Victor Hugo

1868

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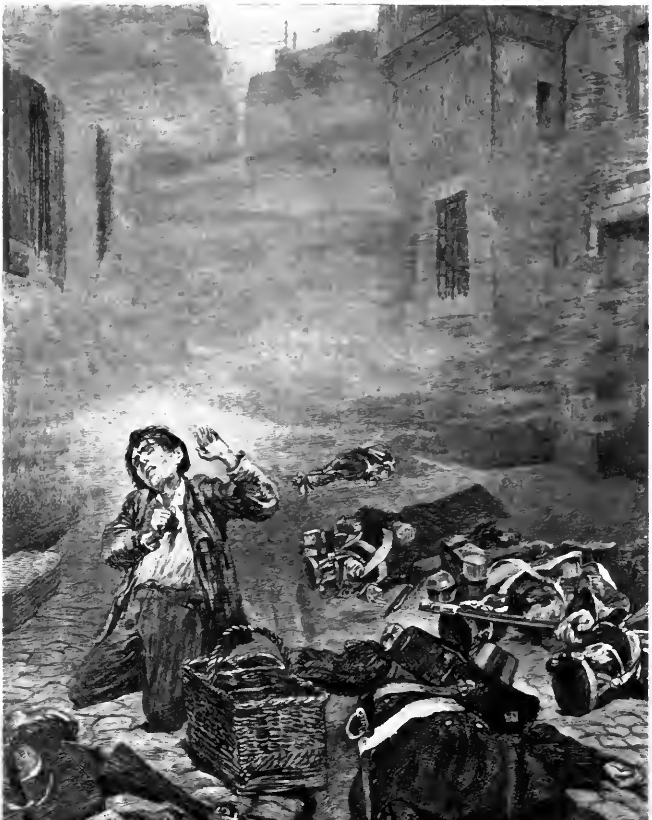

The Works *of*
Victor Hugo

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Isabel F. Hapgood,
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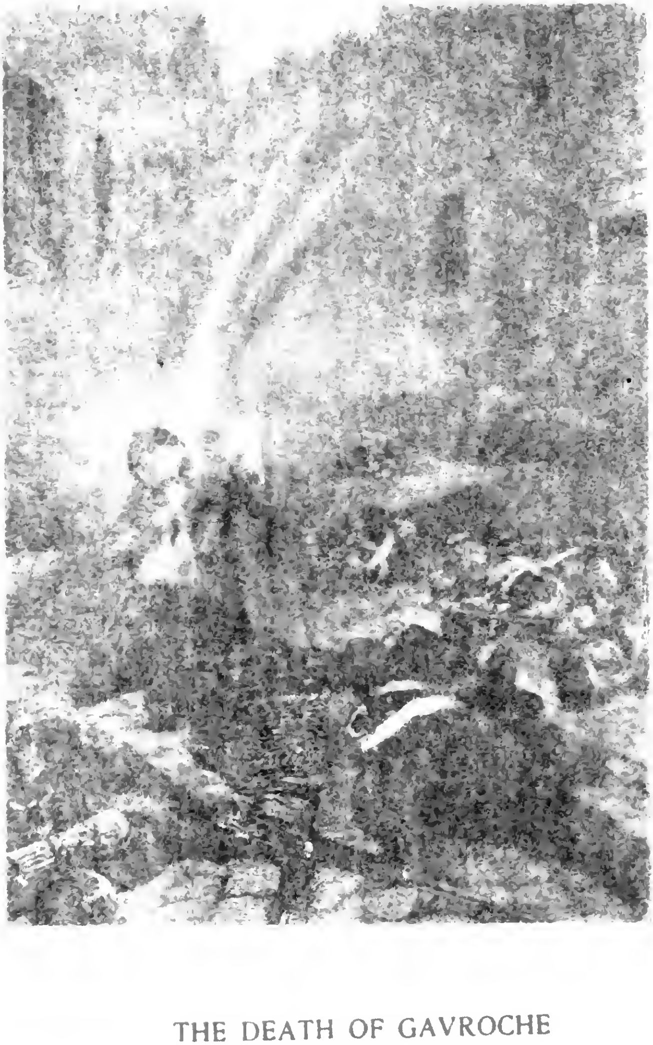
and Helen B. Dole

Les Misérables
Volume III
Ninety-Three

THE KELMSCOTT SOCIETY
PUBLISHERS NEW YORK



THE DEATH OF GAVROCHE

PHOTOGRAVURE FROM A DRAWING BY

G. JEANNIOT

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JEAN VALJEAN.

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LETTER TO M. DAELLI.

JEAN VALJEAN

BOOK FIRST.—THE WAR BETWEEN FOUR WALLS

CHAPTER I

THE CHARYBDIS OF THE FAUBOURG SAINT ANTOINE AND THE SCYLLA OF THE FAUBOURG DU TEMPLE

THE two most memorable barricades which the observer of social maladies can name do not belong to the period in which the action of this work is laid. These two barricades, both of them symbols, under two different aspects, of a redoubtable situation, sprang from the earth at the time of the fatal insurrection of June, 1848, the greatest war of the streets that history has ever beheld.

It sometimes happens that, even contrary to principles, even contrary to liberty, equality, and fraternity, even contrary to the universal vote, even contrary to the government, by all for all, from the depths of its anguish, of its discouragements and its destitutions, of its fevers, of its distresses, of its miasmas, of its ignorances, of its darkness, that great and despairing body, the rabble, protests against, and that the populace wages battle against, the people.

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

These are melancholy days; for there is always a certain amount of night even in this madness, there is suicide in this duel, and those words which are intended to be insults—beggars, canaille, ochlocracy, populace—exhibit, alas! rather the fault of those who reign than the fault of those who suffer; rather the fault of the privileged than the fault of the disinherited.

For our own part, we never pronounce those words without pain and without respect, for when philosophy fathoms the facts to which they correspond, it often finds many a grandeur beside these miseries. Athens was an ochlocracy; the beggars were the making of Holland; the populace saved Rome more than once; and the rabble followed Jesus Christ.

There is no thinker who has not at times contemplated the magnificences of the lower classes.

It was of this rabble that Saint Jerome was thinking, no doubt, and of all these poor people and all these vagabonds and all these miserable people whence sprang the apostles and the martyrs, when he uttered this mysterious saying: *"Fex urbis, lex orbis,"*—the dregs of the city, the law of the earth.

The exasperations of this crowd which suffers and bleeds, its violences contrary to all sense, directed against the principles which are its life, its masterful deeds against the right, are its popular *coups d'état* and should be repressed. The man of probity sacrifices himself, and out of his very love for this crowd, he combats it. But how excusable he feels it even while holding out against it! How he venerates it even while resisting it! This is one of those rare moments when, while doing that which it is one's duty to do, one feels something which disconcerts one, and which would dissuade one from proceeding further; one persists, it is necessary, but conscience, though satisfied, is sad, and the accomplishment of duty is complicated with a pain at the heart.

June, 1848, let us hasten to say, was an exceptional fact, and almost impossible of classification, in the philosophy of history. All the words which we have just uttered, must be discarded, when it becomes a question of this extraordinary revolt, in which one feels the holy anxiety of toil claiming its rights. It was necessary to combat it, and this was a duty, for it attacked the republic. But what was June, 1848, at bottom? A revolt of the people against itself.

Where the subject is not lost sight of, there is no digression; may we, then, be permitted to arrest the reader's attention for a moment on the two absolutely unique barricades of which we have just spoken and which characterized this insurrection.

One blocked the entrance to the Faubourg Saint Antoine; the other defended the approach to the Faubourg du Temple; those before whom these two fearful masterpieces of civil war reared themselves beneath the brilliant blue sky of June, will never forget them.

The Saint-Antoine barricade was tremendous; it was three stories high, and seven hundred feet wide. It barred the vast opening of the faubourg, that is to say, three streets, from angle to angle; ravined, jagged, cut up, divided, crenelated, with an immense rent, buttressed with piles that were bastions in themselves throwing out capes here and there, powerfully backed up by two great promontories of houses of the faubourg, it reared itself like a cyclopean dike at the end of the formidable place which had seen the 14th of July. Nineteen barricades were ranged, one behind the other, in the depths of the streets behind this principal barricade. At the very sight of it, one felt the agonizing suffering in the immense faubourg, which had reached that point of extremity when a distress may become a catastrophe. Of what was that barricade made? Of the ruins of three six-story houses demolished expressly, said some. Of the prodigy of all wraths, said others. It wore the lamentable aspect of all constructions of hatred, ruin. It might be asked: Who built this? It might also be said: Who destroyed this? It was the improvisation of the ebullition. Hold! take this door! this grating! this penthouse! this chimney-piece! this broken brazier! this cracked pot! Give all! cast away all! Push this roll, dig, dismantle, overturn, ruin everything! It was the collaboration of the pavement, the block of stone, the beam, the bar of iron, the rag, the scrap, the broken pane, the unseated chair, the cabbage-stalk, the tatter, the rag, and the malediction. It was grand and it was petty. It was the abyss parodied on the public place by hubbub. The mass beside the atom; the strip of ruined wall and the broken bowl,—threatening fraternization of every sort of rubbish. Sisyphus had thrown his rock there and Job his potsherd. Terrible, in short. It was the acropolis of the barefooted. Overturned carts broke the uniformity of the slope; an immense dray was spread out there crossways, its axle pointing heavenward, and seemed a scar on that tumultuous façade; an omnibus hoisted gayly, by main force, to the very summit of the heap, as though the architects of this bit of savagery had wished to add a touch of the street urchin humor to their terror, presented its horseless, unharnessed pole to no one knows what horses of the air. This gigantic heap, the alluvium of the revolt, figured to the mind an Ossa on Pelion of all revolutions; '93 on '89, the 9th of Thermidor on the 10th of August, the 18th of Brumaire on the 11th of January, Vendémiaire on Prairial, 1848 on 1830. The situation deserved the trouble and this barricade was worthy to figure on the very spot whence the Bastille had disappeared. If the ocean made dikes, it is thus that it would build. The fury of the flood was stamped upon this shapeless mass. What flood? The crowd. One thought one beheld hubbub petrified. One thought one heard humming above this barricade as though there had been over their hive, enormous, dark bees of violent progress. Was it a thicket? Was it a bacchanalia? Was it a fortress? Vertigo seemed to have constructed it with blows of its wings. There was something of the cess-pool in that redoubt and something Olympian in that confusion. One there beheld in a pell-mell full of despair, the rafters of roofs, bits of garret windows with their figured paper, window sashes with their glass planted there in the ruins awaiting the cannon, wrecks of chimneys, cupboards, tables, benches, a howling topsyturveydom, and those thousand poverty-stricken things, the very refuse of the mendicant, which contain at the same time fury and nothingness. One would have said that it was the tatters of a people, rags of wood, of iron, of bronze, of stone, and that the Faubourg Saint Antoine had thrust it there at its door, with a colossal flourish of the broom making of its misery its barricade. Blocks resembling headsman's blocks, dislocated chains, pieces of woodwork with brackets having the form of gibbets, horizontal wheels projecting from the rubbish, amalgamated with this edifice of anarchy the sombre figure of the old tortures endured by the people. The barricade Saint Antoine converted everything into a weapon; everything that civil war could throw at the head of society proceeded thence; it was not combat, it was a paroxysm; the carbines which defended this redoubt, among which there were some blunderbusses, sent bits of earthenware, bones, coat-buttons, even the casters from night-stands, dangerous projectiles on account of the brass. This barricade was furious; it hurled to the clouds an inexpressible clamor; at certain moments, when provoking the army, it was covered with throngs and tempest; a tumultuous crowd of flaming heads crowned it; a swarm filled it; it had a thorny crest of guns, of sabres, of cudgels, of axes, of pikes and of bayonets; a vast red flag flapped in the wind; shouts of command, songs of attack, the roll of drums, the sobs of women and bursts of gloomy laughter from the starving were to be heard there. It was huge and living, and, like the back of an electric beast, there proceeded from it little flashes of lightning. The spirit of revolution covered with its cloud this summit where rumbled that voice of the people which resembles the voice of God; a strange majesty was emitted by this titanic basket of rubbish. It was a heap of filth and it was Sinai.

As we have said previously, it attacked in the name of the revolution—what? The revolution. It—that barricade, chance, hazard, disorder, terror, misunderstanding, the unknown—had facing it the Constituent Assembly, the sovereignty of the people, universal suffrage, the nation, the republic; and it was the Carmagnole bidding defiance to the Marseillaise.

Immense but heroic defiance, for the old faubourg is a hero.

The faubourg and its redoubt lent each other assistance. The faubourg shouldered the redoubt, the redoubt took its stand under cover of the faubourg. The vast barricade spread out like a cliff against which the strategy of the African generals dashed itself. Its caverns, its excrescences, its warts, its gibbosities, grimaced, so to speak, and grinned beneath the smoke. The mitraille vanished in shapelessness; the bombs plunged into it; bullets only succeeded in making holes in it; what was the use of cannonading chaos? and the regiments, accustomed to the fiercest visions of war, gazed with uneasy eyes on that species of redoubt, a wild beast in its boar-like bristling and a mountain by its enormous size.

A quarter of a league away, from the corner of the Rue du Temple which debouches on the boulevard near the Château-d'Eau, if one thrust one's head bodily beyond the point formed by the front of the Dallemagne shop, one perceived in the distance, beyond the canal, in the street which mounts the slopes of Belleville at the culminating point of the rise, a strange wall reaching to the second story of the house fronts, a sort of hyphen between the houses on the right and the houses on the left, as though the street had folded back on itself its loftiest wall in order to close itself abruptly. This wall was built of paving-stones. It was straight, correct, cold, perpendicular, levelled with the square, laid out by rule and line. Cement was lacking, of course, but, as in the case of certain Roman walls, without interfering with its rigid architecture. The entablature was mathematically parallel with the base. From distance to distance, one could distinguish on the gray surface, almost invisible loopholes which resembled black threads. These loopholes were separated from each other by equal spaces. The street was deserted as far as the eye could reach. All windows and doors were closed. In the background rose this barrier, which made a blind thoroughfare of the street, a motionless and tranquil wall; no one was visible, nothing was audible; not a cry, not a sound, not a breath. A sepulchre.

The dazzling sun of June inundated this terrible thing with light.

It was the barricade of the Faubourg of the Temple.

As soon as one arrived on the spot, and caught sight of it, it was impossible, even for the boldest, not to become thoughtful before this mysterious apparition. It was adjusted, jointed, imbricated, rectilinear, symmetrical and funereal. Science and gloom met there. One felt that the chief of this barricade was a geometrician or a spectre. One looked at it and spoke low.

From time to time, if some soldier, an officer or representative of the people, chanced to traverse the deserted highway, a faint, sharp whistle was heard, and the passer-by fell dead or wounded, or, if he escaped the bullet, sometimes a biscaïen was seen to ensconce itself in some closed shutter, in the interstice between two blocks of stone, or in the plaster of a wall. For the men in the barricade had made themselves two small cannons out of two cast-iron lengths of gas-pipe, plugged up at one end with tow and fire-clay. There was no waste of useless powder. Nearly every shot told. There were corpses here and there, and pools of blood on the pavement. I remember a white butterfly which went and came in the street. Summer does not abdicate.

In the neighborhood, the space beneath the portes cochères were encumbered with wounded.

One felt oneself aimed at by some person whom one did not see, and one understood that guns were levelled at the whole length of the street.

Massed behind the sort of sloping ridge which the vaulted canal forms at the entrance to the Faubourg du Temple, the soldiers of the attacking column, gravely and thoughtfully, watched this dismal redoubt, this immobility, this passivity, whence sprang death. Some crawled flat on their faces as far as the crest of the curve of the bridge, taking care that their shakos did not project beyond it.

The valiant Colonel Monteynard admired this barricade with a shudder.—"How that is built!" he said to a Representative. "Not one paving-stone projects beyond its neighbor. It is made of porcelain."—At that moment, a bullet broke the cross on his breast, and he fell.

"The cowards!" people said. "Let them show themselves! Let us see them! They dare not! They are hiding!"

The barricade of the Faubourg du Temple, defended by eighty men, attacked by ten thousand, held out for three days. On the fourth, they did as at Zaatcha, as at Constantine, they pierced the houses, they came over the roofs, the barricade was taken. Not one of the eighty cowards thought of flight, all were killed there with the exception of the leader, Barthélemy, of whom we shall speak presently.

The Saint-Antoine barricade was the tumult of thunders; the barricade of the Temple was silence. The difference between these two redoubts was the difference between the formidable and the sinister. One seemed a maw; the other a mask.

Admitting that the gigantic and gloomy insurrection of June was composed of a wrath and of an enigma, one divined in the first barricade the dragon, and behind the second the sphinx.

These two fortresses had been erected by two men named, the one, Cournet, the other, Barthélemy. Cournet made the Saint-Antoine barricade; Barthélemy the barricade of the Temple. Each was the image of the man who had built it.

Cournet was a man of lofty stature; he had broad shoulders, a red face, a crushing fist, a bold heart, a loyal soul, a sincere and terrible eye. Intrepid, energetic, irascible, stormy; the most cordial of men, the most formidable of combatants. War, strife, conflict, were the very air he breathed and put him in a good humor. He had been an officer in the navy, and, from his gestures and his voice, one divined that he sprang from the ocean, and that he came from the tempest; he carried the hurricane on into battle. With the exception of the genius, there was in Cournet something of Danton, as, with the exception of the divinity, there was in Danton something of Hercules.

Barthélemy, thin, feeble, pale, taciturn, was a sort of tragic street urchin, who, having had his ears boxed by a policeman, lay in wait for him, and killed him, and at seventeen was sent to the galleys. He came out and made this barricade.

Later on, fatal circumstance, in London, proscribed by all, Barthélemy slew Cournet. It was a funereal duel. Some time afterwards, caught in the gearing of one of those mysterious adventures in which passion plays a part, a catastrophe in which French justice sees extenuating circumstances, and in which English justice sees only death, Barthélemy was hanged. The sombre social construction is so made that, thanks to material destitution, thanks to moral obscurity, that unhappy being who possessed an intelligence, certainly firm, possibly great, began in France with the galleys, and ended in England with the gallows. Barthélemy, on occasion, flew but one flag, the black flag.

CHAPTER II

WHAT IS TO BE DONE IN THE ABYSS IF ONE DOES NOT CONVERSE

Sixteen years count in the subterranean education of insurrection, and June, 1848, knew a great deal more about it than June, 1832. So the barricade of the Rue de la Chanvrerie was only an outline, and an embryo compared to the two colossal barricades which we have just sketched; but it was formidable for that epoch.

The insurgents under the eye of Enjolras, for Marius no longer looked after anything, had made good use of the night. The barricade had been not only repaired, but augmented. They had raised it two feet. Bars of iron planted in the pavement resembled lances in rest. All sorts of rubbish brought and added from all directions complicated the external confusion. The redoubt had been cleverly made over into a wall on the inside and a thicket on the outside.

The staircase of paving-stones which permitted one to mount it like the wall of a citadel had been reconstructed.

The barricade had been put in order, the tap-room disencumbered, the kitchen appropriated for the ambulance, the dressing of the wounded completed, the powder scattered on the ground and on the tables had been gathered up, bullets run, cartridges manufactured, lint scraped, the fallen weapons re-distributed, the interior of the redoubt cleaned, the rubbish swept up, corpses removed.

They laid the dead in a heap in the Mondétour lane, of which they were still the masters. The pavement was red for a long time at that spot. Among the dead there were four National Guardsmen of the suburbs. Enjolras had their uniforms laid aside.

Enjolras had advised two hours of sleep. Advice from Enjolras was a command. Still, only three or four took advantage of it.

Feuilly employed these two hours in engraving this inscription on the wall which faced the tavern:—

LONG LIVE THE PEOPLES!

These four words, hollowed out in the rough stone with a nail, could be still read on the wall in 1848.

The three women had profited by the respite of the night to vanish definitely; which allowed the insurgents to breathe more freely.

They had found means of taking refuge in some neighboring house.

The greater part of the wounded were able, and wished, to fight still. On a litter of mattresses and trusses of straw in the kitchen, which had been converted into an ambulance, there were five men gravely wounded, two of whom were municipal guardsmen. The municipal guardsmen were attended to first.

In the tap-room there remained only Mabeuf under his black cloth and Javert bound to his post.

"This is the hall of the dead," said Enjolras.

In the interior of this hall, barely lighted by a candle at one end, the mortuary table being behind the post like a horizontal bar, a sort of vast, vague cross resulted from Javert erect and Mabeuf lying prone.

The pole of the omnibus, although snapped off by the fusillade, was still sufficiently upright to admit of their fastening the flag to it.

Enjolras, who possessed that quality of a leader, of always doing what he said, attached to this staff the bullet-ridden and bloody coat of the old man's.

No repast had been possible. There was neither bread nor meat. The fifty men in the barricade had speedily exhausted the scanty provisions of the wine-shop during the sixteen hours which they had passed there. At a given moment, every barricade inevitably becomes the raft of *la Méduse*. They were obliged to resign themselves to hunger. They had then reached the first hours of that Spartan day of the 6th of June when, in the barricade Saint-Merry, Jeanne, surrounded by the insurgents who demanded bread, replied to all combatants crying: "Something to eat!" with: "Why? It is three o'clock; at four we shall be dead."

As they could no longer eat, Enjolras forbade them to drink. He interdicted wine, and portioned out the brandy.

They had found in the cellar fifteen full bottles hermetically sealed. Enjolras and Combeferre examined them. Combeferre when he came up again said:—"It's the old stock of Father Hucheloup, who began business as a grocer."—"It must be real wine," observed Bossuet. "It's lucky that Grantaire is asleep. If he were on foot, there would be a good deal of difficulty in saving those bottles."—Enjolras, in spite of all murmurs, placed his veto on the fifteen bottles, and, in order that no one might touch them, he had them placed under the table on which Father Mabeuf was lying.

About two o'clock in the morning, they reckoned up their strength. There were still thirty-seven of them.

The day began to dawn. The torch, which had been replaced in its cavity in the pavement, had just been extinguished. The interior of the barricade, that species of tiny courtyard appropriated from the street, was bathed in shadows, and resembled, athwart the vague, twilight horror, the deck of a disabled ship. The combatants, as they went and came, moved about there like black forms. Above that terrible nesting-place of gloom the stories of the mute houses were lividly outlined; at the very top, the chimneys stood palely out. The sky was of that charming, undecided hue, which may be white and may be blue. Birds flew about in it with cries of joy. The lofty house which formed the back of the barricade, being turned to the East, had upon its roof a rosy reflection. The morning breeze ruffled the gray hair on the hair of the dead man at the third-story window.

"I am delighted that the torch has been extinguished," said Courfeyrac to Feuilly. "That torch flickering in the wind annoyed me. It had the appearance of being afraid. The light of torches resembles the wisdom of cowards; it gives a bad light because it trembles."

Dawn awakens minds as it does the birds; all began to talk.

Joly, perceiving a cat prowling on a gutter, extracted philosophy from it.

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

Combeferre, surrounded by students and artisans, was speaking of the dead, of Jean Prouvaire, of Bahorel, of Mabeuf, and even of Cabuc, and of Enjolras' sad severity. He said:—

"Harmodius and Aristogiton, Brutus, Chereas, Stephanus, Cromwell, Charlotte Corday, Sand, have all had their moment of agony when it was too late. Our hearts quiver so, and human life is such a mystery that, even in the case of a civic murder, even in a murder for liberation, if there be such a thing, the remorse for having struck a man surpasses the joy of having served the human race."

And, such are the windings of the exchange of speech, that, a moment later, by a transition brought about through Jean Prouvaire's verses, Combeferre was comparing the translators of the Georgics, Raux with Cournand, Cournand with Delille, pointing out the passages translated by Malfilâtre, particularly the prodigies of Cæsar's death; and at that word, Cæsar, the conversation reverted to Brutus.

"Cæsar," said Combeferre, "fell justly. Cicero was severe towards Cæsar, and he was right. That severity is not diatribe. When Zoïlus insults Homer, when Mævius insults Virgil, when Visé insults Molière, when Pope insults Shakspeare, when Frederic insults Voltaire, it is an old law of envy and hatred which is being carried out; genius attracts insult, great men are always more or less barked at. But Zoïlus and Cicero are two different persons. Cicero is an arbiter in thought, just as Brutus is an arbiter by the sword. For my own part, I blame that last justice, the blade; but antiquity admitted it. Cæsar, the violater of the Rubicon, conferring, as though they came from him, the dignities which emanated from the people, not rising at the entrance of the senate, committed the acts of a king and almost of a tyrant, *regia ac pene tyrannica.* He was a great man; so much the worse, or so much the better; the lesson is but the more exalted. His twenty-three wounds touch me less than the spitting in the face of Jesus Christ. Cæsar is stabbed by the senators; Christ is cuffed by lackeys. One feels the God through the greater outrage."

Bossuet, who towered above the interlocutors from the summit of a heap of paving-stones, exclaimed, rifle in hand:—

"Oh Cydathenæum, Oh Myrrhinus, Oh Probalinthus, Oh graces of the Æantides! Oh! Who will grant me to pronounce the verses of Homer like a Greek of Laurium or of Edapteon?"

CHAPTER III

LIGHT AND SHADOW

Enjolras had been to make a reconnoissance. He had made his way out through Mondétour lane, gliding along close to the houses.

The insurgents, we will remark, were full of hope. The manner in which they had repulsed the attack of the preceding night had caused them to almost disdain in advance the attack at dawn. They waited for it with a smile. They had no more doubt as to their success than as to their cause. Moreover, succor was, evidently, on the way to them. They reckoned on it. With that facility of triumphant prophecy which is one of the sources of strength in the French combatant, they divided the day which was at hand into three distinct phases. At six o'clock in the morning a regiment "which had been labored with," would turn; at noon, the insurrection of all Paris; at sunset, revolution.

They heard the alarm bell of Saint-Merry, which had not been silent for an instant since the night before; a proof that the other barricade, the great one, Jeanne's, still held out.

All these hopes were exchanged between the different groups in a sort of gay and formidable whisper which resembled the warlike hum of a hive of bees.

Enjolras reappeared. He returned from his sombre eagle flight into outer darkness. He listened for a moment to all this joy with folded arms, and one hand on his mouth. Then, fresh and rosy in the growing whiteness of the dawn, he said:

"The whole army of Paris is to strike. A third of the army is bearing down upon the barricades in which you now are. There is the National Guard in addition. I have picked out the shakos of the fifth of the line, and the standard-bearers of the sixth legion. In one hour you will be attacked. As for the populace, it was seething yesterday, to-day it is not stirring. There is nothing to expect; nothing to hope for. Neither from a faubourg nor from a regiment. You are abandoned."

These words fell upon the buzzing of the groups, and produced on them the effect caused on a swarm of bees by the first drops of a storm. A moment of indescribable silence ensued, in which death might have been heard flitting by.

This moment was brief.

A voice from the obscurest depths of the groups shouted to Enjolras:

"So be it. Let us raise the barricade to a height of twenty feet, and let us all remain in it. Citizens, let us offer the protests of corpses. Let us show that, if the people abandon the republicans, the republicans do not abandon the people."

These words freed the thought of all from the painful cloud of individual anxieties. It was hailed with an enthusiastic acclamation.

No one ever has known the name of the man who spoke thus; he was some unknown blouse-wearer, a stranger, a man forgotten, a passing hero, that great anonymous always mingled in human crises and in social geneses who, at a given moment, utters in a supreme fashion the decisive word, and who vanishes into the shadows after having represented for a minute, in a lightning flash, the people and God.

This inexorable resolution so thoroughly impregnated the air of the 6th of June, 1832, that, almost at the very same hour, on the barricade Saint-Merry, the insurgents were raising that clamor which has become a matter of history and which has been consigned to the documents in the case:—"What matters it whether they come to our assistance or not? Let us get ourselves killed here, to the very last man."

As the reader sees, the two barricades, though materially isolated, were in communication with each other.

CHAPTER IV

MINUS FIVE, PLUS ONE

After the man who decreed the "protest of corpses" had spoken, and had given this formula of their common soul, there issued from all mouths a strangely satisfied and terrible cry, funereal in sense and triumphant in tone:

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

"Why all?" said Enjolras.

"All! All!"

Enjolras resumed:

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

They replied:

"Because not one will go away."

"Citizens," cried Enjolras, and there was an almost irritated vibration in his voice, "this republic is not rich enough in men to indulge in useless expenditure of them. Vain-glory is waste. If the duty of some is to depart, that duty should be fulfilled like any other."

Enjolras, the man-principle, had over his co-religionists that sort of omnipotent power which emanates from the absolute. Still, great as was this omnipotence, a murmur arose. A leader to the very finger-tips, Enjolras, seeing that they murmured, insisted. He resumed haughtily:

"Let those who are afraid of not numbering more than thirty say so."

The murmurs redoubled.

"Besides," observed a voice in one group, "it is easy enough to talk about leaving. The barricade is hemmed in."

"Not on the side of the Halles," said Enjolras. "The Rue Mondétour is free, and through the Rue des Prêcheurs one can reach the Marché des Innocents."

"And there," went on another voice, "you would be captured. You would fall in with some grand guard of the line or the suburbs; they will spy a man passing in blouse and cap. 'Whence come you?' 'Don't you belong to the barricade?' And they will look at your hands. You smell of powder. Shot."

Enjolras, without making any reply, touched Combeferre's shoulder, and the two entered the tap-room.

They emerged thence a moment later. Enjolras held in his outstretched hands the four uniforms which he had laid aside. Combeferre followed, carrying the shoulder-belts and the shakos.

"With this uniform," said Enjolras, "you can mingle with the ranks and escape; here is enough for four." And he flung on the ground, deprived of its pavement, the four uniforms.

No wavering took place in his stoical audience. Combeferre took the word.

"Come, said he, "you must have a little pity. Do you know what the question is here? It is a question of women. See here. Are there women or are there not? Are there children or are there not? Are there mothers, yes or no, who rock cradles with their foot and who have a lot of little ones around them? Let that man of you who has never beheld a nurse's breast raise his hand. Ah! you want to get yourselves killed, so do I—I, who am speaking to you; but I do not want to feel the phantoms of women wreathing their arms around me. Die, if you will, but don't make others die. Suicides like that which is on the brink of accomplishment here are sublime; but suicide is narrow, and does not admit of extension; and as soon as it touches your neighbors, suicide is murder. Think of the little blond heads; think of the white locks. Listen, Enjolras has just told me that he saw at the corner of the Rue du Cygne a lighted casement, a candle in a poor window, on the fifth floor, and on the pane the quivering shadow of the head of an old woman, who had the air of having spent the night in watching. Perhaps she is the mother of some one of you. Well, let that man go, and make haste to say to his mother: 'Here I am, mother!' Let him feel at ease, the task here will be performed all the same. When one supports one's relatives by one's toil, one has not the right to sacrifice one's self. That is deserting one's family. And those who have daughters! what are you thinking of? You get yourselves killed, you are dead, that is well. And to-morrow? Young girls without bread—that is a terrible thing. Man begs, woman sells. Ah! those charming and gracious beings, so gracious and so sweet, who have bonnets of flowers, who fill the house with purity, who sing and prattle, who are like a living perfume, who prove the existence of angels in heaven by the purity of virgins on earth, that Jeanne, that Lise, that Mimi, those adorable and honest creatures who are your blessings and your pride, ah! good God, they will suffer hunger! What do you want me to say to you? There is a market for human flesh; and it is not with your shadowy hands, shuddering around them, that you will prevent them from entering it! Think of the street, think of the pavement covered with passers-by, think of the shops past which women go and come with necks all bare, and through the mire. These women, too, were pure once. Think of your sisters, those of you who have them. Misery, prostitution, the police, Saint-Lazare—that is what those beautiful, delicate girls, those fragile marvels of modesty, gentleness and loveliness, fresher than lilacs in the month of May, will come to. Ah! you have got yourselves killed! You are no longer on hand! That is well; you have wished to release the people from Royalty, and you deliver over your daughters to the police. Friends, have a care, have mercy. Women, unhappy women, we are not in the habit of bestowing much thought on them. We trust to the women not having received a man's education, we prevent their reading, we prevent their thinking, we prevent their occupying themselves with politics; will you prevent them from going to the dead-house this evening, and recognizing your bodies? Let us see, those who have families must be tractable, and shake hands with us and take themselves off, and leave us here alone to attend to this affair. I know well that courage is required to leave, that it is hard; but the harder it is, the more meritorious. You say: 'I have a gun, I am at the barricade; so much the worse, I shall remain there.' So much the worse is easily said. My friends, there is a morrow; you will not be here to-morrow, but your families will; and what sufferings! See, here is a pretty, healthy child, with cheeks like an apple, who babbles, prattles, chatters, who laughs, who smells sweet beneath your kiss,—and do you know what becomes of him when he is abandoned? I have seen one, a very small creature, no taller than that. His father was dead. Poor people had taken him in out of charity, but they had bread only for themselves. The child was always hungry. It was winter. He did not cry. You could see him approach the stove, in which there was never any fire, and whose pipe, you know, was of mastic and yellow clay. His breathing was hoarse, his face livid, his limbs flaccid, his belly prominent. He said nothing. If you spoke to him, he did not answer. He is dead. He was taken to the Necker Hospital, where I saw him. I was house-surgeon in that hospital. Now, if there are any fathers among you, fathers whose happiness it is to stroll on Sundays holding their child's tiny hand in their robust hand, let each one of those fathers imagine that this child is his own. That poor brat, I remember, and I seem to see him now, when he lay nude on the dissecting table, how his ribs stood out on his skin like the graves beneath the grass in a cemetery. A sort of mud was found in his stomach. There were ashes in his teeth. Come, let us examine ourselves conscientiously and take counsel with our heart. Statistics show that the mortality among abandoned children is fifty-five per cent. I repeat, it is a question of women, it concerns mothers, it concerns young girls, it concerns little children. Who is talking to you of yourselves? We know well what you are; we know well that you are all brave, parbleu! we know well that you all have in your souls the joy and the glory of giving your life for the great cause; we know well that you feel yourselves elected to die usefully and magnificently, and that each one of you clings to his share in the triumph. Very well. But you are not alone in this world. There are other beings of whom you must think. You must not be egoists."

All dropped their heads with a gloomy air.

Strange contradictions of the human heart at its most sublime moments. Combeferre, who spoke thus, was not an orphan. He recalled the mothers of other men, and forgot his own. He was about to get himself killed. He was "an egoist."

Marius, fasting, fevered, having emerged in succession from all hope, and having been stranded in grief, the most sombre of shipwrecks, and saturated with violent emotions and conscious that the end was near, had plunged deeper and deeper into that visionary stupor which always precedes the fatal hour voluntarily accepted.

A physiologist might have studied in him the growing symptoms of that febrile absorption known to, and classified by, science, and which is to suffering what voluptuousness is to pleasure. Despair, also, has its ecstasy. Marius had reached this point. He looked on at everything as from without; as we have said, things which passed before him seemed far away; he made out the whole, but did not perceive the details. He beheld men going and coming as through a flame. He heard voices speaking as at the bottom of an abyss.

But this moved him. There was in this scene a point which pierced and roused even him. He had but one idea now, to die; and he did not wish to be turned aside from it, but he reflected, in his gloomy somnambulism, that while destroying himself, he was not prohibited from saving some one else.

He raised his voice.

"Enjolras and Combeferre are right," said he; "no unnecessary sacrifice. I join them, and you must make haste. Combeferre has said convincing things to you. There are some among you who have families, mothers, sisters, wives, children. Let such leave the ranks."

No one stirred.

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

His authority was great. Enjolras was certainly the head of the barricade, but Marius was its savior.

"I order it," cried Enjolras.

"I entreat you," said Marius.

Then, touched by Combeferre's words, shaken by Enjolras' order, touched by Marius' entreaty, these heroic men began to denounce each other.—"It is true," said one young man to a full grown man, "you are the father of a family. Go."—"It is your duty rather," retorted the man, "you have two sisters whom you maintain."—And an unprecedented controversy broke forth. Each struggled to determine which should not allow himself to be placed at the door of the tomb.

"Make haste," said Courfeyrac, "in another quarter of an hour it will be too late."

"Citizens," pursued Enjolras, "this is the Republic, and universal suffrage reigns. Do you yourselves designate those who are to go."

They obeyed. After the expiration of a few minutes, five were unanimously selected and stepped out of the ranks.

"There are five of them!" exclaimed Marius.

There were only four uniforms.

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

And then a struggle arose as to who should remain, and who should find reasons for the others not remaining. The generous quarrel began afresh.

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

These great revolutionary barricades were assembling points for heroism. The improbable was simple there. These men did not astonish each other.

"Be quick," repeated Courfeyrac.

Men shouted to Marius from the groups:

"Do you designate who is to remain."

"Yes," said the five, "choose. We will obey you."

Marius did not believe that he was capable of another emotion. Still, at this idea, that of choosing a man for death, his blood rushed back to his heart. He would have turned pale, had it been possible for him to become any paler.

He advanced towards the five, who smiled upon him, and each, with his eyes full of that grand flame which one beholds in the depths of history hovering over Thermopylæ, cried to him:

"Me! me! me!"

And Marius stupidly counted them; there were still five of them! Then his glance dropped to the four uniforms.

At that moment, a fifth uniform fell, as if from heaven, upon the other four.

The fifth man was saved.

Marius raised his eyes and recognized M. Fauchelevent.

Jean Valjean had just entered the barricade.

He had arrived by way of Mondétour lane, whither by dint of inquiries made, or by instinct, or chance. Thanks to his dress of a National Guardsman, he had made his way without difficulty.

The sentinel stationed by the insurgents in the Rue Mondétour had no occasion to give the alarm for a single National Guardsman, and he had allowed the latter to entangle himself in the street, saying to himself: "Probably it is a reinforcement, in any case it is a prisoner." The moment was too grave to admit of the sentinel abandoning his duty and his post of observation.

At the moment when Jean Valjean entered the redoubt, no one had noticed him, all eyes being fixed on the five chosen men and the four uniforms. Jean Valjean also had seen and heard, and he had silently removed his coat and flung it on the pile with the rest.

The emotion aroused was indescribable.

"Who is this man?" demanded Bossuet.

"He is a man who saves others," replied Combeferre.

Marius added in a grave voice:

"I know him."

This guarantee satisfied every one.

Enjolras turned to Jean Valjean.

"Welcome, citizen."

And he added:

"You know that we are about to die."

Jean Valjean, without replying, helped the insurgent whom he was saving to don his uniform.

CHAPTER V

THE HORIZON WHICH ONE BEHOLDS FROM THE SUMMIT OF A BARRICADE

The situation of all in that fatal hour and that pitiless place, had as result and culminating point Enjolras' supreme melancholy.

Enjolras bore within him the plenitude of the revolution; he was incomplete, however, so far as the absolute can be so; he had too much of Saint-Just about him, and not enough of Anacharsis Cloots; still, his mind, in the society of the Friends of the A B C, had ended by undergoing a certain polarization from Combeferre's ideas; for some time past, he had been gradually emerging from the narrow form of dogma, and had allowed himself to incline to the broadening influence of progress, and he had come to accept, as a definitive and magnificent evolution, the transformation of the great French Republic, into the immense human republic. As far as the immediate means were concerned, a violent situation being given, he wished to be violent; on that point, he never varied; and he remained of that epic and redoubtable school which is summed up in the words: "Eighty-three." Enjolras was standing erect on the staircase of paving-stones, one elbow resting on the stock of his gun. He was engaged in thought; he quivered, as at the passage of prophetic breaths; places where death is have these effects of tripods. A sort of stifled fire darted from his eyes, which were filled with an inward look. All at once he threw back his head, his blond locks fell back like those of an angel on the sombre quadriga made of stars, they were like the mane of a startled lion in the flaming of an halo, and Enjolras cried:

"Citizens, do you picture the future to yourselves? The streets of cities inundated with light, green branches on the thresholds, nations sisters, men just, old men blessing children, the past loving the present, thinkers entirely at liberty, believers on terms of full equality, for religion heaven, God the direct priest, human conscience become an altar, no more hatreds, the fraternity of the workshop and the school, for sole penalty and recompense fame, work for all, right for all, peace over all, no more bloodshed, no more wars, happy mothers! To conquer matter is the first step; to realize the ideal is the second. Reflect on what progress has already accomplished. Formerly, the first human races beheld with terror the hydra pass before their eyes, breathing on the waters, the dragon which vomited flame, the griffin who was the monster of the air, and who flew with the wings of an eagle and the talons of a tiger; fearful beasts which were above man. Man, nevertheless, spread his snares, consecrated by intelligence, and finally conquered these monsters. We have vanquished the hydra, and it is called the locomotive; we are on the point of vanquishing the griffin, we already grasp it, and it is called the balloon. On the day when this Promethean task shall be accomplished, and when man shall have definitely harnessed to his will the triple Chimæra of antiquity, the hydra, the dragon and the griffin, he will be the master of water, fire, and of air, and he will be for the rest of animated creation that which the ancient gods formerly were to him. Courage, and onward! Citizens, whither are we going? To science made government, to the force of things become the sole public force, to the natural law, having in itself its sanction and its penalty and promulgating itself by evidence, to a dawn of truth corresponding to a dawn of day. We are advancing to the union of peoples; we are advancing to the unity of man. No more fictions; no more parasites. The real governed by the true, that is the goal. Civilization will hold its assizes at the summit of Europe, and, later on, at the centre of continents, in a grand parliament of the intelligence. Something similar has already been seen. The amphictyons had two sittings a year, one at Delphos the seat of the gods, the other at Thermopylæ, the place of heroes. Europe will have her amphictyons; the globe will have its amphictyons. France bears this sublime future in her breast. This is the gestation of the nineteenth century. That which Greece sketched out is worthy of being finished by France. Listen to me, you, Feuilly, valiant artisan, man of the people. I revere you. Yes, you clearly behold the future, yes, you are right. You had neither father nor mother, Feuilly; you adopted humanity for your mother and right for your father. You are about to die, that is to say to triumph, here. Citizens, whatever happens to-day, through our defeat as well as through our victory, it is a revolution that we are about to create. As conflagrations light up a whole city, so revolutions illuminate the whole human race. And what is the revolution that we shall cause? I have just told you, the Revolution of the True. From a political point of view, there is but a single principle; the sovereignty of man over himself. This sovereignty of myself over myself is called Liberty. Where two or three of these sovereignties are combined, the state begins. But in that association there is no abdication. Each sovereignty concedes a certain quantity of itself, for the purpose of forming the common right. This quantity is the same for all of us. This identity of concession which each makes to all, is called Equality. Common right is nothing else than the protection of all beaming on the right of each. This protection of all over each is called Fraternity. The point of intersection of all these assembled sovereignties is called society. This intersection being a junction, this point is a knot. Hence what is called the social bond. Some say social contract; which is the same thing, the word contract being etymologically formed with the idea of a bond. Let us come to an understanding about equality; for, if liberty is the summit, equality is the base. Equality, citizens, is not wholly a surface vegetation, a society of great blades of grass and tiny oaks; a proximity of jealousies which render each other null and void; legally speaking, it is all aptitudes possessed of the same opportunity; politically, it is all votes possessed of the same weight; religiously, it is all consciences possessed of the same right. Equality has an organ: gratuitous and obligatory instruction. The right to the alphabet, that is where the beginning must be made. The primary school imposed on all, the secondary school offered to all, that is the law. From an identical school, an identical society will spring. Yes, instruction! light! light! everything comes from light, and to it everything returns. Citizens, the nineteenth century is great, but the twentieth century will be happy. Then, there will be nothing more like the history of old, we shall no longer, as to-day, have to fear a conquest, an invasion, a usurpation, a rivalry of nations, arms in hand, an interruption of civilization depending on a marriage of kings, on a birth in hereditary tyrannies, a partition of peoples by a congress, a dismemberment because of the failure of a dynasty, a combat of two religions meeting face to face, like two bucks in the dark, on the bridge of the infinite; we shall no longer have to fear famine, farming out, prostitution arising from distress, misery from the failure of work and the scaffold and the sword, and battles and the ruffianism of chance in the forest of events. One might almost say: There will be no more events. We shall be happy. The human race will accomplish its law, as the terrestrial globe accomplishes its law; harmony will be re-established between the soul and the star; the soul will gravitate around the truth, as the planet around the light. Friends, the present hour in which I am addressing you, is a gloomy hour; but these are terrible purchases of the future. A revolution is a toll. Oh! the human race will be delivered, raised up, consoled! We affirm it on this barrier. Whence should proceed that cry of love, if not from the heights of sacrifice? Oh my brothers, this is the point of junction, of those who think and of those who suffer; this barricade is not made of paving-stones, nor of joists, nor of bits of iron; it is made of two heaps, a heap of ideas, and a heap of woes. Here misery meets the ideal. The day embraces the night, and says to it: 'I am about to die, and thou shalt be born again with me.' From the embrace of all desolations faith leaps forth. Sufferings bring hither their agony and ideas their immortality. This agony and this immortality are about to join and constitute our death. Brothers, he who dies here dies in the radiance of the future, and we are entering a tomb all flooded with the dawn."

Enjolras paused rather than became silent; his lips continued to move silently, as though he were talking to himself, which caused them all to gaze attentively at him, in the endeavor to hear more. There was no applause; but they whispered together for a long time. Speech being a breath, the rustling of intelligences resembles the rustling of leaves.

CHAPTER VI

MARIUS HAGGARD, JAVERT LACONIC

Let us narrate what was passing in Marius' thoughts.

Let the reader recall the state of his soul. We have just recalled it, everything was a vision to him now. His judgment was disturbed. Marius, let us insist on this point, was under the shadow of the great, dark wings which are spread over those in the death agony. He felt that he had entered the tomb, it seemed to him that he was already on the other side of the wall, and he no longer beheld the faces of the living except with the eyes of one dead.

How did M. Fauchelevent come there? Why was he there? What had he come there to do? Marius did not address all these questions to himself. Besides, since our despair has this peculiarity, that it envelops others as well as ourselves, it seemed logical to him that all the world should come thither to die.

Only, he thought of Cosette with a pang at his heart.

However, M. Fauchelevent did not speak to him, did not look at him, and had not even the air of hearing him, when Marius raised his voice to say: "I know him."

As far as Marius was concerned, this attitude of M. Fauchelevent was comforting, and, if such a word can be used for such impressions, we should say that it pleased him. He had always felt the absolute impossibility of addressing that enigmatical man, who was, in his eyes, both equivocal and imposing. Moreover, it had been a long time since he had seen him; and this still further augmented the impossibility for Marius' timid and reserved nature.

The five chosen men left the barricade by way of Mondétour lane; they bore a perfect resemblance to members of the National Guard. One of them wept as he took his leave. Before setting out, they embraced those who remained.

When the five men sent back to life had taken their departure, Enjolras thought of the man who had been condemned to death.

He entered the tap-room. Javert, still bound to the post, was engaged in meditation.

"Do you want anything?" Enjolras asked him.

"Javert replied: "When are you going to kill me?"

"Wait. We need all our cartridges just at present."

"Then give me a drink," said Javert.

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

"Is that all?" inquired Enjolras.

"I am uncomfortable against this post," replied Javert. "You are not tender to have left me to pass the night here. Bind me as you please, but you surely might lay me out on a table like that other man."

And with a motion of the head, he indicated the body of M. Mabeuf.

There was, as the reader will remember, a long, broad table at the end of the room, on which they had been running bullets and making cartridges. All the cartridges having been made, and all the powder used, this table was free.

At Enjolras' command, four insurgents unbound Javert from the post. While they were loosing him, a fifth held a bayonet against his breast.

Leaving his arms tied behind his back, they placed about his feet a slender but stout whip-cord, as is done to men on the point of mounting the scaffold, which allowed him to take steps about fifteen inches in length, and made him walk to the table at the end of the room, where they laid him down, closely bound about the middle of the body.

By way of further security, and by means of a rope fastened to his neck, they added to the system of ligatures which rendered every attempt at escape impossible, that sort of bond which is called in prisons a martingale, which, starting at the neck, forks on the stomach, and meets the hands, after passing between the legs.

While they were binding Javert, a man standing on the threshold was surveying him with singular attention. The shadow cast by this man made Javert turn his head. He raised his eyes, and recognized Jean Valjean. He did not even start, but dropped his lids proudly and confined himself to the remark: "It is perfectly simple."

CHAPTER VII

THE SITUATION BECOMES AGGRAVATED

The daylight was increasing rapidly. Not a window was opened, not a door stood ajar; it was the dawn but not the awaking. The end of the Rue de la Chanvrerie, opposite the barricade, had been evacuated by the troops, as we have stated, it seemed to be free, and presented itself to passers-by with a sinister tranquillity. The Rue Saint-Denis was as dumb as the avenue of Sphinxes at Thebes. Not a living being in the cross-roads, which gleamed white in the light of the sun. Nothing is so mournful as this light in deserted streets. Nothing was to be seen, but there was something to be heard. A mysterious movement was going on at a certain distance. It was evident that the critical moment was approaching. As on the previous evening, the sentinels had come in; but this time all had come.

The barricade was stronger than on the occasion of the first attack. Since the departure of the five, they had increased its height still further.

On the advice of the sentinel who had examined the region of the Halles, Enjolras, for fear of a surprise in the rear, came to a serious decision. He had the small gut of the Mondétour lane, which had been left open up to that time, barricaded. For this purpose, they tore up the pavement for the length of several houses more. In this manner, the barricade, walled on three streets, in front on the Rue de la Chanvrerie, to the left on the Rues du Cygne and de la Petite Truanderie, to the right on the Rue Mondétour, was really almost impregnable; it is true that they were fatally hemmed in there. It had three fronts, but no exit.—"A fortress but a rat hole too," said Courfeyrac with a laugh.

Enjolras had about thirty paving-stones "torn up in excess," said Bossuet, piled up near the door of the wine-shop.

The silence was now so profound in the quarter whence the attack must needs come, that Enjolras had each man resume his post of battle.

An allowance of brandy was doled out to each.

Nothing is more curious than a barricade preparing for an assault. Each man selects his place as though at the theatre. They jostle, and elbow and crowd each other. There are some who make stalls of paving-stones. Here is a corner of the wall which is in the way, it is removed; here is a redan which may afford protection, they take shelter behind it. Left-handed men are precious; they take the places that are inconvenient to the rest. Many arrange to fight in a sitting posture.

They wish to be at ease to kill, and to die comfortably. In the sad war of June, 1848, an insurgent who was a formidable marksman, and who was firing from the top of a terrace upon a roof, had a reclining-chair brought there for his use; a charge of grape-shot found him out there.

As soon as the leader has given the order to clear the decks for action, all disorderly movements cease; there is no more pulling from one another; there are no more coteries; no more asides, there is no more holding aloof; everything in their spirits converges in, and changes into, a waiting for the assailants. A barricade before the arrival of danger is chaos; in danger, it is discipline itself. Peril produces order.

As soon as Enjolras had seized his double-barrelled rifle, and had placed himself in a sort of embrasure which he had reserved for himself, all the rest held their peace. A series of faint, sharp noises resounded confusedly along the wall of paving-stones. It was the men cocking their guns.

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

As on the preceding evening, the attention of all was directed, we might almost say leaned upon, the end of the street, now lighted up and visible.

They had not long to wait. A stir began distinctly in the Saint-Leu quarter, but it did not resemble the movement of the first attack. A clashing of chains, the uneasy jolting of a mass, the click of brass skipping along the pavement, a sort of solemn uproar, announced that some sinister construction of iron was approaching. There arose a tremor in the bosoms of these peaceful old streets, pierced and built for the fertile circulation of interests and ideas, and which are not made for the horrible rumble of the wheels of war.

The fixity of eye in all the combatants upon the extremity of the street became ferocious.

A cannon made its appearance.

Artillery-men were pushing the piece; it was in firing trim; the fore-carriage had been detached; two upheld the gun-carriage, four were at the wheels; others followed with the caisson. They could see the smoke of the burning lint-stock.

"Fire!" shouted Enjolras.

The whole barricade fired, the report was terrible; an avalanche of smoke covered and effaced both cannon and men; after a few seconds, the cloud dispersed, and the cannon and men re-appeared; the gun-crew had just finished rolling it slowly, correctly, without haste, into position facing the barricade. Not one of them had been struck. Then the captain of the piece, bearing down upon the breech in order to raise the muzzle, began to point the cannon with the gravity of an astronomer levelling a telescope.

"Bravo for the cannoneers!" cried Bossuet.

And the whole barricade clapped their hands.

A moment later, squarely planted in the very middle of the street, astride of the gutter, the piece was ready for action. A formidable pair of jaws yawned on the barricade.

"Come, merrily now!" ejaculated Courfeyrac. "That's the brutal part of it. After the fillip on the nose, the blow from the fist. The army is reaching out its big paw to us. The barricade is going to be severely shaken up. The fusillade tries, the cannon takes."

"It is a piece of eight, new model, brass," added Combeferre. "Those pieces are liable to burst as soon as the proportion of ten parts of tin to one hundred of brass is exceeded. The excess of tin renders them too tender. Then it comes to pass that they have caves and chambers when looked at from the vent hole. In order to obviate this danger, and to render it possible to force the charge, it may become necessary to return to the process of the fourteenth century, hooping, and to encircle the piece on the outside with a series of unwelded steel bands, from the breech to the trunnions. In the meantime, they remedy this defect as best they may; they manage to discover where the holes are located in the vent of a cannon, by means of a searcher. But there is a better method, with Gribeauval's movable star."

"In the sixteenth century," remarked Bossuet, "they used to rifle cannon."

"Yes," replied Combeferre, "that augments the projectile force, but diminishes the accuracy of the firing. In firing at short range, the trajectory is not as rigid as could be desired, the parabola is exaggerated, the line of the projectile is no longer sufficiently rectilinear to allow of its striking intervening objects, which is, nevertheless, a necessity of battle, the importance of which increases with the proximity of the enemy and the precipitation of the discharge. This defect of the tension of the curve of the projectile in the rifled cannon of the sixteenth century arose from the smallness of the charge; small charges for that sort of engine are imposed by the ballistic necessities, such, for instance, as the preservation of the gun-carriage. In short, that despot, the cannon, cannot do all that it desires; force is a great weakness. A cannon-ball only travels six hundred leagues an hour; light travels seventy thousand leagues a second. Such is the superiority of Jesus Christ over Napoleon."

"Reload your guns," said Enjolras.

How was the casing of the barricade going to behave under the cannon-balls? Would they effect a breach? That was the question. While the insurgents were reloading their guns, the artillery-men were loading the cannon.

The anxiety in the redoubt was profound.

The shot sped the report burst forth.

"Present!" shouted a joyous voice.

And Gavroche flung himself into the barricade just as the ball dashed against it.

He came from the direction of the Rue du Cygne, and he had nimbly climbed over the auxiliary barricade which fronted on the labyrinth of the Rue de la Petite Truanderie.

Gavroche produced a greater sensation in the barricade than the cannon-ball.

The ball buried itself in the mass of rubbish. At the most there was an omnibus wheel broken, and the old Anceau cart was demolished. On seeing this, the barricade burst into a laugh.

"Go on!" shouted Bossuet to the artillerists.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ARTILLERY-MEN COMPEL PEOPLE TO TAKE THEM SERIOUSLY

THEY flocked round Gavroche. But he had no time to tell anything. Marius drew him aside with a shudder.

"What are you doing here?"

"Hullo!" said the child, "what are you doing here yourself?"

And he stared at Marius intently with his epic effrontery. His eyes grew larger with the proud light within them.

It was with an accent of severity that Marius continued:

"Who told you to come back? Did you deliver my letter at the address?"

Gavroche was not without some compunctions in the matter of that letter. In his haste to return to the barricade, he had got rid of it rather than delivered it. He was forced to acknowledge to himself that he had confided it rather lightly to that stranger whose face he had not been able to make out. It is true that the man was bareheaded, but that was not sufficient. In short, he had been administering to himself little inward remonstrances and he feared Marius' reproaches. In order to extricate himself from the predicament, he took the simplest course; he lied abominably.

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

Marius had had two objects in sending that letter: to bid farewell to Cosette and to save Gavroche. He was obliged to content himself with the half of his desire.

The despatch of his letter and the presence of M. Fauchelevent in the barricade, was a coincidence which occurred to him. He pointed out M. Fauchelevent to Gavroche.

"Do you know that man?"

"No," said Gavroche.

Gavroche had, in fact, as we have just mentioned, seen Jean Valjean only at night.

The troubled and unhealthy conjectures which had outlined themselves in Marius' mind were dissipated. Did he know M. Fauchelevent's opinions? Perhaps M. Fauchelevent was a republican. Hence his very natural presence in this combat.

In the meanwhile, Gavroche was shouting, at the other end of the barricade: "My gun!"

Courfeyrac had it returned to him.

Gavroche warned "his comrades" as he called them, that the barricade was blocked. He had had great difficulty in reaching it. A battalion of the line whose arms were piled in the Rue de la Petite Truanderie was on the watch on the side of the Rue du Cygne; on the opposite side, the municipal guard occupied the Rue des Prêcheurs. The bulk of the army was facing them in front.

This information given, Gavroche added:

"I authorize you to hit 'em a tremendous whack."

Meanwhile, Enjolras was straining his ears and watching at his embrasure.

The assailants, dissatisfied, no doubt, with their shot, had not repeated it.

A company of infantry of the line had come up and occupied the end of the street behind the piece of ordnance. The soldiers were tearing up the pavement and constructing with the stones a small, low wall, a sort of side-work not more than eighteen inches high, and facing the barricade. In the angle at the left of this epaulement, there was visible the head of the column of a battalion from the suburbs massed in the Rue Saint-Denis.

Enjolras, on the watch, thought he distinguished the peculiar sound which is produced when the shells of grape-shot are drawn from the caissons, and he saw the commander of the piece change the elevation and incline the mouth of the cannon slightly to the left. Then the cannoneers began to load the piece. The chief seized the lint-stock himself and lowered it to the vent.

"Down with your heads, hug the wall!" shouted Enjolras, "and all on your knees along the barricade!"

The insurgents who were straggling in front of the wine-shop, and who had quitted their posts of combat on Gavroche's arrival, rushed pell-mell towards the barricade; but before Enjolras' order could be executed, the discharge took place with the terrifying rattle of a round of grape-shot. This is what it was, in fact.

The charge had been aimed at the cut in the redoubt, and had there rebounded from the wall; and this terrible rebound had produced two dead and three wounded.

If this were continued, the barricade was no longer tenable. The grape-shot made its way in.

A murmur of consternation arose.

"Let us prevent the second discharge," said Enjolras.

And, lowering his rifle, he took aim at the captain of the gun, who, at that moment, was bearing down on the breach of his gun and rectifying and definitely fixing its pointing.

The captain of the piece was a handsome sergeant of artillery, very young, blond, with a very gentle face, and the intelligent air peculiar to that predestined and redoubtable weapon which, by dint of perfecting itself in horror, must end in killing war.

Combeferre, who was standing beside Enjolras, scrutinized this young man.

"What a pity!" said Combeferre. "What hideous things these butcheries are! Come, when there are no more kings, there will be no more war. Enjolras, you are taking aim at that sergeant, you are not looking at him. Fancy, he is a charming young man; he is intrepid; it is evident that he is thoughtful; those young artillery-men are very well educated; he has a father, a mother, a family; he is probably in love; he is not more than five and twenty at the most; he might be your brother."

"He is," said Enjolras.

"Yes," replied Combeferre, "he is mine too. Well, let us not kill him."

"Let me alone. It must be done."

And a tear trickled slowly down Enjolras' marble cheek.

At the same moment, he pressed the trigger of his rifle. The flame leaped forth. The artillery-man turned round twice, his arms extended in front of him, his head uplifted, as though for breath, then he fell with his side on the gun, and lay there motionless. They could see his back, from the centre of which there flowed directly a stream of blood. The ball had traversed his breast from side to side. He was dead.

He had to be carried away and replaced by another. Several minutes were thus gained, in fact.

CHAPTER IX

EMPLOYMENT OF THE OLD TALENTS OF A POACHER AND THAT INFALLIBLE MARKSMANSHIP WHICH INFLUENCED THE CONDEMNATION OF 1796

OPINIONS were exchanged in the barricade. The firing from the gun was about to begin again. Against that grapeshot, they could not hold out a quarter of an hour longer. It was absolutely necessary to deaden the blows.

Enjolras issued this command:

"We must place a mattress there."

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

Jean Valjean, who was seated apart on a stone post, at the corner of the tavern, with his gun between his knees, had, up to that moment, taken no part in anything that was going on. He did not appear to hear the combatants saying around him: "Here is a gun that is doing nothing."

At the order issued by Enjolras, he rose.

It will be remembered that, on the arrival of the rabble in the Rue de la Chanvrerie, an old woman, foreseeing the bullets, had placed her mattress in front of her window. This window, an attic window, was on the roof of a six-story house situated a little beyond the barricade. The mattress, placed cross-wise, supported at the bottom on two poles for drying linen, was upheld at the top by two ropes, which, at that distance, looked like two threads, and which were attached to two nails planted in the window frames. These ropes were distinctly visible, like hairs, against the sky.

"Can some one lend me a double-barrelled rifle?" said Jean Valjean.

Enjolras, who had just re-loaded his, handed it to him.

Jean Valjean took aim at the attic window and fired.

One of the mattress ropes was cut.

The mattress now hung by one thread only.

Jean Valjean fired the second charge. The second rope lashed the panes of the attic window. The mattress slipped between the two poles and fell into the street.

The barricade applauded.

All voices cried:

"Here is a mattress!"

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

The mattress had, in fact, fallen outside the barricade, between besiegers and besieged. Now, the death of the sergeant of artillery having exasperated the troop, the soldiers had, for several minutes, been lying flat on their stomachs behind the line of paving-stones which they had erected, and, in order to supply the forced silence of the piece, which was quiet while its service was in course of reorganization, they had opened fire on the barricade. The insurgents did not reply to this musketry, in order to spare their ammunition.

The fusillade broke against the barricade; but the street, which it filled, was terrible.

Jean Valjean stepped out of the cut, entered the street, traversed the storm of bullets, walked up to the mattress, hoisted it upon his back, and returned to the barricade.

He placed the mattress in the cut with his own hands. He fixed it there against the wall in such a manner that the artillery-men should not see it.

That done, they awaited the next discharge of grape-shot.

It was not long in coming.

The cannon vomited forth its package of buck-shot with a roar. But there was no rebound. The effect which they had foreseen had been attained. The barricade was saved.

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

Bossuet admired and laughed. He exclaimed:

"It is immoral that a mattress should have so much power. Triumph of that which yields over that which strikes with lightning. But never mind, glory to the mattress which annuls a cannon!"

CHAPTER X

DAWN

At that moment, Cosette awoke.

Her chamber was narrow, neat, unobtrusive, with a long sash-window, facing the East on the back court-yard of the house.

Cosette knew nothing of what was going on in Paris. She had not been there on the preceding evening, and she had already retired to her chamber when Toussaint had said:

"It appears that there is a row."

Cosette had slept only a few hours, but soundly. She had had sweet dreams, which possibly arose from the fact that her little bed was very white. Some one, who was Marius, had appeared to her in the light. She awoke with the sun in her eyes, which, at first, produced on her the effect of being a continuation of her dream. Her first thought on emerging from this dream was a smiling one. Cosette felt herself thoroughly reassured. Like Jean Valjean, she had, a few hours previously, passed through that reaction of the soul which absolutely will not hear of unhappiness. She began to cherish hope, with all her might, without knowing why. Then she felt a pang at her heart. It was three days since she had seen Marius. But she said to herself that he must have received her letter, that he knew where she was, and that he was so clever that he would find means of reaching her.—And that certainly to-day, and perhaps that very morning.—It was broad daylight, but the rays of light were very horizontal; she thought that it was very early, but that she must rise, nevertheless, in order to receive Marius.

She felt that she could not live without Marius, and that, consequently, that was sufficient and that Marius would come. No objection was valid. All this was certain. It was monstrous enough already to have suffered for three days. Marius absent three days, this was horrible on the part of the good God. Now, this cruel teasing from on high had been gone through with. Marius was about to arrive, and he would bring good news. Youth is made thus; it quickly dries its eyes; it finds sorrow useless and does not accept it. Youth is the smile of the future in the presence of an unknown quantity, which is itself. It is natural to it to be happy. It seems as though its respiration were made of hope.

Moreover, Cosette could not remember what Marius had said to her on the subject of this absence which was to last only one day, and what explanation of it he had given her. Every one has noticed with what nimbleness a coin which one has dropped on the ground rolls away and hides, and with what art it renders itself undiscoverable. There are thoughts which play us the same trick; they nestle away in a corner of our brain; that is the end of them; they are lost; it is impossible to lay the memory on them. Cosette was somewhat vexed at the useless little effort made by her memory. She told herself, that it was very naughty and very wicked of her, to have forgotten the words uttered by Marius.

She sprang out of bed and accomplished the two ablutions of soul and body, her prayers and her toilet.

One may, in a case of exigency, introduce the reader into a nuptial chamber, not into a virginal chamber. Verse would hardly venture it, prose must not.

It is the interior of a flower that is not yet unfolded, it is whiteness in the dark, it is the private cell of a closed lily, which must not be gazed upon by man so long as the sun has not gazed upon it. Woman in the bud is sacred. That innocent bud which opens, that adorable half-nudity which is afraid of itself, that white foot which takes refuge in a slipper, that throat which veils itself before a mirror as though a mirror were an eye, that chemise which makes haste to rise up and conceal the shoulder for a creaking bit of furniture or a passing vehicle, those cords tied, those clasps fastened, those laces drawn, those tremors, those shivers of cold and modesty, that exquisite affright in every movement, that almost winged uneasiness where there is no cause for alarm, the successive phases of dressing, as charming as the clouds of dawn,—it is not fitting that all this should be narrated, and it is too much to have even called attention to it.

