situation in the one which was about to begin? He did not know to whom he was speaking, but he knew of what he was speaking; he rapidly reviewed his forces, and after saying: "I am Thénardier," he waited.

Marius was in deep thought. He had at last found Thénardier. The man whom he had so eagerly desired to find stood before him. He could at last honour Colonel Pontmercy's recommendation.

It humiliated him that that hero should owe anything to this ruffian, and that the bill of exchange drawn by his father from the depths of the tomb, upon him, Marius, had remained up to this day protested. It seemed to him, too, in the complex state of his mind toward Thénardier, that he was bound to avenge the colonel for the misfortune of having been saved by such a villain. But, however this might be, he was satisfied. He was at length about to free the colonel's shade from this unworthy creditor, and he felt as if he were rescuing his father's memory from a debtor's prison.

Side by side with this duty there was another,— to clear up, if possible, the source of Cosette's fortune. The opportunity appeared to present itself. Thénardier probably knew something. It might be well to search this man to the core.

He began with that.

Thénardier caused the "genuine rustler" to disappear in his waistcoat pocket, and looked at Marius with gentleness that was almost tender.

Marius was the first to break the silence.

"Thénardier, I have told you your name. Now shall I tell you your secret,— the one which you came here to impart to me? I have means of information of my own. You shall see that I know more than you do. Jean Valjean, as you said, is an assassin and a robber,— a robber, because he plundered a rich manufacturer, M. Madeleine, whose ruin he caused; an assassin, because he murdered Inspector Javert."

"I do not understand you, Baron," said Thénardier.

"I will make you understand. Listen. In a certain district of the Pas de Calais, about the year 1822, there was a man who had once fallen out with the authorities, and who had rehabilitated and raised himself, under the name of Monsieur Madeleine. This man had become, in the fullest sense of the word, an honest man. He made the fortune of an entire town by a new industry,— the manufacture of black glass goods. As for his private fortune, he made that too, but as a second thought, and, in some sort, by accident. He was the foster-father of the poor. He founded hospitals, opened schools, visited the sick, dowered girls, supported widows, adopted orphans; he was, as it were, the guardian of the whole country. He refused the cross of the Legion of Honour, he was made mayor. A released convict knew the secret of a penalty formerly incurred by this man; he denounced him, and had him arrested, and took advantage of the arrest to come to Paris and draw out of Lafitte's bank,— I have the facts from the cashier himself,— by means of a false signature, the sum of half a million and more, which

belonged to M. Madeleine. The convict who robbed M. Madeleine, was Jean Valjean. As for the other fact, you can tell me no more than I know. Jean Valjean killed Inspector Javert; he shot him with a pistol. I, who speak to you, was present."

Thénardier gave Marius the sovereign glance of a conquered man who regains his hold on victory, and recovered in a single minute all the ground he had lost. But his smile at once returned. The inferior, when in presence of his superior, must keep his triumph to himself.

Thénardier contented himself with saying to Marius:

"Baron, we are on the wrong track."

And he emphasized his words by giving his bunch of seals an expressive twirl.

"What!" replied Marius, "do you dispute that? These are facts."

"They are chimeras. The confidence with which you honour me makes it my duty to tell you so. Truth and justice before all things. I do not like to see people accused wrongfully. Sir, Jean Valjean did not rob M. Madeleine, and Jean Valjean did not kill Javert."

"This is too much! How so?"

"For two reasons."

"What are they? Speak."

"The first is this: he did not rob M. Madeleine, because Jean Valjean himself is M. Madeleine."

"What nonsense are you talking?"

"And this is the second: he did not assassinate Javert, because the man who killed Javert was Javert."

"What do you mean?"

"That Javert committed suicide."

"Prove it! prove it!" cried Marius, beside himself.

Thénardier resumed, scanning his sentence after the fashion of an ancient Alexandrine verse: —

"Police - Agent - Javert-was-found-drowned-un-der-a-boat-near-the-Pont-au-Change."

"But prove it, then."

Thénardier drew from his side-pocket a large gray-paper envelope, which seemed to contain folded papers of various sizes.

"I have my proofs," he said calmly.

And he added: —

"Sir, in your interests I desired to know Jean Valjean thoroughly. I say that Jean Valjean and Madeleine are one and the same man, and I say that Javert had no other assassin but Javert; and when I say this, it is because I have proofs,— not manuscript proofs, for writing is suspicious, writing is complaisant, but printed proofs."

