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# COSETTE.

LES

# MISERABLES.

*William G. Barraber*

BY

*1863*

VICTOR HUGO.

To be published in Five Parts-- Each Part a Complete Novel.

FANTINE,

MARIUS,

COSETTE,

ST. DENIS,

JEAN VALJEAN.

RICHMOND:

WEST & JOHNSTON.

1863.





*Les Misérables*

# LES MISÉRABLES.

(THE WRETCHED.)

*Success*

A Novel.

BY

VICTOR HUGO.

---

A NEW TRANSLATION, REVISED.

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IN FIVE PARTS:

- |                  |                |
|------------------|----------------|
| I. FANTINE.      | III. MARIUS.   |
| II. COSETTE.     | IV. ST. DENIS. |
| V. JEAN VALJEAN. |                |

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PART II.

COSETTE.

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RICHMOND:  
WEST & JOHNSTON.

1863.

NOTE TO THE PUBLIC.—The last three parts of "LES MISERABLES," viz: *Marius*, *St. Denis* and *Jean Valjean*, will be issued in one volume. Should the Publishers succeed in obtaining a sufficient supply of paper, (its scarcity having greatly delayed all their late issues,) they hope to complete the whole work early in the month of August.

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# LES MISÉRABLES.

## COSETTE.

Book First.

WATERLOO.

I.

WHAT YOU MEET IN COMING FROM NIVELLES.

On a beautiful morning in May, last year, (1861), a traveller, he who tells this story, was journeying from Nivelles towards La Hulpe. He travelled a-foot. He was following, between the rows of trees, a broad road, undulating over hills, which, one after another, upheave it and let it fall again, like enormous waves. He had passed Lillois vand Bois-Seigneur-Isaac. He saw to the west the slated steeple of Braine-l'Alleud, which has the form of an inverted vase. He had just passed a wood upon a hill, and at the corner of a cross-road, beside a sort of worn eaten sign-post, bearing the inscription—*Old Toll-Gate, No. 4*—a tavern with this sign: *The Four Winds. Eschaleau, Private Café.*

Half a mile from this tavern, he reached the bottom of a little valley, where a stream flowed beneath an arch in the embankment of the road. The cluster of trees, thin-sown but very green, which fills the vale on one side of the road, on the other spreads out into meadows, and sweeps away in graceful disorder towards Braine-l'Alleud.

At this point there was at the right, and immediately on the road, an inn, with a four-wheeled cart before the door, a great bundle of hop-poles, a plough, a pile of dry brush near a quick-set hedge, some lime which was smoking in a square hole in the ground, and a ladder lying along an old shed with mangers for straw. A young girl was pulling weeds in a field, where a large green poster, probably of a travelling show at some annual fair, fluttered in the wind. At the corner of the inn, beside a pond, in which a flotilla of ducks was navigating, a difficult foot-path lost itself in the shrubbery. The traveller took this path. At the end of a hundred paces, passing a wall of the fifteenth century, surmounted by a sharp gable of crossed bricks, he found himself oppo-

site a great arched stone doorway, with rectilinear impost, in the solemn style of Louis XIV., and plain medallions on the sides. Over the entrance was a severe façade, and a wall perpendicular to the façade almost touched the doorway, flanking it at an abrupt right angle. On the meadow before the door lay three harrows, through which were blooming, as best they could, all the flowers of May. The doorway was closed. It was shut by two decrepid folding doors, decorated with an old rusty knocker.

The sunshine was enchanting; the branches of the trees had that gentle tremulousness of the month of May which seems to come from the birds' nests rather than the wind. A spruce little bird, probably in love, was singing desperately in a tall tree.

The traveller paused and examined in the stone at the left of the door, near the ground, a large circular excavation like the hollow of a sphere. Just then the folding doors opened, and a peasant woman came out.

She saw the traveller, and perceived what he was examining.

"It was a French ball which did that," said she; "and," she added, "what you see there, higher up, in the door, near a nail, is the hole made by a cannon ball. The ball has not gone through the wood."

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

"Hougomont," the woman answered.

The traveller raised his head. He took a few steps and looked over the hedges. He saw in the horizon, through the trees, a sort of hillock, and on this hillock something which, in the distance, resembled a lion. He was on the battle-field of Waterloo.

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## II.

### HOUGOMONT.

Hougomont—this was the fatal spot, the beginning of the resistance, the first check encountered at Waterloo by this great butcher of Europe, called Napoleon; the first knot under the axe.

It was a chateau; it is now nothing more than a farm. Hougomont, to the antiquary, is *Hugomons*. This manor was built by Hugo, sire de Somerel, the same who endowed the sixth chaplainship of the abbey of Villers. The traveller pushed open the door, elbowed an old carriage under the porch, and entered the court. The first thing that he noticed in this yard was a door of the sixteenth century, which seemed like an arch, everything having fallen down around it. Near the arch opens another door in the wall, with keystones of the time of Henry IV., which discloses the trees of an orchard. Beside this door were a dung-bill, mattocks and shovels, some carts, an old well with its flag-stone and iron pulley, a skipping colt, a strutting turkey, a chapel surmounted by a little steeple, a pear-tree in bloom, trained in espalier on the wall of the chapel; this was the court, the conquest of which was the aspiration of Napoleon. This bit of earth, could he have taken it, would perhaps have given him the world. The hens are scattering the dust with their beaks. You hear a growling: it is a great dog, who shows his teeth, and takes the place of the English.

The English fought admirably there. The four companies of Guards under Cooke held their ground for seven hours, against the fury of an assaulting army.

Hougomont, seen on the map, on a geometrical plan, comprising buildings and inclosure, presents a sort of irregular rectangle, one corner of which is cut off. At this corner is the southern entrance, guarded by this wall, which commands it at the shortest musket range. Hougomont has two entrances: the southern, that of the château, and the northern, that of the farm. Napoleon sent against Hougomont his brother Jerome. The divisions of Guilleminot, Foy and Bachelu were hurled against it; nearly the whole corps of Reille was there employed and there defeated, and the bullets of Kellermann were exhausted against the heroic wall-front. It was too much for the brigade of Bauduin to force Hougomont on the north, and the brigade of Soye could only batter it on the south—it could not take it.

The buildings of the farm are on the southern side of the court. A small portion of the northern door, broken by the French, hangs dangling from the wall. It is composed of four planks, nailed to two cross-pieces, and in it may be seen the scars of the attack.

The northern door, forced by the French, and to which a piece has been added to replace the pannel suspended from the wall, stands half open at the foot of the court-yard; it is cut squarely in a wall of stone below, and brick above, and closes the court on the north. It is a simple cart-door, such as are found on all small farms, composed of two large folding doors, made of rustic planks; beyond this are the meadows. This entrance was furiously contested. For a long time there could be seen upon the door all sorts of prints of bloody hands. It was there that Bauduin was killed.

The storm of the combat is still in this court; the horror is visible there; the overturn of the conflict is there petrified; it lives, it dies; it was but yesterday. The walls are still in death agonies; the stones fall, the breaches cry out; the holes are wounds; the trees bend and shudder, as if making an effort to escape. This court, in 1815, was in better condition than it is to-day. Structures which have since been pulled down formed redans, angles and squares. The English were barricaded there; the French effected an entrance, but could not maintain their position. At the side of the chapel, one wing of the château, the only remnant which exists of the manor of Hougomont, stands crumbling, one might almost say disembowelled. The château served as donjon; the chapel served as block-house. There was work of extermination. The French, shot down from all sides, from behind the walls, from the roofs of the barns, from the bottom of the cellars, through every window, through every air-hole, through every chink in the stones, brought fagots and fired the walls and the men: the storm of bullets was answered by a tempest of flame.

A glimpse may be had in the ruined wing, through the iron-barred windows, of the dismantled chambers of a main building; the English guards lay in ambush in these chambers; the spiral staircase, broken from foundation to roof, appears like the interior of a broken shell. The staircase has two landings; the English, besieged in the staircase, and crowded upon the upper steps, had cut away the lower ones. These are

large slabs of blue stone, now heaped together among the nettles. A dozen steps still cling to the wall; on the first is cut the image of a trident. These inaccessible steps are firm in their sockets; all the rest resembles a toothless jaw-bone. Two old trees are there; one is dead, the other is wounded at the root, and does not leaf out until April. Since 1850 it has begun to grow across the staircase.

There was a massacre in the chapel. The interior, again restored to quiet, is strange. No mass has been said there since the carnage. The altar remains, however—a clumsy wooden altar, backed by a wall of rough stone. Four whitewashed walls, a door opposite the altar, two little arched windows, over the door a large wooden crucifix, above the crucifix a square opening in which is stuffed a bundle of straw; in a corner on the ground, an old glazed sash all broken, such is this chapel. Near the altar hangs a wooden statue of St. Anne of the fifteenth century; the head of the infant Jesus has been carried away by a musket-shot. The French, masters for a moment of the chapel, then dislodged, fired it. The flames filled this ruin; it was a furnace; the door was burned, the floor was burned, but the wooden Christ was not burned. The fire ate its way to his feet, the blackened stumps of which only are visible; then it stopped. A miracle, say the country people. The infant Jesus, decapitated, was not so fortunate as the Christ.

The walls are covered with inscriptions. Near the feet of the Christ we read this name: *Henquinez*. Then these others: *Conde de Rio Mañor Marques y Marquesa de Almagro (Habaua)*. There are French names with exclamation points, signs of anger. The wall was whitewashed in 1849. The nations were insulting each other on it.

At the door of this chapel a body was picked up holding an axe in its hand. This body was that of second-lieutenant Legros.

On coming out of the chapel, a well is seen at the left. There are two in this yard. You ask: why is there no bucket and no pulley to this one? Because no water is drawn from it now. Why is no more water drawn from it? Because it is full of skeletons. The last man who drew water from that well was Guillaume Van Kylsom. He was a peasant, who lived in Hougomont, and was gardener there. On the 18th of June, 1815, his family fled and hid in the woods. The forest about the Abbey of Villiers concealed for several days and several nights all that scattered and distressed population. Even now certain vestiges may be distinguished, such as old trunks of scorched trees, which mark the place of these poor trembling bivouacs in the depths of the thickets.

Guillaume Van Kylsom remained at Hougomont "to take care of the château," and hid in the cellar. The English discovered him there. He was torn from his hiding-place, and, with blows of the flat of their swords, the soldiers compelled this frightened man to wait upon them. They were thirsty: this Guillaume brought them drink. It was from this well that he drew the water. Many drank their last quaff. This well, where drank so many of the dead, must die itself also.

After the action, there was haste to bury the corpses. Death has its own way of embittering victory, and it causes glory to be followed by pestilence. Typhus is the successor of triumph. This well was deep, it was made a sepulchre. Three hundred dead were thrown into it.



Perhaps with too much haste. Were they all dead? Tradition says no. It appears that on the night after the burial, feeble voices were heard calling out from the well.

This well is isolated in the middle of the court-yard. Three walls, half brick and half stone, folded back like the leaves of a screen, and imitating a square turret, surround it on three sides. The fourth side is open. On that side the water was drawn. The back wall has a sort of shapeless bull's-eye, perhaps a hole made by a shell. This turret had a roof, of which only the beams remain. The iron that sustains the wall on the right is in the shape of a cross. You bend over the well, the eye is lost in a deep brick cylinder, which is filled with an accumulation of shadows. All around it, the bottom of the walls is covered by nettles.

This well has not in front the large blue flagging stone, which serves as curb for all the wells of Belgium. The blue stone is replaced by a cross-bar on which rest five or six mis-shapen wooden stumps, knotty and hardened, that resemble huge bones. There is no longer either bucket, or chain, or pulley; but the stone basin is still there which served for the waste water. The rain water gathers there, and from time to time a bird from the neighboring forest comes to drink and flies away.

One house among these ruins, the farm-house, is still inhabited. The door of this house opens upon the court-yard. By the side of a pretty Gothic key-hole plate there is upon the door a handful of iron in trefoil, slanting forward. At the moment that the Hanoverian lieutenant Wilda was seizing this to take refuge in the farm-house, a French sapper struck off his hand with the blow of an axe.

The family which occupies the house calls the former gardener Van Kylsom, long since dead, its grand-father. A grey-haired woman said to us: "I was there. I was three years old. My sister, larger, was afraid, and cried. They carried us away into the woods; I was in my mother's arms. They laid their ears to the ground to listen. For my part, I mimicked the cannon, and I went *boom, boom.*"

One of the yard doors, on the left, we have said, opens into the orchard. The orchard is terrible. It is in three parts, one might almost say in three acts. The first part is a garden, the second is the orchard, the third is a wood. These three parts have a common inclosure; on the side of the entrance, the buildings of the chateau and the farm, on the left a hedge, on the right a wall, at the back a wall. The wall on the right is of brick, the wall on the back is of stone. The garden is entered first. It is sloping, planted with currant bushes, covered with wild vegetation, and terminated by a terrace of oct stone, with balusters with a double swell. It is a seignorial garden, in this first French style, which preceded the modern; now ruins and briars. The pilasters are surmounted by globes which look like stone cannon-balls. We count forty-three balusters still in their places; the others are lying in the grass, nearly all show some scratches of musketry. A broken baluster remains upright like a broken leg.

It is in this garden, which is lower than the orchard, that six of the first Light Voltigeurs, having penetrated thither, and being unable to

escape, caught and trapped like bears in a pit, engaged in a battle with two Hanoverian companies, one of which was armed with carbines. The Hanoverians were ranged along these balusters, and fired from above. These Voltigeurs, answering from below, six against two hundred, intrepid, with currant bushes only for a shelter, took a quarter of an hour to die.

You rise a few steps, and from the garden pass into the orchard proper. There, in these few square yards, fifteen hundred men fell in less than an hour. The wall seems ready to recommence the combat. The thirty-eight loopholes, pierced by the English at irregular heights, are there yet. In front of the sixteenth, lie two English tombs of granite. There are no loopholes except in the south wall; the principal attack came from that side. This wall is concealed on the outside by a large quickset hedge; the French came up, thinking there was nothing in their way but the hedge, crossed it, and found the wall, an obstacle and an ambush, the English Guards behind, the thirty-eight loopholes pouring forth their fire at once, a storm of grape and of balls; and Soye's brigade broke there. Waterloo commenced thus.

The orchard, however, was taken. They had no scaling ladders, but the French climbed the wall with their hands. They fought hand to hand under the trees. All the grass was soaked with blood. A battalion from Nassau, seven hundred men, was annihilated there. On the outside, the wall, against which the two batteries of Kellermann were directed, is gnawed by grape.

This orchard is as responsive as any other to the month of May. It has its golden blossoms and its daisies; the grass is high; farm horses are grazing; lines on which clothes are drying, cross the intervals between the trees, making travellers bend their heads; you walk over that sward, and your foot sinks in the path of the mole. In the midst of the grass, you notice an uprooted trunk, lying on the ground, but still growing green. Major Blackman leaned back against it to die. Under a large tree near by, fell the German General, Duplat, of a French family which fled on the revocation of the edict of Nantes. Close beside it, leans a diseased old apple tree swathed in a bandage of straw and loam. Nearly all the apple trees are falling from old age. There is not one which does not show its cannon-ball or its musket shot. Skeletons of dead trees abound in this orchard. Crows fly in its branches; beyond it is a wood full of violets.

Bauduin killed, Foy wounded, fire, slaughter, carnage, a brook made of English blood, of German blood, and of French blood, mingled in fury; a well filled with corpses, the regiment of Nassau, and the regiment of Brunswick destroyed, Duplat killed, Blackmann killed, the English Guards crippled, twenty French battalions, out of the forty of Reille's corps, decimated, three thousand men, in this one ruin of Hougomont, aabred, slashed, slaughtered, shot, burned; and all this in order that to-day a peasant may say to a traveller: *Monsieur, give me three francs; if you like, I will explain to you the affair of Waterloo.*

## III.

## THE 18TH OF JUNE, 1815.

Let us go back, for such is the story-teller's privilege, and place ourselves in the year 1815, a little before the date of the commencement of the action narrated in the first part of this book.

Had it not rained on the night of the 17th of June, 1815, the future of Europe would have been changed. A few drops of water, more or less, prostrated Napoleon. That Waterloo should be the end of Austerlitz, Providence needed only a little rain, and an unseasonable cloud crossing the sky, sufficed for the overthrow of a world.

The battle of Waterloo—and this gave Blücher time to come up—could not be commenced before half-past eleven. Why? Because the ground was soft. It was necessary to wait for it to acquire some little firmness so that the artillery could manœuvre.

Napoleon was an artillery officer, and he never forgot it. The foundation of this prodigious captain was the man who, in his report to the Directory upon Aboukir, said: *Such of our balls killed six men.* All his plans of battle were made for projectiles. To converge the artillery upon a given point, was his key of victory. He treated the strategy of the hostile general as a citadel, and battered it to a breach. He overwhelmed the weak point with grape; he joined and resolved battles with cannon. There was marksmanship in his genius. To destroy squares, to pulverize regiments, to break lines, to crush and disperse masses, all this was for him, to strike, strike, strike incessantly, and he intrusted this duty to the cannon-ball. A formidable method, which, joined to genius, made this sombre athlete of the pugilism of war invincible for fifteen years.

On the 18th of June, 1815, he counted on his artillery the more because he had the advantage in numbers. Wellington had only a hundred and fifty-nine guns; Napoleon had two hundred and forty.

Had the ground been dry, and the artillery been able to move, the action would have been commenced at six o'clock in the morning. The battle would have been won and finished at two o'clock, three hours before the Prussians turned the scale of fortune.

How much fault is there on the part of Napoleon in the loss of this battle? Is the shipwreck to be imputed to the pilot?

Was the evident, physical decline of Napoleon accompanied at this time by a corresponding mental decline? Had his twenty years of war worn out the sword as well as the sheath—the soul as well as the body? Was the veteran injuriously felt in the captain? In a word, was that genius, as many considerable historians have thought, under an eclipse? Had he put on a frenzy to disguise his enfeeblement from himself? Did he begin to waver, and be bewildered by a random blast? Was he becoming—a grave fault in a general—careless of danger? In that class of material great men who may be called the giants of action, is there any age when their genius becomes short-sighted? Old age has no hold on the geniuses of the ideal; for the Dantes and the Michael Angelos to grow old, is to grow great; for the Hannibals and the Bonapartes, is it to grow less? Had Napoleon lost his clear sense of victory?

Could he no longer recognise the shoal, no longer divine the snare, no longer discern the crumbling edge of the abyss? Had he lost the instinct of disaster? Was he, who formerly knew all the paths of triumphs, and who, from the height of his flashing ear, pointed them out with sovereign finger, now under such dark hallucination as to drive his tumultuous legions over the precipices? Was he seized, at forty-six years, with a supreme madness? Was this titanic driver of Destiny, now only a monstrous break-neck? We think not.

His plan of battle was, all confess, a masterpiece. To march straight to the centre of the allied line, pierce the enemy, cut them in two, push the British half upon Hal and the Prussian half upon Tongres, make of Wellington and Blucher two fragments, carry Mont Saint Jean, seize Brussels, throw the German into the Rhine, and the Englishman into the sea. All this, for Napoleon, was in this battle. What would follow, anybody can see.

We do not, of course, profess to give here the history of Waterloo; one of the scenes that gave rise to the drama which we are describing, hangs upon that battle; but the history of the battle is not our subject; that history moreover is told, and told in a masterly way, from one point of view by Napoleon, from the other point of view by Charras. As for us, we leave the two historians to their contest; we are only a witness at a distance, a passer in the plain, a seeker bending over this ground kneaded with human flesh, taking perhaps appearances for realities; we have no right to cope in the name of science with a mass of facts in which there is doubtless some mirage; we have neither the military experience nor the strategic ability which authorizes a system; in our opinion, a chain of accidents overruled both captains at Waterloo; and when destiny is called in, this mysterious accused, we judge like the people, that artless judge.

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#### IV.

##### A.

Those who would get a clear idea of the battle of Waterloo, have only to lay down upon the ground in their mind a capital A. The left stroke of the A is the road from Nivelles, the right stroke is the road from Genappe, the cross of the A is the sunken road from Ohain to Braine-l'Alleud. The top of the A is Mont Saint Jean; Wellington is there; the left-hand lower point is Hougoumont; Reille is there with Jerome Bonaparte; the right hand lower point is La Belle Alliance; Napoleon is there. A little below the point where the cross of the A meets and cuts the right stroke, is La Haie Sainte. At the middle of this cross, is the precise point where the final battle-word was spoken. There the lion is placed, the involuntary symbol of the supreme heroism of the Imperial Guard.

The triangle contained at the top of the A, between the two strokes and the cross, is the plateau of Mont Saint Jean. The struggle for this plateau was the whole of the battle.

The wings of the two armies extended to the right and left of the two

roads from Genappe and from Nivelles; D'Erlon being opposite Picton, Reille opposite Hill.

Behind the point of the A, behind the plateau of Mont Saint Jean, is the forest of Soignes.

As to the plain itself, we must imagine a vast undulating country; each wave commanding the next, and these undulations rising towards Mont Saint Jean, are there bounded by the forest.

Two hostile armies upon a field of battle are two wrestlers. Their arms are locked; each seeks to throw the other. They grasp at every aid; a thicket is a point of support; a corner of a wall is a brace for the shoulder; for lack of a few sheds to lean upon a regiment loses its footing; a depression in the plain, a movement of the soil, a convenient cross path, a wood, a ravine, may catch the heel of this colossus which is called an army, and prevent him from falling. He who leaves the field is beaten. Hence, for the responsible chief, the necessity of examining the smallest tuft of trees, and appreciating the slightest details of contour.

Both generals had carefully studied the plain of Mont Saint Jean, now called the plain of Waterloo. Already, in the preceding year, Wellington, with the sagacity of prescience, had examined it as a possible site for a great battle. On this ground, and for this contest, Wellington had the favorable side, Napoleon the unfavorable. The English army was above, the French army below.

To sketch here the appearance of Napoleon, on horseback, glass in hand, upon the heights of Rossomme, at dawn, on the 18th of June, 1815, would be almost superfluous. Before we point him out, everybody has seen him. This calm profile under the little chapeau of the school of Brienne, this green uniform, the white facings concealing the stars on his breast, the overcoat concealing the epaulets, the bit of red sash under the waistcoat, the leather breeches, the white horse with his housings of purple velvet with crowned N's and eagles on the corners, the Hessian boots over silk stockings, the silver spurs, the Marengo sword, this whole form of the last Cæsar lives in all imaginations, applauded by half the world, reprobated by the rest.

That form has long been fully illuminated; it did have a certain traditional obscurity through which most heroes pass, and which always veils the truth for a longer or shorter time; but now the history is luminous and complete.

This light of history is pitiless; it has this strange and divine quality that, all luminous as it is, and precisely because it is luminous, it often casts a shadow just where we saw a radiance; of the same man it makes two different phantoms, and the one attacks and punishes the other, and the darkness of the despot struggles with the splendor of the captain. Hence, results a truer measure in the final judgment of the nations. Babylon violated lessens Alexander; Rome enslaved lessens Cæsar; massacred Jerusalem lessens Titus. Tyranny follows the tyrant. It is woe to a man to leave behind him a shadow which has his form.

## V.

## THE QUID OBSCURUM OF BATTLES.

Everybody knows the first phase of this battle; the difficult opening, uncertain, hesitating, threatening for both armies, but for the English still more than for the French.

It had rained all night; the ground was softened by the shower; water lay here and there in the hollows of the plain as in basins; at some points the wheels sank in to the axles; the horses' girths dripped with liquid mud; had not the wheat and rye spread down by that multitude of advancing carts filled the ruts and made a bed under the wheels, all movement, particularly in the valleys on the side of Papelotte, would have been impossible.

The affair opened late; Napoleon, as we have explained, had a habit of holding all his artillery in hand like a pistol, aiming now at one point, anon at another point of the battle, and he desired to wait until the field-batteries could wheel and gallop freely; for this the sun must come out and dry the ground. But the sun did not come out. He had not now the field of Austerlitz. When the first gun was fired, the English General Colville looked at his watch, and noted that it was thirty-five minutes past eleven.

The battle was commenced with fury, more fury perhaps than the Emperor would have wished, by the left wing of the French at Hougomont. At the same time, Napoleon attacked the centre by hurling the brigade of Quiot upon La Haie Sainte, and Ney pushed the right wing of the French against the left wing of the English which rested upon Papelotte.

The attack upon Hougomont was partly a feint; to draw Wellington that way, to make him incline to the left; this was the plan. This plan would have succeeded, had not the four companies of the English Guards, and the brave Belgians of Perponcher's division, resolutely held the position, enabling Wellington, instead of massing his forces upon that point, to limit himself to reinforcing them only by four additional companies of Guards, and a Brunswick battalion.

The attack of the French right wing upon Papelotte was intended to overwhelm the English left, cut the Brussels road, bar the passage of the Prussians, should they come, to carry Mont Saint Jean, drive back Wellington upon Hougomont, from thence upon Braine l'Alleud, from thence upon Hal; nothing is clearer. With the exception of a few incidents, this attack succeeded. Papelotte was taken; La Haie Sainte was carried.

Note a circumstance. There were in the English infantry, particularly in Kempt's brigade, many new recruits. These young soldiers, before our formidable infantry, were heroic; their inexperience bore itself boldly in the affair; they did especially good service as skirmishers; the soldier as a skirmisher, to some extent left to himself, becomes, so to speak, his own general; these recruits exhibited something of French invention and French fury. This raw infantry showed enthusiasm. That displeased Wellington.

After the capture of La Haie Sainte, the battle wavered.

There is in this day from noon to four o'clock, an obscure interval; the middle of this battle is almost indistinct, and partakes of the thickness of the conflict. Twilight was gathering. You could perceive vast fluctuations in this mist, a giddy mirage, implements of war now almost unknown, the flaming colbacks, the waving sabretaches, the crossed shoulder-belts, the grenade cartridge boxes, the dolmans of the hussars, the red boots with a thousand creases, the heavy shakos festooned with fringe, the almost black infantry of Brunswick united with the scarlet infantry of England, the English soldiers with great white circular pads on their sleeves for epaulets, the Hanoverian light horse, with their oblong leather cap with copper bands and flowing plumes of red horse-hair, the Scotch with bare knees and plaids, the large white gaiters of our grenadiers; tableaux, not strategic lines; the need of Salvator Rosa, not of Gribbeauval.

A certain amount of tempest always mingles with a battle. *Quid obscurum, quid divinum.* Each historian traces the particular lineament which pleases him in this hurly-burly. Whatever may be the combinations of the generals, the shock of armed masses has incalculable recoils in action, the two plans of the two leaders enter into each other, and are disarranged by each other. Such a point of the battle-field swallows up more combatants than such another, as the more or less spongy soil drinks up water thrown upon it faster or slower. You are obliged to pour out more soldiers there than you thought. An unforeseen expenditure. The line of battle waves and twists like a thread; streams of blood flow regardless of logic; the fronts of the armies undulate; regiments entering or retiring make capes and gulfs; all these shoals are continually swaying back and forth before each other; where infantry was, artillery comes; where artillery was, cavalry rushes up; battalions are smoke. There was something there; look for it; it is gone; the vistas are displaced; the sombre folds advance and recoil; a kind of sepulchral wind pushes forwards, crowds back, swells and disperses these tragic multitudes. What is a hand to hand fight? an oscillation. A rigid mathematical plan tells the story of a minute, and not a day. To paint a battle needs those mighty painters who have chaos in their touch. Rembrandt is better than Vandermeulen. Vandermeulen, exact at noon, lies at three o'clock. Geometry deceives; the hurricane alone is true. This is what gives Folard the right to contradict Polybius. We must add that there is always a certain moment when the battle degenerates into a combat, particularizes itself, scatters into innumerable details, which, to borrow the expression of Napoleon himself, "belong rather to the biography of the regiment than to the history of the army." The historian, in this case, evidently has the right of abridgment. He can only seize upon the principal outlines of the struggle, and it is given to no narrator, however conscientious he may be, to fix absolutely the form of this horrible cloud which is called a battle.

This, which is true of all great armed encounters, is particularly applicable to Waterloo. However, in the afternoon, at a certain moment, the battle assumed precision.

## VI.

## FOUR O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON.

Towards four o'clock the situation of the English army was serious. The Prince of Orange commanded the centre, Hill the right wing, Piéton the left wing. The Prince of Orange, desperate and intrepid, cried to the Hollando-Belgians: *Nassau! Brunswick! never retreat!* Hill, exhausted, had fallen back upon Wellington. Piéton was dead. At the very moment that the English had taken from the French the colors of the 105th of the line, the French had killed General Piéton by a ball through the head. For Wellington the battle had two points of support, Hougomont and La Haie Sainte; Hougomont still held out, but was burning; La Haie Sainte had been taken. Of the German battalion which defended it, forty-two men only survived; all the officers, except five, were dead or prisoners. Three thousand combatants were massacred in that grange. A sergeant of the English Guards, the best boxer in England, reputed invulnerable by his comrades, had been killed by a little French drummer. Baring had been dislodged; Alten put to the sword. Several colors had been lost, one belonging to Alten's division, and one to the Lunenburg battalion, borne by a Prince of the family of Deux-Ponts. The Scotch Grays were no more; Ponsonby's heavy dragoons had been cut to pieces. That valiant cavalry had given way before the lancers of Bro and the cuirassiers of Travers; of their twelve hundred horses there remained six hundred; of three lieutenant-colonels, two lay on the ground, Hamilton wounded, Mather killed. Ponsonby had fallen, pierced with seven thrusts of a lance. Gordon was dead, Marsh was dead. Two divisions, the fifth and the sixth, were destroyed.

Hougomont yielding, La Haie Sainte taken, there was but one knot left, the centre. That still held. Wellington reinforced it. He called thither Hill, who was at Merbe Braine, and Chassé, who was at Braine l'Alleud.

The centre of the English army, slightly concave, very dense and very compact, held a strong position. It occupied the plateau of Mont Saint Jean, with the village behind it, and in front the declivity, which at that time was steep. At the rear it rested on this strong stone-house, then an outlying property of Nivelles, which marks the intersection of the roads, a sixteenth century pile so solid that the balls ricocheted against it without injuring it. All about the plateau, the English had cut away the hedges here and there, made embrasures in the hawthorns, thrust the mouth of a cannon between two branches, made loopholes in the thickets. Their artillery was in ambush under the shrubbery. This puny labor, undoubtedly fair in war, which allows snares, was so well done that Haxo, sent by the Emperor at nine o'clock in the morning to reconnoitre the enemy's batteries, saw nothing of it, and returned to tell Napoleon that there was no obstacle, except the two barricades across the Nivelles and Genappe roads. It was the season when grain is at its height; upon the verge of the plateau, a battalion of Kempt's brigade, the 95th, armed with carbines, was lying in the tall wheat.

Thus supported and protected, the centre of the Anglo-Dutch army



was well situated. The danger of this position was the forest of Soignes, then contiguous to the battle-field, and separated by the ponds of Groenendael and Boitsfort. An army could not retreat there without being routed; regiments would have been dissolved immediately, and the artillery would have been lost in the swamps. A retreat, according to the opinion of many military men—contested by others, it is true—would have been an utter rout.

Wellington reinforced this centre by one of Chassé's brigades, taken from the right wing, and one of Wincke's from the left, in addition to Clinton's division. To his English, to Halkett's regiments, to Mitchell's brigade, to Maitland's guards, he gave as supports the infantry of Brunswick, the Nassau contingent, Kielmansegge's Hanoverians, and Ompteda's Germans. *The right wing, as Charras says, was bent back behind the centre.* An enormous battery was faced with sand-bags at the place where now stands what is called "the Waterloo Museum." Wellington had besides, in a little depression of the grounds, Somerset's Horse Guards, fourteen hundred. This was the other half of that English cavalry, so justly celebrated. Ponsouby destroyed, Somerset was left

The battery, which, finished, would have been almost a redoubt, was disposed behind a very low garden wall, hastily covered with sand-bags, and a broad, sloping bank of earth. This work was not finished; they had not time to stockade it.

Wellington, anxious, but impassible, was on horseback, and remained there the whole day in the same attitude, a little in front of the old mill of Mont Saint Jean, which is still standing, under an elm which an Englishman, an enthusiastic vandal, has since bought for two hundred francs, cut down and carried away. Wellington was frigidly heroic. The balls rained down. His aide-de-camp, Gordon, had just fallen at his side. Lord Hill, showing him a bursting shell, said: My Lord, what are your instructions, and what orders do you leave us, if you allow yourself to be killed? *To follow my example*, answered Wellington. To Clinton, he said laconically: *Hold this spot to the last man.* The day was clearly going badly. Wellington cried to his old companions of Talavera, Vittoria and Salamanca: *Boys! we must not be beat; what would they say of us in England!*

About four o'clock, the English line staggered backwards. All at once, only the artillery and the sharpshooters were seen on the crest of the plateau, the rest disappeared; the regiments, driven by the shells and bullets of the French, fell back into the valley now crossed by the cow-path of the farm of Mont Saint Jean; a retrograde movement took place, the battle front of the English was slipping away, Wellington gave ground. Beginning retreat! cried Napoleon.

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## VII.

### NAPOLEON IN GOOD HUMOR.

The Emperor, although sick and hurt in his saddle by a local affection, had never been in so good humor as on that day. Since morning, his impenetrable countenance had worn a smile. On the 18th of June,

1815, that profound soul masked in marble, shone obscurely forth. The dark-browed man of Austerlitz was gay at Waterloo. The greatest, when foredoomed, present these contradictions. Our joys are shaded. The perfect smile belongs to God alone.

*Ridet Casar, Pompeius flebit*, said the legionaries of the Fulminatrix Legion. Pompey at this time was not to weep, but it is certain that Casar laughed.

From the previous evening, and in the night, at one o'clock, exploring on horseback, in the tempest and the rain, with Bertrand, the hills near Rosomme, and gratified to see the long line of the English fires illuminating all the horizon from Frischemont to Braine l'Alleu, it had seemed to him that destiny, for which he had made an appointment, for a certain day upon the field of Waterloo, was punctual; he stopped his horse, and remained some time motionless, watching the lightning and listening to the thunder; and this fatalist was heard to utter in the darkness these mysterious words: "We are in accord." Napoleon was deceived. They were no longer in accord.

He had not taken a moment's sleep; every instant of that night had brought him a new joy. He passed along the whole line of the advanced guards, stopping here and there to speak to the pickets. At half-past two, near the wood of Hougomont, he heard the tread of a column in march; he thought for a moment that Wellington was falling back. He said: *It is the English rear guard starting to get away. I shall take the six thousand Englishmen who have just arrived at Ostend prisoners.* He chatted freely; he had recovered that animation of the disembarkation of the first of March, when he showed to the Grand Marshal the enthusiastic peasant of Gulf Juan, crying: *Well, Bertrand, there is a reinforcement already!* On the night of the 17th of June, he made fun of Wellington: *This little Englishman must have his lesson*, said Napoleon. The rain redoubled; it thundered while the Emperor was speaking.

At half-past three in the morning one illusion was gone; officers sent out on a reconnoissance announced to him that the enemy was making no movement. Nothing was stirring, not a bivouac fire was extinguished. The English army was asleep. Deep silence was upon the earth; there was no noise save in the sky. At four o'clock, a peasant was brought to him by the scouts; this peasant had acted as guide to a brigade of English cavalry, probably Vivian's brigade on its way to take position at the village of Ohain, at the extreme left. At five o'clock, two Belgian deserters reported to him that they had just left their regiment, and that the English army was expecting a battle. *So much the better!* exclaimed Napoleon, *I would much rather cut them to pieces than repulse them.*

In the morning, he alighted in the mud, upon the high bank at the corner of the road from Flanchenoit, had a kitchen table and a peasant's chair brought from the farm of Rosomme, sat down, with a bunch of straw for a carpet, and spread out upon the table the plan of the battlefield, saying to Soult: "*Pretty chequer-board!*"

In consequence of the night's rain, the convoys of provisions, mired in the softened roads, had not arrived at dawn; the soldiers had not slept, and were wet and fasting; but for all this, Napoleon cried out

joyfully to Ney: *We have ninety chances in a hundred.* At eight o'clock, the Emperor's breakfast was brought. He had invited several generals. While breakfasting, it was related, that on the night but one before, Wellington was at a ball in Brussels, given by the Duchess of Somerset; and Soult, rough soldier that he was, with his archbishop's face, said: *The ball is for to-day.* The Emperor jested with Ney, who said: *Wellington will not be so simple as to wait for your majesty.* This was his manner usually. *He was fond of joking,* says Fleury de Chaboulon. *His character at bottom was a playful humor,* says Gourgaud. *He abounded in pleasantries, oftener grotesque than witty,* says Benjamin Constant. These gaieties of a giant are worthy of remembrance. He called his grenadiers "the growlers;" he would pinch their ears and would pull their moustaches. *The Emperor did nothing but play tricks on us;* so one of them said. During the mysterious voyage from the island of Elba to France, on the 27th of February, in the open sea, the French brig-of-war, *Zephyr*, having met the brig *Inconstant*, on which Napoleon was concealed, and having asked the *Inconstant* for news of Napoleon, the Emperor, who still had on his hat the white and amaranth cockade sprinkled with bees, adopted by him in the island of Elba, took the speaking-trumpet, with a laugh, and answered himself: *The Emperor is getting on finely.* He who laughs in this way is on familiar terms with events; Napoleon had several of these bursts of laughter during his Waterloo breakfast. After breakfast, for a quarter of an hour, he collected his thoughts; then two generals took their seat on the bundle of straw, pen in hand, and paper on knee, and the Emperor dictated the order of battle.

At nine o'clock, at the instant when the French army, drawn up and set in motion in five columns, was deployed, the divisions upon two lines, the artillery between the brigades, music at the head, playing marches, with the rolling of drums and the sounding of trumpets—mighty, vast, joyous—a sea of casques, sabres and bayonets in the horizon, the Emperor, excited, cried out, and repeated: "Magnificent! magnificent!"

Between nine o'clock and half-past ten, the whole army—which seems incredible,—had taken position, and was ranged in six lines, forming, to repeat the expression of the Emperor, "the figure of six V's." A few moments after the formation of the line of battle, in the midst of this profound silence, like that at the commencement of a storm, which precedes the fight, seeing, as they filed by, the three batteries of twelve pounders, detached by his orders from the three corps of D'Erlon, Reille and Lobau, to commence the action by attacking Mont Saint Jean at the intersection of the roads from Nivelles and Genappe, the Emperor struck Haxo on the shoulder, saying: *There are twenty-four pretty girls, General.*

Sure of the event, he encouraged with a smile, as they passed before him, the company of sappers of the first corps, which he had designated to erect barricades in Mont Saint Jean, as soon as the village was carried. All this serenity was disturbed by but a word of haughty pity; on seeing, massed at his left, at a place where there is to-day a great tomb, those wonderful Scotch Grays, with their superb horses, he said: "It is a pity."

Then he mounted his horse, rode forward from Rossoomme, and chose

for his first point of view a narrow grassy ridge, at the right of the road from Genappé to Brussels, which was his second station during the battle. The third station, that of seven o'clock, between La Belle Alliance and La Haie Sainte, is terrible; it is a very large hill which can still be seen, and behind which the guard was massed in a depression of the plain. About this hill, the balls ricocheted over the paved road up to Napoleon. As at Brienne, he had over his head the whistling of balls and bullets. There have been gathered, almost upon the spot pressed by his horse's feet, crushed bullets, old sabre blades, and hopeless projectiles, eaten with rust. *Scabra rubigine*. Some years ago, a sixty-pound shell was dug up there, still loaded, the fuse having broken off even with the bomb. It was at this last station that the Emperor said to his guide, Lacoste, a hostile peasant, frightened, tied to a hussar's saddle, turning around at every volley of grape, and trying to hide behind Napoleon: *Dolt, this is shameful; you will get yourself shot in the back*. He who writes these lines, has himself found in the loose slope of that hill, by turning up the earth, the remains of a bomb, disintegrated by the rust of forty-six years, and some old bits of iron which broke like alder twigs in his finger.

The undulations of the diversely inclined plains, which were the theatre of the encounter of Napoleon and Wellington, are, as everybody knows, no longer what they were on the 18th of June, 1815. In taking from that fatal field wherewith to make its monument, its real form was destroyed; history, disconcerted, no longer recognises herself upon it. To glorify it, it has been disfigured. Wellington, two years afterwards, on seeing Waterloo, exclaimed: *They have changed my battle-field*. Where to-day is the great pyramid of earth surmounted by the lion, there was a ridge which sank away towards the Nivelles road in a practicable slope, but which, above the Genappe road, was almost an escarpment. The elevation of this escarpment may be measured to-day by the height of the two great burial mounds which embank the road from Genappé to Brussels; the English tomb at the left, the German tomb at the right. There is no French tomb. For France, that whole plain is a sepulchre. Thanks to the thousands and thousands of loads of earth used in the mound of a hundred and fifty feet high and half a mile in circuit, the plateau of Mont St. Jean is accessible by a gentle slope; on the day of the battle, especially on the side of La Haie Sainte, the declivity was steep and abrupt. The descent was there so precipitous that the English artillery did not see the farm below them at the bottom of the valley, the centre of the combat. On the 18th of June, 1815, the rain had gullied out this steep descent still more; the mud made the ascent still more difficult; it was not merely laborious, but men actually stuck in the mire. Along the crest of the plateau ran a sort of ditch, which could not possibly have been suspected by a distant observer.

What was this ditch? we will tell. Braine l'Alleud is a village of Belgium, Ohain is another. These villages, both hidden by the curving of the ground, are connected by a road about four miles long which crosses an undulating plain, often burying itself in the hills like a furrow, so that at certain points it is a ravine. In 1815, as now, this road cut the crest of the plateau of Mont Saint Jean between the two roads from Genappe and Nivelles; only, to-day it is on a level with the plain;

whereas then it was sunk between high banks. Its two slopes were taken away for the monumental mound. That road was and is still a trench for the greater part of its length; a trench in some parts a dozen feet deep, the slopes of which are so steep as to slide down here and there, especially in winter, after showers. Accidents happen there. The road was so narrow at the entrance of Braine l'Alleud that a traveller was once crushed by a wagon, as is attested by a stone cross standing near the cemetery, which gives the name of the dead, *Monsieur Debrye, merchant of Brussels*, and the date of the accident, February, 1637.\* It was so deep at the plateau of Mont Saint Jean, that a peasant, Matthew Nicaise, had been crushed there in 1783 by the falling of the bank, as another stone cross attested; the top of this has disappeared in the changes, but its overturned pedestal is still visible upon the sloping bank at the left of the road between La Haie Sante and the farm of Mont Saint Jean.

On the day of the battle, this sunken road, of which nothing gave warning, along the crest of Mont Saint Jean, a ditch at the summit of the escarpement, a trench concealed by the ground, was invisible, that is to say terrible.

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### VIII.

#### • THE EMPEROR PUTS A QUESTION TO THE GUIDE LACOSTE.

On the morning of Waterloo, then, Napoleon was satisfied.

He was right; the plan of battle which he had conceived, as we have shown, was indeed admirable.

After the battle was once commenced, its very diverse fortune, the resistance of Hougomont, the tenacity of La Haie Sainte, Banduin killed, Foy put *hors de combat*, the unexpected wall against which Soye's brigade was broken, the fatal blunder of Guillemot in having neither grenades nor powder, the miring of the batteries, the fifteen pieces without escort cut off by Uxbridge in a deep cut of a road, the slight effect of the bombs that fell within the English lines, burying themselves in the soil softened by the rain and only succeeding in making volcanoes of mud, so that the explosion was changed into a splash, the uselessness of Piré's demonstration upon Braine l'Alleud, all this cavalry, fifteen squadrons, almost destroyed, the English right wing hardly disturbed, the left wing hardly moved, the strange mistake of Ney in massing, instead of drawing out, the four divisions of the first corps, the depth of twenty-seven ranks and the front of two hundred

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\* The inscription is as follows:

DOM  
CY A ETE ECRASE  
PAR MALHEUR  
SOUS UN CHARIOT  
MONSIEUR BERNARD  
DE BRYE MARCHAND  
A BRUXELLE LE (illegible)  
FEBVIER 1637

men offered up in this manner to grape, the frightful gaps made by the balls in these masses, the lack of connection between the attacking columns, the slanting battery suddenly unmasked upon their flank, Bourgeois, Donzelot and Durutte entangled, Quiot repulsed, Lieutenant Vieux, that Hercules sprung from the Polytechnic School, wounded at the moment when he was beating down with the blows of an axe the door of La Haie Sainte under the plunging fire of the English barricade barring the turn of the road from Genappe to Brussels, Marcognet's division, caught between infantry and cavalry, shot down at arm's length in the wheat field by Best and Paek, sabred by Ponsonby, his battery of seven pieces spiked, the Prince of Saxe Weimar holding and keeping Frischemont and Smohain in spite of Count D'Erlon, the colors of the 105th taken, the colors of the 43d taken, this Prussian Black Hussar, brought in by the scouts of the flying column of three hundred Chasseurs scouring the country between Wavre and Planchenoit, the disquieting things that this prisoner had said, Grouchy's delay, the fifteen hundred men killed in less than an hour in the orchard of Hougomont, the eighteen hundred men fallen in still less time around La Haie Sainte—all these stormy events, passing like battle-clouds before Napoleon, had hardly disturbed his countenance, and had not darkened its imperial expression of certainty. Napoleon was accustomed to look upon war fixedly; he never made figure by figure the tedious addition of details; the figures mattered little to him, provided they gave this total: Victory! though beginnings went wrong he was not alarmed at it, he who believed himself master and possessor of the end; he knew how to wait, believing himself beyond contingency, and he treated destiny as an equal treats an equal. He appeared to say to Fate: thou wouldst not dare.

Half light and half shadow, Napoleon felt himself protected in the right, and tolerated in the wrong. He had, or believed that he had, a connivance, one might almost say a complicity, with events, equivalent to the ancient invulnerability. However, when one has Beresina, Leipsic and Fontainebleau behind him, it seems as if he might distrust Waterloo. A mysterious frown is becoming visible in the depths of the sky.

At the moment when Wellington drew back, Napoleon started up. He saw the plateau of Mont Saint Jean suddenly laid bare, and the front of the English army disappear. It rallied, but kept concealed. The Emperor half rose in his stirrups. The flash of victory passed into his eyes.

Wellington hurled back on the forest of Soignes and destroyed; that was the final overthrow of England by France; it was Cressy, Poitiers, Malplaquet and Ramillies avenged. The man of Marengo was wiping out Agincourt.

The Emperor then, contemplating this terrible turn of fortune, swept his glass for the last time over every point of the battle-field. His Guard, standing behind with grounded arms, looked up to him with a sort of religion. He was reflecting; he was examining the slopes, noting the accents, scrutinizing the tuft of trees, the square rye field, the foot path; he seemed to count every bush. He looked for some time at the English barricades on the two roads, two large abattis of

trees, that on the Genappe road above La Haie Sainte, armed with two cannon, which alone, of all the English artillery, bore upon the bottom of the field of battle, and that of the Nivelles road where glistened the Dutch bayonets of Chassé's brigade. He noticed near that barricade the old chapel of Saint Nicholas, painted white, which is at the corner of the cross-road toward Braine l'Alleud. He bent over and spoke in an under tone to the guide Lacoste. The guide made a negative sign of the head, probably treacherous.

The Emperor rose up and reflected. Wellington had fallen back. It remained only to complete this repulse by a crushing charge. Napoleon, turning abruptly, sent off a courier at full speed to Paris to announce that the battle was won. Napoleon was one of those geniuses who rule the thunder. He had found his thunderbolt. He ordered Milhaud's cuirassiers to carry the plateau of Mont Saint Jean.

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## IX.

### THE UNLOOKED FOR.

They were three thousand five hundred. They formed a line of half a mile. They were gigantic men on colossal horses. There were twenty-six squadrons, and they had behind them, as a support, the division of Lefebvre Desnouettes, the hundred and six gendarmes d'élite, the Chasseurs of the Guard, eleven hundred and ninety-seven men, and the Lancers of the Guard, eight hundred and eighty lances. They wore casques without plumes, and cuirasses of wrought iron, with horse pistols in their holsters, and long sabre-swords. In the morning, they had been the admiration of the whole army, when, at nine o'clock, with trumpets sounding, and all the bands playing, *Veillons au salut de l'empire*, they came, in heavy column, one of their batteries on their flank, the other at their centre, and deployed in two ranks between the Genappe road and Frischemont, and took their position of battle in this powerful second line, so wisely made up by Napoleon, which, having at its extreme left the cuirassiers of Kellerman, and at its extreme right the cuirassiers of Milhaud, had, so to speak, two wings of iron.

Aide-de-camp Bernard brought them the Emperor's order. Ney drew his sword and placed himself at their head. The enormous squadrons began to move.

Then was seen a fearful sight. All this cavalry, with sabres drawn, banners waving, and trumpets sounding, formed in column by division, descended with an even movement and as one man—with the precision of a bronze battering-ram opening a breach—the hill of La Belle-Alliance, sank into that formidable depth where so many men had already fallen, disappeared in the smoke, then, rising from this valley of shadow, re-appeared on the other side, still compact and serried, mounting at full trot, through a cloud of grape emptying itself upon them, the frightful acclivity of mud of the plateau of Mont Saint Jean. They rose, serious, menacing, imperturbable; in the intervals of the musketry and artillery could be heard the sound of this colossal tramp. Being in two divisions, they formed two columns; Wathier's division

had the right, Delord's the left. From a distance they would be taken for two immense serpents of steel stretching themselves towards the crest of the plateau. That ran through the battle like a prodigy.

Nothing like it had been seen since the taking of the grand redoubt at La Moscowa by the heavy cavalry; Murat was not there, but Ney was there. It seemed as if this mass had become a monster, and had but a single mind. Each squadron undulated and swelled like the ring of a polyp. They could be seen through the thick smoke, as it was broken here and there. It was one pell-mell of casques, cries, sabres; a furious bounding of horses among the cannon, and the flourish of trumpets, a terrible and disciplined tumult; over all, the cuirasses, like the scales of a hydra.

These recitals appear to belong to another age. Something like this vision appeared, doubtless, in the old Orphic epics which tell of centaurs, antique hippanthropes, those Titans with human faces, and chests like horses, whose gallop sealed Olympus, horrible, invulnerable, sublime; at once gods and beasts.

An odd numerical coincidence, twenty-six battalions were to receive these twenty-six squadrons. Behind the crest of the plateau, under cover of the masked battery, the English infantry, formed in thirteen squares, two battalions to the square, and upon two lines—seven on the first, and six on the second—with musket to the shoulder, and eye upon their sights, waiting calm, silent and immovable. They could not see the cuirassiers, and the cuirassiers could not see them. They listened to the rising of this tide of men. They heard the increasing sound of three thousand horses, the alternate and measured striking of their hoofs at full trot, the rattling of the cuirasses, the clicking of the sabres, and a sort of fierce roar of the coming host. There was a moment of fearful silence, then, suddenly, a long line of raised arms brandishing sabres appeared above the crest, with casques, trumpets and standards, and three thousand faces with grey moustaches, crying, *Vive l'Empereur!* All this cavalry debouched on the plateau, and it was like the beginning of an earthquake.

All at once, tragic to relate, at the left of the English, and on our right, the head of the column of cuirassiers reared with a frightful clamor. Arrived at the culminating point of the crest, unmauveable, full of fury, and bent upon the extermination of the squares and cannons, the cuirassiers saw between themselves and the English a ditch, a grave. It was the sunken road of Ohain.

It was a frightful moment. There was the ravine, unlooked for, yawning at the very feet of the horses, two fathoms deep between its double slope. The second rank pushed in the first, the third pushed in the second; the horses reared, threw themselves over, fell upon their backs, and struggled with their feet in the air, piling up and overturning their riders; no power to retreat; the whole column was nothing but a projectile. The force acquired to crush the English crushed the French. The inexorable ravine could not yield until it was filled; riders and horses rolled in together pell-mell, grinding each other, making common flesh in this dreadful gulf, and when the grave was full of living men, the rest marched over them and passed on. Almost a third of the Dubois' brigade sunk into this abyss.