The eye of man must be more religious in the presence of the rising of a young girl than in the presence of the rising of a star. The possibility of hurting should inspire an augmentation of respect. The down on the peach, the bloom on the plum, the radiated crystal of the snow, the wing of the butterfly powdered with feathers, are coarse compared to that chastity which does not even know that it is chaste. The young girl is only the flash of a dream, and is not yet a statue. Her bed-chamber is hidden in the sombre part of the ideal. The indiscreet touch of a glance brutalizes this vague penumbra. Here, contemplation is profanation.

We shall, therefore, show nothing of that sweet little flutter of Cosette's rising.

An oriental tale relates how the rose was made white by

God, but that Adam looked upon her when she was unfolding, and she was ashamed and turned crimson. We are of the number who fall speechless in the presence of young girls and flowers, since we think them worthy of veneration.

Cosette dressed herself very hastily, combed and dressed her hair, which was a very simple matter in those days, when women did not swell out their curls and bands with cushions and puffs, and did not put crinoline in their locks. Then she opened the window and cast her eyes around her in every direction, hoping to descry some bit of the street, an angle of the house, an edge of pavement, so that she might be able to watch for Marius there. But no view of the outside was to be had. The back court was surrounded by tolerably high walls, and the outlook was only on several gardens. Cosette pronounced these gardens hideous: for the first time in her life, she found flowers ugly. The smallest scrap of the gutter of the street would have met her wishes better. She decided to gaze at the sky, as though she thought that Marius might come from that quarter.

All at once, she burst into tears. Not that this was fickleness of soul; but hopes cut in twain by dejection—that was her case. She had a confused consciousness of something horrible. Thoughts were rife in the air, in fact. She told herself that she was not sure of anything, that to withdraw herself from sight was to be lost; and the idea that Marius could return to her from heaven appeared to her no longer charming but mournful.

Then, as is the nature of these clouds, calm returned to her, and hope and a sort of unconscious smile, which yet indicated trust in God.

Every one in the house was still asleep. A country-like silence reigned. Not a shutter had been opened. The porter's lodge was closed. Toussaint had not risen, and Cosette, naturally, thought that her father was asleep. She must have suffered much, and she must have still been suffering greatly, for she said to herself, that her father had been unkind; but she counted on Marius. The eclipse of such a light was decidedly impossible. Now and then, she heard sharp shocks in the distance, and she said: "It is odd that people should be opening and shutting their carriage gates so early." They were the reports of the cannon battering the barricade.

A few feet below Cosette's window, in the ancient and perfectly black cornice of the wall, there was a martin's nest; the curve of this nest formed a little projection beyond the cornice, so that from above it was possible to look into this little paradise. The mother was there, spreading her wings like a fan over her brood; the father fluttered about, flew away, then came back, bearing in his beak food and kisses. The dawning day gilded this happy thing, the great law, "Multiply," lay there smiling and august, and that sweet mystery unfolded in the glory of the morning. Cosette, with her hair in the sunlight, her soul absorbed in chimæras, illuminated by love within and by the dawn without, bent over mechanically, and almost without daring to avow to herself that she was thinking at the same time of Marius, began to gaze at these birds, at this family, at that male and female, that mother and her little ones, with the profound trouble which a nest produces on a virgin.

CHAPTER XI

THE SHOT WHICH MISSES NOTHING AND KILLS NO ONE

THE assailants' fire continued. Musketry and grape-shot alternated, but without committing great ravages, to tell the truth. The top alone of the Corinthe façade suffered; the window on the first floor, and the attic window in the roof, riddled with buck-shot and biscaïens, were slowly losing their shape. The combatants who had been posted there had been obliged to withdraw. However, this is according to the tactics of barricades; to fire for a long while, in order to exhaust the insurgents' ammunition, if they commit the mistake of replying. When it is perceived, from the slackening of their fire, that they have no more powder and ball, the assault is made. Enjolras had not fallen into this trap; the barricade did not reply.

At every discharge by platoons, Gavroche puffed out his cheek with his tongue, a sign of supreme disdain.

"Good for you," said he, "rip up the cloth. We want some lint."

Courfeyrac called the grape-shot to order for the little effect which it produced, and said to the cannon:

"You are growing diffuse, my good fellow."

One gets puzzled in battle, as at a ball. It is probable that this silence on the part of the redoubt began to render the besiegers uneasy, and to make them fear some unexpected incident, and that they felt the necessity of getting a clear view behind that heap of paving-stones, and of knowing what was going on behind that impassable wall which received blows without retorting. The insurgents suddenly perceived a helmet glittering in the sun on a neighboring roof. A fireman had placed his back against a tall chimney, and seemed to be acting as sentinel. His glance fell directly down into the barricade.

"There's an embarrassing watcher," said Enjolras.

Jean Valjean had returned Enjolras' rifle, but he had his own gun.

Without saying a word, he took aim at the fireman, and, a second later, the helmet, smashed by a bullet, rattled noisily into the street. The terrified soldier made haste to disappear. A second observer took his place. This one was an officer. Jean Valjean, who had re-loaded his gun, took aim at the newcomer and sent the officer's casque to join the soldier's. The officer did not persist, and retired speedily. This time the warning was understood. No one made his appearance thereafter on that roof; and the idea of spying on the barricade was abandoned.

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

Jean Valjean made no reply.

CHAPTER XII

DISORDER A PARTISAN OF ORDER

Bossuet muttered in Combeferre's ear:

"He did not answer my question."

"He is a man who does good by gun-shots," said Combeferre.

Those who have preserved some memory of this already distant epoch know that the National Guard from the suburbs was valiant against insurrections. It was particularly zealous and intrepid in the days of June, 1832. A certain good dram-shop keeper of Pantin des Vertus or la Cunette, whose "establishment" had been closed by the riots, became leonine at the sight of his deserted dance-hall, and got himself killed to preserve the order represented by a tea-garden. In that bourgeois and heroic time, in the presence of ideas which had their knights, interests had their paladins. The prosiness of the originators detracted nothing from the bravery of the movement. The diminution of a pile of crowns made bankers sing the Marseillaise. They shed their blood lyrically for the counting-house; and they defended the shop, that immense diminutive of the fatherland, with Lacedæmonian enthusiasm.

At bottom, we will observe, there was nothing in all this that was not extremely serious. It was social elements entering into strife, while awaiting the day when they should enter into equilibrium.

Another sign of the times was the anarchy mingled with governmentalism [the barbarous name of the correct party]. People were for order in combination with lack of discipline.

The drum suddenly beat capricious calls, at the command of such or such a Colonel of the National Guard; such and such a captain went into action through inspiration; such and such National Guardsmen fought, "for an idea," and on their own account. At critical moments, on "days" they took counsel less of their leaders than of their instincts. There existed in the army of order, veritable guerilleros, some of the sword, like Fannicot, others of the pen, like Henri Fonfrède.

Civilization, unfortunately, represented at this epoch rather by an aggregation of interests than by a group of principles, was or thought itself, in peril; it set up the cry of alarm; each, constituting himself a centre, defended it, succored it, and protected it with his own head; and the first comer took it upon himself to save society.

Zeal sometimes proceeded to extermination. A platoon of the National Guard would constitute itself on its own authority a private council of war, and judge and execute a captured insurgent in five minutes. It was an improvisation of this sort that had slain Jean Prouvaire. Fierce Lynch law, with which no one party had any right to reproach the rest, for it has been applied by the Republic in America, as well as by the monarchy in Europe. This Lynch law was complicated with mistakes. On one day of rioting, a young poet, named Paul Aimé Garnier, was pursued in the Place Royale, with a bayonet at his loins, and only escaped by taking refuge under the porte-cochère of No. 6. They shouted:—"There's another of those Saint-Simonians!" and they wanted to kill him. Now, he had under his arm a volume of the memoirs of the Duc de Saint-Simon. A National Guard had read the words *Saint-Simon* on the book, and had shouted: "Death!"

On the 6th of June, 1832, a company of the National Guards from the suburbs, commanded by the Captain Fannicot, above mentioned, had itself decimated in the Rue de la Chanvrerie out of caprice and its own good pleasure. This fact, singular though it may seem, was proved at the judicial investigation opened in consequence of the insurrection of 1832. Captain Fannicot, a bold and impatient bourgeois, a sort of condottiere of the order of those whom we have just characterized, a fanatical and intractable governmentalist, could not resist the temptation to fire prematurely, and the ambition of capturing the barricade alone and unaided, that is to say, with his company. Exasperated by the successive apparition of the red flag and the old coat which he took for the black flag, he loudly blamed the generals and chiefs of the corps, who were holding council and did not think that the moment for the decisive assault had arrived, and who were allowing "the insurrection to fry in its own fat," to use the celebrated expression of one of them. For his part, he thought the barricade ripe, and as that which is ripe ought to fall, he made the attempt.

He commanded men as resolute as himself, "raging fellows," as a witness said. His company, the same which had shot Jean Prouvaire the poet, was the first of the battalion posted at the angle of the street. At the moment when they were least expecting it, the captain launched his men against the barricade. This movement, executed with more good will than strategy, cost the Fannicot company dear. Before it had traversed two thirds of the street it was received by a general discharge from the barricade. Four, the most audacious, who were running on in front, were mown down point-blank at the very foot of the redoubt, and this courageous throng of National Guards, very brave men but lacking in military tenacity, were forced to fall back, after some hesitation, leaving fifteen corpses on the pavement. This momentary hesitation gave the insurgents time to re-load their weapons, and a second and very destructive discharge struck the company before it could regain the corner of the street, its shelter. A moment more, and it was caught between two fires, and it received the volley from the battery piece which, not having received the order, had not discontinued its firing.

The intrepid and imprudent Fannicot was one of the dead from this grape-shot. He was killed by the cannon, that is to say, by order.

This attack, which was more furious than serious, irritated Enjolras.—"The fools!" said he. "They are getting their own men killed and they are using up our ammunition for nothing."

Enjolras spoke like the real general of insurrection which he was. Insurrection and repression do not fight with equal weapons. Insurrection, which is speedily exhausted, has only a certain number of shots to fire and a certain number of combatants to expend. An empty cartridge-box, a man killed, cannot be replaced. As repression has the army, it does not count its men, and, as it has Vincennes, it does not count its shots. Repression has as many regiments as the barricade has men, and as many arsenals as the barricade has cartridge-boxes. Thus they are struggles of one against a hundred, which always end in crushing the barricade; unless the revolution, uprising suddenly, flings into the balance its flaming archangel's sword. This does happen sometimes. Then everything rises, the pavements begin to seethe, popular redoubts abound. Paris quivers supremely, the *quid divinum* is given forth, a 10th of August is in the air, a 29th of July is in the air, a wonderful light appears, the yawning maw of force draws back, and the army, that lion, sees before it, erect and tranquil, that prophet, France.

CHAPTER XIII

PASSING GLEAMS

In the chaos of sentiments and passions which defend a barricade, there is a little of everything; there is bravery, there is youth, honor, enthusiasm, the ideal, conviction, the rage of the gambler, and, above all, intermittences of hope.

One of these intermittences, one of these vague quivers of hope suddenly traversed the barricade of the Rue de la Chanvrerie at the moment when it was least expected.

"Listen," suddenly cried Enjolras, who was still on the watch, "it seems to me that Paris is waking up."

It is certain that, on the morning of the 6th of June, the insurrection broke out afresh for an hour or two, to a certain extent. The obstinacy of the alarm peal of Saint-Merry reanimated some fancies. Barricades were begun in the Rue du

Poirier and the Rue des Gravilliers. In front of the Porte Saint-Martin, a young man, armed with a rifle, attacked alone a squadron of cavalry. In plain sight, on the open boulevard, he placed one knee on the ground, shouldered his weapon, fired, killed the commander of the squadron, and turned away, saying: "There's another who will do us no more harm."

He was put to the sword. In the Rue Saint-Denis, a woman fired on the National Guard from behind a lowered blind. The slats of the blind could be seen to tremble at every shot. A child fourteen years of age was arrested in the Rue de la Cossonerie, with his pockets full of cartridges. Many posts were attacked. At the entrance to the Rue Bertin-Poirée, a very lively and utterly unexpected fusillade welcomed a regiment of cuirrassiers, at whose head marched Marshal General Cavaignac de Barague. In the Rue Planche-Mibray, they threw old pieces of pottery and household utensils down on the soldiers from the roofs; a bad sign; and when this matter was reported to Marshal Soult, Napoleon's old lieutenant grew thoughtful, as he recalled Suchet's saying at Saragossa: "We are lost when the old women empty their pots de chambre on our heads."

These general symptoms which presented themselves at the moment when it was thought that the uprising had been rendered local, this fever of wrath, these sparks which flew hither and thither above those deep masses of combustibles which are called the faubourgs of Paris,—all this, taken together, disturbed the military chiefs. They made haste to stamp out these beginnings of conflagration.

They delayed the attack on the barricades Maubuée, de la Chanvrerie and Saint-Merry until these sparks had been extinguished, in order that they might have to deal with the barricades only and be able to finish them at one blow. Columns were thrown into the streets where there was fermentation, sweeping the large, sounding the small, right and left, now slowly and cautiously, now at full charge. The troops broke in the doors of houses whence shots had been fired; at the same time, manœuvres by the cavalry dispersed the groups on the boulevards. This repression was not effected without some commotion, and without that tumultuous uproar peculiar to collisions between the army and the people. This was what Enjolras had caught in the intervals of the cannonade and the musketry. Moreover, he had seen wounded men passing the end of the street in litters, and he said to Courfeyrac:—"Those wounded do not come from us."

Their hope did not last long; the gleam was quickly eclipsed. In less than half an hour, what was in the air vanished, it was a flash of lightning unaccompanied by thunder, and the insurgents felt that sort of leaden cope, which the indifference of the people casts over obstinate and deserted men, fall over them once more.

The general movement, which seemed to have assumed a vague outline, had miscarried; and the attention of the minister of war and the strategy of the generals could now be concentrated on the three or four barricades which still remained standing.

The sun was mounting above the horizon.

An insurgent hailed Enjolras.

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

Enjolras, who was still leaning on his elbows at his embrasure, made an affirmitive sign with his head, but without taking his eyes from the end of the street.

CHAPTER XIV

WHEREIN WILL APPEAR THE NAME OF ENJOLRAS' MISTRESS

Courfeyrac, seated on a paving-stone beside Enjolras, continued to insult the cannon, and each time that that gloomy cloud of projectiles which is called grape-shot passed overhead with its terrible sound he assailed it with a burst of irony.

"You are wearing out your lungs, poor, brutal, old fellow, you pain me, you are wasting your row. That's not thunder, it's a cough."

And the bystanders laughed.

Courfeyrac and Bossuet, whose brave good humor increased with the peril, like Madame Scarron, replaced nourishment with pleasantry, and, as wine was lacking, they poured out gayety to all.

"I admire Enjolras," said Bossuet. "His impassive temerity astounds me. He lives alone, which renders him a little sad, perhaps; Enjolras complains of his greatness, which binds him to widowhood. The rest of us have mistresses, more or less, who makes us crazy, that is to say, brave. When a man is as much in love as a tiger, the least that he can do is to fight like a lion. That is one way of taking our revenge for the capers that mesdames our grisettes play on us. Roland gets himself killed for Angélique; all our heroism comes from our women. A man without a woman is a pistol without a trigger; it is the woman that sets the man off. Well, Enjolras has no woman. He is not in love, and yet he manages to be intrepid. It is a thing unheard of that a man should be as cold as ice and as bold as fire."

Enjolras did not appear to be listening, but had any one been near him, that person would have heard him mutter in a low voice: "Patria."

Bossuet was still laughing when Courfeyrac exclaimed:

"News!"

And assuming the tone of an usher making an announcement, he added:

"My name is Eight-Pounder."

In fact, a new personage had entered on the scene. This was a second piece of ordnance.

The artillery-men rapidly performed their manœuvres in force, and placed this second piece in line with the first.

This outlined the catastrophe.

A few minutes later, the two pieces, rapidly served, were firing point-blank at the redoubt; the platoon firing of the line and of the soldiers from the suburbs sustained the artillery.

Another cannonade was audible at some distance. At the same time that the two guns were furiously attacking the redoubt from the Rue de la Chanvrerie, two other cannons, trained one from the Rue Saint-Denis, the other from the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher, were riddling the Saint-Merry barricade. The four cannons echoed each other mournfully.

The barking of these sombre dogs of war replied to each other.

One of the two pieces which was now battering the barricade on the Rue de la Chanvrerie was firing grape-shot, the other balls.

The piece which was firing balls was pointed a little high, and the aim was calculated so that the ball struck the extreme edge of the upper crest of the barricade, and crumbled the stone down upon the insurgents, mingled with bursts of grape-shot.

The object of this mode of firing was to drive the insurgents from the summit of the redoubt, and to compel them to gather close in the interior, that is to say, this announced the assault.

The combatants once driven from the crest of the barricade by balls, and from the windows of the cabaret by grape-shot, the attacking columns could venture into the street without being picked off, perhaps, even, without being seen, could briskly and suddenly scale the redoubt, as on the preceding evening, and, who knows? take it by surprise.

"It is absolutely necessary that the inconvenience of those guns should be diminished," said Enjolras, and he shouted: "Fire on the artillery-men!"

All were ready. The barricade, which had long been silent, poured forth a desperate fire; seven or eight discharges followed, with a sort of rage and joy; the street was filled with blinding smoke, and, at the end of a few minutes, athwart this mist all streaked with flame, two thirds of the gunners could be distinguished lying beneath the wheels of the cannons. Those who were left standing continued to serve the pieces with severe tranquillity, but the fire had slackened.

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

Enjolras shook his head and replied:

"Another quarter of an hour of this success, and there will not be any cartridges left in the barricade."

It appears that Gavroche overheard this remark.

CHAPTER XV

GAVROCHE OUTSIDE

Courfeyrac suddenly caught sight of some one at the base of the barricade, outside in the street, amid the bullets.

Gavroche had taken a bottle basket from the wine-shop, had made his way out through the cut, and was quietly engaged in emptying the full cartridge-boxes of the National Guardsmen who had been killed on the slope of the redoubt, into his basket.

"What are you doing there?" asked Courfeyrac.

Gavroche raised his face:—

"I'm filling my basket, citizen."

"Don't you see the grape-shot?"

Gavroche replied:

"Well, it is raining. What then?"

Courfeyrac shouted:—"Come in!"

"Instanter," said Gavroche.

And with a single bound he plunged into the street.

It will be remembered that Fannicot's company had left behind it a trail of bodies. Twenty corpses lay scattered here and there on the pavement, through the whole length of the street. Twenty cartouches for Gavroche meant a provision of cartridges for the barricade.

The smoke in the street was like a fog. Whoever has beheld a cloud which has fallen into a mountain gorge between two peaked escarpments can imagine this smoke rendered denser and thicker by two gloomy rows of lofty houses. It rose gradually and was incessantly renewed; hence a twilight which made even the broad daylight turn pale. The combatants could hardly see each other from one end of the street to the other, short as it was.

This obscurity, which had probably been desired and calculated on by the commanders who were to direct the assault on the barricade, was useful to Gavroche.

Beneath the folds of this veil of smoke, and thanks to his small size, he could advance tolerably far into the street without being seen. He rifled the first seven or eight cartridge-boxes without much danger.

He crawled flat on his belly, galloped on all fours, took his basket in his teeth, twisted, glided, undulated, wound from one dead body to another, and emptied the cartridge-box or cartouche as a monkey opens a nut.

They did not dare to shout to him to return from the barricade, which was quite near, for fear of attracting attention to him.

On one body, that of a corporal, he found a powder-flask.

"For thirst," said he, putting it in his pocket.

By dint of advancing, he reached a point where the fog of the fusillade became transparent. So that the sharpshooters of the line ranged on the outlook behind their paving-stone dike and the sharpshooters of the banlieue massed at the corner of the street suddenly pointed out to each other something moving through the smoke.

At the moment when Gavroche was relieving a sergeant, who was lying near a stone door-post, of his cartridges, a bullet struck the body.

"Fichtre!" ejaculated Gavroche. "They are killing my dead men for me."

A second bullet struck a spark from the pavement beside him.—A third overturned his basket.

Gavroche looked and saw that this came from the men of the banlieue.

He sprang to his feet, stood erect, with his hair flying in the wind, his hands on his hips, his eyes fixed on the National Guardsmen who were firing, and sang:

"On est laid à Nanterre,	"Men are ugly at Nanterre,
C'est la faute à Voltaire;	'Tis the fault of Voltaire;
Et bête à Palaiseau,	And dull at Palaiseau,
C'est la faute à Rousseau."	'Tis the fault of Rousseau."

Then he picked up his basket, replaced the cartridges which had fallen from it, without missing a single one, and, advancing towards the fusillade, set about plundering another cartridge-box. There a fourth bullet missed him, again. Gavroche sang:

"Je ne suis pas notaire,	"I am not a notary,
C'est la faute à Voltaire;	'Tis the fault of Voltaire;
Je suis un petit oiseau,	I'm a little bird,
C'est la faute à Rousseau."	'Tis the fault of Rousseau."

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

"Joie est mon caractère,	"Joy is my character,
C'est la faute à Voltaire;	'Tis the fault of Voltaire;
Misère est mon trousseau,	Misery is my trousseau,
C'est la faute à Rousseau."	'Tis the fault of Rousseau."

Thus it went on for some time.

It was a charming and terrible sight. Gavroche, though shot at, was teasing the fusillade. He had the air of being greatly diverted. It was the sparrow pecking at the sportsmen. To each discharge he retorted with a couplet. They aimed at him constantly, and always missed him. The National Guardsmen and the soldiers laughed as they took aim at him. He lay down, sprang to his feet, hid in the corner of a doorway, then made a bound, disappeared, re-appeared, scampered away, returned, replied to the grape-shot with his thumb at his nose, and, all the while, went on pillaging the cartouches, emptying the cartridge-boxes, and filling his basket. The insurgents, panting with anxiety, followed him with their eyes. The barricade trembled; he sang. He was not a child, he was not a man; he was a strange gamin-fairy. He might have been called the invulnerable dwarf of the fray. The bullets flew after him, he was more nimble than they. He played a fearful game of hide and seek with death; every time that the flat-nosed face of the spectre approached, the urchin administered to it a fillip.

One bullet, however, better aimed or more treacherous than the rest, finally struck the will-o'-the-wisp of a child. Gavroche was seen to stagger, then he sank to the earth. The whole barricade gave vent to a cry; but there was something of Antæus in that pygmy; for the gamin to touch the pavement is the same as for the giant to touch the earth; Gavroche had fallen only to rise again; he remained in a sitting posture, a long thread of blood streaked his face, he raised both arms in the air, glanced in the direction whence the shot had come, and began to sing:

"Je suis tombé par terre,	"I have fallen to the earth,
C'est la faute à Voltaire;	'Tis the fault of Voltaire;
Le nez dans le ruisseau,	With my nose in the gutter,
C'est la faute à . . . "	'Tis the fault of . . . "

He did not finish. A second bullet from the same marksman stopped him short. This time he fell face downward on the pavement, and moved no more. This grand little soul had taken its flight.

CHAPTER XVI

HOW FROM A BROTHER ONE BECOMES A FATHER

At that same moment, in the garden of the Luxembourg,—for the gaze of the drama must be everywhere present,—two children were holding each other by the hand. One might have been seven years old, the other five. The rain having soaked them, they were walking along the paths on the sunny side; the elder was leading the younger; they were pale and ragged; they had the air of wild birds. The smaller of them said: "I am very hungry."

The elder, who was already somewhat of a protector, was leading his brother with his left hand and in his right he carried a small stick.

They were alone in the garden. The garden was deserted, the gates had been closed by order of the police, on account of the insurrection. The troops who had been bivouacking there had departed for the exigencies of combat.

How did those children come there? Perhaps they had escaped from some guard-house which stood ajar; perhaps there was in the vicinity, at the Barrière d'Enfer, or on the Esplanade de l'Observatoire, or in the neighboring carrefour, dominated by the pediment on which could be read: *Invenerunt parvulum pannis involutum,* some mountebank's booth from which they had fled; perhaps they had, on the preceding evening, escaped the eye of the inspectors of the garden at the hour of closing, and had passed the night in some one of those sentry-boxes where people read the papers? The fact is, they were stray lambs and they seemed free. To be astray and to seem free is to be lost. These poor little creatures were, in fact, lost.

These two children were the same over whom Gavroche had been put to some trouble, as the reader will recollect. Children of the Thénardiers, leased out to Magnon, attributed to M. Gillenormand, and now leaves fallen from all these rootless branches, and swept over the ground by the wind. Their clothing, which had been clean in Magnon's day, and which had served her as a prospectus with M. Gillenormand, had been converted into rags.

Henceforth these beings belonged to the statistics as "Abandoned children," whom the police take note of, collect, mislay and find again on the pavements of Paris.

It required the disturbance of a day like that to account for these miserable little creatures being in that garden. If the superintendents had caught sight of them, they would have driven such rags forth. Poor little things do not enter public gardens; still, people should reflect that, as children, they have a right to flowers.

These children were there, thanks to the locked gates. They were there contrary to the regulations. They had slipped into the garden and there they remained. Closed gates do not dismiss the inspectors, oversight is supposed to continue, but it grows slack and reposes; and the inspectors, moved by the public anxiety and more occupied with the outside than the inside, no longer glanced into the garden, and had not seen the two delinquents.

It had rained the night before, and even a little in the morning. But in June, showers do not count for much. An hour after a storm, it can hardly be seen that the beautiful blonde day has wept. The earth, in summer, is as quickly dried as the cheek of a child. At that period of the solstice, the light of full noonday is, so to speak, poignant. It takes everything. It applies itself to the earth, and superposes itself with a sort of suction. One would say that the sun was thirsty. A shower is but a glass of water; a rainstorm is instantly drunk up. In the morning everything was dripping, in the afternoon everything is powdered over.

Nothing is so worthy of admiration as foliage washed by the rain and wiped by the rays of sunlight; it is warm freshness. The gardens and meadows, having water at their roots, and sun in their flowers, become perfuming-pans of incense, and smoke with all their odors at once. Everything smiles, sings and offers itself. One feels gently intoxicated. The springtime is a provisional paradise, the sun helps man to have patience.

There are beings who demand nothing further; mortals, who, having the azure of heaven, say: "It is enough!" dreamers absorbed in the wonderful, dipping into the idolatry of nature, indifferent to good and evil, contemplators of cosmos and radiantly forgetful of man, who do not understand how people can occupy themselves with the hunger of these, and the thirst of those, with the nudity of the poor in winter, with the lymphatic curvature of the little spinal column, with the pallet, the attic, the dungeon, and the rags of shivering young girls, when they can dream beneath the trees; peaceful and terrible spirits they, and pitilessly satisfied. Strange to say, the infinite suffices them. That great need of man, the finite, which admits of embrace, they ignore. The finite which admits of progress and sublime toil, they do not think about. The indefinite, which is born from the human and divine combination of the infinite and the finite, escapes them. Provided that they are face to face with immensity, they smile Joy never, ecstasy forever. Their life lies in surrendering their personality in contemplation. The history of humanity is for them only a detailed plan. All is not there; the true All remains without; what is the use of busying oneself over that detail, man? Man suffers, that is quite possible; but look at Aldebaran rising! The mother has no more milk, the new-born babe is dying. I know nothing about that, but just look at this wonderful rosette which a slice of wood-cells of the pine presents under the microscope! Compare the most beautiful Mechlin lace to that if you can! These thinkers forget to love. The zodiac thrives with them to such a point that it prevents their seeing the weeping child. God eclipses their souls. This is a family of minds which are, at once, great and petty. Horace was one of them; so was Goethe. La Fontaine perhaps; magnificent egoists of the infinite, tranquil spectators of sorrow, who do not behold Nero if the weather be fair, for whom the sun conceals the funeral pile, who would look on at an execution by the guillotine in the search for an effect of light, who hear neither the cry nor the sob, nor the death rattle, nor the alarm peal, for whom everything is well, since there is a month of May, who, so long as there are clouds of purple and gold above their heads, declare themselves content, and who are determined to be happy until the radiance of the stars and the songs of the birds are exhausted.

These are dark radiances. They have no suspicion that they are to be pitied. Certainly they are so. He who does not weep does not see. They are to be admired and pitied, as one would both pity and admire a being at once night and day, without eyes beneath his lashes but with a star on his brow.

The indifference of these thinkers, is, according to some, a superior philosophy. That may be; but in this superiority there is some infirmity. One may be immortal and yet limp: witness Vulcan. One may be more than man and less than man. There is incomplete immensity in nature. Who knows whether the sun is not a blind man?

But then, what? In whom can we trust? *Solem quis dicere falsum audeat?* Who shall dare to say that the sun is false? Thus certain geniuses, themselves, certain Very-Lofty mortals, man-stars, may be mistaken? That which is on high at the summit, at the crest, at the zenith, that which sends down so much light on the earth, sees but little, sees badly, sees not at all? Is not this a desperate state of things? No. But what is there, then, above the sun? The god.

On the 6th of June, 1832, about eleven o'clock in the morning, the Luxembourg, solitary and depopulated, was charming. The quincunxes and flower-beds shed forth balm and dazzling beauty into the sunlight. The branches, wild with the brilliant glow of midday, seemed endeavoring to embrace. In the sycamores there was an uproar of linnets, sparrows triumphed, wood-peckers climbed along the chestnut trees, administering little pecks on the bark. The flower-beds accepted the legitimate royalty of the lilies; the most august of perfumes is that which emanates from whiteness. The peppery odor of the carnations was perceptible. The old crows of Marie de Medici were amorous in the tall trees. The sun gilded, empurpled, set fire to and lighted up the tulips, which are nothing but all the varieties of flame made into flowers. All around the banks of tulips the bees, the sparks of these flame-flowers, hummed. All was grace and gayety, even the impending rain; this relapse, by which the lilies of the valley and the honeysuckles were destined to profit, had nothing disturbing about it; the swallows indulged in the charming threat of flying low. He who was there aspired to happiness;

life smelled good; all nature exhaled candor, help, assistance, paternity, caress, dawn. The thoughts which fell from heaven were as sweet as the tiny hand of a baby when one kisses it.

The statues under the trees, white and nude, had robes of shadow pierced with light; these goddesses were all tattered with sunlight; rays hung from them on all sides. Around the great fountain, the earth was already dried up to the point of being burnt. There was sufficient breeze to raise little insurrections of dust here and there. A few yellow leaves, left over from the autumn, chased each other merrily, and seemed to be playing tricks on each other.

This abundance of light had something indescribably reassuring about it. Life, sap, heat, odors overflowed; one was conscious, beneath creation, of the enormous size of the source; in all these breaths permeated with love, in this interchange of reverberations and reflections, in this marvellous expenditure of rays, in this infinite outpouring of liquid gold, one felt the prodigality of the inexhaustible; and, behind this splendor as behind a curtain of flame, one caught a glimpse of God, that millionaire of stars.

Thanks to the sand, there was not a speck of mud; thanks to the rain, there was not a grain of ashes. The clumps of blossoms had just been bathed; every sort of velvet, satin, gold and varnish, which springs from the earth in the form of flowers, was irreproachable. This magnificence was cleanly. The grand silence of happy nature filled the garden. A celestial silence that is compatible with a thousand sorts of music, the cooing of nests, the buzzing of swarms, the flutterings of the breeze. All the harmony of the season was complete in one gracious whole; the entrances and exits of spring took place in proper order; the lilacs ended; the jasmines began; some flowers were tardy, some insects in advance of their time; the van-guard of the red June butterflies fraternized with the rear-guard of the white butterflies of May. The plantain trees were getting their new skins. The breeze hollowed out undulations in the magnificent enormity of the chestnut-trees. It was splendid. A veteran from the neighboring barracks, who was gazing through the fence, said: "Here is the Spring presenting arms and in full uniform."

All nature was breakfasting; creation was at table; this was its hour; the great blue cloth was spread in the sky, and the great green cloth on earth; the sun lighted it all up brilliantly. God was serving the universal repast. Each creature had his pasture or his mess. The ring-dove found his hemp-seed, the chaffinch found his millet, the goldfinch found chickweed, the red-breast found worms, the green finch found flies, the fly found infusoriæ, the bee found flowers. They ate each other somewhat, it is true, which is the misery of evil mixed with good; but not a beast of them all had an empty stomach.

The two little abandoned creatures had arrived in the vicinity of the grand fountain, and, rather bewildered by all this light, they tried to hide themselves, the instinct of the poor and the weak in the presence of even impersonal magnificence; and they kept behind the swans' hutch.

Here and there, at intervals, when the wind blew, shouts, clamor, a sort of tumultuous death rattle, which was the firing, and dull blows, which were discharges of cannon, struck the ear confusedly. Smoke hung over the roofs in the direction of the Halles. A bell, which had the air of an appeal, was ringing in the distance.

These children did not appear to notice these noises. The little one repeated from time to time: "I am hungry."

Almost at the same instant with the children, another couple approached the great basin. They consisted of a goodman, about fifty years of age, who was leading by the hand a little fellow of six. No doubt, a father and his son. The little man of six had a big brioche.

At that epoch, certain houses abutting on the river, in the Rues Madame and d'Enfer, had keys to the Luxembourg garden, of which the lodgers enjoyed the use when the gates were shut, a privilege which was suppressed later on. This father and son came from one of these houses, no doubt.

The two poor little creatures watched "that gentleman" approaching, and hid themselves a little more thoroughly.

He was a bourgeois. The same person, perhaps, whom Marius had one day heard, through his love fever, near the same grand basin, counselling his son "to avoid excesses." He had an affable and haughty air, and a mouth which was always smiling, since it did not shut. This mechanical smile, produced by too much jaw and too little skin, shows the teeth rather than the soul. The child, with his brioche, which he had bitten into but had not finished eating, seemed satiated. The child was dressed as a National Guardsman, owing to the insurrection, and the father had remained clad as a bourgeois out of prudence.

Father and son halted near the fountain where two swans were sporting. This bourgeois appeared to cherish a special admiration for the swans. He resembled them in this sense, that he walked like them.

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

If the two poor little beings had listened and if they had been of an age to understand, they might have gathered the words of this grave man. The father was saying to his son:

"The sage lives content with little. Look at me, my son. I do not love pomp. I am never seen in clothes decked with gold lace and stones; I leave that false splendor to badly organized souls."

Here the deep shouts which proceeded from the direction of the Halles burst out with fresh force of bell and uproar.

"What is that?" inquired the child.

The father replied:

"It is the Saturnalia."

All at once, he caught sight of the two little ragged boys behind the green swan-hutch.

"There is the beginning," said he.

And, after a pause, he added:

"Anarchy is entering this garden."

In the meanwhile, his son took a bite of his brioche, spit it out, and suddenly burst out crying.

"What are you crying about?" demanded his father.

"I am not hungry any more," said the child.

The father's smile became more accentuated.

"One does not need to be hungry in order to eat a cake."

"My cake tires me. It is stale."

"Don't you want any more of it?"

"No."

The father pointed to the swans.

"Throw it to those palmipeds."

The child hesitated. A person may not want any more of his cake; but that is no reason for giving it away.

The father went on:

"Be humane. You must have compassion on animals."

And, taking the cake from his son, he flung it into the basin.

The cake fell very near the edge.

The swans were far away, in the centre of the basin, and busy with some prey. They had seen neither the bourgeois nor the brioche.

The bourgeois, feeling that the cake was in danger of being wasted, and moved by this useless shipwreck, entered upon a telegraphic agitation, which finally attracted the attention of the swans.

They perceived something floating, steered for the edge like ships, as they are, and slowly directed their course toward the brioche, with the stupid majesty which befits white creatures.

"The swans [*cygnes*] understand signs [*signes*]," said the bourgeois, delighted to make a jest.

At that moment, the distant tumult of the city underwent another sudden increase. This time it was sinister. There are some gusts of wind which speak more distinctly than others. The one which was blowing at that moment brought clearly defined drum-beats, clamors, platoon firing, and the dismal replies of the tocsin and the cannon. This coincided with a black cloud which suddenly veiled the sun.

The swans had not yet reached the brioche.

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

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

"From the Tuileries to the Luxembourg, there is but the distance which separates Royalty from the peerage; that is not far. Shots will soon rain down."

He glanced at the cloud.

"Perhaps it is rain itself that is about to shower down; the sky is joining in; the younger branch is condemned. Let us return home quickly."

"I should like to see the swans eat the brioche," said the child.

The father replied:

"That would be imprudent."

And he led his little bourgeois away.

The son, regretting the swans, turned his head back toward the basin until a corner of the quincunxes concealed it from him.

In the meanwhile, the two little waifs had approached the brioche at the same time as the swans. It was floating on the water. The smaller of them stared at the cake, the elder gazed after the retreating bourgeois.

Father and son entered the labyrinth of walks which leads to the grand flight of steps near the clump of trees on the side of the Rue Madame.

As soon as they had disappeared from view, the elder child hastily flung himself flat on his stomach on the rounding curb of the basin, and clinging to it with his left hand, and leaning over the water, on the verge of falling in, he stretched out his right hand with his stick towards the cake. The swans, perceiving the enemy, made haste, and in so doing, they produced an effect of their breasts which was of service to the little fisher; the water flowed back before the swans, and one of these gentle concentric undulations softly floated the brioche towards the child's wand. Just as the swans came up, the stick touched the cake. The child gave it a brisk rap, drew in the brioche, frightened away the swans, seized the cake, and sprang to his feet. The cake was wet; but they were hungry and thirsty. The elder broke the cake into two portions, a large one and a small one, took the small one for himself, gave the large one to his brother, and said to him:

"Ram that into your muzzle."

CHAPTER XVII

MORTUUS PATER FILIUM MORITURUM EXPECTAT

Marius dashed out of the barricade, Combeferre followed him. But he was too late. Gavroche was dead. Combeferre brought back the basket of cartridges; Marius bore the child.

"Alas!" he thought, "that which the father had done for his father, he was requiting to the son; only, Thénardier had brought back his father alive; he was bringing back the child dead."

When Marius re-entered the redoubt with Gavroche in his arms, his face, like the child, was inundated with blood.

At the moment when he had stooped to lift Gavroche, a bullet had grazed his head; he had not noticed it.

Courfeyrac untied his cravat and with it bandaged Marius' brow.

They laid Gavroche on the same table with Mabeuf, and spread over the two corpses the black shawl. There was enough of it for both the old man and the child.

Combeferre distributed the cartridges from the basket which he had brought in.

This gave each man fifteen rounds to fire.

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

"Here's a rare eccentric," said Combeferre in a low voice to Enjolras. "He finds a way of not fighting in this barricade."

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

"Heroism has its originals," resumed Combeferre.

And Courfeyrac, who had overheard, added:

"He is another sort from Father Mabeuf."

One thing which must be noted is, that the fire which was battering the barricade hardly disturbed the interior. Those who have never traversed the whirlwind of this sort of war can form no idea of the singular moments of tranquillity mingled with these convulsions. Men go and come, they talk, they jest, they lounge. Some one whom we know heard a combatant say to him in the midst of the grape-shot: "We are here as at a bachelor breakfast." The redoubt of the Rue de la Chanvrerie, we repeat, seemed very calm within. All mutations and all phases had been, or were about to be, exhausted. The position, from critical, had become menacing, and, from menacing, was probably about to become desperate. In proportion as the situation grew gloomy, the glow of heroism empurpled the barricade more and more. Enjolras, who was grave, dominated it, in the attitude of a young Spartan sacrificing his naked sword to the sombre genius, Epidotas.

Combeferre, wearing an apron, was dressing the wounds; Bossuet and Feuilly were making cartridges with the powder-flask picked up by Gavroche on the dead corporal, and Bossuet said to Feuilly: "We are soon to take the diligence for another planet"; Courfeyrac was disposing and arranging on some paving-stones which he had reserved for himself near Enjolras, a complete arsenal, his sword-cane, his gun, two holster pistols, and a cudgel, with the care of a young girl setting a small dunkerque in order. Jean Valjean stared silently at the wall opposite him. An artisan was fastening Mother Hucheloup's big straw hat on his head with a string, "for fear of sun-stroke," as he said. The young men from the Cougourde d'Aix were chatting merrily among themselves, as though eager to speak patois for the last time. Joly, who had taken Widow Hucheloup's mirror from the wall, was examining his tongue in it. Some combatants, having discovered a few crusts of rather mouldy bread, in a drawer, were eagerly devouring them. Marius was disturbed with regard to what his father was about to say to him.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE VULTURE BECOME PREY

We must insist upon one psychological fact peculiar to barricades. Nothing which is characteristic of that surprising war of the streets should be omitted.

Whatever may have been the singular inward tranquillity which we have just mentioned, the barricade, for those who are inside it, remains, none the less, a vision.

There is something of the apocalypse in civil war, all the mists of the unknown are commingled with fierce flashes, revolutions are sphinxes, and any one who has passed through a barricade thinks he has traversed a dream.

The feelings to which one is subject in these places we have pointed out in the case of Marius, and we shall see the consequences; they are both more and less than life. On emerging from a barricade, one no longer knows what one has seen there. One has been terrible, but one knows it not. One has been surrounded with conflicting ideas which had human faces; one's head has been in the light of the future. There were corpses lying prone there, and phantoms standing erect. The hours were colossal and seemed hours of eternity. One has lived in death. Shadows have passed by. What were they?

One has beheld hands on which there was blood; there was a deafening horror; there was also a frightful silence; there were open mouths which shouted, and other open mouths which held their peace; one was in the midst of smoke, of night, perhaps. One fancied that one had touched the sinister ooze of unknown depths; one stares at something red on one's finger nails. One no longer remembers anything.

Let us return to the Rue de la Chanvrerie.

All at once, between two discharges, the distant sound of a clock striking the hour became audible.

"It is midday," said Combeferre.

The twelve strokes had not finished striking when Enjolras sprang to his feet, and from the summit of the barricade hurled this thundering shout:

"Carry stones up into the houses; line the window-sills and the roofs with them. Half the men to their guns, the other half to the paving-stones. There is not a minute to be lost."

A squad of sappers and miners, axe on shoulder, had just made their appearance in battle array at the end of the street.

This could only be the head of a column; and of what column? The attacking column, evidently; the sappers charged with the demolition of the barricade must always precede the soldiers who are to scale it.

They were, evidently, on the brink of that moment which M. Clermont-Tonnerre, in 1822, called "the tug of war."

Enjolras' order was executed with the correct haste which is peculiar to ships and barricades, the only two scenes of combat where escape is impossible. In less than a minute, two thirds of the stones which Enjolras had had piled up at the door of Corinthe had been carried up to the first floor and the attic, and before a second minute had elapsed, these stones, artistically set one upon the other, walled up the sash-window on the first floor and the windows in the roof to half their height. A few loop-holes carefully planned by Feuilly, the principal architect, allowed of the passage of the gun-barrels. This armament of the windows could be effected all the more easily since the firing of grape-shot had ceased. The two cannons were now discharging ball against the centre of the barrier in order to make a hole there, and, if possible, a breach for the assault.

When the stones destined to the final defence were in place, Enjolras had the bottles which he had set under the table where Mabeuf lay, carried to the first floor.

"Who is to drink that?" Bossuet asked him.

"They," replied Enjolras.

Then they barricaded the window below, and held in readiness the iron cross-bars which served to secure the door of the wine-shop at night.

The fortress was complete. The barricade was the rampart, the wine-shop was the dungeon. With the stones which remained they stopped up the outlet.

As the defenders of a barricade are always obliged to be sparing of their ammunition, and as the assailants know this, the assailants combine their arrangements with a sort of irritating leisure, expose themselves to fire prematurely, though in appearance more than in reality, and take their ease. The preparations for attack are always made with a certain methodical deliberation; after which, the lightning strikes.

This deliberation permitted Enjolras to take a review of everything and to perfect everything. He felt that, since such men were to die, their death ought to be a masterpiece.

He said to Marius: "We are the two leaders. I will give the last orders inside. Do you remain outside and observe."

Marius posted himself on the lookout upon the crest of the barricade.

Enjolras had the door of the kitchen, which was the ambulance, as the reader will remember, nailed up.

"No splashing of the wounded," he said.

He issued his final orders in the tap-room in a curt, but profoundly tranquil tone; Feuilly listened and replied in the name of all.

"On the first floor, hold your axes in readiness to cut the staircase. Have you them?"

"Yes," said Feuilly.

"How many?"

"Two axes and a pole-axe."

"That is good. There are now twenty-six combatants of us on foot. How many guns are there?"

"Thirty-four."

"Eight too many. Keep those eight guns loaded like the rest and at hand. Swords and pistols in your belts. Twenty men to the barricade. Six ambushed in the attic windows, and at the window on the first floor to fire on the assailants through the loop-holes in the stones. Let not a single worker remain inactive here. Presently, when the drum beats the assault, let the twenty below stairs rush to the barricade. The first to arrive will have the best places."

These arrangements made, he turned to Javert and said:

"I am not forgetting you."

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

"The last man to leave this room will smash the skull of this spy."

"Here?" inquired a voice.

"No, let us not mix their corpses with our own. The little barricade of the Mondétour lane can be scaled. It is only four feet high. The man is well pinioned. He shall be taken thither and put to death."

There was some one who was more impassive at that moment than Enjolras, it was Javert. Here Jean Valjean made his appearance.

He had been lost among the group of insurgents. He stepped forth and said to Enjolras:

"You are the commander?"

"Yes."

"You thanked me a while ago."

"In the name of the Republic. The barricade has two saviors, Marius Pontmercy and yourself."

"Do you think that I deserve a recompense?"

"Certainly."

"Well, I request one."

"What is it?"

"That I may blow that man's brains out."

Javert raised his head, saw Jean Valjean, made an almost imperceptible movement, and said:

"That is just."

As for Enjolras, he had begun to re-load his rifle; he cast his eyes about him:

"No objections."

And he turned to Jean Valjean:

"Take the spy."

Jean Valjean did, in fact, take possession of Javert, by seating himself on the end of the table. He seized the pistol, and a faint click announced that he had cocked it.

Almost at the same moment, a blast of trumpets became audible.

"Take care!" shouted Marius from the top of the barricade.

Javert began to laugh with that noiseless laugh which was peculiar to him, and gazing intently at the insurgents, he said to them:

"You are in no better case than I am."

"All out!" shouted Enjolras.

The insurgents poured out tumultuously, and, as they went, received in the back,—may we be permitted the expression,—this sally of Javert's:

"We shall meet again shortly!"

CHAPTER XIX

JEAN VALJEAN TAKES HIS REVENGE

When Jean Valjean was left alone with Javert, he untied the rope which fastened the prisoner across the middle of the body, and the knot of which was under the table. After this he made him a sign to rise.

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

Jean Valjean took Javert by the martingale, as one would take a beast of burden by the breast-band, and, dragging the latter after him, emerged from the wine-shop slowly, because

Javert, with his impeded limbs, could take only very short steps.

Jean Valjean had the pistol in his hand.

In this manner they crossed the inner trapezium of the barricade. The insurgents, all intent on the attack, which was imminent, had their backs turned to these two.

Marius alone, stationed on one side, at the extreme left of the barricade, saw them pass. This group of victim and executioner was illuminated by the sepulchral light which he bore in his own soul.

Jean Valjean with some difficulty, but without relaxing his hold for a single instant, made Javert, pinioned as he was, scale the little entrenchment in the Mondétour lane.

When they had crossed this barrier, they found themselves alone in the lane. No one saw them. Among the heap they could distinguish a livid face, streaming hair, a pierced hand and the half nude breast of a woman. It was Éponine. The corner of the houses hid them from the insurgents. The corpses carried away from the barricade formed a terrible pile a few paces distant.

Javert gazed askance at this body, and, profoundly calm, said in a low tone:

"It strikes me that I know that girl."

Then he turned to Jean Valjean.

Jean Valjean thrust the pistol under his arm and fixed on Javert a look which it required no words to interpret: "Javert, it is I."

Javert replied:

"Take your revenge."

Jean Valjean drew from his pocket a knife, and opened it.

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

Jean Valjean cut the martingale which Javert had about his neck, then he cut the cords on his wrists, then, stooping down, he cut the cord on his feet; and, straightening himself up, he said to him:

"You are free."

Javert was not easily astonished. Still, master of himself though he was, he could not repress a start. He remained open-mouthed and motionless.

Jean Valjean continued:

"I do not think that I shall escape from this place. But if, by chance, I do, I live, under the name of Fauchelevent, in the Rue de l'Homme Armé, No. 7."

Javert snarled like a tiger, which made him half open one corner of his mouth, and he muttered between his teeth:

"Have a care."

"Go," said Jean Valjean.

Javert began again:

"Thou saidst Fauchelevent, Rue de l'Homme Armé?"

"Number 7."

Javert repeated in a low voice:—"Number 7."

He buttoned up his coat once more, resumed the military stiffness between his shoulders, made a half turn, folded his arms and, supporting his chin on one of his hands, he set out in the direction of the Halles. Jean Valjean followed him with his eyes:

A few minutes later, Javert turned round and shouted to Jean Valjean:

"You annoy me. Kill me, rather."

Javert himself did not notice that he no longer addressed Jean Valjean as "thou."

"Be off with you," said Jean Valjean.

Javert retreated slowly. A moment later he turned the corner of the Rue des Prêcheurs.

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

Then he returned to the barricade and said:

"It is done."

In the meanwhile, this is what had taken place.

Marius, more intent on the outside than on the interior, had not, up to that time, taken a good look at the pinioned spy in the dark background of the tap-room.

When he beheld him in broad daylight, striding over the barricade in order to proceed to his death, he recognized him. Something suddenly recurred to his mind. He recalled the inspector of the Rue de Pontoise, and the two pistols which the latter had handed to him and which he, Marius, had used in this very barricade, and not only did he recall his face, but his name as well.

This recollection was misty and troubled, however, like all his ideas.

It was not an affirmation that he made, but a question which he put to himself:

"Is not that the inspector of police who told me that his name was Javert?"

Perhaps there was still time to intervene in behalf of that man. But, in the first place, he must know whether this was Javert.

Marius called to Enjolras, who had just stationed himself at the other extremity of the barricade:

"Enjolras!"

"What?"

"What is the name of yonder man?"

"What man?"

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

"Of course. He told us."

"What is it?"

"Javert."

Marius sprang to his feet.

At that moment, they heard the report of the pistol.

Jean Valjean re-appeared and cried: "It is done."

A gloomy chill traversed Marius' heart.

CHAPTER XX

THE DEAD ARE IN THE RIGHT AND THE LIVING ARE NOT IN THE WRONG

The death agony of the barricade was about to begin.

Everything contributed to its tragic majesty at that supreme moment; a thousand mysterious crashes in the air, the breath of armed masses set in movement in the streets which were not visible, the intermittent gallop of cavalry, the heavy shock of artillery on the march, the firing by squads, and the cannonades crossing each other in the labyrinth of Paris, the smokes of battle mounting all gilded above the roofs, indescribable and vaguely terrible cries, lightnings of menace everywhere, the tocsin of Saint-Merry, which now had the accents of a sob, the mildness of the weather, the splendor of the sky filled with sun and clouds, the beauty of the day, and the alarming silence of the houses.

For, since the preceding evening, the two rows of houses in the Rue de la Chanvrerie had become two walls; ferocious walls, doors closed, windows closed, shutters closed.

In those days, so different from those in which we live, when the hour was come, when the people wished to put an end to a situation, which had lasted too long, with a charter granted or with a legal country, when universal wrath was diffused in the atmosphere, when the city consented to the tearing up of the pavements, when insurrection made the bourgeoisie smile by whispering its password in its ear, then the inhabitant, thoroughly penetrated with the revolt, so to speak, was the auxiliary of the combatant, and the house fraternized with the improvised fortress which rested on it. When the situation was not ripe, when the insurrection was not decidedly admitted, when the masses disowned the movement, all was over with the combatants, the city was changed into a desert around the revolt, souls grew chilled, refuges were nailed up, and the street turned into a defile to help the army to take the barricade.

A people cannot be forced, through surprise, to walk more quickly than it chooses. Woe to whomsoever tries to force its hand! A people does not let itself go at random. Then it abandons the insurrection to itself. The insurgents become noxious, infected with the plague. A house is an escarpment, a door is a refusal, a façade is a wall. This wall hears, sees and will not. It might open and save you. No. This wall is a judge. It gazes at you and condemns you. What dismal things are closed houses. They seem dead, they are living. Life which is, as it were, suspended there, persists there. No one has gone out of them for four and twenty hours, but no one is missing from them. In the interior of that rock, people go and come, go to bed and rise again; they are a family party there; there they eat and drink; they are afraid, a terrible thing! Fear excuses this fearful lack of hospitality; terror is mixed with it, an extenuating circumstance. Sometimes, even, and this has been actually seen, fear turns to passion; fright may change into fury, as prudence does into rage; hence this wise saying: "The enraged moderates." There are outbursts of supreme terror, whence springs wrath like a mournful smoke.—"What do these people want? What have they come there to do? Let them get out of the scrape. So much the worse for them. It is their fault. They are only getting what they deserve. It does not concern us. Here is our poor street all riddled with balls. They are a pack of rascals. Above all things, don't open the door."—And the house assumes the air of a tomb. The insurgent is in the death-throes in front of that house; he sees the grape-shot and naked swords drawing near; if he cries, he knows that they are listening to him, and that no one will come; there stand walls which might protect him, there are men who might save him; and these walls have ears of flesh, and these men have bowels of stone.

Whom shall he reproach?

No one and every one.

The incomplete times in which we live.

It is always at its own risk and peril that Utopia is converted into revolution, and from philosophical protest becomes an armed protest, and from Minerva turns to Pallas.

The Utopia which grows impatient and becomes revolt knows what awaits it; it almost always comes too soon. Then it becomes resigned, and stoically accepts catastrophe in lieu of triumph. It serves those who deny it without complaint, even excusing them, and even disculpates them, and its magnanimity consists in consenting to abandonment. It is indomitable in the face of obstacles and gentle towards ingratitude.

Is this ingratitude, however?

Yes, from the point of view of the human race.

No, from the point of view of the individual.

Progress is man's mode of existence. The general life of the human race is called Progress, the collective stride of the human race is called Progress. Progress advances; it makes the great human and terrestrial journey towards the celestial and the divine; it has its halting places where it rallies the laggard troop, it has its stations where it meditates, in the presence of some splendid Canaan suddenly unveiled on its horizon, it has its nights when it sleeps; and it is one of the poignant anxieties of the thinker that he sees the shadow resting on the human soul, and that he gropes in darkness without being able to awaken that slumbering Progress.

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

He who despairs is in the wrong. Progress infallibly awakes, and, in short, we may say that it marches on, even when it is asleep, for it has increased in size. When we behold it erect once more, we find it taller. To be always peaceful does not depend on progress any more than it does on the stream; erect no barriers, cast in no boulders; obstacles make water froth and humanity boil. Hence arise troubles; but after these troubles, we recognize the fact that ground has been gained. Until order, which is nothing else than universal peace, has been established, until harmony and unity reign, progress will have revolutions as its halting-places.

What, then, is progress? We have just enunciated it; the permanent life of the peoples.

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

Let us admit without bitterness, that the individual has his distinct interests, and can, without forfeiture, stipulate for his interest, and defend it; the present has its pardonable dose of egotism; momentary life has its rights, and is not bound to sacrifice itself constantly to the future. The generation which is passing in its turn over the earth, is not forced to abridge it for the sake of the generations, its equal, after all, who will have their turn later on.—"I exist," murmurs that some one whose name is All. "I am young and in love, I am old and I wish to repose, I am the father of a family, I toil, I prosper, I am successful in business, I have houses to lease, I have money in the government funds, I am happy, I have a wife and children, I have all this, I desire to live, leave me in peace."—Hence, at certain hours, a profound cold broods over the magnanimous vanguard of the human race.

Utopia, moreover, we must admit, quits its radiant sphere when it makes war. It, the truth of to-morrow, borrows its mode of procedure, battle, from the lie of yesterday. It, the future, behaves like the past. It, pure idea, becomes a deed of violence. It complicates its heroism with a violence for which it is just that it should be held to answer; a violence of occasion and expedient, contrary to principle, and for which it is fatally punished. The Utopia, insurrection, fights with the old military code in its fist; it shoots spies, it executes traitors; it suppresses living beings and flings them into unknown darkness. It makes use of death, a serious matter. It seems as though Utopia had no longer any faith in radiance, its irresistible and incorruptible force. It strikes with the sword. Now, no sword is simple. Every blade has two edges; he who wounds with the one is wounded with the other.

Having made this reservation, and made it with all severity, it is impossible for us not to admire, whether they succeed or not, those the glorious combatants of the future, the confessors of Utopia. Even when they miscarry, they are worthy of veneration; and it is, perhaps, in failure, that they possess the most majesty. Victory, when it is in accord with progress, merits the applause of the people; but a heroic defeat merits their tender compassion. The one is magnificent, the other sublime. For our own part, we prefer martyrdom to success. John Brown is greater than Washington, and Pisacane is greater than Garibaldi.

It certainly is necessary that some one should take the part of the vanquished.

We are unjust towards these great men who attempt the future, when they fail.

Revolutionists are accused of sowing fear abroad. Every barricade seems a crime. Their theories are incriminated, their aim suspected, their ulterior motive is feared, their conscience denounced. They are reproached with raising, erecting, and heaping up, against the reigning social state, a mass of miseries, of griefs, of iniquities, of wrongs, of despairs, and of tearing from the lowest depths blocks of shadow in order therein to embattle themselves and to combat. People shout to them: "You are tearing up the pavements of hell!" They might reply: "That is because our barricade is made of good intentions."

The best thing, assuredly, is the pacific solution. In short, let us agree that when we behold the pavement, we think of the bear, and it is a good will which renders society uneasy. But it depends on society to save itself; it is to its own good will that we make our appeal. No violent remedy is necessary. To study evil amiably, to prove its existence, then to cure it. It is to this that we invite it.

However that may be, even when fallen, above all when fallen, these men, who at every point of the universe, with their eyes fixed on France, are striving for the grand work with the inflexible logic of the ideal, are august; they give their life a free offering to progress; they accomplish the will of providence; they perform a religious act. At the appointed hour, with as much disinterestedness as an actor who answers to his cue, in obedience to the divine stage-manager, they enter the tomb. And this hopeless combat, this stoical disappearance they accept in order to bring about the supreme and universal consequences, the magnificent and irresistibly human movement begun on the 14th of July, 1789; these soldiers are priests. The French revolution is an act of God.

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

An insurrection which breaks out, is an idea which is passing its examination before the people. If the people lets fall a black ball, the idea is dried fruit; the insurrection is a mere skirmish.

Waging war at every summons and every time that Utopia desires it, is not the thing for the peoples. Nations have not always and at every hour the temperament of heroes and martyrs.

They are positive. *A priori,* insurrection is repugnant to them, in the first place, because it often results in a catastrophe, in the second place, because it always has an abstraction as its point of departure.

Because, and this is a noble thing, it is always for the ideal, and for the ideal alone, that those who sacrifice themselves do thus sacrifice themselves. An insurrection is an enthusiasm. Enthusiasm may wax wroth; hence the appeal to arms. But every insurrection, which aims at a government or a régime, aims higher. Thus, for instance, and we insist upon it, what the chiefs of the insurrection of 1832, and, in particular, the young enthusiasts of the Rue de la Chanvrerie were combating, was not precisely Louis Philippe. The majority of them, when talking freely, did justice to this king who stood midway between monarchy and revolution; no one hated him. But they attacked the younger branch of the divine right in Louis Philippe as they had attacked its elder branch in Charles X.; and that which they wished to overturn in overturning royalty in France, was, as we have explained, the usurpation of man over man, and of privilege over right in the entire universe. Paris without a king has as result the world without despots. This is the manner in which they reasoned. Their aim was distant no doubt, vague perhaps, and it retreated in the face of their efforts; but it was great.

Thus it is. And we sacrifice ourselves for these visions, which are almost always illusions for the sacrificed, but illusions with which, after all, the whole of human certainty is mingled. We throw ourselves into these tragic affairs and become intoxicated with that which we are about to do. Who knows? We may succeed. We are few in number, we have a whole army arrayed against us; but we are defending right, the natural law, the sovereignty of each one over himself from which no abdication is possible, justice and truth, and in case of need, we die like the three hundred Spartans. We do not think of Don Quixote but of Leonidas. And we march straight before us, and once pledged, we do not draw back, and we rush onwards with head held low, cherishing as our hope an unprecedented victory, revolution completed, progress set free again, the aggrandizement of the human race, universal deliverance; and in the event of the worst, Thermopylæ.

These passages of arms for the sake of progress often suffer shipwreck, and we have just explained why. The crowd is restive in the presence of the impulses of paladins. Heavy masses, the multitudes which are fragile because of their very weight, fear adventures; and there is a touch of adventure in the ideal.

Moreover, and we must not forget this, interests which are not very friendly to the ideal and the sentimental are in the way. Sometimes the stomach paralyzes the heart.

The grandeur and beauty of France lies in this, that she takes less from the stomach than other nations: she more easily knots the rope about her loins. She is the first awake, the last asleep. She marches forwards. She is a seeker.

This arises from the fact that she is an artist.

The ideal is nothing but the culminating point of logic, the same as the beautiful is nothing but the summit of the true. Artistic peoples are also consistent peoples. To love beauty is to see the light. That is why the torch of Europe, that is to say of civilization, was first borne by Greece, who passed it on to Italy, who handed it on to France. Divine, illuminating nations of scouts! *Vitælampada tradunt.*

It is an admirable thing that the poetry of a people is the element of its progress. The amount of civilization is measured by the quantity of imagination. Only, a civilizing people should remain a manly people. Corinth, yes; Sybaris, no. Whoever becomes effeminate makes himself a bastard. He must be neither a dilettante nor a virtuoso: but he must be artistic. In the matter of civilization, he must not refine, but he must sublime. On this condition, one gives to the human race the pattern of the ideal.

The modern ideal has its type in art, and its means is science. It is through science that it will realize that august vision of the poets, the socially beautiful. Eden will be reconstructed by A+B. At the point which civilization has now reached, the exact is a necessary element of the splendid, and the artistic sentiment is not only served, but completed by the scientific organ; dreams must be calculated. Art, which is the conqueror, should have for support science, which is the walker; the solidity of the creature which is ridden is of importance. The modern spirit is the genius of Greece with the genius of India as its vehicle; Alexander on the elephant.

Races which are petrified in dogma or demoralized by lucre are unfit to guide civilization. Genuflection before the idol or before money wastes away the muscles which walk and the will which advances. Hieratic or mercantile absorption lessens a people's power of radiance, lowers its horizon by lowering its level, and deprives it of that intelligence, at once both human and divine of the universal goal, which makes missionaries of nations. Babylon has no ideal; Carthage has no ideal. Athens and Rome have and keep, throughout all the nocturnal darkness of the centuries, halos of civilization.

France is in the same quality of race as Greece and Italy. She is Athenian in the matter of beauty, and Roman in her greatness. Moreover, she is good. She gives herself. Oftener than is the case with other races, is she in the humor for self-devotion and sacrifice. Only, this humor seizes upon her, and again abandons her. And therein lies the great peril for those who run when she desires only to walk, or who walk on when she desires to halt. France has her relapses into materialism, and, at certain instants, the ideas which obstruct that sublime brain have no longer anything which recalls French greatness and are of the dimensions of a Missouri or a South Carolina. What is to be done in such a case? The giantess plays at being a dwarf; immense France has her freaks of pettiness. That is all.

To this there is nothing to say. Peoples, like planets, possess the right to an eclipse. And all is well, provided that the light returns and that the eclipse does not degenerate into night. Dawn and resurrection are synonymous. The reappearance of the light is identical with the persistence of the *I*.

Let us state these facts calmly. Death on the barricade or the tomb in exile, is an acceptable occasion for devotion. The real name of devotion is disinterestedness. Let the abandoned allow themselves to be abandoned, let the exiled allow themselves to be exiled, and let us confine ourselves to entreating great nations not to retreat too far, when they do retreat. One must not push too far in descent under pretext of a return to reason.

Matter exists, the minute exists, interest exists, the stomach exists; but the stomach must not be the sole wisdom. The life of the moment has its rights, we admit, but permanent life has its rights also. Alas! the fact that one is mounted does not preclude a fall. This can be seen in history more frequently than is desirable: A nation is great, it tastes the ideal, then it bites the mire, and finds it good; and if it be asked how it happens that it has abandoned Socrates for Falstaff, it replies: "Because I love statesmen."

One word more before returning to our subject, the conflict.

A battle like the one which we are engaged in describing is nothing else than a convulsion towards the ideal. Progress trammelled is sickly, and is subject to these tragic epilepsies. With that malady of progress, civil war, we have been obliged to come in contact in our passage. This is one of the fatal phases, at once act and entr'acte of that drama whose pivot is a social condemnation, and whose veritable title is *Progress.*

Progress!

The cry to which we frequently give utterance is our whole thought; and, at the point of this drama which we have now reached, the idea which it contains having still more than one trial to undergo, it is, perhaps, permitted to us, if not to lift the veil from it, to at least allow its light to shine through.

The book which the reader has under his eye at this moment is, from one end to the other, as a whole and in detail, whatever may be its intermittances, exceptions and faults, the march from evil to good, from the unjust to the just, from night to day, from appetite to conscience, from rottenness to life, from hell to heaven, from nothingness to God. Point of departure: matter; point of arrival: the soul. The hydra at the beginning, the angel at the end.