As he spoke, Thénardier extracted from the envelope two newspapers, yellow, faded, and strongly saturated with tobacco. One of these papers, broken at every fold, and falling into rags, seemed much older than the other.

"Two facts, two proofs," said Thénardier, as he handed Marius the two open newspapers.

These two papers the reader knows. One, the older, a number of the "Drapeau Blanc" for July 25, 1823, of which the exact text was given in the second volume of this story, established the identity of M. Madeleine and Jean Valjean.

The other, a "Moniteur," of June 15, 1832, announced the suicide of Javert, adding that it appeared from a verbal report made by Javert to the prefect, that he had been made prisoner at the barricade of the Rue de la Chanvrerie, and owed his life to the magnanimity of an insurgent, who, holding him under his pistol, instead of blowing out his brains, fired in the air.

Marius read. Here was evidence, a certain date, irrefragable proof.

These two papers were not printed expressly to support Thénardier's statement; the note published in the "Moniteur" was an official communication from the prefecture of police. Marius could no longer doubt.

The cashier's information was false, and he was himself mistaken.

Jean Valjean, suddenly growing grand, emerged from the cloud. Marius could not repress a cry of joy.

"Well, then, that poor fellow is a wonderful man! The whole of that fortune was really his! He is Madeleine, the providence of an entire town! he is Jean Valjean, the saviour of Javert! he is a hero! he is a saint!"

"He is not a saint, and he is not a hero," said Thénardier. "He is an assassin and a robber."

And he added, in the tone of a man who begins to feel himself possessed of some authority: "Let us be calm."

Robber, assassin; those words, which Marius thought had disappeared, and which returned, fell upon him like an icy shower-bath.

"Again —" said he.

"Again and yet again," said Thénardier. "Jean Valjean did not rob M. Madeleine, but he is a robber. He did not murder Javert, but he is a murderer."

"Do you allude," continued Marius, "to that paltry theft committed forty years back, and expiated, as is proved from those very papers of yours, by a whole life of repentance, self-denial, and virtue."

"I say assassination and robbery, Baron; and I repeat that I allude to recent facts. What I have to reveal to you is absolutely unknown. It is unpublished matter, and you may perhaps find in it the source of the fortune so cleverly offered by Jean Valjean to the Baroness. I say cleverly, for it would be far from stupid, by a donation of that nature, to step into an honourable house, whose comforts he would share, and at the same time to hide his crime, enjoy his robbery, bury his name, and create a family."

"I might interrupt you here," observed Marius, "but go on."

"I will tell you all, Baron, leaving the reward to your generosity. This secret is worth its weight in gold. You will say to me: 'Why not apply to Jean Valjean?' For a very simple reason. I know that he has stripped himself, and stripped himself in your favour, and I consider the com-

bination ingenious; but he has not a sou left. He would show me his empty hands; and as I want money for my journey to La Joya, I prefer you,—you who have everything, to him who has nothing. I am rather tired; permit me to take a chair."

Marius sat down, and signed to him to do the same.

Thénardier installed himself in an easy-chair, picked up his two newspapers, put them back in their envelope, and muttered, as he pecked at the "Drapeau Blanc" with his nail: "It cost me a deal of trouble to get this one."

This done, he crossed his legs, threw himself back in the chair,—an attitude characteristic of those who are sure of what they are saying; then he began his narrative gravely, emphasizing his words:—

"Baron, on June 6, 1832, about a year ago, on the day of the riots, a man was in the Great Sewer of Paris, at the point where the sewer enters the Seine, between the Pont des Invalides and the Pont de Jena."

Marius hurriedly drew his chair closer to Thénardier's chair. Thénardier noticed this movement, and continued with the deliberation of an orator who holds his hearer and feels his adversary quivering under his words:—

"This man, forced to hide himself (for reasons, however, unconnected with politics), had selected the sewer as his abode, and had a key to it. It was, I repeat, June 6; it might have been about eight in the evening. The man heard a noise in the sewer. Greatly surprised, he concealed himself, and watched. It was the sound of footsteps; some one was walking in the darkness and coming in his direction. Strange to say, there was another man in the sewer besides himself. The mouth of the sewer was no great distance off. A faint light which fell through it, enabled him to recognize the new-comer, and to see that he was carrying something on his back. He walked in a stooping posture. He was an ex-convict, and what he had on his shoulders was a corpse. A flagrant case of assassination, if ever there was one. As for the robbery, that is a matter of course; no one kills a man for

nothing. This convict was on his way to throw the body into the river. A fact worth noticing is, that before reaching the outlet the convict, who had come a long way through the sewer, must necessarily have encountered a frightful bog, where it seems as if he might have left the corpse; but the sewer-men, who came to make repairs next day, would have found the murdered man, and that did not suit the assassin. He preferred to carry his burden across the slough, and his exertions must have been frightful. It is impossible to risk one's life more completely; I do not understand how he got out of it alive."