Here the loss of the battle began. A local tradition, which evidently exaggerates, says that two thousand horses and fifteen hundred men were buried in the sunken road of Ohain. This undoubtedly comprises all the other bodies thrown into this ravine on the morrow after the battle.

Napoleon, before ordering this charge of Milhaud's cuirassiers, had examined the ground, but could not see this hollow road, which did not make even a wrinkle on the surface of the plateau. Warned, however, and put on his guard by the little white chapel which marks its junction with the Nivelles road, he had, probably on the contingency of an obstacle, put a question to the guide Lacoste. The guide had answered no. It may almost be said that from this shake of a peasant's head came the catastrophe of Napoleon.

Still other fatalities must arise.

Was it possible that Napoleon should win this battle? We answer no. Why? Because of Wellington? Because of Blücher? No. Because of God. For Bonaparte to be conqueror at Waterloo was not in the law of the nineteenth century. Another series of facts were preparing in which Napoleon had no place. The ill-will of events had long been announced. It was time that this vast man should fall.

The excessive weight of this man in human destiny disturbed the equilibrium. This individual counted, of himself alone, more than the universe besides. These plethoras of all human vitality concentrated in a single head, the world mounting to the brain of one man, would be fatal to civilization if they should endure. The moment had come for incorruptible, supreme equity to look to it. Probably the principles and elements upon which regular gravitations in the moral order as well as in the material depend, began to murmur. Reeking blood, overcrowded cemeteries, weeping mothers—these are formidable pleaders. When the earth is suffering from a surcharge, there are mysterious moanings from the deeps which the heavens hear.

Napoleon had been impeached before the Infinite, and his fall was decreed. He vexed God.

Waterloo is not a battle; it is the change of front of the universe.

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## X.

### THE PLATEAU OF MONT SAINT JEAN.

At the same time with the ravine, the artillery was unmasked. Sixty cannon and the thirteen squares thundered and flashed into the cuirassiers. The brave General Delord gave the military salute to the English battery. All the English flying artillery took position in the squares at a gallop. The cuirassiers had not even time to breathe. The disaster of the sunken road had decimated, but not discouraged them. They were men who, diminished in number, grew greater in heart.

Wathier's column alone had suffered from the disaster; Delord's, which Ney had sent obliquely to the left, as if he had a presentiment of the snare, arrived entire.

The cuirassiers hurled themselves upon the English squares.

At full gallop, with free rein, their sabres in their teeth, and their pistols in their hands, the attack began.

There are moments in battle when the soul hardens a man even to changing the soldier into a statue, and all his flesh becomes granite. The English battalions, desperately assailed, did not yield an inch. Then it was frightful.

All sides of the English squares were attacked at once. A whirlwind of frenzy enveloped them. This frigid infantry remained impassable. The first rank, with knee on the ground, received the cuirassiers on their bayonets, the second shot them down; behind the second rank, the cannoniers loaded their guns, the front of the square opened, made way for an eruption of grape, and closed again. The cuirassiers answered by rushing upon them with crushing force. Their great horses reared, trampled upon the ranks, leaped over the bayonets and fell, gigantic, in the midst of these four living walls. The balls made gaps in the ranks of the cuirassiers, the cuirassiers made breaches in the squares. Files of men disappeared, ground down beneath the horses' feet. Bayonets were buried in the bellies of these centaurs. Hence a monstrosity of wounds never perhaps seen elsewhere. The squares, consumed by this furious cavalry, closed up without wavering. Inexhaustible in grape, they kept up an explosion in the midst of their assailants. It was a monstrous sight. These squares were battalions no longer, they were craters; these cuirassiers were cavalry no longer, they were a tempest. Each square was a volcano attacked by a thundercloud; the lava fought with the lightning.

The square on the extreme right, the most exposed of all, being in the open field, was almost annihilated at the first shock. It was formed of the 75th regiment of Highlanders. The piper in the centre, while the work of extermination was going on, profoundly oblivious of all about him, casting down his melancholy eye full of the shadows of forests and lakes, seated upon a drum, his bagpipe under his arm, was playing his mountain airs. These Scotchmen died thinking of Ben Lethian, as the Greeks died remembering Argos. The sabre of a cuirassier, striking down the pibroch and the arm which bore it, caused the strain to cease by killing the player.

The cuirassiers, relatively few in number, lessened by the catastrophe of the ravine, had to contend with almost the whole of the English army, but they multiplied themselves, each man became equal to ten. Nevertheless, some Hanoverian battalions fell back. Wellington saw it and remembered his cavalry. Had Napoleon, at that very moment, remembered his infantry, he would have won the battle. This forgetfulness was his great fatal blunder.

Suddenly the assailing cuirassiers perceived that they were assailed. The English cavalry was upon their back. Before them the squares, behind them Somerset; Somerset, with the fourteen hundred dragoon guards. Somerset had on his right Dornberg, with his German light-horse, and on his left Trip, with the Belgian carbineers. The cuirassiers, attacked front, flank and rear, by infantry and cavalry, were compelled to face in all directions. What was that to them? They were a whirlwind. Their valor became unspeakable. Besides, they had behind them the ever-thundering artillery. All that was necessary in

order to wound such men in the back. One of their cuirasses, with a hole in the left shoulder-plate made by a musket ball, is in the collection of the Waterloo Museum.

With such Frenchmen only such Englishmen could cope.

It was no longer a conflict, it was darkness, a fury, a giddy vortex of souls and courage, a hurricane of sword-flashes. In an instant the fourteen hundred horse guards were but eight hundred; Fuller, their lieutenant-colonel, fell dead. Ney rushed up with the lancers and chasseurs of Lefebvre-Desnouettes. The plateau of Mont Saint Jean was taken, retaken, taken again. The cuirassiers left the cavalry to return to the infantry, or more correctly, all this terrible multitude wrestled with each other without letting go their hold. The squares still held. There were twelve assaults. Ney had four horses killed under him. Half of the cuirassiers lay on the plateau. The struggle lasted two hours. The English army was terribly shaken. There is no doubt, if they had not been crippled in their first shock by the disaster of the sunken road, the cuirassiers would have overwhelmed the centre, and decided the victory. This wonderful cavalry astounded Clinton, who had seen Talavera and Badajos. Wellington, though three-fourths conquered, was struck with heroic admiration. He said in a low voice: "Splendid!"

The cuirassiers annihilated seven squares out of thirteen, took or spiked sixty pieces of cannon, and took from the English regiments six colors, which three cuirassiers and three chasseurs of the guard carried to the Emperor before the farm of la Belle-Alliance.

The situation of Wellington was growing worse. This strange battle was like a duel between two wounded infuriates who, while yet fighting and resisting, lose all their blood. Which of the two shall fall first?

The struggle of the plateau continued.

How far did the cuirassiers penetrate? None can tell. One thing is certain: the day after the battle, a cuirassier and his horse were found dead under the frame of the hay-scales at Mont Saint Jean, at the point where the four roads from Nivelles, Genappe, La Hulpe and Brussels meet. This horseman had pierced the English lines. One of the men who took away the body still lives at Mont Saint Jean. His name is Dehaze; he was then eighteen years old.

Wellington felt that he was giving way. The crisis was upon him. The cuirassiers had not succeeded, in this sense, that the centre was not broken. All holding the plateau, nobody held it, and in fact it remained for the most part with the English. Wellington held the village and the crowning plain; Ney held only the crest and the slope. On both sides they seemed rooted in this funeral soil.

But the enfeeblement of the English appeared irremediable. The hæmorrhage of this army was horrible. Kempt, on the left wing, called for reinforcements. "*Impossible,*" answered Wellington; "*we must die on the spot we now occupy*" Almost at the same moment—singular coincidence which depicts the exhaustion of both armies—Ney sent to Napoleon for infantry, and Napoleon exclaimed: "*Infantry! where does he expect me to take them? Does he expect me to make them?*"

However, the English army was farthest gone. The furious on-

slaughters of these great squadrons with iron cuirasses and steel breast-plates had ground up the infantry. A few men about a flag marked the place of a regiment; battalions were now commanded by captains or lieutenants. Alten's division, already so cut up at La Haie Sainte, was almost destroyed; the intrepid Belgians of Van Kluze's brigade strewed the rye field along the Nivelles road; there were hardly any left of those Dutch grenadiers who, in 1811, joined to our ranks in Spain, fought against Wellington, and who, in 1815, rallied on the English side, fought against Napoleon. The loss in officers was heavy. Lord Uxbridge, who buried his leg next day, had a knee fractured. If, on the side of the French, in this struggle of the cuirassiers, Delord, l'Heritier, Colbert, Dnop, Travers and Blancard were *hors de combat*, on the side of the English, Alten was wounded, Barne was wounded, Delancey was killed, Van Meeren was killed, Ompteda was killed, the entire staff of Wellington was decimated, and England had the worst share in this balance of blood. The second regiment of foot guards had lost five lieutenant-colonels, four captains, and three ensigns; the first battalion of the thirtieth infantry had lost twenty-four officers and one hundred and twelve soldiers; the seventy-ninth Highlanders had twenty-four officers wounded, eighteen officers killed, and four hundred and fifty soldiers slain. Cumberland's Hanoverian hussars, an entire regiment, having at its head Colonel Hacke, who was afterwards court-martialed and broken, had drawn rein before the fight, and were in flight in the Forest of Soignes, spreading the panic as far as Brussels. Carts, ammunition-wagons, baggage-wagons, ambulances full of wounded, seeing the French gain ground, and approach the forest, fled precipitately; the Dutch, sabred by the French cavalry, cried murder! From Vert Coucou to Groencendael, for a distance of nearly six miles in the direction towards Brussels, the roads, according to the testimony of witnesses still alive, were choked with fugitives. This panic was such that it reached the Prince of Condé at Malines, and Louis XVIII. at Ghent. With the exception of the small reserve drawn up in echelon behind the hospital established at the farm of Mont Saint Jean, and the brigades of Vivian and Vandeleur on the flank of the left wing, Wellington's cavalry was exhausted. A number of batteries lay dismounted. These facts are confessed by Siborne; and Pringle, exaggerating the disaster, says that even that the Anglo-Dutch army was reduced to thirty-four thousand men. The Iron Duke remained calm, but his lips were pale. The Austrian Commissary, Vincent, the Spanish Commissary, Olava, present at the battle in the English staff, thought the Duke was beyond hope. At five o'clock Wellington drew out his watch, and was heard to murmur these sombre words: *Blücher, or night!*

It was about this time that a distant line of bayonets glistened on the heights beyond Frischemont.

Here is the turning point in this colossal drama.

## XI.

## BAD GUIDE FOR NAPOLEON; GOOD GUIDE FOR BULOW.

We understand the bitter mistake of Napoleon; Grouchy hoped for Blücher arriving; death instead of life. Destiny has such turnings. Awaiting the world's throne, Saint Helena became visible. If the little cowboy, who acted as guide to Bulow, Blücher's lieutenant, had advised him to debouch from the forest above Frischemont rather than below Planchenoit, the shaping of the nineteenth century would perhaps have been different. Napoleon would have won the battle of Waterloo. By any other road than below Planchenoit, the Prussian army would have brought up at a ravine impassable for artillery, and Bulow would not have arrived. Now, an hour of delay, as the Prussian general Muffling declares, and Blücher would not have found Wellington in position; "the battle was lost."

It was time, we have seen, that Bulow should arrive. He had bivouacked at Dion le Mont, and started on at dawn. But the roads were impracticable, and his division stuck in the mire. The cannon sank to the hubs in the ruts. Furthermore, he had to cross the Dyle on the narrow bridge of Wavre; the street leading to the bridge had been fired by the French; the caissons and artillery wagons, being unable to pass between two rows of burning houses, had to wait till the fire was extinguished. It was noon before Bulow could reach Chapelle Saint Lambert.

Had the action commenced two hours earlier, it would have been finished at four o'clock, and Blücher would have fallen upon a field already won by Napoleon. Such are these immense chances, proportioned to an infinity, which we cannot grasp.

As early as mid-day, the Emperor, first of all, with his field glass, perceived in the extreme horizon something which fixed his attention. He said: "I see yonder a cloud which appears to me to be troops." Then he asked the Duke of Dalmatia: "Sault, what do you see towards Chapelle Saint Lambert?" The marshal, turning his glass that way, answered: "Four or five thousand men, Sire. Grouchy, of course." Meanwhile it remained motionless in the haze. The glasses of the whole staff studied "the cloud" pointed out by the Emperor. Some said: "They are columns halting." The most said: "It is trees." The fact is, that the cloud did not stir. The Emperor detached Domon's division of light cavalry to reconnoitre this obscure point.

Bulow, in fact, had not moved. His vanguard was very weak, and could do nothing. He had to wait for the bulk of his *corps d'armée*, and he was ordered to concentrate his force before entering into line; but at five o'clock, seeing Wellington's peril, Blücher ordered Bulow to attack, and uttered these remarkable words: "We must give the English army a breathing spell."

Soon after, the divisions of Lösthin, Hiller, Hacke and Ryssel deployed in front of Lobau's corps, the cavalry of Prince William of Prussia debouched from the wood of Paris, Planchenoit was in flames,

and the Prussian balls began to rain down even in the ranks of the Guard in reserve behind Napoleon.

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## XII.

### THE GUARD.

The rest is known; the irruption of a third army, the battle thrown out of joint, eighty-six pieces of artillery suddenly thundering forth, Pirch the First coming up with Bulow, Ziethen's cavalry led by Blücher in person, the French crowded back, Marcognet swept from the plateau of Ohain, Durutte dislodged from Papelotte, Donzolo and Quiot recoiling, Lobau taken en echarpe, a new battle falling at nightfall upon our dismantled regiments, the whole English line assuming the offensive and pushed forward, the gigantic gap made in the French army, the English grape and the Prussian grape lending mutual aid, extermination, disaster in front, disaster in flank, the Guard entering into line amid this terrible crumbling.

Feeling that they were going to their death, they cried out: "*Vive l'Empereur!*" There is nothing more touching in history than this death-agony bursting forth in acclamations.

The sky had been overcast all day. All at once, at this very moment—it was eight o'clock at night—the clouds in the horizon broke and through the elms on the Nivelles road, streamed the sinister red light of the setting sun. The rising sun shone upon Austerlitz.

Each battalion of the guard, for this final effort, was commanded by a general. Friant, Michel, Roguet, Harlet, Mallet, Poret de Morvan, were there. When the tall caps of the Grenadiers of the Guard with their large eagle plates appeared, symmetrical, drawn up in line, calm, in the smoke of that conflict, the enemy felt respect for France; they thought they saw twenty victories entering upon the field of battle, with wings extended, and those who were conquerors, thinking themselves conquered, recoiled; but Wellington cried: "*Up Guards, and at them!*" The red regiment of English Guards, lying behind the hedges, rose up, a shower of grape riddled the tri-colored flag fluttering about our eagles, all hurled themselves forward, and the final carnage began. The Imperial Guard felt the army slipping away around them in the gloom, and the vast overthrow of the rout; they heard the *saute qui peut!* which had replaced the *vive l'Empereur!* and, with flight behind them, they held on their course, battered more and more and dying faster and faster at every step. There were no weak souls or cowards there. The privates of that band were as heroic as their general. Not a man flinched from the suicide.

Ney, desperate, great in all the grandeur of accepted death, bared himself to every blow in this tempest. He had his horse killed under him. Reeking with sweat, fire in his eyes, froth upon his lips, his uniform unbuttoned, one of his epaulets half cut away by the sabre stroke of a horse-guard, his badge of the grand eagle pierced by a ball, bloody, covered with mud, magnificent, a broken sword in his hand, he said: "*Come and see how a Marshal of France dies upon the field of battle.*"

But in vain; he did not die. He was haggard and exasperated. He flung this question at Drouet D'Erlon: '*What, are you not going to die?*' He cried out in the midst of all this artillery which was mowing down a handful of men: '*Is there nothing, then, for me? Oh! I would that all these English balls were buried in my body!*' Unhappy man! thou wast reserved for French bullets!

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### XIII.

#### THE CATASTROPHE.

The rout behind the Guard was dismal. The army fell back rapidly from all sides at once, from Hougoumont, from La Haie Sainte, from Papelotte, from Planchenoit. The cry: *Treachery!* was followed by the cry: *saue qui peut!* A disbanding army is a thaw. The whole bends, cracks, snaps, floats, rolls, falls, crashes, hurries, plunges. Mysterious disintegration! Ney borrows a horse, leaps upon him, and without hat, cravat, or sword, plants himself in the Brussels road, arresting at once the English and the French. He endeavors to hold the army, he calls them back, he reproaches them, he grapples with the rout. He is swept away. The soldiers flee from him, crying: *vive Marshal Ney!* Durutte's two regiments come and go, frightened, and tossed between the sabres of the Ublaus and the fire of the brigades of Kempt, Best, Pack, and Rylandt; a rout is the worst of all conflicts; friends slay each other in their flight; squadrons and battalions are crushed and dispersed against each other, enormous foam of the battle. Lobau, at one extremity, like Reille at the other, is rolled away in the flood. In vain does Napoleon make walls with the remains of the Guard; in vain does he expend his reserve squadrons in a last effort. Quot gives way before Vivian, Kellerman before Vandeleur, Lobau before Bulow, Morand before Pirch, Domon and Subervie before Prince William of Prussia. Guyot, who had led the Emperor's squadrons to the charge, falls under the feet of the English horse. Napoleon gallops along the fugitives, harangues them, urges, threatens, entreats. The mouths, which in the morning were crying *vive l'Empereur*, are now agape; he is hardly recognised. The Prussian cavalry, just come up, spring forward, fling themselves upon the enemy, sabre, cut, hack, kill, exterminate. Teams rush off, the guns are left to the care of themselves; the soldiers of the train unhitch the caissons and take the horses to escape; wagons upset, with their four wheels in the air, block up the road, and are accessories of massacre. They crush and they crowd; they trample upon the living and the dead. Arms are broken. A multitude fills roads, paths, bridges, plains, hills, valleys, woods, choked up by this flight of forty thousand men. Cries, despair, knapsacks and muskets, cast into the rye, passages forced at the point of the sword; no more comrades, no more officers, no more generals; inexpressible dismay. Ziethen sabring France at his ease. Lions become kids. Such was this flight.

At Genappe there was an effort to turn back, to form a line, to make a stand. Lobau rallied three hundred men. The entrance to the village

was barricaded, but at the first volley of Prussian grape, all took to flight again, and Lobau was captured. The marks of that volley of grape are still to be seen upon the old gable of a brick ruin at the right of the road, a short distance before entering Genappe. The Prussians rushed into Genappe, furious, doubtless, at having conquered so little. The pursuit was monstrous. Blücher gave orders to kill all. Roguet had set this sad example by threatening with death every French grenadier who should bring him a Prussian prisoner. Blücher surpassed Roguet. The general of the Young Guard, Dullesme, caught at the door of a tavern in Genappe, gave up his sword to a Hussar of Death, who took the sword and killed the prisoner. The victory was completed by the assassination of the vanquished. Let us punish, since we are history: old Blücher disgraced himself. This ferocity filled the disaster to the brim. The desperate rout passed through Genappe, passed through Quatre Bras, passed through Sombrefe, passed through Frasnes, passed through Thuin, passed through Charleroi, and stopped only at the frontier. Alas! who now was flying in such wise? The Grand Army.

This madness, this terror, this falling to ruin of the highest bravery which ever astonished history, can that be without cause? No. The shadow of an enormous right hand rests on Waterloo. It is the day of destiny. A power above man controlled that day. Hence, the loss of mind in dismay; hence, all these great souls yielding up their swords. Those who had conquered Europe fell to the ground, having nothing more to say or to do, feeling a terrible presence in the darkness. *Illoc erat in fatiis*. That day, the perspective of the human race changed. Waterloo is the hinge of the nineteenth century. The disappearance of the great man was necessary for the advent of the great century. One, to whom there is no reply, took it in charge. The panic of heroes is explained. In the battle of Waterloo, there is more than a cloud, there is a meteor. God passed over it.

In the gathering night, on a field near Genappe, Bernard and Bertrand seized by a flap of his coat and stopped a haggard, thoughtful, gloomy man, who, dragged thus far by the current of the rout, had dismounted, passed the bridle of his horse under his arm, and, with bewildered eye, was returning alone towards Waterloo. It was Napoleon, endeavoring to advance again, mighty somnambulist of a vanished dream.

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#### XIV.

##### THE LAST SQUARE.

A few squares of the Guard, immoveable in the flow of the rout as rocks in running water, held out until night. Night approaching, and death also, they awaited this double shadow, and yielded, unfaltering, to its embrace. Each regiment, isolated from the others, and having no further communication with the army, which was broken in all directions, was dying alone. They had taken position for this last struggle, some upon the heights of Rossomme, others in the plain of Mont Saint Jean. There, abandoned, conquered, terrible, these sombre squares suffered formidable martyrdom. Ulm, Wagram, Jena, Friedland, were dying in them.



At dusk, towards nine o'clock in the evening, at the foot of the plateau of Mont Saint Jean, there remained but one. In this fatal valley, at the bottom of that slope which had been climbed by the Cuirassiers, inundated now by the English masses, under the converging fire of the victorious artillery of the enemy, under a frightful storm of projectiles, this square fought on. It was commanded by an obscure officer whose name was Cambronne. At every discharge the square grew less, but returned the fire. It replied to grape by bullets, narrowing in its four walls continually. Afar off the fugitives, stopping for a moment out of breath, heard in the darkness this dismal thunder decreasing.

When this legion was reduced to a handful, when their flag was reduced to a shred, when their muskets, exhausted of ammunition, were reduced to nothing but clubs, when the pile of corpses was larger than the group of the living, there spread among the conquerors a sort of sacred terror about these sublime martyrs, and the English artillery, stopping to take breath, was silent. It was a kind of respite. These combatants had about them, as it were, a swarm of spectres, the outlines of men on horseback, the black profile of the cannons, the white sky seen through the wheels and the gun-carriages; the colossal death's head which heroes always see in the smoke of the battle was advancing upon them, and glaring at them. They could hear in the gloom of the twilight the loading of the pieces, the lighted matches like tigers' eyes in the night made a circle about their heads; all the linestocks of the English batteries approached the guns, when touched by their heroism, holding the death moment suspended over these men, an English general, Colville, according to some, Maitland, according to others, cried to them: 'Brave Frenchmen, surrender!' Cambronne answered: '*Merde!*'

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## XV.

### CAMBRONNE.

Out of respect to the French reader, the finest word, perhaps, that a Frenchman ever uttered, cannot be repeated to him. We are prohibited from embalming a sublimity in history. At our own risk and peril we violate that prohibition.

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

To speak that word, and then to die, what could be more grand! for to accept death is to die, and it is not the fault of this man, if, in the storm of grape, he survived.

The man who won the battle of Waterloo is not Napoleon put to rout; not Wellington giving way at four o'clock, desperate at five; not Blücher, who did not fight; the man who won the battle of Waterloo was Cambronne.

To fulminate such a word at the thunderbolt which kills you is victory.

To make this answer to disaster, to say this to destiny, to give this base for the future lion, to fling down this reply at the rain of the previous night, at the treacherous wall of Hougomont, at the sunken road of Ohain, at the delay of Grouchy, at the arrival of Blücher, to be ironical in the sepulchre, to act so as to remain upright after one shall

have fallen, to drown in two syllables the European coalition, to offer to kings these privities already known to the Cæsars, to make the last of words the first, by associating with it the glory of France, to close Waterloo insolently by a Mardi Gras, to complete Leonidas by Rabelais, to sum up this victory in a supreme word which cannot be pronounced, to lose the field, and to preserve history, after this carnage to have the laugh on his side, is immense.

It is an insult to the thunderbolt. That attains the grandeur of Æschylus.

This word of Cambronne's gives the effect of a fracture. It is the breaking of a heart by scorn; it is an overplus of agony in explosion. Who conquered? Wellington? No. Without Blücher he would have been lost. Blücher? No. If Wellington had not commenced, Blücher could not have finished. This Cambronne, this passer at the last hour, this unknown soldier, this infinitesimal of war, feels that there is there a lie in a catastrophe, doubly bitter; and at the moment when he is bursting with rage, he is offered this mockery—life! How can he restrain himself? They are there, all the kings of Europe, the fortunate generals, the thundering Joves, they have a hundred thousand victorious soldiers, and behind the hundred thousand, a million; their guns, with matches lighted, are agape; they have the Imperial Guard and the Grand Army under their feet; they have crushed Napoleon, and Cambronne only remains: there is none but this worm of the earth to protest. He will protest. Then he seeks for a word as one seeks for a sword. He froths at the mouth, and this froth is the word. Before this mean and monstrous victory, before this victory without victors, this desperate man straightens himself up, he suffers its enormity, but he establishes its nothingness; and he does more than spit upon it; and overwhelmed in numbers and material strength, he finds in the soul an expression—ordure. We repeat it, to say that, to do that, to find that, is to be the conqueror.

The soul of great days entered into this unknown man at that moment of death. Cambronne finds the word of Waterloo, as Roguet de l'Isle finds the Marseillaise, through a superior inspiration. An effluence from the divine afflatus detaches itself, and passes over these men, and they tremble, and the one sings the supreme song, and the other utters the terrible cry. This word of titanic scorn Cambronne throws down not merely to Europe, in the name of the Empire, that would be but little; he throws it down to the past in the name of the Revolution. It is heard, and men recognize in Cambronne the old soul of the giants. It seems as if it were a speech of Danton or a roar of Kleber.

To this word of Cambronne, the English voice replied: 'Fire!' the batteries flamed, the hill trembled, from all those brazen throats went forth a final vomiting of grape, terrific; a fast smoke, dusky white in the light of the rising moon, rolled out, and when the smoke was dissipated, there was nothing left. That formidable remnant was annihilated; the Guard was dead. The four walls of the living redoubt had fallen, hardly could a quivering be distinguished here and there among the corpses; and thus the French legions, grander than the Roman legions, expired at Mont Saint Jean on ground soaked in rain and blood, in the sombre wheat-fields, at the spot where now, at four o'clock in the

morning, whistling and gaily whipping up his horse, Joseph passes, who drives the mail from Nivelles.

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 XVI.

## QUOT LIBRAS IN DUCE?

The battle of Waterloo is an enigma. It is as obscure to those who won it as to him who lost it. To Napoleon it is a panic;\* Blücher sees in it only fire; Wellington comprehends nothing of it. Look at the reports. The bulletins are confused, the commentaries are foggy. The former stammer, the latter falter. Jomini separates the battle of Waterloo into four periods; Muffling divides it into three tides of fortune; Charras alone, though upon some points our appreciation differs from his, has seized with his keen glance the characteristic lineaments of that catastrophe of human genius struggling with divine destiny. All the other historians are blinded by the glare, and are groping about in that blindness. A day of lightnings, indeed, the downfall of the military monarchy, which, to the great amazement of kings, has dragged with it all kingdoms, the fall of force, the overthrow of war.

In this event, bearing the impress of superhuman necessity, man's part is nothing.

Does taking away Waterlôo from Wellington and from Blücher, detract anything from England and Germany? No. Neither illustrious England nor august Germany is in question in the problem of Waterloo. Thank Heaven, nations are great aside from the dismal chances of the sword. Neither Germany, nor England, nor France, is held in a scabbard. At this day, when Waterloo is only a clinking of sabres, above Blücher, Germany has Goethe, and above Wellington, England has Byron. A vast uprising of ideas is peculiar to our century, and in this aurora England and Germany have a magnificent share. They are majestic because they think. The higher plane which they bring to civilization is intrinsic to them; it comes from themselves, and not from an accident. The advancement which they have made in the nineteenth century does not spring from Waterloo. It is only barbarous nations who have a sudden growth after a victory. It is the fleeting vanity of the streamlet swelled by the storm. Civilized nations, especially in our times, are not exalted nor abased by the good or bad fortune of a captain. Their specific gravity in the human race results from something more than a combat. Their honor, thank God, their dignity, their light, their genius, are not numbers that heroes and conquerors, those gamblers, can cast into the lottery of battles. Oftentimes a battle lost is progress attained. Less glory, more liberty. The drum is silent, reason speaks. It is the game at which he who loses, gains. Let us speak, then, coolly of Waterloo on both sides. Let us render unto Fortune, the things that are Fortune's, and unto God, the things that are God's:

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\* "A battle ended, a day finished, false measures repaired, greater successes assured for the morrow, all was lost by a moment of panic."—(Napoleon, *Dictations at St. Helena.*)

What is Waterloo? A victory? No. A prize. A prize won by Europe, paid by France.

It was not much to put a lion there.

Waterloo, moreover, is the strangest encounter in history. Napoleon and Wellington: they are not enemies, they are opposites. Never has God, who takes pleasure in antitheses, made a more striking contrast and a more extraordinary meeting. On one side, precision, foresight, geometry, prudence, retreat assured, reserves economized, obstinate composure, imperturbable method, strategy to profit by the ground, tactics to balance battalions, carnage drawn to the line, war directed watch in hand, nothing left voluntarily to chance, ancient classic courage, absolute correctness; on the other, intuition, inspiration, a military marvel, a superb human instinct; a flashing glance, a mysterious something which glazes like the eagle and strikes like the thunderbolt, prodigious art in disdainful impetuosity, all the mysteries of a deep soul, intimacy with Destiny; river, plain, forest, hill, commanded, and in some sort forced to obey, the despot going even so far as to tyrannize over the battle-field; faith in a star joined to strategic science, increasing it, but disturbing it. Wellington was the Barème of War, Napoleon was its Michael Angelo, and this time genius was vanquished by calculation.

On both sides they were expecting somebody. It was the exact calculator who succeeded. Napoleon expected Grouchy; he did not come. Wellington expected Blücher; he came.

Wellington is classic war taking her revenge. Bonaparte, in his dawn, had met her in Italy, and defeated her superbly. The old owl fled before the young vulture. Ancient tactics had been not only thunder-struck, but had received mortal offence. What was this Corsican of twenty-six? What meant this brilliant novice, who, having everything against him, nothing for him, with no provisions, no munitions, no cannon, no shoes, almost without an army, with a handful of men against multitudes, rushed upon allied Europe, and absurdly gained victories that were impossible? Whence came this thundering madman who, almost without taking breath, and with the same set of combatants in hand, pulverised one after the other the five armies of the Emperor of Germany, overthrowing Beaulieu upon Alvinzi, Wurmser upon Beaulieu, Melas upon Wurmser, Mack upon Melas? Who was this new comer in war with the confidence of destiny? The academic military school excommunicated him as it ran away. Thence an implacable hatred of the old system of war against the new, of the correct sabre against the flashing sword, and of the chequer-board against genius. On the 18th of June, 1815, this hatred had the last word, and under Lodi, Montebello, Montenotte, Mantua, Marengo, Arcola, it wrote Waterloo. Triumph of the common-place, grateful to majorities. Destiny consented to this irony. In his decline, Napoleon again found Wurmser before him, but young. Indeed, to produce Wurmser, nothing was required but to whiten Wellington's hair.

Waterloo is a battle of the first rank won by a captain of the second. What is truly admirable in the battle of Waterloo is England, English firmness, English resolution, English blood; the superb thing which England had there—may it not displease her—is herself. It is not her captain, it is her army. Wellington, strangely ungrateful, declared in a

letter to Lord Bathurst, that his army, the army that fought on the 18th of June, 1815, was a "detestable army." What does this dark assemblage of bones, buried beneath the furrows of Waterloo, think of that? England has been too modest in regard to Wellington. To make Wellington so great is to belittle England. Wellington is but a hero like the rest. These Scotch Grays, these Horse Guards, these regiments of Maitland and of Mitchell, this infantry of Paek and Kempf, this cavalry of Ponsonby and Somerset, these Highlanders playing the bagpipe under the storm of grape, these battalions of Rylandt, these raw recruits who hardly knew how to handle a musket, holding out against the veteran bands of Essling and Rivoli—all that is grand. Wellington was tenacious, that was his merit, and we do not undervalue it, but the least of his foot-soldiers or his horsemen was quite as firm as he. The iron soldier is as good as the Iron Duke. For our part, all our glorification goes to the English soldier, the English army, the English people. If trophy there be, to England the trophy is due. The Waterloo column would be more just if, instead of the figure of a man, it lifted to the clouds the statue of a nation.

But this great England will be offended at what we say here. She has still, after her 1688 and our 1789, the feudal illusion. She believes in hereditary right, and in the hierarchy. This people, surpassed by none in might and glory, esteems itself as a nation, not as a people. So much so, that, as a people, they subordinate themselves willingly, and take a Lord for a head. Workmen, they submit to be despised; soldiers, they submit to be whipped. We remember that at the battle of Inkerman, a sergeant who, as it appeared, had saved the army, could not be mentioned by Lord Raglan, the English military hierarchy not permitting any hero below the rank of an officer to be spoken of in a report.

What we admire above all, in an encounter like that of Waterloo, is the prodigious skill of fortune. The night's rain, the wall of Hougomont, the sunken road of Ohain, Gronchy deaf to cannon, Napoleon's guide who deceives him, Bulow's guide who leads him right; all this cataclysm is wonderfully carried out.

Taken as a whole, let us say, Waterloo was more of a massacre than a battle. Of all great battles, Waterloo is that which has the shortest line in proportion to the number engaged. Napoleon, two miles, Wellington, a mile and a half; seventy-two thousand men on each side. From this density came the carnage.

The calculation has been made, and this proportion established: Loss of men: at Austerlitz, French, fourteen per cent.; Russians, thirty per cent.; Austrians, forty-four per cent. At Wagram, French, thirteen per cent.; Austrians, fourteen. At La Moscowa, French, thirty-seven per cent.; Russians, forty-four. At Bautzen, French, thirteen per cent.; Russians and Prussians, fourteen. At Waterloo, French, fifty six per cent.; Allies, thirty-one. Average for Waterloo, forty-one per cent. A hundred and forty-four thousand men; sixty thousand dead.

The field of Waterloo to-day has that calm which belongs to the earth, impassive support of man; it resembles any other plain.

At night, however, a sort of visionary mist arises from it, and if some traveller be walking there, if he looks, if he listens, if he dreams like

Virgil in the fatal plain of Philippi, he becomes possessed by the hallucination of the disaster. The terrible 18th of June is again before him; the artificial hill of the monument fades away; this lion, whatever it be, is dispelled; the field of battle resumes its reality; the lines of infantry undulate in the plain, furious gallops traverse the horizon; the bewildered dreamer sees the flash of sabres, the glistening of bayonets, the bursting of shells, the awful intermingling of the thunders; he hears, like a death rattle from the depths of a tomb, the vague clamor of the phantom battle; these shadows are grenadiers; these gleams are cuirassiers; this skeleton is Napoleon; that skeleton is Wellington; all this is unreal, and yet it glashes and combats; and the ravines run red, and the trees shiver, and there is fury even in the clouds, and, in the darkness, all those savage heights, Mont Saint Jean, Hougoumont, Frischemont, Papelotte, Planchenoit, appear confusedly crowned with whirlwinds of spectres exterminating each other.

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## XVII.

### MUST WE APPROVE WATERLOO?

There exists a very respectable liberal school, which does not hate Waterloo. We are not of them. To us, Waterloo is but the unconscious date of liberty. That such an eagle should come from such an egg, is certainly an unlooked for thing.

Waterloo, if we place ourselves at the culminating point of view of the question, is intentionally a counter-revolutionary victory. It is Europe against France; it is Petersburg, Berlin and Vienna against Paris; it is the status quo against the initiative; it is the 14th of June, 1789, attacked by the 20th March, 1815; it is the monarchies clearing the decks for action against the indomitable French uprising. The final extinction of this vast people, for twenty-six years in eruption, such was the dream. It was the solidarity of the Brunswicks, the Nassaus, the Romanoffs, the Hohenzollerns, and the Hapsburgs, with the Bourbons. Divine right rides behind with Waterloo. It is true that the empire having been despotic, royalty, by the natural reaction of things, was forced to become liberal, and also that a constitutional order has indirectly sprung from Waterloo, to the great regret of the conquerors. The fact is, that revolution cannot be conquered, and that being providential and absolutely decreed, it re-appears continually, before Waterloo in Bonaparte, throwing down the old thrones, after Waterloo in Louis XVIII. granting and submitting to the charter. Bonaparte places a postillion on the throne of Naples and a sergeant on the throne of Sweden, employing inequality to demonstrate equality; Louis XVIII. at Saint Ouen countersigns the declaration of the rights of man. Would you realize what revolution is, call it Progress; and would you realize what Progress is, call it To-morrow. To-morrow performs its work irresistibly, and it performs it from to-day. It always reaches its aim through unexpected means. It employs Wellington to make Foy, who was only a soldier, an orator. Foy falls at Hougoumont and rises again at the rostrum. Thus progress goes on. No tool comes amiss to this

workman. It adjusts to its divine work, without being disconcerted, the man who strode over the Alps, and the good old tottering invalid of the Père Blysée. It makes use of the cripple as well as the conqueror; the conqueror without, the cripple within. Waterloo, by cutting short the demolition of European thrones by the sword, has had no other effect than to continue the revolutionary work in another way. The saberers have gone out, the time of the thinkers has come. The age which Waterloo would have checked, has marched on and pursued its course. This inauspicious victory has been conquered by liberty.

In fine and incontestably, that which triumphed at Waterloo; that which smiled behind Wellington; that which brought him all the marshals' batons of Europe, among them, it is said, the baton of marshal of France; that which joyfully rolled barrows of earth full of bones to rear the mound of the lion; that which has written triumphantly on that pedestal this date: June 18th, 1815; that which encouraged Blücher sabering the fugitives; that which, from the height of the plateau of Mont Saint Jean, hung over France as over a prey, was Counter-revolution. It was Counter-revolution which murmured this infamous word—dismemberment. Arriving at Paris, it had a near view of the crater; it felt that these ashes were burning its feet, and took a second thought. It came back lisping of a charter.

Let us see in Waterloo only what there is in Waterloo. Of intentional liberty, nothing. The Counter-revolution was involuntarily liberal, as, by a corresponding phenomenon, Napoleon was involuntarily revolutionary. On the 18th of June, 1815, Robespierre on horseback was thrown from the saddle.

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### XVIII.

#### RECUDESCENCE OF DIVINE RIGHT.

End of the dictatorship. The whole European system fell.

The empire sank into darkness which resembled that of the expiring Roman world. It rose again from the depths, as in the time of the Barbarians. Only, the barbarism of 1815, which should be called by its special name, the Counter-revolution, was short-winded, soon out of breath, and soon stopped. The empire, we must acknowledge, was wept over and wept over by heroic eyes. If there be glory in the sceptre-sword, the empire had been glory itself. It had spread over the earth all the light which tyranny can give—a sombre light. Let us say further—an obscure light. Compared to the real day, it is night. This disappearance of night had the effect of an eclipse.

Louis XVIII. returned to Paris. The dancing in a ring of the 8th of July effaced the enthusiasm of the 20th of March. The Corsican became the antithesis of the Bearnois. The flag of the dome of the Tuilleries was white. The exile mounted the throne. The fir table of Hartwell took its place before the chair decorated with fleur-de-lis of Louis XIV. Men talked of Bouvines and Fontenoy as of yesterday, Austerlitz being out of date. The altar and the throne fraternized majestically. One of the most unquestionably safe forms of society in

The nineteenth century was established in France and on the continent. Europe put on the white cockade. Trestitution became famous. The device *non pluribus impar* re-appeared in the radiations of the façade of the barracks of the quay of Orsay. Where there had been an imperial guard, there was a red house. The arc du Carrousel,—covered with awkwardly gained victories,—disowned by these new times, and a little ashamed, perhaps, of Marengo and Arcola, extricated itself from the affair by the statue of the Duke of Angoulême. The cemetery de la Madeleine, the terrible Potter's field of '93, was covered with marble and jasper, the bones of Louis XVI. and Marie-Antoinette being in this dust. In the ditch of Vincennes, a sepulchral column rose from the ground, recalling the fact that the Duke of Enghien died in the same month in which Napoleon was crowned. Pope Pius VII., who had performed this consecration very near the time of this death, tranquilly blessed the fall as he had blessed the elevation. At Schönbrunn there was a little shadow four years old which it was seditious to call the King of Rome. And these things were done, and these kings resumed their thrones, and the master of Europe was put in a cage, and the old *réjime* became the new, and all the light and shade of the earth changed place, because, in the afternoon of a summer's day, a cowboy said to a Prussian in a wood: "Pass this way and not that!"

This 1815 was a sort of gloomy April. The old unhealthy and poisonous realities took on new shapes. Falsehood espoused 1789, divine right masked itself under a charter, fictions became constitutional, prejudices, superstitions and mental reservations, with article 14 hugged to the heart, put on a varnish of liberalism. Serpents changing their skins.

Man had been at once made greater and made less by Napoleon. The ideal, under this splendid material reign, had received the strange name of ideology. Serious recklessness of a great man, to turn the future into derision. The people, however, that food for cannon so fond of the cannoneer, looked for him. Where is he? What is he doing? "Napoleon is dead," said a visitor to an invalid of Marengo and Waterloo. "*He dead!*" cried the soldier; "*are you sure of that?*" Imagination deified this prostrate man. The heart of Europe, after Waterloo, was gloomy. An enormous void remained long after the disappearance of Napoleon.

Kings threw themselves into this void. Old Europe profited by it to assume a new form. There was a Holy Alliance. Belle Alliance the fatal field of Waterloo had said in advance.

In presence of and confronting this ancient Europe made over, the lineaments of a new France began to appear. The future, the jest of the Emperor, made its appearance. It had on its brow this star, Liberty.

The ardent eyes of rising generations turned towards it. Strange to tell, men became enamored at the same time of this future, Liberty, and of this past, Napoleon. Defeat had magnified the vanquished. Bonaparte fallen seemed higher than Bonaparte in power. Those who had triumphed, were struck with fear. England guarded him through Hudson Lowe, and France watched him through Montchenu. His folded arms became the anxiety of thrones. Alexander called him, My Wakefulness. This terror arose from the amount of revolution he had



in him. This is the explanation and excuse of Bonapartist liberalism. This phantom made the old world quake. Kings reigned ill at ease with the rock of Saint Helena in the horizon.

While Napoleon was dying at Longwood, the sixty thousand men fallen on the field of Waterloo tranquilly mouldered away, and something of their peace spread over the world. The congress of Vienna made from it the treaties of 1815, and Europe called that the Restoration.

Such is Waterloo.

But what is that to the Infinite? All this tempest, all this cloud, this war, then this peace, all this darkness, disturb not for a moment the light of that Infinite Eye, before which the least of insects leaping from one blade of grass to another equals the eagle flying from spire to spire among the towers of Notre-Dame.

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## XIX.

### THE FIELD OF BATTLE AT NIGHT.

We return, for it is a requirement of this book, to the fatal field of battle. On the 18th of June, 1815, the moon was full. Its light favored the ferocious pursuit of Blucher, disclosed the traces of the fugitives, delivered this helpless mass to the blood-thirsty Prussian cavalry, and aided in the massacre. Night sometimes lends such tragic assistance to catastrophe. When the last gun had been fired the plain of Mont Saint Jean remained deserted.

The English occupied the camp of the French; it is the usual verification of victory to sleep in the bed of the vanquished. They established their bivouac around Rossomme. The Prussians, let loose upon the fugitives, pushed forward. Wellington went to the village of Waterloo to make up his report to Lord Bathurst.

If ever the *sic vos non vobis* were applicable, it is surely to this village of Waterloo. Waterloo did nothing, and was two miles distant from the action. Mont Saint Jean was cannonaded, Hougoumont was burned, Papelotte was burned, Planchenoit was burned, La Haie Sainte was taken by assault, La Belle-Alliance witnessed the meeting of the two conquerors; these names are scarcely known, and Waterloo, which had nothing to do with the battle, has all the honor of it.

We are not of those who glorify war; when the opportunity presents itself we describe its realities. War has frightful beauties which we have not concealed; it has also, we must admit, some deformities. One of the most surprising is the eager spoliation of the dead after a victory. The day after a battle always dawns upon naked corpses.

Who does this? Who thus sullies the triumph? Whose is this hideous furtive hand which glides into the pocket of victory? Who are these pickpockets following their trade in the wake of glory? Some philosophers, Voltaire among others, affirm that they are precisely those who have achieved the glory. They are the same, say they, there is no exchange; those who survive pillage those who succumb. The hero of the day is the vampire of the night. A man has a right, after all, to despoil in part a corpse which he has made.

For our part we do not believe this. To gather laurels and to steal shams from a dead man, seems to us impossible to the same hand.

One thing is certain, that, after the conquerors, come the robbers. But let us place the soldier, especially the soldier of to-day, beyond this charge.

Every army has a train, and there the accusation should lie. Bats, half brigand and half valet, all species of night bird engendered by this twilight which is called war, bearers of uniforms who never fight, sham invalids, formidable cripples, interloping sutlers, travelling, sometimes with their wives, on little carts, and stealing what they sell, beggars offering themselves as guides to officers, army-servants, marauders; armies on the march formerly—we do not speak of the present time—were followed by all these, to such an extent that, in technical language, they are called “camp-followers.” No army and no nation was responsible for these beings; they spoke Italian and followed the Germans; they spoke French and followed the English. It was by one of these wretches, a Spanish camp-follower who spoke French, that the Marquis of Berry was, deceived by his Picardy gibberish, and taking him for one of us, was treacherously killed and robbed on the battle-field during the night which followed the victory of Cerisoles. From marauding came the marauder. The detestable maxim, *Live on your enemy*, produced this leper, which rigid discipline alone can cure. There are reputations which are illusory; it is not always known why certain generals, though they have been great, have been so popular. Turenne was adored by his soldiers because he tolerated pillage; the permission to do wrong forms part of kindness; Turenne was so kind that he allowed the Palatine to be burned and put to the sword. There were seen in the wake of armies more or less of marauders according as the commander was more or less severe. Hoche and Marcou had no camp-followers; Wellington—we gladly do him this justice—had few.

However, during the night of the 18th of June, the dead were despoiled. Wellington was rigid; he ordered whoever should be taken in the act to be put to death; but rapine is persevering. The marauders were holding in one corner of the battle-field while they were shooting them in another.

The moon was an evil genius on this plain.

Towards midnight a man was prowling or rather crawling along the zucken land of Ohain. He was, to all appearance, one of those whom we have just described, neither English nor French, peasant nor soldier, less a man than a ghoul, attracted by the scent of the corpses, counting theft for victory, coming to rifle Waterloo. He was dressed in a blouse which was in part a capote, was restless and daring, looking behind and before as he went. Who was this man? Night, probably, knew more of his doings than day! He had no knapsack, but evidently large pockets under his capote. From time to time he stopped, examined the plain around him as if to see if he were observed, stooped down suddenly, stirred on the ground something silent and motionless, then rose up and skulked away. His gliding movement, his attitudes, his rapid and mysterious gestures, made him seem like those twilight spectres which haunt ruins and which the old Norman legends call the *Göers*.

Certain nocturnal water-birds make such motions in marshes.

An eye which had carefully penetrated all this haze, might have noticed at some distance, standing as it were concealed behind the ruin which is on the Nivelles road at the corner of the route from Mont Saint Jean to Braine à l'Alleud, a sort of little sutler's wagon, covered with tarred osiers, harnessed to a famished jade browsing nettles through her bit, and in the wagon a sort of woman seated on some trunks and packages. Perhaps there was some connection between this wagon and the prowler.

The night was serene. Not a cloud was in the zenith. What mattered it that the earth was red, the moon retained her whiteness. Such is the indifference of heaven. In the meadows, branches of trees broken by grape, but not fallen, and held by the bark, swung gently to the night wind. A breath, almost a respiration, moved the brushwood. There was a quivering in the grass which seemed like the departure of souls.

The tread of the patrols and roundsmen of the English camp could be heard dimly in the distance.

Hougoumont and La Haie Sainte continued to burn, making, one in the East and the other in the West, two great flames, to which was attached, like a necklace of rubies with two carbuncles at its extremities, the cordon of bivouac fires of the English, extending in an immense semicircle over the hills of the horizon.

We have spoken of the catastrophe of the road of Ohain. The heart almost sinks with terror at the thought of such a death for so many brave men.

If anything is frightful, if there be a reality which surpasses dreams, it is this: to live, to see the sun, to be in full possession of manly vigor, to have health and joy, to laugh sturdily, to rush toward a glory which dazzlingly invites you on, to feel a very pleasure in respiration, to feel your heart beat, to feel yourself a reasoning being, to speak, to think, to hope, to love; to have mother, to have wife, to have children, to have sunlight, and suddenly, in a moment, in less than a minute, to feel yourself buried in an abyss, to fall, to roll, to crush, to be crushed, to see the grain, the flowers, the leaves, the branches, to be able to seize upon nothing, to feel your sword useless, men under you, horses over you, to strike about you in vain, your bones broken by some kick in the darkness, to feel a heel which makes your eyes leap from their sockets, to grind the horseshoes with rage in your teeth, to stifle, to howl, to twist, to be under all this, and to say, just now I was a living man!

There, where this terrible death-rattle had been, all was now silent. The cut of the sunken road was filled with horses and riders inextricably heaped together. Terrible entanglement. There were no longer slopes to the road; dead bodies filled it even with the plain, and came to the edge of the banks like a well measured bushel of barley. A mass of dead above, a river of blood below—such was this road on the evening of the 18th of June, 1815. The blood ran even to the Nivelles road, and oozed through in a large pool in front of the abattis of trees, which barred that road, at a spot which is still shown. It was, it will be remembered, at the opposite point, towards the road from Genappe, that the burying of the enrassiers took place. The thickness of the mass of bodies was proportioned to the depth of the hollow road. Towards the

middle, at a spot where it became shallower, over which Delord's division had passed, this bed of death became thinner.

The night prowler which we have just introduced to the reader, went in this direction. He ferretted through this immense grave. He looked about. He passed an indescribably hideous review of the dead. He walked with his feet in blood. Suddenly he stopped.

A few steps before him, in the sunken road, at a point where the mound of corpses ended, from under this mass of men and horses appeared an open hand, lighted by the moon.

This hand had something upon a finger which sparkled; it was a gold ring.

The man stooped down, remained a moment, and when he rose again there was no ring upon that hand.

He did not rise up precisely; he remained in a sinister and startled attitude, turning his back to the pile of dead, scrutiniating the horizon, on his knees, all the front of his body being supported on his two fore-fingers, his head raised just enough to peep above the edge of the hollow road. The four paws of the jackal are adapted to certain actions.

Then, deciding upon his course, he arose. At this moment he experienced a shock. He felt that he was held from behind. He turned; it was the open hand, which had closed, seizing the lappel of his capote. An honest man would have been frightened. This man began to laugh. "Oh," said he, "it's only the dead man. I like a ghost better than a gendarme."

However, the hand relaxed and let go its hold. Strength is soon exhausted in the tomb.

"Ah ha!" returned the prowler, "is this dead man alive? Let us see." He bent over again, rummaged among the heap, removed whatever impeded him, seized the hand, laid hold of the arm, disengaged the head, drew out the body, and some moments after dragged into the shadow of the hollow road an inanimate man, at least one who was senseless. It was a cuirassier, an officer; an officer, also, of some rank; a great gold epaulette protruded from beneath his cuirass, but he had no casque. A furious sabre cut had disfigured his face, where nothing but blood was to be seen. It did not seem, however, that he had any limbs broken; and by some happy chance, if the word is possible here, the bodies were arched above him in such a way as to prevent his being crushed. His eyes were closed. He had on his cuirass the silver cross of the Legion of Honor. The prowler tore off this cross, which disappeared in one of the gulfs which he had under his capote. After which, he felt the officer's fob, found a watch there, and took it. Then he rummaged in his vest and found a purse, which he pocketed. When he had reached this phase of the success he was lending the dying man, the officer opened his eyes.