CHAPTER XXI

THE HEROES

All at once, the drum beat the charge.

The attack was a hurricane. On the evening before, in the darkness, the barricade had been approached silently, as by a boa. Now, in broad daylight, in that widening street, surprise was decidedly impossible, rude force had, moreover, been unmasked, the cannon had begun the roar, the army hurled itself on the barricade. Fury now became skill. A powerful detachment of infantry of the line, broken at regular intervals, by the National Guard and the Municipal Guard on foot, and supported by serried masses which could be heard though not seen, debouched into the street at a run, with drums beating, trumpets braying, bayonets levelled, the sappers at their head, and, imperturbable under the projectiles, charged straight for the barricade with the weight of a brazen beam against a wall.

The wall held firm.

The insurgents fired impetuously. The barricade once scaled had a mane of lightning flashes. The assault was so furious, that for one moment, it was inundated with assailants; but it shook off the soldiers as the lion shakes off the dogs, and it was only covered with besiegers as the cliff is covered with foam, to re-appear, a moment later, beetling, black and formidable.

The column, forced to retreat, remained massed in the street, unprotected but terrible, and replied to the redoubt with a terrible discharge of musketry. Any one who has seen fireworks will recall the sheaf formed of interlacing lightnings which is called a bouquet. Let the reader picture to himself this bouquet, no longer vertical but horizontal, bearing a bullet, buck-shot or a biscaien at the tip of each one of its jets of flame, and picking off dead men one after another from its clusters of lightning. The barricade was underneath it.

On both sides, the resolution was equal. The bravery exhibited there was almost barbarous and was complicated with a sort of heroic ferocity which began by the sacrifice of self.

This was the epoch when a National Guardsman fought like a Zouave. The troop wished to make an end of it, insurrection was desirous of fighting. The acceptance of the death agony in the flower of youth and in the flush of health turns intrepidity into frenzy. In this fray, each one underwent the broadening growth of the death hour. The street was strewn with corpses.

The barricade had Enjolras at one of its extremities and Marius at the other. Enjolras, who carried the whole barricade in his head, reserved and sheltered himself; three soldiers fell, one after the other, under his embrasure, without having even seen him; Marius fought unprotected. He made himself a target. He stood with more than half his body above the breastworks. There is no more violent prodigal than the avaricious man who takes the bit in his teeth; there is no man more terrible in action than a dreamer. Marius was formidable and pensive. In battle he was as in a dream. One would have pronounced him a phantom engaged in firing a gun.

The insurgents' cartridges were giving out; but not their sarcasms. In this whirlwind of the sepulchre in which they stood, they laughed.

Courfeyrac was bare-headed.

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

Courfeyrac replied:

"They have finally taken it away from me with cannon-balls."

Or they uttered haughty comments.

"Can any one understand," exclaimed Feuilly bitterly, "those men,—[and he cited names, well-known names, even celebrated names, some belonging to the old army]—who had promised to join us, and taken an oath to aid us, and who had pledged their honor to it, and who are our generals, and who abandon us!"

And Combeferre restricted himself to replying with a grave smile.

"There are people who observe the rules of honor as one observes the stars, from a great distance."

The interior of the barricade was so strewn with torn cartridges that one would have said that there had been a snowstorm.

The assailants had numbers in their favor; the insurgents had position. They were at the top of a wall, and they thundered point-blank upon the soldiers tripping over the dead and wounded and entangled in the escarpment. This barricade, constructed as it was and admirably buttressed, was really one of those situations where a handful of men hold a legion in check. Nevertheless, the attacking column, constantly recruited and enlarged under the shower of bullets, drew inexorably nearer, and now, little by little, step by step, but surely, the army closed in around the barricade as the vice grasps the wine-press.

One assault followed another. The horror of the situation kept increasing.

Then there burst forth on that heap of paving-stones, in that Rue de la Chanvrerie, a battle worthy of a wall of Troy. These haggard, ragged, exhausted men, who had had nothing to eat for four and twenty hours, who had not slept, who had but a few more rounds to fire, who were fumbling in their pockets which had been emptied of cartridges, nearly all of whom were wounded, with head or arm bandaged with black and blood-stained linen, with holes in their clothes from which the blood trickled, and who were hardly armed with poor guns and notched swords, became Titans. The barricade was ten times attacked, approached, assailed, scaled, and never captured.

In order to form an idea of this struggle, it is necessary to imagine fire set to a throng of terrible courages, and then to gaze at the conflagration. It was not a combat, it was the interior of a furnace; there mouths breathed the flame; there countenances were extraordinary. The human form seemed impossible there, the combatants flamed forth there, and it was formidable to behold the going and coming in that red glow of those salamanders of the fray.

The successive and simultaneous scenes of this grand slaughter we renounce all attempts at depicting. The epic alone has the right to fill twelve thousand verses with a battle.

One would have pronounced this that hell of Brahmanism, the most redoubtable of the seventeen abysses, which the Veda calls the Forest of Swords.

They fought hand to hand, foot to foot, with pistol shots, with blows of the sword, with their fists, at a distance, close at hand, from above, from below, from everywhere, from the roofs of the houses, from the windows of the wine-shop, from the cellar windows, whither some had crawled. They were one against sixty.

The façade of Corinthe, half demolished, was hideous. The window, tattooed with grape-shot, had lost glass and frame and was nothing now but a shapeless hole, tumultuously blocked with paving-stones.

Bossuet was killed; Feuilly was killed; Courfeyrac was killed; Combeferre, transfixed by three blows from a bayonet in the breast at the moment when he was lifting up a wounded soldier, had only time to cast a glance to heaven when he expired.

Marius, still fighting, was so riddled with wounds, particularly in the head, that his countenance disappeared beneath the blood, and one would have said that his face was covered with a red kerchief.

Enjolras alone was not struck. When he had no longer any weapon, he reached out his hands to right and left and an insurgent thrust some arm or other into his fist. All he had left was the stumps of four swords; one more than François I. at Marignan. Homer says: "Diomedes cuts the throat of Axylus, son of Teuthranis, who dwelt in happy Arisba; Euryalus, son of Mecistæus, exterminates Dresos and Opheltios, Esepius, and that Pedasus whom the naiad Abarbarea bore to the blameless Bucolion; Ulysses overthrows Pidytes of Percosius; Antilochus, Ablerus; Polypætes, Astyalus; Polydamas, Otos, of Cyllene; and Teucer, Aretaon. Meganthios dies under the blows of Euripylus' pike. Agamemnon, king of the heroes, flings to earth Elatos, born in the rocky city which is laved by the sounding river Satnoïs." In our old poems of exploits, Esplandian attacks the giant marquis Swantibore with a cobbler's shoulder-stick of fire, and the latter defends himself by stoning the hero with towers which he plucks up by the roots. Our ancient mural frescoes show us the two Dukes of Bretagne and Bourbon, armed, emblazoned and crested in war-like guise, on horseback and approaching each other, their battle-axes in hand, masked with iron, gloved with iron, booted with iron, the one caparisoned in ermine, the other draped in azure: Bretagne with his lion between the two horns of his crown, Bourbon helmeted with a monster fleur de lys on his visor. But, in order to be superb, it is not necessary to wear, like Yvon, the ducal morion, to have in the fist, like Esplandian, a living flame, or, like Phyles, father of Polydamas, to have brought back from Ephyra a good suit of mail, a present from the king of men, Euphetes; it suffices to give one's life for a conviction or a loyalty. This ingenuous little soldier, yesterday a peasant of Bauce or Limousin, who prowls with his clasp-knife by his side, around the children's nurses in the Luxembourg garden, this pale young student bent over a piece of anatomy or a book, a blond youth who shaves his beard with scissors,—take both of them, breathe upon them with a breath of duty, place them face to face in the Carrefour Boucherat or in the blind alley Planche-Mibray, and let the one fight for his flag, and the other for his ideal, and let both of them imagine that they are fighting for their country; the struggle will be colossal; and the shadow which this raw recruit and this sawbones in conflict will produce in that grand epic field where humanity is striving, will equal the shadow cast by Megaryon, King of Lycia, tiger-filled, crushing in his embrace the immense body of Ajax, equal to the gods.

CHAPTER XXII

FOOT TO FOOT

When there were no longer any of the leaders left alive, except Enjolras and Marius at the two extremities of the barricade, the centre, which had so long sustained Courfeyrac, Joly, Bossuet, Feuilly and Combeferre, gave way. The cannon, though it had not effected a practicable breach, had made a rather large hollow in the middle of the redoubt; there, the summit of the wall had disappeared before the balls, and had crumbled away; and the rubbish which had fallen, now inside, now outside, had, as it accumulated, formed two piles in the nature of slopes on the two sides of the barrier, one on the inside, the other on the outside. The exterior slope presented an inclined plane to the attack.

A final assault was there attempted, and this assault succeeded. The mass bristling with bayonets and hurled forward at a run, came up with irresistible force, and the serried front of battle of the attacking column made its appearance through the smoke on the crest of the battlements. This time, it was decisive. The group of insurgents who were defending the centre retreated in confusion.

Then the gloomy love of life awoke once more in some of them. Many, finding themselves under the muzzles of this forest of guns, did not wish to die. This is a moment when the instinct of self-preservation emits howls, when the beast re-appears in men. They were hemmed in by the lofty, six-story house which formed the background of their redoubt. This house might prove their salvation. The building was barricaded, and walled, as it were, from top to bottom. Before the troops of the line had reached the interior of the redoubt, there was time for a door to open and shut, the space of a flash of lightning was sufficient for that, and the door of that house, suddenly opened a crack and closed again instantly, was life for these despairing men. Behind this house, there were streets, possible flight, space. They set to knocking at that door with the butts of their guns, and with kicks, shouting, calling, entreating, wringing their hands. No one opened. From the little window on the third floor, the head of the dead man gazed down upon them.

But Enjolras and Marius, and the seven or eight rallied about them, sprang forward and protected them. Enjolras had shouted to the soldiers: "Don't advance!" and as an officer had not obeyed, Enjolras had killed the officer. He was now in the little inner court of the redoubt, with his back planted against the Corinthe building, a sword in one hand, a rifle in the other, holding open the door of the wine-shop which he barred against assailants. He shouted to the desperate men:—"There is but one door open; this one."—And shielding them with his body, and facing an entire battalion alone, he made them pass in behind him. All precipitated themselves thither. Enjolras, executing with his rifle, which he now used like a cane, what single-stick players call a "covered rose" round his head, levelled the bayonets around and in front of him, and was the last to enter; and then ensued a horrible moment, when the soldiers tried to make their way in, and the insurgents strove to bar them out. The door was slammed with such violence, that, as it fell back into its frame, it showed the five fingers of a soldier who had been clinging to it, cut off and glued to the post.

Marius remained outside. A shot had just broken his collar bone, he felt that he was fainting and falling. At that moment, with eyes already shut, he felt the shock of a vigorous hand seizing him, and the swoon in which his senses vanished, hardly allowed him time for the thought, mingled with a last memory of Cosette:—"I am taken prisoner. I shall be shot."

Enjolras, not seeing Marius among those who had taken refuge in the wine-shop, had the same idea. But they had reached a moment when each man has not the time to meditate on his own death. Enjolras fixed the bar across the door, and bolted it, and double-locked it with key and chain, while those outside were battering furiously at it, the soldiers with the butts of their muskets, the sappers with their axes. The assailants were grouped about that door. The siege of the wine-shop was now beginning.

The soldiers, we will observe, were full of wrath.

The death of the artillery-sergeant had enraged them, and then, a still more melancholy circumstance, during the few hours which had preceded the attack, it had been reported among them that the insurgents were mutilating their prisoners, and that there was the headless body of a soldier in the wine-shop. This sort of fatal rumor is the usual accompaniment of civil wars, and it was a false report of this kind which, later on, produced the catastrophe of the Rue Transnonain.

When the door was barricaded, Enjolras said to the others:

"Let us sell our lives dearly."

Then he approached the table on which lay Mabeuf and Gavroche. Beneath the black cloth two straight and rigid forms were visible, one large, the other small, and the two faces were vaguely outlined beneath the cold folds of the shroud. A hand projected from beneath the winding sheet and hung near the floor. It was that of the old man.

Enjolras bent down and kissed that venerable hand, just as he had kissed his brow on the preceding evening.

These were the only two kisses which he had bestowed in the course of his life.

Let us abridge the tale. The barricade had fought like a gate of Thebes; the wine-shop fought like a house of Saragossa. These resistances are dogged. No quarter. No flag of truce possible. Men are willing to die, provided their opponent will kill them.

When Suchet says:—"Capitulate,"—Palafox replies: "After the war with cannon, the war with knives." Nothing was lacking in the capture by assault of the Hucheloup wine-shop; neither paving-stones raining from the windows and the roof on the besiegers and exasperating the soldiers by crushing them horribly, nor shots fired from the attic-windows and the cellar, nor the fury of attack, nor, finally, when the door yielded, the frenzied madness of extermination. The assailants, rushing into the wine-shop, their feet entangled in the panels of the door which had been beaten in and flung on the ground, found not a single combatant there. The spiral staircase, hewn asunder with the axe, lay in the middle of the tap-room, a few wounded men were just breathing their last, every one who was not killed was on the first floor, and from there, through the hole in the ceiling, which had formed the entrance of the stairs, a terrific fire burst forth. It was the last of their cartridges. When they were exhausted, when these formidable men on the point of death had no longer either powder or ball, each grasped in his hands two of the bottles which Enjolras had reserved, and of which we have spoken, and held the scaling party in check with these frightfully fragile clubs. They were bottles of aquafortis.

We relate these gloomy incidents of carnage as they occurred. The besieged man, alas! converts everything into a weapon. Greek fire did not disgrace Archimedes, boiling pitch did not disgrace Bayard. All war is a thing of terror, and there is no choice in it. The musketry of the besiegers, though confined and embarrassed by being directed from below upwards, was deadly. The rim of the hole in the ceiling was speedily surrounded by heads of the slain, whence dripped long, red and smoking streams, the uproar was indescribable; a close and burning smoke almost produced night over this combat. Words are lacking to express horror when it has reached this pitch. There were no longer men in this conflict, which was now infernal. They were no longer giants matched with colossi. It resembled Milton and Dante rather than Homer. Demons attacked, spectres resisted.

It was heroism become monstrous.

CHAPTER XXIII

ORESTES FASTING AND PYLADES DRUNK

At length, by dint of mounting on each other's backs, aiding themselves with the skeleton of the staircase, climbing up the walls, clinging to the ceiling, slashing away at the very brink of the trap-door, the last one who offered resistance, a score of assailants, soldiers, National Guardsmen, municipal guardsmen, in utter confusion, the majority disfigured by wounds in the face during that redoubtable ascent, blinded by blood, furious, rendered savage, made an irruption into the apartment on the first floor. There they found only one man still on his feet, Enjolras. Without cartridges, without sword, he had nothing in his hand now but the barrel of his gun whose stock he had broken over the head of those who were entering. He had placed the billiard table between his assailants and himself; he had retreated into the corner of the room, and there, with haughty eye, and head borne high, with this stump of a weapon in his hand, he was still so alarming as to speedily create an empty space around him. A cry arose:

"He is the leader! It was he who slew the artillery-man. It is well that he has placed himself there. Let him remain there. Let us shoot him down on the spot."

"Shoot me," said Enjolras.

And flinging away his bit of gun-barrel, and folding his arms, he offered his breast.

The audacity of a fine death always affects men. As soon as Enjolras folded his arms and accepted his end, the din of strife ceased in the room, and this chaos suddenly stilled into a sort of sepulchral solemnity. The menacing majesty of Enjolras disarmed and motionless, appeared to oppress this tumult, and this young man, haughty, bloody, and charming, who alone had not a wound, who was as indifferent as an invulnerable being, seemed, by the authority of his tranquil glance, to constrain this sinister rabble to kill him respect-fully. His beauty, at that moment augmented by his pride, was resplendent, and he was fresh and rosy after the fearful four and twenty hours which had just elapsed, as though he could no more be fatigued than wounded. It was of him, possibly, that a witness spoke afterwards, before the council of war: "There was an insurgent whom I heard called Apollo." A National Guardsman who had taken aim at Enjolras, lowered his gun, saying: "It seems to me that I am about to shoot a flower."

Twelve men formed into a squad in the corner opposite Enjolras, and silently made ready their guns.

Then a sergeant shouted:

"Take aim!"

An officer intervened.

"Wait."

And addressing Enjolras:

"Do you wish to have your eyes bandaged?"

"No."

"Was it you who killed the artillery sergeant?"

"Yes."

Grantaire had waked up a few moments before.

Grantaire, it will be remembered, had been asleep ever since the preceding evening in the upper room of the wine-shop, seated on a chair and leaning on the table.

He realized in its fullest sense the old metaphor of "dead drunk." The hideous potion of absinthe-porter and alcohol had thrown him into a lethargy. His table being small, and not suitable for the barricade, he had been left in possession of it. He was still in the same posture, with his breast bent over the table, his head lying flat on his arms, surrounded by glasses, beer-jugs and bottles. His was the overwhelming slumber of the torpid bear and the satiated leech. Nothing had had any effect upon it, neither the fusillade, nor the cannon-balls, nor the grape-shot which had made its way through the window into the room where he was. Nor the tremendous uproar of the assault. He merely replied to the cannonade, now and then, by a snore. He seemed to be waiting there for a bullet which should spare him the trouble of waking. Many corpses were strewn around him; and, at the first glance, there was nothing to distinguish him from those profound sleepers of death.

Noise does not rouse a drunken man; silence awakens him. The fall of everything around him only augmented Grantaire's prostration; the crumbling of all things was his lullaby. The sort of halt which the tumult underwent in the presence of Enjolras was a shock to this heavy slumber. It had the effect of a carriage going at full speed, which suddenly comes to a dead stop. The persons dozing within it wake up. Grantaire rose to his feet with a start, stretched out his arms, rubbed his eyes, stared, yawned, and understood.

A fit of drunkenness reaching its end resembles a curtain which is torn away. One beholds, at a single glance and as a whole, all that it has concealed. All suddenly presents itself to the memory; and the drunkard who has known nothing of what has been taking place during the last twenty-four hours, has no sooner opened his eyes than he is perfectly informed. Ideas recur to him with abrupt lucidity; the obliteration of intoxication, a sort of steam which has obscured the brain, is dissipated, and makes way for the clear and sharply outlined importunity of realities.

Relegated, as he was, to one corner, and sheltered behind the billiard-table, the soldiers whose eyes were fixed on Enjolras, had not even noticed Grantaire, and the sergeant was preparing to repeat his order: "Take aim!" when all at once, they heard a strong voice shout beside them:

"Long live the Republic! I'm one of them."

Grantaire had risen. The immense gleam of the whole combat which he had missed, and in which he had had no part, appeared in the brilliant glance of the transfigured drunken man.

He repeated: "Long live the Republic!" crossed the room with a firm stride and placed himself in front of the guns beside Enjolras.

"Finish both of us at one blow," said he.

And turning gently to Enjolras, he said to him:

"Do you permit it?"

Enjolras pressed his hand with a smile.

This smile was not ended when the report resounded.

Enjolras, pierced by eight bullets, remained leaning against the wall, as though the balls had nailed him there. Only, his head was bowed.

Grantaire fell at his feet, as though struck by a thunderbolt.

A few moments later, the soldiers dislodged the last remaining insurgents, who had taken refuge at the top of the house. They fired into the attic through a wooden lattice. They fought under the very roof. They flung bodies, some of them still alive, out through the windows. Two light-infantrymen, who tried to lift the shattered omnibus, were slain by two shots fired from the attic. A man in a blouse was flung down from it, with a bayonet wound in the abdomen, and breathed his last on the ground. A soldier and an insurgent slipped together on the sloping slates of the roof, and, as they would not release each other, they fell, clasped in a ferocious embrace. A similar conflict went on in the cellar. Shouts, shots, a fierce trampling. Then silence. The barricade was captured.

The soldiers began to search the houses round about, and to pursue the fugitives.

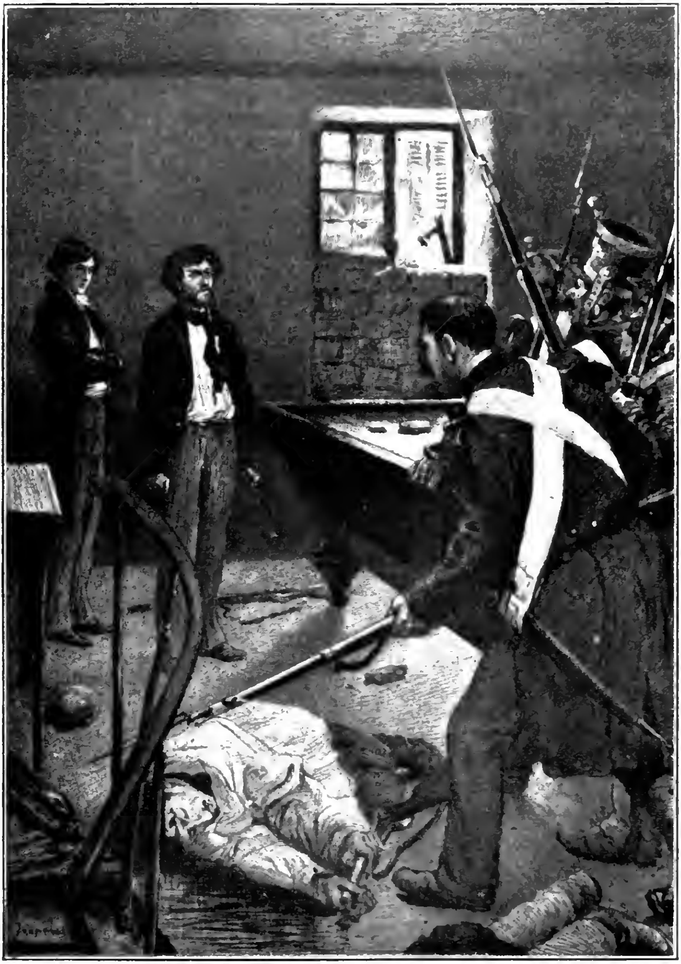
CHAPTER XXIV

PRISONER

MARIUS was, in fact, a prisoner.

The hand which had seized him from behind and whose grasp he had felt at the moment of his fall and his loss of consciousness was that of Jean Valjean.

Jean Valjean had taken no other part in the combat than to expose himself in it. Had it not been for him, no one, in that supreme phase of agony, would have thought of the



"FINISH BOTH OF US AT ONE BLOW," SAID HE.

wounded. Thanks to him, everywhere present in the carnage, like a providence, those who fell were picked up, transported to the tap-room, and cared for. In the intervals, he reappeared on the barricade. But nothing which could resemble a blow, an attack or even personal defence proceeded from his hands. He held his peace and lent succor. Moreover, he had received only a few scratches. The bullets would have none of him. If suicide formed part of what he had meditated on coming to this sepulchre, to that spot, he had not succeeded. But we doubt whether he had thought of suicide, an irreligious act.

Jean Valjean, in the thick cloud of the combat, did not appear to see Marius; the truth is, that he never took his eyes from the latter. When a shot laid Marius low, Jean Valjean leaped forward with the agility of a tiger, fell upon him as on his prey, and bore him off.

The whirlwind of the attack was, at that moment, so violently concentrated upon Enjolras and upon the door of the wine-shop, that no one saw Jean Valjean sustaining the fainting Marius in his arms, traverse the unpaved field of the barricade and disappear behind the angle of the Corinthe building.

The reader will recall this angle which formed a sort of cape on the street; it afforded shelter from the bullets, the grape-shot, and all eyes, and a few square feet of space. There is sometimes a chamber which does not burn in the midst of a conflagration, and in the midst of raging seas, beyond a promontory or at the extremity of a blind alley of shoals, a tranquil nook. It was in this sort of fold in the interior trapezium of the barricade, that Éponine had breathed her last.

There Jean Valjean halted, let Marius slide to the ground, placed his back against the wall, and cast his eyes about him.

The situation was alarming.

For an instant, for two or three perhaps, this bit of wall was a shelter, but how was he to escape from this massacre? He recalled the anguish which he had suffered in the Rue

Polonceau eight years before, and in what manner he had contrived to make his escape; it was difficult then, to-day it was impossible. He had before him that deaf and implacable house, six stories in height, which appeared to be inhabited only by a dead man leaning out of his window; he had on his right the rather low barricade, which shut off the Rue de la Petite Truanderie; to pass this obstacle seemed easy, but beyond the crest of the barrier a line of bayonets was visible. The troops of the line were posted on the watch behind that barricade. It was evident, that to pass the barricade was to go in quest of the fire of the platoon, and that any head which should run the risk of lifting itself above the top of that wall of stones would serve as a target for sixty shots. On his left he had the field of battle. Death lurked round the corner of that wall.

What was to be done?

Only a bird could have extricated itself from this predicament.

And it was necessary to decide on the instant, to devise some expedient, to come to some decision. Fighting was going on a few paces away; fortunately, all were raging around a single point, the door of the wine-shop; but if it should occur to one soldier, to one single soldier, to turn the corner of the house, or to attack him on the flank, all was over.

Jean Valjean gazed at the house facing him, he gazed at the barricade at one side of him, then he looked at the ground, with the violence of the last extremity, bewildered, and as though he would have liked to pierce a hole there with his eyes.

By dint of staring, something vaguely striking in such an agony began to assume form and outline at his feet, as though it had been a power of glance which made the thing desired unfold. A few paces distant he perceived, at the base of the small barrier so pitilessly guarded and watched on the exterior, beneath a disordered mass of paving-stones which partly concealed it, an iron grating, placed flat and on a level with the soil. This grating, made of stout, transverse bars, was about two feet square. The frame of paving-stones which supported it had been torn up, and it was, as it were, unfastened.

Through the bars a view could be had of a dark aperture, something like the flue of a chimney, or the pipe of a cistern. Jean Valjean darted forward. His old art of escape rose to his brain like an illumination. To thrust aside the stones, to raise the grating, to lift Marius, who was as inert as a dead body, upon his shoulders, to descend, with this burden on his loins, and with the aid of his elbows and knees into that sort of well, fortunately not very deep, to let the heavy trap, upon which the loosened stones rolled down afresh, fall into its place behind him, to gain his footing on a flagged surface three metres below the surface,—all this was executed like that which one does in dreams, with the strength of a giant and the rapidity of an eagle; this took only a few minutes.

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

There reigned profound peace, absolute silence, night.

The impression which he had formerly experienced when falling from the wall into the convent recurred to him. Only, what he was carrying to-day was not Cosette; it was Marius. He could barely hear the formidable tumult in the wine-shop, taken by assault, like a vague murmur overhead.

BOOK SECOND.—THE INTESTINE OF THE LEVIATHAN

CHAPTER I

THE LAND IMPOVERISHED BY THE SEA

PARIS casts twenty-five millions yearly into the water. And this without metaphor. How, and in what manner? Day and night. With what object? With no object. With what intention? With no intention. Why? For no reason. By means of what organ? By means of its intestine. What is its intestine? The sewer.

Twenty-five millions is the most moderate approximative figure which the valuations of special science have set upon it.

Science, after having long groped about, now knows that the most fecundating and the most efficacious of fertilizers is human manure. The Chinese, let us confess it to our shame, knew it before us. Not a Chinese peasant—it is Eckberg who says this,—goes to town without bringing back with him, at the two extremities of his bamboo pole, two full buckets of what we designate as filth. Thanks to human dung, the earth in China is still as young as in the days of Abraham. Chinese wheat yields a hundred fold of the seed. There is no guano comparable in fertility with the detritus of a capital. A great city is the most mighty of dung-makers. Certain success would attend the experiment of employing the city to manure the plain. If our gold is manure, our manure, on the other hand, is gold.

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

Fleets of vessels are despatched, at great expense, to collect the dung of petrels and penguins at the South Pole, and the incalculable element of opulence which we have on hand, we send to the sea. All the human and animal manure which the world wastes, restored to the land instead of being cast into the water, would suffice to nourish the world.

Those heaps of filth at the gate-posts, those tumbrils of mud which jolt through the street by night, those terrible casks of the street department, those fetid drippings of subterranean mire, which the pavements hide from you,—do you know what they are? They are the meadow in flower, the green grass, wild thyme, thyme and sage, they are game, they are cattle, they are the satisfied bellows of great oxen in the evening, they are perfumed hay, they are golden wheat, they are the bread on your table, they are the warm blood in your veins, they are health, they are joy, they are life. This is the will of that mysterious creation which is transformation on earth and transfiguration in heaven.

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

You have it in your power to lose this wealth, and to consider me ridiculous to boot. This will form the master-piece of your ignorance.

Statisticians have calculated that France alone makes a deposit of half a milliard every year, in the Atlantic, through the mouths of her rivers. Note this: with five hundred millions we could pay one quarter of the expenses of our budget. The cleverness of man is such that he prefers to get rid of these five hundred millions in the gutter. It is the very substance of the people that is carried off, here drop by drop, there wave after wave, the wretched outpour of our sewers into the rivers, and the gigantic collection of our rivers into the ocean. Every hiccough of our sewers costs us a thousand francs. From this spring two results, the land impoverished, and the water tainted. Hunger arising from the furrow, and disease from the stream.

It is notorious, for example, that at the present hour, the Thames is poisoning London.

So far as Paris is concerned, it has become indispensable of late, to transport the mouths of the sewers down stream, below the last bridge.

A double tubular apparatus, provided with valves and sluices, sucking up and driving back, a system of elementary drainage, simple as the lungs of a man, and which is already in full working order in many communities in England, would suffice to conduct the pure water of the fields into our cities, and to send back to the fields the rich water of the cities, and this easy exchange, the simplest in the world, would retain among us the five hundred millions now thrown away. People are thinking of other things.

The process actually in use does evil, with the intention of doing good. The intention is good, the result is melancholy. Thinking to purge the city, the population is blanched like plants raised in cellars. A sewer is a mistake. When drainage, everywhere, with its double function, restoring what it takes, shall have replaced the sewer, which is a simple impoverishing washing, then, this being combined with the data of a now social economy, the product of the earth will be increased tenfold, and the problem of misery will be singularly lightened. Add the suppression of parasitism, and it will be solved.

In the meanwhile, the public wealth flows away to the river, and leakage takes place. Leakage is the word. Europe is being ruined in this manner by exhaustion.

As for France, we have just cited its figures. Now, Paris contains one twenty-fifth of the total population of France, and Parisian guano being the richest of all, we understate the truth when we value the loss on the part of Paris at twenty-five millions in the half milliard which France annually rejects. These twenty-five millions, employed in assistance and enjoyment, would double the splendor of Paris. The city spends them in sewers. So that we may say that Paris's great prodigality, its wonderful festival, its Beaujon folly, its orgy, its stream of gold from full hands, its pomp, its luxury, its magnificence, is its sewer system.

It is in this manner that, in the blindness of a poor political economy, we drown and allow to float down stream and to be lost in the gulfs the well-being of all. There should be nets at Saint-Cloud for the public fortune.

Economically considered, the matter can be summed up thus: Paris is a spendthrift. Paris, that model city, that patron of well-arranged capitals, of which every nation strives to possess a copy, that metropolis of the ideal, that august country of the initiative, of impulse and of effort, that centre and that dwelling of minds, that nation-city, that hive of the future, that marvellous combination of Babylon and Corinth, would make a peasant of the Fo-Kian shrug his shoulders, from the point of view which we have just indicated.

Imitate Paris and you will ruin yourselves.

Moreover, and particularly in this immemorial and senseless waste, Paris is itself an imitator.

These surprising exhibitions of stupidity are not novel; this is no young folly. The ancients did like the moderns. "The sewers of Rome," says Liebig, "have absorbed all the well-being of the Roman peasant." When the Campagna of Rome was ruined by the Roman sewer, Rome exhausted Italy, and when she had put Italy in her sewer, she poured in Sicily, then Sardinia, then Africa. The sewer of Rome has engulfed the world. This cess-pool offered its engulfment to the city and the universe. *Urbi et orbi.* Eternal city, unfathomable sewer.

Rome sets the example for these things as well as for others.

Paris follows this example with all the stupidity peculiar to intelligent towns.

For the requirements of the operation upon the subject of which we have just explained our views, Paris has beneath it another Paris; a Paris of sewers; which has its streets, its cross-roads, its squares, its blind-alleys, its arteries, and its circulation, which is of mire and minus the human form.

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

However, the stamp of its power is there also, and the Titanic sink of Paris realizes, among monuments, that strange ideal realized in humanity by some men like Macchiavelli, Bacon and Mirabeau, grandiose vileness.

The sub-soil of Paris, if the eye could penetrate its surface, would present the aspect of a colossal madrepore. A sponge has no more partitions and ducts than the mound of earth for a circuit of six leagues round about, on which rests the great and ancient city. Not to mention its catacombs, which are a separate cellar, not to mention the inextricable trellis-work of gas pipes, without reckoning the vast tubular system for the distribution of fresh water which ends in the pillar fountains, the sewers alone form a tremendous, shadowy net-work under the two banks; a labyrinth which has its slope for its guiding thread.

There appears, in the humid mist, the rat which seems the product to which Paris has given birth.

CHAPTER II

ANCIENT HISTORY OF THE SEWER

Let the reader imagine Paris lifted off like a cover, the subterranean net-work of sewers, from a bird's eye view, will outline on the banks a species of large branch grafted on the river. On the right bank, the belt sewer will form the trunk of this branch, the secondary ducts will form the branches, and those without exit the twigs.

This figure is but a summary one and half exact, the right angle, which is the customary angle of this species of subterranean ramifications, being very rare in vegetation.

A more accurate image of this strange geometrical plan can be formed by supposing that one is viewing some eccentric oriental alphabet, as intricate as a thicket, against a background of shadows, and the misshapen letters should be welded one to another in apparent confusion, and as at haphazard, now by their angles, again by their extremities.

Sinks and sewers played a great part in the Middle Ages, in the Lower Empire and in the Orient of old. The masses regarded these beds of decomposition, these monstrous cradles of death, with a fear that was almost religious. The vermin ditch of Benares is no less conducive to giddiness than the lions' ditch of Babylon. Teglath-Phalasar, according to the rabbinical books, swore by the sink of Nineveh. It was from the sewer of Münster that John of Leyden produced his false moon, and it was from the cess-pool of Kekscheb that oriental menalchme, Mokanna, the veiled prophet of Khorassan, caused his false sun to emerge.

The history of men is reflected in the history of sewers. The Gemoniæ[1] narrated Rome. The sewer of Paris has been an ancient and formidable thing. It has been a sepulchre, it has served as an asylum. Crime, intelligence, social protest, liberty of conscience, thought, theft, all that human laws persecute or have persecuted, is hidden in that hole; the *maillotins* in the fourteenth century, the *tire-laine* of the fifteenth, the Huguenots in the sixteenth, Morin's *illuminated* in the seventeenth, the *chauffeurs* [brigands] in the eighteenth. A hundred years ago, the nocturnal blow of the dagger emerged thence, the pickpocket in danger slipped thither; the forest had its cave, Paris had its sewer. Vagrancy, that Gallic *picareria,* accepted the sewer as the adjunct of the Cour des Miracles, and at evening, it returned thither, fierce and sly, through the Maubuée outlet, as into a bed-chamber.

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[1] Steps on the Aventine Hill, leading to the Tiber, to which the bodies of executed criminals were dragged by hooks to be thrown into the Tiber.

It was quite natural, that those who had the blind-alley Vide-Gousset, [Empty-Pocket] or the Rue Coupe-Gorge [Cut-Throat], for the scene of their daily labor, should have for their domicile by night the culvert of the Chemin-Vert, or the catch basin of Hurepoix. Hence a throng of souvenirs. All sorts of phantoms haunt these long, solitary corridors; everywhere is putrescence and miasma; here and there are breathing-holes, where Villon within converses with Rabelais without.

The sewer in ancient Paris is the rendezvous of all exhaustions and of all attempts. Political economy therein spies a detritus, social philosophy there beholds a residuum.

The sewer is the conscience of the city. Everything there converges and confronts everything else. In that livid spot there are shades, but there are no longer any secrets. Each thing bears its true form, or at least, its definitive form. The mass of filth has this in its favor, that it is not a liar. Ingenuousness has taken refuge there. The mask of Basil is to be found there, but one beholds its cardboard and its strings and the inside as well as the outside, and it is accentuated by honest mud. Scapin's false nose is its next-door neighbor. All the uncleannesses of civilization, once past their use, fall into this trench of truth, where the immense social sliding ends. They are there engulfed, but they display themselves there. This mixture is a confession. There, no more false appearances, no plastering over is possible, filth removes its shirt, absolute denudation puts to the rout all illusions and mirages, there is nothing more except what really exists, presenting the sinister form of that which is coming to an end. There, the bottom of a bottle indicates drunkenness, a basket-handle tells a tale of domesticity; there the core of an apple which has entertained literary opinions becomes an apple-core once more; the effigy on the big sou becomes frankly covered with verdigris, Caiphas' spittle meets Falstaff's puking, the louis-d'or which comes from the gaming-house jostles the nail whence hangs the rope's end of the suicide, a livid fœtus rolls along, enveloped in the spangles which danced at the Opera last Shrove-Tuesday, a cap which has pronounced judgment on men wallows beside a mass of rottenness which was formerly Margoton's petticoat; it is more than fraternization, it is equivalent to addressing each other as *thou.* All which was formerly rouged, is washed free. The last veil is torn away. A sewer is a cynic. It tells everything.

The sincerity of foulness pleases us, and rests the soul. When one has passed one's time in enduring upon earth the spectacle of the great airs which reasons of state, the oath, political sagacity, human justice, professional probity, the austerities of situation, incorruptible robes all assume, it solaces one to enter a sewer and to behold the mire which befits it.

This is instructive at the same time. We have just said that history passes through the sewer. The Saint-Barthélemys filter through there, drop by drop, between the paving-stones. Great public assassinations, political and religious butcheries, traverse this underground passage of civilization, and thrust their corpses there. For the eye of the thinker, all historic murderers are to be found there, in that hideous penumbra, on their knees, with a scrap of their winding-sheet for an apron, dismally sponging out their work. Louis XI. is there with Tristan, François I. with Duprat, Charles IX. is there with his mother, Richelieu is there with Louis XIII., Louvois is there, Letellier is there, Hébert and Maillard are there, scratching the stones, and trying to make the traces of their actions disappear. Beneath these vaults one hears the brooms of spectres. One there breathes the enormous fetidness of social catastrophes. One beholds reddish reflections in the corners. There flows a terrible stream, in which bloody hands have been washed.

The social observer should enter these shadows. They form a part of his laboratory. Philosophy is the microscope of the thought. Everything desires to flee from it, but nothing escapes it. Tergiversation is useless. What side of oneself does one display in evasions? the shameful side.

Philosophy pursues with its glance, probes the evil, and does not permit it to escape into nothingness. In the obliteration of things which disappear, in the watching of things which vanish, it recognizes all. It reconstructs the purple from the rag, and the woman from the scrap of her dress. From the cess-pool, it re-constitutes the city; from mud, it reconstructs manners; from the potsherd it infers the amphora or the jug. By the imprint of a finger-nail on a piece of parchment, it recognizes the difference which separates the Jewry of the Judengasse from the Jewry of the Ghetto. It re-discovers in what remains that which has been, good, evil, the true, the blood-stain of the palace, the ink-blot of the cavern, the drop of sweat from the brothel, trials undergone, temptations welcomed, orgies cast forth, the turn which characters have taken as they became abased, the trace of prostitution in souls of which their grossness rendered them capable, and on the vesture of the porters of Rome the mark of Messalina's elbowing.

CHAPTER III

BRUNESEAU

The sewer of Paris in the Middle Ages was legendary. In the sixteenth century, Henri II. attempted a bore, which failed. Not a hundred years ago, the cess-pool, Mercier attests the fact, was abandoned to itself, and fared as best it might.

Such was this ancient Paris, delivered over to quarrels, to indecision, and to gropings. It was tolerably stupid for a long time. Later on, '89 showed how understanding comes to cities. But in the good, old times, the capital had not much head. It did not know how to manage its own affairs either morally or materially, and could not sweep out filth any better than it could abuses. Everything presented an obstacle, everything raised a question. The sewer, for example, was refractory to every itinerary. One could no more find one's bearings in the sewer than one could understand one's position in the city; above the unintelligible, below the inextricable; beneath the confusion of tongues there reigned the confusion of caverns; Dædalus backed up Babel.

Sometimes the Paris sewer took a notion to overflow, as though this misunderstood Nile were suddenly seized with a fit of rage. There occurred, infamous to relate, inundations of the sewer. At times, that stomach of civilization digested badly, the cess-pool flowed back into the throat of the city, and Paris got an after-taste of her own filth. These resemblances of the sewer to remorse had their good points; they were warnings; very badly accepted, however; the city waxed indignant at the audacity of its mire, and did not admit that the filth should return. Drive it out better.

The inundation of 1802 is one of the actual memories of Parisians of the age of eighty. The mud spread in cross-form over the Place des Victoires, where stands the statue of Louis XIV.; it entered the Rue Saint-Honoré by the two mouths to the sewer in the Champs-Élysées, the Rue Saint-Florentin through the Saint-Florentin sewer, the Rue Pierre-à-Poisson through the sewer de la Sonnerie, the Rue Popincourt, through the sewer of the Chemin-Vert, the Rue de la Roquette, through the sewer of the Rue de Lappe; it covered the drain of the Rue des Champs-Élysées to the height of thirty-five centimetres; and, to the South, through the vent of the Seine, performing its functions in inverse sense, it penetrated the Rue Mazarine, the Rue de l'Échaudé, and the Rue des Marais, where it stopped at a distance of one hundred and nine metres, a few paces distant from the house in which Racine had lived, respecting, in the seventeenth century, the poet more than the King. It attained its maximum depth in the Rue Saint-Pierre, where it rose to the height of three feet above the flag-stones of the water-spout, and its maximum length in the Rue Saint-Sabin, where it spread out over a stretch two hundred and thirty-eight metres in length.

At the beginning of this century, the sewer of Paris was still a mysterious place. Mud can never enjoy a good fame;

but in this case its evil renown reached the verge of the terrible. Paris knew, in a confused way, that she had under her a terrible cavern. People talked of it as of that monstrous bed of Thebes in which swarmed centipedes fifteen long feet in length, and which might have served Behemoth for a bath-tub. The great boots of the sewermen never ventured further than certain well-known points. We were then very near the epoch when the scavenger's carts, from the summit of which Sainte-Foix fraternized with the Marquis de Créqui, discharged their loads directly into the sewer. As for cleaning out,—that function was entrusted to the pouring rains which encumbered rather than swept away. Rome left some poetry to her sewer, and called it the Gemoniæ; Paris insulted hers, and entitled it the Polypus-Hole. Science and superstition were in accord, in horror. The Polypus hole was no less repugnant to hygiene than to legend. The goblin was developed under the fetid covering of the Mouffetard sewer; the corpses of the Marmousets had been cast into the sewer de la Barillerie; Fagon attributed the redoubtable malignant fever of 1685 to the great hiatus of the sewer of the Marais, which remained yawning until 1833 in the Rue Saint-Louis, almost opposite the sign of the *Gallant Messenger*. The mouth of the sewer of the Rue de la Mortellerie was celebrated for the pestilences which had their source there; with its grating of iron, with points simulating a row of teeth, it was like a dragon's maw in that fatal street, breathing forth hell upon men. The popular imagination seasoned the sombre Parisian sink with some indescribably hideous intermixture of the infinite. The sewer had no bottom. The sewer was the lower world. The idea of exploring these leprous regions did not even occur to the police. To try that unknown thing, to cast the plummet into that shadow, to set out on a voyage of discovery in that abyss—who would have dared? It was alarming. Nevertheless, some one did present himself. The cess-pool had its Christopher Columbus.

One day, in 1805, during one of the rare apparitions which the Emperor made in Paris, the Minister of the Interior, some Decrès or Crétet or other, came to the master's intimate levee. In the Carrousel there was audible the clanking of swords of all those extraordinary soldiers of the great Republic, and of the great Empire; then Napoleon's door was blocked with heroes; men from the Rhine, from the Escaut, from the Adige, and from the Nile; companions of Joubert, of Desaix, of Marceau, of Hoche, of Kléber; the aérostiers of Fleurus, the grenadiers of Mayence, the pontoon-builders of Genoa, hussars whom the Pyramids had looked down upon, artillerists whom Junot's cannon-ball had spattered with mud, cuirassiers who had taken by assault the fleet lying at anchor in the Zuyderzee; some had followed Bonaparte upon the bridge of Lodi, others had accompanied Murat in the trenches of Mantua, others had preceded Lannes in the hollow road of Montebello. The whole army of that day was present there, in the court-yard of the Tuileries, represented by a squadron or a platoon, and guarding Napoleon in repose; and that was the splendid epoch when the grand army had Marengo behind it and Austerlitz before it.—"Sire," said the Minister of the Interior to Napoleon, "yesterday I saw the most intrepid man in your Empire."—"What man is that?" said the Emperor brusquely, "and what has he done?"—"He wants to do something, Sire."—"What is it?"—"To visit the sewers of Paris."

This man existed and his name was Bruneseau.

CHAPTER IV

The visit took place. It was a formidable campaign; a nocturnal battle against pestilence and suffocation. It was, at the same time, a voyage of discovery. One of the survivors of this expedition, an intelligent workingman, who was very young at the time, related curious details with regard to it, several years ago, which Bruneseau thought himself obliged to omit in his report to the prefect of police, as unworthy of official style. The processes of disinfection were, at that epoch, extremely rudimentary. Hardly had Bruneseau crossed the first articulations of that subterranean network, when eight laborers out of the twenty refused to go any further. The operation was complicated; the visit entailed the necessity of cleaning; hence it was necessary to cleanse and at the same time, to proceed; to note the entrances of water, to count the gratings and the vents, to lay out in detail the branches, to indicate the currents at the point where they parted, to define the respective bounds of the divers basins, to sound the small sewers grafted on the principal sewer, to measure the height under the key-stone of each drain, and the width, at the spring of the vaults as well as at the bottom, in order to determine the arrangements with regard to the level of each water-entrance, either of the bottom of the arch, or on the soil of the street. They advanced with toil. The lanterns pined away in the foul atmosphere. From time to time, a fainting sewerman was carried out. At certain points, there were precipices. The soil had given away, the pavement had crumbled, the sewer had changed into a bottomless well; they found nothing solid; a man disappeared suddenly; they had great difficulty in getting him out again. On the advice of Fourcroy, they lighted large cages filled with tow steeped in resin, from time to time, in spots which had been sufficiently disinfected. In some places, the wall was covered with misshapen fungi,—one would have said tumors; the very stone seemed diseased within this unbreathable atmosphere.

Bruneseau, in his exploration, proceeded down hill. At the point of separation of the two water-conduits of the Grand-Hurleur, he deciphered upon a projecting stone the date of 1550; this stone indicated the limits where Philibert Delorme, charged by Henri II. with visiting the subterranean drains of Paris, had halted. This stone was the mark of the sixteenth century on the sewer; Bruneseau found the handiwork of the seventeenth century once more in the Ponceau drain of the old Rue Vielle-du-Temple, vaulted between 1600 and 1650; and the handiwork of the eighteenth in the western section of the collecting canal, walled and vaulted in 1740. These two vaults, especially the less ancient, that of 1740, were more cracked and decrepit than the masonry of the belt sewer, which dated from 1412, an epoch when the brook of fresh water of Ménilmontant was elevated to the dignity of the Grand Sewer of Paris, an advancement analogous to that of a peasant who should become first *valet de chambre* to the King; something like Gros-Jean transformed into Lebel.

Here and there, particularly beneath the Court-House, they thought they recognized the hollows of ancient dungeons, excavated in the very sewer itself. Hideous *in-pace*. An iron neck-collar was hanging in one of these cells. They walled them all up. Some of their finds were singular; among others, the skeleton of an ourang-outan, who had disappeared from the Jardin des Plantes in 1800, a disappearance probably connected with the famous and indisputable apparition of the devil in the Rue des Bernardins, in the last year of the eighteenth century. The poor devil had ended by drowning himself in the sewer.

Beneath this long, arched drain which terminated at the Arche-Marion, a perfectly preserved rag-picker's basket excited the admiration of all connoisseurs. Everywhere, the mire, which the sewermen came to handle with intrepidity, abounded in precious objects, jewels of gold and silver, precious stones, coins. If a giant had filtered this cesspool, he would have had the riches of centuries in his lair. At the point where the two branches of the Rue du Temple and of the Rue Sainte-Avoye separate, they picked up a singular Huguenot medal in copper, bearing on one side the pig hooded with a cardinal's hat, and on the other, a wolf with a tiara on his head.

The most surprising rencounter was at the entrance to the Grand Sewer. This entrance had formerly been closed by a grating of which nothing but the hinges remained. From one of these hinges hung a dirty and shapeless rag which, arrested there in its passage, no doubt, had floated there in the darkness and finished its process of being torn apart.

Bruneseau held his lantern close to this rag and examined it. It was of very fine batiste, and in one of the corners, less frayed than the rest, they made out a heraldic coronet and embroidered above these seven letters: LAVBESP. The crown was the coronet of a Marquis, and the seven letters signified *Laubespine.* They recognized the fact, that what they had before their eyes was a morsel of the shroud of Marat. Marat in his youth had had amorous intrigues. This was when he was a member of the household of the Comte d'Artois, in the capacity of physician to the Stables. From these love affairs, historically proved, with a great lady, he had retained this sheet. As a waif or a souvenir. At his death, as this was the only linen of any fineness which he had in his house, they buried him in it. Some old women had shrouded him for the tomb in that swaddling-band in which the tragic Friend of the people had enjoyed voluptuousness. Bruneseau passed on. They left that rag where it hung; they did not put the finishing touch to it. Did this arise from scorn or from respect? Marat deserved both. And then, destiny was there sufficiently stamped to make them hesitate to touch it. Besides, the things of the sepulchre must be left in the spot which they select. In short, the relic was a strange one. A Marquise had slept in it; Marat had rotted in it; it had traversed the Pantheon to end with the rats of the sewer. This chamber rag, of which Watteau would formerly have joyfully sketched every fold, had ended in becoming worthy of the fixed gaze of Dante.

The whole visit to the subterranean stream of filth of Paris lasted seven years, from 1805 to 1812. As he proceeded, Bruneseau drew, directed, and completed considerable works; in 1808 he lowered the arch of the Ponceau, and, everywhere creating new lines, he pushed the sewer, in 1809, under the Rue Saint-Denis as far as the fountain of the Innocents; in 1810, under the Rue Froidmanteau and under the Salpêtrière; in 1811 under the Rue Neuve-des-Petits-Pères, under the Rue du Mail, under the Rue de l'Écharpe, under the Place Royale; in 1812, under the Rue de la Paix, and under the Chaussée d'Antin. At the same time, he had the whole net-work disinfected and rendered healthful. In the second year of his work, Bruneseau engaged the assistance of his son-in-law Nargaud.

It was thus that, at the beginning of the century, ancient society cleansed its double bottom, and performed the toilet of its sewer. There was that much clean, at all events.

Tortuous, cracked, unpaved, full of fissures, intersected by gullies, jolted by eccentric elbows, mounting and descending illogically, fetid, wild, fierce, submerged in obscurity, with cicatrices on its pavements and scars on its walls, terrible,—such was, retrospectively viewed, the antique sewer of Paris. Ramifications in every direction, crossings, of trenches, branches, goose-feet, stars, as in military mines, cœcum, blind alleys, vaults lined with saltpetre, pestiferous pools, scabby sweats, on the walls, drops dripping from the ceilings, darkness; nothing could equal the horror of this old, waste crypt, the digestive apparatus of Babylon, a cavern, ditch, gulf pierced with streets, a titanic mole-burrow, where the mind seems to behold that enormous blind mole, the past, prowling through the shadows, in the filth which has been splendor.

This, we repeat, was the sewer of the past.

CHAPTER V

PRESENT PROGRESS

To-day the sewer is clean, cold, straight, correct. It almost realizes the ideal of what is understood in England by the word "respectable." It is proper and grayish; laid out by rule and line; one might almost say as though it came out of a bandbox. It resembles a tradesman who has become a councillor of state. One can almost see distinctly there. The mire there comports itself with decency. At first, one might readily mistake it for one of those subterranean corridors, which were so common in former days, and so useful in flights of monarchs and princes, in those good old times, "when the people loved their kings." The present sewer is a beautiful sewer; the pure style reigns there; the classical rectilinear alexandrine which, driven out of poetry, appears to have taken refuge in architecture, seems mingled with all the stones of that long, dark and whitish vault; each outlet is an arcade; the Rue de Rivoli serves as pattern even in the sewer. However, if the geometrical line is in place anywhere, it is certainly in the drainage trench of a great city. There, everything should be subordinated to the shortest road. The sewer has, nowadays, assumed a certain official aspect. The very police reports, of which it sometimes forms the subject, no longer are wanting in respect towards it. The words which characterize it in administrative language are sonorous and dignified. What used to be called a gut is now called a gallery; what used to be called a hole is now called a surveying orifice. Villon would no longer meet with his ancient temporary provisional lodging. This net-work of cellars has its immemorial population of prowlers, rodents, swarming in greater numbers than ever; from time to time, an aged and veteran rat risks his head at the window of the sewer and surveys the Parisians; but even these vermin grow tame, so satisfied are they with their subterranean palace. The cesspool no longer retains anything of its primitive ferocity. The rain, which in former days soiled the sewer, now washes it. Nevertheless, do not trust yourself too much to it. Miasmas still inhabit it. It is more hypocritical than irreproachable. The prefecture of police and the commission of health have done their best. But, in spite of all the processes of disinfection, it exhales, a vague, suspicious odor like Tartuffe after confession.

Let us confess, that, taking it all in all, this sweeping is a homage which the sewer pays to civilization, and as, from this point of view, Tartuffe's conscience is a progress over the Augean stables, it is certain that the sewers of Paris have been improved.

It is more than progress; it is transmutation. Between the ancient and the present sewer there is a revolution. What has effected this revolution?

The man whom all the world forgets, and whom we have mentioned, Bruneseau.

CHAPTER VI

FUTURE PROGRESS

THE excavation of the sewer of Paris has been no slight task. The last ten centuries have toiled at it without being able to bring it to a termination, any more than they have been able to finish Paris. The sewer, in fact, receives all the counter-shocks of the growth of Paris. Within the bosom of the earth, it is a sort of mysterious polyp with a thousand antennæ, which expands below as the city expands above. Every time that the city cuts a street, the sewer stretches out an arm. The old monarchy had constructed only twenty-three thousand three hundred metres of sewers; that was where Paris stood in this respect on the first of January, 1806. Beginning with this epoch, of which we shall shortly speak, the work was usefully and energetically resumed and prosecuted; Napoleon built—the figures are curious—four thousand eight hundred and four metres; Louis XVIII., five thousand seven hundred and nine; Charles X., ten thousand eight hundred and thirty-six; Louis-Philippe, eighty-nine thousand and twenty; the Republic of 1848, twenty-three thousand three hundred and eighty-one; the present government, seventy thousand five hundred; in all, at the present time, two hundred and twenty-six thousand six hundred and ten metres; sixty leagues of sewers; the enormous entrails of Paris. An obscure ramification ever at work; a construction which is immense and ignored.

As the reader sees, the subterranean labyrinth of Paris is to-day more than ten times what it was at the beginning of the century. It is difficult to form any idea of all the perseverance and the efforts which have been required to bring this cess-pool to the point of relative perfection in which it now is. It was with great difficulty that the ancient monarchical provostship and, during the last ten years of the eighteenth century, the revolutionary mayoralty, had succeeded in perforating the five leagues of sewer which existed previous to 1806. All sorts of obstacles hindered this operation, some peculiar to the soil, others inherent in the very prejudices of the laborious population of Paris. Paris is built upon a soil which is singularly rebellious to the pick, the hoe, the bore, and to human manipulation. There is nothing more difficult to pierce and to penetrate than the geological formation upon which is superposed the marvellous historical formation called Paris; as soon as work in any form whatsoever is begun and adventures upon this stretch of alluvium, subterranean resistances abound. There are liquid clays, springs, hard rocks, and those soft and deep quagmires which special science calls *moutardes*.[1] The pick advances laboriously through the calcareous layers alternating with very slender threads of clay, and schistose beds in plates incrusted with oyster-shells, the contemporaries of the pre-Adamite oceans. Sometimes a rivulet suddenly bursts through a vault that has been begun, and inundates the laborers; or a layer of marl is laid bare, and rolls down with the fury of a cataract, breaking the stoutest supporting beams like glass. Quite recently, at Villette, when it became necessary to pass the collecting sewer under the Saint-Martin canal without interrupting navigation or emptying the canal, a fissure appeared in the basin of the canal, water suddenly became abundant in the subterranean tunnel, which was beyond the power of the pumping engines; it was necessary to send a diver to explore the fissure which had been made in the narrow entrance of the grand basin, and it was not without great difficulty that it was stopped up. Elsewhere near the Seine, and even at a considerable distance from the river, as for instance, at Belleville, Grand-Rue and Lumière Passage, quicksands are encountered in which one sticks fast, and in which a man sinks visibly. Add suffocation by miasmas, burial by slides, and sudden crumbling of the earth. Add the typhus, with which the workmen become slowly impregnated. In our own day, after having excavated the gallery of Clichy, with a banquette to receive the principal water-conduit of Ourcq, a piece of work which was executed in a trench ten metres deep; after having, in the midst of land-slides, and with the aid of excavations, often putrid, and of shoring up, vaulted the Bièvre from the Boulevard de l'Hôpital, as far as the Seine; after having, in order to deliver Paris from the floods of Montmartre and in order to provide an outlet for that river-like pool nine hectares in extent, which crouched near the Barrière des Martyrs, after having, let us state, constructed the line of sewers from the Barrière Blanche to the road of Aubervilliers, in four months, working day and night, at a depth of eleven metres; after having—a thing heretofore unseen—made a subterranean sewer in the Rue Barre-du-Bec, without a trench, six metres below the surface, the superintendent, Monnot, died. After having vaulted three thousand metres of sewer in all quarters of the city, from the Rue Traversière-Saint-Antoine to the Rue de l'Ourcine, after having freed the Carrefour Censier-Mouffetard from inundations of rain by means of the branch of the Arbalète, after having built the Saint-Georges sewer, on rock and concrete in the fluid sands, after having directed the formidable lowering of the flooring of the vault timber in the Notre-Dame-de-Nazareth branch, Duleau the engineer died. There are no bulletins for such acts of bravery as these, which are more useful, nevertheless, than the brutal slaughter of the field of battle.

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[1] Mustards.

The sewers of Paris in 1832 were far from being what they are to-day. Bruneseau had given the impulse, but the cholera was required to bring about the vast reconstruction which took place later on. It is surprising to say, for example, that in 1821, a part of the belt sewer, called the Grand Canal, as in Venice, still stood stagnating uncovered to the sky, in the Rue des Gourdes. It was only in 1821 that the city of Paris found in its pocket the two hundred and sixty-thousand eighty francs and six centimes required for covering this mass of filth. The three absorbing wells, of the Combat, the Cunette, and Saint-Mandé, with their discharging mouths, their apparatus, their cess-pools, and their depuratory branches, only date from 1836. The intestinal sewer of Paris has been made over anew, and, as we have said, it has been extended more than tenfold within the last quarter of a century.

Thirty years ago, at the epoch of the insurrection of the 5th and 6th of June, it was still, in many localities, nearly the same ancient sewer. A very great number of streets which are now convex were then sunken causeways. At the end of a slope, where the tributaries of a street or cross-roads ended, there were often to be seen large, square gratings with heavy bars, whose iron, polished by the footsteps of the throng, gleamed dangerous and slippery for vehicles, and caused horses to fall. The official language of the Roads and Bridges gave to these gratings the expressive name of *Cassis.*[1]

In 1832, in a number of streets, in the Rue de l'Étoile, the Rue Saint-Louis, the Rue du Temple, the Rue Vielle-du-Temple, the Rue Notre-Dame de Nazareth, the Rue Folie-Méricourt, the Quai aux Fleurs, the Rue du Petit-Musc, the Rue du Normandie, the Rue Pont-Aux-Biches, the Rue des Marais, the Faubourg Saint-Martin, the Rue Notre Dame des-Victoires, the Faubourg Montmartre, the Rue Grange-Batelière, in the Champs-Élysées, the Rue Jacob, the Rue de Tournon, the ancient gothic sewer still cynically displayed its maw. It consisted of enormous voids of stone catch-basins sometimes surrounded by stone posts, with monumental effrontery.

Paris in 1806 still had nearly the same sewers numerically as stated in 1663; five thousand three hundred fathoms. After Bruneseau, on the 1st of January, 1832, it had forty thousand three hundred metres. Between 1806 and 1831, there had been built, on an average, seven hundred and fifty metres annually, afterwards eight and even ten thousand metres of galleries were constructed every year, in masonry, of small stones, with hydraulic mortar which hardens under water, on a cement foundation. At two hundred francs the metre, the sixty leagues of Paris' sewers of the present day represent forty-eight millions.

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[1] From *casser,* to break: break-necks.

In addition to the economic progress which we have indicated at the beginning, grave problems of public hygiene are connected with that immense question: the sewers of Paris.

Paris is the centre of two sheets, a sheet of water and a sheet of air. The sheet of water, lying at a tolerably great depth underground, but already sounded by two bores, is furnished by the layer of green clay situated between the chalk and the Jurassic lime-stone; this layer may be represented by a disk five and twenty leagues in circumference; a multitude of rivers and brooks ooze there; one drinks the Seine, the Marne, the Yonne, the Oise, the Aisne, the Cher, the Vienne and the Loire in a glass of water from the well of Grenelle. The sheet of water is healthy, it comes from heaven in the first place and next from the earth; the sheet of air is unhealthy, it comes from the sewer. All the miasms of the cess-pool are mingled with the breath of the city; hence this bad breath. The air taken from above a dung-heap, as has been scientifically proved, is purer than the air taken from above Paris. In a given time, with the aid of progress, mechanisms become perfected, and as light increases, the sheet of water will be employed to purify the sheet of air; that is to say, to wash the sewer. The reader knows, that by "washing the sewer" we mean: the restitution of the filth to the earth; the return to the soil of dung and of manure to the fields. Through this simple act, the entire social community will experience a diminution of misery and an augmentation of health. At the present hour, the radiation of diseases from Paris extends to fifty leagues around the Louvre, taken as the hub of this pestilential wheel.

We might say that, for ten centuries, the cess-pool has been the disease of Paris. The sewer is the blemish which Paris has in her blood. The popular instinct has never been deceived in it. The occupation of sewermen was formerly almost as perilous, and almost as repugnant to the people, as the occupation of knacker, which was so long held in horror and handed over to the executioner. High wages were necessary to induce a mason to disappear in that fetid mine; the ladder of the cess-pool cleaner hesitated to plunge into it; it was said, in proverbial form: "to descend into the sewer is to enter the grave;" and all sorts of hideous legends, as we have said, covered this colossal sink with terror; a dread sink-hole which bears the traces of the revolutions of the globe as of the revolutions of man, and where are to be found vestiges of all cataclysms from the shells of the Deluge to the rag of Marat.

BOOK THIRD.—MUD BUT THE SOUL

CHAPTER I

THE SEWER AND ITS SURPRISES

It was in the sewers of Paris that Jean Valjean found himself.

Still another resemblance between Paris and the sea. As in the ocean, the diver may disappear there.

The transition was an unheard-of one. In the very heart of the city, Jean Valjean had escaped from the city, and, in the twinkling of an eye, in the time required to lift the cover and to replace it, he had passed from broad daylight to complete obscurity, from midday to midnight, from tumult to silence, from the whirlwind of thunders to the stagnation of the tomb, and, by a vicissitude far more tremendous even than that of the Rue Polonceau, from the most extreme peril to the most absolute obscurity.

An abrupt fall into a cavern; a disappearance into the secret trap-door of Paris; to quit that street where death was on every side, for that sort of sepulchre where there was life, was a strange instant. He remained for several seconds as though bewildered; listening, stupefied. The waste-trap of safety had suddenly yawned beneath him. Celestial goodness had, in a manner, captured him by treachery. Adorable ambuscades of providence!

Only, the wounded man did not stir, and Jean Valjean did not know whether that which he was carrying in that grave was a living being or a dead corpse.

His first sensation was one of blindness. All of a sudden, he could see nothing. It seemed to him too, that, in one instant, he had become deaf. He no longer heard anything. The frantic storm of murder which had been let loose a few feet above his head did not reach him, thanks to the thickness of the earth which separated him from it, as we have said, otherwise than faintly and indistinctly, and like a rumbling, in the depths. He felt that the ground was solid under his feet; that was all; but that was enough. He extended one arm and then the other, touched the walls on both sides, and perceived that the passage was narrow; he slipped, and thus perceived that the pavement was wet. He cautiously put forward one foot, fearing a hole, a sink, some gulf; he discovered that the paving continued. A gust of fetidness informed him of the place in which he stood.

After the lapse of a few minutes, he was no longer blind. A little light fell through the man-hole through which he had descended, and his eyes became accustomed to this cavern. He began to distinguish something. The passage in which he had burrowed—no other word can better express the situation—was walled in behind him. It was one of those blind alleys, which the special jargon terms branches. In front of him there was another wall, a wall like night. The light of the air-hole died out ten or twelve paces from the point where Jean Valjean stood, and barely cast a wan pallor on a few metres of the damp walls of the sewer. Beyond, the opaqueness was massive; to penetrate thither seemed horrible, an entrance into it appeared like an engulfment. A man could, however, plunge into that wall of fog and it was necessary so to do. Haste was even requisite. It occurred to Jean Valjean that the grating which he had caught sight of under the flag-stones might also catch the eye of the soldiery, and that everything hung upon this chance. They also might descend into that well and search it. There was not a minute to be lost. He had deposited Marius on the ground, he picked him up again,—that is the real word for it,—placed him on his shoulders once more, and set out. He plunged resolutely into the gloom.