Marius's chair came nearer still. Thénardier took advantage of this to draw a long breath. He continued:

"Baron, a sewer is not the Champ de Mars. Everything is wanting there, even space. When two men are there, they must meet. This is what happened. The man who was domiciled there and the passer-by were compelled to bid each other good-evening, to their mutual regret. The passer-by said to the inhabitant: 'You see what I have on my back. I must get out. You have the key; give it to me.' This convict was a man of terrible strength. There was no chance of refusing him. Still, the man who held the key parleyed, solely to gain time. He examined the dead man, but he could see nothing, except that he was young, well dressed, looked like a rich man, and was quite disfigured with blood. While talking, he managed to tear off from behind, without the murderer perceiving it, a piece of the skirt of the victim's coat,— a convincing proof, you understand; a means of getting on the track of the affair, and bringing the crime home to the criminal.

"He puts this bit of evidence in his pocket; after which he opened the grating, allowed the man to go out with his burden on his back, locked the grating again, and himself fled, unwilling to be mixed up any further in the adventure, or above all, to be present when the assassin threw the corpse into the river. You now understand. The man who carried the corpse was Jean Valjean; the one who

had the key is speaking to you at this moment; and the piece of the coat-skirt —"

Thénardier completed his sentence by drawing from his pocket and holding on a level with his eyes, nipped between his two thumbs and forefingers, a ragged strip of black cloth all covered with dark spots.

Marius had risen, pale, scarcely able to breathe, his eyes fixed on the bit of black cloth, and without uttering a syllable, without taking his eyes from the fragment, he retreated toward the wall, and, with his right hand extended behind him, felt along the wall for a key which was in the lock of a cupboard near the mantelpiece.

He found this key, opened the cupboard, and thrust in his arm without looking, and without taking his startled gaze from the rag which Thénardier displayed.

Meantime Thénardier continued: —

"Baron, I have the strongest grounds for believing that the murdered young man was a wealthy foreigner, lured by Jean Valjean into a trap, and the bearer of an enormous sum of money."

"I was the young man, and here is the coat!" cried Marius; and he flung on the floor an old black, blood-stained coat.

Then snatching the strip from Thénardier's hands, he crouched over the coat and compared it with the skirt. The rent fitted exactly, and the fragment completed the coat.

Thénardier was petrified. He thought: "Well, I am flabbergasted!"

Marius drew himself up, shuddering, desperate, radiant. He fumbled in his pocket, and strode furiously toward Thénardier, offering him, and almost thrusting into his face, his fist filled with bank-notes for five hundred and thousand francs.

"You are an infamous wretch! You are a liar, a slanderer, a villain! You came to accuse that man, you have justified him; you meant to ruin him, you have only succeeded in glorifying him. And it is you who are the robber! It is you who are the assassin! I saw you, Thénardier —

Jondrette, in that den on the Boulevard de l'Hôpital. I know enough about you to send you to the galleys, and even farther if I choose. There are a thousand francs, bully that you are!"

And he threw a thousand-franc note at Thénardier.

"Ah, Jondrette — Thénardier, vile scoundrel! Let this serve you as a lesson, you hawker of second-hand secrets, you merchant of mysteries, you searcher of shadows, you wretch! Take these five hundred francs, and be gone from here! Waterloo protects you."

"Waterloo!" growled Thénardier, as he pocketed the five hundred francs along with the thousand.

"Yes, assassin! You saved the life of a colonel there."

"A general!" said Thénardier, raising his head.

"A colonel," repeated Marius in a fury. "I would not give a farthing for a general. And you come here to commit infamies! I tell you that you have committed every crime! Begone! Be off! Be happy, that is all I desire! Ah, monster! here are three thousand francs more. Take them. You will depart to-morrow for America with your daughter; for your wife is dead, you abominable liar! I will watch over your departure, scoundrel, and at the moment when you set sail, I will pay you twenty thousand francs. Go and get hanged elsewhere."