"Thanks," said he, feebly. The rough movements of the man handling him, the coolness of the night, and breathing the fresh air freely, had roused him from his lethargy. The prowler answered not. He raised his head. The sound of a footstep could be heard on the plain; probably it was some patrol who was approaching. The officer murmured, for there were still signs of suffering in his voice:

"Who has gained the battle?"

"The English," answered the prowler.

The officer replied: "Search my pockets. You will there find a purse and a watch. Take them." This had already been done.

The prowler made a pretence of executing the command, and said: "There is nothing there."

"I have been robbed," replied the officer; "I am sorry. They would have been yours."

The step of the patrol became more and more distinct.

"Somebody is coming," said the prowler, making a movement as if he would go. The officer, raising himself up painfully upon one arm, held him back.

"You have saved my life. Who are you?"

The prowler answered quick and low: "I belong, like yourself, to the French army. I must go. If I am taken I shall be shot. I have saved your life. Help yourself now."

"What is your grade?"

"Sergeant."

"What is your name?"

"Thénardier."

"I shall not forget that name," said the officer. "And you, remember mine. My name is Pontmercy."

## Book Second.

# THE SHIP ORION.

### I.

NUMBER 24601 BECOMES 9430.

Jean Valjean had been retaken.

We shall be pardoned for passing rapidly over the painful details. We shall merely reproduce a couple of items published in the newspapers of that day, some few months after the remarkable events that occurred at M—— sur M——.

The articles referred to, are somewhat laconic. It will be remembered that the *Gazette des Tribunaux* had not yet been established.

We copy the first from the *Drapeau Blanc*. It is dated the 25th of July, 1823:

"A district of the Pas-de-Calais has just been the scene of an extraordinary occurrence. A stranger in that department, known as Monsieur Madeleine, had, within a few years past, restored, by means of certain new processes, the manufacture of jet and black glass ware—a former local branch of industry. He had made his own fortune by it, and, in fact, that of the entire district. In acknowledgment of his services, he had been appointed Mayor. The police has discovered that Monsieur Madeleine was none other than an escaped convict, condemned in 1796 for robbery, and named Jean Valjean. This Jean Valjean has been sent back to the galleys. It appears that previous to his arrest, he succeeded

in withdrawing from Laffitte's a sum amounting to more than half a million which he had deposited there, and which it is said, by the way, he had very legitimately realized in his business. Since his return to the galleys at Toulon, it has been impossible to discover where Jean Valjean concealed this money."

The second article, which enters a little more into detail, is taken from the *Journal de Paris* of the same date :

"An old convict, named Jean Valjean, has recently been brought before the Var Assizes, under circumstances calculated to attract attention. This villain had succeeded in eluding the vigilance of the police; he had changed his name, and had even been adroit enough to procure the appointment of Mayor in one of our small towns in the North. He had established in this town a very considerable business, but was, at length, unmasked and arrested, thanks to the indefatigable zeal of the public authorities. He kept, as his mistress, a prostitute, who died of the shock at the moment of his arrest. This wretch, who is endowed with herculean strength, managed to escape; but, three or four days afterwards, the police retook him, in Paris, just as he was getting into one of the small vehicles that ply between the capital and the village of Montfermeil (Seine et Oise). It is said that he had availed himself of the interval of these three or four days of freedom, to withdraw a considerable sum deposited by him with one of our principal bankers. The amount is estimated at six or seven hundred thousand francs. According to the minutes of the case, he has concealed it in some place known to himself alone, and it has been impossible to seize it; however that may be, the said Jean Valjean has been brought before the assizes of the Department of the Var, under indictment for an assault and robbery on the high road, committed *vi et armis* some eight years ago, on the person of a young chimney-sweep. This bandit attempted no defence. It was proven by the able and eloquent representative of the crown, that the robbery was shared in by others, and that Jean Valjean formed one of a band of robbers in the South. Consequently, Jean Valjean, being found guilty, was condemned to death. The criminal refused to appeal to the higher courts, and the King, in his inexhaustible clemency, deigned to commute his sentence to that of hard labor in prison for life. Jean Valjean was immediately forwarded to the galleys at Toulon."

It will not be forgotten that Jean Valjean had at M—— sur M—— certain religious habits. Some of the newspapers, and, among them, the *Constitutionnel*, held up this commutation as a triumph of the clerical party.

Jean Valjean changed his number at the galleys. He became 9430.

While we are about it, let us remark, in dismissing the subject, that with M. Madeleine, the prosperity of M—— sur M—— disappeared; all that he had foreseen, in that night of fever and irresolution, was realized; he gone, the *soul* was gone. After his downfall, there was at M—— sur M—— that egotistic distribution of what is left when great men have fallen—that fatal carving up of prosperous enterprises which is daily going on, out of sight, in human society, and which history has noted but once, and then, because it took place after the death of Alexander. Generals crown themselves kings; the foremen, in this case, assumed the position of manufacturers. Jealous rivalries arose. The

spacious workshops of M. Madeleine were closed; the buildings fell into ruin, the workmen dispersed. Some left the country, others abandoned the business. From that time forth, everything was done on a small, instead of on a large scale, and for gain rather than for good. No longer any centre; competition on all sides, and on all sides venom. M. Madeleine had ruled and directed everything. He fallen, every man strove for himself; the spirit of strife succeeded to the spirit of organization, bitterness to cordiality, hatred of each against each, instead of the good will of the founder towards all; the threads knitted by M. Madeleine became entangled and were broken; the workmanship was debased, the manufacturers were degraded, confidence was killed; customers diminished, there were fewer orders, wages decreased, the shops became idle, bankruptcy followed. And then there was nothing left for the poor. All that was there disappeared.

Even the State noticed that some one had been crushed, in some direction. Less than four years after the decree of the court of assizes establishing the identity of M. Madeleine and Jean Valjean, for the benefit of the galleys, the expense of collecting the taxes was doubled in the district of M—— sur M.—; and M. de Villèle remarked the fact, on the floor of the Assembly, in the month of February, 1827.

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## II.

IN WHICH A COUPLE OF LINES WILL BE READ, WHICH CAME, PERHAPS, FROM THE EVIL ONE.

Before proceeding further, it will not be amiss to relate, in some detail, a singular incident which took place, about the same time, at Montfermeil, and which, perhaps, does not fall in badly with certain conjectures of the public authorities.

There exists, in the neighborhood of Montfermeil, a very ancient superstition, all the more rare and precious from the fact that a popular superstition in the vicinity of Paris is like an aloe tree in Siberia. Now, we are of those who respect anything in the way of rarity. Here, then, is the superstition of Montfermeil: they believe there, that the Evil One has, from time immemorial, chosen the forest as the hiding-place for his treasure. The good wives of the vicinity affirm that it is no unusual thing to meet, at sundown, in the secluded portions of the woods, a black looking man, resembling a waggoner or wood-cutter, shod in wooden shoes, clad in breeches and sack of coarse linen, and recognizable from the circumstance that, instead of a cap or hat, he has two immense horns upon his head. That certainly ought to render him recognizable. This man is constantly occupied in digging holes. There are three ways of dealing with him when you meet him.

The first mode is to approach the man and speak to him. Then you perceive that the man is nothing but a peasant, that he looks black because it is twilight, that he is digging no hole whatever, but is merely cutting grass for his cows; and that what had been taken for horns are nothing but his pitchfork which he carries on his back, and the prongs of which, thanks to the night perspective, seemed to rise from his head.

You go home and die within the week. The second method is to watch him, to wait until he has dug the hole, closed it up, and gone away; then, to run quickly to the spot, to open it and get the "treasure" which the black-looking man has, of course, buried there. In this case, you die within the month. The third manner is not to speak to the dark man nor even to look at him, and to run away as fast as you can. You die within the year.

As all three of these methods have their drawbacks, the second, which, at least, offers some advantages, among others that of possessing a treasure, though it be but for a month, is the one generally adopted. Daring fellows, who never neglect a good chance, have, therefore, many times, it is asseverated, re-opened the holes thus dug by the black-looking man, and tried to rob the Devil. It would appear, however, that it is not a very good business—at least, if we are to believe tradition, and, more especially, two enigmatic lines in barbarous Latin left us, on this subject, by a roguish Norman monk, named Tryphon, who dabbled in the black art. This Tryphon was buried in the abbey of St. Georges de Bocherville, near Rouen, and toads are produced from his grave.

Well, then, the treasure-seeker makes tremendous efforts, for the holes referred to are dug, generally, very deep; he sweats, he digs, he works away all night, for this is done in the night-time; he gets his clothes wet, he consumes his candle, he hacks and breaks his pick-axe, and when, at length, he has reached the bottom of the hole, when he has put his hand upon the "treasure," what does he find? What is this treasure of the Evil One? A penny—sometimes a crown; a stone, a skeleton, a bleeding corpse, sometimes a spectre twice folded like a sheet of paper in a portfolio, sometimes nothing. This is what seems to be held forth to the indiscreet and prying by the lines of Tryphon:

*"Fodit, et in fossa thesauros condit opaca,  
As, nummos, lapides, calaver, simulacra, nihilque."*

It appears that, in our time, they find in addition sometimes a powder-horn with bullets, sometimes an old pack of brown and greasy cards which have evidently been used by the Devil. Tryphon makes no mention of these articles, as Tryphon lived in the twelfth century, and it does not appear that the Evil One had wit enough to invent powder in advance of Roger Bacon or cards before Charles VI.

Moreover, whoever plays with these cards is sure to lose all he has; and as to the powder in the flask, it has the peculiarity of bursting your gun in your face.

Now, very shortly after the time when the authorities took it into their heads that the liberated convict Jean Valjean had, during his escape of a few days' duration, been prowling about Montfermeil, it was remarked, in that village, that a certain old road-laborer named Boulatruelle had "à faney" for the woods. People in the neighborhood claimed to know that Boulatruelle had been, in the galleys; he was under police surveillance, and, as he could find no work any where, the government employed him at half wages as a mender on the cross-road from Gagny to Lagny.

This Boulatruelle was a man in bad odor with the people of the neighborhood; he was too respectful, too humble, prompt to doff his cap to



every body; he always trembled and smiled in the presence of the gendarmes, was probably in secret connection with robber-bands, said the gossips, and suspected of lying in wait in the hedge corners, at night-fall. He had nothing in his favor except that he was a drunkard.

What had been observed was this:

For some time past, Boulatruelle had left off his work at stone-breaking and keeping the road in order, very early, and had gone into the woods with his pick. He would be met towards evening in the remotest glades and the wildest thickets, having the appearance of a person looking for something, and, sometimes, digging holes. The good wives who passed that way took him at first for Beelzebub, then they recognized Boulatruelle, and were by no means re-assured. These chance meetings seemed greatly to disconcert Boulatruelle. It was clear that he was trying to conceal himself, and that there was something mysterious in his operations.

The village gossips said: "It's plain that the Devil has been about, Boulatruelle has seen him and is looking for his treasure. The truth is, he is just the fellow to rob the Evil One." The Voltairians added: "Will Boulatruelle catch the Devil or the Devil catch Boulatruelle?" The old women crossed themselves very often.

However, the visits of Boulatruelle to the woods ceased and he recommenced his regular labor on the road. People began to talk about something else.

A few, however, retained their curiosity, thinking that there might be involved in the affair, not the fabulous treasures of the legend, but some goodly matter more substantial than the Devil's bank bills, and that Boulatruelle had half spied out the secret. The worst puzzled of all were the schoolmaster and the tavern-keeper, Thénardier, who was every body's friend, and who had not disdained to strike up an intimacy with even Boulatruelle.

"He has been in the galleys," said Thénardier. "Good Lord! no body knows who is there or who may be there!"

One evening, the schoolmaster remarked, in old times, the authorities would have inquired into what Boulatruelle was about in the woods, and that he would have been compelled to speak—even put to torture, if needs were—and that Boulatruelle would not have held out, had he been put to the question by water, for example.

"Let us put him to the wine question," said Thénardier.

So they made up a party and plied the old roadsman with drink. Boulatruelle drank enormously, but said little. He combined with admirable art and in masterly proportions the thirst of a guzzler with the discretion of a judge. However, by dint of returning to the charge and by putting together and twisting the obscure expressions that he did let fall, Thénardier and the schoolmaster made out, as they thought, the following:

One morning about daybreak as he was going to his work, Boulatruelle had been surprised at seeing under a bush in a corner of the wood, a pickaxe and spade, *as one would say, hidden there*. However, he supposed that they were the pick and spade of old Six-Fours, the water-carrier, and thought no more about it. But, on the evening of the same day, he had seen, without being seen himself, for he was hidden

behind a large tree, "a person who did not belong at all to that region, and whom he, Boulatruelle, knew very well"—or, as Thénardier translated it, "*an old comrade at the galleys*"—turn off from the high road towards the thickest part of the wood. Boulatruelle obstinately refused to tell the stranger's name. This person carried a package, something square, like a large box or a small trunk. Boulatruelle was surprised. Seven or eight minutes, however, elapsed before it occurred to him to follow the "person." But he was too late. The person was already in the thick woods, night had come on, and Boulatruelle did not succeed in overtaking him. Thereupon he made up his mind to watch the outskirts of the wood. "There was a moon." Two or three hours later, Boulatruelle saw this person come forth again from the wood, this time carrying now not the little trunk but a pick and spade. Boulatruelle let the person pass unmolested, because, as he thought to himself, the other was three times as strong as he, was armed with a pick-axe, and would probably murder him, on recognizing his countenance and seeing that he, in turn, was recognized. Touching display of feeling in two old companions unexpectedly meeting! But the pick and the spade were a ray of light to Boulatruelle; he hastened to the bushes, in the morning, and found neither one nor the other. He thence concluded that this person, on entering the wood, had dug a hole with his pick, had buried the chest, and had, then, filled up the hole with his spade. Now, as the chest was too small to contain a corpse, it must contain money; hence his continued searches. Boulatruelle had explored, sounded, and ransacked the whole forest, and had rummaged every spot where the earth seemed to have been freshly disturbed. But all in vain.

He had turned up nothing. Nobody thought any more about it, at Montfermeil, excepting a few good gossips, who said: "Be sure the road-laborer of Gagny didn't make all that fuss for nothing: the Devil was certainly there."

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### III.

SHOWING THAT THE CHAIN OF THE IRON RING MUST NEEDS HAVE UNDERGONE A CERTAIN PREPARATION TO BE THUS BROKEN BY ONE BLOW OF THE HAMMER.

Towards the end of October, in that same year, 1823, the inhabitants of Toulon saw coming back into their port, in consequence of heavy weather, and in order to repair some damages, the ship *Orion*, which was at a later period employed at Brest as a vessel of instruction, and which then formed a part of the Mediterranean squadron. This ship, crippled as she was, for the sea had used her roughly, produced some sensation on entering the roadstead. She flew I forget what pennant, but it entitled her to a regular salute of eleven guns, which she returned shot for shot: in all twenty-two. It has been estimated that in salutes, royal and military compliments, exchanges of courteous hubbub, signals of etiquette, roadstead and citadel formalities, risings and settings of the sun saluted daily by all fortresses and all vessels of war, the opening and closing of gates, etc., etc., the civilized world, in every part of

the globe, fires off, daily, one hundred and fifty thousand useless cannon shots. At six francs per shot, that would amount to nine hundred thousand francs per day, or three hundred millions per year, blown off in smoke. This is only an item. In the meanwhile, the poor are dying with hunger.

The year 1823 was what the Restoration has called the "time of the Spanish War."

During the operations of the army of the Prince, commanding-in-chief, a squadron cruised in the Mediterranean. We have said that the *Orion* belonged to that squadron, and that she had been driven back by stress of weather to the port of Toulon.

The presence of a vessel of war in port, has about it a certain influence which attracts and engages the multitude. It is because it is something grand, and the multitude like what is imposing.

A ship of the line is one of the most magnificent struggles of human genius with the forces of nature.

A vessel of the line is composed of the heaviest, and at the same time the lightest materials, because she has to contend, at one and the same time, with the three forms of matter, the solid, the liquid, and the fluid. She has eleven claws of iron to grasp the rock at the bottom of the sea, and more wings and feelers than the butterfly to catch the breezes in the clouds. Her breath goes forth through her hundred and twenty guns as through enormous trumpets, and haughtily answers the thunderbolt. Ocean strives to lead her astray in the frightful sameness of his billows, but the ship has her compass, which is her soul, always counselling her, and always pointing towards the North. In dark nights, her lanterns take the place of the stars. Thus, then, to oppose the wind, she has her ropes and canvas; against the water her timber; against the rock her iron, her copper, and her lead; against the darkness, light; against immensity, a needle.

Whoever would form an idea of all these gigantic proportions, the aggregate of which constitutes a ship-of-the-line, has but to pass under one of the covered ship-houses, six stories high, at Brest or Toulon. The vessels in process of construction, are seen there under glass cases, so to speak. That colossal beam is a yard; that huge column of timber lying on the ground and reaching out of sight is the mainmast. Taking it from its root in the hold to its summit in the clouds, it is sixty fathoms long, and is three feet in diameter at its base. The English mainmast rises two hundred and seventeen feet above the water-line. The navy of our fathers used cables, ours uses chains. Now the mere coil of chains of a hundred-gun ship is four feet high, twenty feet broad, and eight feet thick. And for the construction of this vessel, how much timber is required? It is a floating forest.

And yet, be it remembered, that we are here speaking only of the war vessel of some forty years ago—the mere sailing craft; steam, then in its infancy, has, since that time, added new wonders to this prodigy called a man-of-war. At the present day, for example, the mixed vessel, the screw-propeller, is a surprising piece of mechanism moved by a spread of canvas measuring four thousand square yards of surface, and by a steam engine of twenty-five hundred horse power.

Without referring to these fresher marvels, the old-fashioned ship of Christopher Columbus and of De Ruyter, is one of the noblest works of

man. It is as exhaustless in force as the breath of infinitude; it gathers up the wind in its canvas, it is firmly fixed in the immense chaos of the waves, it floats and it reigns.

But a moment comes, when the white squall breaks that sixty-foot yard like a straw; and when the wind flaw bends that four hundred foot mast like a reed; when that anchor, weighing its tons upon tons, is twisted in the maw of the wave like the angler's hook in the jaws of a pike; when those monster guns utter plaintive and futile roarings which the tempest whirls away into space and night; when all this might and all this majesty are engulfed in a superior might and majesty.

Whenever immense strength is put forth only to end in immense weakness, it makes men meditate. Hence, it is, that, in seaports, the curious, without themselves knowing exactly why, throng about these wonderful instruments of war and navigation.

Every day, then, from morning till night, the quays, the wharves, and the piers of the port of Toulon were covered with a throng of saunterers and idlers, whose occupation consisted in gazing at the *Orion*.

The *Orion* was a ship that had long been in a bad condition. During her previous voyages, thick layers of shell-fish had gathered on her bottom to such an extent as to seriously impede her progress; she had been put upon the dry-dock the year before, to be scraped, and then she had gone to sea again. But this scraping had injured her fastening.

In the latitude of the Balearic Isles, her planking had loosened and opened, and as there was in those days no copper sheathing, the ship had leaked. A fierce equinoctial came on, which had stove in the larboard bows and a porthole, and damaged the fore-chain-wales. In consequence of these injuries, the *Orion* had put back to Toulon.

She was moored near the Arsenal. She was in commission, and they were repairing her. The hull had not been injured on the starboard side, but a few planks had been taken off here and there, according to custom, to admit the air to her frame-work.

One morning, the throng which was gazing at her witnessed an accident.

The crew were engaged in furling sail. The topman, whose duty it was to take in the starboard upper corner of the main top-sail, lost his balance. He was seen tottering; the dense throng assembled on the wharf of the Arsenal, uttered a cry, the man's head overbalanced his body, and he whirled over the yard, his arms outstretched towards the deep; as he went over, he grasped the man-ropes, first with one hand, and then with the other, and hung suspended in that manner. The sea lay far below him at a giddy depth. The shock of the fall had given to the man-ropes a violent swinging motion, and the poor fellow hung dangling to and fro at the end of this line, like a stone in a sling.

To go to his aid was to a run frightful risk. None of the crew, who were all fishermen of the coast recently taken into service, dared attempt it. In the meantime, the poor topman was becoming exhausted; his agony could not be seen in his countenance, but his increasing weakness could be detected in the movements of all his limbs. His arms twisted about in horrible contortions. Every attempt he made to re-ascend only increased the oscillations of the man-ropes. He did not cry out, for fear of losing his strength. All were now looking forward to the moment

when he should let go of the rope, and, at instants, all turned their heads away that they might not see him fall. There are moments when a rope's end, a pole, the branch of a tree, is life itself, and it is a frightful thing to see a living being lose his hold upon it, and fall like a ripe fruit.

Suddenly, a man was discovered clambering up the rigging with the agility of a wildcat. This man was clad in red—it was a convict; he wore a green cap—it was a convict for life. As he reached the round-top, a gust of wind blew off his cap, and revealed a head entirely white; it was not a young man.

In fact, one of the convicts employed on board in some prison task, had, at the first alarm, run to the officer of the watch, and, amid the confusion and hesitation of the crew, while all the sailors trembled and shrank back, had asked permission to save the topman's life at the risk of his own. A sign of assent being given, with one blow of a hammer he broke the chain rivoted to the iron ring at his ankle, then took a rope in his hand, and flung himself into the shrouds. Nobody, at the moment, noticed with what ease the chain was broken. It was only some time afterwards that anybody remembered it.

In a twinkling, he was upon the yard. He paused a few seconds, and seemed to measure it with his glance. Those seconds, during which the wind swayed the sailor to and fro at the end of the rope, seemed ages to the lookers-on. At length, the convict raised his eyes to heaven, and took a step forward. The crowd drew a long breath. He was seen to run along the yard. On reaching its extreme tip, he fastened one end of the rope he had with him, and let the other hang at full length. Thereupon, he began to let himself down by his hands along this rope, and then there was an inexpressible sensation of terror; instead of one man, two were seen dangling at that giddy height.

You would have said it was a spider seizing a fly; only, in this case, the spider was bringing life, and not death. Ten thousand eyes were fixed upon the group. Not a cry, not a word was uttered; the same emotion contracted every brow. Every man held his breath, as if afraid to add the least whisper to the wind which was swaying the two unfortunate men.

However, the convict had, at length, managed to make his way down to the seaman. It was time; one minute more, and the man, exhausted and despairing, would have fallen into the deep. The convict firmly secured him to the rope to which he clung with one hand while he worked with the other. Finally, he was seen re-ascending to the yard, and hauling the sailor after him; he supported him there for an instant, to let him recover his strength, and then, lifting him in his arms, carried him, as he walked along the yard, to the cross-trees, and from there to the round-top, where he left him in the hands of his messmates.

Then the throng applauded; old galley sergeants wept, women hugged each other on the whatves, and, on all sides, voices were heard exclaiming, with a sort of tenderly subdued enthusiasm: "This man must be pardoned!"

He, however, had made it a point of duty to descend again immediately, and go back to his work. In order to arrive more quickly, he slid down the rigging, and started to run along a lower yard. There was a

certain moment when every one felt alarmed; whether it was that he felt fatigued, or because his head swam, people thought they saw him hesitate and stagger. Suddenly, the throng uttered a thrilling outcry; the convict had fallen into the sea.

The fall was perilous. The frigate *Alyesiras* was moored close to the *Orion*, and the poor convict had plunged between the two ships. It was feared that he would be drawn under one or the other. Four men sprang at once, into a boat. The people cheered them on, and anxiety again took possession of all minds. The man had not again risen to the surface. He had disappeared in the sea, without making even a ripple, as though he had fallen into a cask of oil. They sounded and dragged the place. It was in vain. The search was continued until night, but not even the body was found.

The next morning, the Toulon Journal published the following lines: "November 17, 1828 Yesterday, a convict at work on board of the *Orion*, on his return from rescuing a sailor, fell into the sea, and was drowned. His body was not recovered. It is presumed that it has been caught under the piles at the pier-head of the Arsenal. This man was registered by the number 9480, and his name was Jean Valjean."

## Book Third.

### FULFILMENT OF THE PROMISE TO THE DEPARTED.

#### I.

##### THE WATER QUESTION AT MONTFERMEIL.

Montfermeil is situated between Livry and Chelles, upon the southern slope of the high plateau which separates the Ourcq from the Marne. At present, it is a considerable town, adorned all the year round with stuccoed villas, and, on Sundays, with citizens in full blossom. In 1823, there were at Montfermeil neither so many white houses nor so many comfortable citizens; it was nothing but a village in the woods. You would find, indeed, here and there a few country seats of the last century, recognizable by their grand appearance, their balconies of twisted iron, and those long windows, the little panes of which show all sorts of different greens upon the white of the closed shutters. But Montfermeil was none the less a village. Retired dry-goods merchants and amateur villagers had not yet discovered it. It was a peaceful and charming spot, and not upon the road to any place; the inhabitants cheaply enjoyed that rural life which is so luxuriant and easy of enjoyment. But water was scarce there on account of the height of the plateau.

They had to go a considerable distance for it. The end of the village towards Gagny drew its water from the magnificent ponds in the forest on that side; the other end, which surrounds the church and which is towards Chelles, found drinking-water only at a little spring on the side of the hill, near the road to Chelles, about fifteen minutes' walk from Montfermeil.

It was therefore a serious matter for each household to obtain its supply of water. The great houses, the aristocracy, the Thénardier tavern included, paid a penny a bucket-full to an old man who made it his business, and whose income from the water-works was about eight sous per day; but this man worked only till seven o'clock in summer, and five in the winter, and when night had come on, and the first-floor shutters were closed, whoever had no drinking water went after it, or went without it.

This was the terror of the poor being whom the reader has not perhaps forgotten—little Cosette. It will be remembered that Cosette was useful to the Thénardiens in two ways—they got pay from the mother and work from the child. Thus when the mother ceased entirely to pay, we have seen why, in the preceding chapters, the Thénardiens kept Cosette. She saved them a servant. In that capacity she ran for water when it was wanted. So the child, always horrified at the idea of going to the spring at night, took good care that water should never be wanting at the house.

Christmas in the year 1823 was particularly brilliant at Montfermeil. The early part of the winter had been mild; so far there had been neither frost nor snow. Some jugglers from Paris had obtained permission from the Mayor to set up their stalls in the main street of the village, and a company of pedlars had, under the same license, put up their booths in the square before the Church, and even in the lane du Boulanger, upon which, as the reader perhaps remembers, the Thénardier chop-house was situated. This filled up the taverns and pot-houses, and gave to this little quiet place a noisy and joyous appearance. We ought also to say, to be a faithful historian, that, among the curiosities displayed in the square, there was a menagerie in which frightful clowns, clad in rags, and come nobody knows whence, were exhibiting in 1823 to the peasants of Montfermeil one of those horrid Brazilian vultures, a specimen of which our Muséum Royal did not obtain until 1845, and the eye of which is tri-colored cockade. Naturalists call this bird, I believe, *Caracara Polyborus*; it belongs to the order of the *Apicidæ*, and the family of vultures. Some good old retired Bonapartist soldiers in the village went to see the bird as a matter of faith. The jugglers pronounced the tri-colored cockade a unique phenomenon, made expressly by God for their menagerie.

On that Christmas evening, several men, wagoners and pedlars, were seated at table and drinking around four or five candles in the low hall of the Thénardier tavern. This room resembled all bar-rooms: tables, pewter-mugs, bottles, drinkers, smokers; little light, and much noise. The date, 1823, was, however, indicated by the two things then in vogue with the middle classes, which were on the table, a kaleidoscope and a fluted tin lamp. Thénardier, the wife, was looking to the supper, which was cooking before a bright blazing fire; the husband, Thénardier, was drinking with his guests and talking politics.

Cosette was at her usual place, seated on the cross-piece of the kitchen table, near the fireplace; she was clad in rags; her bare feet were in wooden shoes, and by the light of the fire she was knitting woolen stockings for the little Thénardiens. A young kitten was playing under the chairs. In a neighboring room the fresh voices of two children were heard laughing and prattling; it was Eponine and Azelma.

In the chimney-corner, a cow-hide hung upon a nail.

At intervals, the cry of a very young child, which was somewhere in the house, was heard above the noise of the bar-room. This was a little boy which the woman had some winters before—"She didn't know why," she said; "it was the cold weather,"—and which was a little more than three years old. The mother had nursed him, but did not love him. When the hungry clamor of the brat became too much to bear: "Your boy is squalling," said Thénardier, "why don't you go and see what he wants?" "Bah!" answered the mother; "I am sick of him." And the poor little fellow continued to cry in the darkness.

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## II.

### TWO PORTRAITS COMPLETED.

The Thénardiens have hitherto been seen in this book in profile only; the time has come to turn this couple about and look at them on all sides.

Thénardier had just passed his fiftieth year; Madame Thénardier had reached her fortieth, which is the fiftieth for woman; so that there was an equilibrium of age between the husband and wife.

The reader has, perhaps, since her first appearance, preserved some remembrance of this huge Thénardiess—for such we shall call the female of this species—large, blond, red, fat, brawny, square, enormous and agile; she belonged, as we have said, to the race of those colossal wild women who posturize at fairs with paving stones hung in their hair. She did everything about the house, the chamber-work, the washing, the cooking, anything she pleased, and played the deuce generally. Cosette was her only servant; a mouse in the service of an elephant. Everything trembled at the sound of her voice; windows and furniture as well as people. Her broad face, covered with freckles, had the appearance of a skimmer. She had beard. She was the ideal of a butcher's boy dressed in petticoats. She swore splendidly; she prided herself on being able to crack a nut with her fist. Apart from the novels she had read, which at times gave you an odd glimpse of the affected lady under the ogress, the idea of calling her a woman never would have occurred to anybody. This Thénardiess seemed like a cross between a wench and a fishwoman. If you heard her speak, you would say it is a gendarme; if you saw her drink, you would say it is a cartman; if you saw her handle Cosette, you would say it is the hangman. When at rest, a tooth protruded from her mouth.

The other Thénardier was a little man, meagre, pale, angular, bony, and lean, who appeared to be sick, and whose health was excellent; here his knavery began. He smiled habitually, as a matter of business, and tried to be polite to everybody, even to the beggar to whom he refused a penny. He had the look of a weazel, and the mien of a man of letters. He had a strong resemblance to the portraits of the Abbé Delille. He affected drinking with wagoners. Nobody ever saw him drunk. He smoked a large pipe. He wore a blouse, and under it an



old black coat. He made pretensions to literature and materialism. There were names which he often pronounced in support of anything whatever that he might say. Voltaire, Raynal, Parny, and, oddly enough, St. Augustine. He professed to have "a system." For the rest, a great swindler. A fellowsopher. There is such a variety. It will be remembered, that he pretended to have been in the service; he related with some pomp that at Waterloo, being sergeant in a Sixth or Ninth Light something, he alone, against a squadron of Hussars of Death, had covered with his body, and saved amid a shower of grape, "a General dangerously wounded." Hence the flaming picture on his sign, and the name of his inn, which was spoken of in that region as the "tavern of the sergeant of Waterloo." He was liberal, classical, and a Bonapartist. He had subscribed for the Champ d'Asile. It was said in the village that he had studied for the priesthood.

We believe that he had only studied in Holland to be an inn-keeper. This whelp of the composite order was, according to all probability, some Fleming of Lille in Flanders, a Frenchman in Paris, a Belgian in Brussels, conveniently on the fence between the two frontiers. We understand his prowess at Waterloo. As we have seen, he exaggerated it a little. Ebb and flow, waudering, adventure, was his element; a violated conscience is followed by a loose life; and without doubt, at the stormy epoch of the 18th of June, 1815, Thénardier belonged to that species of marauding sutlers of whom we have spoken, scouring the country, robbing here and selling there, and travelling in family style, man, woman and children, in some ricketty carryall, in the wake of marching troops, with the instinct to attach himself always to the victorious army. This campaign over, having, as he said, some "quibus," he had opened a "chop-house" at Montfermeil.

This "quibus," composed of purses and watches, gold rings and silver crosses, gathered at the harvest time in the furrows sown with corpses, did not form a great total, and had not lasted this sutler, now become a tavern-keeper, very long.

Thénardier had that indescribable stiffness of gesture which, with an oath, reminds you of the barracks, and, with a sign of the cross, of the seminary. He was a fine talker. He was fond of being thought learned. Nevertheless, the schoolmaster remarked that he made mistakes in pronunciation. He made out travellers' bills in a superior style, but practised eyes sometimes found them faulty in orthography. Thénardier was sly, greedy, lounging, and clever. He did not disdain servant girls, consequently his wife had no more of them. This giantess was jealous. It seemed to her that this little, lean and yellow man must be the object of universal desire. Thénardier, above all a man of astuteness and poise, was a rascal of the subdued order. This is the worst species; there is hypocrisy in it. Not that Thénardier was not on occasion capable of anger, quite as much so as his wife; but that was very rare, and at such times, as if he were at war with the whole human race, as if he had hid in a deep furnace of hatred, as if he were of those who are perpetually avenging themselves, who accuse everybody about them of the evils that befall them, and are always ready to throw on the first comer, as legitimate grievance, the sum-total of the deceptions, failures, and calamities of their life—as all this leaven worked in him, and boiled

up into his mouth and eyes, he was frightful. Wo to him who came within reach of his fury, then!

Besides all his other qualities, Thénardier was attentive and penetrating, silent or talkative, as occasion required, and always with great intelligence. He had somewhat the look of sailors accustomed to squinting the eye in looking through spy glasses. Thénardier was a statesman.

Every new-comer who entered the chop house, said, on seeing the Thénardiess: There is the master of the house. It was an error. She was not even *the mistress*. The husband was both master and mistress. She performed, he created. He directed everything by a sort of invisible and continuous magnetic action. A word sufficed, sometimes a sign; the mastodon obeyed. Thénardier was to her, without her being really aware of it, a sort of being apart and sovereign. She had the virtues of her order of creation; never would she have differed in any detail with "Monsieur Thénardier"—nor—impossible supposition—would she have publicly quarrelled with her husband, on any matter whatever. Never had she committed "before company" that fault of which women are so often guilty, and which is called, in parliamentary language, discovering the crown. Although their accord had no other result than evil, there was, food for contemplation in the submission of the Thénardiess to her husband. This bustling mountain of flesh moved under the little finger of this frail despot. It was, viewed from its dwarfed and grotesque side, this great universal fact: the homage of matter to spirit: for certain deformities have their origin in the depths even of eternal beauty. There was somewhat of the unknown in Thénardier; hence the absolute empire of this man over this woman. At times, she looked upon him as upon a lighted candle; at others, she felt him like a claw.

This woman was a formidable creation, who loved nothing but her children, and feared nothing but her husband. She was a mother because she was a maternal. Her maternal feelings stopped with her girls, and, as we shall see, did not extend to boys. The man had but one thought—to get rich. He did not succeed. His great talents had no adequate opportunity. Thénardier at Montfermeil was ruining himself, if ruin is possible at zero. In Switzerland, or in the Pyrenees, this penniless rogue would have become a millionaire. . . But where fate places the inn-keeper he must browse. It is understood that the word *inn-keeper* is employed here in a restricted sense, and does not extend to an entire class.

In this same year, 1823, Thénardier owed about fifteen hundred francs, of pressing debts, which rendered him moody. However obstinately unjust destiny was to him, Thénardier was one of those men who best understood, to the greatest depth and in the most modern style, that which is a virtue among the barbarous, and a subject of merchandise among the civilized—hospitality. He was, besides, an admirable poacher, and was counted an excellent shot. He had a certain cool and quiet laugh, which was particularly dangerous. His theories of inn-keeping sometimes sprang from him by flashes. He had certain professional aphorisms which he inculcated in the mind of his wife. "The duty of the inn-keeper," said he to her one day, emphatically, and in a

low voice, "is to sell to the first comer, food, rest, light, fire, dirty linen, servants, fleas, and smiles; to stop travellers, empty small purses, and lighten large ones; to receive families who are travelling, with respect; scrape the man, pluck the woman, and pick the child; to charge for the open window, the closed window, the chimney corner, the sofa, the chair, the stool, the bench, the feather bed, the mattress, and the straw bed; to know how much the mirror is worn, and to tax that; and, by the five hundred thousand devils, to make the traveller pay for everything, even to the flies that his dog eats!"

This man and this woman were cunning and rage married—a hideous and terrible pair. While the husband calculated and schemed, the Thénardiess thought not of absent creditors, took no care either for yesterday or the morrow, and lived passionately in the present moment.

Such were these two beings. Cosette was between them, undergoing their double pressure, like a creature who is at the same time being bruised by a millstone, and lacerated with pincers. The man and the woman had each a different way. Cosette was beaten unmercifully; that came from the woman. She went bare foot in winter; that came from the man. Cosette ran up stairs and down stairs; washed, brushed, scrubbed, swept, ran, tired herself, got out of breath, lifted heavy things, and, puny as she was, did the rough work. No pity; a ferocious mistress, a malignant master. The Thénardier chop-house was like a snare, in which Cosette had been caught, and was trembling. The ideal of oppression was realized by this distasteful servitude. It was something like a fly serving spiders. The poor child was passive and silent.

When they find themselves in such condition at the dawn of existence, so young, so feeble, among men, what passes in these souls fresh from God!

### III.

#### MEN MUST HAVE WINE AND HORSES WATER.

Four new guests had just come in. Cosette was musing sadly; for, though she was only eight years old, she had already suffered so much that she mused with the mournful air of an old woman. She had a black eye from a blow of the Thénardiess' fist, which made the Thénardiess say from time to time, "How ugly she is with her patch on her eye!" Cosette was then thinking that it was evening, late in the evening, that the bowls and pitchers in the rooms of the travellers who had arrived must be filled immediately, and that there was no more water in the cistern.

One thing comforted her a little; they did not drink much water in the Thénardier tavern. There were plenty of people there who were thirsty; but it was that kind of thirst which reaches rather towards the jug than the pitcher. Had anybody asked for a glass of water among these glasses of wine, he would have seemed a savage to all those men. However, there was an instant when the child trembled; the Thénardiess raised the cover of a kettle which was boiling on the range, then took a glass and hastily approached the cistern. She turned the faucet; the

child had raised her head and followed all her movements. A thin stream of water ran from the faucet, and filled the glass half full. "Here," said she, "there is no more water!" Then she was silent for a moment. The child held her breath. "Pshaw!" continued the Thénardiess, examining the half-filled glass, "there is enough of it, such as it is."

Cosette resumed her work, but for more than a quarter of an hour she felt her heart leaping into her throat like a great ball. She counted the minutes as they thus rolled away, and eagerly wished it were morning. From time to time, one of the drinkers would look out into the street and exclaim: "It is as black as an oven!" or, "It would take a cat to go along the street without a lantern to-night." And Cosette shuddered. All at once, one of the pedlars who lodged in the tavern came in, and said in a harsh voice: "You have not watered my horse." "Yes, we have, sure," said the Thénardiess. "I tell you no, ma'am," replied the pedlar. Cosette came out from under the table. "Oh, yes, Monsieur," said she, "the horse did drink; he drank in the bucket, the bucket full, and 'twas me that carried it to him, and I talked to him." This was not true. Cosette lied. "Here is a girl as big as my fist, who can tell a lie as big as a house," exclaimed the pedlar. "I tell you that he has not had any water, little wench! He has a way of blowing when he has not had any water, that I know well enough." Cosette persisted, and added in a voice stifled with anguish, and which could hardly be heard: "But he did drink a good deal." "Come," continued the pedlar, in a passion, "that is enough; give my horse some water, and say no more about it." Cosette went back under the table. "Well, of course that is right," said the Thénardiess; "if the beast has not had any water, she must have some." Then looking about her: "Well, what has become of that girl?" She stooped down and discovered Cosette crouched at the other end of the table, almost under the feet of the drinkers. "Arn't you com'g?" cried the Thénardiess. Cosette came out of the kind of hole where she had hidden. The Thénardiess continued: "Mademoiselle Dog without a name, go and carry some drink to this horse." "But, ma'am," said Cosette feebly, "there is no water." The Thénardiess threw the street door wide open. "Well, go after some!" Cosette hung her head, and went for an empty bucket that was by the chimney-corner. The bucket was larger than she, and the child could have sat down in it comfortably. The Thénardiess went back to her range, and tasted what was in the kettle with a wooden spoon, grumbling the while. "There is some at the spring. She is the worst girl that ever was. I think 'twould have been better if I'd left out the onions." Then she fumbled in a drawer where there were some pennies, pepper and garlic. "Here, M'm'selle Toad," added she, "get a big loaf at the baker's, as you come back. Here is fifteen sous." Cosette had a little pocket in the side of her apron; she took the piece without saying a word, and put it in that pocket. Then she remained motionless, bucket in hand, the open door before her. She seemed to be waiting for somebody to come to her aid. "Get along!" cried the Thénardiess. Cosette went out. The door closed.

## IV.

## A DOLL ENTERS UPON THE SCENE.

The row of booths extended along the street from the church, the reader will remember, as far as the Thénardier tavern. These booths, on account of the approaching passage of the citizens on their way to the midnight mass, were all illuminated with candles, burning in paper lanterns, which, as the schoolmaster of Montfermeil, who was at that moment seated at one of Thénardier's tables, said, produced a magical effect. In retaliation, not a star was to be seen in the sky.

The last of these stalls, set up exactly opposite Thénardier's door, was a toy-shop, all glittering with trinkets, glass beads, and things magnificent in tin. In the first rank, and in front, the merchant had placed, upon a bed of white napkins, a great doll nearly two feet high, dressed in a robe of pink-rape, with golden wheat-ears on its head, and which had real hair and enamel eyes. The whole day, this marvel had been displayed to the bewilderment of the passers under ten years of age, but there had not been found in Montfermeil a mother rich enough, or prodigal enough to give it to her child. Eponine and Azelma had passed hours in contemplating it, and Cosette herself, furtively, it is true, had dared to look at it.

At the moment when Cosette went out, bucket in hand, all gloomy and overwhelmed as she was, she could not help raising her eyes towards *the lady*, as she called it. The poor child stopped petrified. She had not seen this doll so near before.

This whole booth seemed a palace to her; this doll was not a doll, it was a vision. It was joy, splendor, riches, happiness, and it appeared in a sort of chimerical radiance to this unfortunate little being, buried so deeply in a cold and dismal misery. Cosette was measuring with the sad and simple sagacity of childhood the abyss which separated her from that doll. She was saying to herself that one must be a queen, or at least a princess, to have a "thing" like that. She gazed upon this beautiful pink dress, this beautiful smooth hair, and she was thinking, "How happy must be that doll!" Her eye could not turn away from this fantastic booth. The longer she looked, the more she was dazzled. She thought she saw paradise. There were other dolls behind the larger one that appeared to her to be fairies and genii. The merchant walking to and fro in the back part of his stall, suggested the Eternal Father.

In this adoration, she forgot everything, even the errand on which she had been sent. Suddenly, the harsh voice of the Thénardiess called her back to the reality: "How, jade, haven't you gone yet? Hold on; I am coming for you! I'd like to know what she's doing there. Little monster, be off!"

The Thénardiess had glanced into the street, and perceived Cosette in ecstasy. Cosette fled with her bucket, running as fast as she could.

## V.

## THE LITTLE GIRL ALL ALONE.

As the Thénardier tavern was in that part of the village which is near the church, Cosette had to go to the spring in the woods towards Chelles to draw water. She looked no more at the displays in the booths, so long as she was in the lane Boulanger; and in the vicinity of the church, the illuminated stalls lighted the way, but soon the last gleam from the last stall disappeared. The poor child found herself in darkness. She became buried in it. Only, as she became the prey of a certain sensation, she shook the handle of the bucket as much as she could on her way. That made a noise, which kept her company. The further she went, the thicker became the darkness. There was no longer anybody in the street. However, she met a woman who turned around on seeing her pass, and remained motionless, muttering between her teeth: "Where in the world can that child be going? Is it a phantom child?" Then the woman recognised Cosette. "Oh," said she, "it is the Lark!"

Cosette thus passed through the labyrinth of crooked and deserted streets, which terminates the village of Montfermeil towards Chelles. As long as she had houses, or even walls, on the sides of the road, she went on boldly enough. From time to time, she saw the light of a candle through the cracks of a shutter; it was light and life to her; there were people there; that kept up her courage. However, as she advanced, her speed slackened as if mechanically. When she had passed the corner of the last house, Cosette stopped. To go beyond the last booth, had been difficult; to go further than the last house became impossible. She put the bucket on the ground, buried her hands in her hair, and began to scratch her head slowly, a motion peculiar to terrified and hesitating children. It was Montfermeil no longer, it was the open country; dark and deserted space was before her. She looked with despair into this darkness where nobody was, where there were beasts, where there were perhaps ghosts. She looked intensely; and she heard the animals walking in the grass, and she distinctly saw the ghosts moving in the trees. Then she seized her bucket again; fear gave her boldness: 'Pshaw,' said she, 'I will tell her there isn't any more water!' And she resolutely went back into Montfermeil.

She had scarcely gone a hundred steps when she stopped again, and began to scratch her head. Now, it was the Thénardiess that appeared to her; the hideous Thénardiess, with her hyena mouth, and wrath flashing from her eyes. The child cast a pitiful glance before her and behind her. What could she do? What would become of her? Where should she go? Before her, the spectre of the Thénardiess; behind her, all the phantoms of the night and of the forest. It was at the Thénardiess that she recoiled. She took the road to the spring again, and began to run. She ran out of the village; she ran into the woods, seeing nothing, hearing nothing. She did not stop running until out of breath, and even then she staggered on. She went right on, desperate. Even while running, she wanted to cry. The nocturnal tremlousness of the forest wrapped her about completely. She thought no

more; she saw nothing more. The immensity of night confronted this little creature. On one side, the infinite shadow; on the other, an atom.

It was only seven or eight minutes' walk from the edge of the woods to the spring. Cosette knew the road, from travelling it several times a day. Strange thing, she did not lose her way. A remnant of instinct guided her blindly. But she neither turned her eyes to the right nor to the left, for fear of seeing things in the trees and in the bushes. Thus she arrived at the spring.

It was a small natural basin, made by the water in the loamy soil, about two feet deep, surrounded with moss, and with that long figured grass called Henry Fourth's collars, and paved with a few large stones. A brook escaped from it with a gentle, tranquil murmur.

Cosette did not take time to breathe. It was very dark, but she was accustomed to come to this fountain. She felt with her left hand in the darkness for a young oak which bent over the spring and usually served her as a support, found a branch, swung herself from it, bent down and plunged the bucket in the water. She was for a moment so excited that her strength was tripled. When she was thus bent over, she did not notice that the pocket of her apron emptied itself into the spring. The fifteen-sous piece fell into the water. Cosette neither saw it nor heard it fall. She drew out the bucket almost full and set it on the grass. This done, she perceived that her strength was exhausted. She was anxious to start at once; but the effort of filling the bucket had been so great that it was impossible for her to take a step. She was compelled to sit down. She fell upon the grass and remained in a crouching posture. She closed her eyes, then she opened them, without knowing why, without the power of doing otherwise. At her side, the water shaken in the bucket made circles that resembled serpents of white fire. Above her head, the sky was covered with vast black clouds which were like sheets of smoke. The tragic mask of night seemed to bend vaguely over this child. Jupiter was setting in the depths of the horizon. The child looked with a startled eye upon that great star which she did not know and which made her afraid. The planet, in fact, was at that moment very near the horizon, and was crossing a dense bed of mist which gave it a horrid redness. The mist, gloomily empurpled, magnified the star. One would have called it a luminous wound.

A cold wind blew from the plain. The woods were dark, without any rustling of leaves, without any of those vague and fresh commotions of summer. Great branches, drew themselves up fearfully. Mean and shapeless bushes whistled in the glades. The tall grass wriggled under the north wind like eels. The brambles twisted about like long arms seeking to seize their prey in their claws. Some dry weeds driven by the wind, passed rapidly by, and appeared to flee with dismay before something that was following. The prospect was dismal.

Darkness makes the brain giddy. Man needs light. Whoever plunges into the opposite of day feels his heart chilled. When the eye sees blackness, the mind sees trouble. In an eclipse, in night, in the sooty darkness, there is anxiety even to the strongest. Nobody walks alone at night in the forest without trembling. Darkness and trees, two formidable depths—a reality of chimeras appears in the indistinct

distance. The Inconceivable outlines itself a few steps from you with a spectral clearness. You see floating in space, or in your brain, something strangely vague and unseizable as the dreams of sleeping flowers. There are five phantoms in the horizon. You breathe in the odors of the great black void. You are afraid, you are tempted to look behind you. The hollowness of night, the haggardness of all things, the silent profiles that fade away as you advance, the obscure dishevelments, angry clumps, livid pools, the gloomy reflected in the funereal, the sepulchral immensity of silence, the possible unknown beings, the swaying of mysterious branches, the frightful twistings of the trees, long spires of shivering grass—against all this you have no defence. There is no bravery which does not shudder and feel the nearness of anguish. You feel something hideous, as if the soul were amalgamating with the shadow. This penetration of the darkness is unexpressibly dismal for a child. Forests are apocalypses; and the beatings of the wings of a little soul makes an agonizing sound under their monstrous vault.

Without being conscious of what she was experiencing, Cosette felt that she was seized by this black enormity of nature. It was not merely terror that held her, but something more terrible even than terror. She shuddered. Words fail to express the peculiar strangeness of that shudder which chilled her through and through. Her eye had become wild. She felt that perhaps she would be compelled to return there at the same hour the next night. Then, by a sort of instinct, to get out of this singular state, which she did not understand, but which terrified her, she began to count aloud one, two, three, four, up to ten, and when she had finished, she began again. This restored her to a real perception of things about her. Her hands, which she had wet in drawing the water, felt cold. She arose. Her fear had returned, a natural and insurmountable fear. She had only one thought, to fly; to fly with all her might, across woods, across fields, to houses, to windows, to lighted candles. Her eyes fell upon the bucket that was before her. Such was the dread with which the Thénardiess inspired her, that she did not dare to go without the bucket of water. She grasped the handle with both hands. She could hardly lift the bucket.

She went a dozen steps in this manner, but the bucket was full, it was heavy, she was compelled to rest it on the ground. She breathed an instant, then grasped the handle again, and walked on, this time a little longer. But she had to stop again. After resting a few seconds, she started on. She walked bending forward, her head down, like an old woman; the weight of the bucket strained and stiffened her arms. The iron handle was numbing and freezing her little wet hands; from time to time she had to stop, and every time she stopped, the cold water that splashed from the bucket fell upon her naked knees. This took place in the depth of a wood, at night, in the winter, far from all human sight; it was a child of eight years; there was none but God at that moment who saw this sad thing. And undoubtedly her mother, alas! For there are things which open the eyes of the dead in their grave.

She breathed with a kind of mournful rattle; sobs choked her, but she did not dare to weep, so fearful was she of the Thénardiess, even at a distance. She always imagined that the Thénardiess was near. However, she could not make much headway in this manner, and was getting



along very slowly. She tried hard to shorten her resting spells, and to walk as far as possible between them. She remembered with anguish that it would take her more than an hour to return to Moutfermeil thus, and that the Thenardiess would beat her. This anguish added to her dismay at being alone in the woods at night. She was worn out with fatigue, and was not yet out of the forest. Arriving near an old chestnut tree which she knew, she made a last halt, longer than the others, to get well rested, then she gathered all her strength, took up the bucket again, and began to walk off courageously. Meanwhile, the poor little despairing thing could not help crying: "Oh! my God! my God!"

At that moment she felt all at once that the weight of the bucket was gone. A hand, which seemed enormous to her, had just caught the handle, and was carrying it easily. She raised her head. A large dark form, straight and erect, was walking beside her in the gloom. It was a man who had come up behind her, and whom she had not heard. This man, without saying a word, had grasped the handle of the bucket she was carrying.

There are instincts for all the crises of life. The child was not afraid.

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## VI.