The truth is, that they were less safe than Jean Valjean fancied. Perils of another sort and no less serious were awaiting them, perchance. After the lightning-charged whirlwind of the combat, the cavern of miasmas and traps; after chaos, the sewer. Jean Valjean had fallen from one circle of hell into another.

When he had advanced fifty paces, he was obliged to halt. A problem presented itself. The passage terminated in another gut which he encountered across his path. There two ways presented themselves. Which should he take? Ought he to turn to the left or to the right? How was he to find his bearings in that black labyrinth? This labyrinth, to which we have already called the reader's attention, has a clue, which is its slope. To follow to the slope is to arrive at the river.

This Jean Valjean instantly comprehended.

He said to himself that he was probably in the sewer des Halles; that if he were to choose the path to the left and follow the slope, he would arrive, in less than a quarter of an hour, at some mouth on the Seine between the Pont au Change and the Pont-Neuf, that is to say, he would make his appearance in broad daylight on the most densely peopled spot in Paris. Perhaps he would come out on some man-hole at the intersection of streets. Amazement of the passers-by at beholding two bleeding men emerge from the earth at their feet. Arrival of the police, a call to arms of the neighboring post of guards. Thus they would be seized before they had even got out. It would be better to plunge into that labyrinth, to confide themselves to that black gloom, and to trust to Providence for the outcome.

He ascended the incline, and turned to the right.

When he had turned the angle of the gallery, the distant glimmer of an air-hole disappeared, the curtain of obscurity fell upon him once more, and he became blind again. Nevertheless, he advanced as rapidly as possible. Marius' two arms were passed round his neck, and the former's feet dragged behind him. He held both these arms with one hand, and groped along the wall with the other. Marius' cheek touched his, and clung there, bleeding. He felt a warm stream which came from Marius trickling down upon him and making its way under his clothes. But a humid warmth near his ear, which the mouth of the wounded man touched, indicated respiration, and consequently, life. The passage along which Jean Valjean was now proceeding was not so narrow as the first. Jean Valjean walked through it with considerable difficulty. The rain of the preceding day had not, as yet, entirely run off, and it created a little torrent in the centre of the bottom, and he was forced to hug the wall in order not to have his feet in the water.

Thus he proceeded in the gloom. He resembled the beings of the night groping in the invisible and lost beneath the earth in veins of shadow.

Still, little by little, whether it was that the distant air-holes emitted a little wavering light in this opaque gloom, or whether his eyes had become accustomed to the obscurity, some vague vision returned to him, and he began once more to gain a confused idea, now of the wall which he touched, now of the vault beneath which he was passing. The pupil dilates in the dark, and the soul dilates in misfortune and ends by finding God there.

It was not easy to direct his course.

The line of the sewer re-echoes, so to speak, the line of the streets which lie above it. There were then in Paris two thousand two hundred streets. Let the reader imagine himself beneath that forest of gloomy branches which is called the sewer. The system of sewers existing at that epoch, placed end to end, would have given a length of eleven leagues. We have said above, that the actual net-work, thanks to the special activity of the last thirty years, was no less than sixty leagues in extent.

Jean Valjean began by committing a blunder. He thought that he was beneath the Rue Saint-Denis, and it was a pity that it was not so. Under the Rue Saint-Denis there is an old stone sewer which dates from Louis XIII. and which runs straight to the collecting sewer, called the Grand Sewer, with but a single elbow, on the right, on the elevation of the ancient Cour des Miracles, and a single branch, the Saint-Martin sewer, whose four arms describe a cross. But the gut of the Petite-Truanderie the entrance to which was in the vicinity of the Corinthe wine-shop has never communicated with the sewer of the Rue Saint-Denis; it ended at the Montmartre sewer, and it was in this that Jean Valjean was entangled. There opportunities of losing oneself abound. The Montmartre sewer is one of the most labyrinthine of the ancient network. Fortunately, Jean Valjean had left behind him the sewer of the markets whose geometrical plan presents the appearance of a multitude of parrots' roosts piled on top of each other; but he had before him more than one embarrassing encounter and more than one street corner—for they are streets—presenting itself in the gloom like an interrogation point; first, on his left, the vast sewer of the Plâtrière, a sort of Chinese puzzle, thrusting out and entangling its chaos of Ts and Zs under the Post-Office and under the rotunda of the Wheat Market, as far as the Seine, where it terminates in a Y; secondly, on his right, the curving corridor of the Rue du Cadran with its three teeth, which are also blind courts; thirdly, on his left, the branch of the Mail, complicated, almost at its inception, with a sort of fork, and proceeding from zig-zag to zig-zag until it ends in the grand crypt of the outlet of the Louvre, truncated and ramified in every direction; and lastly, the blind alley of a passage of the Rue des Jeûneurs, without counting little ducts here and there, before reaching the belt sewer, which alone could conduct him to some issue sufficiently distant to be safe.

Had Jean Valjean had any idea of all that we have here pointed out, he would speedily have perceived, merely by feeling the wall, that he was not in the subterranean gallery of the Rue Saint-Denis. Instead of the ancient stone, instead of the antique architecture, haughty and royal even in the sewer, with pavement and string courses of granite and mortar costing eight hundred livres the fathom, he would have felt under his hand contemporary cheapness, economical expedients, porous stone filled with mortar on a concrete foundation, which costs two hundred francs the metre, and the bourgeoise masonry known as *à petits matériaux*—small stuff; but of all this he knew nothing.

He advanced with anxiety, but with calmness, seeing nothing, knowing nothing, buried in chance, that is to say, engulfed in providence.

By degrees, we will admit, a certain horror seized upon him. The gloom which enveloped him penetrated his spirit. He walked in an enigma. This aqueduct of the sewer is formidable; it interlaces in a dizzy fashion. It is a melancholy thing to be caught in this Paris of shadows. Jean Valjean was obliged to find and even to invent his route without seeing it. In this unknown, every step that he risked might be his last. How was he to get out? should he find an issue? should he find it in time? would that colossal subterranean sponge with its stone cavities, allow itself to be penetrated and pierced? should he there encounter some unexpected knot in the darkness? should he arrive at the inextricable and the impassable? would Marius die there of hemorrhage and he of hunger? should they end by both getting lost, and by furnishing two skeletons in a nook of that night? He did not know. He put all these questions to himself without replying to them. The intestines of Paris form a precipice. Like the prophet, he was in the belly of the monster.

All at once, he had a surprise. At the most unforeseen moment, and without having ceased to walk in a straight line, he perceived that he was no longer ascending; the water of the rivulet was beating against his heels, instead of meeting him at his toes. The sewer was now descending. Why? Was he about to arrive suddenly at the Seine? This danger was a great one, but the peril of retreating was still greater. He continued to advance.

It was not towards the Seine that he was proceeding. The ridge which the soil of Paris forms on its right bank empties one of its water-sheds into the Seine and the other into the Grand Sewer. The crest of this ridge which determines the division of the waters describes a very capricious line. The culminating point, which is the point of separation of the currents, is in the Sainte-Avoye sewer, beyond the Rue Michel-le-Comte, in the sewer of the Louvre, near the boulevards, and in the Montmartre sewer, near the Halles. It was this culminating point that Jean Valjean had reached. He was directing his course towards the belt sewer; he was on the right path. But he did not know it.

Every time that he encountered a branch, he felt of its angles, and if he found that the opening which presented itself was smaller than the passage in which he was, he did not enter but continued his route, rightly judging that every narrower way must needs terminate in a blind alley, and could only lead him further from his goal, that is to say, the outlet. Thus he avoided the quadruple trap which was set for him in the darkness by the four labyrinths which we have just enumerated.

At a certain moment, he perceived that he was emerging from beneath the Paris which was petrified by the uprising, where the barricades had suppressed circulation, and that he was entering beneath the living and normal Paris. Overhead he suddenly heard a noise as of thunder, distant but continuous. It was the rumbling of vehicles.

He had been walking for about half an hour, at least according to the calculation which he made in his own mind, and he had not yet thought of rest; he had merely changed the hand with which he was holding Marius. The darkness was more profound than ever, but its very depth reassured him.

All at once, he saw his shadow in front of him. It was outlined on a faint, almost indistinct reddish glow, which vaguely empurpled the flooring vault underfoot, and the vault overhead, and gilded to his right and to his left the two viscous walls of the passage. Stupefied, he turned round.

Behind him, in the portion of the passage which he had just passed through, at a distance which appeared to him immense, piercing the dense obscurity, flamed a sort of horrible star which had the air of surveying him.

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

In the rear of that star eight or ten forms were moving about in a confused way, black, upright, indistinct, horrible.

CHAPTER II

EXPLANATION

On the day of the sixth of June, a battue of the sewers had been ordered. It was feared that the vanquished might have taken to them for refuge, and Prefect Gisquet was to search occult Paris while General Bugeaud swept public Paris; a double and connected operation which exacted a double strategy on the part of the public force, represented above by the army and below by the police. Three squads of agents and sewermen explored the subterranean drain of Paris, the first on the right bank, the second on the left bank, the third in the city. The agents of police were armed with carabines, with bludgeons, swords and poignards.

That which was directed at Jean Valjean at that moment, was the lantern of the patrol of the right bank.

This patrol had just visited the curving gallery and the three blind alleys which lie beneath the Rue du Cadran. While they were passing their lantern through the depths of these blind alleys, Jean Valjean had encountered on his path the entrance to the gallery, had perceived that it was narrower than the principal passage and had not penetrated thither. He had passed on. The police, on emerging from the gallery du Cadran, had fancied that they heard the sound of footsteps in the direction of the belt sewer. They were, in fact, the steps of Jean Valjean. The sergeant in command of the patrol had raised his lantern, and the squad had begun to gaze into the mist in the direction whence the sound proceeded.

This was an indescribable moment for Jean Valjean.

Happily, if he saw the lantern well, the lantern saw him but ill. It was light and he was shadow. He was very far off, and mingled with the darkness of the place. He hugged the wall and halted. Moreover, he did not understand what it was that was moving behind him. The lack of sleep and food, and his emotions had caused him also to pass into the state of a visionary. He beheld a gleam, and around that gleam, forms. What was it? He did not comprehend.

Jean Valjean having paused, the sound ceased.

The men of the patrol listened, and heard nothing, they looked and saw nothing. They held a consultation.

There existed at that epoch at this point of the Montmartre sewer a sort of cross-roads called *de service,* which was afterwards suppressed, on account of the little interior lake which formed there, swallowing up the torrent of rain in heavy storms. The patrol could form a cluster in this open space. Jean Valjean saw these spectres form a sort of circle. These bull-dogs' heads approached each other closely and whispered together.

The result of this council held by the watch dogs was, that they had been mistaken, that there had been no noise, that it was useless to get entangled in the belt sewer, that it would only be a waste of time, but that they ought to hasten towards Saint-Merry; that if there was anything to do, and any "bousingot" to track out, it was in that quarter.

From time to time, parties re-sole their old insults. In 1832, the word bousingot formed the interim between the word jacobin, which had become obsolete, and the word demagogue which has since rendered such excellent service.

The sergeant gave orders to turn to the left, towards the watershed of the Seine.

If it had occurred to them to separate into two squads, and to go in both directions, Jean Valjean would have been captured. All hung on that thread. It is probable that the instructions of the prefecture, foreseeing a possibility of combat and insurgents in force, had forbidden the patrol to part company. The patrol resumed its march, leaving Jean Valjean behind it. Of all this movement, Jean Valjean perceived nothing, except the eclipse of the lantern which suddenly wheeled round.

Before taking his departure, the sergeant, in order to acquit his policeman's conscience, discharged his gun in the direction of Jean Valjean. The detonation rolled from echo to echo in the crypt, like the rumbling of that titanic entrail. A bit of plaster which fell into the stream and splashed up the water a few paces away from Jean Valjean, warned him that the ball had struck the arch over his head.

Slow and measured steps resounded for some time on the timber work, gradually dying away as they retreated to a greater distance; the group of black forms vanished, a glimmer of light oscillated and floated, communicating to the vault a reddish glow which grew fainter, then disappeared; the silence became profound once more, the obscurity became complete, blindness and deafness resumed possession of the shadows; and Jean Valjean, not daring to stir as yet, remained for a long time leaning with his back against the wall, with straining ears, and dilated pupils, watching the disappearance of that phantom patrol.

CHAPTER III

THE "SPUN" MAN

This justice must be rendered to the police of that period, that even in the most serious public junctures, it imperturbably fulfilled its duties connected with the sewers and surveillance. A revolt was, in its eyes, no pretext for allowing malefactors to take the bit in their own mouths, and for neglecting society for the reason that the government was in peril. The ordinary service was performed correctly in company with the extraordinary service, and was not troubled by the latter. In the midst of an incalculable political event already begun, under the pressure of a possible revolution, a police agent, "spun" a thief without allowing himself to be distracted by insurrection and barricades.

It was something precisely parallel which took place on the afternoon of the 6th of June on the banks of the Seine, on the slope of the right shore, a little beyond the Pont des Invalides.

There is no longer any bank there now. The aspect of the locality has changed.

On that bank, two men, separated by a certain distance, seemed to be watching each other while mutually avoiding each other. The one who was in advance was trying to get away, the one in the rear was trying to overtake the other.

It was like a game of checkers played at a distance and in silence. Neither seemed to be in any hurry, and both walked slowly, as though each of them feared by too much haste to make his partner redouble his pace.

One would have said that it was an appetite following its prey, and purposely without wearing the air of doing so. The prey was crafty and on its guard.

The proper relations betwen the hunted pole-cat and the hunting dog were observed. The one who was seeking to escape had an insignificant mien and not an impressive appearance; the one who was seeking to seize him was rude of aspect, and must have been rude to encounter.

The first, conscious that he was the more feeble, avoided the second; but he avoided him in a manner which was deeply furious; any one who could have observed him would have discerned in his eyes the sombre hostility of flight, and all the menace that fear contains.

The shore was deserted; there were no passers-by; not even a boatman nor a lighter-man was in the skiffs which were moored here and there.

It was not easy to see these two men, except from the quay opposite, and to any person who had scrutinized them at that distance, the man who was in advance would have appeared like a bristling, tattered, and equivocal being, who was uneasy and trembling beneath a ragged blouse, and the other like a classic and official personage, wearing the frock-coat of authority buttoned to the chin.

Perchance the reader might recognize these two men, if he were to see them closer at hand.

What was the object of the second man?

Probably to succeed in clothing the first more warmly.

When a man clothed by the state pursues a man in rags, it is in order to make of him a man who is also clothed by the state. Only, the whole question lies in the color. To be dressed in blue is glorious; to be dressed in red is disagreeable.

There is a purple from below.

It is probably some unpleasantness and some purple of this sort which the first man is desirous of shirking.

If the other allowed him to walk on, and had not seized him as yet, it was, judging from all appearances, in the hope of seeing him lead up to some significant meeting-place and to some group worth catching. This delicate operation is called "spinning."

What renders this conjecture entirely probable is that the buttoned-up man, on catching sight from the shore of a hackney-coach on the quay as it was passing along empty, made a sign to the driver; the driver understood, evidently recognized the person with whom he had to deal, turned about and began to follow the two men at the top of the quay, at a foot-pace. This was not observed by the slouching and tattered personage who was in advance.

The hackney-coach rolled along the trees of the Champs-Élysées. The bust of the driver, whip in hand, could be seen moving along above the parapet.

One of the secret instructions of the police authorities to their agents contains this article: "Always have on hand a hackney-coach, in case of emergency.

While these two men were manœuvring, each on his own side, with irreproachable strategy, they approached an inclined plane on the quay which descended to the shore, and which permitted cab-drivers arriving from Passy to come to the river and water their horses. This inclined plane was suppressed later on, for the sake of symmetry; horses may die of thirst, but the eye is gratified.

It is probable that the man in the blouse had intended to ascend this inclined plane, with a view to making his escape into the Champs-Élysées, a place ornamented with trees, but, in return, much infested with policemen, and where the other could easily exercise violence.

This point on the quay is not very far distant from the house brought to Paris from Moret in 1824, by Colonel Brack, and designated as "the house of François I." A guard house is situated close at hand.

To the great surprise of his watcher, the man who was being tracked did not mount by the inclined plane for watering. He continued to advance along the quay on the shore.

His position was visibly becoming critical.

What was he intending to do, if not to throw himself into the Seine?

Henceforth, there existed no means of ascending to the quay; there was no other inclined plane, no staircase; and they were near the spot, marked by the bend in the Seine towards the Pont de Jéna, where the bank, growing constantly narrower, ended in a slender tongue, and was lost in the water. There he would inevitably find himself blocked between the perpendicular wall on his right, the river on his left and in front of him, and the authorities on his heels.

It is true that this termination of the shore was hidden from sight by a heap of rubbish six or seven feet in height, produced by some demolition or other. But did this man hope to conceal himself effectually behind that heap of rubbish, which one need but skirt? The expedient would have been puerile. He certainly was not dreaming of such a thing. The innocence of thieves does not extend to that point.

The pile of rubbish formed a sort of projection at the water's edge, which was prolonged in a promontory as far as the wall of the quay.

The man who was being followed arrived at this little mound and went round it, so that he ceased to be seen by the other.

The latter, as he did not see, could not be seen; he took advantage of this fact to abandon all dissimulation and to walk very rapidly. In a few moments, he had reached the rubbish heap and passed round it. There he halted in sheer amazement. The man whom he had been pursuing was no longer there.

Total eclipse of the man in the blouse.

The shore, beginning with the rubbish heap, was only about thirty paces long, then it plunged into the water which beat against the wall of the quay. The fugitive could not have thrown himself into the Seine without being seen by the man who was following him. What had become of him?

The man in the buttoned-up coat walked to the extremity of the shore, and remained there in thought for a moment, his fists clenched, his eyes searching. All at once he smote his brow. He had just perceived, at the point where the land came to an end and the water began, a large iron grating, low, arched, garnished with a heavy lock and with three massive hinges. This grating, a sort of door pierced at the base of the quay, opened on the river as well as on the shore. A blackish stream passed under it. This stream discharged into the Seine.

Beyond the heavy, rusty iron bars, a sort of dark and vaulted corridor could be descried. The man folded his arms and stared at the grating with an air of reproach.

As this gaze did not suffice, he tried to thrust it aside; he shook it, it resisted solidly. It is probable that it had just been opened, although no sound had been heard, a singular circumstance in so rusty a grating; but it is certain that it had been closed again. This indicated that the man before whom that door had just opened had not a hook but a key.

This evidence suddenly burst upon the mind of the man who was trying to move the grating, and evoked from him this indignant ejaculation:

"That is too much! A government key!"

Then, immediately regaining his composure, he expressed a whole world of interior ideas by this outburst of monosyllables accented almost ironically: "Come! Come! Come! Come!"

That said, and in the hope of something or other, either that he should see the man emerge or other men enter, he posted himself on the watch behind a heap of rubbish, with the patient rage of a pointer.

The hackney-coach, which regulated all its movements on his, had, in its turn, halted on the quay above him, close to the parapet. The coachman, foreseeing a prolonged wait, encased his horses' muzzles in the bag of oats which is damp at the bottom, and which is so familiar to Parisians, to whom, be it said in parenthesis, the Government sometimes applies it. The rare passers-by on the Pont de Jéna turned their heads, before they pursued their way, to take a momentary glance at these two motionless items in the landscape, the man on the shore, the carriage on the quay.

CHAPTER IV

HE ALSO BEARS HIS CROSS

Jean Valjean had resumed his march and had not again paused.

This march became more and more laborious. The level of these vaults varies; the average height is about five feet, six inches, and has been calculated for the stature of a man; Jean Valjean was forced to bend over, in order not to strike Marius against the vault; at every step he had to bend, then to rise, and to feel incessantly of the wall. The moisture of the stones, and the viscous nature of the timber framework furnished but poor supports to which to cling, either for hand or foot. He stumbled along in the hideous dung-heap of the city. The intermittent gleams from the air-holes only appeared at very long intervals, and were so wan that the full sunlight seemed like the light of the moon; all the rest was mist, miasma, opaqueness, blackness. Jean Valjean was both hungry and thirsty; especially thirsty; and this, like the sea, was a place full of water where a man cannot drink. His strength, which was prodigious, as the reader knows, and which had been but little decreased by age, thanks to his chaste and sober life, began to give way, nevertheless. Fatigue began to gain on him; and as his strength decreased, it made the weight of his burden increase. Marius, who was, perhaps, dead, weighed him down as inert bodies weigh. Jean Valjean held him in such a manner that his chest was not oppressed, and so that respiration could proceed as well as possible. Between his legs he felt the rapid gliding of the rats. One of them was frightened to such a degree that he bit him. From time to time, a breath of fresh air reached him through the vent-holes of the mouths of the sewer, and re-animated him.

It might have been three hours past midday when he reached the belt-sewer.

He was, at first, astonished at this sudden widening. He found himself, all at once, in a gallery where his outstretched hands could not reach the two walls, and beneath a vault which his head did not touch. The Grand Sewer is, in fact, eight feet wide and seven feet high.

At the point where the Montmartre sewer joins the Grand Sewer, two other subterranean galleries, that of the Rue de Provence, and that of the Abattoir, form a square. Between these four ways, a less sagacious man would have remained undecided. Jean Valjean selected the broadest, that is to say, the belt-sewer. But here the question again came up—should he descend or ascend? He thought that the situation required haste, and that he must now gain the Seine at any risk. In other terms, he must descend. He turned to the left.

It was well that he did so, for it is an error to suppose that the belt-sewer has two outlets, the one in the direction of Bercy, the other towards Passy, and that it is, as its name indicates, the subterranean girdle of the Paris on the right bank. The Grand Sewer, which is, it must be remembered, nothing else than the old brook of Ménilmontant, terminates, if one ascends it, in a blind sack, that is to say, at its ancient point of departure which was its source, at the foot of the knoll of Ménilmontant. There is no direct communication with the branch which collects the waters of Paris beginning with the Quartier Popincourt, and which falls into the Seine through the Amelot sewer above the ancient Isle Louviers. This branch, which completes the collecting sewer, is separated from it, under the Rue Ménilmontant itself, by a pile which marks the dividing point of the waters, between upstream and downstream. If Jean Valjean had ascended the gallery he would have arrived, after a thousand efforts, and broken down with fatigue, and in an expiring condition, in the gloom, at a wall. He would have been lost.

In case of necessity, by retracing his steps a little way, and entering the passage of the Filles-du-Calvaire, on condition that he did not hesitate at the subterranean crossing of the Carrefour Boucherat, and by taking the corridor Saint-Louis, then the Saint-Gilles gut on the left, then turning to the right and avoiding the Saint-Sebastian gallery, he might have reached the Amelot sewer, and thence, provided that he did not go astray in the sort of F which lies under the Bastille, he might have attained the outlet on the Seine near the Arsenal. But in order to do this, he must have been thoroughly familiar with the enormous madrepore of the sewer in all its ramifications and in all its openings. Now, we must again insist that he knew nothing of that frightful drain which he was traversing; and had any one asked him in what he was, he would have answered: "In the night."

His instinct served him well. To descend was, in fact, possible safety.

He left on his right the two narrow passages which branch out in the form of a claw under the Rue Laffitte and the Rue Saint-Georges and the long, bifurcated corridor of the Chaussée d'Antin.

A little beyond an affluent, which was, probably, the Madeleine branch, he halted. He was extremely weary. A passably large air-hole, probably the man-hole in the Rue d'Anjou, furnished a light that was almost vivid. Jean Valjean, with the gentleness of movement which a brother would exercise towards his wounded brother, deposited Marius on the banquette of the sewer. Marius' blood-stained face appeared under the wan light of the air-hole like the ashes at the bottom of a tomb. His eyes were closed, his hair was plastered down on his temples like a painter's brushes dried in red wash; his hands hung limp and dead. A clot of blood had collected in the knot of his cravat; his limbs were cold, and blood was clotted at the corners of his mouth; his shirt had thrust itself into his wounds, the cloth of his coat was chafing the yawning gashes in the living flesh. Jean Valjean, pushing aside the garments with the tips of his fingers, laid his hand upon Marius' breast; his heart was still beating. Jean Valjean tore up his shirt, bandaged the young man's wounds as well as he was able and stopped the flowing blood; then bending over Marius, who still lay unconscious and almost without breathing, in that half light, he gazed at him with inexpressible hatred.

On disarranging Marius' garments, he had found two things in his pockets, the roll which had been forgotten there on the preceding evening, and Marius' pocketbook. He ate the roll and opened the pocketbook. On the first page he found the four lines written by Marius. The reader will recall them:

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

Jean Valjean read these four lines by the light of the air-hole, and remained for a moment as though absorbed in thought, repeating in a low tone: "Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire, number 6, Monsieur Gillenormand." He replaced the pocketbook in Marius' pocket. He had eaten, his strength had returned to him; he took Marius up once more upon his back, placed the latter's head carefully on his right shoulder, and resumed his descent of the sewer.

The Grand Sewer, directed according to the course of the valley of Ménilmontant, is about two leagues long. It is paved throughout a notable portion of its extent.

This torch of the names of the streets of Paris, with which we are illuminating for the reader Jean Valjean's subterranean march, Jean Valjean himself did not possess. Nothing told him what zone of the city he was traversing, nor what way he had made. Only the growing pallor of the pools of light which he encountered from time to time indicated to him that the sun was withdrawing from the pavement, and that the day would soon be over; and the rolling of vehicles overhead, having become intermittent instead of continuous, then having almost ceased, he concluded that he was no longer under central Paris, and that he was approaching some solitary region, in the vicinity of the outer boulevards, or the extreme outer quays. Where there are fewer houses and streets, the sewer has fewer air-holes. The gloom deepened around Jean Valjean. Nevertheless, he continued to advance, groping his way in the dark.

Suddenly this darkness became terrible.

CHAPTER V

IN THE CASE OF SAND AS IN THAT OF WOMAN, THERE IS A FINENESS WHICH IS TREACHEROUS

He felt that he was entering the water, and that he no longer had a pavement under his feet, but only mud.

It sometimes happens, that on certain shores of Bretagne or Scotland a man, either a traveller or a fisherman, while walking at low tide on the beach far from shore, suddenly notices that for several minutes past, he has been walking with some difficulty. The beach under foot is like pitch; his soles stick fast to it; it is no longer sand, it is bird-lime. The strand is perfectly dry, but at every step that he takes, as soon as the foot is raised, the print is filled with water. The eye, however, has perceived no change; the immense beach is smooth and tranquil, all the sand has the same aspect, nothing distinguishes the soil that is solid from that which is not solid; the joyous little cloud of sand-lice continues to leap tumultuously under the feet of the passer-by.

The man pursues his way, he walks on, turns towards the land, endeavors to approach the shore. He is not uneasy. Uneasy about what? Only, he is conscious that the heaviness of his feet seems to be increasing at every step that he takes. All at once he sinks in. He sinks in two or three inches. Decidedly, he is not on the right road; he halts to get his bearings. Suddenly he glances at his feet; his feet have disappeared. The sand has covered them. He draws his feet out of the sand, he tries to retrace his steps, he turns back, he sinks in more deeply than before. The sand is up to his ankles, he tears himself free from it and flings himself to the left, the sand reaches to mid-leg, he flings himself to the right, the sand comes up to his knees. Then, with indescribable terror, he recognizes the fact that he is caught in a quicksand, and that he has beneath him that frightful medium in which neither man can walk nor fish can swim. He flings away his burden, if he have one, he lightens himself, like a ship in distress; it is too late, the sand is above his knees.

He shouts, he waves his hat, or his handkerchief, the sand continually gains on him; if the beach is deserted, if the land is too far away, if the bank of sand is too ill-famed, there is no hero in the neighborhood, all is over, he is condemned to be engulfed. He is condemned to that terrible interment, long, infallible, implacable, which it is impossible to either retard or hasten, which lasts for hours, which will not come to an end, which seizes you erect, free, in the flush of health, which drags you down by the feet, which, at every effort that you attempt, at every shout that you utter, draws you a little lower, which has the air of punishing you for your resistance by a redoubled grasp, which forces a man to return slowly to earth, while leaving him time to survey the horizon, the trees, the verdant country, the smoke of the villages on the plain, the sails of the ships on the sea, the birds which fly and sing, the sun and the sky. This engulfment is the sepulchre which assumes a tide, and which mounts from the depths of the earth towards a living man. Each minute is an inexorable layer-out of the dead. The wretched man tries to sit down, to lie down, to climb; every movement that he makes buries him deeper; he straightens himself up, he sinks; he feels that he is being swallowed up; he shrieks, implores, cries to the clouds, wrings his hands, grows desperate. Behold him in the sand up to his belly, the sand reaches to his breast, he is only a bust now. He uplifts his hands, utters furious groans, clenches his nails on the beach, tries to cling fast to that ashes, supports himself on his elbows in order to raise himself from that soft sheath, and sobs frantically; the sand mounts higher. The sand has reached his shoulders, the sand reaches to his throat; only his face is visible now. His mouth cries aloud, the sand fills it; silence. His eyes still gaze forth, the sand closes them, night. Then his brow decreases, a little hair quivers above the sand; a hand projects, pierces the surface of the beach, waves and disappears. Sinister obliteration of a man.

Sometimes a rider is engulfed with his horse; sometimes the carter is swallowed up with his cart; all founders in that strand. It is shipwreck elsewhere than in the water. It is the earth drowning a man. The earth, permeated with the ocean, becomes a pitfall. It presents itself in the guise of a plain, and it yawns like a wave. The abyss is subject to these treacheries.

This melancholy fate, always possible on certain sea beaches, was also possible, thirty years ago, in the sewers of Paris.

Before the important works, undertaken in 1833, the subterranean drain of Paris was subject to these sudden slides.

The water filtered into certain subjacent strata, which were particularly friable; the foot-way, which was of flagstones, as in the ancient sewers, or of cement on concrete, as in the new galleries, having no longer an underpinning, gave way. A fold in a flooring of this sort means a crack, means crumbling. The framework crumbled away for a certain length. This crevice, the hiatus of a gulf of mire, was called a *fontis*, in the special tongue. What is a *fontis?* It is the quicksands of the seashore suddenly encountered under the surface of the earth; it is the beach of Mont Saint-Michel in a sewer. The soaked soil is in a state of fusion, as it were; all its molecules are in suspension in soft medium; it is not earth and it is not water. The depth is sometimes very great. Nothing can be more formidable than such an encounter. If the water predominates, death is prompt, the man is swallowed up; if earth predominates, death is slow.

Can any one picture to himself such a death? If being swallowed by the earth is terrible on the seashore, what is it in a cess-pool? Instead of the open air, the broad daylight, the clear horizon, those vast sounds, those free clouds whence rains life, instead of those barks descried in the distance, of that hope under all sorts of forms, of probable passers-by, of succor possible up to the very last moment,—instead of all this, deafness, blindness, a black vault, the inside of a tomb already prepared, death in the mire beneath a cover! slow suffocation by filth, a stone box where asphyxia opens its claw in the mire and clutches you by the throat; fetidness mingled with the death-rattle; slime instead of the strand, sulfuretted hydrogen in place of the hurricane, dung in place of the ocean! And to shout, to gnash one's teeth, and to writhe, and to struggle, and to agonize, with that enormous city which knows nothing of it all, over one's head!

Inexpressible is the horror of dying thus! Death sometimes redeems his atrocity by a certain terrible dignity. On the funeral pile, in shipwreck, one can be great; in the flames as in the foam, a superb attitude is possible; one there becomes transfigured as one perishes. But not here. Death is filthy. It is humiliating to expire. The supreme floating visions are abject. Mud is synonymous with shame. It is petty, ugly, infamous. To die in a butt of Malvoisie, like Clarence, is permissible; in the ditch of a scavenger, like Escoubleau, is horrible. To struggle therein is hideous; at the same time that one is going through the death agony, one is floundering about. There are shadows enough for hell, and mire enough to render it nothing but a slough, and the dying man knows not whether he is on the point of becoming a spectre or a frog.

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

The depth of the *fontis* varied, as well as their length and their density, according to the more or less bad quality of the sub-soil. Sometimes a *fontis* was three or four feet deep, sometimes eight or ten; sometimes the bottom was unfathomable. Here the mire was almost solid, there almost liquid. In the Lunière fontis, it would have taken a man a day to disappear, while he would have been devoured in five minutes by the Philippeaux slough. The mire bears up more or less, according to its density. A child can escape where a man will perish. The first law of safety is to get rid of every sort of load. Every sewerman who felt the ground giving way beneath him began by flinging away his sack of tools, or his back-basket, or his hod.

The fontis were due to different causes: the friability of the soil; some landslip at a depth beyond the reach of man; the violent summer rains; the incessant flooding of winter; long, drizzling showers. Sometimes the weight of the surrounding houses on a marly or sandy soil forced out the vaults of the subterranean galleries and caused them to bend aside, or it chanced that a flooring vault burst and split under this crushing thrust. In this manner, the heaping up of the Parthénon, obliterated, a century ago, a portion of the vaults of Saint-Geneviève hill. When a sewer was broken in under the pressure of the houses, the mischief was sometimes betrayed in the street above by a sort of space, like the teeth of a saw, between the paving-stones; this crevice was developed in an undulating line throughout the entire length of the cracked vault, and then, the evil being visible, the remedy could be promptly applied. It also frequently happened, that the interior ravages were not revealed by any external scar, and in that case, woe to the sewermen. When they entered without precaution into the sewer, they were liable to be lost. Ancient registers make mention of several scavengers who were buried in fontis in this manner. They give many names; among others, that of the sewerman who was swallowed up in a quagmire under the man-hole of the Rue Carême-Prenant, a certain Blaise Poutrain; this Blaise Poutrain was the brother of Nicholas Poutrain, who was the last grave-digger of the cemetery called the Charnier des Innocents, in 1785, the epoch when that cemetery expired.

There was also that young and charming Vicomte d'Escoubleau, of whom we have just spoken, one of the heroes of the siege of Lerida, where they delivered the assault in silk stockings, with violins at their head. D'Escoubleau, surprised one night at his cousin's, the Duchess de Sourdis', was drowned in a quagmire of the Beautreillis sewer, in which he had taken refuge in order to escape from the Duke. Madame de Sourdis, when informed of his death, demanded her smelling-bottle, and forgot to weep, through sniffling at her salts. In such cases, there is no love which holds fast; the sewer extinguishes it. Hero refuses to wash the body of Leander. Thisbe stops her nose in the presence of Pyramus and says: "Phew!"

CHAPTER VI

THE FONTIS

Jean Valjean found himself in the presence of a fontis.

This sort of quagmire was common at that period in the subsoil of the Champs-Élysées, difficult to handle in the hydraulic works and a bad preservative of the subterranean constructions, on account of its excessive fluidity. This fluidity exceeds even the inconsistency of the sands of the Quartier Saint-Georges, which could only be conquered by a stone construction on a concrete foundation, and the clayey strata, infected with gas, of the Quartier des Martyrs, which are so liquid that the only way in which a passage was effected under the gallery des Martyrs was by means of a cast-iron pipe. When, in 1836, the old stone sewer beneath the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, in which we now see Jean Valjean, was demolished for the purpose of reconstructing it, the quicksand, which forms the subsoil of the Champs-Élysées as far as the Seine, presented such an obstacle, that the operation lasted nearly six months, to the great clamor of the dwellers on the riverside, particularly those who had hotels and carriages. The work was more than unhealthy; it was dangerous. It is true that they had four months and a half of rain, and three floods of the Seine.

The fontis which Jean Valjean had encountered was caused by the downpour of the preceding day. The pavement, badly sustained by the subjacent sand, had given way and had produced a stoppage of the water. Infiltration had taken place, a slip had followed. The dislocated bottom had sunk into the ooze. To what extent? Impossible to say. The obscurity was more dense there than elsewhere. It was a pit of mire in a cavern of night.

Jean Valjean felt the pavement vanishing beneath his feet. He entered this slime. There was water on the surface, slime at the bottom. He must pass it. To retrace his steps was impossible. Marius was dying, and Jean Valjean exhausted. Besides, where was he to go? Jean Valjean advanced. Moreover, the pit seemed, for the first few steps, not to be very deep. But in proportion as he advanced, his feet plunged deeper. Soon he had the slime up to his calves and water above his knees. He walked on, raising Marius in his arms, as far above the water as he could. The mire now reached to his knees, and the water to his waist. He could no longer retreat. This mud, dense enough for one man, could not, obviously, uphold two. Marius and Jean Valjean would have stood a chance of extricating themselves singly. Jean Valjean continued to advance, supporting the dying man, who was, perhaps, a corpse.

The water came up to his arm-pits; he felt that he was sinking; it was only with difficulty that he could move in the depth of ooze which he had now reached. The density, which was his support, was also an obstacle. He still held Marius on high, and with an unheard-of expenditure of force, he advanced still; but he was sinking. He had only his head above the water now, and his two arms holding up Marius. In the old paintings of the deluge there is a mother holding her child thus.

He sank still deeper, he turned his face to the rear, to escape the water, and in order that he might be able to breathe; anyone who had seen him in that gloom would have thought that what he beheld was a mask floating on the shadows; he caught a faint glimpse above him of the drooping head and livid face of Marius; he made a desperate effort and launched his foot forward; his foot struck something solid; a point of support. It was high time.

He straightened himself up, and rooted himself upon that point of support with a sort of fury. This produced upon him the effect of the first step in a staircase leading back to life.

The point of support, thus encountered in the mire at the supreme moment, was the beginning of the other water-shed of the pavement, which had bent but had not given way, and which had curved under the water like a plank and in a single piece. Well built pavements form a vault and possess this sort of firmness. This fragment of the vaulting, partly submerged, but solid, was a veritable inclined plane, and, once on this plane, he was safe. Jean Valjean mounted this inclined plane and reached the other side of the quagmire.

As he emerged from the water, he came in contact with a stone and fell upon his knees. He reflected that this was but just, and he remained there for some time, with his soul absorbed in words addressed to God.

He rose to his feet, shivering, chilled, foul-smelling, bowed beneath the dying man whom he was dragging after him, all dripping with slime, and his soul filled with a strange light.

CHAPTER VII

ONE SOMETIMES RUNS AGROUND WHEN ONE FANCIES THAT ONE IS DISEMBARKING

He set out on his way once more.

However, although he had not left his life in the fontis, he seemed to have left his strength behind him there. That supreme effort had exhausted him. His lassitude was now such that he was obliged to pause for breath every three or four steps, and lean against the wall. Once he was forced to seat himself on the banquette in order to alter Marius' position, and he thought that he should have to remain there. But if his vigor was dead, his energy was not. He rose again.

He walked on desperately, almost fast, proceeded thus for a hundred paces, almost without drawing breath, and suddenly came in contact with the wall. He had reached an elbow of the sewer, and, arriving at the turn with head bent down, he had struck the wall. He raised his eyes, and at the extremity of the vault, far, very far away in front of him, he perceived a light. This time it was not that terrible light; it was good, white light. It was daylight. Jean Valjean saw the outlet.

A damned soul, who, in the midst of the furnace, should suddenly perceive the outlet of Gehenna, would experience what Jean Valjean felt. It would fly wildly with the stumps of its burned wings towards that radiant portal. Jean Valjean was no longer conscious of fatigue, he no longer felt Marius' weight, he found his legs once more of steel, he ran rather than walked. As he approached, the outlet became more and more distinctly defined. It was a pointed arch, lower than the vault, which gradually narrowed, and narrower than the gallery, which closed in as the vault grew lower. The tunnel ended like the interior of a funnel; a faulty construction, imitated from the wickets of penitentiaries, logical in a prison, illogical in a sewer, and which has since been corrected.

Jean Valjean reached the outlet.

There he halted.

It certainly was the outlet, but he could not get out.

The arch was closed by a heavy grating, and the grating, which, to all appearance, rarely swung on its rusty hinges, was clamped to its stone jamb by a thick lock, which, red with rust, seemed like an enormous brick. The keyhole could be seen, and the robust latch, deeply sunk in the iron staple. The door was plainly double-locked. It was one of those prison locks which old Paris was so fond of lavishing.

Beyond the grating was the open air, the river, the daylight, the shore, very narrow but sufficient for escape. The distant quays, Paris, that gulf in which one so easily hides oneself, the broad horizon, liberty. On the right, down stream, the bridge of Jéna was discernible, on the left, upstream, the bridge of the Invalides; the place would have been a propitious one in which to await the night and to escape. It was one of the most solitary points in Paris; the shore which faces the Grand-Caillou. Flies were entering and emerging through the bars of the grating.

It might have been half-past eight o'clock in the evening. The day was declining.

Jean Valjean laid Marius down along the wall, on the dry portion of the vaulting, then he went to the grating and clenched both fists round the bars; the shock which he gave it was frenzied, but it did not move. The grating did not stir. Jean Valjean seized the bars one after the other, in the hope that he might be able to tear away the least solid, and to make of it a lever wherewith to raise the door or to break the lock. Not a bar stirred. The teeth of a tiger are not more firmly fixed in their sockets. No lever; no prying possible. The obstacle was invincible. There was no means of opening the gate.

Must he then stop there? What was he to do? What was to become of him? He had not the strength to retrace his steps, to recommence the journey which he had already taken. Besides, how was he to again traverse that quagmire whence he had only extricated himself as by a miracle? And after the quagmire, was there not the police patrol, which assuredly could not be twice avoided? And then, whither was he to go? What direction should be pursue? To follow the incline would not conduct him to his goal. If he were to reach another outlet, he would find it obstructed by a plug or a grating. Every outlet was, undoubtedly, closed in that manner. Chance had unsealed the grating through which he had entered, but it was evident that all the other sewer mouths were barred. He had only succeeded in escaping into a prison.

All was over. Everything that Jean Valjean had done was useless. Exhaustion had ended in failure.

They were both caught in the immense and gloomy web of death, and Jean Valjean felt the terrible spider running along those black strands and quivering in the shadows. He turned his back to the grating, and fell upon the pavement, hurled to earth rather than seated, close to Marius, who still made no movement, and with his head bent between his knees. This was the last drop of anguish.

Of what was he thinking during this profound depression? Neither of himself nor of Marius. He was thinking of Cosette.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TORN COAT-TAIL

In the midst of this prostration, a hand was laid on his shoulder, and a low voice said to him:

"Half shares."

Some person in that gloom? Nothing so closely resembles a dream as despair. Jean Valjean thought that he was dreaming. He had heard no footsteps. Was it possible? He raised his eyes.

A man stood before him.

This man was clad in a blouse; his feet were bare; he held his shoes in his left hand; he had evidently removed them in order to reach Jean Valjean, without allowing his steps to be heard.

Jean Valjean did not hesitate for an instant. Unexpected as was this encounter, this man was known to him. The man was Thénardier.

Although awakened, so to speak, with a start, Jean Valjean, accustomed to alarms, and steeled to unforeseen shocks that must be promptly parried, instantly regained possession of his presence of mind. Moreover, the situation could not be made worse, a certain degree of distress is no longer capable of a crescendo, and Thénardier himself could add nothing to this blackness of this night.

A momentary pause ensued.

Thénardier, raising his right hand to a level with his forehead, formed with it a shade, then he brought his eyelashes together, by screwing up his eyes, a motion which, in connection with a slight contraction of the mouth, characterizes the sagacious attention of a man who is endeavoring to recognize another man. He did not succeed. Jean Valjean, as we have just stated, had his back turned to the light, and he was, moreover, so disfigured, so bemired, so bleeding that the would have been unrecognizable in full noonday. On the contrary, illuminated by the light from the grating, a cellar light, it is true, livid, yet precise in its lividness, Thénardier, as the energetic popular metaphor expresses it, immediately "leaped into" Jean Valjean's eyes. This inequality of conditions sufficed to assure some advantage to Jean Valjean in that mysterious duel which was on the point of beginning between the two situations and the two men. The encounter took place between Jean Valjean veiled and Thénardier unmasked.

Jean Valjean immediately perceived that Thénardier did not recognize him.

They surveyed each other for a moment in that half-gloom, as though taking each other's measure. Thénardier was the first to break the silence.

"How are you going to manage to get out?"

Jean Valjean made no reply. Thénardier continued:

"It's impossible to pick the lock of that gate. But still you must get out of this."

"That is true," said Jean Valjean.

"Well, half shares then."

"What do you mean by that?"

"You have killed that man; that's all right. I have the key."

Thénardier pointed to Marius. He went on:

"I don't know you, but I want to help you. You must be a friend."

Jean Valjean began to comprehend. Thénardier took him for an assassin.

Thénardier resumed:

"Listen, comrade. You didn't kill that man without looking to see what he had in his pockets. Give me my half. I'll open the door for you."

And half drawing from beneath his tattered blouse a huge key, he added:

"Do you want to see how a key to liberty is made? Look here."

Jean Valjean "remained stupid"—the expression belongs to the elder Corneille—to such a degree that he doubted whether what he beheld was real. It was providence appearing in horrible guise, and his good angel springing from the earth in the form of Thénardier.

Thénardier thrust his fist into a large pocket concealed under his blouse, drew out a rope and offered it to Jean Valjean.

"Hold on," said he, "I'll give you the rope to boot."

"What is the rope for?"

"You will need a stone also, but you can find one outside. There's a heap of rubbish."

"What am I to do with a stone?"

"Idiot, you'll want to sling that stiff into the river, you'll need a stone and a rope, otherwise it would float on the water."

Jean Valjean took the rope. There is no one who does not occasionally accept in this mechanical way.

Thénardier snapped his fingers as though an idea had suddenly occurred to him.

"Ah, see here, comrade, how did you contrive to get out of that slough yonder? I haven't dared to risk myself in it. Phew! you don't smell good."

After a pause he added:

"I'm asking you questions, but you're perfectly right not to answer. It's an apprenticeship against that cursed quarter of an hour before the examining magistrate. And then, when you don't talk at all, you run no risk of talking too loud. That's no matter, as I can't see your face and as I don't know your name, you are wrong in supposing that I don't know who you are and what you want. I twig. You've broken up that gentleman a bit; now you want to tuck him away somewhere. The river, that great hider of folly, is what you want. I'll get you out of your scrape. Helping a good fellow in a pinch is what suits me to a hair."

While expressing his approval of Jean Valjean's silence, he endeavored to force him to talk. He jostled his shoulder in an attempt to catch a sight of his profile, and he exclaimed, without, however, raising his tone:

"Apropos of that quagmire, you're a hearty animal. Why didn't you toss the man in there?"

Jean Valjean preserved silence.

Thénardier resumed, pushing the rag which served him as a cravat to the level of his Adam's apple, a gesture which completes the capable air of a serious man:

"After all, you acted wisely. The workmen, when they come to-morrow to stop up that hole, would certainly have found the stiff abandoned there, and it might have been possible, thread by thread, straw by straw, to pick up the scent and reach you. Some one has passed through the sewer. Who? Where did he get out? Was he seen to come out? The police are full of cleverness. The sewer is treacherous and tells tales of you. Such a find is a rarity, it attracts attention, very few people make use of the sewers for their affairs, while the river belongs to everybody. The river is the true grave. At the end of a month they fish up your man in the nets at Saint-Cloud. Well, what does one care for that? It's carrion! Who killed that man? Paris. And justice makes no inquiries. You have done well."

The more loquacious Thénardier became, the more mute was Jean Valjean.

Again Thénardier shook him by the shoulder.

"Now let's settle this business. Let's go shares. You have seen my key, show me your money."

Thénardier was haggard, fierce, suspicious, rather menacing, yet amicable.

There was one singular circumstance; Thénardier's manners were not simple; he had not the air of being wholly at his ease; while affecting an air of mystery, he spoke low; from time to time he laid his finger on his mouth, and muttered, "hush!" It was difficult to divine why. There was no one there except themselves. Jean Valjean thought that other ruffians might possibly be concealed in some nook, not very far off, and that Thénardier did not care to share with them.

Thénardier resumed:

"Let's settle up. How much did the stiff have in his bags?"

Jean Valjean searched his pockets.

It was his habit, as the reader will remember, to always have some money about him. The mournful life of expedients to which he had been condemned imposed this as a law upon him. On this occasion, however, he had been caught unprepared. When donning his uniform of a National Guardsman on the preceding evening, he had forgotten, dolefully absorbed as he was, to take his pocket-book. He had only some small change in his fob. He turned out his pocket, all soaked with ooze, and spread out on the banquette of the vault one louis d'or, two five-franc pieces, and five or six large sous.

Thénardier thrust out his lower lip with a significant twist of the neck.

"You knocked him over cheap," said he.

He set to feeling the pockets of Jean Valjean and Marius, with the greatest familiarity. Jean Valjean, who was chiefly concerned in keeping his back to the light, let him have his way.

While handling Marius' coat, Thénardier, with the skill of a pickpocket, and without being noticed by Jean Valjean, tore off a strip which he concealed under his blouse, probably thinking that this morsel of stuff might serve, later on, to identify the assassinated man and the assassin. However, he found no more than the thirty francs.

"That's true," said he, "both of you together have no more than that."

And, forgetting his motto: "half shares," he took all.

He hesitated a little over the large sous. After due reflection, he took them also, muttering:

"Never mind! You cut folks' throats too cheap altogether."

That done, he once more drew the big key from under his blouse.

"Now, my friend, you must leave. It's like the fair here, you pay when you go out. You have paid, now clear out."

And he began to laugh.

Had he, in lending to this stranger the aid of his key, and in making some other man than himself emerge from that portal, the pure and disinterested intention of rescuing an assassin? We may be permitted to doubt this.

Thénardier helped Jean Valjean to replace Marius on his shoulders, then he betook himself to the grating on tiptoe, and barefooted, making Jean Valjean a sign to follow him, looked out, laid his finger on his mouth, and remained for several seconds, as though in suspense; his inspection finished, he placed the key in the lock. The bolt slipped back and the gate swung open. It neither grated nor squeaked. It moved very softly.

It was obvious that this gate and those hinges, carefully oiled, were in the habit of opening more frequently than was supposed. This softness was suspicious; it hinted at furtive goings and comings, silent entrances and exits of nocturnal men, and the wolf-like tread of crime.

The sewer was evidently an accomplice of some mysterious band. This taciturn grating was a receiver of stolen goods.

Thénardier opened the gate a little way, allowing just sufficient space for Jean Valjean to pass out, closed the grating again, gave the key a double turn in the lock and plunged back into the darkness, without making any more noise than a breath. He seemed to walk with the velvet paws of a tiger.

A moment later, that hideous providence had retreated into the invisibility.

Jean Valjean found himself in the open air.

CHAPTER IX

MARIUS PRODUCES ON SOME ONE WHO IS A JUDGE OF THE MATTER, THE EFFECT OF BEING DEAD

He allowed Marius to slide down upon the shore.

They were in the open air!

The miasmas, darkness, horror lay behind him. The pure, healthful, living, joyous air that was easy to breathe inundated him. Everywhere around him reigned silence, but that charming silence when the sun has set in an unclouded azure sky. Twilight had descended; night was drawing on, the great deliverer, the friend of all those who need a mantle of darkness that they may escape from an anguish. The sky presented itself in all directions like an enormous calm. The river flowed to his feet with the sound of a kiss. The aerial dialogue of the nests bidding each other good night in the elms of the Champs-Élysées was audible. A few stars, daintily piercing the pale blue of the zenith, and visible to revery alone, formed imperceptible little splendors amid the immensity. Evening was unfolding over the head of Jean Valjean all the sweetness of the infinite.

It was that exquisite and undecided hour which says neither yes nor no. Night was already sufficiently advanced to render it possible to lose oneself at a little distance and yet there was sufficient daylight to permit of recognition at close quarters.

For several seconds, Jean Valjean was irresistibly overcome by that august and caressing serenity; such moments of oblivion do come to men; suffering refrains from harassing the unhappy wretch; everything is eclipsed in the thoughts; peace broods over the dreamer like night; and, beneath the twilight which beams and in imitation of the sky which is illuminated, the soul becomes studded with stars. Jean Valjean could not refrain from contemplating that vast, clear shadow which rested over him; thoughtfully he bathed in the sea of ecstasy and prayer in the majestic silence of the eternal heavens. Then he bent down swiftly to Marius, as though the sentiment of duty had returned to him, and, dipping up water in the hollow of his hand, he gently sprinkled a few drops on the latter's face. Marius' eyelids did not open; but his half-open mouth still breathed.

Jean Valjean was on the point of dipping his hand in the river once more, when, all at once, he experienced an indescribable embarrassment, such as a person feels when there is some one behind him whom he does not see.

We have already alluded to this impression, with which everyone is familiar.

He turned round.

Some one was, in fact, behind him, as there had been a short while before.

A man of lofty stature, enveloped in a long coat, with folded arms, and bearing in his right fist a bludgeon of which the leaden head was visible, stood a few paces in the rear of the spot where Jean Valjean was crouching over Marius.

With the aid of the darkness, it seemed a sort of apparition. An ordinary man would have been alarmed because of the twilight, a thoughtful man on account of the bludgeon. Jean Valjean recognized Javert.

The reader has divined, no doubt, that Thénardier's pursuer was no other than Javert. Javert, after his unlooked-for escape from the barricade, had betaken himself to the prefecture of police, had rendered a verbal account to the Prefect in person in a brief audience, had then immediately gone on duty again, which implied—the note, the reader will recollect, which had been captured on his person—a certain surveillance of the shore on the right bank of the Seine near the Champs-Élysées, which had, for some time past, aroused the attention of the police. There he had caught sight of Thénardier and had followed him. The reader knows the rest.

Thus it will be easily understood that that grating, so obligingly opened to Jean Valjean, was a bit of cleverness on Thénardier's part. Thénardier intuitively felt that Javert was still there; the man spied upon has a scent which never deceives him; it was necessary to fling a bone to that sleuth-hound. An assassin, what a godsend! Such an opportunity must never be allowed to slip. Thénardier, by putting Jean Valjean outside in his stead, provided a prey for the police, forced them to relinquish his scent, made them forget him in a bigger adventure, repaid Javert for his waiting, which always flatters a spy, earned thirty francs, and counted with certainty, so far as he himself was concerned, on escaping with the aid of this diversion.

Jean Valjean had fallen from one danger upon another.

These two encounters, this falling one after the other, from Thénardier upon Javert, was a rude shock.

Javert did not recognize Jean Valjean, who, as we have stated, no longer looked like himself. He did not unfold his arms, he made sure of his bludgeon in his fist, by an imperceptible movement, and said in a curt, calm voice:

"Who are you?"

"I."

"Who is 'I'?"

"Jean Valjean."

Javert thrust his bludgeon between his teeth, bent his knees, inclined his body, laid his two powerful hands on the shoulders of Jean Valjean, which were clamped within them as in a couple of vices, scrutinized him, and recognized him. Their faces almost touched. Javert's look was terrible.

Jean Valjean remained inert beneath Javert's grasp, like a lion submitting to the claws of a lynx.

"Inspector Javert," said he, "you have me in your power. Moreover, I have regarded myself as your prisoner ever since this morning. I did not give you my address with any intention of escaping from you. Take me. Only grant me one favor."

Javert did not appear to hear him. He kept his eyes riveted on Jean Valjean. His chin being contracted, thrust his lips upwards towards his nose, a sign of savage revery. At length he released Jean Valjean, straightened himself stiffly up without bending, grasped his bludgeon again firmly, and, as though in a dream, he murmured rather than uttered this question:

"What are you doing here? And who is this man?"

He still abstained from addressing Jean Valjean as *thou*.

Jean Valjean replied, and the sound of his voice appeared to rouse Javert:

"It is with regard to him that I desire to speak to you. Dispose of me as you see fit; but first help me to carry him home. That is all that I ask of you."

Javert's face contracted as was always the case when any one seemed to think him capable of making a concession. Nevertheless, he did not say "no."

Again he bent over, drew from his pocket a handkerchief which he moistened in the water and with which he then wiped Marius' blood-stained brow.

"This man was at the barricade," said he in a low voice and as though speaking to himself. "He is the one they called Marius."

A spy of the first quality, who had observed everything, listened to everything, and taken in everything, even when he thought that he was to die; who had played the spy even in his agony, and who, with his elbows leaning on the first step of the sepulchre, had taken notes.

He seized Marius' hand and felt his pulse.

"He is wounded," said Jean Valjean.

"He is a dead man," said Javert.

Jean Valjean replied:

"No. Not yet."

"So you have brought him thither from the barricade?" remarked Javert.

His preoccupation must indeed have been very profound for him not to insist on this alarming rescue through the sewer, and for him not to even notice Jean Valjean's silence after his question.

Jean Valjean, on his side, seemed to have but one thought. He resumed:

"He lives in the Marais, Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire, with his grandfather. I do not recollect his name."

Jean Valjean fumbled in Marius' coat, pulled out his pocket-book, opened it at the page which Marius had pencilled, and held it out to Javert.

There was still sufficient light to admit of reading. Besides this, Javert possessed in his eye the feline phosphorescence of night birds. He deciphered the few lines written by Marius, and muttered: "Gillenormand, Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire, No. 6."

Then he exclaimed: "Coachman!"

The reader will remember that the hackney-coach was waiting in case of need.

Javert kept Marius' pocket-book.

A moment later, the carriage, which had descended by the inclined plane of the watering-place, was on the shore. Marius was laid upon the back seat, and Javert seated himself on the front seat beside Jean Valjean.

The door slammed, and the carriage drove rapidly away, ascending the quays in the direction of the Bastille.

They quitted the quays and entered the streets. The coachman, a black form on his box, whipped up his thin horses. A glacial silence reigned in the carriage. Marius, motionless, with his body resting in the corner, and his head drooping on his breast, his arms hanging, his legs stiff, seemed to be awaiting only a coffin; Jean Valjean seemed made of shadow, and Javert of stone, and in that vehicle full of night, whose interior, every time that it passed in front of a street lantern, appeared to be turned lividly wan, as by an intermittent flash of lightning, chance had united and seemed to be bringing face to face the three forms of tragic immobility, the corpse, the spectre, and the statue.

CHAPTER X

RETURN OF THE SON WHO WAS PRODIGAL OF HIS LIFE

At every jolt over the pavement, a drop of blood trickled from Marius' hair.

Night had fully closed in when the carriage arrived at No. 6, Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire.

Javert was the first to alight; he made sure with one glance of the number on the carriage gate, and, raising the heavy knocker of beaten iron, embellished in the old style, with a male goat and a satyr confronting each other, he gave a violent peal. The gate opened a little way and Javert gave it a push. The porter half made his appearance yawning, vaguely awake, and with a candle in his hand.

Everyone in the house was asleep. People go to bed betimes in the Marais, especially on days when there is a revolt. This good, old quarter, terrified at the Revolution, takes refuge in slumber, as children, when they hear the Bugaboo coming, hide their heads hastily under their coverlet.

In the meantime Jean Valjean and the coachman had taken Marius out of the carriage, Jean Valjean supporting him under the armpits, and the coachman under the knees.

As they thus bore Marius, Jean Valjean slipped his hand under the latter's clothes, which were broadly rent, felt his breast, and assured himself that his heart was still beating. It was even beating a little less feebly, as though the movement of the carriage had brought about a certain fresh access of life.

Javert addressed the porter in a tone befitting the government, and the presence of the porter of a factious person.

"Some person whose name is Gillenormand?"

"Here. What do you want with him?"

"His son is brought back."

"His son?" said the porter stupidly.

"He is dead."

Jean Valjean, who, soiled and tattered, stood behind Javert, and whom the porter was surveying with some horror, made a sign to him with his head that this was not so.

The porter did not appear to understand either Javert's words or Jean Valjean's sign.

Javert continued:

"He went to the barricade, and here he is."

"To the barricade?" ejaculated the porter.

"He has got himself killed. Go waken his father."

The porter did not stir.

"Go along with you!" repeated Javert.

And he added:

"There will be a funeral here to-morrow."

For Javert, the usual incidents of the public highway were categorically classed, which is the beginning of foresight and surveillance, and each contingency had its own compartment; all possible facts were arranged in drawers, as it were, whence they emerged on occasion, in variable quantities; in the street, uproar, revolt, carnival, and funeral.

The porter contented himself with waking Basque. Basque woke Nicolette; Nicolette roused great-aunt Gillenormand.

As for the grandfather, they let him sleep on, thinking that he would hear about the matter early enough in any case.

Marius was carried up to the first floor, without any one in the other parts of the house being aware of the fact, and deposited on an old sofa in M. Gillenormand's antechamber; and while Basque went in search of a physician, and while

Nicolette opened the linen-presses, Jean Valjean felt Javert touch him on the shoulder. He understood and descended the stairs, having behind him the step of Javert who was following him.

The porter watched them take their departure as he had watched their arrival, in terrified somnolence.

They entered the carriage once more, and the coachman mounted his box.

"Inspector Javert," said Jean, "grant me yet another favor."

"What is it?" demanded Javert roughly.

"Let me go home for one instant. Then you shall do whatever you like with me."

Javert remained silent for a few moments, with his chin drawn back into the collar of his great-coat, then he lowered the glass and front:

"Driver," said he, "Rue de l'Homme Armé, No. 7."

CHAPTER XI

CONCUSSION IN THE ABSOLUTE

THEY did not open their lips again during the whole space of their ride.

What did Jean Valjean want? To finish what he had begun; to warn Cosette, to tell her where Marius was, to give her, possibly, some other useful information, to take, if he could, certain final measures. As for himself, so far as he was personally concerned, all was over; he had been seized by Javert and had not resisted; any other man than himself in like situation would, perhaps, have had some vague thoughts connected with the rope which Thénardier had given him, and of the bars of the first cell that he should enter; but, let us impress it upon the reader, after the Bishop, there had existed in Jean Valjean a profound hesitation in the presence of any violence, even when directed against himself.

Suicide, that mysterious act of violence against the unknown, which may contain, in a measure, the death of the soul, was impossible to Jean Valjean.

At the entrance to the Rue de l'Homme Armé, the carriage halted, the way being too narrow to admit of the entrance of vehicles. Javert and Jean Valjean alighted.

The coachman humbly represented to "monsieur l'Inspecteur," that the Utrecht velvet of his carriage was all spotted with the blood of the assassinated man, and with mire from the assassin. That is the way he understood it. He added that an indemnity was due him. At the same time, drawing his certificate book from his pocket, he begged the inspector to have the goodness to write him "a bit of an attestation."

Javert thrust aside the book which the coachman held out to him, and said:

"How much do you want, including your time of waiting and the drive?"

"It comes to seven hours and a quarter," replied the man, "and my velvet was perfectly new. Eighty francs, Mr. Inspector."

Javert drew four napoleons from his pocket and dismissed the carriage.

Jean Valjean fancied that it was Javert's intention to conduct him on foot to the post of the Blancs-Manteaux or to the post of the Archives, both of which are close at hand.

They entered the street. It was deserted as usual. Javert followed Jean Valjean. They reached No. 7. Jean Valjean knocked. The door opened.

"It is well," said Javert. "Go up stairs."

He added with a strange expression, and as though he were exerting an effort in speaking in this manner:

"I will wait for you here."

Jean Valjean looked at Javert. This mode of procedure was but little in accord with Javert's habits. However, he could not be greatly surprised that Javert should now have a sort of haughty confidence in him, the confidence of the cat which grants the mouse liberty to the length of its claws, seeing that Jean Valjean had made up his mind to surrender himself and to make an end of it. He pushed open the door, entered the house, called to the porter who was in bed and who had pulled the cord from his couch: "It is I!" and ascended the stairs.

On arriving at the first floor, he paused. All sorrowful roads have their stations. The window on the landing-place, which was a sash-window, was open. As in many ancient houses, the staircase got its light from without and had a view on the street. The street-lantern, situated directly opposite, cast some light on the stairs, and thus effected some economy in illumination.

Jean Valjean, either for the sake of getting the air, or mechanically, thrust his head out of this window. He leaned out over the street. It is short, and the lantern lighted it from end to end. Jean Valjean was overwhelmed with amazement; there was no longer any one there.

Javert had taken his departure.

CHAPTER XII

THE GRANDFATHER

Basque and the porter had carried Marius into the drawing-room, as he still lay stretched out, motionless, on the sofa upon which he had been placed on his arrival. The doctor who had been sent for had hastened thither. Aunt Gillenormand had risen.

Aunt Gillenormand went and came, in affright, wringing her hands and incapable of doing anything but saying: "Heavens! is it possible?" At times she added: "Everything will be covered with blood." When her first horror had passed off, a certain philosophy of the situation penetrated her mind, and took form in the exclamation: "It was bound to end in this way!" She did not go so far as: "I told you so!" which is customary on this sort of occasion. At the physician's orders, a camp bed had been prepared beside the sofa. The doctor examined Marius, and after having found that his pulse was still beating, that the wounded man had no very deep wound on his breast, and that the blood on the corners of his lips proceeded from his nostrils, he had him placed flat on the bed, without a pillow, with his head on the same level as his body, and even a trifle lower, and with his bust bare in order to facilitate respiration. Mademoiselle Gillenormand, on perceiving that they were undressing Marius, withdrew. She set herself to telling her beads in her own chamber.