"Baron," answered Thénardier, bowing to the ground, "accept my eternal gratitude."

And Thénardier left the room, understanding nothing, but stunned and enchanted by this sweet crushing under bags of gold, and with this lightning flashing over his head in the shape of bank-notes. Struck by lightning he certainly was, but he was also content; and he would have been very sorry to have a lightning-rod to ward off such righting as that.

Let us finish with this man at once.

Two days after the events we have just recorded he started for America, thanks to Marius's care, under a false name, with his daughter Azelma, provided with an order on a New York banker for twenty-thousand francs. The moral poverty

of Thénardier, the tradesman who had missed his vocation, was irremediable; he was in America what he had been in Europe. Contact with a bad man is sometimes enough to corrupt a good deed, and to make something evil spring from it. With this money of Marius, Thénardier turned slave-dealer.

As soon as Thénardier had left the house, Marius ran into the garden, where Cosette was still walking.

"Cosette! Cosette!" he cried. "Come! come quickly! Let us be off. Basque, a cab! Cosette, come! Oh, heavens! it was he who saved my life. Let us not lose a minute! Put on your shawl."

Cosette thought him mad, and obeyed.

He could not breathe; he laid his hand on his heart to check its beating. He walked up and down with long strides; he embraced Cosette.

"Oh, Cosette," said he, "I am a wretch!"

Marius was bewildered. He began to catch a glimpse of some strangely lofty and sombre figure in this Jean Valjean. A rare virtue, supreme and sweet, humble in its immensity, appeared to him. The convict was transfigured into Christ.

Marius was dazzled by this miracle. He knew not exactly what he saw, but it was grand.

In an instant the cab was at the door.

Marius helped Cosette in and sprang after her.

"Driver," he cried, "No. 7, Rue de l'Homme Armé."

The carriage drove off.

"Oh, how glad I am!" said Cosette. "Rue de l'Homme Armé. I no longer dared to mention it to you. We are going to see Monsieur Jean."

"Your father, Cosette! Your father more than ever. Cosette, I see it all. You told me that you never received the letter I sent you by Gavroche. It must have fallen into his hands. Cosette, he went to the barricade to save me. As it is his greatest desire to be an angel, he saved others by the way; he saved Javert. He drew me out of that gulf to give me to you. He carried me on his back through that fright-

ful sewer. Ah! I am a monster of ingratitude. Cosette, after being your providence, he became mine. Just imagine, there was a horrible quagmire where a man might be drowned a hundred times over, drowned in mud, Cosette! He carried me through it. I had fainted; I saw nothing, I heard nothing, I could not know anything about my own adventures. We will bring him back, we will take him with us, whether he is willing or not; he shall never leave us again. I only hope he is at home! I only hope we shall find him! I will spend the rest of my life in revering him. Yes, that must be it, do you see, Cosette? Gavroche must have given my letter to him. That explains everything. You understand?"

Cosette did not understand a word.

"You are right," she said.

Meantime the carriage rolled on.

CHAPTER V

A NIGHT BEHIND WHICH IS DAY

JEAN VALJEAN turned at the knock which he heard at his door.

"Come in," he said feebly.

The door opened.

Cosette and Marius appeared.

Cosette rushed into the room.

Marius remained on the threshold, leaning against the door-post.

"Cosette!" said Jean Valjean.

And he sat up in his chair, his arms outstretched and trembling, haggard, livid, and ominous, an immense joy in his eyes.

Cosette, suffocated with emotion, fell on Jean Valjean's breast.

"Father!" said she.

Jean Valjean, utterly overcome, stammered: "Cosette! she! — you — madame! it is you! Oh, my God!"

And clasped in Cosette's arms, he exclaimed: —

"It is you! You are here! You forgive me, then!"

Marius, drooping his eyelids to keep his tears from flowing, advanced a step, and murmured between his lips, which were convulsively clenched to repress his sobs:

"Father!"

"And you, too,— you forgive me?" said Jean Valjean.

Marius could not find a word to say, and Jean Valjean added: "Thank you."

Cosette tore off her shawl and threw her bonnet on the bed.

"It is in my way," said she.

And seating herself on the old man's knees, she brushed back his white hair with an adorable movement, and kissed his forehead.

Jean Valjean, bewildered, let her have her way.