### WHICH PERHAPS PROVES THE INTELLIGENCE OF BOULATRUELLE.

In the afternoon of that same Christmas day, 1823, a man walked a long time in the most deserted portion of the Boulevard de l'Hôpital at Paris. This man had the appearance of some one who was looking for lodgings, and seemed to stop by preference before the most modest houses of this dilapidated part of the Faubourg Mont Marceau. We shall see further on that this man did in fact hire a room in this isolated quarter. This man, in his dress as in his whole person, realized the type of what might be called the mendicant of good society--extreme misery being combined with extreme neatness. It is a rare coincidence which inspires intelligent hearts with this double respect that we feel for him who is very poor and for him who is very worthy. He wore a round hat, very old and carefully brushed, a long coat, completely threadbare, of coarse yellow cloth, a color which was in nowise extraordinary at that epoch, a large waistcoat with pockets of antique style, black trousers worn grey at the knees, black woollen stockings, and thick shoes with copper buckles. One would have called him an old preceptor of a good family, returned from the Emigration. From his hair, which was entirely white, from his wrinkled brow, from his livid lips, from his face in which everything breathed exhaustion and weariness of life, one would have supposed him considerably over sixty. From his firm though slow step, and the singular vigor impressed upon all his motions, one would hardly have thought him fifty. The wrinkles on his forehead were well disposed, and would have prepossessed in his favor any one who observed him with attention. His lip contracted with a strange expression, which seemed severe and yet which was humble. There was in the depths of his eye an indescribably mournful serenity. He carried in his left hand a small package tied in a handkerchief, with his right he leaned upon a sort of staff

cut from a hedge. This staff had been finished with some care, and did not look very badly; the knots were smoothed down, and a coral head had been formed with red wax; it was a cudgel, and it seemed a cane.

There are few people on that Boulevard, especially in winter. This man appeared to avoid them rather than seek them, but without affectation. At that epoch the king, Louis XVIII., went almost every day to Choisy Le Roy. It was one of his favorite rides. About two o'clock, almost invariably, the carriage and the royal cavalcade were seen to pass at full speed through the Boulevard de l'Hôpital. This supplied the place of watch and clock to the poor women of the quarter, who would say: "It is two o'clock, there he is going back to the Tuileries." And some ran, and others fell into line; for when a king passes by, there is always a tumult. Moreover, the appearance and disappearance of Louis XVIII. produced a certain sensation in the streets of Paris. It was rapid, but majestic. This impotent king had a taste for fast driving; not being able to walk, he wished to run; this cripple would have gladly been drawn by the lightning. He passed by, peaceful and severe, in the midst of naked sabres. His massive coach, all gilded, with great lily branches painted on the panels, rolled noisily along. One hardly had time to catch a glance of it. In the back corner on the right could be seen, upon cushions covered with white satin, a broad face, firm and red, a forehead freshly powdered à la bird of paradise, a proud eye, stern and keen, a well-bred smile, two large epaulets of bullion waving over a citizen's dress, the Golden Fleece, the cross of Saint Louis, the cross of the Legion of Honor, the silver badge of the Holy Spirit, a big belly, and a large blue ribbon; that was the king. Outside of Paris, he held his hat with white feathers upon his knees, which were enclosed in high English gaiters, when he re-entered the city, he placed his hat upon his head, bowing but little. He looked coldly upon the people, who returned his look. When he appeared for the first time in the Quartier Saint Marceau, all he succeeded in eliciting was this saying of a resident to his comrade: "It's that big fellow who is the Government." This unfailling passage of the king at the same hour, was then the daily event of the Boulevard de l'Hôpital.

The promenader in the yellow coat evidently did not belong to the quarter, and probably not to Paris, for he was ignorant of this circumstance. When at two o'clock the royal carriage, surrounded by a squadron of silver-laced body-guard, turned into the Boulevard, after passing La Salpêtrière, he appeared surprised, and almost frightened. There was no one else in the cross alley, and he retired hastily behind a corner of the side wall, but this did not prevent the Duke d'Havre seeing him. The Duke d'Havre, as Captain of the Guards in waiting that day, was seated in the carriage opposite the king. He said to his majesty: "There is a man who has a bad look." Some policemen, who were clearing the passage for the king, also noticed him; one of them was ordered to follow him. But the man plunged into the little solitary streets of the Faubourg, and as night was coming on, the officer lost his track, as is established by a report addressed on the same evening to the Comte Angès, Minister of State, Prefect of Police.

When the man in the yellow coat had thrown the officer off his track, he turned about, not without looking back many times to make sure that

he was not followed. At a quarter past four, that is to say after dark, he passed in front of the theatre of the Porte Saint Martin where the play that day was *The Two Convicts*. The poster, lit up by the reflection from the theatre, seemed to strike him, for, although he was walking rapidly, he stopped to read it. A moment after, he was in the *cul-de-sac* de la Planchette, and entered the *Porter platter*, which was then the office of the Lagny stage. The stage started at half past four. The horses were harnessed, and the travellers, who had been called by the driver hastily, were climbing the high iron steps of the vehicle. The man asked; "Have you a seat?" "Only one, beside me, on the box," said the driver. "I will take it." "Get up, then." Before starting, however, the driver cast a glance at the poor apparel of the traveller, and at the smallness of his bundle, and took his pay. "Are you going through to Lagny?" asked the driver. "Yes," said the man. The traveller paid through to Lagny. They started off. When they had passed the *barrière*, the driver tried to start a conversation, but the traveller answered only in monosyllables. The driver concluded to whistle, and swear at his horses. The driver wrapped himself up in his cloak. It was cold. The man did not appear to notice it. In this way they passed through Gournay and Neuilly sur Marne. About six o'clock in the evening they were at Chelles. The driver stopped to let his horses breathe, in front of the wagoners' tavern established in the old buildings of the royal abbey. "I will get down here," said the man. He took his bundle and stick, and jumped down from the stage. A moment afterwards, he had disappeared. He did not go into the tavern. When, a few minutes afterwards, the stage started off for Lagny, it did not overtake him in the main street of Chelles. The driver turned to the inside passengers: "There," said he, "is a man who does not belong here, for I don't know him. He has an appearance of not having a sou; however, he don't stick about money; he pays to Lagny, and he only goes to Chelles. It is night, all the horses are shut, he don't go to the tavern, and we don't overtake him. He must, then, have sunk into the ground."

The man had not sunk into the ground, but he had hurried rapidly in the darkness along the main street of Chelles; then he had turned to the left, before reaching the church, into the cross road leading to Montfermeil, like one who knew the country and had been that way before. He followed this road rapidly. At the spot where it intersects the old road bordered with trees that goes from Gagny to Lagny, he heard footsteps approaching. He concealed himself hastily in a ditch, and waited there till the people who were passing were a good distance off. The precaution was indeed almost superfluous, for, as we have already said, it was a very dark December night. There were scarcely two or three stars to be seen in the sky.

It is at this point that the ascent of the hill begins. The man did not return to the Montfermeil road; he turned to the right, across the fields, and gained the woods with rapid strides. When he reached the wood, he slackened his pace, and began to look carefully at the trees, pausing at every step, as if he were seeking and following a mysterious route known only to himself. There was a moment when he appeared to lose himself, and when he stopped, undecided. Finally he arrived, by con-

tinual groping, at a glade where there was a heap of large whitish stones. He made his way quickly towards these stones, and examined them with attention in the dusk of the night, as if he were passing them in review. A large tree, covered with these excrescences which are the warts of vegetation, was a few steps from the heap of stones. He went to this tree, and passed his hand over the bark of the trunk, as if he were seeking to recognize and to count all the warts.

Opposite this tree, which was an ash, there was a chestnut tree wounded in the bark, which had been staunched with a bandage of zinc nailed on. He rose on tip-toe and touched that band of zinc.

Then he stamped for some time upon the ground in the space between the tree and the stones, like one who would be sure that the earth had not been freshly stirred. This done, he took his course, and resumed his walk through the woods.

This was the man who had fallen in with Cosette.

As he made his way through the copse in the direction of Montfermeil, he had perceived that little shadow, struggling along with a groan, setting her burden on the ground, then taking it up and going on again. He had approached her and seen that it was a very young child carrying an enormous bucket of water. Then he had gone to the child, and silently taken hold of the handle of the bucket.

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## VII.

### COSETTE SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE UNKNOWN, IN THE DARKNESS.

Cosette, we have said, was not afraid. The man spoke to her. His voice was serious, and was almost a whisper. "My child, that is very heavy for you which you are carrying there." Cosette raised her head and answered: "Yes, Monsieur." "Give it to me," the man continued, "I will carry it for you." Cosette let go the bucket. The man walked along with her. "It is very heavy, indeed," said he to himself. Then he added: "Little girl, how old are you?" "Eight years, Monsieur." "And have you come far in this way?" "From the spring in the woods." "And are you going far?" "A good quarter of an hour from here." The man remained a moment without speaking, then he said abruptly: "You have no mother, then?" "I don't know," answered the child. Before the man had had time to say a word, she added: "I don't believe I have. All the rest have one. For my part, I have none." And after a silence, she added: "I believe I never had any."

The man stopped, put the bucket on the ground, stooped down and placed his hands upon the child's shoulders, making an effort to look at her and see her face in the darkness.

The thin and puny face of Cosette was vaguely outlined in the livid light of the sky. "What is your name?" "Cosette." It seemed as if the man had an electric shock. He looked at her again, then letting go of her shoulders, took up the bucket and walked on. A moment after, he asked: "Little girl, where do you live?" "At Montfermeil, if you know it." "It is there that we are going?" "Yes, Monsieur." He made another pause, then he began: "Who is it that has sent you

out into the woods after water at this time of night?" "Madame Thénardier." The man resumed with a tone of voice which he tried to render indifferent, but in which there was nevertheless a singular tremor: "What does she do, your Madame Thénardier?" "She is my mistress," said the child. "She keeps the tavern." "The tavern," said the man. "Well, I am going there to lodge to-night. Show me the way." "We are going there," said the child.

The man walked very fast. Cosette followed him without difficulty. She felt fatigue no more. From time to time, she raised her eyes towards this man with a sort of tranquillity and inexpressible confidence. She had never been taught to turn towards Providence and to pray. However, she felt in her bosom something that resembled hope and joy, and which rose towards heaven.

A few minutes passed. The man spoke: "Is there no servant at Madame Thénardier's?" "No, Monsieur." "Are you alone?" "Yes, Monsieur." There was another interval of silence. Cosette raised her voice: "That is, there are two little girls." "What little girls?" "Ponine and Zelma." The child simplified in this way the romantic names dear to the mother. "What are Ponine and Zelma?" "They are Madame Thénardier's young ladies, you might say her daughters." "And what do they do?" "Oh!" said the child, "they have beautiful dolls, things which there's gold in; they are full of business. They play, they amuse themselves." "All day long?" "Yes, Monsieur." "And you?" "Me! I work." "All day long?" The child raised her large eyes, in which there was a tear, which could not be seen in the darkness; and answered softly: "Yes, Monsieur." She continued after an interval of silence: "Sometimes, when I have finished my work and they are willing, I amuse myself also." "How do you amuse yourself?" "The best I can. They let me alone. But I have not many play-things. Ponine and Zelma are not willing for me to play with their dolls. I have only a little lead sword, not longer than that." The child showed her little finger. "And which does not cut." "Yes, Monsieur," said the child, "it cuts lettuce and flies' heads."

They reached the village; Cosette guided the stranger through the streets. They passed by the bakery, but Cosette did not think of the bread that she was to have brought back. The man questioned her no more, and now maintained a mournful silence. When they had passed the church, the man seeing all these booths in the street, asked Cosette: "Is it fair-time here?" "No, Monsieur, it is Christmas."

As they drew near the tavern, Cosette timidly touched his arm: "Monsieur?" "What, my child?" "Here we are close by the house." "Well!" "Will you let me take the bucket now?" "What for?" "Because, if Madame sees that anybody brought it for me, she will beat me." The man gave her the bucket. A moment after they were at the door of the chop-house.

## VIII.

## INCONVENIENCE OF ENTERTAINING A POOR MAN WHO IS PERHAPS RICH.

Cosette could not help casting one look towards the grand doll still displayed in the toy-shop, then she rapped. The door opened. The Thenardiess appeared with a candle in her hand.

"Oh! it is you, you little beggar! Lud-a-massy! you have taken your time! she has been playing, the wench!" "Madame," said Cosette, trembling, "here is a gentleman who is coming to lodge." The Thenardiess very quickly replaced her fierce air by her amiable grimace, a change at sight peculiar to inn-keepers, and looked for the new-comer with eager eyes:

"Is it Monsieur?" said she. "Yes, Madame," answered the man, touching his hat. Rich travellers are not so polite. This gesture and the sight of the stranger's costume and baggage which the Thenardiess passed in review at a glance made the amiable grimace disappear and the fierce air re-appear. She added drily: "Enter, goodman."

The "goodman" entered. The Thenardiess cast a second glance at him, examined particularly his long coat, which was absolutely thread-bare, and his hat, which was somewhat broken, and with a nod, a wink, and a turn of her nose, consulted her husband, who was still drinking with the wagoners. The husband answered by that imperceptible shake of the forefinger which, supported by a protrusion of the lips, signifies in such a case: "complete destitution." Upon this, the Thenardiess exclaimed: "Ah! my brave man, I am very sorry, but I have no room." "Put me where you will, said the man, "in the garret, in the stable. I will pay as if I had a room." "Forty sous." "Forty sous. Well." "In advance." "Forty sous," whispered a wagoner to the Thenardiess, "but it is only twenty sous." "It is forty sous for him," replied the Thenardiess in the same tone. "I don't lodge poor people for less." "That is true," added her husband softly, "it ruins a house to have this sort of people."

Meanwhile the man, after leaving his stick and bundle on a bench, had seated himself at a table on which Cosette had been quick to place a bottle of wine and a glass. The pedlar, who had asked for the bucket of water, had gone himself to carry it to his horse. Cosette had resumed her place under the kitchen table and her knitting.

The man, who hardly touched his lips to the wine he had poured out, was contemplating the child with a strange attention.

Cosette was ugly. Happy, she might, perhaps, have been pretty. We have already sketched this little pitiful face. Cosette was thin and pale; she was nearly eight years old, but one would hardly have thought her six. Her large eyes, sunk in a sort of shadow, were almost put out by continual weeping. The corners of her mouth had that curve of habitual anguish, which is seen in the condemned and in the hopelessly sick. Her hands were, as her mother had guessed, "covered with chilblains." The light of the fire, which was shining upon her, made her bones stand out and rendered her thinness fearfully visible. As she was always shivering, she had acquired the habit of drawing her knees

together. Her whole dress was nothing but a rag, which would have excited pity in the summer, and which excited horror in the winter. She had on nothing but cotton, and that full of holes; not a rag of woollen. Her skin showed here and there, and black and blue spots could be distinguished, which indicated the places where the Thenardiess had touched her. Her naked legs were red and rough. The hollows under her collar bones would make one weep. The whole person of this child, her gait, her attitude, the sound of her voice, the intervals between one word and another, her looks, her silence, her least motion, expressed and uttered a single idea: fear.

Fear was spread all over her; she was, so to say, covered with it; fear drew back her elbows against her sides, drew her heels under her skirt, made her take the least possible room, prevented her from breathing more than was absolutely necessary, and had become what might be called her bodily habit, without possible variation, except of increase. There was in the depth of her eye an expression of astonishment mingled with terror.

This fear was such that, on coming in, all wet as she was, Cosette had not dared go and dry herself by the fire; but had gone silently to her work.

The expression of the countenance of this child of eight years was habitually so sad and sometimes so tragical, that it seemed, at certain moments, as if she were in the way of becoming an idiot or a demon. Never, as we have said, had she known what it is to pray, never had she set foot within a church. "How can I spare the time?" said the Thenardiess. The man in the yellow coat did not take his eyes from Cosette. Suddenly, the Thenardiess exclaimed: "Oh! I forgot! that bread!" Cosette, according to her custom whenever the Thenardiess raised her voice, sprang out quickly from under the table. She had entirely forgotten the bread. She had recourse to the expedient of children who are always terrified. She lied. "Madame, the baker was shut." "You ought to have knocked." "I did knock, Madame." "Well!" "He didn't open." "I'll find out to-morrow if that is true," said the Thenardiess, "and if you are lying, you will lead a pretty dance. Meantime, give me back the fifteen-sous piece." Cosette plunged her hand into her apron pocket, and turned white. The fifteen-sous piece was not there. "Come," said the Thenardiess, "didn't you hear me?" Cosette turned her pocket inside out; there was nothing there. What could have become of that money? The little unfortunate could not utter a word. She was petrified. "Have you lost it, the fifteen-sous piece?" screamed the Thenardiess, "or do you want to steal it from me?" At the same time she reached her arm towards the cowhide hanging in the chimney corner. This menacing movement gave Cosette the strength to cry out: "Forgive me, Madame! Madame! I won't do so any more!" The Thenardiess took down the whip.

Meanwhile the man in the yellow coat had been fumbling in his waistcoat pocket, without being noticed. The other travellers were drinking or playing cards, and paid no attention to anything.

Cosette was writhing with anguish in the chimney-corner, trying to gather up and hide her poor, half-paked limbs. The Thenardiess raised her arm.

"I beg your pardon, Madame," said the man, "but I just now saw something fall out of the pocket of that little girl's apron and roll away. That may be it." At the same time he stooped down and appeared to search on the floor for an instant. "Just so, here it is," said he, rising. And he handed a silver piece to the Thenardiess. "Yes, that is it," said she.

That was not it, for it was a twenty sous piece, but the Thenardiess found her profit in it. She put the piece in her pocket, and contented herself with casting a ferocious look at the child and saying: "Don't let that happen again, ever." Cosette went back to what the Thenardiess called "her hole," and her large eye, fixed upon the unknown traveller, began to assume an expression that it had never known before. It was still only an artless astonishment, but a sort of blind confidence was associated with it.

"Oh! you want supper?" asked the Thenardiess of the traveller. He did not answer. He seemed to be thinking deeply. "Who is that man?" said she between her teeth. "It is some frightful pauper. He hasn't a penny for his supper. Is he going to pay me for his lodging only? It is very lucky, any way, that he didn't think to steal the money that was on the floor."

A door now opened, and Eponine and Azelma came in. They were really two pretty little girls, rather city girls than peasants, very charming, one with her well polished auburn tresses, the other with her long black braids falling down her back, and both so lively, neat, plump, fresh and healthy, that it was a pleasure to see them. They were warmly clad, but with such maternal art, that the thickness of the stuff detracted nothing from the coquetry of the fit. Winter was provided against without effacing spring. These two little girls shed light around them. Moreover, they were regnant. In their toilet, in their gaiety, in the noise they made, there was sovereignty. When they entered, the Thenardiess said to them in a scolding tone, which was full of adoration: "Ah! you are here, then, you children!"

Then, taking them upon her knees one after the other, smoothing their hair, tying over their ribbons, and finally letting them go with that gentle sort of shake which is peculiar to mothers: "Are they doddies!" They went and sat down by the fire. They had a doll which they turned backwards and forwards upon their knees with many pretty prattlings. From time to time, Cosette raised her eyes from her knitting, and looked sadly at them as they were playing.

Eponine and Azelma did not notice Cosette. To them she was like the dog. These three little girls could not count twenty-four years among them all, and they already represented all human society; on one side envy, on the other disdain.

The doll of the Thenardier sisters was very much faded, and very old and broken; but it appeared none the less wonderful to Cosette, who had never in her life had a doll, a *real doll*, to use an expression that all children will understand.

All at once, the Thenardiess, who was continually going and coming about the room, noticed that Cosette's attention was distracted, and that instead of working she was busied with the little girls who were playing. "Ah! I've caught you!" cried she. "That is the way you work! I'll make you work with a cowhide, I will."



The stranger, without leaving his chair, turned towards the Thenardiess. "Madame!" said he, smiling diffidently. "Pshaw! let her play!"

On the part of any traveller who had eaten a slice of mutton, and drunk two bottles of wine at his supper, and who had not had the appearance of a *horrid pauper*, such a wish would have been a command. But that a man who wore that hat should allow himself to have a desire, and that a man who wore that coat should permit himself to have a wish, was what the Thenardiess thought ought not to be tolerated. She replied sharply: "She must work, for she eats. I don't support her to do nothing." "What is it she is making?" said the stranger, in that gentle voice which contrasted so strangely with his beggar's clothes, and his porter's shoulders. The Thenardiess deigned to answer. "Stockings, if you please. Stockings for my little girls, who have none worth speaking of, and will soon be going barefooted." The man looked at Cosette's poor red feet, and continued: "When will she finish that pair of stockings?" "It will take her at least three or four good days, the lazy thing." "And how much might this pair of stockings be worth, when it is finished?" The Thenardiess cast a disdainful glance at him. "At least thirty sous." "Would you take five francs for them?" said the man. "Goodness!" exclaimed a wagoner who was listening, with a horse-laugh, "five francs? It's a humbug! five bullets!" Thenardier now thought it time to speak. "Yes, Monsieur, if it is your fancy, you can have that pair of stockings for five francs. We can't refuse anything to travellers." "You must pay for them now," said the Thenardiess, in a short and peremptory way. "I will buy that pair of stockings," answered the man, "and," he added, drawing a five franc piece from his pocket, and laying it on the table, "I will pay for them." Then he turned towards Cosette. "Now your work belongs to me. Play, my child." The wagoner was so affected by the five franc piece, that he left his glass and went to look at it. "It's so, that's a fact!" cried he, as he looked at it. "A regular hind-wheel! and no counterfeit!" Thenardier approached, and silently put the piece in his pocket. The Thenardiess had nothing to reply. She bit her lips, and her face assumed an expression of hatred. Meanwhile Cosette trembled. She ventured to ask: "Madame, is it true? can I play?" "Play!" said the Thenardiess in a terrible voice. "Thank you, madame," said Cosette. And, while her mouth thanked the Thenardiess, all her little soul was thanking the traveller.

Thenardier returned to his drink. His wife whispered in his ears: "What can that yellow man be?" "I have seen," answered Thenardier, in a commanding tone, "millionaires with coats like that."

Cosette had left her knitting, but she had not moved from her place. Cosette always stirred as little as was possible. She had taken from a little box behind her a few old rags, and her little lead sword.

Eponine and Azelma paid no attention to what was going on. They had just performed a very important operation; they had caught the kitten. They had thrown the doll on the floor, and Eponine, the elder, was dressing the kitten, in spite of her miaulings and contortions, with a lot of clothes and red and blue rags. While she was engaged in this serious and difficult labor, she was talking to her sister in that sweet

and charming language of children, the grace of which, like the splendor of the butterfly's wings, escapes when we try to preserve it.

"Look! look, sister, this doll is more amusing than the other. She moves, she cries, she is warm. Come, sister, let us play with her. She shall be my little girl; I will be a lady. I'll come to see you, and you must look at her. By and by you must see her whiskers, and you must be surprised. And then you must see her ears, and then you must see her tail, and that will astonish you. And you must say to me: 'Oh! my stars!' and I will say to you: 'Yes, madame, it is a little girl that I have like that.' Little girls are like that now."

Azelma listened to Eponine with wonder. Meanwhile, the drinkers were singing an obscene song, at which they laughed enough to shake the room. Thenardier encouraged and accompanied them.

As birds make a nest of anything, children make a doll of no matter what. While Eponine and Azelma were dressing up the cat, Cosette, for her part, had dressed up the sword. That done, she had laid it upon her arm, and was singing it softly to sleep.

The doll is one of the most imperious necessities, and at the same time one of the most charming instincts of female childhood. To care for, to clothe, to adorn, to dress, to undress, to dress over again, to teach, to scold a little, to rock, to cuddle, to put to sleep, to imagine that something is somebody—all the future of woman is there. Even while musing and prattling, while making little wardrobes and little baby-clothes, while sewing little dresses, little boddies, and little jackets, the child becomes a little girl, the little girl becomes a great girl, the great girl becomes a woman. The first baby takes the place of the last doll. A little girl without a doll is almost as unfortunate and quite as impossible as a woman without children. Cosette had therefore made a doll of her sword.

The Thenardiess, on her part, approached the *yellow man*. "My husband is right," thought she; "it may be Monsieur Lafitte. Some rich men are so odd."

She came and rested her elbow on the table at which he was sitting. "Monsieur," said she—

At this word *Monsieur*, the man turned. The Thenardiess had called him before only *brave fellow* or *good man*.

"You see, Monsieur," she pursued, pitting on her sweetest look, which was still more unendurable than her ferocious manner, "I am very willing the child should play, I am not opposed to it; it is well for once, because you are generous. But you see, she is poor; she must work." "The child is not yours, then?" asked the man. "Oh dear! no, Monsieur! It is a little pauper that we have taken in through charity. A sort of imbecile child. She must have water on her brain. Her head is big, as you see. We do all we can for her, but we are not rich. We write in vain to her country; for six months we have had no answer. We think that her mother must be dead. "Ah!" said the man, and he fell back into his reverie. "This mother was no great things," added the Thenardiess. "She abandoned her child."

During all this conversation, Cosette, as if an instinct had warned her that they were talking about her, had not taken her eyes from the Thenardiess. She listened. She heard a few words here and there.

Meanwhile the drinkers, all three quarters drunk, were repeating their foul chorus with redoubled gaiety. It was highly spiced with jests, in which the names of the Virgin and the child Jesus were often heard. The Thenardiess had gone to take her part in the hilarity. Cosette, under the table, was looking into the fire, which was reflected from her fixed eye; she was again rocking the sort of rag baby that she had made, and as she rocked it, she sang in a low voice: "My mother is dead! my mother is dead! my mother is dead!"

At the repeated entreaties of the hostess, the yellow man, "the millionaire," finally consented to sup.

"What will Monsieur have?" "Some bread and cheese," said the man. "Decidedly, he is a beggar," thought the Thenardiess.

The revellers continued to sing their songs, and, the child, under the table, also sang hers.

All at once Cosette stopped. She had just turned and seen the little Thenardiers' doll, which they had forsaken for the cat and left on the floor, a few steps from the kitchen table. Then she let the bundled-up sword, that only half satisfied her, fall, and ran her eyes slowly around the room. The Thenardiess was whispering to her husband and counting some money, Eponine and Azelma were playing with the cat, the travellers were eating or drinking or singing, and nobody was looking at her. She had not a moment to lose. She crept out from under the table on her hands and knees, made sure once more that nobody was watching her, then darted quickly to the doll, and seized it. An instant afterwards she was at her place, seated, motionless, only turned in such a way as to keep the doll that she held in her arms in the shadow. The happiness of playing with a doll was so rare to her that it had all the violence of rapture.

Nobody had seen her, except the traveller, who was slowly eating his meagre supper. This joy lasted for nearly a quarter of an hour.

But in spite of Cosette's precautions, she did not perceive that one of the doll's feet *stuck out*, and that the fire of the fire-place lighted it up very vividly. The rosy and luminous foot which protruded from the shadow suddenly caught Azelma's eye, and she said to Eponine: "Oh! sister!"

The two little girls stopped, stupefied; Cosette had dared to take the doll!

Eponine got up, and without letting go of the cat, went to her mother and began to pull at her skirt. "Let me alone," said the mother; "what do you want?" "Mother," said the child, "look there." And she pointed at Cosette.

Cosette, wholly absorbed in the ecstasy of her possession, saw and heard nothing else.

The face of the Thenardiess assumed the peculiar expression which is composed of the terrible mingled with the common-place, and which has given this class of women the name of furies. This time wounded pride exasperated her anger still more. Cosette had leaped over all barriers. Cosette had laid her hands upon the doll of "those young ladies." A czarina who had seen a magick trying on the grand cordon of her imperial son would have had the same expression. She cried with a voice harsh with indignation:

"Cosette!"

Cosette shuddered as if the earth had quaked beneath her. She turned around. "Cosette!" repeated the Thenardiess. Cosette took the doll and placed it gently on the floor with a kind of veneration mingled with despair. Then, without taking away her eyes, she joined her hands, and, what is frightful to tell in a child of that age, she wrung them; then, what none of the emotions of the day had drawn from her, neither the run in the wood, nor the weight of the bucket of water, nor the loss of the money, nor the sight of the cowhide, nor even the stern words she had heard from the Thenardiess, she burst into tears. She sobbed. Meanwhile the traveller arose. "What is the matter?" said he to the Thenardiess. "Don't you see?" said the Thenardiess, pointing with her finger to the *corpus delicti* lying at Cosette's feet. "Well, what is that?" said the man. "That beggar," answered the Thenardiess, "has dared to touch the children's doll." "All this noise about that?" said the man. "Well, what if she did play with that doll?" "She has touched it with her dirty hands!" continued the Thenardiess, "with her horrid hands!" Here Cosette redoubled her sobs. "Be still!" cried the Thenardiess.

The man walked straight to the street door, opened it, and went out.

As soon as he had gone, the Thenardiess profited by his absence to give Cosette under the table a severe kick, which made the child shriek.

The door opened again, and the man re-appeared, holding in his hands the fabulous doll of which we have spoken, and which had been the admiration of all the youngsters of the village since morning; he stood it up before Cosette, saying: "Here, this is for you."

It is probable that during the time he had been there—more than an hour—in the midst of his revery, he had caught confused glimpses of this toy-shop, lighted up with lamps and candles so splendidly that it shone through the bar-room window like an illumination.

Cosette raised her eyes; she saw the man approach her with that doll as she would have seen the sun approach, she heard those astounding words: *This is for you*. She looked at him, she looked at the doll, then she drew back slowly, and went and hid as far as she could under the table in the corner of the room.

She wept no more, she cried no more, she had the appearance of no longer daring to breathe.

The Thenardiess, Eponine, and Azelma were so many statues. Even the drinkers stopped. There was a solemn silence in the whole bar-room.

The Thenardiess, petrified and mute, re-commenced her conjectures anew: "What is this old fellow? is he a pauper? is he a millionaire? Perhaps he's both, that is, a robber."

The face of the husband Thenardier represented that expressive wrinkle which marks the human countenance whenever the dominant instinct appears in it with all its brutal power. The inn-keeper contemplated by turns the doll and the traveller; he seemed to be scenting this man as he would have scented a bag of money. This only lasted for a moment. He approached his wife and whispered to her: "That machine cost at least thirty francs. No nonsense. Down on your knees before that man!"

Coarse natures have this in common with artless natures, that they have no transitions. "Well, Cosette," said the Thenardiess, in a voice

which was meant to be sweet, and which was entirely composed of the sour honey of vicious women, "a'n't you going to take your doll?" Cosette ventured to come out of her hole. "My little Cosette," said Thenardier, with a caressing air, "Monsieur gives you a doll. Take it. It is yours."

Cosette looked upon the wonderful doll with a sort of terror. Her face was still flooded with tears, but her eyes began to fill, like the sky in the breaking of the dawn, with strange radiations of joy. What she experienced at that moment was almost like what she would have felt if some one had said to her suddenly: Little girl, you are Queen of France.

It seemed to her that if she touched that doll, thunder would spring forth from it. Which was true to some extent, for she thought that the Thenardiess would scold and beat her. However, the attraction overcame her. She finally approached, and timidly murmured, turning towards the Thenardiess:

"Can I, madame?"

No expression can describe her look, at once full of despair, dismay, and transport. "Good-Lord!" said the Thenardiess, "it is yours. Since Monsieur gives it to you."

"Is it true, is it true, Monsieur?" said Cosette; "is the lady for me?"

The stranger appeared to have his eyes full of tears. He seemed to be at that stage of emotion in which one does not speak for fear of weeping. He nodded assent to Cosette, and put the hand of "the lady" in her little hand. Cosette withdrew her hand hastily, as if that of *the lady* burned her, and looked down at the floor. We are compelled to add, that at that instant she thrust out her tongue enormously. All at once she turned; and seized the doll eagerly. "I will call her Catharine," said she.

It was a strange moment when Cosette's rags met and pressed against the ribbons and the fresh pink muslins of the doll.

"Madame," said she, "may I put her in a chair?" "Yes, my child," answered the Thenardiess. It was Epouine and Azelma now who looked upon Cosette with envy.

Cosette placed Catharine on a chair, then sat down on the floor before her, and remained motionless, without saying a word, in the attitude of contemplation.

"Why don't you play, Cosette?" said the stranger. "Oh! I am playing," answered the child.

This stranger, this unknown man, who seemed like a visit from Providence to Cosette, was at that moment the being which the Thenardiess hated more than aught else in the world. However, she was compelled to restrain herself. Her emotions were more than she could endure, accustomed as she was to dissimulation, by endeavoring to copy her husband in all her actions. She sent her daughters to bed immediately, then asked the yellow man's *permission* to send Cosette to bed—*who is very tired to-day*, added she, with a motherly air. Cosette went to bed, holding Catharine in her arms.

The Thenardiess went from time to time to the other end of the room, where her husband was, *to soothe her soul*, she said. She exchanged a few words with him, which were the more furious that she did not dare to speak them aloud: "The old fool! what has he got into his head,

to come here to disturb us! to want that little monster to play! to give her dolls! to give forty-franc dolls to a slut that I wouldn't give forty sous for. A little more, and he would say your majesty to her, as they do to the Duchess of Berry! Is he in his senses? he must be crazy, the strange old fellow!"

"Why? It is very simple," replied Thenardier. "If it amuses him! It amuses you for the girl to work; it amuses him for her to play. He has the right to do it. A traveller can do as he likes, if he pays for it. If this old fellow is a philanthropist, what is that to you? if he is crazy, it don't concern you. What do you interfere for, as long as he has money?" Language of a master and reasoning of an inn-keeper, which neither in one case nor the other admits of reply.

The man had leaned his elbows on the table, and resumed his attitude of reverie. All the others, travellers, pedlars, and waggoners, had drawn back a little, and sung no more. They looked upon him from a distance with a sort of respectful fear. This solitary man, so poorly clad, who took five-franc pieces from his pocket with so much indifference, and who lavished gigantic dolls on little brats in wooden shoes, was certainly a magnificent and formidable goodman.

Several hours passed away. The midnight mass was said, the revel was finished, the drinkers had gone, the house was closed, the room was deserted, the fire had gone out, the stranger still remained in the same posture. From time to time he changed the elbow on which he rested. That was all. But he had not spoken a word since Cosette was gone.

The Thenardiers alone, out of propriety and curiosity, had remained in the room. "Is he going to spend the night like this?" grumbled the Thenardiers. When the clock struck two in the morning, she acknowledged herself beaten, and said to her husband: "I am going to bed, you may do as you like." The husband sat down at a table in a corner, lighted a candle, and began to read the *Courrier Français*.

A good hour passed thus. The worthy inn-keeper had read the *Courrier Français* at least three times, from the date of the number to the name of the printer. The stranger did not stir.

Thenardier moved, coughed, spit, blew his nose, and creaked his chair. The man did not stir. "Is he asleep?" thought Thenardier. The man was not asleep, but nothing could arouse him.

Finally, Thenardier took off his cap, approached softly, and ventured to say: "Is Monsieur not going to repose?" *Not going to bed* would have seemed to him too much and too familiar. *To repose* implied luxury, and there was respect in it. Such words have the mysterious and wonderful property of swelling the bill in the morning. A room in which you *go to bed* costs twenty sous; a room in which you *repose* costs twenty francs.

"Yes," said the stranger, "you are right. Where is your stable?" "Monsieur," said Thenardier, with a smile, "I will conduct Monsieur."

He took the candle, the man took his bundle and his staff, and Thenardier led him into a room on the first floor, which was very showy, furnished all in mahogany, with a high-post bedstead and red calico curtains. "What is this?" said the traveller. "It is properly our bridal chamber," said the inn-keeper. "We occupy another like this, my spouse and I; this is not open more than three or four times in a

year." "I should have liked the stable as well," said the man, bluntly. Thenardier did not appear to hear this not very civil answer. He lighted two entirely new wax candles, which were displayed upon the mantel; a good fire was blazing in the fire-place. There was on the mantel, under a glass case, a woman's head-dress of silver thread and orange-flowers. "What is this?" said the stranger. "Monsieur," said Thenardier, "it is my wife's bridal cap." The traveller looked at the object with a look which seemed to say: "there was a moment, then, when this monster was a virgin."

Thenardier lied, however. When he hired this shanty to turn it into a chop-house, he found the room thus furnished, and bought this furniture, and purchased at second hand these orange-flowers, thinking that this would cast a graceful light over "his spouse," and that the house would derive from them what the English call respectability.

When the traveller turned again, the host had disappeared. Thenardier had discreetly taken himself out of the way without daring to say good night, not desiring to treat with a disrespectful cordiality a man whom he proposed to skin royally in the morning.

The inn keeper retired to his room; his wife was in bed, but not asleep. When she heard her husband's step, she turned towards him, and said: "You know that I am going to kick Cosette out doors tomorrow!" Thenardier coolly answered: "You are, indeed!" They exchanged no further words, and in a few moments their candle was blown out.

For his part, the traveller had put his staff and bundle in a corner. The host gone, he sat down in an arm-chair, and remained some time thinking. Then he drew off his shoes, took one of the two candles, blew out the other, pushed open the door, and went out of the room, looking about him as if he were searching for something. He passed through a hall, and came to the stairway. There he heard a very soft little sound, which resembled the breathing of a child. Guided by this sound, he came to a sort of triangular nook built under the stairs, or, rather, formed by the staircase itself. This hole was nothing but the space beneath the stairs. There, among all sorts of old baskets and old rubbish, in the dust and among the cobwebs, there was a bed; if a mattress so full of holes as to show the straw, and a covering so full of holes as to show the mattress, can be called a bed. There were no sheets. This was placed on the floor immediately on the tiles. In this bed Cosette was sleeping.

The man approached and looked at her.

Cosette was sleeping soundly; she was dressed. In the winter she did not undress on account of the cold. She held the doll clasped in her arms; its large open eyes shone in the obscurity. From time to time she heaved a deep sigh, as if she were about to wake, and she hugged the doll almost convulsively. There was only one of her wooden shoes at the side of her bed. An open door near Cosette's nook disclosed a large dark room. The stranger entered. At the further end, through a glass window, he perceived two little beds with very white spreads. They were those of Azima and Eponine. Half hid behind these beds was a willow cradle without curtains, in which the little boy who had cried all the evening was sleeping.

The stranger conjectured that this room communicated with that of the Thenardiers. He was about to withdraw when his eye fell upon the fire place, one of those huge tavern fire-places where there is always so little fire, when there is a fire, and which are so cold to look upon. In this one there was no fire, there was not even any ashes. What there was, however, attracted the traveller's attention: It was two little children's shoes, of coquettish shape and of different sizes. The traveller remembered the graceful and immemorial custom of children putting their shoes in the fire-place on Christmas night, to wait there in the darkness in expectation of some shining gift from their good fairy. Eponine and Azelma had taken good care not to forget this, and each had put one of her shoes in the fire-place.

The traveller bent over them.

The fairy—that is to say, the mother—had already made her visit, and shining in each shoe was a beautiful new ten-sous piece.

The man rose up and was on the point of going away, when he perceived, further along, by itself, in the darkest corner of the fire-place, another object. He looked at, and recognized a shoe, a horrid wooden shoe of the clumsiest sort, half broken and covered with ashes and dried mud. It was Cosette's shoe. Cosette, with that touching confidence of childhood which can always be deceived without ever being discouraged, had also placed her shoe in the fire-place.

What a sublime and sweet thing is hope in a child who has never known anything but despair!

There was nothing in the wooden shoe.

The stranger fumbled in his waistcoat, bent over, and dropped into Cosette's shoe a gold Louis.

Then he went back to his room with stealthy tread.

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## IX.

### THENARDIER MANCEUVRING.

On the following morning, at least two hours before day, Thenardier, seated at a table in the bar room, a candle by his side, with pen in hand, was making out the bill of the traveller in the yellow coat.

His wife was standing, half bent over him, following him with her eyes. Not a word passed between them. It was, on one side, a profound meditation, on the other that religious admiration with which we observe a marvel of the human mind spring up and expand. A noise was heard in the house; it was the Lark, sweeping the stairs.

After a good quarter of an hour, and some crasures, Thenardier produced this masterpiece:

*Bill of Monsieur in No. 1.*

Supper.....	3 frs.
Room.....	10 "
Candle .....	5 "
Fire.....	4 "
Service.....	1 "
	<hr/>
Total.....	23 "



Service was written *servisse*.

"Twenty three francs!" exclaimed the woman with an enthusiasm which was mingled with some hesitation.

Like all great artists, Thenardier was not satisfied. "Pooh!" said he. It was the accent of Castlereagh drawing up for the Congress of Vienna the bill which France was to pay.

"Monsieur Thenardier, you are right, he deserves it," murmured the woman, thinking of the doll given to Cosette in the presence of her daughters; "it is right! but it's too much. He won't pay it."

Thenardier put on his cold laugh, and said: "He will pay it." This laugh was the highest sign of certainty and authority. What was thus said, must be. The woman did not insist. She began to arrange the tables; the husband walked back and forth in the room. A moment after he added: "I owe at least fifteen hundred francs!" He seated himself thoughtfully in the chimney-corner, his feet in the warm ashes. "Ah ha!" replied the woman, "you don't forget that I kick Cosette out of the house to-day? The monster! it tears my vitals to see her with her doll! I would rather marry Louis XVIII. than keep her in the house another day." Thenardier lighted his pipe, and answered between two puffs: "You'll give the bill to the man." Then he went out. He was scarcely out of the room when the traveller came in. Thenardier re-appeared immediately behind him, and remained motionless in the half-open door, visible only to his wife.

The yellow man carried his staff and bundle in his hand. "Up so soon?" said the Thenardiess; "is Monsieur going to leave us already?"

While speaking, she turned the bill in her hands with an embarrassed look, and made creases in it with her nails. Her hard face exhibited a shade of timidity and doubt that was not habitual. To present such a bill to a man who had so perfectly the appearance of "a pauper," seemed too awkward to her.

The traveller appeared pre-occupied and absent-minded. He answered: "Yes, Madame, I am going away." "Monsieur, then, had no business at Montfermeil?" replied she. "No, I am passing through; that is all. Madame," added he, "what do I owe?" The Thenardiess, without answering, handed him the folded bill.

The man unfolded the paper and looked at it; but his thoughts were evidently elsewhere. "Madame," replied he, "do you do a good business in Montfermeil?" "So-so, Monsieur," answered the Thenardiess, stupefied at seeing no other explosion. She continued in a mournful and lamenting strain: "Oh, Monsieur! the times are very hard, and then we have so few rich people around here! It is a very little place, you see. If we only had rich travellers now and then, like Monsieur! We have so many expenses! Why, that little girl eats us out of house and home." "What little girl?" "Why, the little girl you know! Cosette! the Lark, as they call her about here!" "Ah!" said the man. She continued: "How stupid these peasants are with their nick-names! She looks more like a bat than a lark. You see, Monsieur, we don't ask charity, but we are not able to give it. We make nothing, and have a great deal to pay. The license, the excise, the doors and windows, the tax on everything! Monsieur knows that the Government demands a deal of money. And then I have my own girls. I have nothing to spend on other people's children."

The man replied in a voice which he endeavored to render indifferent, and in which there was a slight tremulousness. "Suppose you were relieved of her?" "Who? Cosette?" "Yes." The red and violent face of the woman became illumined with a hideous expression. "Ah, Monsieur! my good Monsieur! take her, keep her, take her away, carry her off, sugar her, stuff her, drink her; eat her, and be blessed by the holy Virgin and all the saints in Paradise!" "Agreed." "Really! you will take her away?" "I will." "Immediately?" "Immediately. Call the child." "Cosette!" cried the Thenardiess. "In the meantime," continued the man, "I will pay my bill. How much is it?" He cast a glance at the bill, and could not repress a movement of surprise. "Twenty-three francs?" He looked at the hostess and repeated: "Twenty-three francs?" There was, in the pronunciation of these two sentences, thus repeated, the accent which lies between the point of exclamation and the point of interrogation. The Thenardiess had had time to prepare herself for the shock. She replied with assurance: "Yes, of course, Monsieur! it is twenty-three francs." The stranger placed a five-franc piece upon the table. "Go for the little girl," said he.

At this moment Thenardier advanced into the middle of the room, and said: "Monsieur owes twenty-six sous." "Twenty-six sous!" exclaimed the woman. "Twenty sous for the room," continued Thenardier coldly, "and six for supper. As to the little girl, I must have some talk with Monsieur about that. Leave us, wife."

The Thenardiess was dazzled by one of those unexpected flashes which emanate from talent. She felt that the great actor had entered upon the scene, answered not a word, and went out.

As soon as they were alone, Thenardier offered the traveller a chair. The traveller sat down, but Thenardier remained standing, and his face assumed a singular expression of good-nature and simplicity. "Monsieur," said he, "listen, I must say that I adore this child." The stranger looked at him steadily. "What child?" Thenardier continued: "How strangely we become attached! What is all this silver? Take back your money. This child I adore." "Who is that?" asked the stranger. "Oh, our little Cosette! And you wish to take her away from us? Indeed, I speak frankly, as true as you are an honorable man, I cannot consent to it. I should miss her. I have had her since she was very small. It is true she costs us money; it is true she has her faults, it is true we are not rich, it is true I paid four hundred francs for medicines at one time when she was sick. But we must do something for God. She has neither father nor mother; I have brought her up. I have bread enough for her and for myself. In fact, I must keep this child. You understand, we have affections; I am a good beast, myself; I do not reason; I love this little girl; my wife is hasty, but she loves her also. You see, she is like our own child. I feel the need of her prattle in the house."

The stranger was looking steadily at him all the while. He continued:

"Pardon me, excuse me, Monsieur, but one does not give his child like that to a traveller. Isn't it true that I am right? After that, I don't say—you are rich and have the appearance of a very fine man—if

it is for her advantage—but I must know about it. You understand? On the supposition that I should let her go and sacrifice my own feelings, I should want to know where she is going. I would not want to lose sight of her, I should want to know who she was with, that I might come and see her now and then, and that she might know that her good foster-father was still watching over her. Finally, there are things which are not possible. I do not know even your name. If you should take her away, I should say, alas for the little lark, where has she gone? I must, at least, see some poor rag of paper, a bit of a passport, something.'

The stranger, without removing from him this gaze, which went, so to speak, to the bottom of his conscience, answered in a severe and firm tone.

'Monsieur Thenardier, people do not take a passport to come five leagues from Paris. If I take Cosette, I take her, that is all. You will not know my name, you will not know my abode, you will not know where she goes, and my intention is that she shall never see you again in her life. Do you agree to that? Yes or no?'

As demons and genii recognize by certain signs the presence of a superior God, Thenardier comprehended that he had to deal with one who was very powerful. It came like an intuition; he understood it with his clear and quick sagacity; although during the evening he had been drinking with the wagoners, smoking and singing bawdy songs, still he was observing the stranger all the while, watching him like a cat, and studying him like a mathematician. He had been observing him on his own account, for pleasure and by instinct, and at the same time lying in wait as if he had been paid for it. Not a gesture, not a movement of the man in the yellow coat had escaped him. Before even the stranger had so clearly shown his interest in Cosette, Thenardier had divined it. He had surprised the searching glances of the old man constantly returning to the child. Why this interest? What was this man? Why, with so much money in his purse, this miserable dress? These were questions which he put to himself without being able to answer them, and they irritated him. He had been thinking it over all night. This could not be Cosette's father. Was it a grandfather? Then why did he not make himself known at once? When a man has a right, he shows it. This man evidently had no right to Cosette. Then who was he? Thenardier was lost in conjectures. He caught glimpses of everything, but saw nothing. However it might be, when he commenced the conversation with this man, sure that there was a secret in all this, sure that the man had an interest in remaining unknown, he felt himself strong; at the stranger's clear and firm answer, when he saw that this mysterious personage was mysterious and nothing more, he felt weak. He was expecting nothing of the kind. His conjectures were put to flight. He rallied his ideas. He weighed all in a second. Thenardier was one of those men who comprehend a situation at a glance. He decided that this was the moment to advance straightforward and swiftly. He did what great captains do at that decisive instant which they alone can recognise, he unmasked his battery at once.

'Monsieur,' said he, 'I must have fifteen hundred francs.'

The stranger took from his side-pocket an old black leather pocket-

book, opened it, and drew forth three bank bills which he placed upon the table. He then rested his large thumb on these bills, and said to the tavern-keeper:

‘Bring Cosette.’

While this was going on what was Cosette doing?

Cosette, as soon as she awoke, had run to her wooden shoe. She had found the gold piece in it. It was not a Napoleon, but one of those new twenty-franc pieces of the Restoration, on the face of which the little Prussian queen had replaced the laurel crown. Cosette was dazzled. Her destiny began to intoxicate her. She did not know that it was a piece of gold; she had never seen one before; she hastily concealed it in her pocket as if she had stolen it. Nevertheless she felt it boded good to her. She divined whence the gift came, but she experienced a joy that was filled with awe. She was gratified; she was moreover stupefied. Such magnificent and beautiful things seemed unreal to her. The doll made her afraid, the gold piece made her afraid. She trembled with wonder before these magnificences. The stranger himself did not make her afraid. On the contrary, he re-assured her. Since the previous evening, amid all her astonishment, and in her sleep, she was thinking in her little child's mind of this man who had such an old, and poor, and sad appearance, and who was so rich and so kind. Since she had met this goodman in the wood, it seemed as though all things were changed about her. Cosette, less happy than the smallest swallow of the sky, had never known what it is to take refuge under a mother's wing. For five years, that is to say as far back as she could remember, the poor child had shivered and shuddered. She had always been naked under the biting north wind of misfortune, and now it seemed to her that she was clothed. Before her soul was cold, now it was warm. Cosette was no longer afraid of the Thénardiens; she was no longer alone; she had somebody to look to.

She hurriedly set herself to her morning task. This louis, which she had placed in the same pocket of her apron from which the fifteen sous-piece had fallen the night before, distracted her attention from her work. She did not dare to touch it, but she spent five minutes at a time contemplating it, and we must confess, with her tongue thrust out. While sweeping the stairs, she stopped and stood there, motionless, forgetting her broom, and the whole world besides, occupied in looking at this shining star at the bottom of her pocket. It was in one of these reveries that the Thénardiess found her. At the command of her husband she had gone to look for her. Wonderful to tell, she did not give her a slap nor even call her a hard name. ‘Cosette,’ said she, almost gently, ‘come quick.’ An instant after, Cosette entered the bar-room.

The stranger took the bundle he had brought and untied it. This bundle contained a little woollen frock, an apron, a coarse cotton undergarment, a petticoat, a scarf, woollen stockings, and shoes—a complete dress for a girl of seven years. It was all in black. ‘My child,’ said the man, ‘take this and go and dress yourself quick.’

The day was breaking when those of the inhabitants of Montfermeil who were beginning to open their doors, saw pass on the road to Paris a poorly clad goodman leading a little girl dressed in mourning who had a pink doll in her arms. They were going towards Livry. It was the stranger and Cosette.

No one recognised the man; as Cosette was not now in tatters, few recognised her.

Cosette was going away. With whom? She was ignorant. Where? She knew not. All she understood was, that she was leaving behind the Thenardier chop-house. Nobody had thought of bidding her good-by, nor had she of bidding good-by to anybody. She went out from that house hated and hating. Poor gentle being, whose heart had only been crushed hitherto.

Cosette walked seriously along, opening her large eyes, and looking at the sky. She had put her louis in the pocket of her new apron. From time to time she bent over and cast a glance at it, and then looked at the Goodman. She felt somewhat as if she were near God.

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X.

WHO SEEKS THE BEST MAY FIND THE WORST.

The Thenardiess, according to her custom, had left her husband alone. She was expecting great events. When the man and Cosette were gone. Thenardier, after a good quarter of an hour, took her aside, and showed her the fifteen hundred francs. 'What's that?' said she.

It was the first time, since the beginning of their housekeeping, that she had dared to criticise the act of her master. He felt the blow. 'True, you are right,' said he; 'I am a fool. Give me my hat.'

He folded the three bank bills, thrust them into his pocket, and started in all haste, but he missed the direction and took the road to the right. Some neighbors of whom he inquired put him on the track; the Lark and the man had been seen to go in the direction of Livry. He followed this indication, walking rapidly and talking to himself.