The trunk had not suffered any internal injury; a bullet, deadened by the pocket-book, had turned aside and made the tour of his ribs with a hideous laceration, which was of no great depth, and consequently, not dangerous. The long, underground journey had completed the dislocation of the broken collar-bone, and the disorder there was serious. The arms had been slashed with sabre cuts. Not a single scar disfigured his face; but his head was fairly covered with cuts; what would be the result of these wounds on the head? Would they stop short at the hairy cuticle, or would they attack the brain? As yet, this could not be decided. A grave symptom was that they had caused a swoon, and that people do not always recover from such swoons. Moreover, the wounded man had been exhausted by hemorrhage. From the waist down, the barricade had protected the lower part of the body from injury.

Basque and Nicolette tore up linen and prepared bandages; Nicolette sewed them, Basque rolled them. As lint was lacking, the doctor, for the time being, arrested the bleeding with layers of wadding. Beside the bed, three candles burned on a table where the case of surgical instruments lay spread out. The doctor bathed Marius' face and hair with cold water. A full pail was reddened in an instant. The porter, candle in hand, lighted them.

The doctor seemed to be pondering sadly. From time to time, he made a negative sign with his head, as though replying to some question which he had inwardly addressed to himself.

A bad sign for the sick man are these mysterious dialogues of the doctor with himself.

At the moment when the doctor was wiping Marius' face, and lightly touching his still closed eyes with his finger, a door opened at the end of the drawing-room, and a long, pallid figure made its appearance.

This was the grandfather.

The revolt had, for the past two days, deeply agitated, enraged and engrossed the mind of M. Gillenormand. He had not been able to sleep on the previous night, and he had been in a fever all day long. In the evening, he had gone to bed very early, recommending that everything in the house should be well barred, and he had fallen into a doze through sheer fatigue.

Old men sleep lightly; M. Gillenormand's chamber adjoined the drawing-room, and in spite of all the precautions that had been taken, the noise had awakened him. Surprised at the rift of light which he saw under his door, he had risen from his bed, and had groped his way thither.

He stood astonished on the threshold, one hand on the handle of the half-open door, with his head bent a little forward and quivering, his body wrapped in a white dressing-gown, which was straight and as destitute of folds as a winding-sheet; and he had the air of a phantom who is gazing into a tomb.

He saw the bed, and on the mattress that young man, bleeding, white with a waxen whiteness, with closed eyes and gaping mouth, and pallid lips, stripped to the waist, slashed all over with crimson wounds, motionless and brilliantly lighted up.

The grandfather trembled from head to foot as powerfully as ossified limbs can tremble, his eyes, whose corneæ were yellow on account of his great age, were veiled in a sort of vitreous glitter, his whole face assumed in an instant the earthy angles of a skull, his arms fell pendent, as though a spring had broken, and his amazement was betrayed by the outspreading of the fingers of his two aged hands, which quivered all over, his knees formed an angle in front, allowing, through the opening in his dressing-gown, a view of his poor bare legs, all bristling with white hairs, and he murmured:

"Marius!"

"Sir," said Basque, "Monsieur has just been brought back. He went to the barricade, and . . ."

"He is dead!" cried the old man in a terrible voice. "Ah! The rascal!"

Then a sort of sepulchral transformation straightened up this centenarian as erect as a young man.

"Sir," said he, "you are the doctor. Begin by telling me one thing. He is dead, is he not?"

The doctor, who was at the highest pitch of anxiety, remained silent.

M. Gillenormand wrung his hands with an outburst of terrible laughter.

"He is dead! He is dead! He is dead! He has got himself killed on the barricades! Out of hatred to me! He did that to spite me! Ah! You blood-drinker! This is the way he returns to me! Misery of my life, he is dead!"

He went to the window, threw it wide open as though he were stifling, and, erect before the darkness, he began to talk into the street, to the night:

"Pierced, sabred, exterminated, slashed, hacked in pieces! Just look at that, the villain! He knew well that I was waiting for him, and that I had had his room arranged, and that I had placed at the head of my bed his portrait taken when he was a little child! He knew well that he had only to come back, and that I had been recalling him for years, and that I remained by my fireside, with my hands on my knees, not knowing what to do, and that I was mad over it! You knew well, that you had but to return and to say: 'It is I,' and you would have been the master of the house, and that I should have obeyed you, and that you could have done whatever you pleased with your old numskull of a grandfather! you knew that well, and you said:

"No, he is a Royalist, I will not go! And you went to the barricades, and you got yourself killed out of malice! To revenge yourself for what I said to you about Monsieur le Duc de Berry. It is infamous! Go to bed then and sleep tranquilly! he is dead, and this is my awakening."

The doctor, who was beginning to be uneasy in both quarters, quitted Marius for a moment, went to M. Gillenormand, and took his arm. The grandfather turned round, gazed at him with eyes which seemed exaggerated in size and bloodshot, and said to him calmly:

"I thank you, sir. I am composed, I am a man, I witnessed the death of Louis XVI., I know how to bear events. One thing is terrible and that is to think that it is your newspapers which do all the mischief. You will have scribblers, chatterers, lawyers, orators, tribunes, discussions, progress, enlightenment, the rights of man, the liberty of the press, and this is the way that your children will be brought home to you. Ah! Marius! It is abominable! Killed! Dead before me! A barricade! Ah, the scamp! Doctor, you live in this quarter, I believe? Oh! I know you well. I see your cabriolet pass my window. I am going to tell you. You are wrong to think that I am angry. One does not fly into a rage against a dead man. That would be stupid. This is a child whom I have reared. I was already old while he was very young. He played in the Tuileries garden with his little shovel and his little chair, and in order that the inspectors might not grumble, I stopped up the holes that he made in the earth with his shovel, with my cane. One day he exclaimed: Down with Louis XVIII.! and off he went. It was no fault of mine. He was all rosy and blond. His mother is dead. Have you ever noticed that all little children are blond? Why is it so? He is the son of one of those brigands of the Loire, but children are innocent of their fathers' crimes. I remember when he was no higher than that. He could not manage to pronounce his Ds. He had a way of talking that was so sweet and indistinct that you would have thought it was a bird chirping. I remember that once, in front of the Hercules Farnese, people formed a circle to admire him and marvel at him, he was so handsome, was that child! He had a head such as you see in pictures. I talked in a deep voice, and I frightened him with my cane, but he knew very well that it was only to make him laugh. In the morning, when he entered my room, I grumbled, but he was like the sunlight to me, all the same. One cannot defend oneself against those brats. They take hold of you, they hold you fast, they never let you go again. The truth is, that there never was a cupid like that child. Now, what can you say for your Lafayettes, your Benjamin Constants, and your Tirecuir de Corcelles who have killed him? This cannot be allowed to pass in this fashion."

He approached Marius, who still lay livid and motionless, and to whom the physician had returned, and began once more to wring his hands. The old man's pallid lips moved as though mechanically, and permitted the passage of words that were barely audible, like breaths in the death agony:

"Ah! heartless lad! Ah! clubbist! Ah! wretch! Ah! Septembrist!"

Reproaches in the low voice of an agonizing man, addressed to a corpse.

Little by little, as it is always indispensable that internal eruptions should come to the light, the sequence of words returned, but the grandfather appeared no longer to have the strength to utter them, his voice was so weak, and extinct, that it seemed to come from the other side of an abyss:

"It is all the same to me, I am going to die too, that I am. And to think that there is not a hussy in Paris who would not have been delighted to make this wretch happy! A scamp who, instead of amusing himself and enjoying life, went off to fight and get himself shot down like a brute! And for whom? Why? For the Republic! Instead of going to dance at the Chaumière, as it is the duty of young folks to do! What's the use of being twenty years old? The Republic, a cursed pretty folly! Poor mothers, beget fine boys, do! Come, he is dead. That will make two funerals under the same carriage gate. So you have got yourself arranged like this for the sake of General Lamarque's handsome eyes! What had that General Lamarque done to you? A slasher! A chatter-box! To get oneself killed for a dead man! If that isn't enough to drive any one mad! Just think of it! At twenty! And without so much as turning his head to see whether he was not leaving something behind him! That's the way poor, good old fellows are forced to die alone, now-a-days. Perish in your corner, owl! Well, after all, so much the better, that is what I was hoping for, this will kill me on the spot. I am too old, I am a hundred years old, I am a hundred thousand years old, I ought, by rights, to have been dead long ago. This blow puts an end to it. So all is over, what happiness! What is the good of making him inhale ammonia and all that parcel of drugs? You are wasting your trouble, you fool of a doctor! Come, he's dead, completely dead. I know all about it, I am dead myself too. He hasn't done things by half. Yes, this age is infamous, infamous and that's what I think of you, of your ideas, of your systems, of your masters, of your oracles, of your doctors, of your scape-graces of writers, of your rascally philosophers, and of all the revolutions which, for the last sixty years, have been frightening the flocks of crows in the Tuileries! But you were pitiless in getting yourself killed like this, I shall not even grieve over your death, do you understand, you assassin?"

At that moment, Marius slowly opened his eyes, and his glance, still dimmed by lethargic wonder, rested on M. Gillenormand.

"Marius!" cried the old man. "Marius! My little Marius! my child! my well-beloved son! You open your eyes, you gaze upon me, you are alive, thanks!"

And he fell fainting.

BOOK FOURTH.—JAVERT DERAILED

CHAPTER I

Javert passed slowly down the Rue de l'Homme Armé.

He walked with drooping head for the first time in his life, and likewise, for the first time in his life, with his hands behind his back.

Up to that day, Javert had borrowed from Napoleon's attitudes, only that which is expressive of resolution, with arms folded across the chest; that which is expressive of uncertainty—with the hands behind the back—had been unknown to him. Now, a change had taken place; his whole person, slow and sombre, was stamped with anxiety.

He plunged into the silent streets.

Nevertheless, he followed one given direction.

He took the shortest cut to the Seine, reached the Quai des Ormes, skirted the quay, passed the Grève, and halted at some distance from the post of the Place du Châtelet, at the angle of the Pont Notre-Dame. There, between the Notre-Dame and the Pont au Change on the one hand, and the Quai de la Mégisserie and the Quai aux Fleurs on the other, the Seine forms a sort of square lake, traversed by a rapid.

This point of the Seine is dreaded by mariners. Nothing is more dangerous than this rapid, hemmed in, at that epoch, and irritated by the piles of the mill on the bridge, now demolished. The two bridges, situated thus close together, augment the peril; the water hurries in formidable wise through the arches. It rolls in vast and terrible waves; it accumulates and piles up there; the flood attacks the piles of the bridges as though in an effort to pluck them up with great liquid ropes. Men who fall in there never re-appear; the best of swimmers are drowned there.

Javert leaned both elbows on the parapet, his chin resting in both hands, and, while his nails were mechanically twined in the abundance of his whiskers, he meditated.

A novelty, a revolution, a catastrophe had just taken place in the depths of his being; and he had something upon which to examine himself.

Javert was undergoing horrible suffering.

For several hours, Javert had ceased to be simple. He was troubled; that brain, so limpid in its blindness, had lost its transparency; that crystal was clouded. Javert felt duty divided within his conscience, and he could not conceal the fact from himself. When he had so unexpectedly encountered Jean Valjean on the banks of the Seine, there had been in him something of the wolf which regains his grip on his prey, and of the dog who finds his master again.

He beheld before him two paths, both equally straight, but he beheld two; and that terrified him; him, who had never in all his life known more than one straight line. And, the poignant anguish lay in this, that the two paths were contrary to each other. One of these straight lines excluded the other. Which of the two was the true one?

His situation was indescribable.

To owe his life to a malefactor, to accept that debt and to repay it; to be, in spite of himself, on a level with a fugitive from justice, and to repay his service with another service; to allow it to be said to him, "Go," and to say to the latter in his turn: "Be free"; to sacrifice to personal motives duty, that general obligation, and to be conscious, in those personal motives, of something that was also general, and, perchance, superior, to betray society in order to remain true to his conscience; that all these absurdities should be realized and should accumulate upon him,—this was what overwhelmed him.

One thing had amazed him,—this was that Jean Valjean should have done him a favor, and one thing petrified him,—that he, Javert, should have done Jean Valjean a favor.

Where did he stand? He sought to comprehend his position, and could no longer find his bearings.

What was he to do now? To deliver up Jean Valjean was bad; to leave Jean Valjean at liberty was bad. In the first case, the man of authority fell lower than the man of the galleys, in the second, a convict rose above the law, and set his foot upon it. In both cases, dishonor for him, Javert. There was disgrace in any resolution at which he might arrive. Destiny has some extremities which rise perpendicularly from the impossible, and beyond which life is no longer anything but a precipice. Javert had reached one of those extremities.

One of his anxieties consisted in being constrained to think. The very violence of all these conflicting emotions forced him to it. Thought was something to which he was unused, and which was peculiarly painful.

In thought there always exists a certain amount of internal rebellion; and it irritated him to have that within him.

Thought on any subject whatever, outside of the restricted circle of his functions, would have been for him in any case useless and a fatigue; thought on the day which had just passed was a torture. Nevertheless, it was indispensable that he should take a look into his conscience, after such shocks, and render to himself an account of himself.

What he had just done made him shudder. He, Javert, had seen fit to decide, contrary to all the regulations of the police, contrary to the whole social and judicial organization, contrary to the entire code, upon a release; this had suited him; he had substituted his own affairs for the affairs of the public; was not this unjustifiable? Every time that he brought himself face to face with this deed without a name which he had committed, he trembled from head to foot. Upon what should he decide? One sole resource remained to him; to return in all haste to the Rue de l'Homme Armé, and commit Jean Valjean to prison. It was clear that that was what he ought to do. He could not.

Something barred his way in that direction.

Something? What? Is there in the world, anything outside of the tribunals, executory sentences, the police and the authorities? Javert was overwhelmed.

A galley-slave sacred! A convict who could not be touched by the law! And that the deed of Javert!

Was it not a fearful thing that Javert and Jean Valjean, the man made to proceed with vigor, the man made to submit, —that these two men who were both the things of the law, should have come to such a pass, that both of them had set themselves above the law? What then! such enormities were to happen and no one was to be punished! Jean Valjean, stronger than the whole social order, was to remain at liberty, and he, Javert, was to go on eating the government's bread!

His revery gradually became terrible.

He might, athwart this revery, have also reproached himself on the subject of that insurgent who had been taken to the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire; but he never even thought of that. The lesser fault was lost in the greater. Besides, that insurgent was, obviously, a dead man, and, legally, death puts an end to pursuit.

Jean Valjean was the load which weighed upon his spirit.

Jean Valjean disconcerted him. All the axioms which had served him as points of support all his life long, had crumbled away in the presence of this man. Jean Valjean's generosity towards him, Javert, crushed him. Other facts which he now recalled, and which he had formerly treated as lies and folly, now recurred to him as realities. M. Madeleine re-appeared behind Jean Valjean, and the two figures were superposed in such fashion that they now formed but one, which was venerable. Javert felt that something terrible was penetrating his soul—admiration for a convict. Respect for a galley-slave—is that a possible thing? He shuddered at it, yet could not escape from it. In vain did he struggle, he was reduced to confess, in his inmost heart, the sublimity of that wretch. This was odious.

A benevolent malefactor, merciful, gentle, helpful, clement, a convict, returning good for evil, giving back pardon for hatred, preferring pity to vengeance, preferring to ruin himself rather than to ruin his enemy, saving him who had smitten him, kneeling on the heights of virtue, more nearly akin to an angel than to a man. Javert was constrained to admit to himself that this monster existed.

Things could not go on in this manner.

Certainly, and we insist upon this point, he had not yielded without resistance to that monster, to that infamous angel, to that hideous hero, who enraged almost as much as he amazed him. Twenty times, as he sat in that carriage face to face with Jean Valjean, the legal tiger had roared within him. A score of times he had been tempted to fling himself upon Jean Valjean, to seize him and devour him, that is to say, to arrest him. What more simple, in fact? To cry out at the first post that they passed:—"Here is a fugitive from justice, who has broken his ban!" to summon the gendarmes and say to them: "This man is yours!" then to go off, leaving that condemned man there, to ignore the rest and not to meddle further in the matter. This man is forever a prisoner of the law; the law may do with him what it will. What could be more just? Javert had said all this to himself; he had wished to pass beyond, to act, to apprehend the man, and then, as at present, he had not been able to do it; and every time that his arm had been raised convulsively towards Jean Valjean's collar, his hand had fallen back again, as beneath an enormous weight, and in the depths of his thought he had heard a voice, a strange voice crying to him:—"It is well. Deliver up your savior. Then have the basin of Pontius Pilate brought and wash your claws."

Then his reflections reverted to himself and beside Jean Valjean glorified he beheld himself, Javert, degraded.

A convict was his benefactor!

But then, why had he permitted that man to leave him alive? He had the right to be killed in that barricade. He should have asserted that right. It would have been better to summon the other insurgents to his succor against Jean Valjean, to get himself shot by force.

His supreme anguish was the loss of certainty. He felt that he had been uprooted. The code was no longer anything more than a stump in his hand. He had to deal with scruples of an unknown species. There had taken place within him a sentimental revelation entirely distinct from legal affirmation, his only standard of measurement hitherto. To remain in his former uprightness did not suffice. A whole order of unexpected facts had cropped up and subjugated him. A whole new world was dawning on his soul: kindness accepted and repaid, devotion, mercy, indulgence, violences committed by pity on austerity, respect for persons, no more definitive condemnation, no more conviction, the possibility of a tear in the eye of the law, no one knows what justice according to God, running in inverse sense to justice according to men. He perceived amid the shadows the terrible rising of an unknown moral sun; it horrified and dazzled him. An owl forced to the gaze of an eagle.

He said to himself that it was true that there were exceptional cases, that authority might be put out of countenance, that the rule might be inadequate in the presence of a fact, that everything could not be framed within the text of the code, that the unforeseen compelled obedience, that the virtue of a convict might set a snare for the virtue of the functionary, that destiny did indulge in such ambushes, and he reflected with despair that he himself had not even been fortified against a surprise.

He was forced to acknowledge that goodness did exist. This convict had been good. And he himself, unprecedented circumstance, had just been good also. So he was becoming depraved.

He found that he was a coward. He conceived a horror of himself.

Javert's ideal, was not to be human, to be grand, to be sublime; it was to be irreproachable.

Now, he had just failed in this.

How had he come to such a pass? How had all this happened? He could not have told himself. He clasped his head in both hands, but in spite of all that he could do, he could not contrive to explain it to himself.

He had certainly always entertained the intention of restoring Jean Valjean to the law of which Jean Valjean was the captive, and of which he, Javert, was the slave. Not for a single instant while he held him in his grasp had he confessed to himself that he entertained the idea of releasing him. It was, in some sort, without his consciousness, that his hand had relaxed and had let him go free.

All sorts of interrogation points flashed before his eyes. He put questions to himself, and made replies to himself, and his replies frightened him. He asked himself: "What has that convict done, that desperate fellow, whom I have pursued even to persecution, and who has had me under his foot, and who could have avenged himself, and who owed it both to his rancor and to his safety, in leaving me my life, in showing mercy upon me? His duty? No. Something more. And I in showing mercy upon him in my turn—what have I done? My duty? No. Something more. So there is something beyond duty?" Here he took fright; his balance became disjointed; one of the scales fell into the abyss, the other rose heavenward, and Javert was no less terrified by the one which was on high than by the one which was below. Without being in the least in the world what is called Voltairian or a philosopher, or incredulous, being, on the contrary, respectful by instinct, towards the established church, he knew it only as an august fragment of the social whole; order was his dogma, and sufficed for him; ever since he had attained to man's estate and the rank of a functionary, he had centred nearly all his religion in the police. Being,—and here we employ words without the least irony and in their most serious acceptation, being, as we have said, a spy as other men are priests. He had a superior, M. Gisquet; up to that day he had never dreamed of that other superior, God.

This new chief, God, he became unexpectedly conscious of, and he felt embarrassed by him. This unforeseen presence threw him off his bearings; he did not know what to do with this superior, he, who was not ignorant of the fact that the subordinate is bound always to bow, that he must not disobey, nor find fault, nor discuss, and that, in the presence of a superior who amazes him too greatly, the inferior has no other resource than that of handing in his resignation.

But how was he to set about handing in his resignation to God?

However things might stand,—and it was to this point that he reverted constantly,—one fact dominated everything else for him, and that was, that he had just committed a terrible infraction of the law. He had just shut his eyes on an escaped convict who had broken his ban. He had just set a galley-slave at large. He had just robbed the laws of a man who belonged to them. That was what he had done. He no longer understood himself. The very reasons for his action escaped him; only their vertigo was left with him. Up to that moment he had lived with that blind faith which gloomy probity engenders. This faith had quitted him, this probity had deserted him. All that he had believed in melted away. Truths which he did not wish to recognize were besieging him, inexorably. Henceforth, he must be a different man. He was suffering from the strange pains of a conscience abruptly operated on for the cataract. He saw that which it was repugnant to him to behold. He felt himself emptied, useless, put out of joint with his past life, turned out, dissolved. Authority was dead within him. He had no longer any reason for existing.

A terrible situation! to be touched.

To be granite and to doubt! to be the statue of Chastisement cast in one piece in the mould of the law, and suddenly to become aware of the fact that one cherishes beneath one's breast of bronze something absurd and disobedient which almost resembles a heart! To come to the pass of returning good for good, although one has said to oneself up to that day that that good is evil! to be the watch-dog, and to lick the intruder's hand! to be ice and melt! to be the pincers and to turn into a hand! to suddenly feel one's fingers opening! to relax one's grip,—what a terrible thing!

The man-projectile no longer acquainted with his route and retreating!

To be obliged to confess this to oneself: infallibility is not infallible, there may exist error in the dogma, all has not been said when a code speaks, society is not perfect, authority is complicated with vacillation, a crack is possible in the immutable, judges are but men, the law may err, tribunals may make a mistake! to behold a rift in the immense blue pane of the firmament!

That which was passing in Javert was the Fampoux of a rectilinear conscience, the derailment of a soul, the crushing of a probity which had been irresistibly launched in a straight line and was breaking against God. It certainly was singular that the stoker of order, that the engineer of authority, mounted on the blind iron horse with its rigid road, could be unseated by a flash of light! that the immovable, the direct, the correct, the geometrical, the passive, the perfect, could bend! that there should exist for the locomotive a road to Damascus!

God, always within man, and refractory, He, the true conscience, to the false; a prohibition to the spark to die out; an order to the ray to remember the sun; an injunction to the soul to recognize the veritable absolute when confronted with the fictitious absolute, humanity which cannot be lost; the human heart indestructible; that splendid phenomenon, the finest, perhaps, of all our interior marvels, did Javert understand this? Did Javert penetrate it? Did Javert account for it to himself? Evidently he did not. But beneath the pressure of that incontestable incomprehensibility he felt his brain bursting.

He was less the man transfigured than the victim of this prodigy. In all this he perceived only the tremendous difficulty of existence. It seemed to him that, henceforth, his respiration was repressed forever. He was not accustomed to having something unknown hanging over his head.

Up to this point, everything above him had been, to his gaze, merely a smooth, limpid and simple surface; there was nothing incomprehensible, nothing obscure; nothing that was not defined, regularly disposed, linked, precise, circumscribed, exact, limited, closed, fully provided for; authority was a plane surface; there was no fall in it, no dizziness in its presence. Javert had never beheld the unknown except from below. The irregular, the unforeseen, the disordered opening of chaos, the possible slip over a precipice—this was the work of the lower regions, of rebels, of the wicked, of wretches. Now Javert threw himself back, and he was suddenly terrified by this unprecedented apparition: a gulf on high.

What! one was dismantled from top to bottom! one was disconcerted, absolutely! In what could one trust! That which had been agreed upon was giving way! What! the defect in society's armor could be discovered by a magnanimous wretch! What! an honest servitor of the law could suddenly find himself caught between two crimes—the crime of allowing a man to escape and the crime of arresting him! everything was not settled in the orders given by the State to the functionary! There might be blind alleys in duty! What,—all this was real! was it true that an ex-ruffian, weighed down with convictions, could rise erect and end by being in the right? Was this credible? were there cases in which the law should retire before transfigured crime, and stammer its excuses?—Yes, that was the state of the case! and Javert saw it! and Javert had touched it! and not only could he not deny it, but he had taken part in it. These were realities. It was abominable that actual facts could reach such deformity. If facts did their duty, they would confine themselves to being proofs of the law; facts—it is God who sends them. Was anarchy, then, on the point of now descending from on high?

Thus,—and in the exaggeration of anguish, and the optical illusion of consternation, all that might have corrected and restrained this impression was effaced, and society, and the human race, and the universe were, henceforth, summed up in his eyes, in one simple and terrible feature,—thus the penal laws, the thing judged, the force due to legislation, the decrees of the sovereign courts, the magistracy, the government, prevention, repression, official cruelty, wisdom, legal infallibility, the principle of authority, all the dogmas on which rest political and civil security, sovereignty, justice, public truth, all this was rubbish, a shapeless mass, chaos; he himself, Javert, the spy of order, incorruptibility in the service of the police, the bull-dog providence of society, vanquished and hurled to earth; and, erect, at the summit of all that ruin, a man with a green cap on his head and a halo round his brow; this was the astounding confusion to which he had come; this was the fearful vision which he bore within his soul.

Was this to be endured? No.

A violent state, if ever such existed. There were only two ways of escaping from it. One was to go resolutely to Jean Valjean, and restore to his cell the convict from the galleys. The other . . .

Javert quitted the parapet, and, with head erect this time, betook himself, with a firm tread, towards the station-house indicated by a lantern at one of the corners of the Place du Châtelet.

On arriving there, he saw through the window a sergeant of police, and he entered. Policemen recognize each other by the very way in which they open the door of a station-house. Javert mentioned his name, showed his card to the sergeant, and seated himself at the table of the post on which a candle was burning. On a table lay a pen, a leaden inkstand and paper, provided in the event of possible reports and the orders of the night patrols. This table, still completed by its straw-seated chair, is an institution; it exists in all police stations; it is invariably ornamented with a box-wood saucer filled with sawdust and a wafer box of cardboard filled with red wafers, and it forms the lowest stage of official style. It is there that the literature of the State has its beginning.

Javert took a pen and a sheet of paper, and began to write. This is what he wrote:

A FEW OBSERVATIONS FOR THE GOOD OF THE SERVICE.

"In the first place: I beg Monsieur le Préfet to cast his eyes on this.

"Secondly: prisoners, on arriving after examination, take off their shoes and stand barefoot on the flagstones while they are being searched. Many of them cough on their return to prison. This entails hospital expenses.

"Thirdly: the mode of keeping track of a man with relays of police agents from distance to distance, is good, but, on important occasions, it is requisite that at least two agents should never lose sight of each other, so that, in case one agent should, for any cause, grow weak in his service, the other may supervise him and take his place.

"Fourthly: it is inexplicable why the special regulation of the prison of the Madelonettes interdicts the prisoner from having a chair, even by paying for it.

"Fifthly: in the Madelonettes there are only two bars to the canteen, so that the canteen woman can touch the prisoners with her hand.

"Sixthly: the prisoners called barkers, who summon the other prisoners to the parlor, force the prisoner to pay them two sous to call his name distinctly. This is a theft.

"Seventhly: for a broken thread ten sous are withheld in the weaving shop; this is an abuse of the contractor, since the cloth is none the worse for it.

"Eighthly: it is annoying for visitors to La Force to be obliged to traverse the boys' court in order to reach the parlor of Sainte-Marie-l'Égyptienne.

"Ninthly: it is a fact that any day gendarmes can be overheard relating in the court-yard of the prefecture the interrogations put by the magistrates to prisoners. For a gendarme, who should be sworn to secrecy, to repeat what he has heard in the examination room is a grave disorder.

"Tenthly: Mme. Henry is an honest woman; her canteen is very neat; but it is bad to have a woman keep the wicket to the mouse-trap of the secret cells. This is unworthy of the Conciergerie of a great civilization."

Javert wrote these lines in his calmest and most correct chirography, not omitting a single comma, and making the paper screech under his pen. Below the last line he signed:

"JAVERT,
"Inspector of the 1st class.
"The Post of the Place du Châtelet.
"June 7th, 1832, about one o'clock in the morning."

Javert dried the fresh ink on the paper, folded it like a letter, sealed it, wrote on the back: *Note for the administration,* left it on the table, and quitted the post. The glazed and grated door fell to behind him.

Again he traversed the Place du Châtelet diagonally, regained the quay, and returned with automatic precision to the very point which he had abandoned a quarter of an hour previously, leaned on his elbows and found himself again in the same attitude on the same paving-stone of the parapet. He did not appear to have stirred.

The darkness was complete. It was the sepulchral moment which follows midnight. A ceiling of clouds concealed the stars. Not a single light burned in the houses of the city; no one was passing; all of the streets and quays which could be seen were deserted; Notre-Dame and the towers of the Court-House seemed features of the night. A street lantern reddened the margin of the quay. The outlines of the bridges lay shapeless in the mist one behind the other. Recent rains had swollen the river.

The spot where Javert was leaning was, it will be remembered, situated precisely over the rapids of the Seine, perpendicularly above that formidable spiral of whirlpools which loose and knot themselves again like an endless screw.

Javert bent his head and gazed. All was black. Nothing was to be distinguished. A sound of foam was audible; but the river could not be seen. At moments, in that dizzy depth, a gleam of light appeared, and undulated vaguely, water possessing the power of taking light no one knows whence, and converting it into a snake. The light vanished, and all became indistinct once more. Immensity seemed thrown open there. What lay below was not water, it was a gulf. The wall of the quay, abrupt, confused, mingled with the vapors, instantly concealed from sight, produced the effect of an escarpment of the infinite. Nothing was to be seen, but the hostile chill of the water and the stale odor of the wet stones could be felt. A fierce breath rose from this abyss. The flood in the river, divined rather than perceived, the tragic whispering of the waves, the melancholy vastness of the arches of the bridge, the imaginable fall into that gloomy void, into all that shadow was full of horror.

Javert remained motionless for several minutes, gazing at this opening of shadow; he considered the invisible with a fixity that resembled attention. The water roared. All at once he took off his hat and placed it on the edge of the quay. A moment later, a tall black figure, which a belated passer-by in the distance might have taken for a phantom, appeared erect upon the parapet of the quay, bent over towards the Seine, then drew itself up again, and fell straight down into the shadows; a dull splash followed; and the shadow alone was in the secret of the convulsions of that obscure form which had disappeared beneath the water.

BOOK FIFTH.—GRANDSON AND GRANDFATHER

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH THE TREE WITH THE ZINC PLASTER APPEARS AGAIN

Some time after the events which we have just recorded, Sieur Boulatruelle experienced a lively emotion.

Sieur Boulatruelle was that road-mender of Montfermeil whom the reader has already seen in the gloomy parts of this book.

Boulatruelle, as the reader may, perchance, recall, was a man who was occupied with divers and troublesome matters. He broke stones and damaged travellers on the highway.

Road-mender and thief as he was, he cherished one dream; he believed in the treasures buried in the forest of Montfermeil. He hoped some day to find the money in the earth at the foot of a tree; in the meanwhile, he lived to search the pockets of passers-by.

Nevertheless, for an instant, he was prudent. He had just escaped neatly. He had been, as the reader is aware, picked up in Jondrette's garret in company with the other ruffians. Utility of a vice: his drunkenness had been his salvation. The authorities had never been able to make out whether he had been there in the quality of a robber or a man who had been robbed. An order of *nolle prosequi,* founded on his well authenticated state of intoxication on the evening of the ambush, had set him at liberty. He had taken to his heels. He had returned to his road from Gagny to Lagny, to make, under administrative supervision, broken stone for the good of the state, with downcast mien, in a very pensive mood, his ardor for theft somewhat cooled; but he was addicted none the less tenderly to the wine which had recently saved him.

As for the lively emotion which he had experienced a short time after his return to his road-mender's turf-thatched cot, here it is:

One morning, Boulatruelle, while on his way as was his wont, to his work, and possibly also to his ambush, a little before daybreak caught sight, through the branches of the trees, of a man, whose back alone he saw, but the shape of whose shoulders, as it seemed to him at that distance and in the early dusk, was not entirely unfamiliar to him. Boulatruelle, although intoxicated, had a correct and lucid memory, a defensive arm that is indispensable to any one who is at all in conflict with legal order.

"Where the deuce have I seen something like that man yonder?" he said to himself. But he could make himself no answer, except that the man resembled some one of whom his memory preserved a confused trace.

However, apart from the identity which he could not manage to catch, Boulatruelle put things together and made calculations. This man did not belong in the country-side. He had just arrived there. On foot, evidently. No public conveyance passes through Montfermeil at that hour. He had walked all night. Whence came he? Not from a very great distance; for he had neither haversack, nor bundle. From Paris, no doubt. Why was he in these woods? why was he there at such an hour? what had he come there for?

Boulatruelle thought of the treasure. By dint of ransacking his memory, he recalled in a vague way that he had already, many years before, had a similar alarm in connection with a man who produced on him the effect that he might well be this very individual.

"By the deuce," said Boulatruelle, "I'll find him again. I'll discover the parish of that parishioner. This prowler of Patron-Minette has a reason, and I'll know it. People can't have secrets in my forest if I don't have a finger in the pie."

He took his pick-axe which was very sharply pointed.

"There now," he grumbled, "is something that will search the earth and a man."

And, as one knots one thread to another thread, he took up the line of march at his best pace in the direction which the man must follow, and set out across the thickets.

When he had compassed a hundred strides, the day, which was already beginning to break, came to his assistance. Footprints stamped in the sand, weeds trodden down here and there, heather crushed, young branches in the brushwood bent and in the act of straightening themselves up again with the graceful deliberation of the arms of a pretty woman who stretches herself when she wakes, pointed out to him a sort of track. He followed it, then lost it. Time was flying. He plunged deeper into the woods and came to a sort of eminence. An early huntsman who was passing in the distance along a path, whistling the air of Guillery, suggested to him the idea of climbing a tree. Old as he was, he was agile. There stood close at hand a beech-tree of great size, worthy of Tityrus and of Boulatruelle. Boulatruelle ascended the beech as high as he was able.

The idea was a good one. On scrutinizing the solitary waste on the side where the forest is thoroughly entangled and wild, Boulatruelle suddenly caught sight of his man.

Hardly had he got his eye upon him when he lost sight of him.

The man entered, or rather, glided into, an open glade, at a considerable distance, masked by large trees, but with which Boulatruelle was perfectly familiar, on account of having noticed, near a large pile of porous stones, an ailing chestnut-tree bandaged with a sheet of zinc nailed directly upon the bark. This glade was the one which was formerly called the Blaru-bottom. The heap of stones, destined for no one knows what employment, which was visible there thirty years ago, is doubtless still there. Nothing equals a heap of stones in longevity, unless it is a board fence. They are temporary expedients. What a reason for lasting!

Boulatruelle, with the rapidity of joy, dropped rather than descended from the tree. The lair was unearthed, the question now was to seize the beast. That famous treasure of his dreams was probably there.

It was no small matter to reach that glade. By the beaten paths, which indulge in a thousand teasing zigzags, it required a good quarter of an hour. In a bee-line, through the underbrush, which is peculiarly dense, very thorny, and very aggressive in that locality, a full half hour was necessary. Boulatruelle committed the error of not comprehending this. He believed in the straight line; a respectable optical illusion which ruins many a man. The thicket, bristling as it was, struck him as the best road.

"Let's take to the wolves' Rue de Rivoli," said he.

Boulatruelle, accustomed to taking crooked courses, was on this occasion guilty of the fault of going straight.

He flung himself resolutely into the tangle of undergrowth.

He had to deal with holly bushes, nettles, hawthorns, eglantines, thistles, and very irascible brambles. He was much lacerated.

At the bottom of the ravine he found water which he was obliged to traverse.

At last he reached the Blaru-bottom, after the lapse of forty minutes, sweating, soaked, breathless, scratched, and ferocious.

There was no one in the glade. Boulatruelle rushed to the heap of stones. It was in its place. It had not been carried off.

As for the man, he had vanished in the forest. He had made his escape. Where? in what direction? into what thicket? Impossible to guess.

And, heart-rending to say, there, behind the pile of stones, in front of the tree with the sheet of zinc, was freshly turned earth, a pick-axe, abandoned or forgotten, and a hole.

The hole was empty.

"Thief!" shrieked Boulatruelle, shaking his fist at the horizon.

CHAPTER II

MARIUS, EMERGING FROM CIVIL WAR, MAKES READY FOR DOMESTIC WAR

For a long time, Marius was neither dead nor alive. For many weeks he lay in a fever accompanied by delirium, and by tolerably grave cerebral symptoms, caused more by the shocks of the wounds on the head than by the wounds themselves.

He repeated Cosette's name for whole nights in the melancholy loquacity of fever, and with the sombre obstinacy of agony. The extent of some of the lesions presented a serious danger, the suppuration of large wounds being always liable to become re-absorbed, and consequently, to kill the sick man, under certain atmospheric conditions; at every change of weather, at the slightest storm, the physician was uneasy.

"Above all things," he repeated, "let the wounded man be subjected to no emotion." The dressing of the wounds was complicated and difficult, the fixation of apparatus and bandages by cerecloths not having been invented as yet, at that epoch. Nicolette used up a sheet "as big as the ceiling," as she put it, for lint. It was not without difficulty that the chloruretted lotions and the nitrate of silver overcame the gangrene. As long as there was any danger, M. Gillenormand, seated in despair at his grandson's pillow, was, like Marius, neither alive nor dead.

Every day, sometimes twice a day, a very well dressed gentleman with white hair,—such was the description given by the porter,—came to inquire about the wounded man, and left a large package of lint for the dressings.

Finally, on the 7th of September, four months to a day, after the sorrowful night when he had been brought back to his grandfather in a dying condition, the doctor declared that he would answer for Marius. Convalescence began. But Marius was forced to remain for two months more stretched out on a long chair, on account of the results called up by the fracture of his collar-bone. There always is a last wound like that which will not close, and which prolongs the dressings indefinitely, to the great annoyance of the sick person.

However, this long illness and this long convalescence saved him from all pursuit. In France, there is no wrath, not even of a public character, which six months will not extinguish. Revolts, in the present state of society, are so much the fault of every one, that they are followed by a certain necessity of shutting the eyes.

Let us add, that the inexcusable Gisquet order, which enjoined doctors to lodge information against the wounded, having outraged public opinion, and not opinion alone, but the King first of all, the wounded were covered and protected by this indignation; and, with the exception of those who had been made prisoners in the very act of combat, the councils of war did not dare to trouble any one. So Marius was left in peace.

M. Gillenormand first passed through all manner of anguish, and then through every form of ecstasy. It was found difficult to prevent his passing every night beside the wounded man; he had his big arm-chair carried to Marius' bedside; he required his daughter to take the finest linen in the house for compresses and bandages. Mademoiselle Gillenormand, like a sage and elderly person, contrived to spare the fine linen, while allowing the grandfather to think that he was obeyed. M. Gillenormand would not permit any one to explain to him, that for the preparation of lint batiste is not nearly so good as coarse linen, nor new linen as old linen. He was present at all the dressings of the wounds from which Mademoiselle Gillenormand modestly absented herself. When the dead flesh was cut away with scissors, he said: "Aïe! aïe!" Nothing was more touching than to see him with his gentle, senile palsy, offer the wounded man a cup of his cooling-draught. He overwhelmed the doctor with questions. He did not observe that he asked the same ones over and over again.

On the day when the doctor announced to him that Marius was out of danger, the good man was in a delirium. He made his porter a present of three louis. That evening, on his return to his own chamber, he danced a gavotte, using his thumb and forefinger as castanets, and he sang the following song:

"Jeanne est née à Fougère,
Vrai nid d'une bergère;
J'adore son jupon,
Fripon.

"Amour, tu vis en elle;
Car c'est dans sa prunelle
Que tu mets ton carquois.
Narquois!

"Moi, je la chante, et j'aime,
Plus que Diane même,
Jeanne et ses durs tetons
Bretons."[1]

Then he knelt upon a chair, and Basque, who was watching him through the half-open door, made sure that he was praying.

Up to that time, he had not believed in God.

At each succeeding phase of improvement, which became more and more pronounced, the grandfather raved. He executed a multitude of mechanical actions full of joy; he ascended and descended the stairs, without knowing why. A pretty female neighbor was amazed one morning at receiving a big bouquet; it was M. Gillenormand who had sent it to her. The husband made a jealous scene. M. Gillenormand tried to draw Nicolette upon his knees. He called Marius, "M. le Baron." He shouted: "Long live the Republic!"

Every moment, he kept asking the doctor: "Is he no longer in danger?" He gazed upon Marius with the eyes of a grandmother. He brooded over him while he ate. He no longer knew himself, he no longer rendered himself an account of himself. Marius was the master of the house, there was abdication in his joy, he was the grandson of his grandson.

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[1] "Jeanne was born at Fougère, a true shepherd's nest; I adore her petticoat, the rogue.

"Love, thou dwellest in her; For 'tis in her eyes that thou placest thy quiver, sly scamp!

"As for me, I sing her, and I love, more than Diana herself, Jeanne and her firm Breton breasts."

In the state of joy in which he then was, he was the most venerable of children. In his fear lest he might fatigue or annoy the convalescent, he stepped behind him to smile. He was content, joyous, delighted, charming, young. His white locks added a gentle majesty to the gay radiance of his visage. When grace is mingled with wrinkles, it is adorable. There is an indescribable aurora in beaming old age.

As for Marius, as he allowed them to dress his wounds and care for him, he had but one fixed idea: Cosette.

After the fever and delirium had left him, he did not again pronounce her name, and it might have been supposed that he no longer thought of her. He held his peace, precisely because his soul was there.

He did not know what had become of Cosette; the whole affair of the Rue de la Chanvrerie was like a cloud in his memory; shadows that were almost indistinct, floated through his mind, Éponine, Gavroche, Mabeuf, the Thénardiers, all his friends gloomily intermingled with the smoke of the barricade; the strange passage of M. Fauchelevent through that adventure produced on him the effect of a puzzle in a tempest; he understood nothing connected with his own life, he did not know how nor by whom he had been saved, and no one of those around him knew this; all that they had been able to tell him was, that he had been brought home at night in a hackney-coach, to the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire; past, present, future were nothing more to him than the mist of a vague idea; but in that fog there was one immovable point, one clear and precise outline, something made of granite, a resolution, a will; to find Cosette once more. For him, the idea of life was not distinct from the idea of Cosette. He had decreed in his heart that he would not accept the one without the other, and he was immovably resolved to exact of any person whatever, who should desire to force him to live,—from his grandfather, from fate, from hell,—the restitution of his vanished Eden.

He did not conceal from himself the fact that obstacles existed.

Let us here emphasize one detail, he was not won over and was but little softened by all the solicitude and tenderness of his grandfather. In the first place, he was not in the secret; then, in his reveries of an invalid, which were still feverish, possibly, he distrusted this tenderness as a strange and novel thing, which had for its object his conquest. He remained cold. The grandfather absolutely wasted his poor old smile. Marius said to himself that it was all right so long as he, Marius, did not speak, and let things take their course; but that when it became a question of Cosette, he would find another face, and that his grandfather's true attitude would be unmasked. Then there would be an unpleasant scene; a recrudescence of family questions, a confrontation of positions, every sort of sarcasm and all manner of objections at one and the same time, Fauchelevent, Coupelevent, fortune, poverty, a stone about his neck, the future. Violent resistance; conclusion: a refusal. Marius stiffened himself in advance.

And then, in proportion as he regained life, the old ulcers of his memory opened once more, he reflected again on the past, Colonel Pontmercy placed himself once more between M. Gillenormand and him, Marius, he told himself that he had no true kindness to expect from a person who had been so unjust and so hard to his father. And with health, there returned to him a sort of harshness towards his grandfather. The old man was gently pained by this. M. Gillenormand, without however allowing it to appear, observed that Marius, ever since the latter had been brought back to him and had regained consciousness, had not once called him father. It is true that he did not say "monsieur" to him; but he contrived not to say either the one or the other, by means of a certain way of turning his phrases. Obviously, a crisis was approaching.

As almost always happens in such cases, Marius skirmished before giving battle, by way of proving himself. This is called "feeling the ground." One morning it came to pass that M. Gillenormand spoke slightingly of the Convention, àpropos of a newspaper which had fallen into his hands, and gave vent to a Royalist harangue on Danton, Saint-Juste and Robespierre.—"The men of '93 were giants," said Marius with severity. The old man held his peace, and uttered not a sound during the remainder of that day.

Marius, who had always present to his mind the inflexible grandfather of his early years, interpreted this silence as a profound concentration of wrath, augured from it a hot conflict, and augmented his preparations for the fray in the inmost recesses of his mind.

He decided that, in case of a refusal, he would tear off his bandages, dislocate his collar-bone, that he would lay bare all the wounds which he had left, and would reject all food. His wounds were his munitions of war. He would have Cosette or die.

He awaited the propitious moment with the crafty patience of the sick.

That moment arrived.

CHAPTER III

MARIUS ATTACKED

One day, M. Gillenormand, while his daughter was putting in order the phials and cups on the marble of the commode, bent over Marius and said to him in his tenderest accents: "Look here, my little Marius, if I were in your place, I would eat meat now in preference to fish. A fried sole is excellent to begin a convalescence with, but a good cutlet is needed to put a sick man on his feet."

Marius, who had almost entirely recovered his strength, collected the whole of it, drew himself up into a sitting posture, laid his two clenched fists on the sheets of his bed, looked his grandfather in the face, assumed a terrible air, and said:

"This leads me to say something to you."

"What is it?"

"That I wish to marry."

"Agreed," said his grandfather.—And he burst out laughing.

"How agreed?"

"Yes, agreed. You shall have your little girl."

Marius, stunned and overwhelmed with the dazzling shock, trembled in every limb.

M. Gillenormand went on:

"Yes, you shall have her, that pretty little girl of yours. She comes every day in the shape of an old gentleman to inquire after you. Ever since you were wounded, she has passed her time in weeping and making lint. I have made inquiries. She lives in the Rue de l'Homme Armé, No. 7. Ah! There we have it! Ah! so you want her! Well, you shall have her. You're caught. You had arranged your little plot, you had said to yourself:—'I'm going to signify this squarely to my grandfather, to that mummy of the Regency and of the Directory, to that ancient beau, to that Dorante turned Géronte; he has indulged in his frivolities also, that he has, and he has had his love affairs, and his grisettes and his Cosettes; he has made his rustle, he has had his wings, he has eaten of the bread of spring; he certainly must remember it.' Ah! you take the cockchafer by the horns. That's good. I offer you a cutlet and you answer me: 'By the way, I want to marry.' There's a transition for you! Ah! you reckoned on a bickering! You do not know that I am an old coward. What do you say to that? You are vexed? You did not expect to find your grandfather still more foolish than yourself, you are wasting the discourse which you meant to bestow upon me, Mr. Lawyer, and that's vexatious. Well, so much the worse, rage away. I'll do whatever you wish, and that cuts you short, imbecile! Listen. I have made my inquiries, I'm cunning too; she is charming, she is discreet, it is not true about the lancer, she has made heaps of lint, she's a jewel, she adores you, if you had died, there would have been three of us, her coffin would have accompanied mine. I have had an idea, ever since you have been better, of simply planting her at your bedside, but it is only in romances that young girls are brought to the bedsides of handsome young wounded men who interest them. It is not done. What would your aunt have said to it? You were nude three quarters of the time, my good fellow. Ask Nicolette, who has not left you for a moment, if there was any possibility of having a woman here. And then, what would the doctor have said? A pretty girl does not cure a man of fever. In short, it's all right, let us say no more about it, all's said, all's done, it's all settled, take her. Such is my ferocity. You see, I perceived that you did not love me. I said to myself: 'Here now, I have my little Cosette right under my hand, I'm going to give her to him, he will be obliged to love me a little then, or he must tell the reason why.' Ah! so you thought that the old man was going to storm, to put on a big voice, to shout no, and to lift his cane at all that aurora. Not a bit of it. Cosette, so be it; love, so be it; I ask nothing better. Pray take the trouble of getting married, sir. Be happy, my well-beloved child."

That said, the old man burst forth into sobs.

And he seized Marius' head, and pressed it with both arms against his breast, and both fell to weeping. This is one of the forms of supreme happiness.

"Father!" cried Marius.

"Ah, so you love me!" said the old man.

An ineffable moment ensued. They were choking and could not speak.

At length the old man stammered:

"Come! his mouth is unstopped at last. He has said: 'Father' to me."

Marius disengaged his head from his grandfather's arms, and said gently:

"But, father, now that I am quite well, it seems to me that I might see her."

"Agreed again, you shall see her to-morrow."

"Father!"

"What?"

"Why not to-day?"

"Well, to-day then. Let it be to-day. You have called me 'father' three times, and it is worth it. I will attend to it. She shall be brought hither. Agreed, I tell you. It has already been put into verse. This is the ending of the elegy of the 'Jeune Malade' by André Chénier, by André Chénier whose throat was cut by the ras . . . by the giants of '93."

M. Gillenormand fancied that he detected a faint frown on the part of Marius, who, in truth, as we must admit, was no longer listening to him, and who was thinking far more of Cosette than of 1793.

The grandfather, trembling at having so inopportunely introduced André Chénier, resumed precipitately:

"Cut his throat is not the word. The fact is that the great revolutionary geniuses, who were not malicious, that is incontestable, who were heroes, pardi! found that André Chénier embarrassed them somewhat, and they had him guillot . . . that is to say, those great men on the 7th of Thermidor, besought André Chénier, in the interests of public safety, to be so good as to go . . ."

M. Gillenormand, clutched by the throat by his own phrase, could not proceed. Being able neither to finish it nor to retract it, while his daughter arranged the pillow behind Marius, who was overwhelmed with so many emotions, the old man rushed headlong, with as much rapidity as his age permitted, from the bed-chamber, shut the door behind him, and, purple, choking and foaming at the mouth, his eyes starting from his head, he found himself nose to nose with honest Basque, who was blacking boots in the anteroom. He seized Basque by the collar, and shouted full in his face in fury:—"By the hundred thousand Javottes of the devil, those ruffians did assassinate him!"

"Who, sir?"

"André Chénier!"

"Yes, sir," said Basque in alarm.

CHAPTER IV

MADEMOISELLE GILLENORMAND ENDS BY NO LONGER THINKING IT A BAD THING THAT M. FAUCHELEVENT SHOULD HAVE ENTERED WITH SOMETHING UNDER HIS ARM

Cosette and Marius beheld each other once more.

What that interview was like we decline to say. There are things which one must not attempt to depict; the sun is one of them.

The entire family, including Basque and Nicolette, were assembled in Marius' chamber at the moment when Cosette entered it.

Precisely at that moment, the grandfather was on the point of blowing his nose; he stopped short, holding his nose in his handkerchief, and gazing over it at Cosette.

She appeared on the threshold; it seemed to him that she was surrounded by a glory.

"Adorable!" he exclaimed.

Then he blew his nose noisily.

Cosette was intoxicated, delighted, frightened, in heaven. She was as thoroughly alarmed as any one can be by happiness. She stammered all pale, yet flushed, she wanted to fling herself into Marius' arms, and dared not. Ashamed of loving in the presence of all these people. People are pitiless towards happy lovers; they remain when the latter most desire to be left alone. Lovers have no need of any people whatever.

With Cosette, and behind her, there had entered a man with white hair who was grave yet smiling, though with a vague and heartrending smile. It was "Monsieur Fauchelevent"; it was Jean Valjean.

He was very well dressed, as the porter had said, entirely in black, in perfectly new garments, and with a white cravat.

The porter was a thousand leagues from recognizing in this correct bourgeois, in this probable notary, the fear-inspiring bearer of the corpse, who had sprung up at his door on the night of the 7th of June, tattered, muddy, hideous, haggard, his face masked in blood and mire, supporting in his arms the fainting Marius; still, his porter's scent was aroused. When M. Fauchelevent arrived with Cosette, the porter had not been able to refrain from communicating to his wife this aside: "I don't know why it is, but I can't help fancying that I've seen that face before."

M. Fauchelevent in Marius' chamber, remained apart near the door. He had under his arm, a package which bore considerable resemblance to an octavo volume enveloped in paper. The enveloping paper was of a greenish hue, and appeared to be mouldy.

"Does the gentleman always have books like that under his arm?" Mademoiselle Gillenormand, who did not like books, demanded in a low tone of Nicolette.

"Well," retorted M. Gillenormand, who had overheard her, in the same tone, "he's a learned man. What then? Is that his fault? Monsieur Boulard, one of my acquaintances, never walked out without a book under his arm either, and he always had some old volume hugged to his heart like that."

And, with a bow, he said aloud:

"Monsieur Tranchelevent . . ."

Father Gillenormand did not do it intentionally, but inattention to proper names was an aristocratic habit of his.

"Monsieur Tranchelevent, I have the honor of asking you, on behalf of my grandson, Baron Marius Pontmercy, for the hand of Mademoiselle."

Monsieur Tranchelevent bowed.

"That's settled," said the grandfather.

And, turning to Marius and Cosette, with both arms extended in blessing, he cried:

"Permission to adore each other!"

They did not require him to repeat it twice. So much the worse! the chirping began. They talked low. Marius, resting on his elbow on his reclining chair, Cosette standing beside him. "Oh, heavens!" murmured Cosette, "I see you once again! it is thou! it is you! The idea of going and fighting like that! But why? It is horrible. I have been dead for four months. Oh! how wicked it was of you to go to that battle! What had I done to you? I pardon you, but you will never do it again. A little while ago, when they came to tell us to come to you, I still thought that I was about to die, but it was from joy. I was so sad! I have not taken the time to dress myself, I must frighten people with my looks! What will your relatives say to see me in a crumpled collar? Do speak! You let me do all the talking. We are still in the Rue de l'Homme Armé. It seems that your shoulder was terrible. They told me that you could put your fist in it. And then, it seems that they cut your flesh with the scissors. That is frightful. I have cried till I have no eyes left. It is queer that a person can suffer like that. Your grandfather has a very kindly air. Don't disturb yourself, don't rise on your elbow, you will injure yourself. Oh! how happy I am! So our unhappiness is over! I am quite foolish. I had things to say to you, and I no longer know in the least what they were. Do you still love me? We live in the Rue de l'Homme Armé. There is no garden. I made lint all the time; stay, sir, look, it is your fault, I have a callous on my fingers."

"Angel!" said Marius.

Angel is the only word in the language which cannot be worn out. No other word could resist the merciless use which lovers make of it.

Then as there were spectators, they paused and said not a word more, contenting themselves with softly touching each other's hands.

M. Gillenormand turned towards those who were in the room and cried:

"Talk loud, the rest of you. Make a noise, you people behind the scenes. Come, a little uproar, the deuce! so that the children can chatter at their ease."

And, approaching Marius and Cosette, he said to them in a very low voice:

"Call each other *thou*. Don't stand on ceremony."

Aunt Gillenormand looked on in amazement at this irruption of light in her elderly household. There was nothing aggressive about this amazement; it was not the least in the world like the scandalized and envious glance of an owl at two turtle-doves, it was the stupid eye of a poor innocent seven and fifty years of age; it was a life which had been a failure gazing at that triumph, love.

"Mademoiselle Gillenormand senior," said her father to her, "I told you that this is what would happen to you."

He remained silent for a moment, and then added:

"Look at the happiness of others."

Then he turned to Cosette.

"How pretty she is! how pretty she is! She's a Greuze. So you are going to have that all to yourself, you scamp! Ah! my rogue, you are getting off nicely with me, you are happy; if I were not fifteen years too old, we would fight with swords to see which of us should have her. Come now! I am in love with you, mademoiselle. It's perfectly simple. It is your right. You are in the right. Ah! what a sweet, charming little wedding this will make! Our parish is Saint-Denis du Saint Sacrament, but I will get a dispensation so that you can be married at Saint-Paul. The church is better. It was built by the Jesuits. It is more coquettish. It is opposite the fountain of Cardinal de Biragüe. The masterpiece of Jesuit architecture is at Namur. It is called Saint-Loup. You must go there after you are married. It is worth the journey. Mademoiselle, I am quite of your mind, I think girls ought to marry; that is what they are made for. There is a certain Sainte-Catherine whom I should always like to see uncoiffed.[1] It's a fine thing to remain a spinster, but it is chilly. The Bible says: Multiply. In order to save the people, Jeanne d'Arc is needed; but in order to make people, what is needed is Mother Goose. So, marry, my beauties. I really do not see the use in remaining a spinster! I know that they have their chapel apart in the church, and that they fall back on the Society of the Virgin; but, sapristi, a handsome husband, a fine fellow, and at the expiration of a year, a big, blond brat who nurses lustily, and who has fine rolls of fat on his thighs, and who musses up your breast in handfuls with his little rosy paws, laughing the while like the dawn,—that's better than holding a candle at vespers, and chanting *Turris eburnea!*"

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[1] In allusion to the expression, *coiffer Sainte-Catherine*, "to remain unmarried."

The grandfather executed a pirouette on his eighty-year-old heels, and began to talk again like a spring that has broken loose once more:

> "Ainsi, bornant les cours de tes rêvasseries,
> Alcippe, il est donc vrai, dans peu tu te maries."[1]

"By the way!"

"What is it, father?"

"Have not you an intimate friend?"

"Yes, Courfeyrac."

"What has become of him?"

"He is dead."

"That is good."

He seated himself near them, made Cosette sit down, and took their four hands in his aged and wrinkled hands:

"She is exquisite, this darling. She's a masterpiece, this Cosette! She is a very little girl and a very great lady. She will only be a Baroness, which is a come down for her; she was born a Marquise. What eyelashes she has! Get it well fixed in your noddles, my children, that you are in the true road. Love each other. Be foolish about it. Love is the folly of men and the wit of God. Adore each other. Only," he added, suddenly becoming gloomy, "what a misfortune! It has just occurred to me! More than half of what I possess is swallowed up in an annuity; so long as I live, it will not matter, but after my death, a score of years hence, ah! my poor children, you will not have a sou! Your beautiful white hands, Madame la Baronne, will do the devil the honor of pulling him by the tail."[2]

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[1] "Thus, hemming in the course of thy musings, Alcippus, it is true that thou wilt wed ere long."

[2] "*Tirer le diable par la queue,* "to live from hand to mouth."

At this point they heard a grave and tranquil voice say:

"Mademoiselle Euphrasie Fauchelevent possesses six hundred thousand francs."

It was the voice of Jean Valjean.

So far he had not uttered a single word, no one seemed to be aware that he was there, and he had remained standing erect and motionless, behind all these happy people.

"What has Mademoiselle Euphrasie to do with the question?" inquired the startled grandfather.

"I am she," replied Cosette.

"Six hundred thousand francs?" resumed M. Gillenormand.

"Minus fourteen or fifteen thousand francs, possibly," said Jean Valjean.

And he laid on the table the package which Mademoiselle Gillenormand had mistaken for a book.

Jean Valjean himself opened the package; it was a bundle of bank-notes. They were turned over and counted. There were five hundred notes for a thousand francs each, and one hundred and sixty-eight of five hundred. In all, five hundred and eighty-four thousand francs.

"This is a fine book," said M. Gillenormand.

"Five hundred and eighty-four thousand francs!" murmured the aunt.

"This arranges things well, does it not, Mademoiselle Gillenormand senior?" said the grandfather. "That devil of a Marius has ferreted out the nest of a millionaire grisette in his tree of dreams! Just trust to the love affairs of young folks now, will you! Students find studentesses with six hundred thousand francs. Cherubino works better than Rothschild."

"Five hundred and eighty-four thousand francs!" repeated Mademoiselle Gillenormand, in a low tone. "Five hundred and eighty-four! one might as well say say six hundred thousand!"

As for Marius and Cosette, they were gazing at each other while this was going on; they hardly heeded this detail.

CHAPTER V

DEPOSIT YOUR MONEY IN A FOREST RATHER THAN WITH A NOTARY

The reader has, no doubt, understood, without necessitating a lengthy explanation, that Jean Valjean, after the Champmathieu affair, had been able, thanks to his first escape of a few days' duration, to come to Paris and to withdraw in season, from the hands of Laffitte, the sum earned by him, under the name of Monsieur Madeleine, at Montreuil-sur-Mer; and that fearing that he might be recaptured,—which eventually happened—he had buried and hidden that sum in the forest of Montfermeil, in the locality known as the Blaru-bottom. The sum, six hundred and thirty thousand francs, all in bank-bills, was not very bulky, and was contained in a box; only, in order to preserve the box from dampness, he had placed it in a coffer filled with chestnut shavings. In the same coffer he had placed his other treasures, the Bishop's candlesticks. It will be remembered that he had carried off the candlesticks when he made his escape from Montreuil-sur-Mer. The man seen one evening for the first time by Boulatruelle, was Jean Valjean. Later on, every time that Jean Valjean needed money, he went to get it in the Blaru-bottom. Hence the absences which we have mentioned. He had a pickaxe somewhere in the heather, in a hiding-place known to himself alone. When he beheld Marius convalescent, feeling that the hour was at hand, when that money might prove of service, he had gone to get it; it was he again, whom Boulatruelle had seen in the woods, but on this occasion, in the morning instead of in the evening. Boulatreulle inherited his pickaxe.

The actual sum was five hundred and eighty-four thousand, five hundred francs. Jean Valjean withdrew the five hundred francs for himself.—"We shall see hereafter," he thought.

The difference between that sum and the six hundred and thirty thousand francs withdrawn from Laffitte represented his expenditure in ten years, from 1823 to 1833. The five years of his stay in the convent had cost only five thousand francs.

Jean Valjean set the two candlesticks on the chimney-piece, where they glittered to the great admiration of Toussaint.

Moreover, Jean Valjean knew that he was delivered from Javert. The story had been told in his presence, and he had verified the fact in the *Moniteur,* how a police inspector named Javert had been found drowned under a boat belonging to some laundresses, between the Pont au Change and the Pont-Neuf, and that a writing left by this man, otherwise irreproachable and highly esteemed by his superiors, pointed to a fit of mental aberration and a suicide.—"In fact," thought Jean Valjean, "since he left me at liberty, once having got me in his power, he must have been already mad."

CHAPTER VI

THE TWO OLD MEN DO EVERYTHING, EACH ONE AFTER HIS OWN FASHION, TO RENDER COSETTE HAPPY

EVERYTHING was made ready for the wedding. The doctor, on being consulted, declared that it might take place in February. It was then December. A few ravishing weeks of perfect happiness passed.

The grandfather was not the least happy of them all. He remained for a quarter of an hour at a time gazing at Cosette.

"The wonderful, beautiful girl!" he exclaimed. "And she has so sweet and good an air! she is, without exception, the most charming girl that I have ever seen in my life. Later on, she'll have virtues with an odor of violets. How graceful! one cannot live otherwise than nobly with such a creature. Marius, my boy, you are a Baron, you are rich, don't go to pettifogging, I beg of you."

Cosette and Marius had passed abruptly from the sepulchre to paradise. The transition had not been softened, and they would have been stunned, had they not been dazzled by it.

"Do you understand anything about it?" said Marius to Cosette.

"No," replied Cosette, "but it seems to me that the good God is caring for us."

Jean Valjean did everything, smoothed away every difficulty, arranged everything, made everything easy. He hastened towards Cosette's happiness with as much ardor, and, apparently with as much joy, as Cosette herself.

As he had been a mayor, he understood how to solve that delicate problem, with the secret of which he alone was acquainted, Cosette's civil status. If he were to announce her origin bluntly, it might prevent the marriage, who knows? He extricated Cosette from all difficulties. He concocted for her a family of dead people, a sure means of not encountering any objections. Cosette was the only scion of an extinct family; Cosette was not his own daughter, but the daughter of the other Fauchelevent. Two brothers Fauchelevent had been gardeners to the convent of the Petit-Picpus. Inquiry was made at that convent; the very best information and the most respectable references abounded; the good nuns, not very apt and but little inclined to fathom questions of paternity, and not attaching any importance to the matter, had never understood exactly of which of the two Fauchelevents Cosette was the daughter. They said what was wanted and they said it with zeal. An *acte de notoriété* was drawn up. Cosette became in the eyes of the law, Mademoiselle Euphrasie Fauchelevent. She was declared an orphan, both father and mother being dead. Jean Valjean so arranged it that he was appointed, under the name of Fauchelevent, as Cosette's guardian, with M. Gillenormand as supervising guardian over him.

As for the five hundred and eighty thousand francs, they constituted a legacy bequeathed to Cosette by a dead person, who desired to remain unknown. The original legacy had consisted of five hundred and ninety-four thousand francs;

but ten thousand francs had been expended on the education of Mademoiselle Euphrasie, five thousand francs of that amount having been paid to the convent. This legacy, deposited in the hands of a third party, was to be turned over to Cosette at her majority, or at the date of her marriage. This, taken as a whole, was very acceptable, as the reader will perceive, especially when the sum due was half a million. There were some peculiarities here and there, it is true, but they were not noticed; one of the interested parties had his eyes blindfolded by love, the others by the six hundred thousand francs.

Cosette learned that she was not the daughter of that old man whom she had so long called father. He was merely a kinsman; another Fauchelevent was her real father. At any other time this would have broken her heart. But at the ineffable moment which she was then passing through, it cast but a slight shadow, a faint cloud, and she was so full of joy that the cloud did not last long. She had Marius. The young man arrived, the old man was effaced; such is life.

And then, Cosette had, for long years, been habituated to seeing enigmas around her; every being who has had a mysterious childhood is always prepared for certain renunciations.

Nevertheless, she continued to call Jean Valjean: Father.

Cosette, happy as the angels, was enthusiastic over Father Gillenormand. It is true that he overwhelmed her with gallant compliments and presents. While Jean Valjean was building up for Cosette a normal situation in society and an unassailable status, M. Gillenormand was superintending the basket of wedding gifts. Nothing so amused him as being magnificent. He had given to Cosette a robe of Binche guipure which had descended to him from his own grandmother.