Cosette, who understood but vaguely, redoubled her caresses, as if she wished to pay the debt of Marius.

Jean Valjean stammered: —

"How foolish a man can be! I thought that I should never see her again. Just imagine, Monsieur Pontmercy, at the very moment when you came in, I was saying: 'All is over. Here is her little gown, I am a miserable man, I shall never see Cosette again;' I was saying this at the very moment when you were coming up the stairs. What an idiot I was! How idiotic we can be! But we reckon without God. The good God says: 'You imagine that you are going to be abandoned sure! No, no, things will not happen like that. Look here, there is a poor old fellow who wants an angel.' And the angel comes; and he sees his Cosette once more, and he sees his little Cosette once more! Oh, I was very unhappy."

For a moment he could not speak, then he went on: —

"I really needed to see Cosette for a little every now and

then. A heart requires a bone to gnaw. Still, I knew very well that I was in the way. I reasoned with myself: 'They do not want you, so stop in your corner; a man has no right to hang on forever.' Ah, God be praised; I see her again! Do you know, Cosette, that your husband is very handsome? What a pretty embroidered collar you are wearing; I am very glad, I like that pattern. Your husband chose it, did he not? And then, you must have some cashmere shawls. Monsieur Pontmercy, let me call her Cosette. It will not be for long."

And Cosette replied:—

"How unkind of you to leave us like that! Where have you been? Why did you stay away so long? Your journeys never used to last over three or four days. I sent Nicolette, and the answer always was: 'He is away.' When did you get back? Why did you not let us know? Do you know that you are greatly changed? Oh, naughty papa! He has been ill, and we did not know it. Here, Marius, feel how cold his hand is!"

"So you are here! So you forgive me, Monsieur Pontmercy!" repeated Jean Valjean.

At this remark, again repeated by Valjean, all that was swelling Marius's heart found vent.

He burst forth:—

"Cosette, do you hear? It has come to that! he asks my pardon. And do you know what he did for me, Cosette! He saved my life. He did more. He gave you to me. And after saving me and giving you to me, Cosette, what did he do for himself? He sacrificed himself. That is the man he is!

"And he says to me, the ingrate, the pitiless, the forgetful, the guilty one: 'Thank you!' Cosette, my whole life spent at this man's feet would be too little. That barricade, that sewer, that fiery furnace, that cesspool, he went through them all for me, for you, Cosette! He carried me through every form of death, which he held at bay from me and accepted for himself. He possesses every courage, every

virtue, every heroism, and every holiness. Cosette, that man is an angel!"

"Hush! hush!" said Jean Valjean, in a low voice. "Why tell all that?"

"But you!" cried Marius, with a passion in which was veneration, "why did you not tell me? It is your fault. You save people's lives, and you conceal it from them! You do more: under the pretext of unmasking yourself, you calumniate yourself. It is frightful!"

"I told the truth," replied Jean Valjean.

"No," retorted Marius, "the truth is the whole truth; and you did not tell that. You were Monsieur Madeleine, why not tell me so? You saved Javert, why not tell me so? I owed my life to you, why not tell me so?"

"Because I thought as you do. I thought that you were right. It was best that I should leave you. Had you known about that affair of the sewer, you would have compelled me to remain with you. I was therefore forced to hold my tongue. Had I spoken, it would have been embarrassing in every way."

"Embarrassing to whom, to what?" Marius broke out. "Do you suppose that you are going to stay here? We shall carry you off with us. Oh, good heavens! when I think that I only learned all this by a mere accident! We shall carry you off with us. You are a part of ourselves. You are her father and mine. You shall not spend another day in this frightful house. Do not fancy that you will be here to-morrow."

"To-morrow," said Jean Valjean, "I shall not be here, but I shall not be at your house."

"What do you mean?" answered Marius. "Oh! no, we shall not permit any more journeys. You shall not leave us again. You belong to us. We will not let you go."

"This time it is for good," added Cosette. "We have a carriage below. I mean to elope with you. If necessary, I shall use force."

And, laughing, she pretended to lift the old man in her arms.