'This man is evidently a millionaire dressed in yellow, and as for me, I am a brute. He first gave twenty sous, then five francs, then fifty francs, then fifteen hundred francs, all so readily. He would have given fifteen thousand francs. But I shall catch him.'

And then this bundle of clothes, made ready beforehand for the little girl; all that was strange, there was a good deal of mystery under it. When one gets hold of a mystery, he does not let go of it. The secrets of the rich are sponges full of gold; a man ought to know how to squeeze them. All these thoughts were whirling in his brain. 'I am a brute,' said he.

On leaving Montfermeil and reaching the turn made by the road to Livry, the route may be seen for a long distance on the plateau. On reaching this point he counted on being able to see the man and the little girl. He looked as far as his eye could reach, but saw nothing. He inquired again. In the meanwhile he was losing time. The passers-by told him that the man and child whom he sought had travelled towards the wood in the direction of Gagny. He hastened in this direction.

They had the start of him, but a child walks slowly, and he went rapidly. And then the country was well known to him.

Suddenly he stopped and struck his forehead like a man who has for-

gotten the main thing, and who thinks of retracing his steps. "I ought to have taken my gun!" said he.

Thenardier was one of those double natures who sometimes appear among us without our knowledge, and disappear without ever being known, because destiny has shown us but one side of them. It is the fate of many men to live thus half submerged. In a quiet, ordinary situation, Thenardier had all that is necessary to make—we do not say to be—what passes for an honest tradesman, a good citizen. At the same time, under certain circumstances, under the operation of certain occurrences exciting his baser nature, he had in him all that was necessary to be a villain. He was a shopkeeper, in which lay hidden a monster. Satan ought for a moment to have squatted in some corner of the hole in which Thenardier lived and studied this hideous masterpiece. After hesitating an instant, "bah!" thought he, "they would have time to escape!" And he continued, on his way, going rapidly forward, and almost as if he were certain, with the sagacity of the fox scenting a flock of partridges.

In fact, when he had passed the ponds, and crossed obliquely the large meadow at the right of the avenue de Bellevue, as he reached the grassy path which nearly encircles the hill, and which covers the arch of the old aqueduct of the abbey of Chelles, he perceived above a bush, the hat on which he had already built so many conjectures. It was the man's hat. The bushes were low. Thenardier perceived that the man and Cosette were seated there. The child could not be seen, she was so short, but he could see the head of the doll.

Thenardier was not deceived. The man had sat down there to give Cosette a little rest. The chop-house keeper turned aside the bushes, and suddenly appeared before the eyes of those whom he sought.

"Pardon me, excuse me Monsieur," said he, all out of breath; "but here are your fifteen hundred francs." So saying, he held out the three bank bills to the stranger.

The man raised his eyes: "what does that mean?"

Thenardier answered respectfully: "Monsieur, that means that I take back Cosette."

Cosette shuddered and hugged close to the goodman.

He answered, looking Thenardier straight in the eye, and spacing his syllables:

"You—take—back—Cosette?"

"Yes, monsieur, I take her back. I tell you I have reflected. Indeed, I haven't the right to give her to you. I am an honest man, you see. This little girl is not mine; she belongs to her mother. Her mother has confided her to me; I can only give her up to her mother. You will tell me, but her mother is dead. Well. In that case I can only give up the child to a person who shall bring me a written order, signed by the mother, stating I should deliver the child to him. That is clear."

The man without answering, felt in his pocket, and Thenardier saw the pocket book containing the bank bills reappear.

The tavern-keeper felt a thrill of joy. "Good," thought he; "hold on. He is going to corrupt me."

Before opening the pocket-book, the traveller cast a look about him.

The place was entirely deserted. There was not a soul either in the wood or in the valley. The man opened the pocket-book, and drew from it, not the handful of bank-bills which Thenardier expected, but a little piece of paper, which he unfolded and presented open to the inn-keeper, saying:

"You are right. Read that!"

Thenardier took the paper and read.

"M — sur M —, March 25, 1823."

Monsieur Thenardier:

You will deliver Cosette to the bearer. He will settle all small debts. I have the honor to salute you with consideration.

FANTINE."

"You know that signature?" replied the man.

It was indeed the signature of Fantine. Thenardier recognised it.

There was nothing to say. He felt doubly enraged; enraged at being compelled to give up the bribe which he hoped for, and enraged at being beaten. The man added, "you can keep this paper as your receipt." Thenardier retreated in good order. "This signature is very well imitated," he grumbled between his teeth, "Well, so be it." Then he made a desperate effort. "Monsieur," said he, "it is all right. Then you are the person. But you must settle 'all small debts.' There is a large amount due to me."

The man rose to his feet, and said at the same time, snapping with his thumb and finger, some dust from his threadbare sleeve: "Monsieur Thenardier, in January the mother reckoned that she owed you a hundred and twenty francs; you sent her in February a memorandum of five hundred francs; you received three hundred francs at the end of February, and three hundred at the beginning of March. There has since elapsed nine months, which, at fifteen francs per month, the price agreed upon, amounts to a hundred and thirty-five francs. You had received a hundred francs in advance. There remained thirty-five francs due you. I have just given you fifteen hundred francs."

Thenardier felt what the wolf feels the moment when he finds him seized and crushed by the steel jaws of the trap. "What is this devil of a man," thought he

He did what the wolf does, he gave a spring. Audacity had succeeded with him once already.

"Monsieur I-don't-know-your-name," said he resolutely, and putting aside this time all show of respect. "I shall take back Cosette or you must give me a thousand crowns." The stranger said quietly, "come Cosette."

He took Cosette with his left hand, and with the right picked up his staff, which was on the ground.

Thenardier noted the enormous size of the cudgel, and the solitude of the place.

The man disappeared in the wood with the child, leaving the chop-house-keeper motionless and non-plussed.

As they walked away, Thenardier observed his broad shoulders, a little rounded, and his big fists. Then his eyes fell back upon his own puny arms and thin hands. "I must have been a fool indeed," thought

he, "not to have brought my gun, as I was going on a hunt." However, the inn-keeper did not abandon the pursuit. "I must know where he goes," said he; and he began to follow them at a distance. There remained two things in his possession, one a bitter mockery, the piece of paper signed *Fantine*, and the other a consolation, the fifteen hundred francs.

The man was leading Cosette in the direction of Livry and Bondy. He was walking slowly, his head bent down, in an attitude of reflection and sadness. The winter had bereft the wood of foliage, so that Theardier did not lose sight of them, though remaining at a considerable distance behind. From time to time the man turned and looked to see if he were followed. Suddenly he perceived Theardier. He at once entered a coppice with Cosette, and both disappeared from sight. "The devil," said Theardier, and he redoubled his pace.

The density of the thicket compelled him to approach them. When the man reached the thickest part of the wood, he turned again. Theardier had endeavored to conceal himself in the branches in vain, he could not prevent the man from seeing him. The man cast an uneasy glance at him, then shook his head, and resumed his journey. The inn-keeper again took up the pursuit. They walked thus two or three hundred paces. Suddenly the man turned again. He perceived the inn-keeper. This time he looked at him so forbiddingly that Theardier judged it "unprofitable" to go further. Theardier went home.

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## XI.

NUMBER 9430 COMES UP AGAIN, AND COSETTE DRAWS IT.

Jean Valjean was not dead.

When he fell into the sea, or rather when he threw himself into it, he was, as we have seen, free from his irons. He swam under water to a ship at anchor to which a boat was fastened.

He found means to conceal himself in this boat until evening. At night he betook himself again to the water, and reached the land a short distance from Capé Brun.

There, as he did not lack for money, he could procure clothes. A little public house in the environs of Balagnier was then the place which supplied clothing for escaped convicts, a lucrative business. Then Jean Valjean, like all those joyless fugitives who are endeavoring to throw off the track the spy of the law and social fatality, followed an obscure and wandering path. He found an asylum first in Pradeaux, near Beausset. Then he went towards Grand Villard near Briançon, in the Hautes Alps. Groping and restless flight, threading the mazes of the mole whose windings are unknown. There was afterwards found some trace of his passage in Ain, on the territory of Civrieux, in the Pyrenees at Acons, at a place called the Grange-de-Domecq, near the hamlet of Chavillies, and in the environs of Périgueux, at Brunies, a canton of Chapelle Gonaguet. He finally reached Paris. We have seen him at Montfermeil.

His first care, on reaching Paris, had been to purchase a mourning



dress for a little girl of seven years, then to procure lodgings. That done, he had gone to Montfermeil.

It will be remembered that, at the time of his former escape, or near that time, he had made a mysterious journey of which justice had some glimpse.

Moreover, he was believed to be dead, and that thickened the obscurity which surrounded him. At Paris there fell into his hands a paper which chronicled the fact. He felt re-assured, and almost as much at peace as if he really had been dead.

On the evening of the same day that Jean Valjean had rescued Cosette from the clutches of the Thénardiess, he entered Paris again. He entered the city at night-fall, with the child, by the *barrière de Montceaux*. There he took a *cabriolet*, which carried him as far as the *esplanade of the Observatory*. There he got out, paid the driver, took Cosette by the hand, and both in the darkness of the night, through the deserted streets in the vicinity of *l'Ourcine* and *la Glacière*, walked towards the *Boulevard de l'Hôpital*.

The day had been strange and full of emotion for Cosette; they had eaten behind hedges bread and cheese bought in isolated chop-houses; they had often changed carriages, and had travelled short distances on foot. She did not complain; but she was tired, and Jean Valjean perceived it by her pulling more heavily at his hand while walking. He took her in his arms; Cosette, without letting go of *Cathariac*, laid her head on Jean Valjean's shoulder, and went to sleep.

## Book Fourth.

### THE OLD GORBEAU HOUSE.

#### I.

##### MASTER GORBEAU.

Forty years ago, the solitary pedestrian who ventured into the unknown regions of *La Salpêtrière* and went up along the *Boulevard* as far as the *Barrière d'Italie*, reached certain points where it might be said that Paris disappeared. It was no longer a solitude, for there were people passing; it was not the country, for there were houses and streets; it was not a city, the streets had ruts in them like the highways, and grass grew along their borders; it was not a village, the houses were too lofty. What was it then? It was an inhabited place where there was nobody, it was a desert place where there was somebody; it was a *boulevard* of the great city, a street in Paris, wilder at night than a forest, and gloomier by day than a graveyard.

It was the old quarter of the *Horse Market*.

Our pedestrian, if he trusted himself beyond the four tumbling walls of this *Horse Market*, if willing to go even further than the *Rue du Petit Banquier*, leaving on his right a court-yard shut in by lofty walls,

then a meadow studded with stacks of tanbark that looked like gigantic beaver dams, then an enclosure half filled with lumber and piles of logs, sawdust and shavings, from the top of which a huge dog was baying, then a long, low, ruined wall with a small, dark-colored and decrepit gate in it, covered with moss, which was full of flowers in spring-time, then, in the loveliest spot, a frightful broken-down structure in which could be read in large letters: POST NO BILLS; this bold promenade, we say, would reach the corner of the Rue des Vignes-Saint Marcel, a latitude not much explored. There, near a manufactory and between two garden-walls, could be seen at the time of which we speak, an old ruined dwelling that, at first sight, seemed as small as a cottage, yet was, in reality, as vast as a cathedral. It stood with its gable end towards the highway, and hence its apparent diminutiveness. Nearly the whole house was hidden. Only the door and one window could be seen. This old dwelling had but one story. On examining it, the peculiarity that first struck the beholder was that the door could never have been anything but the door of a hovel, while the window, had it been cut in free-stone and not in rough material, might have been the casement of a lordly residence.

The door was merely a collection of worn-eaten boards rudely tacked together with cross-pieces that looked like pieces of firewood clumsily split out. It opened directly on a steep staircase with high steps covered with mud, plaster and dust, and of the same breadth as the door, and which seemed from the street to rise perpendicularly like a ladder, and disappear in the shadow between two walls. The top of the shapeless opening which this door closed upon, was disguised by a narrow top-screen, in the middle of which had been sawed a three-cornered orifice that served both for skylight and ventilator when the door was shut. On the inside of the door a brush dipped in ink had, in a couple of strokes of the hand, traced the number 52, and above the screen, the same brush had daubed the number 50, so that a new-comer would hesitate, asking: Where am I?

The top of the entrance says, at number 50; the inside, however, replies, No! at number 52! The dust-colored rags that hung in guise of curtains about the three-cornered ventilator, we will not attempt to describe.

The window was broad and of considerable height, with large panes in the sashes and provided with Venetian shutters; only the panes had received a variety of wounds which were at once concealed and made manifest by ingenious strips and bandages of paper, and the shutters were so broken and disjointed, that they menaced the passer-by more than they shielded the occupants within. The horizontal slats were lacking, here and there, and had been very simply replaced with boards nailed across, so that what had been a Venetian in the first instance, ended as a regular close shutter. This door with its dirty look, and this window with its decent though dilapidated appearance, seen thus in one and the same building, produced the effect of two ragged beggars bound in the same direction and walking side by side, with different mien under the same rags, one having always been a pauper while the other had been a gentleman.

The staircase led up to a very spacious interior, which looked like a

barn converted into a house. This structure had for its main channel of communication a long hall, on which there opened, on either side, apartments of different dimensions scarcely habitable, rather resembling booths than rooms. These chambers looked out upon the shapeless grounds of the neighborhood. Altogether, it was dark and dull and dreary, even melancholy and sepulchral, and it was penetrated, either by the dim, cold rays of the sun, or by icy draughts, according to the situation of the cracks, in the roof, or in the door. One interesting and picturesque peculiarity of this kind of tenement is the monstrous size of the spiders.

To the left of the main door, on the boulevard, a small window that had been walled up formed a square niche some six feet from the ground, which was filled with stones that passing urchins had thrown into it.

A portion of this building has recently been pulled down, but what remains, at the present day, still conveys an idea of what it was. The structure, taken as a whole, is not more than a hundred years old. A hundred years is youth to a church, but old age to a private mansion. It would seem that the dwelling of man partakes of his brief existence, and the dwelling of God, of His eternity.

The letter-carriers called the house No. 50-52; but it was known, in the quarter, as *Gorbeau House*.

Opposite No. 50-52 stands, among the shade-trees that line the Boulevard, a tall elm, three quarters dead, and almost directly in front, opens the Rue de la Barrière des Gobelins—a street, at that time, without houses, unpaved, bordered with scrubby trees, grass-grown or muddy, according to the season, and running squarely up to the wall encircling Paris. An odor of vitriol ascended in puffs from the roofs of a neighboring factory.

The Barrière was quite near. In 1823, the encircling wall yet existed.

This Barrière itself filled the mind with gloomy images. It was on the way to the Bicêtre. It was there that, under the Empire and the Restoration, condemned criminals re-entered Paris on the day of their execution. It was there, that, about the year 1829, was committed the mysterious assassination, called "the murder of the Barrière de Fontainebleau," the perpetrators of which the authorities have never discovered—a sombre problem which has not yet been solved,—a terrible enigma not yet unravelled. Go a few steps further, and you find that fatal Rue Croulebarbe where Ulbach stabbed the shepherd girl of Ivry, in a thunder storm, in the style of a melodrama. Still a few steps, and you come to those detestable clipped elm-trees of the Barrière Saint Jacques, that expedient of philanthropists to hide the scaffold, that pitiful and shameful Place de Grève of a cockney, shop-keeping society which recoils from capital punishment, yet dares, neither to abolish it with lofty dignity, nor to maintain it with firm authority.

Thirty-seven years ago, excepting this place Saint Jacques, which seemed fore-doomed, and always was horrible, the gloomiest of all this gloomy Boulevard was the spot, still so unattractive, where stood the old building 50-52.

The city dwelling houses did not begin to start up there until some twenty-five years later. The place was repulsive. In addition to the melancholy thoughts that seized you there, you felt conscious of being be-

tween a La Salpêtrière, the cupola of which was in sight, and Bicêtre, the barrier of which was closed by—that is to say, between the wicked folly of woman and that of man.\* Far as the eye could reach, there was nothing to be seen but the public shambles, the city wall, and here and there the side of a factory, resembling a barrack or a monastery; on all sides, miserable hovels and heaps of rubbish, old walls as black as widows' weeds, and new walls as white as winding-sheets; on all sides, parallel rows of trees, buildings in straight lines, low, flat structures, long, cold perspectives, and the gloomy sauciness of right angles. Not a variation of the surface of the ground, not a caprice of architecture, not a curve. Altogether, it was chilly, regular and hideous. Nothing stifles one like this perpetual symmetry. Symmetry is ennui, and ennui is the very essence of grief and melancholy. Despair yawns. Something more terrible than a hell of suffering may be conceived; to wit, a hell of ennui. Were there such a hell in existence, this section of the Boulevard de l'Hôpital might well serve as the approach to it.

Then, at nightfall, at the moment when the day is dying out, especially in winter, at that hour when the evening breeze tears from the elms their faded and withered leaves, when the gloom is deep, without a single star, or when the moon and the wind make openings in the clouds, this Boulevard became positively terrifying. The dark outlines shrank together, and even lost themselves in the obscurity like fragments of the infinite. The passer-by could not keep from thinking of the innumerable bloody traditions of the spot. The solitude of this neighborhood in which so many crimes had been committed, had something fearful about it. One felt presentiments of snares in this obscurity; all the confused outlines visible through the gloom, were eyed suspiciously, and the oblong cavities between the trees seemed like graves. In the day-time it was ugly; in the evening it was dismal; at night it was ominous of evil. In summer, in the twilight, some old woman might be seen seated, here and there, under the elms, on benches made mouldy by the rain. These good old dames were addicted to begging.

In conclusion, this quarter, which was rather superannuated than ancient, from that time began to undergo a transformation. Thenceforth, whoever would see it, must hasten. Each day, some of its details wholly passed away. Now, as has been the case for twenty years past, the terminus of the Orleans railroad lies just outside of the old suburb, and keeps it in movement. Wherever you may locate, in the outskirts of a capital, a railroad dépôt, it is the death of a suburb, and the birth of a city. It would seem as though around these great centres of the activity of nations, at the rumbling of these mighty engines, at the snorting of these giant draught-horses of civilization, which devour coal and spout forth fire, the earth, teeming with germs of life, trembles and opens to swallow old dwellings of men and to bring forth new; old houses crumble, new houses spring up.

Since the dépôt of the Orleans railway invaded the grounds of La Salpêtrière, the old narrow streets that adjoin the Fossés Saint-Victor and the Jardin des Plantes are giving way, violently traversed, as they

\* Bicêtre is an insane asylum for males, and La Salpêtrière a house of correction for abandoned women.—Ed.

are, three or four times a day, by those streams of diligences, hacks and omnibuses, which, in course of time, push back the houses right and left; for there are things that sound strangely, and yet which are precisely correct; and, just as the remark is true; that in large cities, the sun causes the fronts of houses looking south to vegetate and grow, so is it undeniable that the frequent passage of vehicles widens the streets. The symptoms of a new life are evident. In that old provincial quarter, and in its wildest corners, pavement is beginning to appear, sidewalks are springing up and stretching to longer and longer distances, even in those parts where there are as yet no passers-by. One morning, a memorable morning in July, 1845, black kettles filled with bitumen were seen smoking there;—on that day, one could exclaim that civilization had reached the Rue de l'Orcine, and that Paris had stepped across into the Faubourg Saint Marceau.

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## II.

### A NEST FOR OWL AND WREN.

Before the Garbeau tenement Jean Valjean stopped. Like the birds of prey, he had chosen this lonely place to make his nest.

He fumbled in his waistcoat and took from it a sort of night-key, opened the door, entered, then carefully closed it again, and ascended the stairway, still carrying Cosette.

At the top of the stairway he drew from his pocket another key, with which he opened another door. The chamber which he entered and closed again immediately was a sort of garret, rather spacious, furnished only with a mattress spread on the floor, a table, and a few chairs. A stove containing a fire, the coals of which were visible, stood in one corner. The street lamp of the Boulevard shed a dim light through this poor interior. At the farther extremity there was a little room containing a cot bed. On this Jean Valjean laid the child without waking her.

He struck a light with flint and steel and lit a candle, which, with his tinder box, stood ready, beforehand, on the table; and, as he had done on the preceding evening, he began to gaze upon Cosette with a look of ecstasy, in which the expression of goodness and tenderness went almost to the verge of insanity. The little girl, with that tranquil confidence which belongs only to extreme strength or extreme weakness, had fallen asleep without knowing with whom she was, and continued to slumber without knowing where she was. Jean Valjean bent down and kissed the child's hand. Nine months before, he had kissed the hand of the mother, who also had just fallen asleep. The same mournful, pious, agonizing feeling now filled his heart. He knelt down by the bedside of Cosette.

It was broad daylight, and yet the child slept on. A pale ray from the December sun struggled through the garret window and traced upon the ceiling long streaks of light and shade. Suddenly a carrier's wagon, heavily laden, trundled over the cobble-stones of the Boulevard, and shook the old building like the rumbling of a tempest, jarring it from cellar to roof-tree.

"Yes, Madame!" cried Cosette, starting up out of sleep, "here I am! here I am!" And she threw herself from the bed, her eyelids still half closed with the weight of slumber, stretching out her hand towards the corner of the wall. "Oh! what shall I do? Where is my broom?" said she.

By this time her eyes were fully open, and she saw the smiling face of Jean Valjean. "Oh! yes—so it is!" said the child. "Good morning, Monsieur."

Children at once accept joy and happiness with quick familiarity, being themselves naturally all happiness and joy.

Cosette noticed Catharine at the foot of the bed, laid hold of her at once, and, playing the while, asked Jean Valjean a thousand questions. Where was she? Was Paris a big place? Was Madame Thénardier really very far away? Wouldn't she come back again, etc., etc. All at once she exclaimed, "How pretty it is here!"

It was a frightful hovel, but she felt free.

"Must I sweep?" she continued at length. "Play!" replied Jean Valjean. And thus the day passed by. Cosette, without troubling herself with trying to understand anything about it, was inexpressibly happy with her doll and her good friend.

### III.

#### TWO MISFORTUNES MINGLED MAKE HAPPINESS.

The dawn of the next day found Jean Valjean again near the bed of Cosette. He waited there, motionless, to see her awake. Something new was entering his soul.

Jean Valjean had never loved anything. For twenty-five years, he had been alone in the world. He had never been a father, lover, husband, or friend. At the galleys, he was cross, sullen, abstinent, ignorant and intractable. The heart of the old convict was full of freshness. His sister and her children had left in his memory only a vague and distant impression, which had finally almost entirely vanished. He had made every exertion to find them again, and, not succeeding, had forgotten them. Human nature is thus constituted. The other tender emotions of his youth, if such he had, were lost in an abyss.

When he saw Cosette, when he had taken her, carried her away, and rescued her, he felt his heart moved. All that he had of feeling and affection was aroused and vehemently attracted towards this child. He would approach the bed where she slept, and would tremble there with delight; he felt inward yearnings, like a mother, and knew not what they were; for it is something very incomprehensible and very sweet, this grand and strange emotion of a heart in its first love.

Poor old heart, so young!

But, as he was fifty-five, and Cosette was but eight years old, all that he might have felt of love in his entire life melted into a sort of ineffable radiance. This was the second white vision he had seen. The bishop had caused the dawn of virtue in his horizon; Cosette evoked the dawn of love. The first few days rolled by amid this bewilderment. On her

part, Cosette, too, unconsciously underwent a change, poor little creature! She was so small when her mother left her, that she could not recollect her now. As all children do, like the young shoots of the vine that cling to everything, she had tried to love. She had not been able to succeed. Everybody had repelled her—the Thenardiens, their children, other children. She had loved the dog; it had died, and after that no person and no thing would have aught to do with her. Mournful thing to tell, and one which we have already hinted, at the age of eight her heart was cold. This was not her fault; it was not the faculty of love that she lacked; alas! it was the possibility. And so, from the very first day, all that thought and felt in her began to love this kind old friend. She now felt sensations utterly unknown to her before—a sensation of budding and of growth.

Her kind friend no longer impressed her as old and poor. In her eyes Jean Valjean was handsome, just as the garret had seemed pretty.

Such are the effects of the auroral glow of childhood, youth and joy. The newness of earth and of life has something to do with it. Nothing is so charming as the ruddy tints that happiness can shed around a garret room. We all, in the course of our lives, have had our rose-colored sky-parlor.

Nature had placed a wide chasm—fifty years' interval of age—between Jean Valjean and Cosette. This chasm fate filled up. Fate abruptly brought together, and wedded with its resistless power, these two shattered lives, dissimilar in years, but similar in sorrow. The one, indeed, was the complement of the other. The instinct of Cosette sought for a father, as the instinct of Jean Valjean sought for a child. To meet, was to find one another. In that mysterious moment when their hands touched, they were wedded together. When their two souls saw each other, they recognised that they were mutually needed, and they closely embraced.

Taking the words in their most comprehensive and most absolute sense, it might be said that, separated from everything by the walls of the tomb, Jean Valjean was the husband bereaved, as Cosette was the orphan. This position made Jean Valjean become, in a celestial sense, the father of Cosette.

And, in truth, the mysterious impression produced upon Cosette, in the depths of the woods at Chelles, by the hand of Jean Valjean grasping her own in the darkness, was not an illusion but a reality. The coming of this man and his participation in the destiny of this child had been the advent of God.

In the meanwhile, Jean Valjean had well chosen his hiding place. He was there in a state of security that seemed to be complete.

The apartment with the side chamber which he occupied with Cosette, was the one whose window looked out upon the Boulevard. This window being the only one in the house, there was no neighbor's prying eye to fear either from that side or opposite.

The lower floor of No. 50-52 was a sort of dilapidated shed; it served as a sort of stable for market gardeners, and had no communication with the upper floor. It was separated from it by the flooring, which had neither stairway nor trap-door, and was, as it were, the diaphragm of the old building. The upper floor contained, as we have said, several

rooms and a few lofts, only one of which was occupied—by an old woman who was maid of all work to Jean Valjean. All the rest were uninhabited.

It was this old woman, honored with the title of landlady, but, in reality, intrusted with the functions of portress, who had rented him these lodgings on Christmas day. He had passed himself off to her as a gentleman of means, ruined by the Spanish bonds, who was going to live there with his grand-daughter. He had paid her for six months in advance, and engaged the old dame to furnish the chamber and the little bedroom, as we have described them. This old woman it was who had kindled the fire in the stove, and made everything ready for them on the evening of their arrival.

Weeks rolled by. These two beings led in that wretched shelter a happy life.

From the earliest dawn Cosette laughed, prattled and sang. Children have their morning song, like birds.

Sometimes it happened that Jean Valjean would take her little red hand, all chapped and frost-bitten as it was, and kiss it. The poor child, accustomed only to blows, had no idea what this meant, and would draw back ashamed.

At times she grew serious, and looked musingly at her little black dress. Cosette was no longer in rags; she was in mourning. She was issuing from utter poverty, and was entering upon life.

Jean Valjean had begun to teach her to read. Sometimes, while teaching the child to spell, he would remember that it was with the intention of accomplishing evil, that he had learned to read in the galleys. This intention had now been changed into teaching a child to read. Then the old convict would smile with the pensive smile of angels.

He felt in this a pre-ordination from on high, a volition of some one more than man, and he would lose himself in reverie. Good thoughts as well as bad have their abysses.

To teach Cosette to read, and to watch her playing, was nearly all Jean Valjean's life. And then, he would talk to her about her mother, and teach her to pray.

She called him *Father*, and knew him by no other name.

He spent hours seeing her dress and undress her doll, and listening to her song and prattle. From that time on, life seemed full of interest to him; men seemed good and just; he no longer, in his thoughts, reproached any one with any wrong; he saw no reason now why he should not live to grow very old, since his child loved him. He looked forward to a long future illuminated by Cosette with charming light. The very best of us are not altogether exempt from some tinge of egotism. At times, he thought with a sort of quiet satisfaction, that she would be by no means handsome.

This is but a personal opinion; but in order to express our idea thoroughly, at the point Jean Valjean had reached, when he began to love Cosette, it is not clear to us that he did not require this fresh supply of goodness to enable him to persevere in the right path. He had seen the wickedness of men and the misery of society under new aspects—aspects incomplete, and, unfortunately, showing forth only one side of the truth—the lot of woman summed up in Fantine, public authority



personified in Javert; he had been sent back to the galleys this time for doing good; new waves of bitterness had overwhelmed him; disgust and weariness had once more resumed their sway; the recollection of the bishop, even, was perhaps almost eclipsed, sure to re-appear afterwards luminous and triumphant; yet, in fact, this blessed remembrance was growing feebler. Who knows that Jean Valjean was not on the point of becoming discouraged and falling back to evil ways? Love came, and he again grew strong. Alas! he was no less feeble than Cosette. He protected her, and she gave strength to him. Thanks to him, she could walk upright in life; thanks to her, he could persist in virtuous deeds. He was the support of this child, and this child was his prop and staff. Oh, divine and unfathomable mystery of the compensations of destiny.

## IV.

## WHAT THE LANDLADY DISCOVERED.

Jean Valjean was prudent enough never to go out in the day-time. Every evening, however, about twilight, he would walk for an hour or two, sometimes alone, often with Cosette, selecting the most unfrequented side alleys of the boulevards, and going into the churches at nightfall. He was fond of going to St. Medard, which is the nearest church. When he did not take Cosette, she remained with the old woman; but it was the child's delight to go out with her kind old friend. She preferred an hour with him even to her delicious *tête-à-têtes* with Catherine. He would walk along holding her by the hand, and telling her pleasant things. • It turned out that Cosette was very playful. The old woman was housekeeper and cook and did the marketing. They lived frugally, always with a little fire in the stove, but like people in embarrassed circumstances. Jean Valjean made no change in the furniture described on the first day, except that he caused a solid door to be put up in place of the glass door of Cosette's little bed chamber.

He still wore his yellow coat, his black pantaloons, and his old hat. On the street he was taken for a beggar. It sometimes happened that kind-hearted dames, in passing, would turn and hand him a penny. Jean Valjean accepted the penny and bowed humbly. It chanced, sometimes also, that he would meet some wretched creature begging alms, and then, glancing about him to be sure that no one was looking, he would stealthily approach the beggar, slip a piece of money, often silver, into his hand, and walk rapidly away. This had its inconveniences. He began to be known in the quarter as *the beggar who gives alms*.

The old *landlady*, a crabbed creature, fully possessed with that keen observation as to all that concerned her neighbors, which is peculiar to the suburbs, watched Jean Valjean closely without exciting his suspicion. She was a little deaf, which made her talkative. She had but two teeth left, one in the upper and one in the lower jaw, and these she was continually rattling together. She had questioned Cosette, who, knowing nothing, could tell nothing further than that she came from

Montfermeil. One morning this old female spy saw Jean Valjean go, with an appearance which seemed peculiar to the old busybody, into one of the uninhabited apartments of the building. She followed with the steps of an old eel, and could see him without herself being seen, through the chink of the door directly opposite. Jean Valjean had, doubtless for greater caution, turned his back upon the door in question. The old woman saw him fumble in his pocket, and take from it a needle case, scissors and thread, and then proceed to rip open the lining of one lapel of his coat and take from under it a piece of yellowish paper, which he unfolded. The beldame remarked with dismay that it was a bank bill for a thousand francs. It was the second or third one only that she had ever seen. She ran away very much frightened.

A moment afterwards Jean Valjean accosted her, and asked her to get this thousand-franc bill changed for him, adding that it was the half-yearly interest on his property which he had received on the previous day. "Where," thought the old woman. He did not go out until six o'clock, and the government treasury is certainly not open at that hour. The old woman got the note changed, all the while forming her conjectures. This bill of a thousand francs, commented upon and multiplied, gave rise to a host of breathless conferences among the gossips of the Rue des Vignes Saint Mareel.

Some days afterwards, it chanced that Jean Valjean, in his shirt-sleeves, was sawing wood in the entry. The old woman was in his room doing the chamberwork. She was alone. Cosette was intent upon the wood he was sawing. The old woman saw the coat hanging on a nail and examined it. The lining had been sewed over. She felt it carefully and thought she could detect in the lappels and in the padding, thicknesses of paper. Other thousand franc bills beyond a doubt!

She noticed, besides, that there were all sorts of things in the pockets. Not only were there the needles, scissors and thread, which she had already seen, but a large pocket book, a very big knife, and, worst symptom of all, several wigs of different colors. Every pocket of this coat had the appearance of containing something to be provided with against sudden emergencies.

Thus, the occupants of the old building reached the closing days of winter.

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## V.

### A FIVE FRANC PIECE FALLING ON THE FLOOR MAKES A NOISE.

There was in the neighborhood of St. Médard a mendicant, who sat crouching over the edge of a condemned public well near by, and to whom Jean Valjean often gave alms. He never passed this man without giving him a few pennies. Sometimes he spoke to him. Those who were envious of this poor creature said he was in the pay of the police. He was an old church beadle of seventy five, who was always mumbling prayers.

One evening as Jean Valjean was passing that way, accompanied by Cosette, he noticed the beggar sitting in his usual place, under the

street lamp which had just been lighted. The man, according to custom, seemed to be praying, and was bent over. Jean Valjean walked up to him, and put a piece of money in his hand as usual. The beggar suddenly raised his eyes, gazed intently at Jean Valjean, and then quickly dropped his head. This movement was like a flash. Jean Valjean shuddered; it seemed to him that he had just seen, by the light of the street lamp, not the calm, sanctimonious face of the aged beadle, but a terrible and well known countenance. He experienced the sensation one would feel on finding himself suddenly face to face, in the gloom, with a tiger. He recoiled, horror-stricken and petrified, daring neither to breathe nor to speak, to stay nor to fly, but gazing upon the beggar, who had once more bent down his head, with its tattered covering, and seemed to be no longer conscious of his presence. At this singular moment an instinct, perhaps the mysterious instinct of self preservation, prevented Jean Valjean from uttering a word. The beggar had the same form, the same rags, the same general appearance, as on every other day. "Pshaw," said Jean Valjean to himself, "I am mad! I am dreaming! It cannot be!" And he went home anxious and ill at ease.

He scarcely dared to admit, even to himself, that the countenance he thought he had seen was the face of Javert.

That night, upon reflection, he regretted that he had not questioned the man so as to compel him to raise his head a second time. On the morrow, at nightfall, he went thither again. The beggar was in his place. "Good day! good day!" said Jean Valjean, with firmness, as he gave him the accustomed alms. The beggar raised his head and answered in a whining voice: "Thanks, kind sir, thanks!" It was, indeed, only the old beadle.

Jean Valjean now felt fully re-assured. He even began to laugh. "What the deuce was I about to fancy that I saw Javert," thought he; "is my sight growing poor already?" And he thought no more about it.

Some days after, it might be eight o'clock in the evening, he was in his room, giving Cosette her spelling lesson, which the child was repeating in a loud voice, when he heard the door of the building open and close again. That seemed odd to him. The old woman, the only occupant of the house besides himself and Cosette, always went to bed at dark to save candles. Jean Valjean made a sign to Cosette to be silent. He heard some one coming up stairs. Possibly it might be the old woman who had felt unwell and had been to the druggist's. Jean Valjean listened. The footstep was heavy and sounded like a man's; but the old woman wore heavy shoes, and there is nothing so much like the step of a man as the step of an old woman. However, Jean Valjean blew out the candle.

He sent Cosette to bed, telling her in a suppressed voice to lie down very quietly—and, as he kissed her forehead, the footsteps stopped. Jean Valjean remained silent and motionless, his back turned towards the door, still seated on his chair from which he had not moved, and holding his breath in the darkness. After a considerable interval, not hearing anything more, he turned round without making any noise, and as he raised his eyes towards the door of his room, he saw a light through

the keyhole. This ray of light was an evil star in the black background of the door and the wall: There was, evidently, somebody outside with a candle who was listening.

A few minutes elapsed, and the light disappeared. But he heard no sound of footsteps, which seemed to indicate that whoever was listening at the door had taken off his shoes.

Jean Valjean threw himself on his bed without undressing, but could not shut his eyes that night.

At daybreak, as he was sinking into slumber from fatigue, he was aroused again by the creaking of the door of some room at the end of the hall, and then he heard the same footstep which had ascended the stairs on the preceding night. The step approached. He started from his bed, and placed his eye to the keyhole, which was quite a large one, hoping to get a glimpse of the person, whoever it might be, who had made his way into the building in the night time and had listened at his door. It was a man, indeed, who passed by Jean Valjean's room, this time, without stopping. The hall was still too dark for him to make out his features; but when the man reached the stairs, a ray of light from without made his figure stand out like a profile, and Jean Valjean had a full view of his back. The man was tall, wore a long frock coat, and had a cudgel under his arm. It was the redoubtable form of Javert.

Jean Valjean might have tried to get another look at him, through his window that opened on the Boulevard, but he would have had to raise the sash, and that he dared not do.

It was evident that the man had entered by means of a key, as if at home. "Who, then, had given him the key?—and what was the meaning of this?"

At seven in the morning, when the old lady came to clear up the rooms, Jean Valjean eyed her sharply, but asked her no questions. The good dame appeared as usual.

While she was doing her sweeping, she said: "Perhaps, Monsieur heard some one come in, last night?"

At her age and on that Boulevard, eight in the evening is the very darkest of the night.

"Ah! yes, by the way, I did," he answered in the most natural tone. "Who was it?" "It's a new lodger," said the old woman, "who has come into the house." "And his name is——?" "Well, I hardly recollect now. Dumont or Daumont. Some such name as that." "And what is he—this M. Daumont?"

The old woman studied him, a moment, through her little foxy eyes, and answered: "He's a gentleman living on his income like you."

She may have intended nothing by this, but Jean Valjean thought he could make out that she did.

When the old woman was gone, he made a roll of a hundred francs he had in a drawer and put it into his pocket. Do what he would to manage this so that the clinking of the silver should not be heard, a five-franc piece escaped his grasp, and rolled jingling away over the floor.

At dusk, he went to the street-door and looked carefully up and down the Boulevard. No one was to be seen. The Boulevard seemed to be utterly deserted. It is true that there might have been some one hidden behind a tree.

He went up stairs again. "Come," said he to Cosette. He took her by the hand and they both went out.

## Book Fifth.

### A DARK CHASE NEEDS A SILENT HOUND.

#### I.

#### THE ZIGZAGS OF STRATEGY.

In order to understand the pages immediately following, and others also which will be found further on, an observation is here necessary.

Many years have already passed away since the author of this book, who is compelled, reluctantly, to speak of himself, was in Paris. Since then, Paris has been transformed. A new city has arisen, which to him is in some sense unknown. He need not say that he loves Paris; Paris is the native city of his heart. Through demolition and reconstruction, the Paris of his youth, that Paris which he religiously treasures in his memory, has become a Paris of former times. Let him be permitted to speak of that Paris as if it still existed. It is possible that where the author is about to conduct his readers, saying: "In such a street there is such a house," there is now no longer either house or street. The reader will verify it, if he chooses to take the trouble. As to himself, the author knows not the new Paris, and writes with the old Paris before his eyes in an illusion which is precious to him. It is a sweet thing for him to imagine that there still remains something of what he saw when he was in his own country, and that all is not vanished. While we are living in our native land, we fancy that these streets are indifferent to us, that these windows, these roofs, and these doors are nothing to us, that these walls are strangers to us, that these trees are no more than other trees, that these houses which we never enter are useless to us, that this pavement on which we walk is nothing but stone. In after times, when we are there no longer, we find that those streets are very dear, that we miss those roofs, those windows, and those doors, that those walls are necessary to us, that those trees are our well-beloved, that those houses which we never entered we entered every day, and that we have left something of our affections, our life and our heart in those streets. All those places which we see no more, which perhaps we shall never see again, but the image of which we have preserved, assume a mournful charm, return to us with the sadness of a spectre, make the holy land visible to us, and are, so to speak, the very form of France; and we love them and call them up such as they are, such as they were, and hold to them, unwilling to change anything, for one clings to the form of his fatherland as to the face of his mother.

Permit us, then, to speak of the past in the present. Saying which, we beg the reader to take note of it, and we proceed.

Jean Valjean had immediately left the Boulevard and began to thread

the streets, making as many turns as he could, returning sometimes upon his track to make sure that he was not followed.

This manœuvre is peculiar to the hunted stag. On ground where the foot leaves a mark, it has, among other advantages, that of deceiving the hunters and the dogs by the counter-step. It is what is called in venery *false re-embushment*.

The moon was full. Jean Valjean was not sorry for that. The moon, still near the horizon, cut large prisms of light and shade in the streets. Jean Valjean could glide along the houses and the walls on the dark side and observe the light side. He did not, perhaps, sufficiently realize that the obscure side escaped him. However, in all the deserted little streets in the neighborhood of the Rue de Poliveau, he felt sure that no one was behind him.

Cosette walked without asking any questions. The sufferings of the first six years of her life had introduced something of the passive into her nature. Besides—and this is a remark to which we shall have more than one occasion to return—she had become familiar, without being fully conscious of them, with the peculiarities of her good friend and the eccentricities of destiny. And then, she felt safe, being with him.

Jean Valjean knew, no more than Cosette, where he was going. He trusted in God, as she trusted in him. It seemed to him that he also held some one greater than himself by the hand; he believed he felt a being leading him, invisible. Finally, he had no definite idea, no plan, no project. He was not even absolutely sure that this was Javert, and then it might be Javert, and Javert not know that he was Jean Valjean. Was he not disguised? Was he not supposed to be dead? Nevertheless, singular things had happened within the last few days. He wanted no more of them. He was determined not to enter Gorgeon House again. Like the animal hunted from his den, he was looking for a hole to hide in until he could find one to remain in.

Jean Valjean described many and varied labyrinths in the Quartier Moutard, which was a-leep already as if it were still under the discipline of the middle age and the yoke of the curfew; he produced different combinations, in wise strategy, with the Rue Censier and the Rue Copeau, the Rue du Battoir Saint Victor and the Rue du Puits l'Ermité. There are lodgings in that region, but he did not even enter them, not finding what suited him. He had no doubt whatever that if, perchance, they had sought his track, they had lost it.

As eleven o'clock struck in the tower of Saint Etienne du Mont, he crossed the Rue de Pontoise in front of the bureau of the Commissary of Police, which is at No. 14. Some moments afterwards, the instinct of which we have already spoken made him turn his head. At this moment he saw distinctly—thanks to the commissary's lamp which revealed them—three men following him quite near, pass one after another under this lamp on the dark side of the street. One of these men entered the passage leading to the commissary's house. The one in advance appeared to him decidedly suspicious.

"Come, child!" said he to Cosette, and he made haste to get out of the Rue de Pontoise.

He made a circuit, went round the arcade des Patriarches, which was closed on account of the lateness of the hour, walked rapidly through

the Rue de l'Épée de-Bois and the Rue de l'Arbalète, and plunged into the Rue des Postes.

There was a square there, where the Collège Rollin now is, and from which branches off the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Genève.

We need not say that the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Genève is an old street, and that there a postchaise did not pass once in ten years through the Rue des Postes. This Rue des Postes was in the thirteenth century inhabited by potters, and its true name is Rue des Pots.

The moon lighted up this square brightly. Jean Valjean concealed himself in a doorway, calculating that if these men were still following him, he could not fail to get a good view of them when they crossed this lighted space.

In fact, three minutes had not elapsed when the men appeared. There were now four of them; all were tall, dressed in long brown coats, with round hats, and great clubs in their hands. They were not less fearfully forbidding by their size and their large fists than by their stealthy tread in the darkness. One would have taken them for four spectres in citizen's dress.

They stopped in the centre of the square and formed a group like people consulting. They appeared undecided. The man who seemed to be the leader turned, and energetically pointed in the direction in which Jean Valjean was; one of the others seemed to insist with some obstinacy on the contrary direction. At this instant when the leader turned, the moon shone full in his face. Jean Valjean recognised Javert perfectly.

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## II.

IT IS FORTUNATE THAT VEHICLES CAN CROSS THE BRIDGE OF AUSTERLITZ.

Uncertainty was at an end for Jean Valjean; happily, it still continued with these men. He took advantage of their hesitation; it was time lost for them, gained for him. He came out from the doorway in which he was concealed, and made his way into the Rue des Postes towards the region of the Jardin des Plantes. Cosette began to be tired; he took her in his arms and carried her. There was nobody in the streets, and the lamps had not been lighted on account of the moon.

He doubled his pace.

In a few steps, he reached the Goblet Pottery, on the facade of which the old inscription stood out distinctly legible in the light of the moon.

He passed through the Rue de la Clef, then by the Fontaine de Saint-Victor along the Jardin des Plantes by the lower streets, and reached the quay. There he looked around. The quay was deserted. The streets were deserted. Nobody behind him. He took breath.

He arrived at the bridge of Austerlitz. It was still a toll-bridge at this period. He presented himself at the toll-house and gave a sou. "It is two sous," said the toll keeper. "You are carrying a child who can walk. Pay for two." He paid, annoyed that his passage should have attracted observation. All flight should be a gliding.

A large cart was passing the Seine at the same time, and like him was going towards the right bank. This could be made of use. He could go the whole length of the bridge in the shade of this cart.

Towards the middle of the bridge, Cosette, her feet becoming numb, desired to walk. He put her down and took her by the hand.

The bridge passed, he perceived some wood-yards a little to the right and walked in that direction. To get there, he must venture into a large clear open space. Those who followed him were evidently thrown off his track, and Jean Valjean believed himself out of danger. Sought for, he might be, but followed he was not.

A little street, the Rue du Chemin Vert Saint Antoine, opened between two wood-yards inclosed by walls. This street was narrow, obscure, and seemed made expressly for him. Before entering it, he looked back.

From the point where he was, he could see the whole length of the bridge of Austerlitz.

Four shadows, at that moment, entered upon the bridge.

These shadows were coming from the Jardin des Plantes towards the right bank.

These four shadows were the four men.

Jean Valjean felt a shudder like that of the deer when he sees the hounds again upon his track.

One hope was left him; it was that these men had not entered upon the bridge, and had not perceived him when he crossed the large clear space leading Cosette by the hand.

In that case, by plunging into the little street before him, if he could succeed in reaching the wood-yards, the marshes, the fields, the open grounds, he could escape.

It seemed to him that he might trust himself to this silent little street. He entered it.

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### III.

#### SEE THE PLAN OF PARIS OF 1727.

Some three hundred paces on, he reached a point where the street forked. It divided into two streets, the one turning off obliquely to the left, the other to the right. Jean Valjean had before him the two branches of a Y. Which should he choose?

He did not hesitate, but took the right.

Why?

Because the left branch led towards the faubourg—that is to say, towards the inhabited region, and the right branch towards the country—that is, towards the uninhabited region.

But now, they no longer walked very fast. Cosette's step slackened Jean Valjean's pace.

He took her up and carried her again. Cosette rested her head upon the good man's shoulder, and did not say a word.

He turned, from time to time, and looked back. He took care to keep always on the dark side of the street. The street was straight behind



him. The two or three first times he turned, he saw nothing; the silence was complete, and he kept on his way somewhat reassured. Suddenly, on turning again, he thought he saw in the portion of the street through which he had just passed, far in the obscurity, something which stirred.

He plunged forward rather than walked, hoping to find some side street by which to escape, and once more to elude his pursuers.

He came to a wall.

This wall, however, did not prevent him from going further; it was a wall forming the side of a cross alley, in which the street Jean Valjean was then in came to an end.

Here again he must decide; shall he take the right or the left?

He looked to the right. The alley ran out into a space between some buildings that were mere sheds or barns, then terminated abruptly. The end of this blind alley was plain to be seen—a great white wall.

He looked to the left. The alley on this side was open, and, about two hundred paces further on, ran into a street of which it was an affluent. In this direction lay safety.

The instant Jean Valjean decided to turn to the left, to try to reach the street which he saw at the end of the alley, he perceived at the corner of the alley and the street towards which he was just about going, a sort of black, motionless statue.

It was a man who had just been posted there, evidently, and who was waiting for him, guarding the passage. Jean Valjean was startled. This part of Paris where Jean Valjean was, situated between the Faubourg Saint Antoine and the La Rapée, is one of those which have been entirely transformed by the recent works—a change for the worse, in the opinion of some, a transfiguration, according to others. The vegetable gardens, the wood-yards, and the old buildings are gone. There are now broad, new streets, amphitheatres, circuses, hippodromes, railroad depots, a prison, Mazas; progress, as we see, with its corrective.

Half a century ago, in the common popular language, full of tradition, which obstinately calls l'Institut *Les Quatre Nations*, and l'Opera Comique *Foyseau*, the precise spot which Jean Valjean had reached was called the *Petit Picpus*. The Porte Saint Jacques, the Porte Paris, the Barrière des Sergents, the Porcherons, the Galiote, the Célestins, the Capuchins, the Mail, the Bourbe, the Arbre de Cracovie, the Petite Pologne, the Petit Picpus, these are names of the old Paris floating over into the new. The memory of the people buoys over these waifs of the past.

The Petit Picpus, which in fact hardly had a real existence, and was never more than a mere outline of a quarter, had almost the monkish aspect of a Spanish city. The roads were poorly paved, the streets were thinly built up. Beyond the two or three streets of which we are about to speak, there was nothing there but wail and solitude. Not a shop, not a vehicle, hardly a light here and there in the windows; all the lights put out after ten o'clock. Gardens, convents, wood yards, market gardens, a few scattered low houses, and great walls as high as the houses.

Such was the quarter in the last century. The Revolution had already very much altered it. The republican authorities had pulled down build-

ings and run streets into and through it. Depositories of rubbish had been established there. Thirty years ago, this quarter was being gradually erased by the construction of new buildings. It is now completely blotted out. The Petit Picpus, of which no present plan retains a trace, is clearly enough indicated in the plan of 1727, published at Paris by Denis Thierry, Rue Saint Jacques, opposite the Rue du Plâtre; and at Lyons by Jean Girin, Rue Mercière, à la Prudence. The Petit Picpus had what we have just called a Y of streets, formed by the Rue du Chemin Vert Saint Amoine dividing into two branches and taking on the left the name Petite Rue Picpus and on the right the name of the Rue Polonceau. The two branches of the Y were joined at the top as by a bar. This bar was called the Rue Droit Mur. The Rue Polonceau ended there; the Petite Rue Picpus passed beyond, rising towards the Marché Lenoir. He who, coming from the Seine, reached the extremity of the Rue Polonceau, had on his left the Rue Droit Mur turning sharply at a right angle, before him the side wall of that street, and on his right a truncated prolongation of the Rue Droit Mur, without thoroughfare, called the Cul-de-sac Genrot.

Jean Valjean was in this place.

As we have said, on perceiving the black form standing sentry at the corner of the Rue Droit Mur and the Petite Rue Picpus, he was startled. There was no doubt. He was watched by this shadow. What should he do?

There was now no time to turn back. What he had seen moving in the obscurity some distance behind him, the moment before, was undoubtedly Javert and his squad. Javert probably had already reached the commencement of the street of which Jean Valjean was at the end. Javert, to all appearance, was acquainted with this little trap, and had taken his precautions by sending one of his men to guard the exit. These conjectures, so like certainties, whirled about wildly in Jean Valjean's troubled brain, as a handful of dust flies before a sudden blast. He scrutinized the Cul-de-sac Genrot; there were high walls. He scrutinized the Petite Rue Picpus; there was a sentinel. He saw that dark form repeated in black upon the white pavement flooded with the moonlight. To advance, was to fall upon that man. To go back, was to throw himself into Javert's hands. Jean Valjean felt as if caught by a chain that was slowly winding up. He looked up into the sky in despair.

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#### IV.