"These fashions come up again," said he, "ancient things are the rage, and the young women of my old age dress like the old women of my childhood."

He rifled his respectable chests of drawers in Coromandel lacquer, with swelling fronts, which had not been opened for years.—"Let us hear the confession of these dowagers," he said, "let us see what they have in their paunches." He noisily violated the pot-bellied drawers of all his wives, of all his mistresses and of all his grandmothers. Pekins, damasks, lampas, painted moires, robes of shot gros de Tours, India kerchiefs embroidered in gold that could be washed, dauphines without a right or wrong side, in the piece, Genoa and Alençon point lace, parures in antique goldsmith's work, ivory bon-bon boxes ornamented with microscopic battles, gewgaws and ribbons—he lavished everything on Cosette. Cosette, amazed, desperately in love with Marius, and wild with gratitude towards M. Gillenormand, dreamed of a happiness without limit clothed in satin and velvet. Her wedding basket seemed to her to be upheld by seraphim. Her soul flew out into the azure depths, with wings of Mechlin lace.

The intoxication of the lovers was only equalled, as we have already said, by the ecstasy of the grandfather. A sort of flourish of trumpets went on in the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire.

Every morning, a fresh offering of bric-à-brac from the grandfather to Cosette. All possible knick-knacks glittered around her.

One day Marius, who was fond of talking gravely in the midst of his bliss, said, àpropos of I know not what incident:

"The men of the revolution are so great, that they have the prestige of the ages, like Cato and like Phocion, and each one of them seems to me an antique memory."

"Moire antique!" exclaimed the old gentleman. "Thanks, Marius. That is precisely the idea of which I was in search."

And on the following day, a magnificent dress of tea-rose colored moire antique was added to Cosette's wedding presents.

From these fripperies, the grandfather extracted a bit of wisdom.

"Love is all very well; but there must be something else to go with it. The useless must be mingled with happiness. Happiness is only the necessary. Season that enormously with the superfluous for me. A palace and her heart. Her heart and the Louvre. Her heart and the grand waterworks of Versailles. Give me my shepherdess and try to make her a duchess. Fetch me Phyllis crowned with corn-flowers, and add a hundred thousand francs income. Open for me a bucolic perspective as far as you can see, beneath a marble colonnade. I consent to the bucolic and also to the fairy spectacle of marble and gold. Dry happiness resembles dry bread. One eats, but one does not dine. I want the superfluous, the useless, the extravagant, excess, that which serves no purpose. I remember to have seen, in the Cathedral of Strasburg, a clock, as tall as a three-story house which marked the hours, which had the kindness to indicate the hour, but which had not the air of being made for that; and which, after having struck midday, or midnight,—midday, the hour of the sun, or midnight, the hour of love,—or any other hour that you like, gave you the moon and the stars, the earth and the sea, birds and fishes, Phœbus and Phœbe, and a host of things which emerged from a niche, and the twelve apostles, and the Emperor Charles the Fifth, and Éponine, and Sabinus, and a throng of little gilded goodmen, who played on the trumpet to boot. Without reckoning delicious chimes which it sprinkled through the air, on every occasion, without any one's knowing why. Is a petty bald clock-face which merely tells the hour equal to that? For my part, I am of the opinion of the big clock of Strasburg, and I prefer it to the cuckoo clock from the Black Forest."

M. Gillenormand talked nonsense in connection with the wedding, and all the fripperies of the eighteenth century passed pell-mell through his dithyrambs.

"You are ignorant of the art of festivals. You do not know how to organize a day of enjoyment in this age," he exclaimed. "Your nineteenth century is weak. It lacks excess. It ignores the rich, it ignores the noble. In everything it is clean-shaven. Your third estate is insipid, colorless, odorless, and shapeless. The dreams of your bourgeois who set up, as they express it: a pretty boudoir freshly decorated, violet, ebony and calico. Make way! Make way! the Sieur Curmudgeon is marrying Mademoiselle Clutch-penny. Sumptuousness and splendor. A louis d'or has been stuck to a candle.

There's the epoch for you. My demand is that I may flee from it beyond the Sarmatians. Ah! in 1787, I predict that all was lost, from the day when I beheld the Duc de Rohan, Prince de Léon, Duc de Chabot, Duc de Montbazon, Marquis de Soubise, Vicomte de Thouars, peer of France, go to Longchamps in a tapecu! That has borne its fruits. In this century, men attend to business, they gamble on 'Change, they win money, they are stingy. People take care of their surfaces and varnish them; every one is dressed as though just out of a bandbox, washed, soaped, scraped, shaved, combed, waked, smoothed, rubbed, brushed, cleaned on the outside, irreproachable, polished as a pebble, discreet, neat, and at the same time, death of my life, in the depths of their consciences they have dung-heaps and cess-pools that are enough to make a cow-herd who blows his nose in his fingers, recoil. I grant to this age the device: 'Dirty Cleanliness.' Don't be vexed, Marius, give me permission to speak; I say no evil of the people as you see, I am always harping on your people, but do look favorably on my dealing a bit of a slap to the bourgeoisie. I belong to it. He who loves well lashes well. Thereupon, I say plainly, that now-a-days people marry, but that they no longer know how to marry. Ah! it is true, I regret the grace of the ancient manners. I regret everything about them, their elegance, their chivalry, those courteous and delicate ways, that joyous luxury which every one possessed, music forming part of the wedding, a symphony above stairs, a beating of drums below stairs, the dances, the joyous faces round the table, the fine-spun gallant compliments, the songs, the fireworks, the frank laughter, the devil's own row, the huge knots of ribbon. I regret the bride's garter. The bride's garter is cousin to the girdle of Venus. On what does the war of Troy turn? On Helen's garter, parbleu! Why did they fight, why did Diomed the divine break over the head of Meriones that great brazen helmet of ten points? why did Achilles and Hector hew each other up with vast blows of their lances? Because Helen allowed Paris to take her garter. With Cosette's garter, Homer would construct the *Iliad*. He would put in his poem, a loquacious old fellow, like me, and he would call him Nestor. My friends, in bygone days, in those amiable days of yore, people married wisely; they had a good contract, and then they had a good carouse. As soon as Cujas had taken his departure, Gamacho entered. But, in sooth! the stomach is an agreeable beast which demands its due, and which wants to have its wedding also. People supped well, and had at table a beautiful neighbor without a guimpe so that her throat was only moderately concealed. Oh! the large laughing mouths, and how gay we were in those days! youth was a bouquet; every young man terminated in a branch of lilacs or a tuft of roses; whether he was a shepherd or a warrior; and if, by chance, one was a captain of dragoons, one found means to call oneself Florian. People thought much of looking well. They embroidered and tinted themselves. A bourgeois had the air of a flower, a Marquis had the air of a precious stone. People had no straps to their boots, they had no boots. They were spruce, shining, waved, lustrous, fluttering, dainty, coquettish, which did not at all prevent their wearing swords by their sides. The humming-bird has beak and claws. That was the day of the *Galland Indies.* One of the sides of that century was delicate, the other was magnificent; and by the green cabbages! people amused themselves. To-day, people are serious. The bourgeois is avaricious, the bourgeoise is a prude; your century is unfortunate. People would drive away the Graces as being too low in the neck. Alas! beauty is concealed as though it were ugliness. Since the revolution, everything, including the ballet-dancers, has had its trousers; a mountebank dancer must be grave; your rigadoons are doctrinarian. It is necessary to be majestic. People would be greatly annoyed if they did not carry their chins in their cravats. The ideal of an urchin of twenty when he marries, is to resemble M. Royer-Collard. And do you know what one arrives at with that majesty? at being petty. Learn this: joy is not only joyous; it is great. But be in love gayly then, what the deuce! marry, when you marry, with fever and giddiness, and tumult, and the uproar of happiness! Be grave in church, well and good. But, as soon as the mass is finished, sarpejou! you must make a dream whirl around the bride. A marriage should be royal and chimerical; it should promenade its ceremony from the cathedral of Rheims to the pagoda of Chanteloup. I have a horror of a paltry wedding. Ventregoulette! be in Olympus for that one day, at least. Be one of the gods. Ah! people might be sylphs. Games and Laughter, argiraspides; they are stupids. My friends, every recently made bridegroom ought to be Prince Aldobrandini. Profit by that unique minute in life to soar away to the empyrean with the swans and the eagles, even if you do have to fall back on the morrow into the bourgeoisie of the frogs. Don't economize on the nuptials, do not prune them of their splendors; don't scrimp on the day when you beam. The wedding is not the housekeeping. Oh! if I were to carry out my fancy, it would be gallant, violins would be heard under the trees. Here is my programme: sky-blue and silver. I would mingle with the festival the rural divinities, I would convoke the Dryads and the Nereids. The nuptials of Amphitrite, a rosy cloud, nymphs with well dressed locks and entirely naked, an Academician offering quatrains to the goddess, a chariot drawn by marine monsters.

> "Triton trottait devant, et tirait de sa conque
> Des sons si ravissants qu'il ravissait quiconque!"[1]

—there's a festive programme, there's a good one, or else I know nothing of such matters, deuce take it!"

While the grandfather, in full lyrical effusion, was listening to himself, Cosette and Marius grew intoxicated as they gazed freely at each other.

Aunt Gillenormand surveyed all this with her imperturbable placidity. Within the last five or six months she had experienced a certain amount of emotions. Marius returned, Marius brought back bleeding, Marius brought back from a barricade, Marius dead, then living, Marius reconciled, Marius betrothed, Marius wedding a poor girl, Marius wedding a millionairess. The six hundred thousand francs had been her last surprise. Then, her indifference of a girl taking her first communion returned to her. She went regularly to service, told her beads, read her euchology, mumbled *Aves* in one corner of the house, while *I love you* was being whispered in the other, and she beheld Marius and Cosette in a vague way, like two shadows. The shadow was herself.

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[1] "Triton trotted on before, and drew from his conch-shell sounds so ravishing that he delighted everyone!"

There is a certain state of inert asceticism in which the soul, neutralized by torpor, a stranger to that which may be designated as the business of living, receives no impressions, either human, or pleasant or painful, with the exception of earthquakes and catastrophes. This devotion, as Father Gillenormand said to his daughter, corresponds to a cold in the head. You smell nothing of life. Neither any bad, nor any good odor.

Moreover, the six hundred thousand francs had settled the elderly spinster's indecision. Her father had acquired the habit of taking her so little into account, that he had not consulted her in the matter of consent to Marius' marriage. He had acted impetuously, according to his wont, having, a despot-turned slave, but a single thought,—to satisfy Marius. As for the aunt,—it had not even occurred to him that the aunt existed, and that she could have an opinion of her own, and, sheep as she was, this had vexed her. Somewhat resentful in her inmost soul, but impassible externally, she had said to herself: "My father has settled the question of the marriage without reference to me; I shall settle the question of the inheritance without consulting him." She was rich, in fact, and her father was not. She had reserved her decision on this point. It is probable that, had the match been a poor one, she would have left him poor. "So much the worse for my nephew! he is wedding a beggar, let him be a beggar himself!" But Cosette's half-million pleased the aunt, and altered her inward situation so far as this pair of lovers were concerned. One owes some consideration to six hundred thousand francs, and it was evident that she could not do otherwise than leave her fortune to these young people, since they did not need it.

It was arranged that the couple should live with the grandfather—M. Gillenormand insisted on resigning to them his chamber, the finest in the house. "That will make me young again," he said. "It's an old plan of mine. I have always entertained the idea of having a wedding in my chamber."

He furnished this chamber with a multitude of elegant trifles. He had the ceiling and walls hung with an extraordinary stuff, which he had by him in the piece, and which he believed to have emanated from Utrecht, with a buttercup-colored satin ground, covered with velvet auricula blossoms.—"It was with that stuff," said he, "that the bed of the Duchesse d'Anville at la Roche-Guyon was draped."—On the chimney-piece, he set a little figure in Saxe porcelain, carrying a muff against her nude stomach.

M. Gillenormand's library became the lawyer's study, which Marius needed; a study, it will be remembered, being required by the council of the order.

CHAPTER VII

THE EFFECTS OF DREAMS MINGLED WITH HAPPINESS

The lovers saw each other every day. Cosette came with M. Fauchelevent.—"This is reversing things," said Mademoiselle Gillenormand, "to have the bride come to the house to do the courting like this." But Marius' convalescence had caused the habit to become established, and the arm-chairs of the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire, better adapted to interviews than the straw chairs of the Rue de l'Homme Armé, had rooted it. Marius and M. Fauchelevent saw each other, but did not address each other. It seemed as though this had been agreed upon. Every girl needs a chaperon. Cosette could not have come without M. Fauchelevent. In Marius' eyes, M.

Fauchelevent was the condition attached to Cosette. He accepted it. By dint of discussing political matters, vaguely and without precision, from the point of view of the general amelioration of the fate of all men, they came to say a little more than "yes" and "no." Once, on the subject of education, which Marius wished to have free and obligatory, multiplied under all forms, lavished on every one, like the air and the sun, in a word, respirable for the entire population, they were in unison, and they almost conversed. M. Fauchelevent talked well, and even with a certain loftiness of language—still he lacked something indescribable. M. Fauchelevent possessed something less and also something more, than a man of the world.

Marius, inwardly, and in the depths of his thought, surrounded with all sorts of mute questions this M. Fauchelevent, who was to him simply benevolent and cold. There were moments when doubts as to his own recollections occurred to him. There was a void in his memory, a black spot, an abyss excavated by four months of agony.—Many things had been lost therein. He had come to the point of asking himself whether it were really a fact that he had seen M. Fauchelevent, so serious and so calm a man, in the barricade.

This was not, however, the only stupor which the apparitions and the disappearances of the past had left in his mind. It must not be supposed that he was delivered from all those obsessions of the memory which force us, even when happy, even when satisfied, to glance sadly behind us. The head which does not turn backwards towards horizons that have vanished contains neither thought nor love. At times, Marius clasped his face between his hands, and the vague and tumultuous past traversed the twilight which reigned in his brain. Again he beheld Mabeuf fall, he heard Gavroche singing amid the grape-shot, he felt beneath his lips the cold brow of Éponine; Enjolras, Courfeyrac, Jean Prouvaire, Combeferre, Bossuet, Grantaire, all his friends rose erect before him, then dispersed into thin air. Were all those dear, sorrowful, valiant, charming or tragic beings merely dreams? had they actually existed? The revolt had enveloped everything in its smoke. These great fevers create great dreams. He questioned himself; he felt himself; all these vanished realities made him dizzy. Where were they all then? was it really true that all were dead? A fall into the shadows had carried off all except himself. It all seemed to him to have disappeared as though behind the curtain of a theatre. There are curtains like this which drop in life. God passes on to the following act.

And he himself—was he actually the same man? He, the poor man, was rich; he, the abandoned, had a family; he, the despairing, was to marry Cosette. It seemed to him that he had traversed a tomb, and that he had entered into it black and had emerged from it white, and in that tomb the others had remained. At certain moments, all these beings of the past, returned and present, formed a circle around him, and overshadowed him; then he thought of Cosette, and recovered his serenity; but nothing less than this felicity could have sufficed to efface that catastrophe.

M. Fauchelevent almost occupied a place among these vanished beings. Marius hesitated to believe that the Fauchelevent of the barricade was the same as this Fauchelevent in flesh and blood, sitting so gravely beside Cosette. The first was, probably, one of those nightmares occasioned and brought back by his hours of delirium. However, the natures of both men were rigid, no question from Marius to M. Fauchelevent was possible. Such an idea had not even occurred to him. We have already indicated this characteristic detail.

Two men who have a secret in common, and who, by a sort of tacit agreement, exchange not a word on the subject, are less rare than is commonly supposed.

Once only, did Marius make the attempt. He introduced into the conversation the Rue de la Chanvrerie, and, turning to M. Fauchelevent, he said to him:

"Of course, you are acquainted with that street?"

"What street?"

"The Rue de la Chanvrerie."

"I have no idea of the name of that street," replied M. Fauchelevent, in the most natural manner in the world.

The response which bore upon the name of the street and not upon the street itself, appeared to Marius to be more conclusive than it really was.

"Decidedly," thought he, "I have been dreaming. I have been subject to a hallucination. It was some one who resembled him. M. Fauchelevent was not there."

CHAPTER VIII

TWO MEN IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND

MARIUS' enchantment, great as it was, could not efface from his mind other pre-occupations.

While the wedding was in preparation, and while awaiting the date fixed upon, he caused difficult and scrupulous retrospective researches to be made.

He owed gratitude in various quarters; he owed it on his father's account, he owed it on his own.

There was Thénardier; there was the unknown man who had brought him, Marius, back to M. Gillenormand.

Marius endeavored to find these two men, not intending to marry, to be happy, and to forget them, and fearing that, were these debts of gratitude not discharged, they would leave a shadow on his life, which promised so brightly for the future.

It was impossible for him to leave all these arrears of suffering behind him, and he wished, before entering joyously into the future, to obtain a quittance from the past.

That Thénardier was a villain detracted nothing from the fact that he had saved Colonel Pontmercy. Thénardier was a ruffian in the eyes of all the world except Marius.

And Marius, ignorant of the real scene in the battle field of Waterloo, was not aware of the peculiar detail, that his father, so far as Thénardier was concerned, was in the strange position of being indebted to the latter for his life, without being indebted to him for any gratitude.

None of the various agents whom Marius employed succeeded in discovering any trace of Thénardier. Obliteration appeared to be complete in that quarter. Madame Thénardier had died in prison pending the trial. Thénardier and his daughter Azelma, the only two remaining of that lamentable group, had plunged back into the gloom. The gulf of the social unknown had silently closed above those beings. On the surface there was not visible so much as that quiver, that trembling, those obscure concentric circles which announce that something has fallen in, and that the plummet may be dropped.

Madame Thénardier being dead, Boulatruelle being eliminated from the case, Claquesous having disappeared, the principal persons accused having escaped from prison, the trial connected with the ambush in the Gorbeau house had come to nothing.

That affair had remained rather obscure. The bench of Assizes had been obliged to content themselves with two subordinates. Panchaud, alias Printanier, alias Bigrenaille, and Demi-Liard, alias Deux-Milliards, who had been inconsistently condemned, after a hearing of both sides of the case, to ten years in the galleys. Hard labor for life had been the sentence pronounced against the escaped and contumacious accomplices.

Thénardier, the head and leader, had been, through contumacy, likewise condemned to death.

This sentence was the only information remaining about Thénardier, casting upon that buried name its sinister light like a candle beside a bier.

Moreover, by thrusting Thénardier back into the very remotest depths, through a fear of being re-captured, this sentence added to the density of the shadows which enveloped this man.

As for the other person, as for the unknown man who had saved Marius, the researches were at first to some extent successful, then came to an abrupt conclusion. They succeeded in finding the carriage which had brought Marius to the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire on the evening of the 6th of June.

The coachman declared that, on the 6th of June, in obedience to the commands of a police-agent, he had stood from three o'clock in the afternoon until nightfall on the Quai des Champs-Élysées, above the outlet of the Grand Sewer; that, towards nine o'clock in the evening, the grating of the sewer, which abuts on the bank of the river, had opened; that a man had emerged therefrom, bearing on his shoulders another man, who seemed to be dead; that the agent, who was on the watch at that point, had arrested the living man and had seized the dead man; that, at the order of the police-agent, he, the coachman, had taken "all those folks" into his carriage; that they had first driven to the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire; that they had there deposited the dead man; that the dead man was Monsieur Marius, and that he, the coachman, recognized him perfectly, although he was alive "this time"; that afterwards, they had entered the vehicle again, that he had whipped up his horses; a few paces from the gate of the Archives, they had called to him to halt; that there, in the street, they had paid him and left him, and that the police-agent had led the other man away; that he knew nothing more; that the night had been very dark.

Marius, as we have said, recalled nothing. He only remembered that he had been seized from behind by an energetic hand at the moment when he was falling backwards into the barricade; then, everything vanished so far as he was concerned.

He had only regained consciousness at M. Gillenormand's.

He was lost in conjectures.

He could not doubt his own identity. Still, how had it come to pass that, having fallen in the Rue de la Chanvrerie, he had been picked up by the police-agent on the banks of the Seine, near the Pont des Invalides?

Some one had carried him from the Quartier des Halles to the Champs-Élysées. And how? Through the sewer. Unheard-of devotion!

Some one? Who?

This was the man for whom Marius was searching.

Of this man, who was his savior, nothing; not a trace; not the faintest indication.

Marius, although forced to preserve great reserve, in that direction, pushed his inquiries as far as the prefecture of police. There, no more than elsewhere, did the information obtained lead to any enlightenment.

The prefecture knew less about the matter than did the hackney-coachman. They had no knowledge of any arrest having been made on the 6th of June at the mouth of the Grand Sewer.

No report of any agent had been received there upon this matter, which was regarded at the prefecture as a fable. The invention of this fable was attributed to the coachman.

A coachman who wants a gratuity is capable of anything, even of imagination. The fact was assured, nevertheless, and Marius could not doubt it, unless he doubted his own identity, as we have just said.

Everything about this singular enigma was inexplicable.

What had become of that man, that mysterious man, whom the coachman had seen emerge from the grating of the Grand Sewer bearing upon his back the unconscious Marius, and whom the police-agent on the watch had arrested in the very act of rescuing an insurgent? What had become of the agent himself?

Why had this agent preserved silence? Had the man succeeded in making his escape? Had he bribed the agent? Why did this man give no sign of life to Marius, who owed everything to him? His disinterestedness was no less tremendous than his devotion. Why had not that man appeared again? Perhaps he was above compensation, but no one is above gratitude. Was he dead? Who was the man? What sort of a face had he? No one could tell him this.

The coachman answered: "The night was very dark." Basque and Nicolette, all in a flutter, had looked only at their young master all covered with blood.

The porter, whose candle had lighted the tragic arrival of Marius, had been the only one to take note of the man in question, and this is the description that he gave:

"That man was terrible."

Marius had the blood-stained clothing which he had worn when he had been brought back to his grandfather preserved, in the hope that it would prove of service in his researches.

On examining the coat, it was found that one skirt had been torn in a singular way. A piece was missing.

One evening, Marius was speaking in the presence of Cosette and Jean Valjean of the whole of that singular adventure, of the innumerable inquiries which he had made, and of the fruitlessness of his efforts. The cold countenance of "Monsieur Fauchelevent" angered him.

He exclaimed, with a vivacity which had something of wrath in it:

"Yes, that man, whoever he may have been, was sublime. Do you know what he did, sir? He intervened like an archangel. He must have flung himself into the midst of the battle, have stolen me away, have opened the sewer, have dragged me into it, and have carried me through it! He must have traversed more than a league and a half in those frightful subterranean galleries, bent over, weighed down, in the dark, in the cess-pool,—more than a league and a half, sir, with a corpse upon his back! And with what object? With the sole object of saving the corpse. And that corpse I was. He said to himself: 'There may still be a glimpse of life there, perchance; I will risk my own existence for that miserable spark!' And his existence he risked not once but twenty times! And every step was a danger. The proof of it is, that on emerging from the sewer, he was arrested. Do you know, sir, that that man did all this? And he had no recompense to expect. What was I? An insurgent. What was I? One of the conquered. Oh! if Cosette's six hundred thousand francs were mine . . ."

"They are yours," interrupted Jean Valjean.

"Well," resumed Marius, "I would give them all to find that man once more."

Jean Valjean remained silent.

BOOK SIXTH.—THE SLEEPLESS NIGHT

CHAPTER I

THE 16TH OF FEBRUARY, 1833

THE night of the 16th to the 17th of February, 1833, was a blessed night. Above its shadows heaven stood open. It was the wedding night of Marius and Cosette.

The day had been adorable.

It had not been the grand festival dreamed by the grandfather, a fairy spectacle, with a confusion of cherubim and Cupids over the heads of the bridal pair, a marriage worthy to form the subject of a painting to be placed over a door; but it had been sweet and smiling.

The manner of marriage in 1833 was not the same as it is to-day. France had not yet borrowed from England that supreme delicacy of carrying off one's wife, of fleeing, on coming out of church, of hiding oneself with shame from one's happiness, and of combining the ways of a bankrupt with the delights of the Song of Songs. People had not yet grasped to the full the chastity, exquisiteness, and decency of jolting their paradise in a posting-chaise, of breaking up their mystery with clic-clacs, of taking for a nuptial bed the bed of an inn, and of leaving behind them, in a commonplace chamber, at so much a night, the most sacred of the souvenirs of life mingled pell-mell with the tête-à-tête of the conductor of the diligence and the maid-servant of the inn.

In this second half of the nineteenth century in which we are now living, the mayor and his scarf, the priest and his chasuble, the law and God no longer suffice; they must be eked out by the Postilion de Lonjumeau; a blue waistcoat turned up with red, and with bell buttons, a plaque like a vantbrace, knee-breeches of green leather, oaths to the Norman horses with their tails knotted up, false galloons, varnished hat, long powdered locks, an enormous whip and tall boots. France does not yet carry elegance to the length of doing like the English nobility, and raining down on the post-chaise of the bridal pair a hail storm of slippers trodden down at heel and of worn-out shoes, in memory of Churchill, afterwards Marlborough, or Malbrouck, who was assailed on his wedding-day by the wrath of an aunt which brought him good luck. Old shoes and slippers do not, as yet, form a part of our nuptial celebrations; but patience, as good taste continues to spread, we shall come to that.

In 1833, a hundred years ago, marriage was not conducted at a full trot.

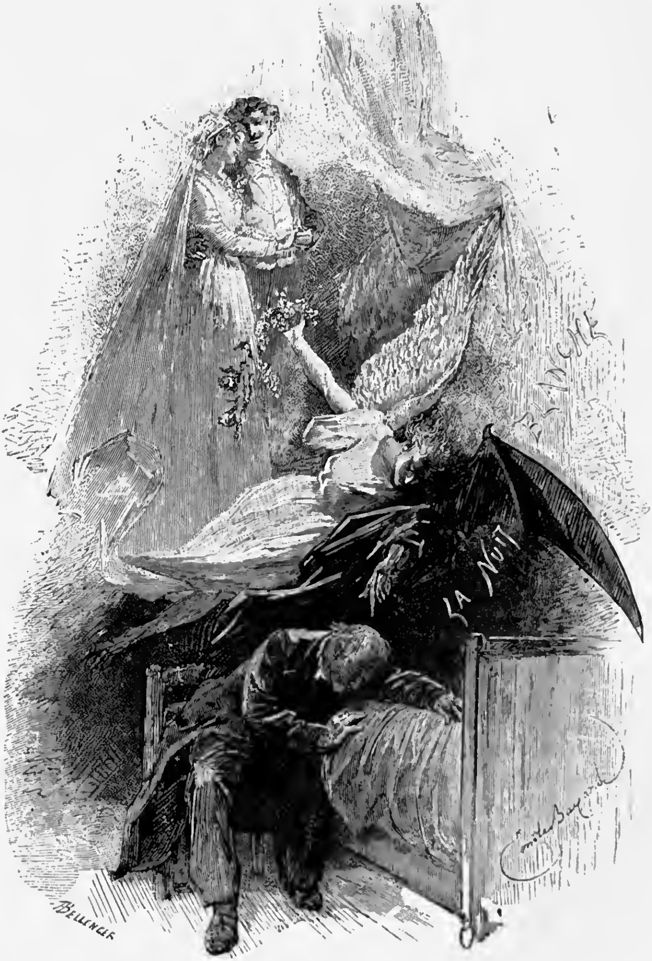
Strange to say, at that epoch, people still imagined that a wedding was a private and social festival, that a patriarchal banquet does not spoil a domestic solemnity, that gayety, even in excess, provided it be honest, and decent, does happiness no harm, and that, in short, it is a good and a venerable thing that the fusion of these two destinies whence a family is destined to spring, should begin at home, and that the household should thenceforth have its nuptial chamber as its witness.

And people were so immodest as to marry in their own homes.

The marriage took place, therefore, in accordance with this now superannuated fashion, at M. Gillenormand's house.

Natural and commonplace as this matter of marrying is, the banns to publish, the papers to be drawn up, the mayoralty, and the church produce some complication. They could not get ready before the 16th of February.

Now, we note this detail, for the pure satisfaction of being exact, it chanced that the 16th fell on Shrove Tuesday. Hesitations, scruples, particularly on the part of Aunt Gillenormand.


BLANCHE
LA NUIT

THE SLEEPLESS NIGHT.

"Shrove Tuesday!" exclaimed the grandfather, "so much the better. There is a proverb:

> " 'Mariage un Mardi gras
> N'aura point enfants ingrats.'[1]

Let us proceed. Here goes for the 16th! Do you want to delay, Marius?"

"No, certainly not!" replied the lover.

"Let us marry, then," cried the grandfather.

Accordingly, the marriage took place on the 16th, notwithstanding the public merrymaking. It rained that day, but there is always in the sky a tiny scrap of blue at the service of happiness, which lovers see, even when the rest of creation is under an umbrella.

On the preceding evening, Jean Valjean handed to Marius, in the presence of M. Gillenormand, the five hundred and eighty-four thousand francs.

As the marriage was taking place under the régime of community of property, the papers had been simple.

Henceforth, Toussaint was of no use to Jean Valjean; Cosette inherited her and promoted her to the rank of lady's maid.

As for Jean Valjean, a beautiful chamber in the Gillenormand house had been furnished expressly for him, and Cosette had said to him in such an irresistible manner: "Father, I entreat you," that she had almost persuaded him to promise that he would come and occupy it.

A few days before that fixed on for the marriage, an accident happened to Jean Valjean; he crushed the thumb of his right hand. This was not a serious matter; and he had not allowed any one to trouble himself about it, nor to dress it, nor even to see his hurt, not even Cosette. Nevertheless, this had forced him to swathe his hand in a linen bandage, and to carry his arm in a sling, and had prevented his signing. M. Gillenormand, in his capacity of Cosette's supervising-guardian, had supplied his place.

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[1] "A Shrove-Tuesday marriage will have no ungrateful children."

We will not conduct the reader either to the mayor's office or to the church. One does not follow a pair of lovers to that extent, and one is accustomed to turn one's back on the drama as soon as it puts a wedding nosegay in its buttonhole. We will confine ourselves to noting an incident which, though unnoticed by the wedding party, marked the transit from the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire to the church of Saint-Paul.

At that epoch, the northern extremity of the Rue Saint-Louis was in process of repaving. It was barred off, beginning with the Rue du Parc-Royal. It was impossible for the wedding carriages to go directly to Saint-Paul. They were obliged to alter their course, and the simplest way was to turn through the boulevard. One of the invited guests observed that it was Shrove Tuesday, and that there would be a jam of vehicles.—"Why?" asked M. Gillenormand.—"Because of the maskers."—"Capital," said the grandfather, "let us go that way. These young folks are on the way to be married; they are about to enter the serious part of life. This will prepare them for seeing a bit of the masquerade."

They went by way of the boulevard. The first wedding coach held Cosette and Aunt Gillenormand, M. Gillenormand, and Jean Valjean. Marius, still separated from his betrothed, according to usage, did not come until the second. The nuptial train, on emerging from the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire, became entangled in a long procession of vehicles which formed an endless chain from the Madeleine to the Bastille, and from the Bastille to the Madeleine. Maskers abounded on the boulevard. In spite of the fact that it was raining at intervals, Merry-Andrew, Pantaloon and Clown persisted. In the good humor of that winter of 1833, Paris had disguised itself as Venice. Such Shrove Tuesdays are no longer to be seen now-a-days. Everything which exists being a scattered Carnival, there is no longer any Carnival.

The sidewalks were overflowing with pedestrians and the windows with curious spectators. The terraces which crown the peristyles of the theatres were bordered with spectators. Besides the maskers, they stared at that procession—peculiar to Shrove Tuesday as to Longchamps,—of vehicles of every description, citadines, tapissières, carioles, cabriolets marching in order, rigorously riveted to each other by the police regulations, and locked into rails, as it were. Any one in these vehicles is at once a spectator and a spectacle. Police-sergeants maintained, on the sides of the boulevard, these two interminable parallel files, moving in contrary directions, and saw to it that nothing interfered with that double current, those two brooks of carriages, flowing, the one down stream, the other up stream, the one towards the Chaussée d'Antin, the other towards the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. The carriages of the peers of France and of the Ambassadors, emblazoned with coats of arms, held the middle of the way, going and coming freely. Certain joyous and magnificent trains, notably that of the Bœuf Gras, had the same privilege. In this gayety of Paris, England cracked her whip; Lord Seymour's post-chaise, harassed by a nickname from the populace, passed with great noise.

In the double file, along which the municipal guards galloped like sheep-dogs, honest family coaches, loaded down with great-aunts and grandmothers, displayed at their doors fresh groups of children in disguise, Clowns of seven years of age, Columbines of six, ravishing little creatures, who felt that they formed an official part of the public mirth, who were imbued with the dignity of their harlequinade, and who possessed the gravity of functionaries.

From time to time, a hitch arose somewhere in the procession of vehicles; one or other of the two lateral files halted until the knot was disentangled; one carriage delayed sufficed to paralyze the whole line. Then they set out again on the march.

The wedding carriages were in the file proceeding towards the Bastille, and skirting the right side of the Boulevard. At the top of the Pont-aux-Choux, there was a stoppage. Nearly at the same moment, the other file, which was proceeding towards the Madeleine, halted also. At that point of the file there was a carriage-load of maskers.

These carriages, or to speak more correctly, these wagon-loads of maskers are very familiar to Parisians. If they were missing on a Shrove Tuesday, or at the Mid-Lent, it would be taken in bad part, and people would say: "There's something behind that. Probably the ministry is about to undergo a change." A pile of Cassandras, Harlequins and Columbines, jolted along high above the passers-by, all possible grotesquenesses, from the Turk to the savage, Hercules supporting Marquises, fishwives who would have made Rabelais stop up his ears just as the Mœnads made Aristophanes drop his eyes, tow wigs, pink tights, dandified hats, spectacles of a grimacer, three-cornered hats of Janot tormented with a butterfly, shouts directed at pedestrians, fists on hips, bold attitudes, bare shoulders, immodesty unchained; a chaos of shamelessness driven by a coachman crowned with flowers; this is what that institution was like.

Greece stood in need of the chariot of Thespis, France stands in need of the hackney-coach of Vadé.

Everything can be parodied, even parody. The Saturnalia, that grimace of antique beauty, ends, through exaggeration after exaggeration, in Shrove Tuesday; and the Bacchanal, formerly crowned with sprays of vine leaves and grapes, inundated with sunshine, displaying her marble breast in a divine semi-nudity, having at the present day lost her shape under the soaked rags of the North, has finally come to be called the Jack-pudding.

The tradition of carriage-loads of maskers runs back to the most ancient days of the monarchy. The accounts of Louis XI. allot to the bailiff of the palace "twenty sous, Tournois, for three coaches of mascarades in the cross-roads." In our day, these noisy heaps of creatures are accustomed to have themselves driven in some ancient cuckoo carriage, whose imperial they load down, or they overwhelm a hired landau, with its top thrown back, with their tumultuous groups. Twenty of them ride in a carriage intended for six. They cling to the seats, to the rumble, on the cheeks of the hood, on the shafts. They even bestride the carriage lamps. They stand, sit, lie, with their knees drawn up in a knot, and their legs hanging. The women sit on the men's laps. Far away, above the throng of heads, their wild pyramid is visible. These carriage-loads form mountains of mirth in the midst of the rout. Collé, Panard and Piron flow from it, enriched with slang. This carriage which has become colossal through its freight, has an air of conquest. Uproar reigns in front, tumult behind. People vociferate, shout, howl, there they break forth and writhe with enjoyment; gayety roars; sarcasm flames forth, joviality is flaunted like a red flag; two jades there drag farce blossomed forth into an apotheosis; it is the triumphal car of laughter.

A laughter that is too cynical to be frank. In truth, this laughter is suspicious. This laughter has a mission. It is charged with proving the Carnival to the Parisians.

These fishwife vehicles, in which one feels one knows not what shadows, set the philosopher to thinking. There is government therein. There one lays one's finger on a mysterious affinity between public men and public women.

It certainly is sad that turpitude heaped up should give a sum total of gayety, that by piling ignominy upon opprobrium the people should be enticed, that the system of spying, and serving as caryatids to prostitution should amuse the rabble when it confronts them, that the crowd loves to behold that monstrous living pile of tinsel rags, half dung, half light, roll by on four wheels howling and laughing, that they should clap their hands at this glory composed of all shames, that there would be no festival for the populace, did not the police promenade in their midst these sorts of twenty-headed hydras of joy. But what can be done about it? These be-ribboned and be-flowered tumbrils of mire are insulted and pardoned by the laughter of the public. The laughter of all is the accomplice of universal degradation. Certain unhealthy festivals disaggregate the people and convert them into the populace. And populaces, like tyrants, require buffoons. The King has Roquelaure, the populace has the Merry-Andrew. Paris is a great, mad city on every occasion that it is a great sublime city. There the Carnival forms part of politics. Paris,—let us confess it—willingly allows infamy to furnish it with comedy. She only demands of her masters—when she has masters—one thing: "Paint me the mud." Rome was of the same mind. She loved Nero. Nero was a titanic lighterman.

Chance ordained, as we have just said, that one of these shapeless clusters of masked men and women, dragged about on a vast calash, should halt on the left of the boulevard, while the wedding train halted on the right. The carriage-load of masks caught sight of the wedding carriage containing the bridal party opposite them on the other side of the boulevard.

"Hullo!" said a masker, "here's a wedding."

"A sham wedding," retorted another. "We are the genuine article."

And, being too far off to accost the wedding party, and fearing also, the rebuke of the police, the two maskers turned their eyes elsewhere.

At the end of another minute, the carriage-load of maskers had their hands full, the multitude set to yelling, which is the crowd's caress to masquerades; and the two maskers who had just spoken had to face the throng with their comrades, and did not find the entire repertory of projectiles of the fish-markets too extensive to retort to the enormous verbal attacks of the populace. A frightful exchange of metaphors took place between the maskers and the crowd.

In the meanwhile, two other maskers in the same carriage, a Spaniard with an enormous nose, an elderly air, and huge black moustache, and a gaunt fishwife, who was quite a young girl, masked with a *loup*,[1] had also noticed the wedding, and while their companions and the passers-by were exchanging insults, they had held a dialogue in a low voice.

Their aside was covered by the tumult and was lost in it. The gusts of rain had drenched the front of the vehicle, which was wide open; the breezes of February are not warm; as the fishwife, clad in a low-necked gown, replied to the Spaniard, she shivered, laughed and coughed.

[1] A short mask.

Here is their dialogue:

"Say, now."

"What, daddy?"

"Do you see that old cove?"

"What old cove?"

"Yonder, in the first wedding-cart, on our side."

"The one with his arm hung up in a black cravat?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"I'm sure that I know him."

"Ah!"

"I'm willing that they should cut my throat, and I'm ready to swear that I never said either you, thou, or I, in my life, if I don't know that Parisian." [*pantinois.*]

"Paris in Pantin to-day."

"Can you see the bride if you stoop down?"

"No."

"And the bridegroom?"

"There's no bridegroom in that trap."

"Bah!"

"Unless it's the old fellow."

"Try to get a sight of the bride by stooping very low."

"I can't."

"Never mind, that old cove who has something the matter with his paw I know, and that I'm positive."

"And what good does it do to know him?"

"No one can tell. Sometimes it does!"

"I don't care a hang for old fellows, that I don't!"

"I know him."

"Know him, if you want to."

"How the devil does he come to be one of the wedding party?"

"We are in it, too."

"Where does that wedding come from?"

"How should I know?"

"Listen."

"Well, what?"

"There's one thing you ought to do."

"What's that?"

"Get off of our trap and spin that wedding."

"What for?"

"To find out where it goes, and what it is. Hurry up and jump down, trot, my girl, your legs are young."

"I can't quit the vehicle."

"Why not?"

"I'm hired."

"Ah, the devil!"

"I owe my fishwife day to the prefecture."

"That's true."

"If I leave the cart, the first inspector who gets his eye on me will arrest me. You know that well enough."

"Yes, I do."

"I'm bought by the government for to-day."

"All the same, that old fellow bothers me."

"Do the old fellows bother you? But you're not a young girl."

"He's in the first carriage."

"Well?"

"In the bride's trap."

"What then?"

"So he is the father."

"What concern is that of mine?"

"I tell you that he's the father."

"As if he were the only father."

"Listen."

"What?"

"I can't go out otherwise than masked. Here I'm concealed, no one knows that I'm here. But to-morrow, there will be no more maskers. It's Ash Wednesday. I run the risk of being nabbed. I must sneak back into my hole. But you are free."

"Not particularly."

"More than I am, at any rate."

"Well, what of that?"

"You must try to find out where that wedding-party went to."

"Where it went?"

"Yes."

"I know."

"Where is it going then?"

"To the Cadran-Bleu."

"In the first place, it's not in that direction."

"Well! to la Rapée."

"Or elsewhere."

"It's free. Wedding-parties are at liberty."

"That's not the point at all. I tell you that you must try to learn for me what that wedding is, who that old cove belongs to, and where that wedding pair lives."

"I like that! that would be queer. It's so easy to find out a wedding-party that passed through the street on a Shrove Tuesday, a week afterwards. A pin in a hay-mow! It ain't possible!"

"That don't matter. You must try. You understand me, Azelma."

The two files resumed their movement on both sides of the boulevard, in opposite directions, and the carriage of the maskers lost sight of the "trap" of the bride.

CHAPTER II

JEAN VALJEAN STILL WEARS HIS ARM IN A SLING

To realize one's dream. To whom is this accorded? There must be elections for this in heaven; we are all candidates, unknown to ourselves; the angels vote. Cosette and Marius had been elected.

Cosette, both at the mayor's office and at church, was dazzling and touching. Toussaint, assisted by Nicolette, had dressed her.

Cosette wore over a petticoat of white taffeta, her robe of

Binche guipure, a veil of English point, a necklace of fine pearls, a wreath of orange flowers; all this was white, and, from the midst of that whiteness she beamed forth. It was an exquisite candor expanding and becoming transfigured in the light. One would have pronounced her a virgin on the point of turning into a goddess.

Marius' handsome hair was lustrous and perfumed; here and there, beneath the thick curls, pale lines—the scars of the barricade—were visible.

The grandfather, haughty, with head held high, amalgamating more than ever in his toilet and his manners all the elegances of the epoch of Barras, escorted Cosette. He took the place of Jean Valjean, who, on account of his arm being still in a sling, could not give his hand to the bride.

Jean Valjean, dressed in black, followed them with a smile.

"Monsieur Fauchelevent," said the grandfather to him, "this is a fine day. I vote for the end of afflictions and sorrows. Henceforth, there must be no sadness anywhere. Pardieu, I decree joy! Evil has no right to exist. That there should be any unhappy men is, in sooth, a disgrace to the azure of the sky. Evil does not come from man, who is good at bottom. All human miseries have for their capital and central government hell, otherwise, known as the Devil's Tuileries. Good, here I am uttering demagogical words! As far as I am concerned, I have no longer any political opinions; let all me be rich, that is to say, mirthful, and I confine myself to that."

When, at the conclusion of all the ceremonies, after having pronounced before the mayor and before the priest all possible "yesses," after having signed the registers at the municipality and at the sacristy, after having exchanged their rings, after having knelt side by side under the pall of white moire in the smoke of the censer, they arrived, hand in hand, admired and envied by all, Marius in black, she in white, preceded by the suisse, with the epaulets of a colonel, tapping the pavement with his halberd, between two rows of astonished spectators, at the portals of the church, both leaves of which were thrown wide open, ready to enter their carriage again, and all being finished, Cosette still could not believe that it was real. She looked at Marius, she looked at the crowd, she looked at the sky: it seemed as though she feared that she should wake up from her dream. Her amazed and uneasy air added something indescribably enchanting to her beauty. They entered the same carriage to return home, Marius beside Cosette; M. Gillenormand and Jean Valjean sat opposite them; Aunt Gillenormand had withdrawn one degree, and was in the second vehicle.

"My children," said the grandfather, "here you are, Monsieur le Baron and Madame la Baronne, with an income of thirty thousand livres."

And Cosette, nestling close to Marius, caressed his ear with an angelic whisper: "So it is true. My name is Marius. I am Madame Thou."

These two creatures were resplendent. They had reached that irrevocable and irrecoverable moment, at the dazzling intersection of all youth and all joy. They realized the verses of Jean Prouvaire; they were forty years old taken together. It was marriage sublimated; these two children were two lilies. They did not see each other, they did not contemplate each other. Cosette perceived Marius in the midst of a glory; Marius perceived Cosette on an altar. And on that altar, and in that glory, the two apotheoses mingling, in the background, one knows not how, behind a cloud for Cosette, in a flash for Marius, there was the ideal thing, the real thing, the meeting of the kiss and the dream, the nuptial pillow. All the torments through which they had passed came back to them in intoxication. It seemed to them that their sorrows, their sleepless nights, their tears, their anguish, their terrors, their despair, converted into caresses and rays of light, rendered still more charming the charming hour which was approaching; and that their griefs were but so many handmaidens who were preparing the toilet of joy. How good it is to have suffered! Their unhappiness formed a halo round their happiness. The long agony of their love was terminating in an ascension.

It was the same enchantment in two souls, tinged with voluptuousness in Marius, and with modesty in Cosette. They said to each other in low tones: "We will go back to take a look at our little garden in the Rue Plumet." The folds of Cosette's gown lay across Marius.

Such a day is an ineffable mixture of dream and of reality. One possesses and one supposes. One still has time before one to divine. The emotion on that day, of being at mid-day and of dreaming of midnight is indescribable. The delights of these two hearts overflowed upon the crowd, and inspired the passers-by with cheerfulness.

People halted in the Rue Saint-Antoine, in front of Saint-Paul, to gaze through the windows of the carriage at the orange-flowers quivering on Cosette's head.

Then they returned home to the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire. Marius, triumphant and radiant, mounted side by side with Cosette the staircase up which he had been borne in a dying condition. The poor, who had trooped to the door, and who shared their purses, blessed them. There were flowers everywhere. The house was no less fragrant than the church; after the incense, roses. They thought they heard voices carolling in the infinite; they had God in their hearts; destiny appeared to them like a ceiling of stars; above their heads they beheld the light of a rising sun. All at once, the clock struck. Marius glanced at Cosette's charming bare arm, and at the rosy things which were vaguely visible through the lace of her bodice, and Cosette, intercepting Marius' glance, blushed to her very hair.

Quite a number of old family friends of the Gillenormand family had been invited; they pressed about Cosette. Each one vied with the rest in saluting her as Madame la Baronne.

The officer, Théodule Gillenormand, now a captain, had come from Chartres, where he was stationed in garrison, to be present at the wedding of his cousin Pontmercy. Cosette did not recognize him.

He, on his side, habituated as he was to have women consider him handsome, retained no more recollection of Cosette than of any other woman.

"How right I was not to believe in that story about the lancer!" said Father Gillenormand to himself.

Cosette had never been more tender with Jean Valjean. She was in unison with Father Gillenormand; while he erected joy into aphorisms and maxims, she exhaled goodness like a perfume. Happiness desires that all the world should be happy.

She regained, for the purpose of addressing Jean Valjean, inflections of voice belonging to the time when she was a little girl. She caressed him with her smile.

A banquet had been spread in the dining-room.

Illumination as brilliant as the daylight is the necessary seasoning of a great joy. Mist and obscurity are not accepted by the happy. They do not consent to be black. The night, yes; the shadows, no. If there is no sun, one must be made.

The dining-room was full of gay things. In the centre, above the white and glittering table, was a Venetian lustre with flat plates, with all sorts of colored birds, blue, violet, red, and green, perched amid the candles; around the chandelier, girandoles, on the walls, sconces with triple and quintuple branches; mirrors, silverware, glassware, plate, porcelain, faïence, pottery, gold and silversmith's work, all was sparkling and gay. The empty spaces between the candelabra were filled in with bouquets, so that where there was not a light, there was a flower.

In the antechamber, three violins and a flute softly played quartettes by Haydn.

Jean Valjean had seated himself on a chair in the drawing-room, behind the door, the leaf of which folded back upon him in such a manner as to nearly conceal him. A few moments before they sat down to table, Cosette came, as though inspired by a sudden whim, and made him a deep courtesy, spreading out her bridal toilet with both hands, and with a tenderly roguish glance, she asked him:

"Father, are you satisfied?"

"Yes," said Jean Valjean, "I am content."

"Well, then, laugh."

Jean Valjean began to laugh.

A few moments later, Basque announced that dinner was served.

The guests, preceded by M. Gillenormand with Cosette on his arm, entered the dining-room, and arranged themselves in the proper order around the table.

Two large arm-chairs figured on the right and left of the bride, the first for M. Gillenormand, the other for Jean Valjean. M. Gillenormand took his seat. The other arm-chair remained empty.

They looked about for M. Fauchelevent.

He was no longer there.

M. Gillenormand questioned Basque.

"Do you know where M. Fauchelevent is?"

"Sir," replied Basque, "I do, precisely. M. Fauchelevent told me to say to you, sir, that he was suffering, his injured hand was paining him somewhat, and that he could not dine with Monsieur le Baron and Madame la Baronne. That he begged to be excused, that he would come to-morrow. He has just taken his departure."

That empty arm-chair chilled the effusion of the wedding feast for a moment. But, if M. Fauchelevent was absent, M. Gillenormand was present, and the grandfather beamed for two. He affirmed that M. Fauchelevent had done well to retire early, if he were suffering, but that it was only a slight ailment. This declaration sufficed. Moreover, what is an obscure corner in such a submersion of joy? Cosette and Marius were passing through one of those egotistical and blessed moments when no other faculty is left to a person than that of receiving happiness. And then, an idea occurred to M. Gillenormand.—"Pardieu, this arm-chair is empty. Come hither, Marius. Your aunt will permit it, although she has a right to you. This armchair is for you. That is legal and delightful. Fortunatus beside Fortunata."—Applause from the whole table. Marius took Jean Valjean's place beside Cosette, and things fell out so that Cosette, who had, at first, been saddened by Jean Valjean's absence, ended by being satisfied with it. From the moment when Marius took his place, and was the substitute, Cosette would not have regretted God himself. She set her sweet little foot, shod in white satin, on Marius' foot.

The arm-chair being occupied, M. Fauchelevent was obliterated; and nothing was lacking.

And, five minutes afterward, the whole table, from one end to the other, was laughing with all the animation of forgetfulness.

At dessert, M. Gillenormand, rising to his feet, with a glass of champagne in his hand—only half full so that the palsy of his eighty years might not cause an overflow,—proposed the health of the married pair.

"You shall not escape two sermons," he exclaimed. "This morning you had one from the curé, this evening you shall have one from your grandfather. Listen to me; I will give you a bit of advice: Adore each other. I do not make a pack of gyrations, I go straight to the mark, be happy. In all creation, only the turtle-doves are wise. Philosophers say: 'Moderate your joys.' I say: 'Give rein to your joys.' Be as much smitten with each other as fiends. Be in a rage about it. The philosophers talk stuff and nonsense. I should like to stuff their philosophy down their gullets again. Can there be too many perfumes, too many open rose-buds, too many nightingales singing, too many green leaves, too much aurora in life? can people love each other too much? can people please each other too much? Take care, Estelle, thou art too pretty! Have a care, Nemorin, thou art too handsome! Fine stupidity, in sooth! Can people enchant each other too much, cajole each other too much, charm each other too much? Can one be too much alive, too happy? Moderate your joys. Ah, indeed! Down with the philosophers! Wisdom consists in jubilation. Make merry, let us make merry. Are we happy because we are good, or are we good because we are happy?

Is the Sancy diamond called the Sancy because it belonged to Harley de Sancy, or because it weighs six hundred carats? I know nothing about it, life is full of such problems; the important point is to possess the Sancy and happiness. Let us be happy without quibbling and quirking. Let us obey the sun blindly. What is the sun? It is love. He who says love, says woman. Ah! ah! behold omnipotence—women. Ask that demagogue of a Marius if he is not the slave of that little tyrant of a Cosette. And of his own free will, too, the coward! Woman! There is no Robespierre who keeps his place but woman reigns. I am no longer Royalist except towards that royalty. What is Adam? The kingdom of Eve. No '89 for Eve. There has been the royal sceptre surmounted by a fleur-de-lys, there has been the imperial sceptre surmounted by a globe, there has been the sceptre of Charlemagne, which was of iron, there has been the sceptre of Louis the Great, which was of gold,—the revolution twisted them between its thumb and forefinger, ha'penny straws; it is done with, it is broken, it lies on the earth, there is no longer any sceptre, but make me a revolution against that little embroidered handkerchief, which smells of patchouli! I should like to see you do it. Try. Why is it so solid? Because it is a gewgaw. Ah! you are the nineteenth century? Well, what then? And we have been as foolish as you. Do not imagine that you have effected much change in the universe, because your trip-gallant is called the cholera-morbus, and because your *pourrée* is called the cachuca. In fact, the women must always be loved. I defy you to escape from that. These friends are our angels. Yes, love, woman, the kiss forms a circle from which I defy you to escape; and, for my own part, I should be only too happy to re-enter it. Which of you has seen the planet Venus, the coquette of the abyss, the Célimène of the ocean, rise in the infinite, calming all here below? The ocean is a rough Alcestis. Well, grumble as he will, when Venus appears he is forced to smile. That brute beast submits. We are all made so. Wrath, tempest, claps of thunder, foam to the very ceiling. A woman enters on the scene, a planet rises; flat on your face! Marius was fighting six months ago; to-day he is married. That is well. Yes, Marius, yes, Cosette, you are in the right. Exist boldly for each other, make us burst with rage that we cannot do the same, idealize each other, catch in your beaks all the tiny blades of felicity that exist on earth, and arrange yourselves a nest for life. Pardi, to love, to be loved, what a fine miracle when one is young! Don't imagine that you have invented that. I, too, have had my dream, I, too, have meditated, I, too, have sighed; I, too, have had a moonlight soul. Love is a child six thousand years old. Love has the right to a long white beard. Methusalem is a street arab beside Cupid. For sixty centuries men and women have got out of their scrape by loving. The devil, who is cunning, took to hating man; man, who is still more cunning, took to loving woman. In this way he does more good than the devil does him harm. This craft was discovered in the days of the terrestrial paradise. The invention is old, my friends, but it is perfectly new. Profit by it. Be Daphnis and Chloe, while waiting to become Philemon and Baucis. Manage so that, when you are with each other, nothing shall be lacking to you, and that Cosette may be the sun for Marius, and that Marius may be the universe to Cosette. Cosette, let your fine weather be the smile of your husband; Marius, let your rain be your wife's tears. And let it never rain in your household. You have filched the winning number in the lottery; you have gained the great prize, guard it well, keep it under lock and key, do not squander it, adore each other and snap your fingers at all the rest. Believe what I say to you. It is good sense. And good sense cannot lie. Be a religion to each other. Each man has his own fashion of adoring God. Saperlotte! the best way to adore God is to love one's wife. *I love thee!* that's my catechism. He who loves is orthodox. The oath of Henri IV. places sanctity somewhere between feasting and drunkenness. Ventre-saint-gris! I don't belong to the religion of that oath. Woman is forgotten in it. This astonishes me on the part of Henri IV. My friends, long live women! I am old, they say; it's astonishing how much I feel in the mood to be young. I should like to go and listen to the bagpipes in the woods. Children who contrive to be beautiful and contented,—that intoxicates me. I would like greatly to get married, if any one would have me. It is impossible to imagine that God could have made us for anything but this: to idolize, to coo, to preen ourselves, to be dove-like, to be dainty, to bill and coo our loves from morn to night, to gaze at one's image in one's little wife, to be proud, to be triumphant, to plume oneself; that is the aim of life. There, let not that displease you which we used to think in our day, when we were young folks. Ah! vertu-bamboche! what charming women there were in those days, and what pretty little faces and what lovely lasses! I committed my ravages among them. Then love each other. If people did not love each other, I really do not see what use there would be in having any springtime; and for my own part, I should pray the good God to shut up all the beautiful things that he shows us, and to take away from us and put back in his box, the flowers, the birds, and the pretty maidens. My children, receive an old man's blessing."

The evening was gay, lively and agreeable. The grandfather's sovereign good humor gave the key-note to the whole feast, and each person regulated his conduct on that almost centenarian cordiality. They danced a little, they laughed a great deal; it was an amiable wedding. Goodman Days of Yore might have been invited to it. However, he was present in the person of Father Gillenormand.

There was a tumult, then silence.

The married pair disappeared.

A little after midnight, the Gillenormand house became a temple.

Here we pause. On the threshold of wedding nights stands a smiling angel with his finger on his lips.

The soul enters into contemplation before that sanctuary where the celebration of love takes place.

There should be flashes of light athwart such houses. The joy which they contain ought to make its escape through the stones of the walls in brilliancy, and vaguely illuminate the gloom. It is impossible that this sacred and fatal festival should not give off a celestial radiance to the infinite. Love is the sublime crucible wherein the fusion of the man and the woman takes place; the being one, the being triple, the being final, the human trinity proceeds from it. This birth of two souls into one, ought to be an emotion for the gloom. The lover is the priest; the ravished virgin is terrified. Something of that joy ascends to God. Where true marriage is, that is to say, where there is love, the ideal enters in. A nuptial bed makes a nook of dawn amid the shadows. If it were given to the eye of the flesh to scan the formidable and charming visions of the upper life, it is probable that we should behold the forms of night, the winged unknowns, the blue passers of the invisible, bend down, a throng of sombre heads, around the luminous house, satisfied, showering benedictions, pointing out to each other the virgin wife gently alarmed, sweetly terrified, and bearing the reflection of human bliss upon their divine countenances. If at that supreme hour, the wedded pair, dazzled with voluptuousness and believing themselves alone, were to listen, they would hear in their chamber a confused rustling of wings. Perfect happiness implies a mutual understanding with the angels. That dark little chamber has all heaven for its ceiling. When two mouths, rendered sacred by love, approach to create, it is impossible that there should not be, above that ineffable kiss, a quivering throughout the immense mystery of stars.

These felicities are the true ones. There is no joy outside of these joys. Love is the only ecstasy. All the rest weeps.

To love, or to have loved,—this suffices. Demand nothing more. There is no other pearl to be found in the shadowy folds of life. To love is a fulfilment.

CHAPTER III

THE INSEPARABLE

WHAT had become of Jean Valjean?

Immediately after having laughed, at Cosette's graceful command, when no one was paying any heed to him, Jean Valjean had risen and had gained the antechamber unperceived. This was the very room which, eight months before, he had entered black with mud, with blood and powder, bringing back the grandson to the grandfather. The old wainscoting was garlanded with foliage and flowers; the musicians were seated on the sofa on which they had laid Marius down. Basque, in a black coat, knee-breeches, white stockings and white gloves, was arranging roses round all of the dishes that were to be served. Jean Valjean pointed to his arm in its sling, charged Basque to explain his absence, and went away.

The long windows of the dining-room opened on the street. Jean Valjean stood for several minutes, erect and motionless in the darkness, beneath those radiant windows. He listened. The confused sounds of the banquet reached his ear. He heard the loud, commanding tones of the grandfather, the violins, the clatter of the plates, the bursts of laughter, and through all that merry uproar, he distinguished Cosette's sweet and joyous voice.

He quitted the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire, and returned to the Rue de l'Homme Armé.

In order to return thither, he took the Rue Saint-Louis, the Rue Culture-Sainte-Catherine, and the Blancs-Manteaux; it was a little longer, but it was the road through which, for the last three months, he had become accustomed to pass every day on his way from the Rue de l'Homme Armé to the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire, in order to avoid the obstructions and the mud in the Rue Vielle-du-Temple.

This road, through which Cosette had passed, excluded for him all possibility of any other itinerary.

Jean Valjean entered his lodgings. He lighted his candle and mounted the stairs. The apartment was empty. Even Toussaint was no longer there. Jean Valjean's step made more noise than usual in the chambers. All the cupboards stood open. He penetrated to Cosette's bedroom. There were no sheets on the bed. The pillow, covered with ticking, and without a case or lace, was laid on the blankets folded up on the foot of the mattress, whose covering was visible, and on which no one was ever to sleep again. All the little feminine objects which Cosette was attached to had been carried away; nothing remained except the heavy furniture and the four walls. Toussaint's bed was despoiled in like manner. One bed only was made up, and seemed to be waiting some one, and this was Jean Valjean's bed.

Jean Valjean looked at the walls, closed some of the cupboard doors, and went and came from one room to another.

Then he sought his own chamber once more, and set his candle on a table.

He had disengaged his arm from the sling, and he used his right hand as though it did not hurt him.

He approached his bed, and his eyes rested, was it by chance? was it intentionally? on the *inseparable* of which Cosette had been jealous, on the little portmanteau which never left him. On his arrival in the Rue de l'Homme Armé, on the 4th of June, he had deposited it on a round table near the head of his bed. He went to this table with a sort of vivacity, took a key from his pocket, and opened the valise.

From it he slowly drew forth the garments in which, ten years before, Cosette had quitted Montfermeil; first the little gown, then the black fichu, then the stout, coarse child's shoes which Cosette might almost have worn still, so tiny were her feet, then the fustian bodice, which was very thick, then the knitted petticoat, next the apron with pockets, then the woollen stockings. These stockings, which still preserved the graceful form of a tiny leg, were no longer than Jean Valjean's hand. All this was black of hue. It was he who had brought those garments to Montfermeil for her. As he removed them from the valise, he laid them on the bed. He fell to thinking. He called up memories. It was in winter, in a very cold month of December, she was shivering, half-naked, in rags, her poor little feet were all red in their wooden shoes. He, Jean Valjean, had made her abandon those rags to clothe herself in these mourning habiliments. The mother must have felt pleased in her grave, to see her daughter wearing mourning for her, and, above all, to see that she was properly clothed, and that she was warm. He thought of that forest of Montfermeil; they had traversed it together, Cosette and he; he thought of what the weather had been, of the leafless trees, of the wood destitute of birds, of the sunless sky; it mattered not, it was charming. He arranged the tiny garments on the bed, the fichu next to the petticoat, the stockings beside the shoes, and he looked at them, one after the other. She was no taller than that, she had her big doll in her arms, she had put her louis d'or in the pocket of that apron, she had laughed, they walked hand in hand, she had no one in the world but him.

Then his venerable, white head fell forward on the bed, that stoical old heart broke, his face was engulfed, so to speak, in Cosette's garments, and if any one had passed up the stairs at that moment, he would have heard frightful sobs.

CHAPTER IV

THE IMMORTAL LIVER[1]

THE old and formidable struggle, of which we have already witnessed so many phases, began once more.

Jacob struggled with the angel but one night. Alas! how many times have we beheld Jean Valjean seized bodily by his conscience, in the darkness, and struggling desperately against it!

Unheard-of conflict! At certain moments the foot slips;

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[1] In allusion to the story of Prometheus.

at other moments the ground crumbles away underfoot. How many times had that conscience, mad for the good, clasped and overthrown him! How many times had the truth set her knee inexorably upon his breast! How many times, hurled to earth by the light, had he begged for mercy! How many times had that implacable spark, lighted within him, and upon him by the Bishop, dazzled him by force when he had wished to be blind! How many times had he risen to his feet in the combat, held fast to the rock, leaning against sophism, dragged in the dust, now getting the upper hand of his conscience, again overthrown by it! How many times, after an equivoque, after the specious and treacherous reasoning of egotism, had he heard his irritated conscience cry in his ear: "A trip! you wretch!" How many times had his refractory thoughts rattled convulsively in his throat, under the evidence of duty! Resistance to God. Funereal sweats. What secret wounds which he alone felt bleed! What excoriations in his lamentable existence! How many times he had risen bleeding, bruised, broken, enlightened, despair in his heart, serenity in his soul! and, vanquished, he had felt himself the conqueror. And, after having dislocated, broken, and rent his conscience with red-hot pincers, it had said to him, as it stood over him, formidable, luminous, and tranquil: "Now, go in peace!"

But on emerging from so melancholy a conflict, what a lugubrious peace, alas!

Nevertheless, that night Jean Valjean felt that he was passing through his final combat.

A heart-rending question presented itself.

Predestinations are not all direct; they do not open out in a straight avenue before the predestined man; they have blind courts, impassable alleys, obscure turns, disturbing crossroads offering the choice of many ways. Jean Valjean had halted at that moment at the most perilous of these crossroads.

He had come to the supreme crossing of good and evil. He had that gloomy intersection beneath his eyes. On this occasion once more, as had happened to him already in other sad vicissitudes, two roads opened out before him, the one tempting, the other alarming.

Which was he to take?

He was counselled to the one which alarmed him by that mysterious index finger which we all perceive whenever we fix our eyes on the darkness.

Once more, Jean Valjean had the choice between the terrible port and the smiling ambush.

Is it then true? the soul may recover; but not fate. Frightful thing! an incurable destiny!

This is the problem which presented itself to him:

In what manner was Jean Valjean to behave in relation to the happiness of Cosette and Marius? It was he who had willed that happiness, it was he who had brought it about; he had, himself, buried it in his entrails, and at that moment, when he reflected on it, he was able to enjoy the sort of satisfaction which an armorer would experience on recognizing his factory mark on a knife, on withdrawing it, all smoking, from his own breast.

Cosette had Marius, Marius possessed Cosette. They had everything, even riches. And this was his doing.