"Your room still stands ready in our house," she went on. "If you only knew how pretty the garden is just now! The azaleas are coming on splendidly. The walks are strewn with river sand; there are little violet shells. You shall eat my strawberries. I water them myself. And no more 'madame' and no more 'Monsieur Jean,' for we are living under a republic; we are all on friendly terms, are we not, Marius? The programme is changed. If you only knew, father, what a grief I have had; a redbreast had made its nest in a hole in the wall, and a horrible cat ate it. My poor, pretty little robin redbreast, that used to put its head out of its window and look at me! I cried about it. I could have killed the cat! But now, nobody weeps. Everybody laughs, everybody is happy. You will come with us. How pleased grandfather will be! You shall have your bed in the garden, you shall cultivate it, and we shall see whether your strawberries are as fine as mine. And then, I will do everything you wish, and then you will obey me nicely."

Jean Valjean listened without hearing. He heard the music of her voice rather than the meaning of her words; one of those heavy tears, which are the black pearls of the soul, slowly gathered in his eye.

He murmured:—

"The proof that God is good is that she is here."

"Father!" said Cosette.

Jean Valjean continued:—

"It is true it would be charming to live together. Their trees are full of birds. I should walk about with Cosette. It is sweet to be with living people, who bid each other good-morning, who call to each other in the garden. I should see her the first thing in the morning. We would each cultivate a little bed. She would give me her strawberries to eat, I would let her pick my roses. It would be delicious. But —"

He broke off, and said gently: "It is a pity."

The tear did not fall; it was recalled, and Jean Valjean substituted a smile for it.

Cosette took both the old man's hands in hers.

"Good heavens!" said she, "your hands are colder than ever. Are you ill? Are you in pain?"

"I? No," replied Jean Valjean; "I am quite well. Only —" He paused.

"Only what?"

"I am going to die directly."

Marius and Cosette shuddered.

"To die!" exclaimed Marius.

"Yes; but that is nothing," said Jean Valjean.

He breathed, smiled, and added:—

"Cosette, you were talking to me; go on, speak again. So your little redbreast died? Speak; let me hear your voice."

Marius, who was petrified, gazed at the old man.

Cosette uttered a piercing shriek:—

"Father? father! You will live! you must live! I insist upon your living; do you hear?"

Jean Valjean looked up at her in adoration.

"Oh, yes, forbid me to die. Who knows? Perhaps I shall obey. I was on the verge of dying when you came. That stopped me, it seemed to me that I was born again."

"You are full of strength and life," exclaimed Marius. "How can you suppose that a man dies like that? You have known grief; you shall know no more. It is I who ask your pardon, and on my knees! You will live, and live with us, and live a long time. We take possession of you once more. Here are two of us who will henceforth have but one thought,— your happiness!"

"There, you see," said Cosette, bathed in tears, "Marius says that you will not die."

Jean Valjean continued to smile.

"Even if you were to take me home with you, Monsieur Pontmercy, would that make me other than I am? No. God thought as you and I did, and he does not change his

mind. It is better for me to go. Death is an excellent arrangement. God knows better than we do what we need. That you should be happy, that Monsieur Pontmercy should have Cosette, that youth should espouse the dawn, that there should be around you, my children, lilacs and nightingales, that your life should be a smooth lawn bathed in sunlight, that all the enchantments of heaven should fill your souls, and that I who am good for nothing should die,— all this is surely right.

"Come, be reasonable. Nothing is possible now; I am fully conscious that all is over. An hour ago I had a fainting-fit. And, then, last night, I drank the whole of that jug of water. How good your husband is, Cosette! You are much better off with him than with me!"

A noise was heard at the door.

It was the doctor.

"Good-day, and good-by, doctor," said Jean Valjean. "Here are my poor children."

Marius went up to the doctor. He said but one word to him: "Sir?"— but his manner of pronouncing it contained a complete question. The doctor answered the question by an expressive glance.

"Because things are unpleasant," said Jean Valjean, "is no reason for being unjust to God."

There was a pause.

All breasts were oppressed.

Jean Valjean turned to Cosette. He gazed at her as if he wished to take that last look with him into eternity.

In the deep shadow into which he had already sunk, ecstasy was still possible for him in gazing on Cosette. The reflection of her sweet countenance illumined his pale face. The sepulchre may have its radiance.

The doctor felt his pulse.

"Ah, it was you that he wanted," he murmured, looking at Marius and Cosette.

And bending to Marius's ear, he whispered:—

"Too late."

Jean Valjean, almost without ceasing to gaze at Cosette, looked at Marius and the doctor with serenity.

These scarcely articulate words came from his lips:

"It is nothing to die; it is terrible not to live."