##### GROPING FOR ESCAPE.

In order to understand what follows, it is necessary to form an exact idea of the little Rue Droit Mur, and particularly the corner which it makes at the left as you leave the Rue Polonceau to enter this alley. The little Rue Droit Mur was almost entirely lined on the right, as far as the Petite Rue Picpus, by houses of poor appearance; on the left by a single building of severe outline, composed of several structures which rose gradually a story or two, one above another, as they approached the Petite Rue Picpus, so that the building, very high on the side of the

Petite Rue Piepus, was quite low on the side of the Rue Polonceau. There, at the corner of which we have spoken, it became so low as to be nothing more than a wall. This wall did not abut squarely on the corner, which was cut off diagonally, leaving a considerable space that was shielded by the two angles thus formed from observers at a distance in either the Rue Polonceau, or the Rue Droit Mur.

From these two angles of the truncated corner, the wall extended along the Rue Polonceau as far as a house numbered 49, and along the Rue Droit Mur, where its height was much less, to the sombre-looking building of which we have spoken, cutting its gable; and thus making a new re-entering angle in the street. This gable had a gloomy aspect; there was but one window to be seen, or rather two shutters covered with a sheet of zinc, and always closed.

The situation of the places we describe here is rigorously exact, and will certainly awaken a very precise remembrance in the minds of the old inhabitants of the locality.

This truncated corner was entirely filled by a thing which seemed like a colossal and miserable door. It was a vast shapeless assemblage of perpendicular planks, broader above than below, bound together by long transverse iron bands. At the side there was a porte-cochère of the ordinary dimensions, which had evidently been cut in within the last fifty years.

A lime-tree lifted its branches above this corner, and the wall was covered with ivy towards the Rue Polonceau.

In the imminent peril of Jean Valjean, this sombre building had a solitary and uninhabited appearance which attracted him. He glanced over it rapidly. He thought if he could only succeed in getting into it, he would perhaps be safe. Hope came to him with the idea.

Midway of the front of this building on the Rue Droit Mur, there were at all the windows of the different stories old leaden waste-pipes. The varied branchings of the tubing which was continued from a central conduit to each of these waste-pipes, outlined on the façade a sort of tree. These ramifications of the pipes with their hundred elbows seemed like those old closely-pruned grape-vines which twist about over the front of ancient farm-houses.

This grotesque espalier, with its sheet-iron branches, was the first object which Jean Valjean saw. He seated Cosette with her back against a post, and, telling her to be quiet, ran to the spot where the conduit came to the pavement. Perhaps there was some means of sealing the wall by that and entering the house. But the conduit was dilapidated and out of use, and scarcely held by its fastening. Besides, all the windows of this silent house were protected by thick bars of iron, even the dormer windows. And then the moon shone full upon this façade, and the man who was watching from the end of the street would have seen Jean Valjean making the escalade. And then what should he do with Cosette? How could he raise her to the top of a three-story house?

He gave up climbing by the conduit, and crept along the wall to the Rue Polonceau.

When he reached this flattened corner where he had left Cosette, he noticed that there no one could see him. He escaped, as we have just explained, all observation from every side. Besides, he was in the shade.

Then there were two doors. Perhaps they might be forced. The wall above which he saw the lime and the ivy, evidently surrounded a garden, where he could at least conceal himself, although there were no leaves on the trees yet, and pass the rest of the night.

Time was passing. He must act quickly. He tried the carriage door, and found at once that it was fastened within and without.

He approached the other large door with more hope. It was frightfully decrepit, its immense size even rendering it less solid; the planks were rotten, the iron fastenings, of which there were three, were rusted. It seemed possible to pierce this worm-eaten structure.

On examining it, he saw that this door was not a door. It had neither hinges, braces, lock, nor crack in the middle. The iron bands crossed from one side to the other without a break. Through the crevices of the planks he saw the rubble-work and stones, roughly cemented, which passers by could have seen within the last ten years. He was compelled to admit with consternation that this appearance of a door was simply an ornamentation in wood of a wall, upon which it was placed. It was easy to tear off a board, but then he would find himself face to face with a wall.

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## V.

WHICH WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE WERE THE STREETS LIGHTED WITH GAS.

At this moment a muffled and regular sound began to make itself heard at some distance. Jean Valjean ventured to thrust his head a little way around the corner of the street. Seven or eight soldiers, formed into platoon, had just turned into the Rue Polonceau. He saw the gleam of their bayonets. They were coming towards him.

The soldiers, at whose head he distinguished the tall form of Javert, advanced slowly and with precaution. They stopped frequently. It was plain they were exploring all the recesses of the walls and all the entrances of doors and alleys.

It was—and here conjecture could not be deceived—some patrol which Javert had met and which he had put in requisition.

Javert's two assistants marched in the ranks.

At the rate at which they were marching, and with the stops they were making, it would take them about a quarter of an hour to arrive at the spot where Jean Valjean was. It was a frightful moment. A few minutes separated Jean Valjean from that awful precipice which was opening before him for the third time. And the galleys now were no longer simply the galleys, they were Cosette lost for ever; that is to say, a life in death. There was now only one thing possible. Jean Valjean had this peculiarity, that he might be said to carry two knapsacks; in one he had the thoughts of a saint, in the other the formidable talents of a convict. He helped himself from one or the other as occasion required. Among other resources, thanks to his numerous escapes from the galleys at Toulon, he had, it will be remembered, become master of that incredible art of raising himself, in the right angle of a wall, if need be

to the height of a sixth story; an art without ladders or props, by mere muscular strength, supporting himself by the back of his neck, his shoulders, his hips and his knees, hardly making use of the few projections of the stone, which rendered so terrible and so celebrated the corner of the yard of the Conciergerie of Paris by which, some twenty years ago, the convict Battenolle made his escape.

Jean Valjean measured with his eyes the wall above which he saw the lime-tree. It was about eighteen feet high. The angle that it made with the gable of the great building was filled in its lower part with a pile of masonry of triangular shape, probably intended to preserve this too convenient recess from a too public use. This preventive filling-up of the corners of a wall is very common in Paris.

This pile was about five feet high. From its top the space to climb to get upon the wall was hardly more than fourteen feet.

The wall was capped by a flat stone without any projection.

The difficulty was Cosette. Cosette did not know how to scale a wall. Abandon her? Jean Valjean did not think of it. To carry her was impossible. The whole strength of a man is necessary to accomplish these strange ascents. The least burden would make him lose his centre of gravity and he would fall.

He needed a cord. Jean Valjean had none. Where could he find a cord, at midnight, in the Rue Polonceau? Truly at that instant, if Jean Valjean had had a kingdom, he would have given it for a rope.

All extreme situations have their flashes which sometimes make us blind, sometimes illuminate us. The despairing gaze of Jean Valjean encountered the lamp-post in the Cul-de-sac Genrot.

At this epoch there were no gas lights in the streets of Paris. At nightfall they lighted the street lamps, which were placed at intervals, and were raised and lowered by means of a rope traversing the street from end to end, running through the grooves of posts. The reel on which this rope was wound was inclosed below the lantern in a little iron box the key of which was kept by the lamp-lighter, and the rope itself was protected by a casing of metal.

Jean Valjean, with the energy of a final struggle, crossed the street at a bound, entered the Cul-de-sac, sprang the bolt of the little box with the point of his knife, and an instant after was back at the side of Cosette. He had a rope. These desperate inventors of expedients, in their struggles with fatality, move electrically in case of need.

We have explained that the street lamps had not been lighted that night. The lamp in the Cul-de-sac Genrot was then, as a matter of course, extinguished like the rest, and one might pass by without even noticing that it was not in its place.

Meanwhile the hour, the place, the darkness, the pre-occupation of Jean Valjean, his singular actions, his going to and fro, all this began to disturb Cosette. Any other child would have uttered loud cries long before. She contented herself with pulling Jean Valjean by the skirt of his coat. The sound of the approaching patrol was constantly becoming more and more distinct.

"Father," said she, in a whisper, "I am afraid. Who is that is coming?"

"Hush!" answered the unhappy man, "it is the Thénardiess."

Cosette shuddered. He added: "Don't say a word; I'll take care of her. If you cry, if you make any noise, the Thénardiess will hear you. She is coming to catch you."

Then, without any haste, but without doing anything a second time, with a firm and rapid precision, so much the more remarkable at such a moment when the patrol and Javert might come upon him at any instant, he took off his cravat, passed it around Cosette's body, under the arms, taking care that it should not hurt the child, attached this cravat to an end of the rope by means of the knot which seamen call a swallow-knot, took the other end of the rope in his teeth, took off his shoes and stockings and threw them over the wall, climbed upon the pile of masonry and began to raise himself in the angle of the wall and the gable with as much solidity and certainty as if he had the rounds of a ladder under his heels and his elbows. Half a minute had not passed before he was on his knees on the wall.

Cosette watched him, stupefied, without saying a word. Jean Valjean's charge and the name of the Thénardiess had made her dumb.

All at once, she heard Jean Valjean's voice calling to her in a low whisper: "Put your back against the wall."

She obeyed.

"Don't speak, and don't be afraid," added Jean Valjean. And she felt herself lifted from the ground.

Before she had time to think where she was she was at the top of the wall.

Jean Valjean seized her, put her on his back, took her two little hands in his left hand, lay down flat and crawled along the top of the wall as far as the cut-off corner. As he had supposed, there was a building there, the roof of which sloped from the top of the wooden casing we have mentioned very nearly to the ground, with a gentle inclination, and just reaching to the lime-tree.

A fortunate circumstance, for the wall was much higher on this side than on the street. Jean Valjean saw the ground beneath him at a great depth.

He had just reached the inclined plane of the roof, and had not yet left the crest of the wall, when a violent uproar proclaimed the arrival of the patrol. He heard the thundering voice of Javert: "Search the Cul-de-sac! The Rue Droit Mur is guarded, the Petite Rue Piepus also. I'll answer for it he is in the Cul-de-sac!" The soldiers rushed into the Cul-de-sac Genrot. Jean Valjean slid down the roof, keeping hold of Cosette, reached the lime-tree, and jumped to the ground. Whether from terror or from courage, Cosette had not uttered a whisper. Her hands were a little scraped.

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## VI.

### COMMENCEMENT OF AN ENIGMA.

Jean Valjean found himself in a sort of garden, very large and of a singular appearance; one of those gloomy gardens which seem made to be seen in the winter and at night. This garden was oblong, with a row

of large poplars at the further end, some tall forest trees in the corners, and a clear space in the centre, where stood a very large isolated tree, then a few fruit trees, contorted and shaggy, like big bushes, some vegetable beds, a melon patch the glass covers of which shone in the moonlight, and an old well. There were here and there stone benches which seemed black with moss. The walks were bordered with sorry little shrubs perfectly straight. The grass covered half of them, and a green moss covered the rest.

Jean Valjean had on one side the building, down the roof of which he had come, a wood-pile; and behind the wood, against the wall, a stone statue, the mutilated face of which was now nothing but a shapeless mask which was seen dimly through the obscurity.

The building was in ruins, but some dismantled rooms could be distinguished in it, one of which was well filled, and appeared to serve as a shed.

The large building of the Rue Droit Mur which ran back on the Petite Rue Piepus, presented upon this garden two square façades. These inside façades were still more gloomy than those on the outside. All the windows were grated. No light was to be seen. On the upper stories there were shutters as in prisons. The shadow of one of these façades was projected upon the other, and fell on the garden like an immense black pall.

No other house could be seen. The farther end of the garden was lost in mist and darkness. Still, he could make out walls intersecting, as if there were other cultivated grounds beyond, as well as the low roofs of the Rue Polanceau.

Nothing can be imagined more wild and more solitary than this garden. There was no one there, which was very natural on account of the hour; but it did not seem as if the place were made for anybody to walk in, even in broad noon.

Jean Valjean's first care had been to find his shoes, and put them on; then he entered the shed with Cosette. A man trying to escape never thinks himself sufficiently concealed. The child, thinking instantly of the Thénardiess, shared his instinct, and cowered down as closely as she could.

Cosette trembled, and pressed closely to his side. They heard the tumultuous clamor of the patrol ransacking the cul-de-sac and the street, the clatter of their muskets against the stones, the calls of Javert to the watchmen he had stationed, and his imprecations mingled with words which they could not distinguish.

At the end of a quarter of a hour, it seemed as though this stormy rumbling began to recede. Jean Valjean did not breathe. He had placed his hand gently upon Cosette's mouth.

But the solitude about him was so strangely calm that that frightful din, so furious and so near, did not even cast over it a shadow of disturbance. It seemed as if these walls were built of the deaf stones spoken of in Scripture.

Suddenly, in the midst of this deep calm, a new sound arose; a celestial, divine, ineffable sound, as ravishing as the other was horrible. It was a hymn which came forth from the darkness, a bewildering mingling of prayer and harmony in the obscure and fearful silence of the night;

*Jean Valjean*

voices of women, but voices with the pure accents of virgins, and artless accents of children; those voices which are not of earth, and which resemble those that the new-born still hear, and the dying hear already. This song came from the gloomy building which overlooked the garden. At the moment when the uproar of the demons receded, one would have said it was a choir of angels approaching in the darkness.

Cosette and Jean Valjean fell on their knees. They knew not what it was; they knew not where they were; but they both felt, the man and the child, the penitent and the innocent, that they ought to be on their knees.

These voices had this strange effect; they did not prevent the building from appearing deserted. It was like a supernatural song in an uninhabited dwelling. While these voices were singing, Jean Valjean was entirely absorbed in them. He no longer saw the night—he saw a blue sky. He seemed to feel the spreading of these wings, which we all have within us.

The chant ceased. Perhaps it had lasted a long time. Jean Valjean could not have told. Hours of ecstasy are never more than a moment.

All had again relapsed into silence. There was nothing more in the street, nothing more in the garden. That which threatened, that which re-assured, all had vanished. The wind rattled the dry grass on the top of the wall, which made a low, soft and mournful noise.

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## VII.

### THE ENIGMA CONTINUED.

The night wind had risen, which indicated that it must be between one and two o'clock in the morning. Poor Cosette did not speak. As she had sat down at his side and leaned her head on him, Jean Valjean thought that she was asleep. He bent over and looked at her. Her eyes were wide open, and she had a look that gave Jean Valjean pain.

She was still trembling. "Are you sleepy?" said Jean Valjean. "I am very cold," she answered. A moment after she added: "Is she there yet?" "Who?" said Jean Valjean. "Madame Thénardier."

Jean Valjean had already forgotten the means he had employed to secure Cosette's silence. "Oh!" said he, "she has gone. Don't be afraid any longer."

The child sighed as if a weight were lifted from her breast. The ground was damp, the shed open on all sides, the wind freshened every moment. The good man took off his coat and wrapped Cosette in it. "Are you warmer, so?" "Oh! yes, father!" "Well, wait here a moment for me. I shall soon be back."

He went out of the ruin, and along by the large building, in search of some better shelter. He found doors, but they were all closed. All the windows of the ground-floor were barred. As he passed the interior angle of the building, he noticed several arched windows before him, where he perceived some light. He rose on tip-toe and looked in at one of these windows. They all opened into a large hall, paved with broad slabs, and intersected by arches and pillars; he could distinguish nothing



but a slight glimmer in the deep obscurity. This glimmer came from a night-lamp burning in a corner. The hall was deserted; everything was motionless. However, by dint of looking, he thought he saw something, stretched out on the pavement, which appeared to be covered with a shroud, and which resembled a human form. It was lying with the face downwards, the arms crossed, in the immobility of death. One would have said, from a sort of serpent that trailed along the pavement, that this ill omened figure had a rope about its neck. The whole hall was enveloped in that mist peculiar to dimly-lighted places, which always increases horror.

Jean Valjean has often said since that, although in the course of his life he had seen many funereal sights, never had he seen anything more freezing and more terrible than this enigmatical figure fulfilling some strange mystery, he knew not what, in that gloomy place, and thus dimly seen in the night. It was terrifying to suppose that it was perhaps dead, and still more terrifying to think that it might be alive.

He had the courage to press his forehead against the glass, and watch to see if the thing would move. He remained what seemed to him a long time in vain; the prostrate form made no movement. Suddenly he was seized with an inexpressible dismay, and he fled. He ran towards the shed without daring to look behind him. It seemed to him that if he should turn his head he would see the figure walking behind him with rapid strides and shaking its arms.

He reached the ruin breathless. His knees gave way; a cold sweat oozed out from every pore. Where was he? who would ever have imagined anything equal to this species of sepulchre in the midst of Paris? what was this strange house? A building full of nocturnal mystery, calling to souls in the shade with the voice of angels, and, when they came, abruptly presenting to them this frightful vision—promising to open the radiant gate of Heaven, and opening the horrible door of the tomb. And that was in fact a building, a house which had its number in a street? It was not a dream? He had to touch the wall to believe it.

The cold, the anxiety, the agitation, the anguish of the night, were giving him a veritable fever, and all his ideas were jostling in his brain. He went to Cosette. She was sleeping.

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## VIII.

### THE ENIGMA REDOUBLES.

The child had laid her head upon a stone and gone to sleep. He sat down near her and looked at her. Little by little, as he beheld her, he grew calm, and regained possession of his clearness of mind.

He plainly perceived this truth, the basis of his life henceforth, that so long as she should be alive, so long as he should have her with him, he should need nothing except for her, and fear nothing save on her account. He did not even realize that he was very cold, having taken off his coat to cover her.

Meanwhile, through the reverie into which he had fallen, he had heard

for sometime a singular noise. It sounded like a little bell that some one was shaking. This noise was in the garden. It was heard distinctly, though feebly. It resembled the dimly heard tinkling of cow bells in the pastures at night. This noise made Jean Valjean turn. He looked, and saw that there was some one in the garden. Something which resembled a man was walking among the glass cases of the melon patch, rising up, stooping down, stopping, with a regular motion, as if he were drawing or stretching something upon the ground. This being appeared to him

Jean Valjean shuddered with the continual tremor of the outcast; to them everything is hostile and suspicious. They distrust the day because it helps to discover them, and the night because it helps to surprise them. Just now he was shuddering because the garden was empty, now he shuddered because there was some one in it.

He fell again from chimerical terrors into real terrors. He said to himself that perhaps Javert and his spies had not gone away, that they had doubtless left somebody on the watch in the street; that, if this man should discover him in the garden, he would cry thief, and would deliver him up. He took the sleeping Cosette gently in his arms and carried her into the furthest corner of the shed behind a heap of old furniture that was out of use. Cosette did not stir.

From there he watched the strange motions of the man in the melon-patch. It seemed very singular, but the sound of the bell followed every movement of the man. When the man approached, the sound approached; when he moved away, the sound moved away; if he made some sudden motion, a trill accompanied his motion; when he stopped, the noise ceased. It seemed evident that the bell was fastened to this man; but then what could that mean? what was this man to whom a bell was hung as to a raven or a cow?

While he was revolving these questions, he touched Cosette's hands. They were icy. "Oh! God!" said he. He called to her in a low voice: "Cosette!" She did not open her eyes. He shook her smartly. She did not wake. "Could she be dead?" said he, and he sprang up, shuddering from head to foot.

The most frightful thoughts rushed through his mind in confusion. There are moments when hideous suppositions besiege us like a throng of furies and violently force the portals of our brain. When those whom we love are in danger, our solicitude invents all sorts of follies. He remembered that sleep may be fatal in the open air in a cold night. Cosette was pallid; she had fallen prostrate on the ground at his feet, making no sign. He listened for her breathing; she was breathing; but with a respiration that appeared feeble and about to stop. How should he get her warm again? how rouse her? All else was banished from his thoughts. He rushed desperately out of the ruin. It was absolutely necessary that in less than a quarter of an hour Cosette should be in bed and before a fire.

## IX.

## THE MAN WITH THE BELL.

He walked straight to the man whom he saw in the garden. He had taken in his hand the roll of money which was in his vest pocket. This man had his head down and did not see him coming. A few strides, Jean Valjean was at his side.

Jean Valjean approached him, exclaiming: "A hundred francs!" The man started and raised his eyes. "A hundred francs for you," continued Jean Valjean, "if you will give me refuge to night." The moon shone full in Jean Valjean's bewildered face. "What, is it you, father Madeleine?" said the man.

This name, thus pronounced, at this dark hour, in this unknown place, by this unknown man, made Jean Valjean start back. He was ready for anything but that. The speaker was an old man, bent and lame, dressed much like a peasant, who had on his left knee a leather knee-cap from which hung a bell. His face was in the shade, and could not be distinguished.

Meanwhile the good man had taken off his cap, and was exclaiming, tremulously:

"Ah! my God! how did you come here, father Madeleine? How did you get in, O Lord? Did you fall from the sky? There is no doubt, if you ever do fall, you will fall from there. And what has happened to you? You have no cravat, you have no hat, you have no coat! Do you know that you would have frightened anybody who did not know you? No coat? Merciful heavens! Are the saints all crazy now? But how did you get in?"

One word did not wait for another. The old man spoke with a rustic volubility in which there was nothing disquieting. All this was said with a mixture of astonishment and frank good nature. "Who are you and what is this house?" asked Jean Valjean. "Oh! indeed, that is good now," exclaimed the old man. "I am the one you got the place for here, and this house is the one you got me the place in. What! you don't remember me?" "No," said Jean Valjean. "And how does it happen that you know me?" "You saved my life," said the man.

He turned, a ray of the moon lighted up his side face, and Jean Valjean recognized old Fauchelevent.

"Ah!" said Jean Valjean, "it is you; yes, I remember you." "That is very fortunate," said the old man, in a reproachful tone. "And what are you doing here?" added Jean Valjean. "Oh! I am covering my melons."

Old Fauchelevent had in his hand, indeed, at the moment when Jean Valjean accosted him, the end of a piece of awning which he was stretching out over the melon patch. He had already spread out several in this way during the hour he had been in the garden. It was this work which made him go through the peculiar motions observed by Jean Valjean from the shed. He continued:

"I said to myself, the moon is bright, there is going to be a frost. Suppose I put their jackets on my melons? And," added he, looking

at Jean Valjean, with a loud laugh, "you would have done well to do as much for yourself; but how did you come here?"

Jean Valjean, finding that he was known by this man, at least under his name of Madeleine, went no further with his precautions. He multiplied questions. Oddly enough their parts seemed reversed. It was he, the intruder, who put questions. "And what is this bell you have on your knee?" "That!" answered Fauchelevent, "that is so that they may keep away from me." "How! keep away from you?" Old Fauchelevent winked in an indescribable manner.

"Ah! bless me! there's nothing but women in this house: plenty of young girls. It seems that I am dangerous to meet. The bell warns them. When I come they go away." "What is this house?" "Why, you know very well." "No, I don't." "Why, you got me this place here as gardener?" "Answer me as if I didn't know." "Well, it is the Convent of the Petit Picpus, then."

Jean Valjean remembered. Chance, that is to say, Providence, had thrown him precisely into this convent of the Quartier Saint Antoine, to which old Fauchelevent, crippled by his fall from his cart, had been admitted, upon his recommendation, two years before. He repeated as if he were talking to himself: "The convent of the Petit Picpus."

"But now, really," resumed Fauchelevent, "how the deuce did you manage to get in, you, father Madeleine? It is no use for you to be a saint, you are a man; and no men come in here." "But you are here." "There is none but me." "But," resumed Jean Valjean, "I must stay here." "Oh! my God," exclaimed Fauchelevent.

Jean Valjean approached the old man, and said to him in a grave voice: "Father Fauchelevent, I saved your life." "I was first to remember it," answered Fauchelevent. "Well you can now do for me what I once did for you." Fauchelevent grasped in his old wrinkled and trembling hands the robust hands of Jean Valjean, and it was some seconds before he could speak; at last he exclaimed: "Oh! that would be a blessing of God if I could do something for you in return for that! I save your life! Monsieur Mayor, the old man is at your disposal." A wonderful joy had, as it were, transfigured the old gardener. A radiance seemed to shine forth from his face. "What do you want me to do?" added he. "I will explain. You have a room?" "I have a solitary shanty, over there, behind the ruins of the old convent, in a corner that nobody ever sees. There are three rooms."

The shanty was in fact so well concealed behind the ruins, and so well arranged, that no one should see it—that Jean Valjean had not seen it.

"Good," said Jean Valjean. "Now I ask of you two things." "What are they, Monsieur Mayor?" "First, that you will not tell anybody what you know about me. Second, that you will not attempt to learn anything more." "As you please. I know that you can do nothing dishonorable, and that you have always been a man of God. And then, besides, it was you that put me here. It is your place, I am yours." "Very well. But now come with me. We will go for the child." "Ah!" said Fauchelevent, "there is a child!"

He said not a word more, but followed Jean Valjean as a dog follows his master.

In half an hour Cosette, again become rosy before a good fire, was asleep in the old gardener's bed. Jean Valjean had put on his cravat and coat; his hat, which he had thrown over the wall, had been found and brought in. While Jean Valjean was putting on his coat, Fauchelevent had taken off his knee-cap with the bell attached, which now, hanging on a nail near a shutter, decorated the wall. The two men were warming themselves, with their elbows on a table, on which Fauchelevent had set a piece of cheese, some brown bread, a bottle of wine, and two glasses, and the old man said to Jean Valjean, putting his hand on his knee: "Ah! father Madeleine, you didn't know me at first? You save people's lives and then you forget them? Oh! that's bad; they remember you. You are ungrateful!"

## X.

## IN WHICH IS EXPLAINED HOW JAVERT LOST THE GAME.

The events, the reverse of which, so to speak, we have just seen, had been brought about under the simplest conditions.

When Jean Valjean, on the night of the very day that Javert arrested him at the death-bed of Fantine, escaped from the municipal prison of M—— sur M——, the police supposed that the escaped convict would start for Paris. Paris is a maelstrom in which everything is lost; and everything disappears in this whirlpool of the world as in the whirlpool of the sea. No forest conceals a man like this multitude. Fugitives of all kinds know this. They go to Paris to be swallowed up; there are swallowings up which save. The police know it also, and it is in Paris that they search for what they have lost elsewhere. They searched there for the ex-mayor of M—— sur M——. Javert was summoned to Paris to aid in the investigation. Javert, in fact, was of great aid in the recapture of Jean Valjean. The zeal and intelligence of Javert on this occasion were remarked by M. Chabouillet, Secretary of the Prefecture, under Count Angles. M. Chabouillet, who had already interested himself in Javert, secured the transfer of the inspector of M—— sur M—— to the police of Paris. There Javert rendered himself in various ways, and, let us say, although the word seems unusual for such service, honourably, useful.

He thought no more of Jean Valjean—with these hounds always upon the scent, the wolf of to-day banishes the memory of the wolf of yesterday—when, in December, 1823, he read a newspaper; he who never read the newspapers; but Javert, as a monarchist, made a point of knowing the details of the triumphal entry of the "Prince generalissimo" into Bayonne. Just as he finished the article which interested him, a name—the name of Jean Valjean—at the bottom of the page attracted his attention. The newspaper announced that the convict Jean Valjean was dead, and published the fact in terms so explicit, that Javert had no doubt of it. He merely said: "*That settles it.*" Then he threw aside the paper; and thought no more of it.

Some time afterwards it happened that a police notice was transmitted by the Prefecture of Seine-et-Oise to the Prefecture of Police of Paris

in relation to the kidnapping of a child, which had taken place, it was said, under peculiar circumstances, in the commune of Montfermeil. A little girl, seven or eight years old, the notice said, who had been confided by her mother to an inn-keeper of the country, had been stolen by an unknown man; this little girl answered to the name of Cosette, and was the child of a young woman named Fantine, who had died at the Hospital, nobody knew when or where. This notice came under the eyes of Javert, and set him to thinking.

The name of Fantine was well known to him. He remembered that Jean Valjean had actually made him—Javert—laugh aloud by asking of him a respite of three days, in order to go for the child of this creature. He recalled the fact that Jean Valjean had been arrested at Paris, at the moment he was getting into the Montfermeil diligence. Some indications had even led him to think then that it was the second time that he was entering this diligence, and that he had already, the night previous, made another excursion to the environs of this village, for he had not been seen in the village itself. What was he doing in this region of Montfermeil? Nobody could divine. Javert understood it. The daughter of Fantine was there. Jean Valjean was going after her. Now this child had been stolen by an unknown man! Who could this man be? Could it be Jean Valjean? But Jean Valjean was dead. Javert, without saying a word to any one, took the diligence at the Plat d'Étain, cul-de-sac de Planchette, and took a trip to Montfermeil.

He expected to find great developments there; he found great obscurity.

For the first few days the Thenardiers, in their spite, had blabbed the story about. The disappearance of the Lark had made some noise in the village. There were soon several versions of the story, which ended by becoming a case of kidnapping. Hence the police notice. However, when the first ebullition was over, Thenardier, with admirable instinct, very soon arrived at the conclusion that it is never useful to set in motion the Procureur du Roi; that the first result of his complaints in regard to the *kidnapping* of Cosette would be to fix-upon himself and on many business troubles which he had, the keen eye of justice. The last things that owls wish is a candle. And first of all, how should he explain the fifteen hundred francs he had received? He stopped short, and enjoined secrecy upon his wife, and professed to be astonished when anybody spoke to him of the *stolen child*. He knew nothing about it; undoubtedly he had made some complaint at the time that the dear little girl should be "taken away" so suddenly; he would have liked, for affection's sake, to keep her two or three days; but it was her "grandfather" who had come for her, the most natural thing in the world. He had added the grandfather, which sounded well. It was upon this story that Javert fell, on reaching Montfermeil. The grandfather put Jean Valjean out of the question.

Javert, however, dropped a few questions, like plummets, into Thenardier's story. Who was this grandfather, and what was his name? Thenardier answered with simplicity: "He is a rich farmer, I saw his passport. I believe his name is M. Guillaume Lambert."

Lambert is a very respectable re-assuring name. Javert returned to Paris.

"Jean Valjean is really dead," said he, "and I am a fool."

He had begun to forget all this story, when, in the month of March, 1824, he heard an odd person spoken of who lived in the parish of St. Mélard, and who was called "the beggar who gave alms." This person was, it was said, a man living on his income, whose name nobody knew exactly, and who lived alone with a little girl eight years old, who knew nothing of herself except that she came from Montfermeil Montfermeil! This name constantly recurring, excited Javert's attention anew. An old begging police spy, formerly a beadle, to whom this person had extended his charity added some other details. "This man was very unsociable, never going out except at night, speaking to nobody, except to the poor sometimes, and allowing nobody to get acquainted with him. He wore a horrible old yellow coat which was worth millions, being lined all over with bank bills." This decidedly piqued Javert's curiosity. That he might get a near view of this fantastic rich man without frightening him away, he borrowed one day of the beadle his old flock, and the place where the old spy squatted every night droning out his orisons, and playing the spy as he prayed.

"The suspicious individual" did indeed come to Javert thus disguised, and gave him alms; at that moment Javert raised his head, and the shock which Jean Valjean received, thinking that he recognized Javert, Javert received, thinking that he recognized Jean Valjean.

However, the obscurity might have deceived him, the death of Jean Valjean was officially certified; Javert had still serious doubts; and in case of doubt, Javert, scrupulous as he was, never seized any man by the collar.

He followed the old man to Gorbeau House, and set "the old woman" talking; which was not at all difficult. The old woman confirmed the story of the coat lined with millions, and related to him the episode of the thousand-franc note. She had seen it! she had touched it! Javert hired a room. That very night he installed himself in it. He listened at the door of the mysterious lodger, hoping to hear the sound of his voice, but Jean Valjean perceived his candle through the key-hole and balked the spy by keeping silence.

The next day Jean Valjean decamped. But the noise of the five-franc piece which he dropped was noticed by the old woman, who hearing money moving, suspected that he was going to move, and hastened to forewarn Javert. At night, when Jean Valjean went out, Javert was waiting for him behind the trees of the Boulevard with two men.

Javert had called for assistance from the Prefecture, but he had not given the name of the person he hoped to seize. That was his secret; and he kept it for three reasons: first, because the least indiscretion might give the alarm to Jean Valjean; next, because the arrest of an old escaped convict who was reputed dead, a criminal whom the records of justice had already classed for ever *among malefactors of the most dangerous kind*, would be a magnificent success which the old members of the Parisian police certainly would never leave to a new comer like Javert, and he feared they would take his galley-slave away from him; finally, because Javert, being an artist, had a liking for surprises. He hated these boasted successes which are deflowered by talk-

ing of them long in advance. He liked to elaborate his masterpieces in the shade, and then to unveil them suddenly afterwards.

Javert had followed Jean Valjean from tree to tree, then from street-corner to street-corner, and had not lost sight of him a single instant; even in the moments when Jean Valjean felt himself most secure, the eye of Javert was upon him. Why did not Javert arrest Jean Valjean? Because he was still in doubt.

It must be remembered that at that time the police was not exactly at its ease; it was cramped by a free press. Some arbitrary arrests, denounced by the newspapers, had been re-echoed even in the Chambers, and rendered the Prefecture timid. To attack individual liberty was a serious thing. The officers were afraid of making mistakes; the Prefect held them responsible; an error was the loss of their place. Imagine the effect which this brief paragraph, repeated in twenty papers, would have produced in Paris: "Yesterday, an old white-haired grand-sire, a respectable person living on his income, who was taking a walk with his grand-daughter, eight years old, was arrested and taken to the Station of the Prefecture as an escaped convict!"

Let us say, in addition, that Javert had his own personal scruples; the injunctions of his conscience were added to the injunctions of the Prefect. He was really in doubt.

Jean Valjean turned his back, and walked away in the darkness.

Sadness, trouble, anxiety, weight of cares, this new sorrow of being obliged to fly by night, and to seek a chance asylum in Paris for Cosette and himself, the necessity of adapting his pace to the pace of a child, all this, without his knowing it even, had changed Jean Valjean's gait, and impressed upon his carriage such an appearance of old age that the police itself, incarnated in Javert, could be deceived. The impossibility of approaching too near, his dress of an old Preceptor of the Emigration, the declaration of Thenardier, who made him a grand-father; finally, the belief in his death at the galleys, added yet more to the uncertainty which was increasing in Javert's mind.

For a moment he had an idea of asking him abruptly for his papers. But if the man were not Jean Valjean, and if the man were not a good old honest man of means, he was probably some sharper profoundly and skilfully adept in the obscure web of Parisian Crime, some dangerous chief of bandits, giving alms to conceal his other talents, an old trick. He had comrades, accomplices, retreats on all hands, in which he could take refuge without doubt. All these windings which he was making in the streets seemed to indicate that he was not a simple honest man. To arrest him too soon would be to "kill the goose that laid the golden egg." What inconvenience was there in waiting? Javert was very sure that he would not escape.

He walked on, therefore, in some perplexity, questioning himself continually in regard to this mysterious personage.

It was not until quite late, in the Rue de Pontoise, that, thanks to the bright light which streamed from a bar-room, he decidedly recognized Jean Valjean.

There are in this world two beings who can be deeply thrilled: the mother, who finds her child, and the tiger, who finds his prey. Javert felt this profound thrill.



As soon as he had positively recognized Jean Valjean, the formidable convict, he perceived that there were only three of them, and sent to the commissary of police, of the Rue de Pontoise, for additional aid. Before grasping a thorny stick men put on gloves.

This delay and stopping at the Rollin square to arrange with his men, made him lose the scent. However, he had very soon guessed that Jean Valjean's first wish would be to put the river between his pursuers and himself. He bowed his head, and reflected, like a hound who puts his nose to the ground to be sure of the way. Javert, with his straightforward power of instinct, went directly to the bridge of Austerlitz. A word to the toll-keeper set him right: "Have you seen a man with a little girl?" "I made him pay two sous," answered the toll-man. Javert reached the bridge in time to see Jean Valjean on the other side of the river, leading Cosette across the space lighted by the moon. He saw him enter the Rue de Chemin Vert Saint Antoine, he thought of the Cul-de-sac Genrot placed there like a trap, and of the only outlet from the Rue Droit-Mur into the Petite Rue Picpus. He put out beaters, as hunters say; he sent one of his men hastily by a detour to guard that outlet. A patrol passing, on its return to the station at the Arsenal, he put it in requisition, and took it along with him. In such games soldiers are trumps. Moreover, it is a maxim that, to take the boar requires the science of the hunter, and the strength of the dogs. These combinations being effected, feeling that Jean Valjean was caught between the Cul-de-sac Genrot on the right, his officer on the left, and himself, Javert, in the rear, he took a pinch of snuff.

Then he began to play. He enjoyed a ravishing and infernal moment; he let his man go before him, knowing that he had him, but desiring to put off as long as possible the moment of arresting him, delighting to feel that he was caught, and to see him free, fondly gazing upon him with the rapture of the spider which lets the fly buzz, or the cat which lets the mouse run. The paw and the talon find a monstrous pleasure in the quivering of the animal imprisoned in their grasp. What delight is there in this suffocation!

Javert was rejoicing. The links of his chain were solidly welded. He was sure of success; he had now only to close his hand.

Accompanied as he was, the very idea of resistance was impossible, however energetic, however vigorous, and however desperate Jean Valjean might be.

Javert advanced slowly, sounding and ransacking on his way all the recesses of the street as he would the pockets of a thief.

When he reached the centre of the web, the fly was no longer there.

Imagine his exasperation.

He questioned his sentinel at the corner of the Rue Droit-Mur and Rue Picpus; this officer, who had remained motionless at his post, had not seen the man pass.

It happens sometimes that a stag breaks with the head covered, that is to say, escapes, although the hound is upon him; then the oldest hunters know not what to say. On the occasion of a mishap of this sort, one of them exclaimed: *It is not a stag, it is a sorcerer.*

Javert would fain have uttered the same cry.

His disappointment had a moment of despair and fury.

It is certain that Napoleon blundered in the campaign in Russia, that Alexander blundered in the war in India, that Cæsar blundered in the African war, that Cyrus blundered in the war in Syethia, and that Javert blundered in this campaign against Jean Valjean. He did wrong perhaps in hesitating to recognize the old galley slave. The first glance should have been enough for him. He did wrong in not arresting him without ceremony in the old building. He did wrong in not arresting him when he positively recognized him in the Rue de Pontoise. He did wrong to hold a council with his aids, in full moonlight, in the Rollin square. Certainly advice is useful, and it is well to know and to question those of the dogs which are worthy of credit; but the hunter cannot take too many precautions when he is chasing restless animals, like the wolf and the convict. Javert, by too much forethought in setting his bloodhounds on the track, alarmed his prey by giving him wind of the pursuit, and allowed him the start. He did wrong, above all, when he had regained the scent at the Bridge of Austerlitz, to play the formidable and puerile game of holding such a man at the end of a thread. He thought himself stronger than he was, and believed he could play mouse with a lion. At the same time, he esteemed himself too weak when he deemed it necessary to obtain a reinforcement. Fatal precaution, loss of precious time. Javert made all these blunders, and yet he was none the less one of the wisest and most correct detectives that ever existed. He was, in the full force of the term, what in vengery is called a *gentle dog*. But who is perfect?

Great strategists have their eclipses

Great blunders are often made, like large ropes, of a multitude of fibres. Take the cable thread by thread, take separately all the little determining motives, you break them one after another, and you say: that is all! Wind them and twist them together, they become an enormity; Attila hesitating between Marcian in the East and Valentinian in the West; Hannibal delaying at Capua; Danton falling to sleep at Arcis sur Aube.

However this may be, even at the moment when he perceived that Jean Valjean had escaped him, Javert did not lose his presence of mind. Sure that the convict who had broken his ban could not be far away, he set watches, arranged traps and ambushes, and beat the quarter the night through. The first thing that he saw was the displacement of the lamp, the rope of which was cut. Precious indication, which led him astray, however, by directing all his researches towards the Cul-de-sac Genrot. There are in that cul-de-sac some rather low walls, which face upon gardens the limits of which extend to some very large uncultivated grounds. Jean Valjean evidently must have fled that way. The fact is that, if he had penetrated into the Cul-de-sac Genrot a little further, he would have done so, and would have been lost. Javert explored these gardens and these grounds, as if he were searching for a needle.

At daybreak, he left two intelligent men on the watch, and returned to the Prefecture of Police, crestfallen as a spy who has been caught by a thief.

## Book Sixth.

## PETIT PICPUS.

## I.

## PETITE RUE PICPUS, NO. 62.

Nothing resembled more closely, half a century ago, the commonest *porte-cochère* of the time than the *porte-cochère* of No. 62 Petite Rue Picpus. This door was usually half open in the most attractive manner, disclosing two things which have nothing very funereal about them—a court surrounded with walls bedecked with vines, and the face of a lounging porter. Above the rear wall large trees could be seen. When a beam of sunshine enlivened the court, when a glass of wine enlivened the porter, it was difficult to pass by No. 62 Petite Rue Picpus, without carrying away a pleasant idea. It was, however, a gloomy place of which you had had a glimpse.

The door smiled; the house prayed and wept.

If you succeeded, which was not easy, in passing the porter—which for almost everybody was even impossible, for there was an *open sesame* which you must know—if, having passed the porter, you entered on the right a little vestibule which led to a stairway shut in between two walls, and so narrow that but one person could pass at a time; if you did not allow yourself to be frightened by the yellow wall paper with the chocolate surbase that extended along the stairs, if you ventured to go up, you passed by a first broad stair, then a second, and reached the second in a hall where the yellow hue and the chocolate plinth followed you with a peaceful persistency. Staircase and hall were lighted by two handsome windows. The hall made a sudden turn and became dark. If you doubled that cape, you came, in a few steps, to a door, all the more mysterious that it was not quite closed. You pushed it open, and found yourself in a little room about six feet square, the floor tiled, scoured, neat and cold, and the walls hung with fifteen-cent paper, nankeen colored paper with green flowers. A dull, white light came from a large window with small panes, which was at the left, and which took up the whole width of the room. You looked out, you saw no one; you listened, you heard no step and no human sound. The wall was bare; the room had no furniture, not even a chair.

You looked again, and you saw in the wall opposite the door a quadrangular opening about a foot square, covered with a grate of iron bars crossing one another, black, knotted, solid, which formed squares, I had almost said meshes, less than an inch across. The little green flowers on the nankeen paper came calmly and in order to these iron bars, without being frightened or scattered by the dismal contact. In case any living being had been so marvellously slender as to attempt to get in or out by the square hole, this grate would have prevented it. It did not let the body pass, but it did let the eyes pass, that is to say, the mind. This seemed to have been cared for, for it had been doubled by a sheet

of tin inserted in the wall a little behind it, and pierced with a thousand holes more microscopic than those of a skimmer. At the bottom of this plate there was an opening cut exactly like the mouth of a letter-box. A piece of broad tape attached to a bell hung at the right of the grated opening.

If you pulled this tape, a bell tinkled and a voice was heard, very near you, which startled you.

"Who is there?" asked the voice.

It was a woman's voice, a gentle voice, so gentle that it was mournful.

Here again there was a magic word which you must know. If you did not know it, the voice was heard no more, and the wall again became silent as if the wild obscurity of the sepulchre had been on the other side.

If you knew the word, the voice added: "Enter at the right."

You then noticed at your right, opposite the window, a glazed door surmounted by a glazed sash and painted grey. You lifted the latch, you passed through the door, and you felt exactly the same impression as when you enter a grated box at the theatre before the grate is lowered and the lights are lit. You were in fact in a sort of theatre box, hardly made visible by the dim light of the glass door, narrow, furnished with two old chairs and a piece of tattered straw matting—a genuine box with its front to lean upon, upon which was a tablet of black wood. This box was grated, but it was not a grate of gilded wood as at the Opera; it was a monstrous trellis of iron bars frightfully tangled together, and bolted to the wall by enormous bolts which resembled clenched fists.

After a few minutes, when your eyes began to get accustomed to this cavernous light, you tried to look through the grate, but could not see more than six inches beyond. There you saw a barrier of black shutters, secured and strengthened by wooden cross-bars painted ginger-bread color. These shutters were jointed, divided into long, slender strips, and covered the whole length of the grate. They were always closed.

In a few moments, you heard a voice calling to you from behind these shutters and saying: "I am here. What do you want of me?"

It was a loved voice, perhaps sometimes an adored one. You saw nobody. You hardly heard a breath. It seemed as if it were a ghostly voice speaking to you across the portal of the tomb.

If you appeared under certain necessary conditions, very rare, the narrow strip of one of these shutters opened in front of you, and the ghostly voice became an apparition. Behind the grate, behind the shutter, you perceived, as well as the grate permitted, a head, of which you saw only the mouth and chin; the rest was covered with a black veil. You caught a glimpse of a black gimp and an ill-defined form covered with a black shroud. This head spoke to you, but did not look at you and never smiled at you.

The light which came from behind you was disposed in such wise that you saw her in the light, and she saw you in the shade. This light was symbolic.

Meantime your eyes gazed eagerly, through this aperture thus opened, into this place closed against all observation.

A deep obscurity enveloped this form thus clad in mourning. Your eyes strained into this obscurity, and sought to distinguish what was about the apparition. In a little while you perceived that you saw nothing. What you saw was night, void, darkness, a wintry mist mingled with a sepulchral vapor, a sort of terrifying quiet, a silence from which you distinguished nothing, not even sighs—a shade in which you discerned nothing, not even phantoms.

What you saw was the interior of a cloister.

It was the interior of that stern and gloomy house that was called the convent of the Bernardines of the Perpetual Adoration. This box where you were was the parlor. This voice, the first that spoke to you, was the voice of the portress, who was always seated, motionless and silent, on the other side of the wall, near the square aperture, defended by the iron grate and the plate with the thousand holes, as by a double visor.

The obscurity in which the grated box was sunk arose from this, that the locutory, which had a window on the side towards the outside world, had none on the convent side. Profane eyes must see nothing of this sacred place.

There was something, however, beyond this shade, there was a light; there was a life within this death. Although this convent was more inaccessible than any other, we shall endeavor to penetrate it, and to take the reader with us, and to relate, as fully as we may, something which story-tellers have never seen, and consequently have never related.

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## II.

### THE OBEDIENCE OF MARTIN VERGA.

This convent, which in 1824 had existed for long years in the *Petite Rue Picpus*, was a community of Bernardines of the Obedience of *Martin Verga*.

These Bernardines, consequently, were attached, not to *Clairvaux*, like other Bernardines, but to *Cîteaux*, like the Benedictines. In other words, they were subjects, not of *Saint Bernard*, but of *Saint Benedict*.

Whoever is at all familiar with old folios, knows that *Martin Verga* founded in 1425 a congregation of Bernardine-Benedictines, having their chief convent at *Salamanca* and an affiliation at *Alealà*.

This congregation had put out branches in all the Catholic countries of Europe.

These grafts of one order upon another are not unusual in the Latin church. To speak only of the single order of *St. Benedict*, which is here in question—to this order are attached, without counting the Obedience of *Martin Verga*, four congregations; two in Italy, *Monte Cassino* and *Santa Giustina* of *Padua*; two in France, *Cluny* and *Saint Maur*; and nine orders, *Vallombrosa*, *Grammont*, the *Celestines*, the *Camaldules*, the *Carthusians*, the *Humiliati*, the *Olivetans*, the *Sylvestrines*, and finally *Cîteaux*; for *Cîteaux* itself, the trunk of other orders, is only an offshoot from *Saint Benedict*. *Cîteaux* dates from *St. Robert*, *Abbé* of *Molesme*, in the diocese of *Langres* in 1008. Now it was in

529 that the devil, who had retired to the desert of Subiaco, (he was old; had he become a hermit?) was driven from the ancient temple of Apollo, where he was living with St. Benedict, then seventeen years old.

Next to the rules of the Carmelites, who go bare-footed, wear a withé about their throat, and never sit down, the most severe rules are those of the Bernardine-Benedictines of Martin Verga. They are clothed with a black guimp, which, according to the express command of Saint Benedict, comes up to the chin. A serge dress with wide sleeves, a large wooden veil, the guimp which rises to the chin, cut square across the breast, and the fillet which comes down to the eyes, constitute their dress. It is all black, except the fillet, which is white. The novices wear the same dress, all in white. The professed nuns have in addition a rosary by their side.

The Bernardine-Benedictines of Martin Verga perform the devotion of the Perpetual Adoration, as do the Benedictines called Ladies of the Holy Sacrament, who, at the commencement of this century, had at Paris two houses, one at the Temple, the other in the Rue Neuve Sainte Geneviève. In other respects, the Bernardine-Benedictines of the Petit Picpus, of whom we are speaking, were an entirely separate order from the Ladies of the Holy Sacrament, whose cloisters were in the Rue Neuve Sainte Geneviève and at the Temple. There were many differences in their rules, there were some in their costume. The Bernardine-Benedictines of the Petit Picpus wore a black guimp, and the Benedictines of the Holy Sacrament and of the Rue Neuve Sainte Geneviève wore a white one, and had moreover upon their breast a crucifix about three inches long in silver or copper gilt. The nuns of the Petit Picpus did not wear this crucifix. The devotion of the Perpetual Adoration, common to the house of the Petit Picpus and to the house of the Temple, left the two orders perfectly distinct. There is a similarity only in this respect between the Ladies of the Holy Sacrament and the Bernardines of Martin Verga, even as there is a similitude, in the study and the glorification of all the mysteries relative to the infancy, the life and the death of Jesus Christ, and to the Virgin, between two orders widely separated and occasionally inimical: the Oratory of Italy, established at Florence by Philip di Neri, and the Oratory of France, established at Paris by Pierre de Bérulle. The Oratory of Paris claims the precedence, Philip di Neri being only a saint, and Bérulle being a cardinal.

Let us return to the severe Spanish rules of Martin Verga.

The Bernardine-Benedictines of this Obedience abstain from meat all the year round, fast during Lent and many other days peculiar to them, rise out of their first sleep at one o'clock in the morning to read their breviary and chant matins until three, sleep in coarse woollen sheets at all seasons and upon straw, use no baths, never light any fire, scourge themselves every Friday, observe the rule of silence, speak to one another only at recreations, which are very short, and wear haircloth chemises for six months, from the fourteenth of September, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and Easter. These six months are a moderation, the rules say all the year; but this haircloth chemise, insupportable in the heat of summer, produced fevers and nervous spasms. It became necessary to limit its use. Even with this mitigation, after the fourteenth of

September, when the nuns put on this chemise, they have three or four days of fever. Obedience, poverty, chastity, continuance in cloister; such are their vows, rendered much more difficult of fulfillment by the rules.

The prioress is elected for three years by the mothers, who are called *vocal mothers*, because they have a voice in the chapter. A prioress can be re-elected but twice, which fixes the longest possible reign of a prioress at nine years.

They never see the officiating priest, who is always concealed from them by a woollen curtain nine feet high. During sermon, when the preacher is in the chapel, they drop their veil over their face; they must always speak low, walk with their eyes on the ground, and their head bowed down. But one man can enter the convent, the archbishop of the diocese.

There is indeed one other, the gardener; but he is always an old man, and in order that he may be perpetually alone in the garden, and that the nuns may be warned to avoid him, a bell is attached to his knee.

They are subject to the prioress, with an absolute and passive submission. It is canonical subjection in all its abnegation. As at the voice of Christ, *ut voci Christi*, at a nod, at the first signal, *ad nutum ad primum signum*, promptly, with pleasure, with perseverance, with a certain blind obedience, *promptè, hilariter, perseveranter, et cæcâ quâdam obedientiâ*, like the file in the workman's hands, *quasi limam in manibus fabri*, forbidden to read or write without express permission, *legere vel scribere non adliscerit sine expressâ superioris licentiâ*.

Each one of them in turn performed what they call *the reparation*. The Reparation is prayer for all sins, for all faults, for all disorders, for all violations, for all iniquities, for all the crimes which are committed upon the earth. During twelve consecutive hours, from four o'clock in the afternoon till four o'clock in the morning, or from four o'clock in the morning till four o'clock in the afternoon, the sister who performs *the reparation* remains on her knees upon the stone before the holy sacrament, her hands clasped and a rope around her neck. When fatigue becomes insupportable, she prostrates herself, her face against the marble, and her arms crossed; this is all her relief. In this attitude she prays for all the guilty in the universe. This is grand even to sublimity.

As this act is performed before a post on the top of which a taper is burning, they say indiscriminately, *to perform the reparation* or *to be at the post*. The nuns even prefer, from humility, this latter expression, which involves an idea of punishment and of abasement.

*The performance of the reparation* is a process in which the whole soul is absorbed. The sister at the post would not turn were a thunderbolt to fall behind her.