But what was he, Jean Valjean, to do with this happiness, now that it existed, now that it was there? Should he force himself on this happiness? Should he treat it as belonging to him? No doubt, Cosette did belong to another; but should he, Jean Valjean, retain of Cosette all that he could retain? Should he remain the sort of father, half seen but respected, which he had hitherto been? Should he, without saying a word, bring his past to that future? Should he present himself there, as though he had a right, and should he seat himself, veiled, at that luminous fireside? Should he take those innocent hands into his tragic hands, with a smile? Should he place upon the peaceful fender of the Gillenormand drawing-room those feet of his, which dragged behind them the disgraceful shadow of the law? Should he enter into participation in the fair fortunes of Cosette and Marius? Should he render the obscurity on his brow and the cloud upon theirs still more dense? Should he place his catastrophe as a third associate in their felicity? Should he continue to hold his peace? In a word, should he be the sinister mute of destiny beside these two happy beings?

We must have become habituated to fatality and to encounters with it, in order to have the daring to raise our eyes when certain questions appear to us in all their horrible nakedness. Good or evil stands behind this severe interrogation point. What are you going to do? demands the sphinx.

This habit of trial Jean Valjean possessed. He gazed intently at the sphinx.

He examined the pitiless problem under all its aspects.

Cosette, that charming existence, was the raft of this shipwreck. What was he to do? To cling fast to it, or to let go his hold?

If he clung to it, he should emerge from disaster, he should ascend again into the sunlight, he should let the bitter water drip from his garments and his hair, he was saved, he should live.

And if he let go his hold?

Then the abyss.

Thus he took sad council with his thoughts. Or, to speak more correctly, he fought; he kicked furiously internally, now against his will, now against his conviction.

Happily for Jean Valjean that he had been able to weep. That relieved him, possibly. But the beginning was savage. A tempest, more furious than the one which had formerly driven him to Arras, broke loose within him. The past surged up before him facing the present; he compared them and sobbed. The silence of tears once opened, the despairing man writhed.

He felt that he had been stopped short.

Alas! in this fight to the death between our egotism and our duty, when we thus retreat step by step before our immutable ideal, bewildered, furious, exasperated at having to yield, disputing the ground, hoping for a possible flight, seeking an escape, what an abrupt and sinister resistance does the foot of the wall offer in our rear!

To feel the sacred shadow which forms an obstacle!

The invisible inexorable, what an obsession!

Then, one is never done with conscience. Make your choice, Brutus; make your choice, Cato. It is fathomless, since it is God. One flings into that well the labor of one's whole life, one flings in one's fortune, one flings in one's riches, one flings in one's success, one flings in one's liberty or fatherland, one flings in one's well-being, one flings in one's repose, one flings in one's joy! More! more! more! Empty the vase! tip the urn! One must finish by flinging in one's heart.

Somewhere in the fog of the ancient hells, there is a tun like that.

Is not one pardonable, if one at last refuses! Can the inexhaustible have any right? Are not chains which are endless above human strength? Who would blame Sisyphus and Jean Valjean for saying: "It is enough!"

The obedience of matter is limited by friction; is there no limit to the obedience of the soul? If perpetual motion is impossible, can perpetual self-sacrifice be exacted?

The first step is nothing, it is the last which is difficult. What was the Champmathieu affair in comparison with Cosette's marriage and of that which it entailed? What is a re-entrance into the galleys, compared to entrance into the void?

Oh, first step that must be descended, how sombre art thou! Oh, second step, how black art thou!

How could he refrain from turning aside his head this time?

Martyrdom is sublimation, corrosive sublimation. It is a torture which consecrates. One can consent to it for the first hour; one seats oneself on the throne of glowing iron, one places on one's head the crown of hot iron, one accepts the globe of red hot iron, one takes the sceptre of red hot iron, but the mantle of flame still remains to be donned, and comes there not a moment when the miserable flesh revolts and when one abdicates from suffering?

At length, Jean Valjean entered into the peace of exhaustion.

He weighed, he reflected, he considered the alternatives, the mysterious balance of light and darkness.

Should he impose his galleys on those two dazzling children, or should he consummate his irremediable engulfment by himself? On one side lay the sacrifice of Cosette, on the other that of himself.

At what solution should he arrive? What decision did he come to?

What resolution did he take? What was his own inward definitive response to the unbribable interrogatory of fatality? What door did he decide to open? Which side of his life did he resolve upon closing and condemning? Among all the unfathomable precipices which surrounded him, which was his choice? What extremity did he accept? To which of the gulfs did he nod his head?

His dizzy revery lasted all night long.

He remained there until daylight, in the same attitude, bent double over that bed, prostrate beneath the enormity of fate, crushed, perchance, alas! with clenched fists, with arms outspread at right angles, like a man crucified who has been unnailed, and flung face down on the earth. There he remained for twelve hours, the twelve long hours of a long winter's night, ice-cold, without once raising his head, and without uttering a word. He was as motionless as a corpse, while his thoughts wallowed on the earth and soared, now like the hydra, now like the eagle. Any one to behold him thus motionless would have pronounced him dead; all at once he shuddered convulsively, and his mouth, glued to Cosette's garments, kissed them; then it could be seen that he was alive.

Who could see? Since Jean Valjean was alone, and there was no one there.

The One who is in the shadows.

BOOK SEVENTH.—THE LAST DRAUGHT FROM THE CUP

CHAPTER I

THE SEVENTH CIRCLE AND THE EIGHTH HEAVEN

THE days that follow weddings are solitary. People respect the meditations of the happy pair. And also, their tardy slumbers, to some degree. The tumult of visits and congratulations only begins later on. On the morning of the 17th of February, it was a little past midday when Basque, with napkin and feather-duster under his arm, busy in setting his antechamber to rights, heard a light tap at the door. There had been no ring, which was discreet on such a day. Basque opened the door, and beheld M. Fauchelevent. He introduced him into the drawing-room, still encumbered and topsy-turvy, and which bore the air of a field of battle after the joys of the preceding evening.

"*Dame,* sir," remarked Basque, "we all woke up late."

"Is your master up?" asked Jean Valjean.

"How is Monsieur's arm?" replied Basque.

"Better. Is your master up?"

"Which one? the old one or the new one?"

"Monsieur Pontmercy."

"Monsieur le Baron," said Basque, drawing himself up.

A man is a Baron most of all to his servants. He counts for something with them; they are what a philosopher would call, bespattered with the title, and that flatters them. Marius, be it said in passing, a militant republican as he had proved, was now a Baron in spite of himself. A small revolution had taken place in the family in connection with this title. It was now M. Gillenormand who clung to it, and Marius who detached himself from it. But Colonel Pontmercy had written: "My son will bear my title." Marius obeyed. And then, Cosette, in whom the woman was beginning to dawn, was delighted to be a Baroness.

"Monsieur le Baron?" repeated Basque. "I will go and see. I will tell him that M. Fauchelevent is here."

"No. Do not tell him that it is I. Tell him that some one wishes to speak to him in private, and mention no name."

"Ah!" ejaculated Basque.

"I wish to surprise him."

"Ah!" ejaculated Basque once more, emitting his second "ah!" as an explanation of the first.

And he left the room.

Jean Valjean remained alone.

The drawing-room, as we have just said, was in great disorder. It seemed as though, by lending an air, one might still hear the vague noise of the wedding. On the polished floor lay all sorts of flowers which had fallen from garlands and head-dresses. The wax candles, burned to stumps, added stalactites of wax to the crystal drops of the chandeliers. Not a single piece of furniture was in its place. In the corners, three or four arm-chairs, drawn close together in a circle, had the appearance of continuing a conversation. The whole effect was cheerful. A certain grace still lingers round a dead feast. It has been a happy thing. On the chairs in disarray, among those fading flowers, beneath those extinct lights, people have thought of joy. The sun had succeeded to the chandelier, and made its way gayly into the drawing-room.

Several minutes elapsed. Jean Valjean stood motionless on the spot where Basque had left him. He was very pale. His eyes were hollow, and so sunken in his head by sleeplessness that they nearly disappeared in their orbits. His black coat bore the weary folds of a garment that has been up all night. The elbows were whitened with the down which the friction of cloth against linen leaves behind it.

Jean Valjean stared at the window outlined on the polished floor at his feet by the sun.

There came a sound at the door, and he raised his eyes.

Marius entered, his head well up, his mouth smiling, an indescribable light on his countenance, his brow expanded, his eyes triumphant. He had not slept either.

"It is you, father!" he exclaimed, on catching sight of Jean Valjean; "that idiot of a Basque had such a mysterious air! But you have come too early. It is only half past twelve. Cosette is asleep."

That word: "Father," said to M. Fauchelevent by Marius, signified: supreme felicity. There had always existed, as the reader knows, a lofty wall, a coldness and a constraint between them; ice which must be broken or melted. Marius had reached that point of intoxication when the wall was lowered, when the ice dissolved, and when M. Fauchelevent was to him, as to Cosette, a father.

He continued: his words poured forth, as is the peculiarity of divine paroxysms of joy.

"How glad I am to see you! If you only knew how we missed you yesterday! Good morning, father. How is your hand? Better, is it not?"

And, satisfied with the favorable reply which he had made to himself, he pursued:

"We have both been talking about you. Cosette loves you so dearly! You must not forget that you have a chamber here. We want nothing more to do with the Rue de l'Homme Armé. We will have no more of it at all. How could you go to live in a street like that, which is sickly, which is disagreeable, which is ugly, which has a barrier at one end, where one is cold, and into which one cannot enter? You are to come and install yourself here. And this very day. Or you will have to deal with Cosette. She means to lead us all by the nose, I warn you. You have your own chamber here, it is close to ours, it opens on the garden; the trouble with the clock has been attended to, the bed is made, it is all ready, you have only to take possession of it. Near your bed Cosette has placed a huge, old, easy-chair covered with Utrecht velvet, and she has said to it: 'Stretch out your arms to him.' A nightingale comes to the clump of acacias opposite your windows, every spring. In two months more you will have it. You will have its nest on your left and ours on your right. By night it will sing, and by day Cosette will prattle. Your chamber faces due South. Cosette will arrange your books for you, your Voyages of Captain Cook and the other,—Vancouver's—and all your affairs. I believe that there is a little valise to which you are attached, I have fixed upon a corner of honor for that. You have conquered my grandfather, you suit him. We will live together. Do you play whist? you will overwhelm my grandfather with delight if you play whist. It is you who shall take Cosette to walk on the days when I am at the courts, you shall give her your arm, you know, as you used to, in the Luxembourg. We are absolutely resolved to be happy. And you shall be included in it, in our happiness, do you hear, father? Come, will you breakfast with us to-day?"

"Sir," said Jean Valjean, "I have something to say to you. I am an ex-convict."

The limit of shrill sounds perceptible can be overleaped, as well in the case of the mind as in that of the ear. These words: "I am an ex-convict," proceeding from the mouth of M. Fauchelevent and entering the ear of Marius, overshot the possible. It seemed to him that something had just been said to him; but he did not know what. He stood with his mouth wide open.

Then he perceived that the man who was addressing him was frightful. Wholly absorbed in his own dazzled state, he had not, up to that moment, observed the other man's terrible pallor.

Jean Valjean untied the black cravat which supported his right arm, unrolled the linen from around his hand, bared his thumb and showed it to Marius.

"There is nothing the matter with my hand," said he.

Marius looked at the thumb.

"There has not been anything the matter with it," went on Jean Valjean.

There was, in fact, no trace of any injury.

Jean Valjean continued:

"It was fitting that I should be absent from your marriage. I absented myself as much as was in my power. So I invented this injury in order that I might not commit a forgery, that I might not introduce a flaw into the marriage documents, in order that I might escape from signing."

Marius stammered.

"What is the meaning of this?"

"The meaning of it is," replied Jean Valjean, "that I have been in the galleys."

"You are driving me mad!" exclaimed Marius in terror.

"Monsieur Pontmercy," said Jean Valjean, "I was nineteen years in the galleys. For theft. Then, I was condemned for life for theft, for a second offence. At the present moment, I have broken my ban."

In vain did Marius recoil before the reality, refuse the fact, resist the evidence, he was forced to give way. He began to understand, and, as always happens in such cases, he understood too much. An inward shudder of hideous enlightenment flashed through him; an idea which made him quiver traversed his mind. He caught a glimpse of a wretched destiny for himself in the future.

"Say all, say all!" he cried. "You are Cosette's father!"

And he retreated a couple of paces with a movement of indescribable horror.

Jean Valjean elevated his head with so much majesty of attitude that he seemed to grow even to the ceiling.

"It is necessary that you should believe me here, sir; although our oath to others may not be received in law . . ."

Here he paused, then, with a sort of sovereign and sepulchral authority, he added, articulating slowly, and emphasizing the syllables:

". . . You will believe me. I the father of Cosette! before God, no. Monsieur le Baron Pontmercy, I am a peasant of Faverolles. I earned my living by pruning trees. My name is not Fauchelevent, but Jean Valjean. I am not related to Cosette. Reassure yourself."

Marius stammered:

"Who will prove that to me?"

"I. Since I tell you so."

Marius looked at the man. He was melancholy yet tranquil. No lie could proceed from such a calm. That which is icy is sincere. The truth could be felt in that chill of the tomb.

"I believe you," said Marius.

Jean Valjean bent his head, as though taking note of this, and continued:

"What am I to Cosette? A passer-by. Ten years ago, I did not know that she was in existence. I love her, it is true. One loves a child whom one has seen when very young, being old oneself. When one is old, one feels oneself a grandfather towards all little children. You may, it seems to me, suppose that I have something which resembles a heart. She was an orphan. Without either father or mother. She needed me. That is why I began to love her. Children are so weak that the first comer, even a man like me, can become their protector. I have fulfilled this duty towards Cosette. I do not think that so slight a thing can be called a good action; but if it be a good action, well, say that I have done it. Register this attenuating circumstance. To-day, Cosette passes out of my life; our two roads part. Henceforth, I can do nothing for her. She is Madame Pontmercy. Her providence has changed. And Cosette gains by the change. All is well. As for the six hundred thousand francs, you do not mention them to me, but I forestall your thought, they are a deposit. How did that deposit come into my hands? What does that matter? I restore the deposit. Nothing more can be demanded of me. I complete the restitution by announcing my true name. That concerns me. I have a reason for desiring that you should know who I am."

And Jean Valjean looked Marius full in the face.

All that Marius experienced was tumultuous and incoherent. Certain gusts of destiny produce these billows in our souls.

We have all undergone moments of trouble in which everything within us is dispersed; we say the first things that occur to us, which are not always precisely those which should be said. There are sudden revelations which one cannot bear, and which intoxicate like baleful wine. Marius was stupefied by the novel situation which presented itself to him, to the point of addressing that man almost like a person who was angry with him for this avowal.

"But why," he exclaimed, "do you tell me all this? Who forces you to do so? You could have kept your secret to yourself. You are neither denounced, nor tracked nor pursued. You have a reason for wantonly making such a revelation. Conclude. There is something more. In what connection do you make this confession? What is your motive?"

"My motive?" replied Jean Valjean in a voice so low and dull that one would have said that he was talking to himself rather than to Marius. "From what motive, in fact, has this convict just said 'I am a convict'? Well, yes! the motive is strange. It is out of honesty. Stay, the unfortunate point is that I have a thread in my heart, which keeps me fast. It is when one is old that that sort of thread is particularly solid. All life falls in ruin around one; one resists. Had I been able to tear out that thread, to break it, to undo the knot or to cut it, to go far away, I should have been safe. I had only to go away; there are diligences in the Rue Bouloy; you are happy; I am going. I have tried to break that thread, I have jerked at it, it would not break, I tore my heart with it. Then I said: 'I cannot live anywhere else than here.' I must stay. Well, yes, you are right, I am a fool, why not simply remain here? You offer me a chamber in this house, Madame Pontmercy is sincerely attached to me, she said to the arm-chair: 'Stretch out your arms to him,' your grandfather demands nothing better than to have me, I suit him, we shall live together, and take our meals in common, I shall give Cosette my arm . . . . Madame Pontmercy, excuse me, it is a habit,—

we shall have but one roof, one table, one fire, the same chimney-corner in winter, the same promenade in summer, that is joy, that is happiness, that is everything. We shall live as one family. One family!"

At that word, Jean Valjean became wild. He folded his arms, glared at the floor beneath his feet as though he would have excavated an abyss therein, and his voice suddenly rose in thundering tones:

"As one family! No. I belong to no family. I do not belong to yours. I do not belong to any family of men. In houses where people are among themselves, I am superfluous. There are families, but there is nothing of the sort for me. I am an unlucky wretch; I am left outside. Did I have a father and mother? I almost doubt it. On the day when I gave that child in marriage, all came to an end. I have seen her happy, and that she is with a man whom she loves, and that there exists here a kind old man, a household of two angels, and all joys in that house, and that it was well, I said to myself: 'Enter thou not.' I could have lied, it is true, have deceived you all, and remained Monsieur Fauchelevent. So long as it was for her, I could lie; but now it would be for myself, and I must not. It was sufficient for me to hold my peace, it is true, and all would go on. You ask me what has forced me to speak? a very odd thing; my conscience. To hold my peace was very easy, however. I passed the night in trying to persuade myself to it; you questioned me, and what I have just said to you is so extraordinary that you have the right to do it; well, yes, I have passed the night in alleging reasons to myself, and I gave myself very good reasons, I have done what I could. But there are two things in which I have not succeeded; in breaking the thread that holds me fixed, riveted and sealed here by the heart, or in silencing some one who speaks softly to me when I am alone. That is why I have come hither to tell you everything this morning. Everything or nearly everything. It is useless to tell you that which concerns only myself; I keep that to myself. You know the essential points. So I have taken my mystery and have brought it to you. And I have disembowelled my secret before your eyes. It was not a resolution that was easy to take. I struggled all night long. Ah! you think that I did not tell myself that this was no Champmathieu affair, that by concealing my name I was doing no one any injury, that the name of Fauchelevent had been given to me by Fauchelevent himself, out of gratitude for a service rendered to him, and that I might assuredly keep it, and that I should be happy in that chamber which you offer me, that I should not be in any one's way, that I should be in my own little corner, and that, while you would have Cosette, I should have the idea that I was in the same house with her. Each one of us would have had his share of happiness. If I continued to be Monsieur Fauchelevent, that would arrange everything. Yes, with the exception of my soul. There was joy everywhere upon my surface, but the bottom of my soul remained black. It is not enough to be happy, one must be content. Thus I should have remained Monsieur Fauchelevent, thus I should have concealed my true visage, thus, in the presence of your expansion, I should have had an enigma, thus, in the midst of your full noonday, I should have had shadows, thus, without crying "ware,' I should have simply introduced the galleys to your fireside, I should have taken my seat at your table with the thought that if you knew who I was, you would drive me from it, I should have allowed myself to be served by domestics who, had they known, would have said: 'How horrible!' I should have touched you with my elbow, which you have a right to dislike, I should have filched your clasps of the hand! There would have existed in your house a division of respect between venerable white locks and tainted white locks; at your most intimate hours, when all hearts thought themselves open to the very bottom to all the rest, when we four were together, your grandfather, you two and myself, a stranger would have been present! I should have been side by side with you in your existence, having for my only care not to disarrange the cover of my dreadful pit. Thus, I, a dead man, should have thrust myself upon you who are living beings. I should have condemned her to myself forever. You and Cosette and I would have had all three of our heads in the green cap! Does it not make you shudder? I am only the most crushed of men; I should have been the most monstrous of men. And I should have committed that crime every day! And I should have had that face of night upon my visage every day! every day! And I should have communicated to you a share in my taint every day! every day! to you, my dearly beloved, my children, to you, my innocent creatures! Is it nothing to hold one's peace? is it a simple matter to keep silence? No, it is not simple. There is a silence which lies. And my lie, and my fraud and my indignity, and my cowardice and my treason and my crime, I should have drained drop by drop, I should have spit it out, then swallowed it again, I should have finished at midnight and have begun again at midday, and my 'good morning' would have lied, and my 'good night' would have lied, and I should have slept on it, I should have eaten it, with my bread, and I should have looked Cosette in the face, and I should have responded to the smile of the angel by the smile of the damned soul, and I should have been an abominable villain! Why should I do it? in order to be happy. In order to be happy. Have I the right to be happy? I stand outside of life, sir."

Jean Valjean paused. Marius listened. Such chains of ideas and of anguishes cannot be interrupted. Jean Valjean lowered his voice once more, but it was no longer a dull voice—it was a sinister voice.

"You ask why I speak? I am neither denounced, nor pursued, nor tracked, you say. Yes! I am denounced! yes! I am tracked! By whom? By myself. It is I who bar the passage to myself, and I drag myself, and I push myself, and I arrest myself, and I execute myself, and when one holds oneself, one is firmly held."

And, seizing a handful of his own coat by the nape of the neck and extending it towards Marius:

"Do you see that fist?" he continued. "Don't you think that it holds that collar in such a wise as not to release it? Well! conscience is another grasp! If one desires to be happy, sir, one must never understand duty; for, as soon as one has comprehended it, it is implacable. One would say that it punished you for comprehending it; but no, it rewards you; for it places you in a hell, where you feel God beside you. One has no sooner lacerated his own entrails than he is at peace with himself."

And, with a poignant accent, he added:

"Monsieur Pontmercy, this is not common sense, I am an honest man. It is by degrading myself in your eyes that I elevate myself in my own. This has happened to me once before, but it was less painful then; it was a mere nothing. Yes, an honest man. I should not be so if, through my fault, you had continued to esteem me; now that you despise me, I am so. I have that fatality hanging over me that, not being able to ever have anything but stolen consideration, that consideration humiliates me, and crushes me inwardly, and, in order that I may respect myself, it is necessary that I should be despised. Then I straighten up again. I am a galley-slave who obeys his conscience. I know well that that is most improbable. But what would you have me do about it? it is the fact. I have entered into engagements with myself; I keep them. There are encounters which bind us, there are chances which involve us in duties. You see, Monsieur Pontmercy, various things have happened to me in the course of my life."

Again Jean Valjean paused, swallowing his saliva with an effort, as though his words had a bitter after-taste, and then he went on:

"When one has such a horror hanging over one, one has not the right to make others share it without their knowledge, one has not the right to make them slip over one's own precipice without their perceiving it, one has not the right to let one's red blouse drag upon them, one has no right to slyly encumber with one's misery the happiness of others. It is hideous to approach those who are healthy, and to touch them in the dark with one's ulcer. In spite of the fact that Fauchelevent lent me his name, I have no right to use it; he could give it to me, but I could not take it. A name is an *I*. You see, sir, that I have thought somewhat, I have read a little, although I am a peasant; and you see that I express myself properly. I understand things. I have procured myself an education. Well, yes, to abstract a name and to place oneself under it is dishonest. Letters of the alphabet can be filched, like a purse or a watch. To be a false signature in flesh and blood, to be a living false key, to enter the house of honest people by picking their lock, never more to look straightforward, to forever eye askance, to be infamous within the *I*, no! no! no! no! no! It is better to suffer, to bleed, to weep, to tear one's skin from the flesh with one's nails, to pass nights writhing in anguish, to devour oneself body and soul. That is why I have just told you all this. Wantonly, as you say."

He drew a painful breath, and hurled this final word:

"In days gone by, I stole a loaf of bread in order to live; to-day, in order to live, I will not steal a name."

"To live!" interrupted Marius. "You do not need that name in order to live?"

"Ah! I understand the matter," said Jean Valjean, raising and lowering his head several times in succession.

A silence ensued. Both held their peace, each plunged in a gulf of thoughts. Marius was sitting near a table and resting the corner of his mouth on one of his fingers, which was folded back. Jean Valjean was pacing to and fro. He paused before a mirror, and remained motionless. Then, as though replying to some inward course of reasoning, he said, as he gazed at the mirror, which he did not see:

"While, at present, I am relieved."

He took up his march again, and walked to the other end of the drawing-room. At the moment when he turned round, he perceived that Marius was watching his walk. Then he said, with an inexpressible intonation:

"I drag my leg a little. Now you understand why."

Then he turned fully round towards Marius:

"And now, sir, imagine this: I have said nothing, I have remained Monsieur Fauchelevent, I have taken my place in your house, I am one of you, I am in my chamber, I come to breakfast in the morning in slippers, in the evening all three of us go to the play, I accompany Madame Pontmercy to the Tuileries, and to the Place Royale, we are together, you think me your equal; one fine day you are there, and I am there, we are conversing, we are laughing; all at once, you hear a voice shouting this name: 'Jean Valjean!' and behold, that terrible hand, the police, darts from the darkness, and abruptly tears off my mask!"

Again he paused; Marius had sprung to his feet with a shudder. Jean Valjean resumed:

"What do you say to that?"

Marius' silence answered for him.

Jean Valjean continued:

"You see that I am right in not holding my peace. Be happy, be in heaven, be the angel of an angel, exist in the sun, be content therewith, and do not trouble yourself about the means which a poor damned wretch takes to open his breast and force his duty to come forth; you have before you, sir, a wretched man."

Marius slowly crossed the room, and, when he was quite close to Jean Valjean, he offered the latter his hand.

But Marius was obliged to step up and take that hand which was not offered, Jean Valjean let him have his own way, and it seemed to Marius that he pressed a hand of marble.

"My grandfather has friends," said Marius; "I will procure your pardon."

"It is useless," replied Jean Valjean. "I am believed to be dead, and that suffices. The dead are not subjected to surveillance. They are supposed to rot in peace. Death is the same thing as pardon."

And, disengaging the hand which Marius held, he added, with a sort of inexorable dignity:

"Moreover, the friend to whom I have recourse is the doing of my duty; and I need but one pardon, that of my conscience."

At that moment, a door at the other end of the drawing-room opened gently half way, and in the opening Cosette's head appeared. They saw only her sweet face, her hair was in charming disorder, her eyelids were still swollen with sleep. She made the movement of a bird, which thrusts its head out of its nest, glanced first at her husband, then at Jean Valjean, and cried to them with a smile, so that they seemed to behold a smile at the heart of a rose:

"I will wager that you are talking politics. How stupid that is, instead of being with me!"

Jean Valjean shuddered.

"Cosette! . . ." stammered Marius.

And he paused. One would have said that they were two criminals.

Cosette, who was radiant, continued to gaze at both of them. There was something in her eyes like gleams of paradise.

"I have caught you in the very act," said Cosette. "Just now, I heard my father Fauchelevent through the door saying: 'Conscience . . . doing my duty . . .' That is politics, indeed it is. I will not have it. People should not talk politics the very next day. It is not right."

"You are mistaken, Cosette," said Marius, "we are talking business. We are discussing the best investment of your six hundred thousand francs . . ."

"That is not it at all," interrupted Cosette. "I am coming. Does anybody want me here?"

And, passing resolutely through the door, she entered the drawing-room. She was dressed in a voluminous white dressing-gown, with a thousand folds and large sleeves which, starting from the neck, fell to her feet. In the golden heavens of some ancient gothic pictures, there are these charming sacks fit to clothe the angels.

She contemplated herself from head to foot in a long mirror, then exclaimed, in an outburst of ineffable ecstasy:

"There was once a King and a Queen. Oh! how happy I am!"

That said, she made a curtsey to Marius and to Jean Valjean.

"There," said she, "I am going to install myself near you in an easy-chair, we breakfast in half an hour, you shall say anything you like, I know well that men must talk, and I will be very good."

Marius took her by the arm and said lovingly to her:

"We are talking business."

"By the way," said Cosette, "I have opened my window, a flock of pierrots has arrived in the garden,—Birds, not maskers. To-day is Ash-Wednesday; but not for the birds."

"I tell you that we are talking business, go, my little Cosette, leave us alone for a moment. We are talking figures. That will bore you."

"You have a charming cravat on this morning, Marius. You are very dandified, monseigneur. No, it will not bore me."

"I assure you that it will bore you."

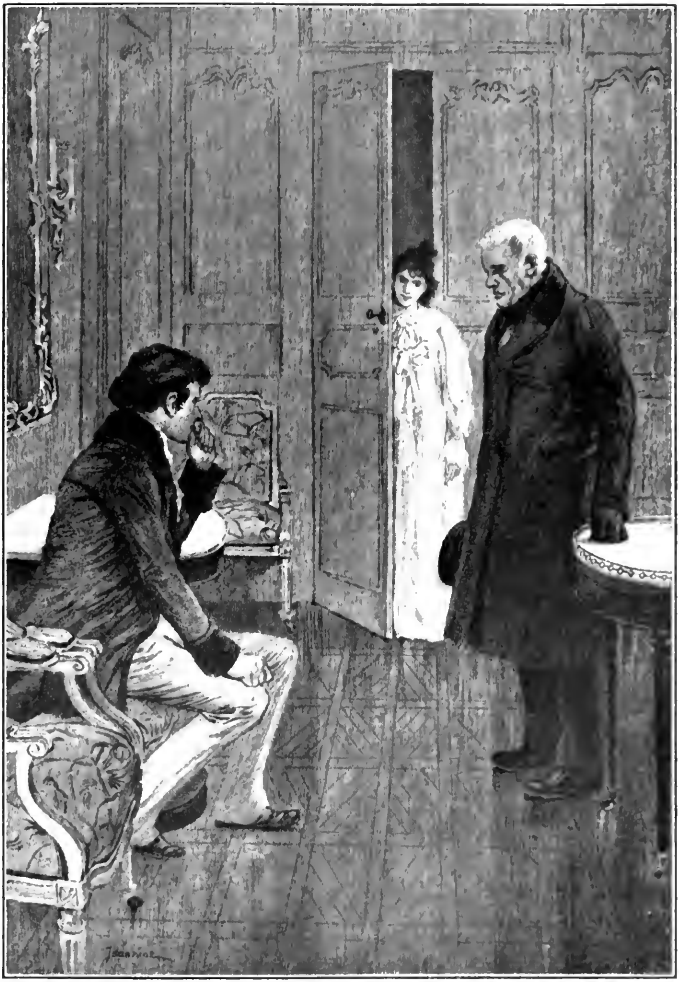
"No. Since it is you. I shall not understand you, but I shall listen to you. When one hears the voices of those whom one loves, one does not need to understand the words that they utter. That we should be here together—that is all that I desire. I shall remain with you, bah!"

"You are my beloved Cosette! Impossible."

"Impossible!"

"Yes."

"Very good," said Cosette. "I was going to tell you some news. I could have told you that your grandfather is still asleep, that your aunt is at mass, that the chimney in my father Fauchelevent's room smokes, that Nicolette has sent for the chimney-sweep, that Toussaint and Nicolette have already quarrelled, that Nicolette makes sport of Toussaint's stammer. Well, you shall know nothing. Ah! it is impos-



"I NEED BUT ONE PARDON, THAT OF MY CONSCIENCE."

sible? you shall see, gentlemen, that I, in my turn, can say: It is impossible. Then who will be caught? I beseech you, my little Marius, let me stay here with you two."

"I swear to you, that it is indispensable that we should be alone."

"Well, am I anybody?"

Jean Valjean had not uttered a single word. Cosette turned to him:

"In the first place, father, I want you to come and embrace me. What do you mean by not saying anything instead of taking my part? who gave me such a father as that? You must perceive that my family life is very unhappy. My husband beats me. Come, embrace me instantly."

Jean Valjean approached.

Cosette turned toward Marius.

"As for you, I shall make a face at you."

Then she presented her brow to Jean Valjean.

Jean Valjean advanced a step toward her.

Cosette recoiled.

"Father, you are pale. Does your arm hurt you?"

"It is well," said Jean Valjean.

"Did you sleep badly?"

"No."

"Are you sad?"

"No."

"Embrace me if you are well, if you sleep well, if you are content, I will not scold you."

And again she offered him her brow.

Jean Valjean dropped a kiss upon that brow whereon rested a celestial gleam.

"Smile."

Jean Valjean obeyed. It was the smile of a spectre.

"Now, defend me against my husband."

"Cosette! . . ." ejaculated Marius.

"Get angry, father. Say that I must stay. You can certainly talk before me. So you think me very silly. What you say is astonishing! business, placing money in a bank a great matter truly. Men make mysteries out of nothing. I am very pretty this morning. Look at me, Marius."

And with an adorable shrug of the shoulders, and an indescribably exquisite pout, she glanced at Marius.

"I love you!" said Marius.

"I adore you!" said Cosette.

And they fell irresistibly into each other's arms.

"Now," said Cosette, adjusting a fold of her dressing-gown, with a triumphant little grimace, "I shall stay."

"No, not that," said Marius, in a supplicating tone. "We have to finish something."

"Still no?"

Marius assumed a grave tone:

"I assure you, Cosette, that it is impossible."

"Ah! you put on your man's voice, sir. That is well, I go. You, father, have not upheld me. Monsieur my father, monsieur my husband, you are tyrants. I shall go and tell grandpapa. If you think that I am going to return and talk platitudes to you, you are mistaken. I am proud. I shall wait for you now. You shall see, that it is you who are going to be bored without me. I am going, it is well."

And she left the room.

Two seconds later, the door opened once more, her fresh and rosy head was again thrust between the two leaves, and she cried to them:

"I am very angry indeed."

The door closed again, and the shadows descended once more.

It was as though a ray of sunlight should have suddenly traversed the night, without itself being conscious of it.

Marius made sure that the door was securely closed.

"Poor Cosette!" he murmured, "when she finds out . . ."

At that word Jean Valjean trembled in every limb. He fixed on Marius a bewildered eye.

"Cosette! oh yes, it is true, you are going to tell Cosette about this. That is right. Stay, I had not thought of that. One has the strength for one thing, but not for another. Sir, I conjure you, I entreat now, sir, give me your most sacred word of honor, that you will not tell her. Is it not enough that you should know it? I have been able to say it myself without being forced to it, I could have told it to the universe, to the whole world,—it was all one to me. But she, she does not know what it is, it would terrify her. What, a convict! we should be obliged to explain matters to her, to say to her: 'He is a man who has been in the galleys.' She saw the chain-gang pass by one day. Oh! My God!" . . . He dropped into an arm-chair and hid his face in his hands.

His grief was not audible, but from the quivering of his shoulders it was evident that he was weeping. Silent tears, terrible tears.

There is something of suffocation in the sob. He was seized with a sort of convulsion, he threw himself against the back of the chair as though to gain breath, letting his arms fall, and allowing Marius to see his face inundated with tears, and Marius heard him murmur, so low that his voice seemed to issue from fathomless depths:

"Oh! would that I could die!"

"Be at your ease," said Marius, "I will keep your secret for myself alone."

And, less touched, perhaps, than he ought to have been, but forced, for the last hour, to familiarize himself with something as unexpected as it was dreadful, gradually beholding the convict superposed before his very eyes, upon M. Fauchelevent, overcome, little by little, by that lugubrious reality, and led, by the natural inclination of the situation, to recognize the space which had just been placed between that man and himself, Marius added:

"It is impossible that I should not speak a word to you with regard to the deposit which you have so faithfully and honestly remitted. That is an act of probity. It is just that some recompense should be bestowed on you. Fix the sum yourself, it shall be counted out to you. Do not fear to set it very high."

"I thank you, sir," replied Jean Valjean, gently.

He remained in thought for a moment, mechanically passing the tip of his fore-finger across his thumb-nail, then he lifted up his voice:

"All is nearly over. But one last thing remains for me . . ."

"What is it?"

Jean Valjean struggled with what seemed a last hesitation, and, without voice, without breath, he stammered rather than said:

"Now that you know, do you think, sir, you, who are the master, that I ought not to see Cosette any more?"

"I think that would be better," replied Marius coldly.

"I shall never see her more," murmured Jean Valjean. And he directed his steps towards the door.

He laid his hand on the knob, the latch yielded, the door opened. Jean Valjean pushed it open far enough to pass through, stood motionless for a second, then closed the door again and turned to Marius.

He was no longer pale, he was livid. There were no longer any tears in his eyes, but only a sort of tragic flame. His voice had regained a strange composure.

"Stay, sir," he said. "If you will allow it, I will come to see her. I assure you that I desire it greatly. If I had not cared to see Cosette, I should not have made to you the confession that I have made, I should have gone away; but, as I desired to remain in the place where Cosette is, and to continue to see her, I had to tell you about it honestly. You follow my reasoning, do you not? it is a matter easily understood. You see, I have had her with me for more than nine years. We lived first in that hut on the boulevard, then in the convent, then near the Luxembourg. That was where you saw her for the first time. You remember her blue plush hat. Then we went to the Quartier des Invalides, where there was a railing on a garden, the Rue Plumet. I lived in a little back court-yard, whence I could hear her piano. That was my life. We never left each other. That lasted for nine years and some months. I was like her own father, and she was my child. I do not know whether you understand, Monsieur Pontmercy, but to go away now, never to see her again, never to speak to her again, to no longer have anything, would be hard. If you do not disapprove of it, I will come to see Cosette from time to time. I will not come often. I will not remain long. You shall give orders that I am to be received in the little waiting-room. On the ground floor. I could enter perfectly well by the back door, but that might create surprise perhaps, and it would be better, I think, for me to enter by the usual door. Truly, sir, I should like to see a little more of Cosette. As rarely as you please. Put yourself in my place, I have nothing left but that. And then, we must be cautious. If I no longer come at all, it would produce a bad effect, it would be considered singular. What I can do, by the way, is to come in the afternoon, when night is beginning to fall."

"You shall come every evening," said Marius, "and Cosette will be waiting for you."

"You are kind, sir," said Jean Valjean.

Marius saluted Jean Valjean, happiness escorted despair to the door, and these two men parted.

CHAPTER II

THE OBSCURITIES WHICH A REVELATION CAN CONTAIN

MARIUS was quite upset.

The sort of estrangement which he had always felt towards the man beside whom he had seen Cosette, was now explained to him. There was something enigmatic about that person, of which his instinct had warned him.

This enigma was the most hideous of disgraces, the galleys. This M. Fauchelevent was the convict Jean Valjean.

To abruptly find such a secret in the midst of one's happiness resembles the discovery of a scorpion in a nest of turtle-doves.

Was the happiness of Marius and Cosette thenceforth condemned to such a neighborhood? Was this an accomplished fact? Did the acceptance of that man form a part of the marriage now consummated? Was there nothing to be done?

Had Marius wedded the convict as well?

In vain may one be crowned with light and joy, in vain may one taste the grand purple hour of life, happy love, such shocks would force even the archangel in his ecstasy, even the demigod in his glory, to shudder.

As is always the case in changes of view of this nature, Marius asked himself whether he had nothing with which to reproach himself. Had he been wanting in divination? Had he been wanting in prudence? Had he involuntarily dulled his wits? A little, perhaps. Had he entered upon this love affair, which had ended in his marriage to Cosette, without taking sufficient precautions to throw light upon the surroundings? He admitted,—it is thus, by a series of successive admissions of ourselves in regard to ourselves, that life amends us, little by little,—he admitted the chimerical and visionary side of his nature, a sort of internal cloud peculiar to many organizations, and which, in paroxysms of passion and sorrow, dilates as the temperature of the soul changes, and invades the entire man, to such a degree as to render him nothing more than a conscience bathed in a mist. We have more than once indicated this characteristic element of Marius' individuality.

He recalled that, in the intoxication of his love, in the Rue Plumet, during those six or seven ecstatic weeks, he had not even spoke to Cosette of that drama in the Gorbeau hovel, where the victim had taken up such a singular line of silence during the struggle and the ensuing flight. How had it happened that he had not mentioned this to Cosette? Yet it was so near and so terrible! How had it come to pass that he had not even named the Thénardiers, and, particularly, on the day when he had encountered Éponine? He now found it almost difficult to explain his silence of that time. Nevertheless, he could account for it. He recalled his benumbed state, his intoxication with Cosette, love absorbing everything, that catching away of each other into the ideal, and perhaps also, like the imperceptible quantity of reason mingled with this violent and charming state of the soul, a vague, dull instinct impelling him to conceal and abolish in his memory that redoubtable adventure, contact with which he dreaded, in which he did not wish to play any part, his agency in which he had kept secret, and in which he could be neither narrator nor witness without being an accuser.

Moreover, these few weeks had been a flash of lightning; there had been no time for anything except love.

In short, having weighed everything, turned everything over in his mind, examined everything, whatever might have been the consequences if he had told Cosette about the Gorbeau ambush, even if he had discovered that Jean Valjean was a convict, would that have changed him, Marius? Would that have changed her, Cosette? Would he have drawn back? Would he have adored her any the less? Would he have refrained from marrying her? No. Then there was nothing to regret, nothing with which he need reproach himself. All was well. There is a deity for those drunken men who are called lovers. Marius blind, had followed the path which he would have chosen had he been in full possession of his sight. Love had bandaged his eyes, in order to lead him whither? To paradise.

But this paradise was henceforth complicated with an infernal accompaniment.

Marius' ancient estrangement towards this man, towards this Fauchelevent who had turned into Jean Valjean, was at present mingled with horror.

In this horror, let us state, there was some pity, and even a certain surprise.

This thief, this thief guilty of a second offence, had restored that deposit. And what a deposit! Six hundred thousand francs.

He alone was in the secret of that deposit. He might have kept it all, he had restored it all.

Moreover, he had himself revealed his situation. Nothing forced him to this. If any one learned who he was, it was through himself. In this avowal there was something more than acceptance of humiliation, there was acceptance of peril. For a condemned man, a mask is not a mask, it is a shelter. A false name is security, and he had rejected that false name. He, the galley-slave, might have hidden himself forever in an honest family; he had withstood this temptation. And with what motive? Through a conscientious scruple. He himself explained this with the irresistible accents of truth. In short, whatever this Jean Valjean might be, he was, undoubtedly, a conscience which was awakening. There existed some mysterious re-habilitation which had begun; and, to all appearances, scruples had for a long time already controlled this man. Such fits of justice and goodness are not characteristic of vulgar natures. An awakening of conscience is grandeur of soul.

Jean Valjean was sincere. This sincerity, visible, palpable, irrefragable, evident from the very grief that it caused him, rendered inquiries useless, and conferred authority on all that that man had said.

Here, for Marius, there was a strange reversal of situations. What breathed from M. Fauchelevent? distrust. What did Jean Valjean inspire? confidence.

In the mysterious balance of this Jean Valjean which the pensive Marius struck, he admitted the active principle, he admitted the passive principle, and he tried to reach a balance.

But all this went on as in a storm. Marius, while endeavoring to form a clear idea of this man, and while pursuing Jean Valjean, so to speak, in the depths of his thought, lost him and found him again in a fatal mist.

The deposit honestly restored, the probity of the confession —these were good. This produced a lightening of the cloud, then the cloud became black once more.

Troubled as were Marius' memories, a shadow of them returned to him.

After all, what was that adventure in the Jondrette attic? Why had that man taken to flight on the arrival of the police, instead of entering a complaint?

Here Marius found the answer. Because that man was a fugitive from justice, who had broken his ban.

Another question: Why had that man come to the barricade?

For Marius now once more distinctly beheld that recollection which had re-appeared in his emotions like sympathetic ink at the application of heat. This man had been in the barricade. He had not fought there. What had he come there for? In the presence of this question a spectre sprang up and replied: "Javert."

Marius recalled perfectly now that funereal sight of Jean Valjean dragging the pinioned Javert out of the barricade, and he still heard behind the corner of the little Rue Mondétour that frightful pistol shot. Obviously, there was hatred between that police spy and the galley-slave. The one was in the other's way. Jean Valjean had gone to the barricade for the purpose of revenging himself. He had arrived late. He probably knew that Javert was a prisoner there. The Corsican vendetta has penetrated to certain lower strata and has become the law there; it is so simple that it does not astonish souls which are but half turned towards good; and those hearts are so constituted that a criminal, who is in the path of repentance, may be scrupulous in the matter of theft and unscrupulous in the matter of vengeance. Jean Valjean had killed Javert. At least, that seemed to be evident.

This was the final question, to be sure; but to this there was no reply. This question Marius felt like pincers. How had it come to pass that Jean Valjean's existence had elbowed that of Cosette for so long a period?

What melancholy sport of Providence was that which had placed that child in contact with that man? Are there then chains for two which are forged on high? and does God take pleasure in coupling the angel with the demon? So a crime and an innocence can be room-mates in the mysterious galleys of wretchedness? In that defiling of condemned persons which is called human destiny, can two brows pass side by side, the one ingenuous, the other formidable, the one all bathed in the divine whiteness of dawn, the other forever blemished by the flash of an eternal lightning? Who could have arranged that inexplicable pairing off? In what manner, in consequence of what prodigy, had any community of life been established between this celestial little creature and that old criminal?

Who could have bound the lamb to the wolf, and, what was still more incomprehensible, have attached the wolf to the lamb? For the wolf loved the lamb, for the fierce creature adored the feeble one, for, during the space of nine years, the angel had had the monster as her point of support. Cosette's childhood and girlhood, her advent in the daylight, her virginal growth towards life and light, had been sheltered by that hideous devotion. Here questions exfoliated, so to speak, into innumerable enigmas, abysses yawned at the bottoms of abysses, and Marius could no longer bend over Jean Valjean without becoming dizzy. What was this man-precipice?

The old symbols of Genesis are eternal; in human society, such as it now exists, and until a broader day shall effect a change in it, there will always be two men, the one superior, the other subterranean; the one which is according to good is Abel; the other which is according to evil is Cain. What was this tender Cain? What was this ruffian religiously absorbed in the adoration of a virgin, watching over her, rearing her, guarding her, dignifying her, and enveloping her, impure as he was himself, with purity?

What was that cess-pool which had venerated that innocence to such a point as not to leave upon it a single spot? What was this Jean Valjean educating Cosette? What was this figure of the shadows which had for its only object the preservation of the rising of a star from every shadow and from every cloud?

That was Jean Valjean's secret; that was also God's secret.

In the presence of this double secret, Marius recoiled. The one, in some sort, reassured him as to the other. God was as visible in this affair as was Jean Valjean. God has his instruments. He makes use of the tool which he wills. He is not responsible to men. Do we know how God sets about the work? Jean Valjean had labored over Cosette. He had, to some extent, made that soul. That was incontestable. Well, what then? The workman was horrible; but the work was admirable. God produces his miracles as seems good to him. He had constructed that charming Cosette, and he had employed Jean Valjean. It had pleased him to choose this strange collaborator for himself. What account have we to demand of him? Is this the first time that the dung-heap has aided the spring to create the rose?

Marius made himself these replies, and declared to himself that they were good. He had not dared to press Jean Valjean on all the points which we have just indicated, but he did not confess to himself that he did not dare to do it. He adored Cosette, he possessed Cosette, Cosette was splendidly pure. That was sufficient for him. What enlightenment did he need? Cosette was a light. Does light require enlightenment? He had everything; what more could he desire? All, —is not that enough? Jean Valjean's personal affairs did not concern him.

And bending over the fatal shadow of that man, he clung fast, convulsively, to the solemn declaration of that unhappy wretch: "I am nothing to Cosette. Ten years ago I did not know that she was in existence."

Jean Valjean was a passer-by. He had said so himself. Well, he had passed. Whatever he was, his part was finished.

Henceforth, there remained Marius to fulfil the part of Providence to Cosette. Cosette had sought the azure in a person like herself, in her lover, her husband, her celestial male. Cosette, as she took her flight, winged and transfigured, left behind her on the earth, her hideous and empty chrysalis, Jean Valjean.

In whatever circle of ideas Marius revolved, he always returned to a certain horror for Jean Valjean. A sacred horror, perhaps, for, as we have just pointed out, he felt a *quid divinum* in that man. But do what he would, and seek what extenuation he would, he was certainly forced to fall back upon this: the man was a convict; that is to say, a being who has not even a place in the social ladder, since he is lower than the very lowest rung. After the very last of men comes the convict. The convict is no longer, so to speak, in the semblance of the living. The law has deprived him of the entire quantity of humanity of which it can deprive a man.

Marius, on penal questions, still held to the inexorable system, though he was a democrat and he entertained all the ideas of the law on the subject of those whom the law strikes. He had not yet accomplished all progress, we admit. He had not yet come to distinguish between that which is written by man and that which is written by God, between law and right. He had not examined and weighed the right which man takes to dispose of the irrevocable and the irreparable. He was not shocked by the word *vindicte.* He found it quite simple that certain breaches of the written law should be followed by eternal suffering, and he accepted, as the process of civilization, social damnation. He still stood at this point, though safe to advance infallibly later on, since his nature was good, and, at bottom, wholly formed of latent progress.

In this stage of his ideas, Jean Valjean appeared to him hideous and repulsive. He was a man reproved, he was the convict. That word was for him like the sound of the trump on the Day of Judgment; and, after having reflected upon Jean Valjean for a long time, his final gesture had been to turn away his head. *Vade retro.*

Marius, if we must recognize and even insist upon the fact, while interrogating Jean Valjean to such a point that Jean Valjean had said: "You are confessing me," had not, nevertheless, put to him two or three decisive questions.

It was not that they had not presented themselves to his mind, but that he had been afraid of them. The Jondrette attic? The barricade? Javert? Who knows where these revelations would have stopped? Jean Valjean did not seem like a man who would draw back, and who knows whether Marius, after having urged him on, would not have himself desired to hold him back?

Has it not happened to all of us, in certain supreme conjunctures, to stop our ears in order that we may not hear the reply, after we have asked a question? It is especially when one loves that one gives way to these exhibitions of cowardice. It is not wise to question sinister situations to the last point, particularly when the indissoluble side of our life is fatally intermingled with them. What a terrible light might have proceeded from the despairing explanations of Jean Valjean, and who knows whether that hideous glare would not have darted forth as far as Cosette? Who knows whether a sort of infernal glow would not have lingered behind it on the brow of that angel? The spattering of a lightning-flash is of the thunder also. Fatality has points of juncture where innocence itself is stamped with crime by the gloomy law of the reflections which give color. The purest figures may forever preserve the reflection of a horrible association. Rightly or wrongly, Marius had been afraid. He already knew too much. He sought to dull his senses rather than to gain further light.

In dismay he bore off Cosette in his arms and shut his eyes to Jean Valjean.

That man was the night, the living and horrible night. How should he dare to seek the bottom of it? It is a terrible thing to interrogate the shadow. Who knows what its reply will be? The dawn may be blackened forever by it.

In this state of mind the thought that that man would, henceforth, come into any contact whatever with Cosette was a heartrending perplexity to Marius.

He now almost reproached himself for not having put those formidable questions, before which he had recoiled, and from which an implacable and definitive decision might have sprung. He felt that he was too good, too gentle, too weak, if we must say the word. This weakness had led him to an imprudent concession. He had allowed himself to be touched. He had been in the wrong. He ought to have simply and purely rejected Jean Valjean. Jean Valjean played the part of fire, and that is what he should have done, and have freed his house from that man.

He was vexed with himself, he was angry with that whirlwind of emotions which had deafened, blinded, and carried him away. He was displeased with himself.

What was he to do now? Jean Valjean's visits were profoundly repugnant to him. What was the use in having that man in his house? What did the man want? Here, he became dismayed, he did not wish to dig down, he did not wish to penetrate deeply; he did not wish to sound himself. He had promised, he had allowed himself to be drawn into a promise; Jean Valjean held his promise; one must keep one's word even to a convict, above all to a convict. Still, his first duty was to Cosette. In short, he was carried away by the repugnance which dominated him.

Marius turned over all this confusion of ideas in his mind, passing from one to the other, and moved by all of them. Hence arose a profound trouble.

It was not easy for him to hide this trouble from Cosette, but love is a talent, and Marius succeeded in doing it.

However, without any apparent object, he questioned Cosette, who was as candid as a dove is white and who suspected nothing; he talked of her childhood and her youth, and he became more and more convinced that that convict had been everything good, paternal and respectable that a man can be towards Cosette. All that Marius had caught a glimpse of and had surmised was real. That sinister nettle had loved and protected that lily.

BOOK EIGHTH.—FADING AWAY OF THE TWILIGHT

CHAPTER I

THE LOWER CHAMBER

On the following day, at nightfall, Jean Valjean knocked at the carriage gate of the Gillenormand house. It was Basque who received him. Basque was in the courtyard at the appointed hour, as though he had received his orders. It sometimes happens that one says to a servant: "You will watch for Mr. So and So, when he arrives."

Basque addressed Jean Valjean without waiting for the latter to approach him:

"Monsieur le Baron has charged me to inquire whether monsieur desires to go upstairs or to remain below?"

"I will remain below," replied Jean Valjean.

Basque, who was perfectly respectful, opened the door of the waiting-room and said:

"I will go and inform Madame."

The room which Jean Valjean entered was a damp, vaulted room on the ground floor, which served as a cellar on occasion, which opened on the street, was paved with red squares and was badly lighted by a grated window.

This chamber was not one of those which are harassed by the feather-duster, the pope's head brush, and the broom. The dust rested tranquilly there. Persecution of the spiders was not organized there. A fine web, which spread far and wide, and was very black and ornamented with dead flies, formed a wheel on one of the window-panes. The room, which was small and low-ceiled, was furnished with a heap of empty bottles piled up in one corner.

The wall, which was daubed with an ochre yellow wash, was scaling off in large flakes. At one end there was a chimney-piece painted in black with a narrow shelf. A fire was burning there; which indicated that Jean Valjean's reply: "I will remain below," had been foreseen.

Two arm-chairs were placed at the two corners of the fireplace. Between the chairs an old bedside rug, which displayed more foundation thread than wool, had been spread by way of a carpet.

The chamber was lighted by the fire on the hearth and the twilight falling through the window.

Jean Valjean was fatigued. For days he had neither eaten nor slept. He threw himself into one of the arm-chairs.

Basque returned, set a lighted candle on the chimney-piece and retired. Jean Valjean, his head drooping and his chin resting on his breast, perceived neither Basque nor the candle.

All at once, he drew himself up with a start. Cosette was standing beside him.

He had not seen her enter, but he had felt that she was there.

He turned round. He gazed at her. She was adorably lovely. But what he was contemplating with that profound gaze was not her beauty but her soul.

"Well," exclaimed Cosette, "father, I knew that you were peculiar, but I never should have expected this. What an idea! Marius told me that you wish me to receive you here."

"Yes," it is my wish."

"I expected that reply. Good. I warn you that I am going to make a scene for you. Let us begin at the beginning. Embrace me, father."

And she offered him her cheek.

Jean Valjean remained motionless.

"You do not stir. I take note of it. Attitude of guilt. But never mind, I pardon you. Jesus Christ said: Offer the other cheek. Here it is."

And she presented her other cheek.

Jean Valjean did not move. It seemed as though his feet were nailed to the pavement.

"This is becoming serious," said Cosette. "What have I done to you? I declare that I am perplexed. You owe me reparation. You will dine with us."

"I have dined."

"That is not true. I will get M. Gillenormand to scold you. Grandfathers are made to reprimand fathers. Come. Go upstairs with me to the drawing-room. Immediately."

"Impossible."

Here Cosette lost ground a little. She ceased to command and passed to questioning.

"But why? and you choose the ugliest chamber in the house in which to see me. It's horrible here."

"Thou knowest . . ."

Jean Valjean caught himself up.

"You know, madame, that I am peculiar, I have my freaks."

Cosette struck her tiny hands together.

"Madame! . . . You know! . . . more novelties! What is the meaning of this?"

Jean Valjean directed upon her that heartrending smile to which he occasionally had recourse:

"You wished to be Madame. You are so."

"Not for you, father."

"Do not call me father."

"What?"

"Call me 'Monsieur Jean.' 'Jean,' if you like."

"You are no longer my father? I am no longer Cosette? 'Monsieur Jean'? What does this mean? why, these are revolutions, aren't they? what has taken place? come, look me in the face. And you won't live with us! And you won't have my chamber! What have I done to you? Has anything happened?"

"Nothing."

"Well then?"

"Everything is as usual."

"Why do you change your name?"

"You have changed yours, surely."

He smiled again with the same smile as before and added:

"Since you are Madame Pontmercy, I certainly can be Monsieur Jean."

"I don't understand anything about it. All this is idiotic. I shall ask permission of my husband for you to be 'Monsieur Jean.' I hope that he will not consent to it. You cause me a great deal of pain. One does have freaks, but one does not cause one's little Cosette grief. That is wrong. You have no right to be wicked, you who are so good."

He made no reply.

She seized his hands with vivacity, and raising them to her face with an irresistible movement, she pressed them against her neck beneath her chin, which is a gesture of profound tenderness.

"Oh!" she said to him, "be good!"

And she went on:

"This is what I call being good: being nice and coming and living here,—there are birds here as there are in the Rue Plumet,—living with us, quitting that hole of a Rue de l'Homme Armé, not giving us riddles to guess, being like all the rest of the world, dining with us, breakfasting with us, being my father."

He loosed her hands.

"You no longer need a father, you have a husband."

Cosette became angry.

"I no longer need a father! One really does not know what to say to things like that, which are not common sense!"

"If Toussaint were here," resumed Jean Valjean, like a person who is driven to seek authorities, and who clutches at every branch, "she would be the first to agree that it is true that I have always had ways of my own. There is nothing new in this. I always have loved my black corner."

"But it is cold here. One cannot see distinctly. It is abominable, that it is, to wish to be Monsieur Jean! I will not have you say 'you' to me."

"Just now, as I was coming hither," replied Jean Valjean, "I saw a piece of furniture in the Rue Saint Louis. It was at a cabinet-maker's. If I were a pretty woman, I would treat myself to that bit of furniture. A very neat toilet table; in the reigning style. What you call rosewood, I think. It is inlaid. The mirror is quite large. There are drawers. It is pretty."

"Hou! the villainous bear!" replied Cosette.

And with supreme grace, setting her teeth and drawing back her lips, she blew at Jean Valjean. She was a Grace copying a cat.

"I am furious," she resumed. "Ever since yesterday, you have made me rage, all of you. I am greatly vexed. I don't understand. You do not defend me against Marius. Marius will not uphold me against you. I am all alone. I arrange a chamber prettily. If I could have put the good God there I would have done it. My chamber is left on my hands. My lodger sends me into bankruptcy. I order a nice little dinner of Nicolette. We will have nothing to do with your dinner, Madame. And my father Fauchelevent wants me to call him 'Monsieur Jean,' and to receive him in a frightful, old, ugly cellar, where the walls have beards, and where the crystal consists of empty bottles, and the curtains are of spiders' webs! You are singular, I admit, that is your style, but people who get married are granted a truce. You ought not to have begun being singular again instantly. So you are going to be perfectly contented in your abominable Rue de l'Homme Armé. I was very desperate indeed there, that I was. What have you against me? You cause me a great deal of grief. Fi!"

And, becoming suddenly serious, she gazed intently at Jean Valjean and added:

"Are you angry with me because I am happy?"

Ingenuousness sometimes unconsciously penetrates deep. This question, which was simple for Cosette, was profound for Jean Valjean. Cosette had meant to scratch, and she lacerated.

Jean Valjean turned pale.

He remained for a moment without replying, then, with an inexpressible intonation, and speaking to himself, he murmured:

"Her happiness was the object of my life. Now God may sign my dismissal. Cosette, thou art happy; my day is over."

"Ah, you have said *thou* to me!" exclaimed Cosette.

And she sprang to his neck.

Jean Valjean, in bewilderment, strained her wildly to his breast. It almost seemed to him as though he were taking her back.

"Thanks, father!" said Cosette.

This enthusiastic impulse was on the point of becoming poignant for Jean Valjean. He gently removed Cosette's arms, and took his hat.

"Well?" said Cosette.

"I leave you, Madame, they are waiting for you."

And, from the threshold, he added:

"I have said *thou* to you. Tell your husband that this shall not happen again. Pardon me."

Jean Valjean quitted the room, leaving Cosette stupefied at this enigmatical farewell.

CHAPTER II

ANOTHER STEP BACKWARDS

On the following day, at the same hour, Jean Valjean came.

Cosette asked him no questions, was no longer astonished, no longer exclaimed that she was cold, no longer spoke of the drawing-room, she avoided saying either "father" or "Monsieur Jean." She allowed herself to be addressed as *you*. She allowed herself to be called Madame. Only, her joy had undergone a certain diminution. She would have been sad, if sadness had been possible to her.

It is probable that she had had with Marius one of those conversations in which the beloved man says what he pleases, explains nothing, and satisfies the beloved woman. The curiosity of lovers does not extend very far beyond their own love.

The lower room had made a little toilet. Basque had suppressed the bottles, and Nicolette the spiders.

All the days which followed brought Jean Valjean at the same hour. He came every day, because he had not the strength to take Marius' words otherwise than literally. Marius arranged matters so as to be absent at the hours when Jean Valjean came. The house grew accustomed to the novel ways of M. Fauchelevent. Toussaint helped in this direction: "Monsieur has always been like that," she repeated. The grandfather issued this decree:—"He's an original." And all was said. Moreover, at the age of ninety-six, no bond is any longer possible, all is merely juxtaposition; a newcomer is in the way. There is no longer any room; all habits are acquired. M. Fauchelevent, M. Tranchelevent, Father Gillenormand asked nothing better than to be relieved from "that gentleman." He added:—"Nothing is more common than those originals. They do all sorts of queer things. They have no reason. The Marquis de Canaples was still worse. He bought a palace that he might lodge in the garret. These are fantastic appearances that people affect."

No one caught a glimpse of the sinister foundation. And moreover, who could have guessed such a thing? There are marshes of this description in India. The water seems extraordinary, inexplicable, rippling though there is no wind, and agitated where it should be calm. One gazes at the surface of these causeless ebullitions; one does not perceive the hydra which crawls on the bottom.

Many men have a secret monster in this same manner, a dragon which gnaws them, a despair which inhabits their night. Such a man resembles other men, he goes and comes. No one knows that he bears within him a frightful parasitic pain with a thousand teeth, which lives within the unhappy man, and of which he is dying. No one knows that this man is a gulf. He is stagnant but deep. From time to time, a trouble of which the onlooker understands nothing appears on his surface. A mysterious wrinkle is formed, then vanishes, then re-appears; an air-bubble rises and bursts. It is the breathing of the unknown beast.

Certain strange habits: arriving at the hour when other people are taking their leave, keeping in the background when other people are displaying themselves, preserving on all occasions what may be designated as the wall-colored mantle, seeking the solitary walk, preferring the deserted street, avoiding any share in conversation, avoiding crowds and festivals, seeming at one's ease and living poorly, having one's key in one's pocket, and one's candle at the porter's lodge, however rich one may be, entering by the side door, ascending the private staircase,—all these insignificant singularities, fugitive folds on the surface, often proceed from a formidable foundation.

Many weeks passed in this manner. A new life gradually took possession of Cosette: the relations which marriage creates, visits, the care of the house, pleasures, great matters. Cosette's pleasures were not costly, they consisted in one thing: being with Marius. The great occupation of her life was to go out with him, to remain with him. It was for them a joy that was always fresh, to go out arm in arm, in the face of the sun, in the open street, without hiding themselves, before the whole world, both of them completely alone.

Cosette had one vexation. Toussaint could not get on with Nicolette, the soldering of two elderly maids being impossible, and she went away. The grandfather was well; Marius argued a case here and there; Aunt Gillenormand peacefully led that life aside which sufficed for her, beside the new household. Jean Valjean came every day.

The address as *thou* disappeared, the *you,* the "Madame," the "Monsieur Jean," rendered him another person to Cosette. The care which he had himself taken to detach her from him was succeeding. She became more and more gay and less and less tender. Yet she still loved him sincerely, and he felt it.

One day she said to him suddenly: "You used to be my father, you are no longer my father, you were my uncle, you are no longer my uncle, you were Monsieur Fauchelevent, you are Jean. Who are you then? I don't like all this. If I did not know how good you are, I should be afraid of you."

He still lived in the Rue de l'Homme Armé, because he could not make up his mind to remove to a distance from the quarter where Cosette dwelt.

At first, he only remained a few minutes with Cosette, and then went away.

Little by little he acquired the habit of making his visits less brief. One would have said that he was taking advantage of the authorization of the days which were lengthening: he arrived earlier and departed later.

One day Cosette chanced to say "father" to him. A flash of joy illuminated Jean Valjean's melancholy old countenance. He caught her up: "Say Jean."—"Ah! truly," she replied with a burst of laughter, "Monsieur Jean."—"That is right," said he. And he turned aside so that she might not see him wipe his eyes.

CHAPTER III

THEY RECALL THE GARDEN OF THE RUE PLUMET

This was the last time. After that last flash of light, complete extinction ensued. No more familiarity, no more good-morning with a kiss, never more that word so profoundly sweet: "My father!" He was at his own request and through his own complicity driven out of all his happinesses one after the other; and he had this sorrow, that after having lost Cosette wholly in one day, he was afterwards obliged to lose her again in detail.

The eye eventually becomes accustomed to the light of a cellar. In short, it sufficed for him to have an apparition of Cosette every day. His whole life was concentrated in that one hour.

He seated himself close to her, he gazed at her in silence, or he talked to her of years gone by, of her childhood, of the convent, of her little friends of those bygone days.

One afternoon,—it was on one of those early days in April, already warm and fresh, the moment of the sun's great gayety, the gardens which surrounded the windows of Marius and Cosette felt the emotion of waking, the hawthorn was on the point of budding, a jewelled garniture of gillyflowers spread over the ancient walls, snapdragons yawned through the crevices of the stones, amid the grass there was a charming beginning of daisies, and buttercups, the white butterflies of the year were making their first appearance, the wind, that minstrel of the eternal wedding, was trying in the trees the first notes of that grand, auroral symphony which the old poets called the springtide,—Marius said to Cosette:—"We said that we would go back to take a look at our garden in the Rue Plumet. Let us go thither. We must not be ungrateful."—And away they flitted, like two swallows towards the spring. This garden of the Rue Plumet produced on them the effect of the dawn. They already had behind them in life something which was like the springtime of their love. The house in the Rue Plumet being held on a lease, still belonged to Cosette. They went to that garden and that house. There they found themselves again, there they forgot themselves. That evening, at the usual hour, Jean Valjean came to the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire.—"Madame went out with Monsieur and has not yet returned," Basque said to him. He seated himself in silence, and waited an hour. Cosette did not return. He departed with drooping head.