All at once he rose. Such returns of strength are sometimes a sign of the death-agony itself. He walked with a firm step to the wall, thrust aside Marius and the doctor, who tried to help him, took from the wall the small copper crucifix which hung on it, returned to his seat with all the vigour of perfect health, and said in a loud voice, as he laid the crucifix on the table:—

"There is the great martyr."

Then his chest sank in, his head trembled as if the intoxication of the tomb were seizing hold of him.

His hands, resting on his knees, began to pluck at the cloth of his trousers.

Cosette supported his shoulders and sobbed, and tried to speak to him, but could not. Amid words mingled with that mournful saliva which accompanies tears, could be distinguished these broken sentences: "Father, do not leave us. Is it possible that we have found you again only to lose you?"

It may be said that the death-agony moves like a serpent. It comes, goes, advances toward the grave, and then turns back toward life. There is a sort of groping in the act of dying.

Jean Valjean, after this partial swoon, rallied, shook his head as if to throw off the shadows, and again became almost lucid.

He caught hold of Cosette's sleeve and kissed it.

"He is recovering, doctor, he is recovering!" cried Marius.

"You are both good," said Jean Valjean. "I will tell you what has grieved me. It grieves me, Monsieur Pontmercy, that you should refuse to touch that money. That money really belongs to your wife. I will explain it to you, my children, and that is one reason why I am so glad to see you. Black jet comes from England; white jet comes from

Norway. It is all set down in that paper there, which you will read. I invented a way of substituting soldered snaps for welded snaps in bracelets. They are prettier, better, and not so dear. You will understand how much money may be made in that way. So Cosette's fortune is really hers. I give you these details that your mind may be at rest."

The porter's wife had come up, and was peeping through the open door. The doctor sent her off, but he could not prevent the zealous old woman from crying to the dying man before she went:—

"Will you have a priest?"

"I have one," answered Jean Valjean.

And he seemed to point with his finger to a spot over his head, where one would have said that he saw some one. It is probable, in truth, that the bishop was present at this death scene.

Cosette gently slipped a pillow behind Jean Valjean's back.

He resumed:—

"Monsieur Pontmercy, have no fears, I conjure you. The six hundred thousand francs really belong to Cosette! My whole life will have been wasted if you will not enjoy them! We succeeded in making those glass goods famously. We rivalled what is called Berlin jewelry. To be sure, the black beads of Germany cannot be equalled. A gross, which contains twelve hundred well-cut beads, only costs three francs."

When a being who is dear to us is about to die, we gaze on him with a look which clings to him, and would fain hold him back.

Cosette and Marius stood before him, hand in hand, in mute anguish, not knowing how to face death, trembling and despairing.

Jean Valjean failed from moment to moment. He sank; he drew nearer to the dark horizon.

His breathing had become intermittent; a slight rattle impeded it. He had some difficulty in moving his forearm, his feet had lost all power of motion; and as the helplessness

of his limbs and the exhaustion of his body increased, all the majesty of his soul ascended and was revealed upon his brow. The light of the unknown world was already visible in his eyes.

His face grew pale and smiled. Life was no longer there; there was something else.

His breath grew short, his glance grew grander. He was a corpse whose wings could be seen.

He signed to Cosette to approach, and then to Marius; the last minute of the last hour had evidently come.

He began to speak to them in so faint a voice that it seemed to come from a distance, and it was as if there were henceforth a wall between them and him.

"Come nearer, come nearer, both of you. I love you dearly. Oh, how pleasant it is to die like this! You, too, love me, my Cosette. I knew that you were fond of your poor old man. How kind it was of you to place that pillow at my back! You will weep for me a little, will you not? Not too much. I do not want you to feel a real sorrow. You must amuse yourselves as much as you can, my children. I forgot to tell you that there was more profit on the buckles without tongues than on all the rest. A gross of twelve dozen cost ten francs to produce, and sold for sixty. It was really a good trade. You need not be surprised at the six hundred thousand francs, Monsieur Pontmercy. It is honest money. You may be rich without any fear. You must have a carriage, a box at the opera now and then, handsome ball-dresses, my Cosette, and give good dinners to your friends, and be very happy. I was writing to Cosette just now. She will find my letter. To her, I leave the two candlesticks on the mantelpiece. They are silver; but to me they are made of gold, of diamonds; they change the candles placed in them into consecrated tapers. I know not whether the man who gave them to me is satisfied with me above. I have done what I could. My children, you will not forget that I am a poor man; you will have me buried in any odd corner, with a stone to mark the spot. That is my wish.