Moreover, there is always a nun on her knees before the holy sacrament. They remain for an hour. They are relieved like soldiers standing sentry. That is the Perpetual Adoration.

The prioresses and the mothers almost always have names of peculiar solemnity, recalling not the saints and the martyrs, but moments in the life of Christ, like Mother Nativity, Mother Conception, Mother Presentation, Mother Passion. The names of saints, however, are not prohibited.

When you see them, you see only their mouth.

They all have yellow teeth. Never did a tooth brush enter the convent. To brush the teeth is the top round of a ladder, the bottom round of which is to lose the soul.

They never say *my* or *mine*. They have nothing of their own, and must cherish nothing. They say *our* of everything; thus: our veil, our chapel; if they speak of their chemise, they say *our chemise*. Sometimes they become attached to some little object, to a prayer-book, a relic or a sacred medal. As soon as they perceive that they are beginning to cherish this object, they must give it up. They remember the reply of Saint Theresa, to whom a great lady, at the moment of entering her order, said: permit me, mother, to send for a holy Bible, which I cherish very much. "*Ah! you cherish something! In that case do not enter our house.*"

None are allowed to shut themselves up, and to have a *home*, a *room*. They live in open cells. When they meet one another, one says: *Praise and adoration to the most holy sacrament of the altar!* The other responds: *Forever*. The same ceremony when one knocks at another's door. Hardly is the door touched when a gentle voice is heard from the other side hastily saying, *forever!* Like all rituals, this becomes mechanical from habit: and one sometimes says *forever* before the other has had time to say what indeed is rather lengthy, *Praise and adoration to the most holy sacrament of the altar!*

Among the Visitandines, the one who comes in says: *Ave Maria*, and the one to whose cell she comes, says: *Gratia plena*. This is their good day, which is, in fact, "*graceful.*"

At each hour of the day three supplementary strokes sound from the bell of the convent church. At this signal, prioress, mothers; professed nuns, sister servants, novices, postulants, all break off from what they are saying, doing or thinking, and say at once, if it is five o'clock, for example: *At five o'clock and at all times, praise and adoration to the most holy sacrament of the altar!* If it is eight o'clock: *At eight o'clock and at all times, etc.*, and so on, according to whatever hour it may be.

This custom, which is intended to interrupt the thoughts, and to lead them back constantly to God, exists in many communities; the formula only varies. Thus, at the Infant Jesus, they say: *At the present hour and at all hours may the love of Jesus enkindle my heart!*

The Benedictine-Bernardines of Martin Verga, cloistered fifty years ago in the Petit Picpus, chant the offices in a grave psalmody, pure plainchant, and always in a loud voice for the whole duration of the office. Wherever there is an asterisk in the missal, they make a pause and say in a low tone: *Jesus—Mary—Joseph*. For the office for the dead, they take so low a pitch, that it is difficult for female voices to reach it. The effect is thrilling and tragical.

Those of the Petit Picpus had had a vault made under their high altar for the burial of their community. The *gouvernement*, as they call it, does not permit corpses to be deposited in this vault. They therefore were taken from the convent when they died. This was an affliction to them, and horrified them as if it were a violation.

They had obtained—small consolation—the privilege of being buried



at a special hour and in a special place in the old Vaugirard cemetery, which was located in ground formerly belonging to the community:

On Thursday these nuns heard high mass, vespers, and all the offices the same as on Sunday. They moreover scrupulously observed all the little feast days unknown to persons living in the world, of which the church was formerly lavish in France, and is still lavish in Spain and Italy. Their attendance at chapel is interminable. As to the number and duration of their prayers we cannot give a better idea than by quoting the frank words of one of themselves: *The prayers of the postulants are frightful, the prayers of the novices worse, and the prayers of the professed nuns still worse.*

Once a week the chapter assembles; the prioress presides, the mothers attend. Each sister comes in her turn, kneels upon the stone, and confesses aloud, before all, the faults and sins which she has committed during the week. The mothers consult together after each confession, and announce the penalty aloud.

In addition to open confession, for which they reserve all serious faults, they have for venial faults what they call the *coulpe*. To perform the *coulpe* is to prostrate yourself on your face during the office, before the prioress, until she, who is never spoken of except as *our mother*, indicates to the sufferer, by a gentle rap upon the side of her stall, that she may rise. The *coulpe* is performed for very petty things; a glass broken, a veil torn, an involuntary delay of a few seconds at an office, a false note in church, etc.—these are enough for the *coulpe*. The *coulpe* is entirely spontaneous; it is the *culpable* herself (this word is here etymologically in its place) who judges herself and who inflicts it upon herself. On feast days and Sundays there are four chorister mothers who sing the offices before a large desk with four music stands. One day a mother chorister intoned a psalm which commenced by *Eccc*, and, instead of *Eccc*, she pronounced in a loud voice these three notes: *ut, si, sol*; for this absence of mind she underwent a *coulpe* which lasted through the whole office. What rendered the fault peculiarly enormous was, that the chapter laughed.

When a nun is called to the locutory, be it even the prioress, she drops her veil, it will be remembered, in such a way as to show nothing but her mouth.

The prioress alone can communicate with strangers. The others can see only their immediate family, and that very rarely. If by chance persons from without present themselves to see a nun whom they have known or loved in the world, a formal negotiation is necessary. If it be a woman, permission may be sometimes accorded; the nun comes and is spoken to through the shutters, which are never opened except for a mother or sister. It is unnecessary to say that permission is always refused to men.

Such are the rules of St. Benedict, rendered more severe by Martin Verga.

These nuns are not joyous, rosy, and cheerful, as are often the daughters of other orders. They are pale and serious. Between 1825 and 1830 three became insane.

## III.

## SEVERITIES.

A postulancy of at least two years is required, often four; a novitiate of four years. It is rare that the final vows can be pronounced under twenty-three or twenty-four years. The Bernardine-Benedictines of Martin Verga admit no widows into their order.

They subject themselves in their cells to many unknown self-mortifications of which they must never speak.

The day on which a novice makes her profession she is dressed in her finest attire, with her head decked with white roses, and her hair glossy and curled; then she prostrates herself; a great black veil is spread over her, and the office for the dead is chanted. The nuns then divide into two files, one file passes near her, saying in plaintive accents: *Our sister is dead*, and the other file responds in ringing tones: *living in Jesus Christ!*

At the period to which this history relates, a boarding school was attached to the convent. A school of noble young girls, for the most part rich, among whom were noticeable Mesdemoiselles De Sainte Aulaine and De Bélissen, and an English girl bearing the illustrious Catholic name of Talbot. These young girls, reared by these nuns between four walls, grew up in horror of the world and of the age. One of them said to us one day: *to see the pavement of the street made me shiver from head to foot.* They were dressed in blue with a white cap, and a Holy Spirit, in silver or copper gilt, upon their breast. On certain grand feast days, particularly on St. Martha's day, they were allowed, as a high favor and a supreme pleasure, to dress as nuns and perform the offices and the ritual of St. Benedict for a whole day. At first the professed nuns lent them their black garments. That appeared profane and the prioress forbade it. This loan was permitted only to novices. It is remarkable that these representations, undoubtedly tolerated and encouraged in the convent by a secret spirit of proselytism, and to give these children some foretaste of the holy dress, were a real pleasure and a genuine recreation for the scholars. They simply amused themselves. *It was new; it was a change.* Candid reasons of childhood, which do not succeed, however, in making us mundane people, comprehend the felicity of holding a holy sprinkler in the hand, and remaining standing entire hours singing in quartette before a desk.

The pupils, austerities excepted, conformed to all the ritual of the convent. They are young women, who, returned to the world, and after several years of marriage, have not yet succeeded in breaking off the habit of saying hastily, whenever there is a knock at the door: *Forever!* Like the nuns, the boarders saw their relatives only in the locutory. Even their mothers were not permitted to embrace them. Strictness upon this point was carried to the following extent: One day a young girl was visited by her mother, accompanied by a little sister three years old. The young girl wept, for she wished very much to kiss her sister. Impossible. She begged that the child should at least be permitted to pass her little hand through the bars that she might kiss it. This was refused almost with indignation.

## IV.

## GAIETIES.

These young girls have none the less filled this solemn house with charming reminiscences.

At certain hours childhood sparkled in this cloister. The hour of recreation struck. A door turned upon its hinges. The birds said: good! here are the children! An irruption of youth inundated this garden, which was cut by walks in the form of a cross, like a shroud. Radiant faces, white foreheads, frank eyes full of cheerful light, auroras of all sorts scattered through this darkness. After the chants, the bell-ringing, the knells, and the offices, all at once this hum of little girls burst forth sweeter than the hum of bees. The hive of joy opened and each one brought her honey. They played, they called to one another, they formed groups, they ran; pretty little white teeth chattered in the corners; veils from a distance watched over the laughter, shadows spying the sunshine; but what matter! They sparkled and they laughed. These four dismal walls had their moment of bewilderment. They too shared, dimly lighted up by the reflection of so much joy, in this sweet and swarming whirl. It was like a shower of roses upon this mourning. The young girls frolicked under the eyes of the nuns; the gaze of sinlessness does not disturb innocence. Thanks to these children, among so many hours of austerity, there was one hour of artlessness. The little girls skipped, the larger ones danced. In this cloister, play was mingled with heaven. Nothing was so transporting and superb, as all these fresh, blooming souls. Homer might have laughed there with Perrault, and there were, in this dark garden, enough of youth, health, murmurs, cries, uproar, pleasure and happiness, to smooth the wrinkles of all grandamès, those of the epic as well as the tale, those of the throne as well as the hut, from Hecuba to Mother Goose.

In this house, more than anywhere else, perhaps have been heard these *children's sayings*, which have so much grace, and which make one laugh with a laugh full of thought. It was within these four forbidding walls that a child of five years exclaimed one day: *Mother, a great girl has just told me that I have only nine years and ten months more to stay here. How glad I am!*"

Here, also, that this memorable dialogue occurred:

A MOTHER.—“What are you crying for, my child?”

THE CHILD, (six years old), sobbing—“I told Alice I knew my French history. She says I don't know it, and I do know it.”

ALICE, larger (nine years)—“No, she doesn't know it.”

THE MOTHER.—“How is that, my child?”

ALICE.—“She told me to open the book anywhere, and ask her any question there was in the book, and she could answer it.”

“Well?”

“She didn't answer it.”

“Let us see. What did you ask her?”

“I opened the book anywhere, just as she said, and I asked her the first question I found.”

“And what was the question?”

"It was: *What happened next?*" . . .

Here this profound observation was made about a rather dainty parrot, which belonged to a lady boarder:

"*Isn't she grateful? she picks off the top of her tart like a lady.*"

From one of the tiles of the cloister, the following confession was picked up, written beforehand, so as not, to be forgotten, by a little sinner seven years old:

"Father, I accuse myself of having been avaricious."

"Father, I accuse myself of having been adulterous."

"Father, I accuse myself of having raised my eyes towards the gentlemen."

There, also, these sweet and heart-rending words were said by a little fountling that the convent was rearing through charity. She heard the others talking about their mothers, and she murmured in her little place.

"*For my part, my mother was not there when I was born.*"

There was a fat portress who was always to be seen hurrying about the corridors with her bunch of keys, and whose name was Sister Agatha. The *great big girls*—over ten—called her *Agathoclés*.

The refectory, a large, oblong room, which received light only from a cloister window with a fluted arch opening on a level with the garden, was dark and damp, and, as the children said, full of beasts. All the surrounding places furnished it their contingents of insects. Each of its four corners had received, in the language of the pupils, a peculiar and expressive name. There was the Spiders' corner, the Caterpillars' corner, the Woodlice's corner, and the Crickets' corner. The Crickets' corner was near the kitchen, and was highly esteemed. It was not so cold as the others. From the refectory the names had passed to the school-room, and served to distinguish there, as at the old Mazarin College, four nations. Each pupil belonged to one of these four nations according to the corner of the refectory in which she sat at meals. One day, the Archbishop, making his pastoral visit, saw enter the class which he was passing, a pretty little blushing girl with beautiful fair hair; and he asked another scholar, a charming, fresh-checked brunette, who was near him:

"What is this little girl?"

"She is a spider, Monseigneur."

"Pshaw!—and this other one?"

"She is a cricket."

"And that one?"

"She is a caterpillar."

"Indeed! And what are you?"

"I am a wood-louse, Monseigneur."

Every house of this kind has its peculiarities. At the commencement of this century, Écouen was one of those serene and graceful places where, in a shade which was almost august, the childhood of young girls was passed. At Écouen, by way of rank in the procession of the Holy Sacrament, they made a distinction between the virgins and the florists. There were also "the canopies" and the "censers," the former carrying the cords of the canopy, the latter swinging censers before the Holy Sacrament. The flowers returned of right to the flo-

rists. Four "virgins" walked at the head of the procession. On the morning of the great day, it was not uncommon to hear the question in the dormitory:

"Who is a virgin?"

Madame Campan relates this saying of a "little girl" seven years old to a "great girl" of sixteen, who took the head of the procession, while she, the little one, remained in the rear. You're a virgin, you are; but I am not."

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V.

DISTRACTIONS.

Above the door of the refectory was written in a large black letters a prayer, which was called *the white Patroster*, and which possessed the virtue of leading people straight into Paradise.

In 1826, this characteristic orison had disappeared from the wall under a triple layer of paper. It is fading away to this hour in the memory of some young girls of that day, old ladies now.

A large crucifix hanging upon the wall completed the decoration of this refectory, the only door of which, as we believe we have said, opened upon the garden. Two narrow tables, at the sides of each of which were two wooden benches, extended along the refectory in parallel lines from one end to the other. The walls were white, and the tables black; these two mourning colors are the only variety in convents. The meals were coarse, and the diet of even the children strict. A single plate, meat and vegetables together, or salt fish, constituted the fare. This brief bill of fare was, however, an exception, reserved for the scholars alone. The children ate in silence, under the watchful eyes of the mother for the week, who, from time to time, if a fly ventured to hum or to buzz contrary to rule, noisily opened and shut a wooden book. This silence was seasoned with the Lives of the Saints, read in a loud voice from a little reading desk placed at the foot of a crucifix. The reader was a large pupil, selected for the week. There were placed at intervals along the bare table, glazed earthen bowls, in which each pupil washed her cup and dish herself, and sometimes threw refuse bits, tough meat or tainted fish; this was punished. These bowls were called *water basins*.

A child who broke the silence made a "cross with her tongue." Where? On the floor. She licked the tiles. (Dust, that end of all joy, was made to chastise these poor little rose-buds, when guilty of prattling.

There was a book in the convent, which is the *only copy* ever printed, and which it is forbidden to read. It is the rules of St. Benedict; arena into which no profane eye must penetrate. *Nemo regulas, seu constitutiones nostras, externis communicabit*.

The scholars succeeded one day in purloining this book, and began to read it eagerly, a reading often interrupted by fears of being caught, which made them close the volume very suddenly. But from this great risk they derived small pleasure. A few unintelligible pages about the sins of young boys, were what they thought "most interesting."

They played in one walk of the garden, along which were a few puny fruit trees. In spite of the close watch and the severity of the punishments, when the wind had shaken the trees, they sometimes succeeded in furtively picking up a green apple, a half rotten apricot, or a worm-eaten pear. This was one of their most vivid pleasures.

At another time, also on the occasion of a visit of the Archbishop to the convent, one of the young girls, Mademoiselle Boucard, a descendant of the Montmorencies, wagered that she would ask for a holiday, a dreadful thing in a community so austere. The wager was accepted, but no one of those who took it believed she would dare do it. When the opportunity came, as the Archbishop was passing before the scholars, Mademoiselle Boucard, to the indescribable dismay of her companions, left the ranks, and said: "Monseigneur, one day's holiday." Mademoiselle Boucard was tall and fresh looking, with the prettiest little rosy face in the world. M. De Quélen smiled and said: "*How now, my dear child, one day's holiday! Three days, if you like. I grant you three days.*" The prioress could do nothing; the Archbishop had spoken. A scandal to the convent, but a joyful thing to the school. Imagine the effect.

This rigid cloister was not, however, so well walled in, that the life of the passions of the outside world, that drama, that romance even, did not penetrate it. To prove this, we will merely state briefly an actual, incontestable fact, which, however, has in itself no relation to our story, not being attached to it even by a thread. We mention this merely to complete the picture of the convent in the mind of the reader.

There was about that time, then, in the convent, a mysterious person, not a nun, who was treated with great respect, and who was called *Madame Albertine*. Nothing was known of her, except that she was insane, and that in the world she was supposed to be dead. There were, it was said, involved in her story, some pecuniary arrangements necessary for a great marriage.

This woman, hardly thirty years old, a beautiful brunette, stared wildly with her large black eyes. Was she looking at anything? It was doubtful. She glided along rather than walked; she never spoke; it was not quite certain that she breathed. Her nostrils were as thin and livid, as if she had heaved her last sigh. To touch her hand was like touching snow. She had a strange spectral grace. Wherever she came, all were cold. One day, a sister seeing her pass, said to another, "She passes for dead." "Perhaps she is," answered the other.

Many stories were told about Madame Albertine. She was the eternal subject of curiosity of the boarders. There was in the chapel a gallery, which was called *l'Œil-de-Bœuf*. In this gallery, which had only a circular opening, an *œil-de-bœuf*, Madame Albertine attended the offices. She was usually alone there, because from this gallery, which was elevated, the preacher or the officiating priest could be seen, which was forbidden to the nuns. One day, the pulpit was occupied by a young priest of high rank, the Duke de Rohan, peer of France, who was an officer of the Mousquetaires Rouges in 1815, when he was Prince de Léon, and who died afterwards in 1830, a cardinal, and Archbishop of Besançon. This was the first time that M. de Rohan had preached in the convent of the Petit Picpus. Madame Albertine ordinarily at-

tended the sermons and the offices with perfect calmness and complete silence. On that day, as soon as she saw M. de Rohan, she half rose, and, in all the stillness of the chapel, exclaimed: "What! Auguste?" The whole community were astounded, and turned their heads; the preacher raised his eyes, but Madame Albertine had fallen back into her motionless silence. A breath from the world without, a glimmer of life, had passed for a moment over that dead and icy form, then all had vanished, and the lunatic had again become a corpse.

These two words, however, set everybody in the convent, who could speak, to chattering. How many things there were in that *What! Auguste?* How many revelations! M. de Rohan's name was, in fact, Auguste. It was clear that Madame Albertine came from the highest society, since she knew M. de Rohan; that she had occupied a high position herself, since she spoke of so great a noble so familiarly; and that she had some connection with him, of relationship perhaps, but beyond all doubt very intimate, since she knew his "pet name."

M. de Rohan was, moreover, without knowing it, the object of the attention of the school-girls. He had just at that time been made, while waiting for the episcopacy, grand vicar of the Archbishop of Paris. He was in the habit of coming rather frequently to chant the offices in the chapel of the nuns of the Petit Picpus. None of the young recluses could see him, on account of the serge curtain, but he had a gentle, penetrating voice, which they came to recognize and distinguish. He had been a mousquetaire; and then he was said to be very pleasing, with beautiful chestnut hair, which he wore in curls, and a large girdle of magnificent moire, while his black cassock was of the most elegant cut in the world. All these girlish imaginations were very much occupied with him.

No sound from without penetrated the convent. There was, however, one year when the sound of a flute was heard. This was an event, and the pupils of the time remember it yet.

It was a flute on which somebody in the neighborhood was playing. This flute always played the same air, an air long since forgotten: *My Zetulba, come reign o'er my soul*, and they heard it two or three times a-day. The young girls passed hours in listening, the mothers were distracted, heads grew giddy, punishments were exhausted. This lasted for several months. The pupils were all more or less in love with the unknown musician. Each one imagined herself Zetulba. The sound of the flute came from the direction of the Rue Droit-Mur; they would have given everything, sacrificed everything, dared everything, to see, were it only for a second, to catch a glimpse of the "young man," who played so deliciously on that flute, and who, without suspecting it, was playing at the same time upon all their hearts. There were some who escaped by a back door, and climbed up to the third story on the Rue Droit-Mur, incurring days of suffering in the endeavor to see him. Impossible. One went so far as to reach her arm above her head through the grate and wave her white handkerchief. Two were bolder still. They found means to climb to the top of a roof, and risking themselves there, they finally succeeded in seeing the "young man." He was an old gentleman of the Emigration, ruined and blind, who was playing upon the flute in his garret, to while away the time.

## VI.

## THE LITTLE CONVENT.

There were in this enclosure of the Petit Picpus three perfectly distinct buildings, the Great Convent, in which the nuns lived, the School building, in which the pupils lodged, and finally what was called the Little Convent. This was a detached building with a garden, in which dwelt in common many old nuns of various orders, remnants of cloisters destroyed by the Revolution; a gathering of all shades, black, grey and white, from all the communities and of all the varieties possible; what might be called, if such a coupling of names were not disrespectful, a sort of motley convent.

From the time of the Empire, all these poor scattered and desolate maidens had been permitted to take shelter under the wings of the Benedictine-Bernardines. The government made them a small allowance; the ladies of the Petit Picpus had received them with eagerness. It was a grotesque mixture. Each followed her own rules. The school-girls were sometimes permitted, as a great recreation, to make them a visit; so that these young memories have retained among others, a reminiscence of holy Mother Bazile, of holy Mother Scholastique, and of Mother Jacob.

One of these refugees found herself again almost in her own home. She was a nun of Sainte Aure, the only one of her order who survived. The ancient convent of the Ladies of Sainte Aure occupied at the beginning of the eighteenth century this same house of the Petit Picpus which afterwards belonged to the Benedictines of Martin Verga. This holy maiden, too poor to wear the magnificent dress of her order, which was a white robe with a scarlet scapular, had piously clothed a little image with it, which she showed complacently, and which at her death she bequeathed to the house. In 1824 there remained of this order only one nun; to-day there remains only a doll.

In addition to these worthy mothers, a few old women of fashion had obtained permission of the prioress, as had Madame Albertine, to retire into the Little Convent. Among the number were Mesdames de Beaufort, d'Hautpoul, and Madame la Marquise Dufresne. Another was known in the Convent only by the horrible noise she made in blowing her nose. The pupils called her Racketini.

About 1820 or 1821, Madame de Genlis, who at that time was editing a little magazine called the *Intrépide*, asked permission to occupy a room at the convent of the Petit Picpus. Mon-sieur the Duke of Orleans recommended her. A buzzing in the hive; the mothers were all in a tremor; Madame de Genlis had written romances; but she declared that she was the first to detest them, and then she had arrived at her phase of fierce devotion. God aiding, and the prince also, she entered.

She went away at the end of six or eight months, giving as a reason that the garden had no shade. The nuns were in raptures. Although very old, she still played on the harp, and that very well.

The church of the convent, which was built in such a manner as to



separate as much as possible the Great Convent from the School, was, of course, common to the School, the Great Convent and the Little Convent. The public even were admitted there by a beggarly entrance opening from the street. But everything was arranged in such a way that none of the inmates of the cloister could see a face from without. Imagine a church, the choir of which should be seized by a gigantic hand, and bent round in such a way as to form, not, as in ordinary churches, a prolongation behind the altar, but a sort of room or obscure cavern at the right of the priest; imagine this room closed by the curtain seven feet high, of which we have already spoken; heap together in the shade of this curtain, on wooden stalls, the nuns of the choir at the left, the pupils at the right, the sister servants and the novices in the rear, and you will have some idea of the nuns of the Petit Picpus attending divine service. This cavern, which was called the choir, communicated with the cloister by a narrow passage. The church received light from the garden. When the nuns were attending offices in which their rules commanded silence, the public was advised of their presence only by the sound of the rising and falling stall-seats.

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## VII.

### A FEW OUTLINES IN THIS SHADE.

During the six years which separated 1819 from 1825, the prioress of the Petit Picpus was Mademoiselle De Blemeur, whose religious name was Mother Innocent. She was of the family of Marguerite De Blemeur, author of the *Lives of the Saints of the Order of Saint Benedict*. She had been re-elected. A woman of about sixty, short, fat, "chanting like a cracked kettle," says the letter from which we have already quoted; but an excellent woman, the only one who was cheerful in the whole convent, and on that account adored.

Mother Innocent resembled her ancestor Marguerite, the Dacier of the Order. She was well-read, erudite, learned, skilful, emulous in history, stuffed with Latin, crammed with Greek, full of Hebrew, and rather a monk than a nun.

The sub-prioress was an old Spanish nun, almost blind, Mother Cineres.

Mother Sainte Mechthilde, who had charge of the singing and the choir, gladly availed herself of the pupils. She usually took a complete gamut of them, that is to say, seven, from ten years old to sixteen inclusive, of graduated voice and stature, and had them sing, standing in a row, ranged according to their age, from the smallest to the largest. This presented to the sight something like a harp of young girls, a sort of living pipe of Pan made of angels.

Those of the servant sisters whom the pupils liked best were Sister Sainte Euphrasie, Sister Sainte Marguerite, Sister Sainte Marthe, who was in her dotage, and Sister Saint Michael, whose long nose made them laugh.

All these women were gentle to all these children. The nuns were

severe only to themselves. The only fires were in the school building, and the fire compared with that of the convent was choice. Besides that, they received a thousand little attentions. Only when a child passed near a nun and spoke to her, the nun never answered.

This rule of silence had had this effect that, in the whole convent, speech was withdrawn from human creatures and given to inanimate objects. Sometimes it was the church-bell that spoke, sometimes the gardener's. A very sonorous bell placed beside the portress, and which was heard all over the house, indicated by its variations, which were a kind of acoustic telegraph, all the acts of material life to be performed, and called to the locutory, if need were, this or that inhabitant of the house. Each person and each thing had its special ring. The prioress had one and one; the sub-prioress one and two. Six-five announced the recitation, so that the pupils never said going to recitation, but going to six-five. Nineteen strokes announced a great event. It was the opening of the *close door*, a fearful iron plate bristling with bolts, which turned upon its hinges only before the Archbishop.

He and the gardener excepted, as we have said, no man entered the convent. The pupils saw two others; one, the almoner, the Abbé Barons, old and ugly, whom they had the privilege of contemplating through a grate in the choir; the other, the drawing-master, M. Ansiaux, whom the letter from which we have already quoted a few lines, calls *M. Anriot*, and describes as a *horrid old hunchback*.

We see that all the men were select.

Such was this rare house.

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## VIII.

### END OF THE PETIT PICPUS.

From the time of the restoration, the convent of the Petit Picpus had been dwindling away; this was a portion of the general death of the order, which, since the eighteenth century, has been going the way of all religious orders. Meditation is, as well as prayer, a necessity of humanity; but, like everything which the Revolution has touched, it will transform itself, and from being hostile to social progress, will become favorable to it.

The house of the Petit Picpus dwindled rapidly. In 1840, the little convent had disappeared; the school had disappeared. There were no longer either the old women or the young girls; the former were dead, the latter had gone away. *Volaverunt.*

The rules of the Perpetual Adoration are so rigid that they inspire dismay; inclinations recoil, the order gets no recruits. In 1815 it still gathered here and there a few sisters servants; but no nuns of the choir. Forty years ago there were nearly a hundred nuns, fifteen years ago there were only twenty-eight. How many are there to-day? In 1847 the prioress was young, a sign that the opportunity for choice was limited. She was not forty. As the number diminishes the fatigue increases; the service of each becomes more difficult, thenceforth they saw

the moment approaching when there should be only a dozen sorrowful and bowed shoulders to bear the hard rules of Saint Benedict. The burden is inflexible, and remains the same for the few as for the many. It weighs down, it crushes. Thus they died. Since the author of this book lived in Paris, two have died. One was twenty-five, the other twenty-three. The latter might say, with Julia Alpinula, *Hic jaceo. Vixi annos viginti et tres.* It was on account of this decay that the convent abandoned the education of girls.

We could not pass by this extraordinary, unknown, obscure house, without entering and leading in those who accompany us, and who listen as we relate, for the benefit of some, perhaps, the melancholy history of Jean Valjean. We have penetrated into that community, full of its old practices which seem so novel to-day. It is the closed garden. *Hortus conclusus.* We have spoken of this singular place with minuteness, but with respect, as much at least as respect and minuteness are reconcilable. We do not comprehend everything, but we insult nothing. We are equally distant from the hosannahs of Joseph De Maistre, who goes so far as to sanctify the executioner, and the mockery of Voltaire, who goes so far as to rail at the crucifix.

Illogicalness of Voltaire, be it said by the way; for Voltaire would have defended Jesus as he defended Calas; and, for those even who deny the superhuman incarnation, what does the crucifix represent? The assassinated sage.

In the nineteenth century the religious idea is undergoing a crisis. We are unlearning certain things, and we do well, provided that while unlearning one thing we are learning another. No vacuum in the human heart! Certain forms are torn down, and it is well that they should be, but on condition that they are followed by reconstructions.

In the meantime let us study the things which are no more. It is necessary to understand them, were it only to avoid them. The counterfeits of the past take assumed names, and are fond of calling themselves the future. That spectre, the past, not unfrequently falsifies its passport. Let us be ready for the snare. Let us beware. The past has a face, superstition, and a mask, hypocrisy. Let us denounce the face and tear off the mask.

As to convents, they present a complex question. A question of civilization, which condemns them; a question of liberty, which protects them.

## Book Seventh.

### CEMETERIES TAKE WHAT IS GIVEN THEM.

#### I.

WHICH TREATS OF THE MANNER OF ENTERING THE CONVENT.

Into this house it was that Jean Valjean had, as Fauchelevent said, "fallen from Heaven."

He had crossed the garden wall at the corner of the Rue Polonceau. That angel's hymn which he had heard in the middle of the night, was the nuns chanting matins; that hall of which he had caught a glimpse in the obscurity, was the chapel; that phantom which he had seen extended on the floor was the sister performing the reparation; that bell the sound of which had so strangely surprised him was the gardener's bell fastened to old Fauchelevent's knee.

When Cosette had been put to bed, Jean Valjean and Fauchelevent had, as we have seen, taken a glass of wine and a piece of cheese before a blazing fire; then the only bed in the shanty being occupied by Cosette, they had thrown themselves each upon a bundle of straw. Before closing his eyes, Jean Valjean had said: "Henceforth I must remain here." These words were chasing one another through Fauchelevent's head the whole night.

To tell the truth, neither of them had slept.

Jean Valjean feeling that he was discovered and Javert was upon his track, knew full well that he and Cosette were lost should they return into the city. Since the new blast which had burst upon him had thrown him into this cloister, Jean Valjean had but one thought, to remain there. Now, for one in his unfortunate position, this convent was at once the safest and the most dangerous place; the most dangerous, for, no man being allowed to enter, if he should be discovered, it was a flagrant crime, and Jean Valjean would take but one step from the convent to prison; the safest, for if he succeeded in getting permission to remain, who would come there to look for him? To live in an impossible place: that would be safety.

For his part, Fauchelevent was racking his brains. He began by deciding that he was utterly bewildered. How did Monsieur Madeleine come there, with such walls! The walls of a cloister are not so easily crossed. How did he happen to be with a child? A man does not scale a steep wall with a child in his arms. Who was this child? Where did they both come from? Since Fauchelevent had been in the convent, he had not heard a word from M—— sur M——, and he knew nothing of what had taken place. Father Madeleine wore that air which discourages questions; and moreover Fauchelevent said to himself: "One does not question a saint." To him Monsieur Madeleine had preserved his prestige. From some words that escaped from Jean Valjean, however the gardener thought he might conclude that Monsieur Madeleine had probably sinned on account of the hard times, and that he was pursued by his creditors; or it might be that he was compromised in some political affair and was concealing himself; which did not at all displease Fauchelevent, who, like many of our peasants of the north, had an old Bonapartist heart. Being in concealment, Monsieur Madeleine had taken the convent for an asylum, and it was natural that he should wish to remain there. But the mystery to which Fauchelevent constantly returned and over which he was racking his brains, was that Monsieur Madeleine should be there, and that this little girl should be with him. Fauchelevent saw them, touched them, spoke to them, and yet did not believe it. An incomprehensibility had made its way into Fauchelevent's hut. Fauchelevent was groping amid conjectures, but saw nothing clearly except this: Monsieur Madeleine has saved my life. This single

certainty was sufficient, and determined him. He said aside to himself: It is my turn now. He added in his conscience: Monsieur Madeleine did not deliberate so long when the question was about squeezing himself under the wagon to draw me out. He decided that he would save Monsieur Madeleine.

He however put several questions to himself and made several answers: "After what he has done for me, if he were a thief, would I save him? just the same. If he were an assassin, would I save him? just the same. Since he is a saint, shall I save him? just the same.

But to have him remain in the convent, what a problem was that! Before that almost chimerical-attempt, Fauchelevent did not recoil; this poor Picardy peasant, with no other ladder than his devotion, his good will, a little of that old country cunning, engaged for once in the service of a generous intention, undertook to scale the impossibilities of the cloister, and the craggy escarpments of the rules of St. Benedict. Fauchelevent was an old man who had been selfish throughout his life, and who, near the end of his days, crippled, infirm, having no interest longer in the world, found it sweet to be grateful, and seeing a virtuous action to be done, threw himself into it like a man who, at the moment of death, finding at hand a glass of some good wine which he had never tasted, should drink it greedily. We might add that the air which he had been breathing now for several years in this convent had destroyed his personality, and had at last rendered some good action necessary to him.

He formed his resolution then: to devote himself to Monsieur Madeleine.

We have just described him as a *poor Picardy peasant*. The description is true, but incomplete. At the point of this story at which we now are, a closer acquaintance with Fauchelevent becomes necessary. He was a peasant, but he had been a notary, which added craft to his cunning, and penetration to his simplicity. Having, from various causes, failed in his business, from a notary he had fallen to a cartman and laborer. But, in spite of the oaths and blows which seem necessary with horses, he had retained something of the notary. He had some natural wit; he said neither I is nor I has; he could carry on a conversation, a rare thing in a village; and the other peasants said of him: he talks almost like a gentleman. Fauchelevent belonged in fact to that class which the flippant and impertinent vocabulary of the last century termed *half-yeoman, half-clown*; and which the metaphors falling from the castle to the hovel, label in the distribution of the commonalty, *half-heretic, half-citizen, pepper-and-salt*. Fauchelevent, although sorely tried and sorely used by Fortune; a sort of poor old soul worn thread-bare, was nevertheless an impulsive man, and had a very willing heart; a precious quality, which prevents one from ever being wicked. His faults and his virtues, for such he had, were superficial; and finally, his physiognomy was one of those which attract the observer. That old face had none of those ugly wrinkles in the upper part of the forehead which indicate wickedness or stupidity.

At daybreak, having dreamed enormously, old Fauchelevent opened his eyes, and saw Monsieur Madeleine, who, seated upon his bunch of straw, was looking at Cosette as she slept. Fauchelevent half arose, and

said: "Now that you are here, how are you going to manage to come in?" This question summed up the situation, and wakened Jean Valjean from his reverie.

The two men took counsel. "To begin with," said Fauchelevent, "you will not set foot outside of this room, neither the little girl nor you. One step in the garden, we are ruined." "That is true." "Monsieur Madeleine," resumed Fauchelevent, "you have arrived at a very good time; I mean to say very bad; there is one of these ladies dangerously sick. On that account they do not look this way much. She must be dying. They are saying the forty hour prayers. The whole community is upset. That takes up their attention. She who is about departing is a saint. In fact, we are all saints here; all the difference between them and me is, that they say my cell, and I say my shanty. They are going to have the prison for the dying, and then the prison for the dead. For to day we shall be quiet here; but I do not answer for to-morrow."

"However," observed Jean Valjean, "this shanty is under the corner of the wall; it is hidden by a sort of ruin; there are trees; they cannot see it from the convent." "And I add, that the nuns never come near it." "Well?" said Jean Valjean. The interrogation point which followed that well, meant: it seems to me that we can remain here concealed. This interrogation point Fauchelevent answered: "There are the little girls." "What little girls?" asked Jean Valjean. As Fauchelevent opened his mouth to explain the words he had just uttered, a single stroke of a bell was heard. "The nun is dead," said he. "There is the knell." And he motioned to Jean Valjean to listen.

The bell sounded a second time. "It is the knell, Monsieur Madeleine. The bell will strike every minute, for twenty-four hours, until the body goes out of the church. You see they play. In their recreations, if a ball roll here, that is enough for them to come after it, in spite of the rules, and rummage all about here. Those cherubs are little devils." "Who?" asked Jean Valjean. "The little girls. You would be found out very soon. They would cry, 'what! a man!' But there is no danger to day. There will be no recreation. The day will be all prayers. You heard the bell. As I told you, a stroke every minute. It is the knell." "I understand, Father Fauchelevent. There are boarding scholars."

And Jean Valjean thought within himself: "Here, then, Cosette can be educated, too." Fauchelevent exclaimed: "Zounds! they are the little girls for you! And how they would scream at sight of you! and how they would run! Here, to be a man, is to have the plague. You see how they fasten a bell to my leg, as they would to a wild beast!"

Jean Valjean was studying more and more deeply. "This convent would save us," murmured he. Then he raised his voice: "Yes, the difficulty is in remaining." "No," said Fauchelevent, "it is to get out." Jean Valjean felt his blood run cold. "To get out?" "Yes, Monsieur Madeleine, in order to come in, it is necessary that you should get out." And, after waiting for a sound from the tolling bell to die away, Fauchelevent pursued: "It would not do to have you found here like this. Whence do you come? for me you have fallen from heaven, because I know you; but for the nuns, you must come in at the door."

Suddenly they heard a complicated ringing upon another bell. "Oh!"

said Fauchelevent, "that is the ring for the mother. They are going to the chapter. They always hold a chapter when anybody dies. She died at daybreak. It is usually at daybreak that people die. But cannot you go out the way you came in? Let us see; this is not to question you, but where did you come in?"

Jean Valjean became pale; the bare idea of climbing down again into that formidable street, made him shudder. Make your way out of a forest full of tigers, and when out, fancy yourself advised by a friend to return. Jean Valjean imagined all the police still swarming in the quarter, officers on the watch, sentries everywhere, frightful fists stretched out towards his collar, Javert, perhaps, at the corner of the square. "Impossible," said he. "Father Fauchelevent, let it go that I fell from on high." "Ah! I believe it, I believe it," replied Fauchelevent. "You have no need to tell me so. God must have taken you into his hand, to have a close look at you, and then put you down. Only he meant to put you into a monastery; he made a mistake. Hark! another ring; that is to warn the porter to go and notify the municipality, so that they may go and notify the death physician, so that he may come and see that there is really a dead woman. All that is the ceremony of dying. These good ladies do not like this visit very much. A physician believes in nothing. He lifts the veil. He even lifts something else, sometimes. How soon they have notified the inspector, this time! What can be the matter? Your little one is asleep yet. What is her name?" "Cosette." "She is your girl? that is to say, you should be her grandfather?" "Yes." "For her, to get out will be easy. I have my door, which opens into the court. I knock, the porter opens. I have my basket on my back, the little girl is inside; I go out. Father Fauchelevent goes out with his basket—that is all simple. You will tell the little girl to keep very still. She will be under cover. I will leave her as soon as I can, with a good old friend of mine, a fruiteress, in the Rue du Chemin Vert, who is deaf, and who has a little bed. I will scream into the fruiteress's ear that she is my niece, and she must keep her for me till to-morrow. Then the little girl will come back with you; for I shall bring you back. It must be done. But how are you going to manage to get out?"

Jean Valjean shook his head. "Let nobody see me, that is all. Father Fauchelevent. Find some means to get me out, like Cosette, in a basket, and under cover."

Fauchelevent scratched the tip of his ear with the middle finger of his left hand—a sign of serious embarrassment.

A third ring made a diversion. "That is the death physician going away," said Fauchelevent. "He has looked, and said, she is dead; it is right. When the inspector has viséd the passport for Paradise, the undertaker sends a coffin. If it is a mother, the mothers lay her out; if it is a sister, the sisters lay her out. After which, I nail it up. That's a part of my gardening. A gardener is something of a grave-digger. They put her in a low room in the church which communicates with the street, and where no man can enter except the death physician. I do not count the bearers and myself for men. In that room I nail the coffin. The bearers come and take her, and whip-up driver; that is the way they go to heaven. They bring in a box with nothing in it,

they carry it away with something inside. That is what an interment is. *De profundis*”

A ray of the rising sun beamed upon the face of the sleeping Cosette, who half opened her mouth dreamily, seeming like an angel drinking in the light. Jean Valjean was looking at her. He no longer heard Fauchelevent.

Not being heard is no reason for silence. The brave old gardener quietly continued his garrulous rehearsal: “The grave is at the Vaugirard Cemetery. They pretend that this Vaugirard Cemetery is going to be suppressed. It is an ancient cemetery, which is not according to the regulations, which does not wear the uniform, and which is going to be retired. I am sorry for it, for it is convenient. I have a friend there—Father Mesnienne, the gravedigger. The nuns here have the privilege of being carried to that cemetery at night fall. There is an order of the Préfecture, expressly for them. But what events since yesterday? Mother Crucifixion is dead, and Father Madeleine——”

“Is buried,” said Jean Valjean, sadly smiling.

Fauchelevent echoed the word. “Really, if you were here for good, it would be a genuine burial.”

A fourth time the bell rang out. Fauchelevent quickly took down the knee-piece and bell from the nail, and buckled it on his knee. “This time, it is for me. The mother prioress wants me. Well, I am pricking myself with the tongue of my buckle. Monsieur Madeleine, do not stir, but wait for me. There is something new. If you are hungry, there is wine, and bread and cheese.” And he went out of the hut, saying “I am coming, I am coming.”

Jean Valjean saw him hasten across the garden, as fast as his crooked leg would let him, with side glances at his melons the while.

In less than ten minutes, Father Fauchelevent, whose bell put the nuns to flight as he went along, rapped softly at a door, and a gentle voice answered—*Forcez, Forcez!* that is to say, *come in.*

This door was that of the parlor allotted to the gardener, for use when it was necessary to communicate with him. The parlor was near the hall of the chapter. The prioress, seated in the only chair in the parlor, was waiting for Fauchelevent.

## II.

### FAUCHELEVENT FACING THE DIFFICULTY.

A serious and troubled bearing is peculiar, on critical occasions, to certain characters and certain professions, especially priests and monastics. At the moment when Fauchelevent entered, this double sign of pre-occupation marked the countenance of the prioress, the charming and learned Mademoiselle de Blemeur, Mother Innocent, who was ordinarily cheerful.

The gardener made a timid bow, and stopped at the threshold of the cell. The prioress, who was saying her rosary, raised her eyes and said: “Ah! it is you, Father Fauvent. This abbreviation had been adopted in the convent. Fauchelevent again began his bow. “Father Fauvent,



"I have called you." "I am here, reverend mother." "I wish to speak to you." "And I, for my part," said Fauchelevent, with a boldness at which he was alarmed himself, "I have something to say to the most reverend mother."

The prioress looked at him. "Ah, you have a communication to make to me." "A petition." "Well, what is it?"

Goodman Fauchelevent, ex notary, belonged to that class of peasants who are never disconcerted. A certain combination of ignorance and skill, is very effective; you do not suspect it, and you accede to it. Within little more than two years that he had lived in the convent, Fauchelevent had achieved a success in the community. Always alone, and even while attending to his garden, he had hardly anything to do but to be envious. Being, as he was, at a distance from all these veiled women, going to and fro, he saw before him hardly more than a fluttering of shadows. By dint of attention and penetration, he had succeeded in clothing all these phantoms with flesh, and these dead were alive to him. He was like a deaf man whose sight is extended, and like a blind man whose hearing is sharpened. He had applied himself to unravelling the meaning of the various rings, and had made them out; so that in this enigmatic and taciturn cloister, nothing was hidden from him; this sphynx blabbed all her secrets in his ear. Fauchelevent, knowing everything, concealed everything. That was his art. The whole convent thought him stupid—a great merit. The mothers prized Fauchelevent. He was a rare mute. He inspired confidence. Moreover, he was regular in his habits, and never went out except when it was clearly necessary on account of the orchard and the garden. This discretion in his conduct was counted to his credit. He had, nevertheless, learned the secrets of two men: the porter of the convent, who knew the peculiarities of the parlor, and the gravedigger of the cemetery, who knew the singularities of burial; in this manner, he had a double-light in regard to these nuns—one upon their life, the other upon their death. The congregation thought much of him, old, lame, seeing nothing, probably a little deaf—how many good qualities! It would have been difficult to replace him.

The good man, with the assurance of one who feels that he is appreciated, began before the reverend prioress a rustic harangue, quite diffuse and very profound. He spoke at length of his age, his infirmities, of the weight of years henceforth doubly heavy upon him, of the growing demands of his work, of the size of the garden, of the nights to be spent, like last night for example, when he had to put awnings over the melons on account of the moon; and he finally ended with this: "That he had a brother—(the prioress gave a start)—a brother not young—(second start of the prioress, but a reassured start)—that if it was desired, this brother could come and live with him and help him; that he was an excellent gardener; that the community would get good services from him, better than his own: that, otherwise, if this brother were not admitted, as he, the oldest, felt that he was broken down, and unequal to the labor, he would be obliged to leave, though with much regret; and that his brother had a little girl that he would bring with him, who would be reared under God in the house, and who, perhaps,—who knows?—would some day become a nun."

When he had finished, the prioress stopped the sliding of her rosary through her fingers, and said: "Can you, between now and night, procure a strong iron bar?" "For what work?" "To be used as a lever." "Yes, reverend mother," answered Fauchelevent.

The prioress, without adding a word, arose, and went into the next room, which was the hall of the chapter, where the vocal mothers were probably assembled; Fauchelevent remained alone.

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 III.

## MOTHER INNOCENT.

About a quarter of an hour elapsed. The prioress returned and resumed her seat.

Both seemed pre-occupied. We report as well as we can the dialogue that followed.

"Father Fauvent." "Reverend mother." "You are familiar with the chapel?" "I have a little box there to go to mass, and the offices." "And you have been in the choir about your work?" "Two or three times." "A stone is to be raised." "Heavy?" "The slab of the pavement at the side of the altar." "The stone that covers the vault?" "Yes." "That is a piece of work where it would be well to have two men. Mother Ascension, who is as strong as a man, will help you." "A woman is never a man." "We have only a woman to help you. Everybody does what he can. Because Dom Mabillon gives four hundred and seventeen epistles of St. Bernard, and Merlonus Horstius gives only three hundred and sixty-seven, I do not despise Merlonus Horstius." "Nor I either." "Merit consists in work according to our strength. A cloister is not a ship-yard." "And a woman is not a man. My brother is very strong." "And then you will have a lever." "That is the only kind of key that fits that kind of door." "There is a ring in the stone." "I will pass the lever through it." "And the stone is arranged to turn on a pivot." "Very well, reverend mother, I will open the vault." "And the four mother choristers will assist you." "And when the vault is opened?" "It must be shut again." "Is that all?" "No." "Give me your orders, most reverend mother." "Fauvent, we have confidence in you." "I am here to do anything." "And to keep silent about everything." "Yes, reverend mother." "When the vault is opened——" "I will shut it again." "But before——" "What, reverend mother?" "Something must be let down."

There was silence. The prioress, after a quivering of the under-lip, which resembled hesitation, spoke: "Father Fauvent?" "Reverend mother?" "You know that a mother died this morning." "No." "You have not heard the bell then?" "Nothing is heard at the further end of the garden." "Really?" "I can hardly distinguish my ring." "She died at daybreak." "And then, this morning, the wind didn't blow my way." "It is mother Crucifixion. One of the best."

The prioress was silent, moved her lips a moment as in a mental orison, and resumed: "Three years ago, merely from having seen Mother Crucifixion at prayer, a Jansenist, Madame de Béthune, became ortho-

dox." "Ah! yes, I hear the knell now, reverend mother." "The mothers have carried her into the room of the dead, which opens into the church." "I know." "No other man than you can or must enter that room. Be watchful. It would look well for a man to enter the room of the dead!" "Oftener." "Eh?" "Oftener." "What do you say?" "I say oftener." "Oftener than what?" "Reverend mother, I don't say oftener than what; I say oftener." "I do not understand you. Why do you say oftener?" "To say as you do, reverend mother." "But I did not say oftener." "You did not say it, but I said it to say as you did."

The clock struck nine "At nine o'clock in the morning, and at all hours, praise and adoration to the most holy sacrament of the altar," said the prioress. "Amen!" said Fauchelevent

The clock struck in good time. It cut short that Oftener. It is probable, that without it, the prioress and Fauchelevent would never have got out of that snarl. Fauchelevent wiped his forehead.

The prioress again made a little low murmur, probably sacred, then raised her voice: "During her life, Mother Crucifixion worked conversions; after her death, she will work miracles." "She will!" answered Fauchelevent, correcting his step, and making an effort not to blunder again. "Father Fauvent, the community has been blessed in Mother Crucifixion. Doubtless, it is not given to everybody to die like Cardinal de Bérulle, saying the holy mass, and to breathe out his soul to God, pronouncing these words: *Hanc igitur oblationem*. But without attaining to so great happiness, Mother Crucifixion had a very precious death. She had her consciousness to the last. She spoke to us, then she spoke to the angels. She gave us her last commands. If you had a little more faith, and if you could have been in her cell, she would have cured your leg by touching it. She smiled. We felt that she was returning to life in God. There was something of Paradise in that death." Fauchelevent thought that he had been listening to a prayer. "Amen!" said he. "Father Fauvent, we must do what the dead wish."

The prioress counted a few beads on her chaplet. Fauchelevent was silent. She continued; "I have consulted upon this question several ecclesiastics laboring in our Lord, who are engaged in the exercise of clerical functions, and with admirable results."

A few beads of her chaplet were told over silently. The prioress went on: "Father Fauvent, Mother Crucifixion will be buried in the coffin in which she has slept for twenty years." "That is right." "It is a continuation of sleep." "I shall have to nail her up then in that coffin." "Yes." "And we will put aside the undertaker's coffin?" "Precisely." "I am at the disposal of the most reverend community." "The four mother choristers will help you." "To nail up the coffin I don't need them." "No. To let it down." "Where?" "Into the vault." "What vault?" "Under the altar." Fauchelevent gave a start. "The vault under the altar!" "Under the altar." "But —" "You will have an iron bar." "Yes, but —" "You will lift the stone with the bar by means of the ring." "But —" "We must obey the dead. To be buried in the vault under the altar of the chapel, not to go into profane ground, to remain in death where she prayed in

life; this was the last request of Mother Crucifixion. She has asked it, that is to say, commanded it."

"But it is forbidden." "Forbidden by man, enjoined by God." "If it should come to be known?" "We have confidence in you." "Oh! as for me, I am like a stone in your wall." "The chapter has assembled. The vocal mothers, whom I have just consulted again, and who are now deliberating, have decided that Mother Crucifixion should be, according to her desire, buried in her coffin under our altar. Think, Father Fauvent, if there should be miracles performed here! what glory under God for the community! Miracles spring from tombs."

"But, reverend Mother, if the Agent of the Health Commission —" "St. Benedict II, in the matter of burial, resisted Constantine Pogonatus." "However, the Commissary of Police —" "Chonodemaire, one of the seven German kings who entered Gaul in the reign of Constantine, expressly recognised the right of conventuals to be inhumed in religion, that is to say, under the altar." "But the Inspector of the Prefecture —" "The world is nothing before the cross. Martin, eleventh general of the Carthusians, gave to his order this device: *Stat crux dum volvitur orbis*." "Amen," said Fauchelevent, imperturbable in this method of extricating himself whenever he heard any Latin.

The prioress drew breath, then turning towards Fauchelevent: "Father Fauvent, is it settled?" "It is settled, reverend mother." "Can we count upon you?" "I shall obey." "It is well." "I am entirely devoted to the convent." "It is understood you will close the coffin. The sisters will carry it into the chapel. The office for the dead will be said. Then they will return to the cloister. Between eleven o'clock and midnight you will come with your iron bar. All will be done with the greatest secrecy. There will be in the chapel only the four mother choristers, mother Ascension and you." "And the sister who will be at the post?" "She will not turn." "But she will hear." "She will not listen; moreover what the cloister knows, the world does not know."

There was a pause again. The prioress continued: "You will take off your bell. It is needless that the sister at the post should perceive that you are there." "Reverend mother?" "What, Father Fauvent?" "Has the death physician made his visit?" "He is going to make it at four o'clock to-day. The bell has been sounded which summons the death physician. But you do not hear any ring then." "I only pay attention to my own." "That is right, Father Fauvent." "Reverend mother, I shall need a fever at least six feet long." "Where will you get it?" "Where there are gratings there are always iron bars. I have my heap of old iron at the back of the garden." "About three-quarters of an hour before midnight; do not forget." "Reverend mother." "What?" "If you should ever have any other work like this, my brother is very strong. A Turk." "You will do it as quickly as possible." "I cannot go very fast. I am infirm; it is on that account I need help. I limp." "To limp is not a crime, and it may be a blessing. Father Fauvent, now I think of it, we will take a whole hour. It is not too much. Be at the high altar with the iron bar at eleven o'clock. The office commences at midnight. It must all be finished a good quarter of an hour before."

"I will do everything to prove my zeal for the community. This is

the arrangement. I shall nail up the coffin. At eleven o'clock precisely I will be in the chapel. The mother choristers will be there, mother Ascension will be there. Two men would be better. But no matter! I shall have my lever. We shall open the vault, let down the coffin, and close the vault again. After which there will be no trace of anything. The government will suspect nothing. Reverend mother, is this all so?" "No." "What more is there, then?" "There is still the empty coffin."

This brought them to a stand. Fauchelevant pondered. The prioress pondered. "Father Fauvent, what shall be done with the coffin?" "It will be put in the ground." "Empty?"

Another silence. Fauchelevant made with his left hand that peculiar gesture which dismisses an unpleasant question.

"Reverend mother, I nail up the coffin in the lower room in the church, and nobody can come in there except me, and I will cover the coffin with the pall." "Yes, but the bearers, in putting it into the hearse and in letting it down into the grave, will surely perceive that there is nothing inside." "Ah! the de——!" exclaimed Fauchelevant. The prioress began to cross herself, and looked fixedly at the gardener. *Vil* stuck in his throat. He made haste to think of an expedient to make her forget the oath.

"Reverend mother, I will put some earth into the coffin. That will have the effect of a body." "You are right. Earth is the same thing as man. So you will prepare the empty coffin?" "I will attend to that."

The face of the prioress, till then dark and anxious, became again serene. She made him the sign of a superior dismissing an inferior. Fauchelevant moved towards the door. As he was going out the prioress gently raised her voice: "Father Fauvent, I am satisfied with you; to-morrow, after the burial, bring your brother to me, and tell him to bring his daughter."

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#### IV.

IN WHICH JEAN VALJEAN HAS QUITE THE APPEARANCE OF HAVING READ AUSTIN CASTILLEJO.

The strides of the lame are like the glances of the one-eyed; they do not speedily reach their aim. Furthermore, Fauchelevant was perplexed. It took him nearly a quarter of an hour to get back to the shanty in the garden. Cosette was awake. Jean Valjean had seated her near the fire. At the moment when Fauchelevant entered, Jean Valjean was showing her the gardener's basket hanging on the wall, and saying to her:

"Listen attentively to me, my little Cosette. We must go away from this house, but we shall come back, and we shall be very well off here. The good man here will carry you out on his back inside there. You will wait for me at a lady's. I shall come and find you. Above all, if you do not want the Thenardiess to take you back, obey and say nothing."

Cosette nodded her head with a serious look. At the sound of Fau-

chelevant opening the door, Jean Valjean turned. "Well?" "All is arranged, and nothing is," said Fauchelevant. "I have permission to bring you in; but before bringing you in, it is necessary to get you out. That is where the cart is blocked! For the little girl it is easy enough." "You will carry her out?" "And she will keep quiet?" "I will answer for it." "But you, Father Madeleine?" And after an anxious silence, Fauchelevant exclaimed: "But why not go out the way you came in?" Jean Valjean, as before, merely answered, "impossible."

Fauchelevant, talking more to himself than to Jean Valjean, grumbled:

"There is another thing that torments me. I said I would put in some earth. But I think that earth inside, instead of a body, will not be like it; that will not do, it will shake about; it will move. The men will feel it. You understand, Father Madeleine, the government will find it out."

Jean Valjean stared at him, and thought that he was raving. Fauchelevant resumed: "How the d——ickens are you going to get out? For all this must be done to-morrow. To-morrow I am to bring you in. The prioress expects you."

Then he explained to Jean Valjean that this was a reward for a service that he, Fauchelevant, was rendering to the community. That it was a part of his duties to assist in burials, that he nailed up the coffins, and attended the grave-digger at the cemetery. That the nun who died that morning had requested to be buried in the coffin which she had used as a bed, and interred in the vault under the altar of the chapel. That this was forbidden by the regulations of the Police, but that she was one of those departed ones to whom nothing is refused. That the prioress and the vocal mothers intended to carry out the will of the deceased. So much the worse for the government. That he, Fauchelevant, would nail up the coffin in the cell, raise the stone in the chapel, and let down the body into the vault. And that, in return for this, the prioress would admit his brother into the house as gardener, and his niece as boarder. That his brother was M. Madeleine, and that his niece was Cosette. That the prioress had told him to bring his brother the next evening, after the fictitious burial at the cemetery. But that he could not bring M. Madeleine from the outside, if M. Madeleine were not outside. That that was the first difficulty. And then that he had another difficulty; the empty coffin.

"What is the empty coffin?" asked Jean Valjean.

Fauchelevant resumed: "The coffin from the administration." "What coffin and what administration?" "A nun dies. The municipality physician comes and says: there is a nun dead. The government sends a coffin. The next day it sends a hearse and some bearers to take the coffin and carry it to the cemetery. The bearers will come and take up the coffin; there will be nothing in it." "Put something in it." "A dead body? I have none." "No." "What then?" "A living body." "What living body?" "Me," said Jean Valjean.

Fauchelevant, who had taken a seat, sprang up as if a cracker had burst under his chair. "You?" "Why not?" Jean Valjean had one of those rare smiles which came over him like the aurora in a winter sky.

"You know, Fauchelevent, that you said, Mother Crucifixion is dead, and that I added, and Father Madeleine is buried. It will be so." "Ah! good, you are laughing, you are not talking seriously." "Very seriously. I must get out!" "Undoubtedly." "And I told you to find a basket, and a cover for me also." "Well!" "The basket will be of pine, and the cover of black cloth." "In the first place a white cloth. The nuns are buried in white." "Well, a white cloth." "You are not like other men, Father Madeleine."

To see such devices, which are nothing more than the savage and foolhardy inventions of the galleys, appear in the midst of the peaceful things that surrounded him, and mingled with what he called the "little jog-jog of the convent," was to Fauchelevent an astonishment comparable to that of a person who should see a seaman fishing in the brook in the Rue St. Denis.

Jean Valjean continued: "The question is how to get out without being seen. This is the means. But in the first place tell me how is it done? where is this coffin?" "The empty one?" "Yes." "Down in what is called the dead room. It is on two trestles and under the pall." "What is the length of the coffin?" "Six feet." "What is the dead-room?" "It is a room on the ground floor, with a grated window towards the garden, closed on the outside with a shutter and two doors; one leading to the convent, the other to the church." "What church?" "The church on the street, the church for everybody." "Have you the keys of those two doors?" "No. I have the key of the door that opens into the convent; the porter has the key of the door that opens into the church." "When does the porter open that door?" "Only to let in the bearers, who come after the coffin; as soon as the coffin goes out, the door is closed again." "Who nails up the coffin?" "I do." "Who puts the cloth on it?" "I do." "Are you alone?" "No other man, except the police physician can enter the dead-room. That is even written upon the wall." "Could you, to-night, when all are asleep in the convent, hide me in that room?" "No. But I can hide you in a little dark closet which opens into the dead-room, where I keep my burial tools, and of which I have the care and the key." "At what hour will the hearse come after the coffin to-morrow?" "About three o'clock in the afternoon. The burial takes place at the Vaugirard cemetery a little before night. It is not very near." "I shall remain hidden in your tool-closet all night and all the morning. And about eating? I shall be hungry." "I will bring you something." "You can come and nail me up in the coffin at two o'clock."

Fauchelevent started back, and began to snap his fingers. "But it is impossible!" "Pshaw! to take a hammer and drive some nails into a board?"

What seemed unheard-of to Fauchelevent was, we repeat, simple to Jean Valjean. Jean Valjean had been in worst straits. He who has been a prisoner knows the art of making himself small according to the dimensions of the place for escape. The prisoner is subject to flight as the sick man is to the crisis which cures or kills him. An escape is a cure. What does not one undergo to be cured? To be nailed up and carried out in a chest like a bundle, to live a long time in a box, to find air where there is none, to economize the breath for entire hours, to know

low to be stifled without dying—that was one of the gloomy talents of Jean Valjean.

Moreover, a coffin in which there is a living being, that convict's expedient, is also an Emperor's expedient. If we can believe the monk Austin Castillejo, this was the means which Charles V., desiring after his abdication to see La Plombes again a last time, employed to bring her into the monastery St. Juste and to take her out again.

Fauchelevant, recovering a little, exclaimed: "But how will you manage to breathe?" "I shall breathe." "In that box? Only to think of it suffocates me." "You surely have a gimlet, you can make a few little holes about the mouth here and there, and you can nail it without drawing the upper board tight." "Good? But if you happen to cough or sneeze?" "He who is escaping never coughs or sneezes." And Jean Valjean added: "Father Fauchelevant, I must decide: either to be taken here, or to be willing to go out in the hearse."

Everybody has noticed the taste which cats have for stopping and loitering in a half-open door. Who has not said to a cat, why don't you come in? There are men who, with an opportunity half-open before them, have a similar tendency to remain undecided, between two resolutions, at the risk of being crushed by destiny abruptly closing the opportunity. The over prudent, cats as they are, and because they are cats, sometimes run more danger than the bold. Fauchelevant was of this hesitating nature. However, Jean Valjean's coolness won him over in spite of himself. He grumbled: "It is true, there is no other way."

Jean Valjean resumed: "The only thing that I am anxious about is what will be done at the cemetery." "That is just what does not embarrass me," exclaimed Fauchelevant. "If you are sure of getting yourself out of the coffin, I am sure of getting you out of the grave. The grave-digger is a drunkard and a friend of mine. He is Father Mestienne. An old son of the old vine. The grave-digger puts the dead in the grave, and I put the grave-digger in my pocket. I will tell you what will take place. We shall arrive a little before dusk, three-quarters of an hour before the cemetery gates are closed. The hearse will go to the grave. I shall follow; that is my business. I will have a hammer, a chisel, and some pincers in my pocket. The hearse stops, the bearers tie a rope around your coffin and let you down. The priest says the prayers, makes the sign of the cross, sprinkles the holy water, and is off. I remain alone with Father Mestienne. He is my friend, I tell you. One of two things; either he will be drunk, or he will not be drunk. If he is not drunk, I say to him: come and take a drink before the *Good Quince* is shut. I get him away, I fuddle him; Father Mestienne is not long in getting fuddled, he is always half way. I lay him under the table, I take his card from him to return to the cemetery with, and I come back without him. You will have only me to deal with. If he is drunk, I say to him, be off. I'll do your work. He goes away, and I pull you out of the hole."

Jean Valjean extended his hand, upon which Fauchelevant threw himself with a rustic outburst of touching devotion. "It is settled, Father Fauchelevant. All will go well." "Provided nothing goes amiss," thought Fauchelevant. "How terrible that would be!"



## V.

IT IS NOT SUFFICIENT TO BE A DRUNKARD TO BE IMMORTAL.

Next day, as the sun was declining, the scattered passers on the Boulevard du Maine took off their hats at the passage of an old-fashioned hearse, adorned with death's-heads, cross-bones, and tear-drops. In this hearse there was a coffin covered with a white cloth, upon which was displayed a large black cross like a great dummy with hanging arms. A draped carriage, in which might be seen a priest in a surplice, and a choir-boy in a red calotte, followed. Two bearers in grey uniform with black trimmings walked on the right and left of the hearse. In the rear came an old man dressed like a laborer, who limped. The procession moved towards the Vaugirard Cemetery.

Sticking out of the man's pocket were the handle of a hammer, the blade of a cold chisel, and the double handles of a pair of pincers.

The Vaugirard Cemetery was an exception among the cemeteries of Paris. It had its peculiar usages, so far that it had its porte-cochère, and its small door which, in the quarter, old people, tenacious of old words, called the cavalier door, and the pedestrian door. The Bernardine-Benedictines of the Petit-Picpus had obtained the right, as we have said, to be buried in a corner apart and at night, this ground having formerly belonged to their community. The grave-diggers, having thus to work in the cemetery in the evening in summer, and at night in winter, were subject to a peculiar discipline. The gates of the cemeteries of Paris closed at that epoch at sunset, and, this being a measure of municipal order, the Vaugirard Cemetery was subject to it like the rest. The cavalier door and the pedestrian door were two contiguous gratings; near which was a pavilion built by the architect Perronet, in which the door-keeper of the cemetery lived. These gratings therefore inexorably turned upon their hinges the instant the sun disappeared behind the dome of the Invalides. If any grave-digger, at that moment, was belated in the cemetery, his only resource for getting out was his grave-digger's card, given him by the administration of funeral ceremonies. A sort of letter-box was arranged in the shutter of the gate-keeper's window. The grave-digger dropped his card into this box, the gate-keeper heard it fall, pulled the string, and the pedestrian door opened. If the grave-digger did not have his card, he gave his name; the gate-keeper, sometimes in bed and asleep, got up, went to identify the grave-digger, and open the door with the key; the grave-digger went out, but paid fifteen francs fine.

This cemetery, with its peculiarities breaking over the rules, disturbed the symmetry of the administration. It was suppressed shortly after 1830. The Mont Parnasse Cemetery, called the Cemetery of the East, has succeeded it, and has inherited this famous drinking house let into the Vaugirard Cemetery, which was surmounted by a quince painted on a board, which looked on one side upon the tables of the drinkers, and on the other upon graves, with this inscription: *The Good Quince*.

The Vaugirard Cemetery was what might be called a decayed cemetery. It was falling into disuse. Mould was invading it, flowers were eaving it. The well-to-do citizens little cared to be buried at Vaugi-

ard; it sounded poor. Père Lachaise is very fine! to be buried in Père Lachaise is like having mahogany furniture. Elegance is understood by that. The Vaugirard Cemetery was a venerable inclosure, laid out like an old French garden. Straight walks, box, evergreens, hollies, old tombs under old yews, very high grass. Night there was terrible. There were some very dismal outlines there.

The sun had not yet set when the hearse with the white pall and the black cross entered the avenue of the Vaugirard Cemetery. The lame man who followed it was none other than Fauchelevant.

The burial of Mother Crucifixion in the vault under the altar, the departure of Cosette, the introduction of Jean Valjean into the dead-room, all had been carried out without obstruction, and nothing had gone wrong.

Fauchelevant limped behind the hearse very well satisfied. His two twin plots, one with the nuns, the other with M. Madeleine, one for the convent, the other against it, had succeeded equally well. Jean Valjean's calmness had that powerful tranquility which is contagious. Fauchelevant had now no doubt of success. What remained to be done was nothing. Within two years he had fuddled the grave-digger ten times, good Father Mestienne, a rubicund old fellow. Father Mestienne was play for him. He did what he liked with him. He got him drunk at will and at his fancy. Mestienne saw through Fauchelevant's eyes. Fauchelevant's security was complete.

At the moment the convoy entered the avenue leading to the cemetery, Fauchelevant, happy, looked at the hearse and rubbed his big hands together, saying in an undertone: "Here's a farce!"

Suddenly the hearse stopped; they were at the gate. It was necessary to exhibit the burial permit. The undertaker whispered with the porter of the cemetery. During this colloquy, which always causes a delay of a minute or two, somebody, an unknown man, came and placed himself behind the hearse at Fauchelevant's side. He was a working-man, who wore a vest with large pockets, and had a pick under his arm. Fauchelevant looked at this unknown man. "Who are you?" he asked. The man answered: "The grave-digger."

Should a man survive a cannon-shot through his breast, he would present the appearance that Fauchelevant did.

"The grave-digger?" "Yes." "You?" "Me." "The grave-digger is Father Mestienne." "He was." "How! he was?" "He is dead."

Fauchelevant was ready for anything but this, that a grave-digger could die. It is, however, true; grave-diggers themselves die. By dint of digging graves for others, they open their own.

Fauchelevant remained speechless. He had hardly the strength to stammer out:

"But it is not possible!" "It is so." "But," repeated he, feebly, "the grave-digger is Father Mestienne." "After Napoleon, Louis XVIII. After Mestienne, Gribier. Peasant, my name is Gribier."

Fauchelevant grew pale; he started at Gribier.

He was a long, thin, livid man, perfectly funereal. He had the appearance of a broken-down doctor turned grave-digger.

Fauchelevant burst out laughing. "Ah! what droll things happen!"

Father Mestienne is dead. Little Father Mestienne is dead, but hurrah for little Father Lenoir! You know what little Father Lenoir is? It is the mug of red for a six spot. It is the mug of Surène, zounds! real Paris Surène. So he is dead, old Mestienne! I am sorry for it; he was a jolly fellow. But you too, you are a jolly fellow. Isn't that so, comrade? we will go and take a drink together, right away."

The man answered: "I have studied, I have graduated. I never drink."

The hearse had started, and was rolling along the main avenue of the cemetery.

Fauchelevont had slackened his pace. He limped still more from anxiety than from infirmity.

The grave-digger walked before him.

Fauchelevont again scrutinized the unexpected Gribier.

He was one of those men who, though very young, have an old appearance, and, who, though thin, are very strong. "Comrade!" cried Fauchelevont. The man turned. "I am the grave-digger of the convent." "My colleague," said the man.

Fauchelevont, illiterate, but very keen, understood that he had to do with a very formidable species, a good talker. He mumbled out: "Is it so, Father Mestienne is dead?"

The man answered:

"Perfectly. The good God consulted his list of bills payable. It was Father Mestienne's turn. Father Mestienne is dead." Fauchelevont, repeated mechanically: "The good God." "The good God," said the man authoritatively. "What the philosophers call the Eternal Father; the Jacobins, the Supreme Being."

"Are we not going to make each other's acquaintance?" stammered Fauchelevont. "It is made. You are a peasant, I am a Parisian." "We are not acquainted as long as we have not drunk together. He who empties his glass empties his heart. Come and drink with me. You can't refuse."—"Business first."

Fauchelevont said to himself, I am lost.

They were now only a few rods from the path that led to the nuns' corner. The grave-digger continued: "Peasant, I have seven youngsters that I must feed. As they must eat, I must not drink. And he added with the satisfaction of a serious being who is making a sententious phrase: "Their hunger is the enemy of my thirst."

The hearse turned a huge cypress, left the main path, took a little one, entered upon the grounds, and was lost in a thicket. This indicated the immediate proximity of the grave. Fauchelevont slackened his pace, but could not slacken that of the hearse. Luckily the mellow soil, wet by the winter rains, stuck to the wheels, and made the track heavy.

He approached the grave-digger. "They have such a good little Argenteuil wine," suggested Fauchelevont. "Villager," continued the man, "I ought not to be a grave-digger. My father was porter at the Prytanée. He intended me for literature. But he was unfortunate, met with losses at the Bourse, I was obliged to renounce the condition of an author. However, I am still a public scribe." "But then you are not the grave-digger?" replied Fauchelevont, catching at a straw. feeble as it was. "One does not prevent the other. I emulate." Fau-

chevevent did not understand this last word. "Let us go and drink," said he.

Here an observation is necessary. Fauchelevant, whatever was his anguish, proposed to drink, but did not explain himself on one point; who should pay. Ordinarily Fauchelevant proposed, and Father Mestienne paid. A proposal to drink resulted evidently from the new situation produced by the fact of the new grave-digger, and this proposal he must make; but the old gardener left, no unintentionally, the proverbial quarter of an hour of Rabelais in the shade. As for him, Fauchelevant, however excited he was, he did not care about paying.

The grave-digger went on with a smile of superiority. "We must live. I accepted the succession of Father Mestienne. When one has almost finished his classes, he is a philosopher. To the labor of my hand I have added the labor of my arm. I have my little writer's shop at the market in the Rue de Sèvres. You know? the market of the Parapluies. All the cooks of the Croix Rouge come to me; I patch up their declarations to their true loves. In the morning I write love letters; in the evening I dig graves. Such is life, countryman."

The hearse advanced; Fauchelevant, full of anxiety, looked about him on all sides. Great drops of sweat were falling from his forehead.

"However," continued the grave-digger, "one cannot serve two mistresses; I must choose between the pen and the pick. The pick hurts my hand."

The hearse stopped. The choir-boy got out of the mourning carriage, then the priest. One of the forward wheels of the hearse mounted on a little heap of earth, beyond which was seen an open grave.

"Here is a farce!" repeated Fauchelevant in consternation.

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## VI.

### IN THE NARROW HOUSE.

Who was in the coffin? We know: Jean Valjean.

Jean Valjean had managed it so that he could live in it, and could breathe a very little.

It is a strange thing to what extent an easy conscience gives calmness in other respects. The entire combination pre-arranged by Jean Valjean had been executed, and executed well, since the night before. He counted, as did Fauchelevant, upon Father Mestienne. He had no doubt of the result. Never was a situation more critical, never calmness more complete.

The four boards of the coffin exhaled a kind of terrible peace. It seemed as if something of the repose of the dead had entered into the tranquility of Jean Valjean.

From within that coffin he had been able to follow, and he had followed, all the phases of the fearful drama which he was playing with Death.

Soon after Fauchelevant had finished nailing down the upper board, Jean Valjean had felt himself carried out, then wheeled along. By the diminished jolting he had felt that he was passing from the pavement to

the hard ground; that is to say, that he was leaving the streets and entering upon the Boulevards. By a dull sound, he had divined that they were crossing the bridge of Austerlitz. At the first stop he had comprehended that they were entering the cemetery; at the second stop he had said: here is the grave.

He felt that hands hastily seized the coffin, then a harsh scraping upon the boards; he concluded that that was the rope which they were tying around the coffin to let it down into the excavation.

Then he felt a kind of dizziness.

Probably the bearer and the grave-digger had tipped the coffin and let the head down before the feet. He returned fully to himself on feeling that he was horizontal and motionless. He had touched the bottom.

He felt a certain chill.

A voice arose above him, icy and solemn. He heard pass away some Latin words which he did not understand, pronounced so slowly that he could catch them one after another:

*"Qui dormiunt in terræ pulvere evigilabunt; alii in vitam æternam, et alii in opprobrium, ut videant semper."*

A child's voice said: "*De profundis.*" The deep voice recommenced. "*Requiem æternam dona ei, Domine.*" The child's voice responded: "*Et lux perpetua luceat ei.*"

He heard upon the board which covered him something like the gentle patter of a few drops of rain. It was probably the holy water.

He thought: "This will soon be finished. A little more patience. The priest is going away. Fauchelevent will take Mestienne away to drink. They will leave me. Then Fauchelevent will come back alone, and I shall get out. That will take a good hour.

The deep voice resumed: "*Requiescat in pace.*" And the child's voice said: "*Amen.*"

Jean Valjean, intently listening, perceived something like receding steps. "Now there they go," thought he. "I am alone."

All at once he heard a sound above his head which seemed to him like a clap of thunder.

It was a spadeful of earth falling upon the coffin.

A second spadeful of earth fell. One of the holes by which he breathed was stopped up.

A third spadeful of earth fell. Then a fourth. There are things stronger than the strongest man. Jean Valjean lost consciousness.

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## VII.

IN WHICH WILL BE FOUND THE ORIGIN OF THE SAYING: DON'T LOSE YOUR CARD.

Let us see what occurred over the coffin in which Jean Valjean lay.

When the hearse had departed, and the priest and the choir-boy had got into the carriage and were gone, Fauchelevent, who had never taken his eyes off the grave digger, saw him stoop, and grasp his spade, which was standing upright in the heap of earth. Hereupon, Fauchelevent formed a supreme resolve. Placing himself between the grave and the

grave-digger, and folding his arms, he said: "I'll pay for it." The grave-digger eyed him with amazement, and replied: "What, peasant?" Fauchelevant repeated: "I'll pay for it." "For what?" "For the wine." "What wine?" "The Argenteuil." "Where's the Argenteuil?" "At the Good Quince." "Go to the devil!" said the grave-digger. And he threw a spadeful of earth upon the coffin.

The coffin gave back a hollow sound. Fauchelevant felt himself stagger, and nearly fell into the grave. In a voice in which the strangling sound of the death rattle began to be heard, he cried: "Come comrade, before the Good Quince closes." The grave-digger took up another spadeful of earth. Fauchelevant continued: "I'll pay," and he seized the grave-digger by the arm. "Hark ye, comrade," he said, "I am the grave digger of the convent, and have come to help you. It's a job we can do at night. Let us take a drink first."

And as he spoke, even while clinging desperately to this urgent effort, he asked himself, with some misgiving: "And even should he drink—will he get tipsy?"

"Good rustic," said the gravedigger, "if you insist, I consent. We'll have a drink, but after my work, never before it." And he tossed his spade again. Fauchelevant held him. "It is Argenteuil at six sous the pint!" "Ah! bah!" said the grave-digger, "you're a bore. Ding-dong, ding-dong, the same thing over and over again; that's all you can say. Be off, about your business." And he threw in the second spadeful.

Fauchelevant had reached that point where a man knows no longer what he is saying. "Oh! come on, and take a glass, since I'm the one to pay," he again repeated. "When we've put the child to bed," said the grave-digger. He tossed in the third spadeful; then, plunging his spade into the earth, he added: "You see, now, it's going to be cold to-night, and the dead one would cry out after us, if we were to plant her there without good covering."

At this moment, in the act of filling his spade, the grave-digger stooped low, and the pocket of his vest gaped open.

The bewildered eye of Fauchelevant rested mechanically on this pocket, and remained fixed.

The sun was not yet hidden behind the horizon, and there was still light enough to distinguish something white in the gaping pocket.

All the lightning which the eye of a Picardy peasant can contain flashed into the pupils of Fauchelevant. A new idea had struck him.

Without the grave-digger, who was occupied with his spadeful of earth, perceiving him, he slipped his hand from behind into the pocket, and took from it the white object it contained.

The grave-digger flung into the grave the fourth spadeful.

Just as he was turning to take the fifth, Fauchelevant, looking at him with imperturbable calmness, asked: "By the way, my new friend, have you your card?" The grave-digger stopped. "What card?" "The sun is setting." "Well let him put on his night-cap." "The cemetery gate will be closed." "Well, what then?" "Have you your card?" "Oh! my card," said the grave-digger, and he felt in his pocket.

Having rummaged one pocket, he tried another. From these, he pro-

ceeded to try his watch fobs, exploring the first, and turning the second inside out. "No!" said he, "no! I haven't got my card. I must have forgotten it." "Fifteen francs fine," said Fauchelevant.

The grave-digger turned green. Green is the paleness of people naturally livid. "Oh, good-gracious God, what a fool I am," he exclaimed. "Fifteen francs fine!" "Three hundred-sous pieces," said Fauchelevant. The grave-digger dropped his spade. Fauchelevant's turn had come.

"Come! come, cheer up," said Fauchelevant, "never despair; there's nothing to kill oneself about, and feed the worms. Fifteen francs are fifteen francs, and besides you may not have them to pay. I am an old hand, and you are a new one. I know all the tricks and traps and turns and twists of the business. I'll give you a friend's advice. One thing is clear—the sun is setting—and the grave-yard will be closed in five minutes." "That's true," replied the grave-digger. "Five minutes is not time enough for you to fill the grave—it's as deep as the very devil—and get out of this before the gate is shut." "You're right." "In that case there is fifteen francs fine." "Fifteen francs!" "But you have time. . . . Where do you live?" "Just in the barrière. Fifteen minutes' walk. Number 87, Rue de Vaugirard." "You have time, if you will hang your toggery about your neck, to get out at once." "That's true." "Once outside of the gate, you scamper home, get your card, come back, and the gate-keeper will let you in again. Having your card, there's nothing to pay. Then you can bury your dead man. I'll stay here and watch him while you are gone, to see that he doesn't run away." "I owe you my life, peasant." "Be off, then, quick," said Fauchelevant.

The grave-digger, overcome with gratitude, shook his hands and started at a run.

When the grave-digger had disappeared through the bushes, Fauchelevant listened until his footsteps died away, and then, bending over the grave, called out in a low voice: "Father Madelaine!"

No answer.

Fauchelevant shuddered. He dropped rather than clambered down into the grave, threw himself upon the head of the coffin, and cried out: "Are you there?"

Silence in the coffin.

Fauchelevant, no longer able to breathe for the shiver that was on him, took his cold chisel and hammer, and wrenched off the top board. The face of Jean Valjean could be seen in the twilight, his eyes closed and his cheeks colorless.

Fauchelevant's hair stood erect with alarm; he arose to his feet, and then tottered with his back against the side of the grave, ready to sink down upon the coffin. He looked upon Jean Valjean.

Jean Valjean lay there pallid and motionless.

Fauchelevant murmured in a voice low as a whisper:

"He is dead"

Then straightening himself, and crossing his arms so violently that his clenched fists sounded against his shoulders, he exclaimed: "This is the way I have saved him."

Then the poor old man began to sob, talking aloud to himself the

while, for it is a mistake to think that talking to oneself is not natural. Powerful emotions often speak aloud.

"It's Father Mestienne's fault. What did he die for, the fool? What was the use of going off in that way just when no one expected it? It was he who killed poor M. Madeleine. Father Madeleine! He is in the coffin. He's settled. There's an end of it. Now, what's the sense of such things? Good God! he's dead! Yes, and his little girl—what am I to do with her? What will the fruit-woman say? That such a man could die in that way. Good Heaven, is it possible! When I think that he put himself under my care! . . . Father Madeleine! Father Madeleine! Mercy, he's suffocated. I said so—but, he wouldn't believe me. Now, here's a pretty piece of business! He's dead—one of the very best men God ever made; aye, the best, the very best! And his little girl! I'm not going back there again. I'm going to stay here. To have done such a thing as this! It's well worth while to be two old greybeards, in order to be two old fools. But, to begin with, how did he manage to get into the convent—that's where it started. Such things shouldn't be done. Father Madeleine! Father Madeleine! Father Madeleine! Madeleine! Monsieur Madeleine! Monsieur Mayor! He doesn't hear me. Get yourself out of this now, if you please."

And he tore his hair.

At a distance, through the trees, a harsh grating sound was heard. It was the gate of the cemetery closing.

Fauchelevant again bent over Jean Valjean, but suddenly started back with all the recoil that was possible in a grave. Jean Valjean's eyes were open, and gazing at him.

To behold death is terrifying, and to see a sudden restoration is nearly as much so. Fauchelevant became cold and white as a stone, haggard and utterly disconcerted by all these powerful emotions, and not knowing whether he had the dead or the living to deal with, stared at Jean Valjean, who in turn stared at him.

"I was falling asleep," said Jean Valjean. And he arose to a sitting posture.

Fauchelevant dropped on his knees. "Oh, blessed Virgin! How you frightened me!"

Then springing again to his feet, he cried: "Thank you, Father Madeleine!"

Jean Valjean had merely swooned. The open air had revived him.

Joy is the reflex of terror. Fauchelevant had nearly as much difficulty as Jean Valjean in coming to himself. "Then you're not dead. Oh, what good sense you have. I called you so loudly that you got over it. When I saw you with your eyes shut, I said, 'Well, there now, he's suffocated.' I should have gone raving mad—mad enough for a straight-jacket. They'd have put me in the Bicêtre. What would you have had me do if you had been dead? And your little girl! the fruit woman would have understood nothing about it! A child plumped into her lap, and its grandfather dead! What a story to tell! By all the saints in Heaven, what a story! Ah! but you're alive—that's the best of it.

"I am cold," said Jean Valjean. These words recalled Fauchelevant completely to the real state of affairs, which were urgent. These two



men, even when restored, felt, without knowing it, a peculiar agitation and a strange inward trouble, which was but the sinister bewilderment of the place.

"Let us get away from here at once," said Fauchelevant. He thrust his hand into his pocket, and drew from it a flask with which he was provided. "But a drop of this first," said he.

The flask completed what the open air had begun. Jean Valjean took a swallow of brandy, and felt thoroughly restored.

He got out of the coffin, and assisted Fauchelevant to nail down the lid again. Three minutes afterwards, they were out of the grave.

After this Fauchelevant was calm enough. He took his time. The cemetery was closed. There was no fear of the return of Gribier, the grave-digger. That recruit was at home, hunting up his "card," and rather unlikely to find it, as it was in Fauchelevant's pocket. Without his card he could not get back into the cemetery.

Fauchelevant took the spade and Jean Valjean the pick, and together they buried the empty coffin.

When the grave was filled, Fauchelevant said to Jean Valjean: "Come let us go, I'll keep the spade, you take the pick."

Night was coming on rapidly.

Jean Valjean found it hard to move and walk. In the coffin he had stiffened considerably, somewhat in reality like a corpse. The ankylosis of death had seized him in that narrow wooden box. He had, in some sort, to thaw himself out of the sepulchre.

"You are benumbed," said Fauchelevant; "and what a pity that I'm bawdy-legged, or we'd run a bit."

"No matter," replied Jean Valjean, "a few steps will put my legs into walking order."

They went out by the avenues the hearse had followed. When they reached the closed gate and the porter's lodge, Fauchelevant, who had the grave digger's card in his hand, dropped it into the box, the porter drew the cord, the gate opened, and they went through.

"How well everything goes," said Fauchelevant; "what a good plan that was of yours, Father Madeleine!"

They passed the Barrière Vaugirard in the easiest way in the world. In the neighborhood of a grave-yard a pick and spade are two passports.

The Rue de Vaugirard was deserted.

"Father Madeleine," said Fauchelevant, as he went along, looking up at the houses, "you have better eyes than mine—which is number 87?"

"Here it is now," said Jean Valjean.

"There's no one in the street," resumed Fauchelevant. "Give me the pick, and wait for me a couple of minutes."

Fauchelevant went in at number 87, ascended to the topmost flight, guided by the instinct which always leads the poor to the garret, and knocked, in the dark, at the door of a little attic room. A voice called: "Come in." It was Gribier's voice.

Fauchelevant pushed open the door. The lodging of the grave-digger was, like all these shelters of the needy, an unfurnished, but much littered loft. A packing case of some kind—a coffin, perhaps—supplied the place of a bureau, a straw pallet the place of a bed, a butter pot the

place of water-cooler, and the floor served alike for chairs and table. In one corner, on a ragged old scrap of carpet, was a haggard woman, and a number of children were huddled together. The whole of this wretched interior bore the traces of recent overturn: One would have said that there had been an earthquake served up there "for one." The coverlets were displaced, the ragged garments were scattered about, the pitcher broken, the mother had been weeping, and the children probably beaten; all traces of a headlong and violent search. It was plain that the grave-digger had been looking, wildly, for his card, and had made everything in the attic, from his pitcher to his wife, responsible for the loss. He had a desperate appearance.

But Fauchelevent was in too great a hurry for the end of his adventure, to notice this gloomy side of his triumph. As he came in, he said: "I've brought your spade and pick." Gribier looked at him with stupefaction. "What, is it you, peasant?" "And to-morrow morning you will find your card with the gate-keeper of the cemetery." And he set down the pick and the spade on the floor. "What does all this mean?" asked Gribier.

"Why, it means that you let your card drop out of your pocket; that I found it on the ground when you had gone; that I buried the corpse; that I filled in the grave; that I finished your job; that the porter will give you your card, and that you will not have to pay the fifteen francs. That's what it means, recruit?" "Thanks, villager!" exclaimed Gribier, in amazement. "The next time I will treat."

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## VIII.

### SUCCESSFUL EXAMINATION.

An hour later, in the depth of night, two men and a child stood in front of No. 62, Petite Rue Piepus. The elder of the men lifted the knocker and rapped.

It was Fauchelevent, Jean Valjean, and Cosette.

The two men had gone to look for Cosette at the shop of the fruiteress of the Rue du Chemin Vert, where Fauchelevent had left her on the preceding evening. Cosette had passed the twenty-four hours wondering what it all meant, and trembling in silence. She trembled so much that she had not wept, nor had she tasted food nor slept. The worthy fruit-woman had asked her a thousand questions without obtaining any other answer than a sad look that never varied. Cosette did not let a word of all she had heard and seen, in the last two days, escape her. She divined that a crisis had come. She felt, in her very heart, that she must be "good." Who has not experienced the supreme effect of these two words pronounced in a certain tone in the ear of some little frightened creature, "don't speak." Fear is mute. Besides, no one ever keeps a secret so well as a child.

But when, after those mournful four-and-twenty hours, she again saw Jean Valjean, she uttered such a cry of joy that any thoughtful person hearing her would have divined in it an escape from some yawning gulf.

Fauchelevant belonged to the convent and knew all the pass-words. Every door opened before him.

Thus was that doubly fearful problem solved of getting out and getting in again.

The porter, who had his instructions, opened the little side door which served to communicate between the court and the garden, and which, twenty years ago, could still be seen from the street, in the wall at the extremity of the court, facing the porte-cochère. The porter admitted all three by this door, and from that point they went to this private inner parlor, where Fauchelevant had, on the previous evening, received the orders of the prioress.

The prioress, rosary in hand, was awaiting them. A mother, with her veil down, stood near her. A modest taper lighted, or one might almost say, pretended to light up the parlor.

The prioress scrutinized Jean Valjean. Nothing scans so carefully as a downcast eye.

Then she proceeded to question :

"You are the brother?" "Yes, reverend mother," replied Fauchelevant. "What is your name?" Fauchelevant replied: "Ultimus Fauchelevant!" He had, in reality, had a brother named Ultimus, who was dead. "From what part of the country are you?" Fauchelevant answered: "From Picquigny, near Amiens." "What is your age?" Fauchelevant answered: "Fifty." "What is your business?" Fauchelevant answered: "Gardener." "Are you a true Christian?" Fauchelevant answered: "All of our family are such." "Is this your little girl?" Fauchelevant answered: "Yes, reverend mother." "You are her father?" Fauchelevant answered: "Her grandfather." The mother said to the prioress in an undertone: "He answers well." Jean Valjean had not spoken a word.

The prioress looked at Cosette attentively, and then said, aside to the mother: "She will be homely." The two mothers talked together very low for a few minutes in a corner of the parlor, and then the prioress turned and said: "Father Fauvent, you will have another knee-cap and bell. We need two now."

So, next morning, two little bells were heard tinkling in the garden, and the nuns could not keep from lifting a corner of their veils. They saw two men digging side by side, in the lower part of the garden under the trees—Fauvent and another. Immense event! The silence was broken so far as to say: "It's an assistant-gardener!" The mothers added: "He is Father Fauvent's brother."

In fact, Jean Valjean was regularly installed; he had the leather knee-cap and the bell; henceforth he had his commission. His name was Ultimus Fauchelevant.

The strongest recommendation for Cosette's admission had been the remark of the prioress: *She will be homely.*

The prioress having uttered this prediction, immediately took Cosette into her friendship and gave her a place in the school building as a charity pupil.

There is nothing not entirely logical in this.

It is all in vain to have no mirrors in convents; women are conscious of their own appearance; young girls who know that they are pretty do

not readily become nuns: the inclination to the calling being in inverse proportion to good looks, more is expected from the homely than from the handsome ones. Hence a marked preference for the homely.

This whole affair elevated good old Fauchelevent greatly; he had achieved a triple success: in the eyes of Jean Valjean, whom he had rescued and sheltered; with the gravedigger, Gribier, who said he had saved him from a fine; and, at the convent, which, thanks to him, in retaining the coffin of Mother Crucifixion under the altar, eluded the law and satisfied God. There was a coffin with a body in it at the Petit Picpus, and a coffin without a body in the Vaugirard Cemetery. Public order was greatly disturbed thereby, undoubtedly, but nobody perceived it. As for the convent, its gratitude to Fauchelevent was deep. Fauchelevent became the best of servants and the most precious of gardeners.

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## IX.

### THE CLOSE.

Cosette, at the convent, still kept silent. She very naturally thought herself Jean Valjean's daughter. Moreover, knowing nothing, there was nothing she could tell, and then, in any case, she would not have told anything. As we have remarked, nothing habituates children to silence like misfortune. Cosette had suffered so much that she was afraid of everything, even to speak, even to breathe. A single word had so often brought down an avalanche on her head! She had hardly begun to feel re-assured since she had been with Jean Valjean. She soon became accustomed to the convent. Still, she longed for Catharine, but dared not say so. One day, however, she said to Jean Valjean, "If I had known it, father, I would have brought her with me."

Cosette, in becoming a pupil at the convent, had to assume the dress of the school girls. Jean Valjean succeeded in having the garments which she laid aside, given to him. It was the same mourning suit he had carried for her to put on when she left the Thenardiens. It was not much worn. Jean Valjean rolled up these garments, as well as the woollen stockings and shoes, with much camphor and other aromatic substances of which there is such an abundance in convents, and packed them in a small valise which he managed to procure. He put this valise in a chair near his bed, and always kept the key of it in his pocket.

"Father," Cosette one day asked him, "what is that box there that smells so good?"

Father Fauchelevent was recompensed for his good deed; in the first place it made him happy, and then he had less work to do, as it was divided. Finally, as he was very fond of tobacco, he found the presence of M. Madeleine advantageous in another point of view: he took three times as much tobacco as before, and that, too, in a manner infinitely more voluptuous, since M. Madeleine paid for it. The nuns did not adopt the name of *Ultimus*: they called Jean Valjean *the other Fauchent*.

If those holy women had possessed aught of the discrimination of Javert, they might have remarked, in course of time, that when there was any little errand to run outside for on account of the garden, it was

always the elder Fauchelevent, old, infirm, and lame as he was, who went, and never the other; but, whether it be that eyes continually fixed upon God cannot play the spy, or whether they were too constantly employed in watching one another, they noticed nothing.

However, Jean Valjean was well satisfied to keep quiet and still. Javert watched the quarter for a good long month.

The convent was to Jean Valjean like an island surrounded by wide waters. These four walls were, henceforth, the world to him. Within them he could see enough of the sky to be calm, and enough of Cosette to be happy. A very pleasant life began again for him.

He lived with Fauchelevent in the out-building at the foot of the garden. This pretty structure, built of rubbish, which was still standing in 1845, consisted, as we have already stated, of three rooms, all of which were bare to the very walls. The principal one had been forcibly pressed upon M. Madelcine by Fauchelevent, for Jean Valjean had resisted in vain. The wall of this room, besides the two nails used for hanging up the knee-leather and the hoe, was decorated with a royalist specimen of paper-money of '93, pasted above the fireplace.

This Vendean assignat had been tacked to the wall by the preceding gardener, a former member of the Chouan party, who had died at the convent, and whom Fauchelevent had succeeded.

Jean Valjean worked every day in the garden, and was very useful there. He had formerly been a pruner, and now found it quite in his way to be a gardener. It may be remembered that he knew all kinds of receipts and secrets of field-work. These he turned to account. Nearly all the orchard trees were wild stock; he grafted them and made them bear excellent fruit.

Cosette was allowed to come every day, and pass an hour with him. As the sisters were melancholy, and he was kind, the child compared him with them, and worshipped him. Every day, at the hour appointed, she would hurry to the little building. When she entered the old place, she filled it with Paradise. Jean Valjean basked in her presence and felt his own happiness increase by reason of the happiness he conferred on Cosette. The delight we inspire in others has this enchanting peculiarity that, far from being diminished like every other reflection, it returns to us more radiant than ever. At the hours of recreation, Jean Valjean from a distance watched her playing and romping, and he could distinguish her laughter from the laughter of the rest.

For, now, Cosette laughed.

Even Cosette's countenance had, in a measure, changed. The gloomy cast had disappeared. Laughter is sunshine; it chases winter from the human face.

When the recreation was over and Cosette went in, Jean Valjean watched the windows of her school-room, and, at night, would rise from his bed to take a look at the windows of the room in which she slept.

God has his own ways. The convent contributed, like Cosette, to confirm and complete, in Jean Valjean, the work of the Bishop. It cannot be denied that one of virtue's phases ends in pride. Therein is a bridge built by the Evil One. Jean Valjean was, perhaps, without knowing it, near that very phase of virtue, and that very bridge, when Providence flung him into the convent of the Petit Picpus. So long as

he compared himself only with the Bishop, he found himself unworthy and remained humble; but, for some time past, he had been comparing himself with the rest of men, and pride was springing up in him. Who knows? He might have finished by going gradually back to hate.

The convent stopped him on this descent.

It was the second place of captivity he had seen. In his youth, in what had been for him the commencement of life, and, later, quite recently too, he had seen another, a frightful place, a terrible place, the severities of which had always seemed to him to be the iniquity of public justice and the crime of the law. Now, after having seen the galleys, he saw the cloister, and reflecting that he had been an inmate of the galleys, and that he now was, so to speak, a spectator of the cloister, he anxiously compared them in his meditations with anxiety.

Sometimes he would lean upon his spade and descend slowly along the endless rounds of revery.

He recalled his former companions, and how wretched they were. They rose at dawn and toiled until night. Scarcely allowed to sleep, they lay on camp beds, and were permitted to have mattresses but two inches thick, in halls which were warmed only during the most inclement months. They were attired in hideous red sacks, and had given to them, as a favor, a pair of canvas pantaloons in the heats of midsummer, and a square of woollen stuff to throw over their shoulders, during the bitterest frosts of winter. They had no wine to drink, no meat for food excepting when sent upon "extra hard work." They lived without names, distinguished solely by numbers, and reduced, as it were, to cyphers, lowering their eyes, lowering their voices, with their hair cropped close, under the rod, and plunged in shame.

Then, his thoughts reverted to the beings before his eyes.

These beings, also, lived with their hair cut close, their eyes bent down, their voices hushed, not in shame indeed, but amid the scoffs of the world; not with their backs bruised by the gaoler's staff, but with their shoulders lacerated by self-inflicted penance. Their names, too, had perished from among men, and they now existed under austere designations alone. They never ate meat and never drank wine; they often remained until evening without food. They were attired, not in red sacks, but in black habits of woollen, heavy in summer, light in winter, unable to increase or diminish them, without even the privilege, according to the season, of substituting a linnen dress or a woollen cloak, and then, for six months in the year, they wore under-clothing of serge which fevered them. They dwelt, not in dormitories warmed only in the bitterest frosts of winter, but in cells where fire was never kindled. They slept, not on mattresses two inches thick, but upon straw. Moreover, they were not even allowed to sleep, for, every night, after a day of labor, they were, when whelmed beneath the weight of the first sleep, at the moment when they were just beginning to slumber, and, with difficulty, to collect a little warmth, required to waken, rise and assemble for prayers in an icy-cold and gloomy chapel, with their knees on the stone pavement.

On certain days, each one of these beings, in her turn, had to remain twelve hours in succession kneeling upon the flags, or prostrate on her face, with her arms crossed.

The others were men, these were women. What had these men done? They had robbed, ravished, plundered, killed assassinated. They were highwaymen, forgers, poisoners, incendiaries, murderers, parricides. What had these women done? They had done nothing.

On one side, robbery, fraud, imposition, violence, lust, homicide, every species of sacrilege, every description of offence; on the other, one thing only—innocence.

A perfect innocence almost borne upwards in a mysterious Assumption, clinging still to Earth through virtue, already touching Heaven through holiness.

On the one hand, the mutual avowal of crimes detailed with bated breath; on the other, faults confessed aloud. And oh! what crimes! and oh! what faults!

On one side, foul miasma; on the other, ineffable perfume. On the one side, a moral pestilence, watched day and night, held in subjection at the cannon's mouth, and slowly consuming its infected victims; on the other, a chaste kindling of every soul together on the same hearthstone. There, utter gloom; here, the shadow, but a shadow full of light, and the light full of glowing radiations.

Two seats of slavery; but, in the former, rescue possible, a legal limit always in view, and then, escape. In the second, perpetuity, the only hope at the most distant boundary of the future, that gleam of liberty which men call death.

In the former, the captives were enchained by chains only; in the other, they were enchained by faith alone.

What resulted from the first? One vast curse, the gnashing of teeth, hatred, desperate depravity, a cry of rage against human society, a sarcasm against Heaven.

What issued from the second? Benediction and love.

And, in these two places, so alike and yet so different, these two species of beings so dissimilar were performing the same work of expiation.

Jean Valjean thoroughly comprehended the expiation of the first; personal expiation, expiation for one's self. But he did not understand that of the others, of these blameless, spotless creatures, and he asked himself with a tremor: "Expiation of what? What expiation?"

A voice responded in his conscience: the most divine of all human generosity, expiation for others:

Here we withhold all theories of our own: we are but the narrator; at Jean Valjean's point of view we place ourselves, and we merely reproduce his impression.

He had before his eyes the sublime summit of self-denial, the loftiest possible height of virtue; innocence forgiving men their sins and expiating them in their stead; servitude endured, torture accepted, chastisement and misery invoked by souls that had not sinned in order that these might not fall upon souls which had; the love of humanity losing itself in the love of God, but remaining there, distinct and suppliant; sweet, feeble beings, supporting all the torments of those who are punished, yet retaining the smile of those who are rewarded. And then he remembered that he had dared to complain.

Often, in the middle of the night, he would rise from his bed to listen to the grateful anthem of these innocent beings thus overwhelmed

with austerities, and he felt the blood run cold in his veins as he reflected that they who were justly punished never raised their voices towards Heaven excepting to blaspheme, and that he, wretch that he was, had uplifted his clenched fist against God.

Another strange thing which made him muse and meditate profoundly seemed like an intimation whispered in his ear by Providence itself: the scaling of walls, the climbing over inclosures, the risk taken in defiance of danger or death, the difficult and painful ascent—all these very efforts that he had made to escape from the other place of expiation, he had made to enter this one. Was this an emblem of his destiny?

This house, also, was a prison, and bore dismal resemblance to the other from which he had fled, and yet he had never conceived anything like it.

He once more saw gratings, bolts and bars of iron—to shut in whom? Angels. Those lofty walls which he had seen surrounding tigers, he now saw encircling lambs.

It was a place of expiation, not of punishment; and yet it was still more austere, more sombre and more pitiless than the other. These virgins were more harshly bent down than the convict. A harsh, cold blast, the blast that had frozen his youth, carcered across that grated moat and manacled the vultures; but a wind still more biting and more cruel beat upon the dove cage. And why?

When he thought of these things, all that was in him gave way before this mystery of sublimity. In these meditations pride vanished. He reverted, again and again, to himself; he felt his own pitiful unworthiness, and often wept. All that had occurred in his existence, for the last six months, led him back towards the holy injunctions of the Bishop; Cosette through love, the convent through humility.

Sometimes, in the evening, about dusk, at the hour when the garden was solitary, he was seen kneeling, in the middle of the walk that ran along the chapel, before the window through which he had looked, on the night of his first arrival, turned towards the spot where he knew that the sister who was performing the reparation was prostrate in prayer. Thus he prayed kneeling before this sister.

It seemed as though he dared not kneel directly before God.

Everything around him, this quiet garden, these balmy flowers, these children, shouting with joy, these meek and simple women, this silent cloister, gradually entered into all his being, and, little by little, his soul subsided into silence like this cloister, into fragrance like these flowers, into peace like this garden, into simplicity like these women, into joy like these children. And then he reflected that two houses of God had received him in succession at the two critical moments of his life, the first when every door was closed and human society repelled him; the second, when human society again howled upon his track, and the galleys once more gaped for him; and that, had it not been for the first, he should have fallen back into crime, and, had it not been for the second, into punishment.

His whole heart melted in gratitude, and he loved more and more.

Several years passed thus. Cosette was growing.