No name on the stone. If Cosette likes to visit it now and then, it will give me pleasure. And you, too, Monsieur Pontmercy. I must confess that I did not always like you. I ask your forgiveness. Now she and you are all one to me. I am very grateful to you. I feel that you make Cosette happy. If you only knew, Monsieur Pontmercy, her pretty red cheeks were my joy; when I saw her a little pale, I was miserable. There is a five-hundred-franc note in the chest of drawers; I have not touched it. It is for the poor. Cosette, do you see your little dress there on the bed? Do you recognize it? And yet it was only ten years ago! How time flies! We have been very happy. It is all over now. Do not weep, my children. I am not going very far, and I shall see you from there; you will only have to look up at night, and you will see me smile. Cosette, do you remember Montfermeil? You were in the wood; you were very much frightened. Do you remember when I took the bucket-handle? That was the first time I ever touched your poor little hand. It was so cold! Oh, you had red hands in those days, miss; but now they are very white. And the big doll! Do you remember? You called her Catherine. You were sorry that you did not take her with you to the convent! How you did make me laugh sometimes, my sweet angel! When it had rained, you used to set straws floating in the gutter, and you watched them sail away. One day I gave you a wicker battledore, and a shuttlecock with yellow, blue, and green feathers. You have forgotten it. You were such a rogue when you were little! You used to play. You would hang cherries in your ears. Those are things of the past. The forests through which I went with my child, the trees under which we walked, the convent where we hid, the sports, the hearty laughter of childhood, are all shadows now. I imagined that all this belonged to me. That was where my stupidity lay. Those Thénardiers were very wicked. You must forgive them. Cosette, the time has come to tell you your mother's name. Her name was Fantine. Remember that name,— Fantine. Fall on your knees every time that

"Cosette and Marius fell on their knees, heart-broken, choked with tears, each under one of Jean Valjean's hands."

Les Miserables. Jean Valjean. Page 333.

you utter it. She suffered. She loved you dearly. She knew as much misery as you have known happiness. Thus God apportions things. He lives above; he sees us all, and he knows what he does amid his great stars. I am going away, my children. Love each other well and always. There is no other thing in the world but that: love one another. You will think sometimes of the poor old man who died here. Oh, my Cosette! it is not my fault, indeed it is not, that I have not seen you all this time; it broke my heart. I went as far as the corner of the street. I must have produced a strange effect on the people who saw me pass. I was like a madman; once I even went out without my hat. My children, I can no longer see very clearly. I had other things to say to you, but no matter. Think of me sometimes. You are blessed beings. I don't know what ails me. I see light. Come nearer yet. I die happy. Let me lay my hands on your beloved heads."

Cosette and Marius fell on their knees, heart-broken, choked with tears, each under one of Jean Valjean's hands. Those august hands did not move again.

He had fallen back, the light from the two candles fell full upon him.

His white face looked up to heaven; he let Cosette and Marius cover his hands with kisses.

He was dead.

The night was starless and intensely dark. No doubt, some immense angel stood in the shadow, with outstretched wings, waiting for his soul.

CHAPTER VI

THE GRASS HIDES, AND THE RAIN EFFACES

NEAR the Potters' Field in the cemetery of Père-Lachaise, far removed from the elegant quarter of that city of sepulchres, far from those fantastic tombs which display all the hideous fashions of death in the presence of eternity, in a deserted corner, under an old wall, beneath a yew over which bind-weed climbs, and amid dandelions and moss, there is a tombstone. That stone is no more exempt than others from the gnawing tooth of Time, from mildew, lichen, and the deposits of birds. Water turns it green, the air blackens it. It is not near any path, and people do not care to go in that direction, because the grass is tall and they get their feet wet directly. When there is a little sunshine, the lizards gather there; there is a rustling of wild oats all about it. In springtime, linnets sing on the tree.

That stone is quite bare. In cutting it, only the necessities of the tomb were taken into consideration; no further care was taken than to make the stone long enough and narrow enough to cover a man.

No name is to be read on it.

Many, many years ago, however, a hand wrote on it in pencil these four lines, which have become gradually illegible from rain and dust, and which are now probably effaced:—

"He sleeps. Though cruel was his fate and drear,
He lived. He died when angels ceased to hover near;
From life to death he passed without a sigh,
As darkness falls, when tired day doth die."

THE END.

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