Cosette was so intoxicated with her walk to "their garden," and so joyous at having "lived a whole day in her past," that she talked of nothing else on the morrow. She did not notice that she had not seen Jean Valjean.

"In what way did you go thither?" Jean Valjean asked her.

"On foot."

"And how did you return?"

"In a hackney carriage."

For some time, Jean Valjean had noticed the economical life led by the young people. He was troubled by it. Marius' economy was severe, and that word had its absolute meaning for Jean Valjean. He hazarded a query:

"Why do you not have a carriage of your own? A pretty coupé would only cost you five hundred francs a month. You are rich."

"I don't know," replied Cosette.

"It is like Toussaint," resumed Jean Valjean. "She is gone. You have not replaced her. Why?"

"Nicolette suffices."

"But you ought to have a maid."

"Have I not Marius?"

"You ought to have a house of your own, your own servants, a carriage, a box at the theatre. There is nothing too fine for you. Why not profit by your riches? Wealth adds to happiness."

Cosette made no reply.

Jean Valjean's visits were not abridged. Far from it. When it is the heart which is slipping, one does not halt on the downward slope.

When Jean Valjean wished to prolong his visit and to induce forgetfulness of the hour, he sang the praises of Marius; he pronounced him handsome, noble, courageous, witty, eloquent, good. Cosette outdid him. Jean Valjean began again. They were never weary. Marius—that word was inexhaustible; those six letters contained volumes. In this manner, Jean Valjean contrived to remain a long time.

It was so sweet to see Cosette, to forget by her side! It alleviated his wounds. It frequently happened that Basque came twice to announce: "M. Gillenormand sends me to remind Madame la Baronne that dinner is served."

On those days, Jean Valjean was very thoughtful on his return home.

Was there, then, any truth in that comparison of the chrysalis which had presented itself to the mind of Marius? Was Jean Valjean really a chrysalis who would persist, and who would come to visit his butterfly?

One day he remained still longer than usual. On the following day he observed that there was no fire on the hearth. —"Hello!" he thought. "No fire."—And he furnished the explanation for himself.—"It is perfectly simple. It is April. The cold weather has ceased."

"Heavens! how cold it is here!" exclaimed Cosette when she entered.

"Why, no," said Jean Valjean.

"Was it you who told Basque not to make a fire then?"

"Yes, since we are now in the month of May."

"But we have a fire until June. One is needed all the year in this cellar."

"I thought that a fire was unnecessary."

"That is exactly like one of your ideas!" retorted Cosette.

On the following day there was a fire. But the two arm-chairs were arranged at the other end of the room near the door. "—What is the meaning of this?" thought Jean Valjean.

He went for the arm-chairs and restored them to their ordinary place near the hearth.

This fire lighted once more encouraged him, however. He prolonged the conversation even beyond its customary limits. As he rose to take his leave, Cosette said to him:

"My husband said a queer thing to me yesterday."

"What was it?"

"He said to me: 'Cosette, we have an income of thirty thousand livres. Twenty-seven that you own, and three that my grandfather gives me.' I replied: 'That makes thirty.' He went on: 'Would you have the courage to live on the three thousand?' I answered: 'Yes, on nothing. Provided that it was with you.' And then I asked: 'Why do you say that to me?' He replied: 'I wanted to know.'"

Jean Valjean found not a word to answer. Cosette probably expected some explanation from him; he listened in gloomy silence. He went back to the Rue de l'Homme Armé; he was so deeply absorbed that he mistook the door and instead of entering his own house, he entered the adjoining dwelling. It was only after having ascended nearly two stories that he perceived his error and went down again.

His mind was swarming with conjectures. It was evident that Marius had his doubts as to the origin of the six hundred thousand francs, that he feared some source that was not pure, who knows? that he had even, perhaps, discovered that the money came from him, Jean Valjean, that he hesitated before this suspicious fortune, and was disinclined to take it as his own,—preferring that both he and Cosette should remain poor, rather than that they should be rich with wealth that was not clean.

Moreover, Jean Valjean began vaguely to surmise that he was being shown the door.

On the following day, he underwent something like a shock on entering the ground-floor room. The arm-chairs had disappeared. There was not a single chair of any sort.

"Ah, what's this!" exclaimed Cosette as she entered, "no chairs! Where are the arm-chairs?"

"They are no longer here," replied Jean Valjean.

"This is too much!"

Jean Valjean stammered:

"It was I who told Basque to remove them."

"And your reason?"

"I have only a few minutes to stay to-day."

"A brief stay is no reason for remaining standing."

"I think that Basque needed the chairs for the drawing-room."

"Why?"

"You have company this evening, no doubt."

"We expect no one."

Jean Valjean had not another word to say.

Cosette shrugged her shoulders.

"To have the chairs carried off! The other day you had the fire put out. How odd you are!"

"Adieu!" murmured Jean Valjean.

He did not say: "Adieu, Cosette." But he had not the strength to say: "Adieu, Madame."

He went away utterly overwhelmed.

This time he had understood.

On the following day he did not come. Cosette only observed the fact in the evening.

"Why," said she, "Monsieur Jean has not been here today."

And she felt a slight twinge at her heart, but she hardly perceived it, being immediately diverted by a kiss from Marius.

On the following day he did not come.

Cosette paid no heed to this, passed her evening and slept well that night, as usual, and thought of it only when she woke. She was so happy! She speedily despatched Nicolette to M. Jean's house to inquire whether he were ill, and why he had not come on the previous evening. Nicolette brought back the reply of M. Jean that he was not ill. He was busy. He would come soon. As soon as he was able. Moreover, he was on the point of taking a little journey. Madame must remember that it was his custom to take trips from time to time. They were not to worry about him. They were not to think of him.

Nicolette on entering M. Jean's had repeated to him her mistress' very words. That Madame had sent her to inquire why M. Jean had not come on the preceding evening. "—It is two days since I have been there," said Jean Valjean gently.

But the remark passed unnoticed by Nicolette, who did not report it to Cosette.

CHAPTER IV

ATTRACTION AND EXTINCTION

During the last months of spring and the first months of summer in 1833, the rare passers-by in the Marais, the petty shopkeepers, the loungers on thresholds, noticed an old man neatly clad in black, who emerged every day at the same hour, towards nightfall, from the Rue de l'Homme Armé, on the side of the Rue Sainte-Croix-de-la-Bretonnerie, passed in front of the Blancs Manteaux, gained the Rue Culture-Sainte-Catherine, and, on arriving at the Rue de l'Ècharpe, turned to the left, and entered the Rue Saint-Louis.

There he walked at a slow pace, with his head strained forward, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, his eye immovably fixed on a point which seemed to be a star to him, which never varied, and which was no other than the corner of the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire. The nearer he approached the corner of the street the more his eye lighted up; a sort of joy illuminated his pupils like an inward aurora, he had a fascinated and much affected air, his lips indulged in obscure movements, as though he were talking to some one whom he did not see, he smiled vaguely and advanced as slowly as possible. One would have said that, while desirous of reaching his destination, he feared the moment when he should be close at hand. When only a few houses remained between him and that street which appeared to attract him his pace slackened, to such a degree that, at times, one might have thought that he was no longer advancing at all. The vacillation of his head and the fixity of his eyeballs suggested the thought of the magnetic needle seeking the pole. Whatever time he spent on arriving, he was obliged to arrive at last; he reached the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire; then he halted, he trembled, he thrust his head with a sort of melancholy timidity round the corner of the last house, and gazed into that street, and there was in that tragic look something which resembled the dazzling light of the impossible, and the reflection from a paradise that was closed to him. Then a tear, which had slowly gathered in the corner of his lids, and had become large enough to fall, trickled down his cheek, and sometimes stopped at his mouth. The old man tasted its bitter flavor. Thus he remained for several minutes as though made of stone, then he returned by the same road and with the same step, and, in proportion as he retreated, his glance died out.

Little by little, this old man ceased to go as far as the corner of the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire; he halted half way in the Rue Saint-Louis; sometimes a little further off, sometimes a little nearer.

One day he stopped at the corner of the Rue Culture-Sainte-Catherine and looked at the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire from a distance. Then he shook his head slowly from right to left, as though refusing himself something, and retraced his steps.

Soon he no longer came as far as the Rue Saint-Louis. He got as far as the Rue Pavée, shook his head and turned back; then he went no further than the Rue des Trois-Pavillons; then he did not overstep the Blancs-Manteaux. One would have said that he was a pendulum which was no longer wound up, and whose oscillations were growing shorter before ceasing altogether.

Every day he emerged from his house at the same hour, he undertook the same trip, but he no longer completed it, and, perhaps without himself being aware of the fact, he constantly shortened it. His whole countenance expressed this single idea: What is the use?—His eye was dim; no more radiance. His tears were also exhausted; they no longer collected in the corner of his eye-lid; that thoughtful eye was dry. The old man's head was still craned forward; his chin moved at times; the folds in his gaunt neck were painful to behold. Sometimes, when the weather was bad, he had an umbrella under his arm, but he never opened it.

The good women of the quarter said: "He is an innocent." The children followed him and laughed.

BOOK NINTH.—SUPREME SHADOW, SUPREME DAWN

CHAPTER I

PITY FOR THE UNHAPPY, BUT INDULGENCE FOR THE HAPPY

It is a terrible thing to be happy! How content one is! How all-sufficient one finds it! How, being in possession of the false object of life, happiness, one forgets the true object, duty!

Let us say, however, that the reader would do wrong were he to blame Marius.

Marius, as we have explained, before his marriage, had put no questions to M. Fauchelevent, and, since that time, he had feared to put any to Jean Valjean. He had regretted the promise into which he had allowed himself to be drawn. He had often said to himself that he had done wrong in making that concession to despair. He had confined himself to gradually estranging Jean Valjean from his house and to effacing him, as much as possible, from Cosette's mind. He had, in a manner, always placed himself between Cosette and Jean Valjean, sure that, in this way, she would not perceive nor think of the latter. It was more than effacement, it was an eclipse.

Marius did what he considered necessary and just. He thought that he had serious reasons which the reader has already seen, and others which will be seen later on, for getting rid of Jean Valjean without harshness, but without weakness.

Chance having ordained that he should encounter, in a case which he had argued, a former employee of the Laffitte establishment, he had acquired mysterious information, without seeking it, which he had not been able, it is true, to probe, out of respect for the secret which he had promised to guard, and out of consideration for Jean Valjean's perilous position. He believed at that moment that he had a grave duty to perform: the restitution of the six hundred thousand francs to some one whom he sought with all possible discretion. In the meanwhile, he abstained from touching that money.

As for Cosette, she had not been initiated into any of these secrets; but it would be harsh to condemn her also.

There existed between Marius and her an all-powerful magnetism, which caused her to do, instinctively and almost mechanically, what Marius wished. She was conscious of Marius' will in the direction of "Monsieur Jean," she conformed to it. Her husband had not been obliged to say anything to her; she yielded to the vague but clear pressure of his tacit intentions, and obeyed blindly. Her obedience in this instance consisted in not remembering what Marius forgot. She was not obliged to make any effort to accomplish this. Without her knowing why herself, and without his having any cause to accuse her of it, her soul had become so wholly her husband's that that which was shrouded in gloom in Marius' mind became overcast in hers.

Let us not go too far, however; in what concerns Jean Valjean, this forgetfulness and obliteration were merely superficial. Se was rather heedless than forgetful. At bottom, she was sincerely attached to the man whom she had so long called her father; but she loved her husband still more dearly. This was what had somewhat disturbed the balance of her heart, which leaned to one side only.

It sometimes happened that Cosette spoke of Jean Valjean and expressed her surprise. Then Marius calmed her: "He is absent, I think. Did not he say that he was setting out on a journey?"—"That is true," thought Cosette. "He had a habit of disappearing in this fashion. But not for so long." Two or three times she despatched Nicolette to inquire in the Rue de l'Homme Armé whether M. Jean had returned from his journey. Jean Valjean caused the answer "no" to be given.

Cosette asked nothing more, since she had but one need on earth, Marius.

Let us also say that, on their side, Cosette and Marius had also been absent. They had been to Vernon. Marius had taken Cosette to his father's grave.

Marius gradually won Cosette away from Jean Valjean. Cosette allowed it.

Moreover that which is called, far too harshly in certain cases, the ingratitude of children, is not always a thing so deserving of reproach as it is supposed. It is the ingratitude of nature. Nature, as we have elsewhere said, "looks before her." Nature divides living beings into those who are arriving and those who are departing. Those who are departing are turned towards the shadows, those who are arriving towards the light. Hence a gulf which is fatal on the part of the old, and involuntary on the part of the young. This breach, at first insensible, increases slowly, like all separations of branches. The boughs, without becoming detached from the trunk, grow away from it. It is no fault of theirs. Youth goes where there is joy, festivals, vivid lights, love. Old age goes towards the end. They do not lose sight of each other, but there is no longer a close connection. Young people feel the cooling off of life; old people, that of the tomb. Let us not blame these poor children.

CHAPTER II

LAST FLICKERINGS OF A LAMP WITHOUT OIL

One day, Jean Valjean descended his staircase, took three steps in the street, seated himself on a post, on that same stone post where Gavroche had found him meditating on the night between the 5th and the 6th of June; he remained there a few moments, then went up stairs again. This was the last oscillation of the pendulum. On the following day he did not leave his apartment. On the day after that, he did not leave his bed.

His portress, who prepared his scanty repasts, a few cabbages or potatoes with bacon, glanced at the brown earthenware plate and exclaimed:

"But you ate nothing yesterday, poor, dear man."

"Certainly I did," replied Jean Valjean.

"The plate is quite full."

"Look at the water jug. It is empty."

"That proves that you have drunk; it does not prove that you have eaten."

"Well," said Jean Valjean, "what if I felt hungry only for water?"

"That is called thirst, and, when one does not eat at the same time, it is called fever."

"I will eat to-morrow."

"Or at Trinity day. Why not to-day? Is it the thing to say: 'I will eat to-morrow'? The idea of leaving my platter without even touching it! My lady-finger potatoes were so good!"

Jean Valjean took the old woman's hand:

"I promise you that I will eat them," he said, in his benevolent voice.

"I am not pleased with you," replied the portress.

Jean Valjean saw no other human creature than this good woman. There are streets in Paris through which no one ever passes, and houses to which no one ever comes. He was in one of those streets and one of those houses.

While he still went out, he had purchased of a copper-smith, for a few sous, a little copper crucifix which he had hung up on a nail opposite his bed. That gibbet is always good to look at.

A week passed, and Jean Valjean had not taken a step in his room. He still remained in bed. The portress said to her husband:—"The good man upstairs yonder does not get up, he no longer eats, he will not last long. That man has his sorrows, that he has. You won't get it out of my head that his daughter has made a bad marriage."

The porter replied, with the tone of marital sovereignty:

"If he's rich, let him have a doctor. If he is not rich, let him go without. If he has no doctor he will die."

"And if he has one?"

"He will die," said the porter.

The portress set to scraping away the grass from what she called her pavement, with an old knife, and, as she tore out the blades, she grumbled:

"It's a shame. Such a neat old man! He's as white as a chicken."

She caught sight of the doctor of the quarter as he passed the end of the street; she took it upon herself to request him to come up stairs.

"It's on the second floor," said she. "You have only to enter. As the good man no longer stirs from his bed, the door is always unlocked."

The doctor saw Jean Valjean and spoke with him.

When he came down again the portress interrogated him:

"Well, doctor?"

"Your sick man is very ill indeed."

"What is the matter with him?"

"Everything and nothing. He is a man who, to all appearances, has lost some person who is dear to him. People die of that."

"What did he say to you?"

"He told me that he was in good health."

"Shall you come again, doctor?"

"Yes," replied the doctor. "But some one else besides must come."

CHAPTER III

A PEN IS HEAVY TO THE MAN WHO LIFTED THE FAUCHELEVENT'S CART

ONE evening Jean Valjean found difficulty in raising himself on his elbow; he felt of his wrist and could not find his pulse; his breath was short and halted at times; he recognized the fact that he was weaker than he had ever been before. Then, no doubt under the pressure of some supreme preoccupation, he made an effort, drew himself up into a sitting posture and dressed himself. He put on his old workingman's clothes. As he no longer went out, he had returned to them and preferred them. He was obliged to pause many times while dressing himself; merely putting his arms through his waistcoat made the perspiration trickle from his forehead.

Since he had been alone, he had placed his bed in the antechamber, in order to inhabit that deserted apartment as little as possible.

He opened the valise and drew from it Cosette's outfit.

He spread it out on his bed.

The Bishop's candlesticks were in their place on the chimney-piece. He took from a drawer two wax candles and put them in the candlesticks. Then, although it was still broad daylight,—it was summer,—he lighted them. In the same way candles are to be seen lighted in broad daylight in chambers where there is a corpse.

Every step that he took in going from one piece of furniture to another exhausted him, and he was obliged to sit down. It was not ordinary fatigue which expends the strength only to renew it; it was the remnant of all movement possible to him; it was life drained which flows away drop by drop in overwhelming efforts and which will never be renewed.

The chair into which he allowed himself to fall was placed in front of that mirror, so fatal for him, so providential for Marius, in which he had read Cosette's reversed writing on the blotting book. He caught sight of himself in this mirror, and did not recognize himself. He was eighty years old; before Marius' marriage, he would have hardly been taken for fifty; that year had counted for thirty. What he bore on his brow was no longer the wrinkles of age, it was the mysterious mark of death. The hollowing of that pitiless nail could be felt there. His cheeks were pendulous; the skin of his face had the color which would lead one to think that it already had earth upon it; the corners of his mouth drooped as in the mask which the ancients sculptured on tombs. He gazed into space with an air of reproach; one would have said that he was one of those grand tragic beings who have cause to complain of some one.

He was in that condition, the last phase of dejection, in which sorrow no longer flows; it is coagulated, so to speak; there is something on the soul like a clot of despair.

Night had come. He laboriously dragged a table and the old arm-chair to the fireside, and placed upon the table a pen, some ink and some paper.

That done, he had a fainting fit. When he recovered consciousness, he was thirsty. As he could not lift the jug, he tipped it over painfully towards his mouth, and swallowed a draught.

As neither the pen nor the ink had been used for a long time, the point of the pen had curled up, the ink had dried away, he was forced to rise and put a few drops of water in the ink, which he did not accomplish without pausing and sitting down two or three times, and he was compelled to write with the back of the pen. He wiped his brow from time to time.

Then he turned towards the bed, and, still seated, for he could not stand, he gazed at the little black gown and all those beloved objects.

These contemplations lasted for hours which seemed minutes.

All at once he shivered, he felt that a child was taking possession of him; he rested his elbows on the table, which was illuminated by the Bishop's candles and took up the pen. His hand trembled. He wrote slowly the few following lines:

"Cosette, I bless thee. I am going to explain to thee. Thy husband was right in giving me to understand that I ought to go away; but there is a little error in what he believed, though he was in the right. He is excellent. Love him well even after I am dead. Monsieur Pontmercy, love my darling child well. Cosette, this paper will be found; this is what I wish to say to thee, thou wilt see the figures, if I have the strength to recall them, listen well, this money is really thine. Here is the whole matter: White jet comes from Norway, black jet comes from England, black glass jewellery comes from Germany. Jet is the lightest, the most precious, the most costly. Imitations can be made in France as well as in Germany. What is needed is a little anvil two inches square, and a lamp burning spirits of wine to soften the wax. The wax was formerly made with resin and lampblack, and cost four livres the pound. I invented a way of making it with gum shellac and turpentine. It does not cost more than thirty sous, and is much better. Buckles are made with a violet glass which is stuck fast, by means of this wax, to a little framework of black iron. The glass must be violet for iron jewellery, and black for gold jewellery. Spain buys a great deal of it. It is the country of jet . . ."

Here he paused, the pen fell from his fingers, he was seized by one of those sobs which at times welled up from the very depths of his being; the poor man clasped his head in both hands, and meditated.

"Oh!" he exclaimed within himself [lamentable cries, heard by God alone], "all is over. I shall never see her more. She is a smile which passed over me. I am about to plunge into the night without even seeing her again. Oh! one minute, one instant, to hear her voice, to touch her dress, to gaze upon her, upon her, the angel! and then to die! It is nothing to die, what is frightful is to die without seeing her. She would smile on me, she would say a word to me, would that do any harm to any one? No, all is over, and forever. Here I am all alone. My God! My God! I shall never see her again!"

At that moment there came a knock at the door.

CHAPTER IV

A BOTTLE OF INK WHICH ONLY SUCCEEDED IN WHITENING

THAT same day, or to speak more accurately, that same evening, as Marius left the table, and was on the point of withdrawing to his study, having a case to look over, Basque handed him a letter saying: "The person who wrote the letter is in the antechamber."

Cosette had taken the grandfather's arm and was strolling in the garden.

A letter, like a man, may have an unprepossessing exterior. Coarse paper, coarsely folded—the very sight of certain missives is displeasing.

The letter which Basque had brought was of this sort.

Marius took it. It smelled of tobacco. Nothing evokes a memory like an odor. Marius recognized that tobacco. He looked at the superscription: "To Monsieur, Monsieur le Baron Pommerci. At his hotel." The recognition of the tobacco caused him to recognize the writing as well. It may be said that amazement has its lightning flashes.

Marius was, as it were, illuminated by one of these flashes.

The sense of smell, that mysterious aid to memory, had just revived a whole world within him. This was certainly the paper, the fashion of folding, the dull tint of ink; it was certainly the well-known handwriting, especially was it the same tobacco.

The Jondrette garret rose before his mind.

Thus, strange freak of chance! one of the two scents which he had so diligently sought, the one in connection with which he had lately again exerted so many efforts, and which he supposed to be forever lost, had come and presented itself to him of its own accord.

He eagerly broke the seal, and read:

> "Monsieur le Baron:—If the Supreme Being had given me the talents, I might have been baron Thénard, member of the Institute [acadenmy of ciences], but I am not. I only bear the same as him, happy if this memory recommends me to the eccellence of your kindnesses. The benefit with which you will honor me will be reciprocle. I am in possession of a secret concerning an individual. This individual concerns you. I hold the secret at your disposal desiring to have the honor to be huseful to you. I will furnish you with the simple means of driving from your honorabel family that individual who has no right there, madame la baronne being of lofty birth. The sanctuary of virtue cannot cohabit longer with crime without abdicating.
>
> I awate in the entichamber the orders of monsieur le baron.
>
> "With respect."

The letter was signed "Thénard."

This signature was not false. It was merely a trifle abridged.

Moreover, the rigmarole and the orthography completed the revelation. The certificate of origin was complete.

Marius' emotion was profound. After a start of surprise, he underwent a feeling of happiness. If he could now but find that other man of whom he was in search, the man who had saved him, Marius, there would be nothing left for him to desire.

He opened the drawer of his secretary, took out several bank-notes, put them in his pocket, closed the secretary again, and rang the bell. Basque half opened the door.

"Show the man in," said Marius.

Basque announced:

"Monsieur Thénard."

A man entered.

A fresh surprise for Marius. The man who entered was an utter stranger to him.

This man, who was old, moreover, had a thick nose, his chin swathed in a cravat, green spectacles with a double screen of green taffeta over his eyes, and his hair was plastered and flattened down on his brow on a level with his eyebrows like the wigs of English coachmen in "high life." His hair was gray. He was dressed in black from head to foot, in garments that were very threadbare but clean; a bunch of seals depending from his fob suggested the idea of a watch. He held in his hand an old hat! He walked in a bent attitude, and the curve in his spine augmented the profundity of his bow.

The first thing that struck the observer was, that this personage's coat, which was too ample although carefully buttoned, had not been made for him.

Here a short digression becomes necessary.

There was in Paris at that epoch, in a low-lived old lodging in the Rue Beautreillis, near the Arsenal, an ingenious Jew whose profession was to change villains into honest men. Not for too long, which might have proved embarrassing for the villain. The change was on sight, for a day or two, at the rate of thirty sous a day, by means of a costume which resembled the honesty of the world in general as nearly as possible. This costumer was called "the Changer"; the pickpockets of Paris had given him this name and knew him by no other. He had a tolerably complete wardrobe. The rags with which he tricked out people were almost probable. He had specialties and categories; on each nail of his shop hung a social status, threadbare and worn; here the suit of a magistrate, there the outfit of a Curé, beyond the outfit of a banker, in one corner the costume of a retired military man, elsewhere the habiliments of a man of letters, and further on the dress of a statesman.

This creature was the costumer of the immense drama which knavery plays in Paris. His lair was the green-room whence theft emerged, and into which roguery retreated. A tattered knave arrived at this dressing-room, deposited his thirty sous and selected, according to the part which he wished to play, the costume which suited him, and on descending the stairs once more, the knave was a somebody. On the following day, the clothes were faithfully returned, and the Changer, who trusted the thieves with everything, was never robbed. There was one inconvenience about these clothes, they "did not fit"; not having been made for those who wore them, they were too tight for one, too loose for another and did not adjust themselves to any one. Every pickpocket who exceeded or fell short of the human average was ill at his ease in the Changer's costumes. It was necessary that one should not be either too fat or too lean. The changer had foreseen only ordinary men. He had taken the measure of the species from the first rascal who came to hand, who is neither stout nor thin, neither tall nor short. Hence adaptations which were sometimes difficult and from which the Changer's clients extricated themselves as best they might. So much the worse for the exceptions! The suit of the statesman, for instance, black from head to foot, and consequently proper, would have been too large for Pitt and too small for Castelcicala. The costume of a statesman was designated as follows in the Changer's catalogue; we copy:

"A coat of black cloth, trowsers of black wool, a silk waistcoat, boots and linen." On the margin there stood: *ex-ambassador,* and a note which we also copy: "In a separate box, a neatly frizzed peruke, green glasses, seals, and two small quills an inch long, wrapped in cotton." All this belonged to the statesman, the ex-ambassador. This whole costume was, if we may so express ourselves, debilitated; the seams were white, a vague button-hole yawned at one of the elbows; moreover, one of the coat buttons was missing on the breast; but this was only detail; as the hand of the statesman should always be thrust into his coat and laid upon his heart, its function was to conceal the absent button.

If Marius had been familiar with the occult institutions of Paris, he would instantly have recognized upon the back of the visitor whom Basque had just shown in, the statesman's suit borrowed from the pick-me-down-that shop of the Changer.

Marius' disappointment on beholding another man than the one whom he expected to see turned to the newcomer's disadvantage.

He surveyed him from head to foot, while that personage made exaggerated bows, and demanded in a curt tone:

"What do you want?"

The man replied with an amiable grin of which the caressing smile of a crocodile will furnish some idea:

"It seems to me impossible that I should not have already had the honor of seeing Monsieur le Baron in society. I think I actually did meet monsieur personally, several years ago, at the house of Madame la Princesse Bagration and in the drawing-rooms of his Lordship the Vicomte Dambray, peer of France."

It is always a good bit of tactics in knavery to pretend to recognize some one whom one does not know.

Marius paid attention to the manner of this man's speech. He spied on his accent and gesture, but his disappointment increased; the pronunciation was nasal and absolutely unlike the dry, shrill tone which he had expected.

He was utterly routed.

"I know neither Madame Bagration nor M. Dambray," said he. "I have never set foot in the house of either of them in my life."

The reply was ungracious. The personage, determined to be gracious at any cost, insisted.

"Then it must have been at Chateaubriand's that I have seen Monsieur! I know Chateaubriand very well. He is very affable. He sometimes says to me: 'Thénard, my friend . . . won't you drink a glass of wine with me?' "

Marius' brow grew more and more severe:

"I have never had the honor of being received by M. de Chateaubriand. Let us cut it short. What do you want?"

The man bowed lower at that harsh voice.

"Monsieur le Baron, deign to listen to me. There is in America, in a district near Panama, a village called la Joya. That village is composed of a single house, a large, square house of three stories, built of bricks dried in the sun, each side of the square five hundred feet in length, each story retreating twelve feet back of the story below, in such a manner as to leave in front a terrace which makes the circuit of the edifice, in the centre an inner court where the provisions and munitions are kept; no windows, loopholes, no doors, ladders, ladders to mount from the ground to the first terrace, and from the first to the second, and from the second to the third, ladders to descend into the inner court, no doors to the chambers, trap-doors, no staircases to the chambers, ladders; in the evening the traps are closed, the ladders are withdrawn, carbines and blunderbusses trained from the loopholes; no means of entering, a house by day, a citadel by night, eight hundred inhabitants,—that is the village. Why so many precautions? because the country is dangerous; it is full of cannibals. Then why do people go there? because the country is marvellous; gold is found there."

"What are you driving at?" interrupted Marius, who had passed from disappointment to impatience.

"At this, Monsieur le Baron. I am an old and weary diplomat. Ancient civilization has thrown me on my own devices. I want to try savages."

"Well?"

"Monsieur le Baron, egotism is the law of the world. The proletarian peasant woman, who toils by the day, turns round when the diligence passes by, the peasant proprietress, who toils in her field, does not turn round. The dog of the poor man barks at the rich man, the dog of the rich man barks at the poor man. Each one for himself. Self-interest—that's the object of men. Gold, that's the loadstone."

"What then? Finish."

"I should like to go and establish myself at la Joya. There are three of us. I have my spouse and my young lady; a very beautiful girl. The journey is long and costly. I need a little money."

"What concern is that of mine?" demanded Marius.

The stranger stretched his neck out of his cravat, a gesture characteristic of the vulture, and replied with an augmented smile:

"Has not Monsieur le Baron perused my letter?"

There was some truth in this. The fact is, that the contents of the epistle had slipped Marius' mind. He had seen the writing rather than read the letter. He could hardly recall it. But a moment ago a fresh start had been given him. He had noted that detail: "my spouse and my young lady."

He fixed a penetrating glance on the stranger. An examining judge could not have done the look better. He almost lay in wait for him.

He confined himself to replying:

"State the case precisely."

The stranger inserted his two hands in both his fobs, drew himself up without straightening his dorsal column, but scrutinizing Marius in his turn, with the green gaze of his spectacles.

"So be it, Monsieur le Baron. I will be precise. I have a secret to sell to you."

"A secret?"

"A secret."

"Which concerns me?"

"Somewhat."

"What is the secret?"

Marius scrutinized the man more and more as he listened to him.

"I commence gratis," said the stranger. "You will see that I am interesting."

"Speak."

"Monsieur le Baron, you have in your house a thief and an assassin."

Marius shuddered.

"In my house? no," said he.

The imperturbable stranger brushed his hat with his elbow, and went on:

"An assassin and a thief. Remark, Monsieur le Baron, that I do not here speak of ancient deeds, deeds of the past which have lapsed, which can be effaced by limitation before the law and by repentance before God. I speak of recent deeds, of actual facts as still unknown to justice at this hour. I continue. This man has insinuated himself into your confidence, and almost into your family under a false name. I am about to tell you his real name. And to tell it to you for nothing."

"I am listening."

"His name is Jean Valjean."

"I know it."

"I am going to tell you, equally for nothing, who he is."

"Say on."

"He is an ex-convict."

"I know it."

"You know it since I have had the honor of telling you."

"No. I knew it before."

Marius' cold tone, that double reply of "I know it," his laconicism, which was not favorable to dialogue, stirred up some smouldering wrath in the stranger. He launched a furious glance on the sly at Marius, which was instantly extinguished. Rapid as it was, this glance was of the kind which a man recognizes when he has once beheld it; it did not escape Marius. Certain flashes can only proceed from certain souls; the eye, that vent-hole of the thought, glows with it; spectacles hide nothing; try putting a pane of glass over hell!

The stranger resumed with a smile:

"I will not permit myself to contradict Monsieur le Baron. In any case, you ought to perceive that I am well informed. Now what I have to tell you is known to myself alone. This concerns the fortune of Madame la Baronne. It is an extraordinary secret. It is for sale—I make you the first offer of it. Cheap. Twenty thousand francs."

"I know that secret as well as the others," said Marius.

The personage felt the necessity of lowering his price a trifle.

"Monsieur le Baron, say ten thousand francs and I will speak."

"I repeat to you that there is nothing which you can tell me. I know what you wish to say to me."

A fresh flash gleamed in the man's eye. He exclaimed:

"But I must dine to-day, nevertheless. It is an extraordinary secret, I tell you. Monsieur le Baron, I will speak. I speak. Give me twenty francs."

Marius gazed intently at him:

"I know your extraordinary secret, just as I knew Jean Valjean's name, just as I know your name."

"My name?"

"Yes."

"That is not difficult, Monsieur le Baron. I had the honor to write to you and to tell it to you. Thénard."

"—Dier."

"Hey?"

"Thénardier."

"Who's that?"

In danger the porcupine bristles up, the beetle feigns death, the old guard forms in a square; this man burst into laughter.

Then he flicked a grain of dust from the sleeve of his coat with a fillip.

Marius continued:

"You are also Jondrette the workman, Fabantou the comedian, Genflot the poet, Don Alvarès the Spaniard, and Mistress Balizard."

"Mistress what?"

"And you kept a pot-house at Montfermeil."

"A pot-house! Never."

"And I tell you that your name is Thénardier."

"I deny it."

"And that you are a rascal. Here."

And Marius drew a bank-note from his pocket and flung it in his face.

"Thanks! Pardon me! five hundred francs! Monsieur le Baron!"

And the man, overcome, bowed, seized the note and examined it.

"Five hundred francs!" he began again, taken aback. And he stammered in a low voice: "An honest rustler."[1]

Then brusquely:

"Well, so be it!" he exclaimed. "Let us put ourselves at our ease."

And with the agility of a monkey, flinging back his hair, tearing off his spectacles, and withdrawing from his nose by sleight of hand the two quills of which mention was recently made, and which the reader has also met with on another page of this book, he took off his face as the man takes off his hat.

His eye lighted up; his uneven brow, with hollows in some places and bumps in others, hideously wrinkled at the top, was laid bare, his nose had become as sharp as a beak; the fierce and sagacious profile of the man of prey reappeared.

"Monsieur le Baron is infallible," he said in a clear voice whence all nasal twang had disappeared, "I am Thénardier."

And he straightened up his crooked back.

Thénardier, for it was really he, was strangely surprised; he would have been troubled, had he been capable of such a thing. He had come to bring astonishment, and it was he who had received it. This humiliation had been worth five hundred francs to him, and, taking it all in all, he accepted it; but he was none the less bewildered.

He beheld this Baron Pontmercy for the first time, and, in spite of his disguise, this Baron Pontmercy recognized him, and recognized him thoroughly. And not only was this Baron perfectly informed as to Thénardier, but he seemed well posted as to Jean Valjean. Who was this almost beardless young man, who was so glacial and so generous, who knew people's names, who knew all their names, and who opened his purse to them, who bullied rascals like a judge, and who paid them like a dupe?

Thénardier, the reader will remember, although he had been Marius' neighbor, had never seen him, which is not unusual in Paris; he had formerly, in a vague way, heard his daughters talk of a very poor young man named Marius who lived in the house. He had written to him, without knowing him, the letter with which the reader is acquainted.

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[1] *Unfafiot sérieux. Fafiot* is the slang term for a bank-bill, derived from its rustling noise.

No connection between that Marius and M. le Baron Pontmercy was possible in his mind.

As for the name Pontmercy, it will be recalled that, on the battlefield of Waterloo, he had only heard the last two syllables, for which he always entertained the legitimate scorn which one owes to what is merely an expression of thanks.

However, through his daughter Azelma, who had started on the scent of the married pair on the 16th of February, and through his own personal researches, he had succeeded in learning many things, and, from the depths of his own gloom, he had contrived to grasp more than one mysterious clew. He had discovered, by dint of industry, or, at least, by dint of induction, he had guessed who the man was whom he had encountered on a certain day in the Grand Sewer. From the man he had easily reached the name. He knew that Madame la Baronne Pontmercy was Cosette. But he meant to be discreet in that quarter.

Who was Cosette? He did not know exactly himself. He did, indeed, catch an inkling of illegitimacy, the history of Fantine had always seemed to him equivocal; but what was the use of talking about that? in order to cause himself to be paid for his silence? He had, or thought he had, better wares than that for sale. And, according to all appearances, if he were to come and make to the Baron Pontmercy this revelation—and without proof: "Your wife is a bastard," the only result would be to attract the boot of the husband towards the loins of the revealer.

From Thénardier's point of view, the conversation with Marius had not yet begun. He ought to have drawn back, to have modified his strategy, to have abandoned his position, to have changed his front; but nothing essential had been compromised as yet, and he had five hundred francs in his pocket.

Moreover, he had something decisive to say, and, even against this very well-informed and well-armed Baron Pontmercy, he felt himself strong. For men of Thénardier's nature, every dialogue is a combat. In the one in which he was about to engage, what was his situation? He did not know to whom he was speaking, but he did know of what he was speaking, he made this rapid review of his inner forces, and after having said: "I am Thénardier," he waited.

Marius had become thoughtful. So he had hold of Thénardier at last. That man whom he had so greatly desired to find was before him. He could honor Colonel Pontmercy's recommendation.

He felt humiliated that that hero should have owned anything to this villain, and that the letter of change drawn from the depths of the tomb by his father upon him, Marius, had been protested up to that day. It also seemed to him, in the complex state of his mind towards Thénardier, that there was occasion to avenge the Colonel for the misfortune of having been saved by such a rascal. In any case, he was content. He was about to deliver the Colonel's shade from this unworthy creditor at last, and it seemed to him that he was on the point of rescuing his father's memory from the debtors' prison. By the side of this duty there was another—to elucidate, if possible, the source of Cosette's fortune. The opportunity appeared to present itself. Perhaps Thénardier knew something. It might prove useful to see the bottom of this man.

He commenced with this.

Thénardier had caused the "honest rustler" to disappear in his fob, and was gazing at Marius with a gentleness that was almost tender.

Marius broke the silence.

"Thénardier, I have told you your name. Now, would you like to have me tell you your secret—the one that you came here to reveal to me? I have information of my own, also. You shall see that I know more about it than you do. Jean Valjean, as you have said, is an assassin and a thief. A thief, because he robbed a wealthy manufacturer, whose ruin he brought about. An assassin, because he assassinated police-agent Javert."

"I don't understand, sir," ejaculated Thénardier.

"I will make myself intelligible. In a certain arrondissement of the Pas de Calais, there was, in 1822, a man who had fallen out with justice, and who, under the name of M. Madeleine, had regained his status and rehabilitated himself. This man had become a just man in the full force of the term. In a trade, the manufacture of black glass goods, he made the fortune of an entire city. As far as his personal fortune was concerned he made that also, but as a secondary matter, and in some sort, by accident. He was the foster-father of the poor. He founded hospitals, opened schools, visited the sick, dowered young girls, supported widows, and adopted orphans; he was like the guardian angel of the country. He refused the cross, he was appointed Mayor. A liberated convict knew the secret of a penalty incurred by this man in former days; he denounced him, and had him arrested, and profited by the arrest to come to Paris and cause the banker Laffitte,—I have the fact from the cashier himself,—by means of a false signature, to hand over to him the sum of over half a million which belonged to M. Madeleine. This convict who robbed M. Madeleine was Jean Valjean. As for the other fact, you have nothing to tell me about it either. Jean Valjean killed the agent Javert; he shot him with a pistol. I, the person who is speaking to you, was present."

Thénardier cast upon Marius the sovereign glance of a conquered man who lays his hand once more upon the victory, and who has just regained, in one instant, all the ground which he has lost. But the smile returned instantly. The inferior's triumph in the presence of his superior must be wheedling.

Thénardier contented himself with saying to Marius:

"Monsieur le Baron, we are on the wrong track."

And he emphasized this phrase by making his bunch of seals execute an expressive whirl.

"What!" broke forth Marius, "do you dispute that? These are facts."

"They are chimæras. The confidence with which Monsieur le Baron honors me renders it my duty to tell him so. Truth and justice before all things. I do not like to see folks accused unjustly. Monsieur le Baron, Jean Valjean did not rob M. Madeleine and Jean Valjean did not kill Javert."

"This is too much! How is this?"

"For two reasons."

"What are they? Speak."

"This is the first: he did not rob M. Madeleine, because it is Jean Valjean himself who was M. Madeleine."

"What tale are you telling me?"

"And this is the second: he did not assassinate Javert, because the person who killed Javert was Javert."

"What do you mean to say?"

"That Javert committed suicide."

"Prove it! prove it!" cried Marius beside himself.

Thénardier resumed, scanning his phrase after the manner of the ancient Alexandrine measure:

"Police-agent-Ja-vert-was-found-drowned-un-der-a-boat-of-the-Pont-au-Change."

"But prove it!"

Thénardier drew from his pocket a large envelope of gray paper, which seemed to contain sheets folded in different sizes.

"I have my papers," he said calmly.

And he added:

"Monsieur le Baron, in your interests I desired to know Jean Valjean thoroughly. I say that Jean Valjean and M. Madeleine are one and the same man, and I say that Javert had no other assassin than Javert. If I speak, it is because I have proofs. Not manuscript proofs—writing is suspicious, handwriting is complaisant,—but printed proofs."

As he spoke, Thénardier extracted from the envelope two copies of newspapers, yellow, faded, and strongly saturated with tobacco. One of these two newspapers, broken at every fold and falling into rags, seemed much older than the other.

"Two facts, two proofs," remarked Thénardier. And he offered the two newspapers, unfolded, to Marius.

The reader is acquainted with these two papers. One, the most ancient, a number of the *Drapeau Blanc* of the 25th of July, 1823, the text of which can be seen in the first volume, established the identity of M. Madeleine and Jean Valjean.

The other, a *Moniteur* of the 15th of June, 1832, announced the suicide of Javert, adding that it appeared from a verbal report of Javert to the prefect that, having been taken prisoner in the barricade of the Rue de la Chanvrerie, he had owed his life to the magnanimity of an insurgent who, holding him under his pistol, had fired into the air, instead of blowing out his brains.

Marius read. He had evidence, a certain date, irrefragable proof, these two newspapers had not been printed expressly for the purpose of backing up Thénardier's statements; the note printed in the *Moniteur* had been an administrative communication from the Prefecture of Police. Marius could not doubt.

The information of the cashier-clerk had been false, and he himself had been deceived.

Jean Valjean, who had suddenly grown grand, emerged from his cloud. Marius could not repress a cry of joy.

"Well, then this unhappy wretch is an admirable man! the whole of that fortune really belonged to him! he is Madeleine, the providence of a whole countryside! he is Jean Valjean, Javert's savior! he is a hero! he is a saint!"

"He's not a saint, and he's not a hero!" said Thénardier. "He's an assassin and a robber."

And he added, in the tone of a man who begins to feel that he possesses some authority:

"Let us be calm."

Robber, assassin—those words which Marius thought had disappeared and which returned, fell upon him like an ice-cold shower-bath.

"Again!" said he.

"Always," ejaculated Thénardier. "Jean Valjean did not rob Madeleine, but he is a thief. He did not kill Javert, but he is a murderer."

"Will you speak," retorted Marius, "of that miserable theft, committed forty years ago, and expiated, as your own newspapers prove, by a whole life of repentance, of self-abnegation and of virtue?"

"I say assassination and theft, Monsieur le Baron, and I repeat that I am speaking of actual facts. What I have to reveal to you is absolutely unknown. It belongs to unpublished matter. And perhaps you will find in it the source of the fortune so skilfully presented to Madame la Baronne by Jean Valjean. I say skilfully, because, by a gift of that nature it would not be so very unskilful to slip into an honorable house whose comforts one would then share, and, at the same stroke, to conceal one's crime, and to enjoy one's theft, to bury one's name and to create for oneself a family."

"I might interrupt you at this point," said Marius, "but go on."

"Monsieur le Baron, I will tell you all, leaving the recompense to your generosity. This secret is worth massive gold. You will say to me: 'Why do not you apply to Jean Valjean?' For a very simple reason; I know that he has stripped himself, and stripped himself in your favor, and I consider the combination ingenious; but he has no longer a sou, he would show me his empty hands, and, since I am in need of some money for my trip to la Joya, I prefer you, you who have it all, to him who has nothing. I am a little fatigued, permit me to take a chair."

Marius seated himself and motioned to him to do the same.

Thénardier installed himself on a tufted chair, picked up his two newspapers, thrust them back into their envelope, and murmured as he pecked at the *Drapeau Blanc* with his nail: "It cost me a good deal of trouble to get this one."

That done he crossed his legs and stretched himself out on the back of the chair, an attitude characteristic of people who are sure of what they are saying, then he entered upon his subject gravely, emphasizing his words:

"Monsieur le Baron, on the 6th of June, 1832, about a year ago, on the day of the insurrection, a man was in the Grand Sewer of Paris, at the point where the sewer enters the Seine, between the Pont des Invalides and the Pont de Jéna."

Marius abruptly drew his chair closer to that of Thénardier. Thénardier noticed this movement and continued with the deliberation of an orator who holds his interlocutor and who feels his adversary palpitating under his words:

"This man, forced to conceal himself, and for reasons, moreover, which are foreign to politics, had adopted the sewer as his domicile and had a key to it. It was, I repeat, on the 6th of June; it might have been eight o'clock in the evening. The man hears a noise in the sewer. Greatly surprised, he hides himself and lies in wait. It was the sound of footsteps, some one was walking in the dark, and coming in his direction. Strange to say, there was another man in the sewer besides himself. The grating of the outlet from the sewer was not far off. A little light which fell through it permitted him to recognize the newcomer, and to see that the man was carrying something on his back. He was walking in a bent attitude. The man who was walking in a bent attitude was an ex-convict, and what he was dragging on his shoulders was a corpse. Assassination caught in the very act, if ever there was such a thing. As for the theft, that is understood; one does not kill a man gratis. This convict was on his way to fling the body into the river. One fact is to be noticed, that before reaching the exit grating, this convict, who had come a long distance in the sewer, must, necessarily, have encountered a frightful quagmire where it seems as though he might have left the body, but the sewermen would have found the assassinated man the very next day, while at work on the quagmire, and that did not suit the assassin's plans. He had preferred to traverse that quagmire with his burden, and his exertions must have been terrible, for it is impossible to risk one's life more completely; I don't understand how he could have come out of that alive."

Marius' chair approached still nearer. Thénardier took advantage of this to draw a long breath. He went on:

"Monsieur le Baron, a sewer is not the Champ de Mars. One lacks everything there, even room. When two men are there, they must meet. That is what happened. The man domiciled there and the passer-by were forced to bid each other good-day, greatly to the regret of both. The passer-by said to the inhabitant:—"You see what I have on my back, I must get out, you have the key, give it to me." That convict was a man of terrible strength. There was no way of refusing. Nevertheless, the man who had the key parleyed, simply to gain time. He examined the dead man, but he could see nothing, except that the latter was young, well dressed, with the air of being rich, and all disfigured with blood. While talking, the man contrived to tear and pull off behind, without the assassin perceiving it, a bit of the assassinated man's coat. A document for conviction, you understand; a means of recovering the trace of things and of bringing home the crime to the criminal. He put this document for conviction in his pocket. After which he opened the grating, made the man go out with his embarrassment on his back, closed the grating again, and ran off, not caring to be mixed up with the remainder of the adventure and above all, not wishing to be present when the assassin threw the assassinated man into the river. Now you comprehend. The man who was carrying the corpse was Jean Valjean; the one who had the key is speaking to you at this moment; and the piece of the coat . . ."

Thénardier completed his phrase by drawing from his pocket, and holding, on a level with his eyes, nipped between his two thumbs and his two forefingers, a strip of torn black cloth, all covered with dark spots.

Marius had sprung to his feet, pale, hardly able to draw his breath, with his eyes riveted on the fragment of black cloth, and, without uttering a word, without taking his eyes from that fragment, he retreated to the wall and fumbled with his right hand along the wall for a key which was in the lock of a cupboard near the chimney.

He found the key, opened the cupboard, plunged his arm into it without looking, and without his frightened gaze quitting the rag which Thénardier still held outspread.

But Thénardier continued:

"Monsieur le Baron, I have the strongest of reasons for believing that the assassinated young man was an opulent stranger lured into a trap by Jean Valjean, and the bearer of an enormous sum of money."

"The young man was myself, and here is the coat!" cried Marius, and he flung upon the floor an old black coat all covered with blood.

Then, snatching the fragment from the hands of Thénardier, he crouched down over the coat, and laid the torn morsel against the tattered skirt. The rent fitted exactly, and the strip completed the coat.

Thénardier was petrified.

This is what he thought: "I'm struck all of a heap."

Marius rose to his feet trembling, despairing, radiant.

He fumbled in his pocket and stalked furiously to Thénardier, presenting to him and almost thrusting in his face his fist filled with bank-notes for five hundred and a thousand francs.

"You are an infamous wretch! you are a liar, a calumniator, a villain. You came to accuse that man, you have only justified him; you wanted to ruin him, you have only succeeded in glorifying him. And it is you who are the thief! And it is you who are the assassin! I saw you, Thénardier Jondrette, in that lair on the Rue de l'Hôpital. I know enough about you to send you to the galleys and even further if I choose. Here are a thousand francs, bully that you are!"

And he flung a thousand franc note at Thénardier.

"Ah! Jondrette Thénardier, vile rascal! Let this serve you as a lesson, you dealer in second-hand secrets, merchant of mysteries, rummager of the shadows, wretch! Take these five hundred francs and get out of here! Waterloo protects you."

"Waterloo!" growled Thénardier, pocketing the five hundred francs along with the thousand.

"Yes, assassin! You there saved the life of a Colonel . . ."

"Of a General," said Thénardier, elevating his head.

"Of a Colonel!" repeated Marius in a rage. "I wouldn't give a ha'penny for a general. And you come here to commit infamies! I tell you that you have committed all crimes. Go! disappear! Only be happy, that is all that I desire. Ah! monster! here are three thousand francs more. Take them. You will depart to-morrow, for America, with your daughter; for your wife is dead, you abominable liar. I shall watch over your departure, you ruffian, and at that moment I will count out to you twenty thousand francs. Go get yourself hung elsewhere!"

"Monsieur le Baron!" replied Thénardier, bowing to the very earth, "eternal gratitude." And Thénardier left the room, understanding nothing, stupefied and delighted with this sweet crushing beneath sacks of gold, and with that thunder which had burst forth over his head in bank-bills.

Struck by lightning he was, but he was also content; and he would have been greatly angered had he had a lightning rod to ward off such lightning as that.

Let us finish with this man at once.

Two days after the events which we are at this moment narrating, he set out, thanks to Marius' care, for America under a false name, with his daughter Azelma, furnished with a draft on New York for twenty thousand francs.

The moral wretchedness of Thénardier, the bourgeois who had missed his vocation, was irremediable. He was in America what he had been in Europe. Contact with an evil man sometimes suffices to corrupt a good action and to cause evil things to spring from it. With Marius' money, Thénardier set up as a slave-dealer.

As soon as Thénardier had left the house, Marius rushed to the garden, where Cosette was still walking.

"Cosette! Cosette!" he cried. "Come! come quick! Let us go. Basque, a carriage! Cosette, come. Ah! My God!

It was he who saved my life! Let us not lose a minute! Put on your shawl."

Cosette thought him mad and obeyed.

He could not breathe, he laid his hand on his heart to restrain its throbbing. He paced back and forth with huge strides, he embraced Cosette:

"Ah! Cosette! I am an unhappy wretch!" said he.

Marius was bewildered. He began to catch a glimpse in Jean Valjean of some indescribably lofty and melancholy figure. An unheard-of virtue, supreme and sweet, humble in its immensity, appeared to him. The convict was transfigured into Christ.

Marius was dazzled by this prodigy. He did not know precisely what he beheld, but it was grand.

In an instant, a hackney-carriage stood in front of the door.

Marius helped Cosette in and darted in himself.

"Driver," said he, "Rue de l'Homme Armé, Number 7."

The carriage drove off.

"Ah! what happiness!" ejaculated Cosette. "Rue de l'Homme Armé, I did not dare to speak to you of that. We are going to see M. Jean."

"Thy father! Cosette, thy father more than ever. Cosette, I guess it. You told me that you had never received the letter that I sent you by Gavroche. It must have fallen into his hands. Cosette, he went to the barricade to save me. As it is a necessity with him to be an angel, he saved others also; he saved Javert. He rescued me from that gulf to give me to you. He carried me on his back through that frightful sewer. Ah! I am a monster of ingratitude. Cosette, after having been your providence, he became mine. Just imagine, there was a terrible quagmire enough to drown one a hundred times over, to drown one in mire. Cosette! he made me traverse it. I was unconscious; I saw nothing, I heard nothing, I could know nothing of my own adventure. We are going to bring him back, to take him with us, whether he is willing or not, he shall never leave us again. If only he is at home! Provided only that we can find him, I will pass the rest of my life in venerating him. Yes, that is how it should be, do you see, Cosette? Gavroche must have delivered my letter to him. All is explained. You understand."

Cosette did not understand a word.

"You are right," she said to him.

Meanwhile the carriage rolled on.

CHAPTER V

A NIGHT BEHIND WHICH THERE IS DAY

Jean Valjean turned round at the knock which he heard on his door.

"Come in," he said feebly.

The door opened.

Cosette and Marius made their appearance.

Cosette rushed into the room.

Marius remained on the threshold, leaning against the jamb of the door.

"Cosette!" said Jean Valjean.

And he sat erect in his chair, his arms outstretched and trembling, haggard, livid, gloomy, an immense joy in his eyes.

Cosette, stifling with emotion, fell upon Jean Valjean's breast.

"Father!" said she.

Jean Valjean, overcome, stammered:

"Cosette! she! you! Madame! it is thou! Ah! my God!"

And, pressed close in Cosette's arms, he exclaimed:

"It is thou! thou art here! Thou dost pardon me then!"

Marius, lowering his eyelids, in order to keep his tears from flowing, took a step forward and murmured between lips convulsively contracted to repress his sobs:

"My father!"

"And you also, you pardon me!" Jean Valjean said to him.

Marius could find no words, and Jean Valjean added:

"Thanks."

Cosette tore off her shawl and tossed her hat on the bed.

"It embarrasses me," said she.

And, seating herself on the old man's knees, she put aside his white locks with an adorable movement, and kissed his brow.

Jean Valjean, bewildered, let her have her own way.

Cosette, who only understood in a very confused manner, redoubled her caresses, as though she desired to pay Marius' debt.

Jean Valjean stammered:

"How stupid people are! I thought that I should never see her again. Imagine, Monsieur Pontmercy, at the very moment when you entered, I was saying to myself: 'All is over. Here is her little gown, I am a miserable man, I shall never see Cosette again,' and I was saying that at the very moment when you were mounting the stairs. Was not I an idiot? Just see how idiotic one can be! One reckons without the good God. The good God says:

" 'You fancy that you are about to be abandoned, stupid! No. No, things will not go so. Come, there is a good man yonder who is in need of an angel.' And the angel comes, and one sees one's Cosette again! and one sees one's little Cosette once more! Ah! I was very unhappy."

For a moment he could not speak, then he went on:

"I really needed to see Cosette a little bit now and then. A heart needs a bone to gnaw. But I was perfectly conscious that I was in the way. I gave myself reasons: 'They do not want you, keep in your own course, one has not the right to cling eternally.' Ah! God be praised, I see her once more! Dost thou know, Cosette, thy husband is very handsome? Ah! what a pretty embroidered collar thou hast on, luckily. I am fond of that pattern. It was thy husband who chose it, was it not? And then, thou shouldst have some cashmere shawls. Let me call her thou, Monsieur Pontmercy. It will not be for long."

And Cosette began again:

"How wicked of you to have left us like that! Where did you go? Why have you stayed away so long? Formerly your journeys only lasted three or four days. I sent Nicolette, the answer always was: 'He is absent.' How long have you been back? Why did you not let us know? Do you know that you are very much changed? Ah! what a naughty father! he has been ill, and we have not known it! Stay, Marius, feel how cold his hand is!"

"So you are here! Monsieur Pontmercy, you pardon me!" repeated Jean Valjean.

At that word which Jean Valjean had just uttered once more, all that was swelling Marius' heart found vent.

He burst forth:

"Cosette, do you hear? he has come to that! he asks my forgiveness! And do you know what he has done for me, Cosette? He has saved my life. He has done more—he has given you to me. And after having saved me, and after having given you to me, Cosette, what has he done with himself? He has sacrificed himself. Behold the man. And he says to me the ingrate, to me the forgetful, to me the pitiless, to me the guilty one: Thanks! Cosette, my whole life passed at the feet of this man would be too little. That barricade, that sewer, that furnace, that cesspool,—all that he traversed for me, for thee, Cosette! He carried me away through all the deaths which he put aside before me, and accepted for himself. Every courage, every virtue, every heroism, every sanctity he possesses! Cosette, that man is an angel!"

"Hush! hush!" said Jean Valjean in a low voice. "Why tell all that?"

"But you!" cried Marius with a wrath in which there was veneration, "why did you not tell it to me? It is your own fault, too. You save people's lives, and you conceal it from them! You do more, under the pretext of unmasking yourself, you calumniate yourself. It is frightful."

"I told the truth," replied Jean Valjean.

"No," retorted Marius, "the truth is the whole truth; and that you did not tell. You were Monsieur Madeleine, why not have said so? You saved Javert, why not have said so? I owed my life to you, why not have said so?"

"Because I thought as you do. I thought that you were in the right. It was necessary that I should go away. If you had known about that affair of the sewer, you would have made me remain near you. I was therefore forced to hold my peace. If I had spoken, it would have caused embarrassment in every way."

"It would have embarrassed what? embarrassed whom?" retorted Marius. "Do you think that you are going to stay here? We shall carry you off. Ah! good heavens! when I reflect that it was by an accident that I have learned all this. You form a part of ourselves. You are her father, and mine. You shall not pass another day in this dreadful house. Do not imagine that you will be here to-morrow."

"To-morrow," said Jean Valjean, "I shall not be here, but I shall not be with you."

"What do you mean?" replied Marius. "Ah! come now, we are not going to permit any more journeys. You shall never leave us again. You belong to us. We shall not loose our hold of you."

"This time it is for good," added Cosette. "We have a carriage at the door. I shall run away with you. If necessary, I shall employ force."

And she laughingly made a movement to lift the old man in her arms.

"Your chamber still stands ready in our house," she went on. "If you only knew how pretty the garden is now! The azaleas are doing very well there. The walks are sanded with river sand; there are tiny violet shells. You shall eat my strawberries. I water them myself. And no more 'madame,' no more 'Monsieur Jean,' we are living under a Republic, everybody says *thou,* don't they, Marius? The programme is changed. If you only knew, father, I have had a sorrow, there was a robin red-breast which had made her nest in a hole in the wall, and a horrible cat ate her. My poor, pretty, little robin red-breast which used to put her head out of her window and look at me! I cried over it. I should have liked to kill the cat. But now nobody cries any more. Everybody laughs, everybody is happy. You are going to come with us. How delighted grandfather will be! You shall have your plot in the garden, you shall cultivate it, and we shall see whether your strawberries are as fine as mine. And, then, I shall do everything that you wish, and then, you will obey me prettily."

Jean Valean listened to her without hearing her. He heard the music of her voice rather than the sense of her words; one of those large tears which are the sombre pearls of the soul welled up slowly in his eyes.

He murmured:

"The proof that God is good is that she is here."

"Father!" said Cosette.

Jean Valjean continued:

"It is quite true that it would be charming for us to live together. Their trees are full of birds. I would walk with Cosette. It is sweet to be among living people who bid each other 'good-day,' who call to each other in the garden. People see each other from early morning. We should each cultivate our own little corner. She would make me eat her strawberries. I would make her gather my roses. That would be charming. Only . . ."

He paused and said gently:

"It is a pity."

The tear did not fall, it retreated, and Jean Valjean replaced it with a smile.

Cosette took both the old man's hands in hers.

"My God!" said she, "your hands are still colder than before. Are you ill? Do you suffer?"

"I? No." replied Jean Valjean. I am very well. Only . . ."

He paused.

"Only what?"

"I am going to die presently."

Cosette and Marius shuddered.

"To die!" exclaimed Marius.

"Yes, but that is nothing," said Jean Valjean.

He took breath, smiled and resumed:

"Cosette, thou wert talking to me, go on, so thy little robin red-breast is dead? Speak, so that I may hear thy voice."

Marius gazed at the old man in amazement.

Cosette uttered a heartrending cry.

"Father! my father! you will live. You are going to live. I insist upon your living, do you hear?"

Jean Valjean raised his head towards her with adoration.

"Oh! yes, forbid me to die. Who knows? Perhaps I shall obey. I was on the verge of dying when you came. That stopped me, it seemed to me that I was born again."

"You are full of strength and life," cried Marius. "Do you imagine that a person can die like this? You have had sorrow, you shall have no more. It is I who ask your forgiveness, and on my knees! You are going to live, and to live with us, and to live a long time. We take possession of you once more. There are two of us here who will henceforth have no other thought than your happiness."

"You see," resumed Cosette, all bathed in tears, "that Marius says that you shall not die."

Jean Valjean continued to smile.

"Even if you were to take possession of me, Monsieur Pontmercy, would that make me other than I am? No, God has thought like you and myself, and he does not change his mind; it is useful for me to go. Death is a good arrangement. God knows better than we what we need. May you be happy, may Monsieur Pontmercy have Cosette, may youth wed the morning, may there be around you, my children, lilacs and nightingales; may your life be a beautiful, sunny lawn, may all the enchantments of heaven fill your souls, and now let me, who am good for nothing, die; it is certain that all this is right. Come, be reasonable, nothing is possible now, I am fully conscious that all is over. And then, last night, I drank that whole jug of water. How good thy husband is, Cosette! Thou art much better off with him than with me."

A noise became audible at the door.

It was the doctor entering.

"Good-day, and farewell, doctor," said Jean Valjean. "Here are my poor children."

Marius stepped up to the doctor. He addressed to him only this single word: "Monsieur? . . ." But his manner of pronouncing it contained a complete question.

The doctor replied to the question by an expressive glance.

"Because things are not agreeable," said Jean Valjean, "that is no reason for being unjust towards God."

A silence ensued.

All breasts were oppressed.

Jean Valjean turned to Cosette. He began to gaze at her as though he wished to retain her features for eternity.

In the depths of the shadow into which he had already descended, ecstasy was still possible to him when gazing at Cosette. The reflection of that sweet face lighted up his pale visage.

The doctor felt of his pulse.

"Ah! it was you that he wanted!" he murmured, looking at Cosette and Marius.

And bending down to Marius' ear, he added in a very low voice:

"Too late."

Jean Valjean surveyed the doctor and Marius serenely, almost without ceasing to gaze at Cosette.

These barely articulate words were heard to issue from his mouth:

"It is nothing to die; it is dreadful not to live."

All at once he rose to his feet. These accesses of strength are sometimes the sign of the death agony. He walked with a firm step to the wall, thrusting aside Marius and the doctor who tried to help him, detached from the wall a little copper crucifix which was suspended there, and returned to his seat with all the freedom of movement of perfect health, and said in a loud voice, as he laid the crucifix on the table:

"Behold the great martyr."

Then his chest sank in, his head wavered, as though the intoxication of the tomb were seizing hold upon him.

His hands, which rested on his knees, began to press their nails into the stuff of his trousers.

Cosette supported his shoulders, and sobbed, and tried to speak to him, but could not.

Among the words mingled with that mournful saliva which accompanies tears, they distinguished words like the following:

"Father, do not leave us. Is it possible that we have found you only to lose you again?"

It might be said that agony writhes. It goes, comes, advances towards the sepulchre, and returns towards life. There is groping in the action of dying.

Jean Valjean rallied after this semi-swoon, shook his brow as though to make the shadows fall away from it and became almost perfectly lucid once more.

He took a fold of Cosette's sleeve and kissed it.

"He is coming back! doctor, he is coming back," cried Marius.

"You are good, both of you," said Jean Valjean. "I am going to tell you what has caused me pain. What has pained me, Monsieur Pontmercy, is that you have not been willing to touch that money. That money really belongs to your wife. I will explain to you, my children, and for that reason, also, I am glad to see you. Black jet comes from England, white jet comes from Norway. All this is in this paper, which you will read. For bracelets, I invented a way of substituting for slides of soldered sheet iron, slides of iron laid together. It is prettier, better and less costly. You will understand how much money can be made in that way. So Cosette's fortune is really hers. I give you these details, in order that your mind may be set at rest."

The portress had come upstairs and was gazing in at the half-open door. The doctor dismissed her.

But he could not prevent this zealous woman from exclaiming to the dying man before she disappeared: "Would you like a priest?"

"I have had one," replied Jean Valjean.

And with his finger he seemed to indicate a point above his head where one would have said that he saw some one.

It is probable, in fact, that the Bishop was present at this death agony.

Cosette gently slipped a pillow under his loins.

Jean Valjean resumed:

"Have no fear, Monsieur Pontmercy, I adjure you. The six hundred thousand francs really belong to Cosette. My life will have been wasted if you do not enjoy them! We managed to do very well with those glass goods. We rivalled what is called Berlin jewellery. However, we could not equal the black glass of England. A gross, which contains twelve hundred very well cut grains, only costs three francs."

When a being who is dear to us is on the point of death, we gaze upon him with a look which clings convulsively to him and which would fain hold him back.

Cosette gave her hand to Marius, and both, mute with anguish, not knowing what to say to the dying man, stood trembling and despairing before him.

Jean Valjean sank moment by moment. He was failing; he was drawing near to the gloomy horizon.

His breath had become intermittent; a little rattling interrupted it. He found some difficulty in moving his forearm, his feet had lost all movement, and in proportion as the wretchedness of limb and feebleness of body increased, all the majesty of his soul was displayed and spread over his brow. The light of the unknown world was already visible in his eyes.

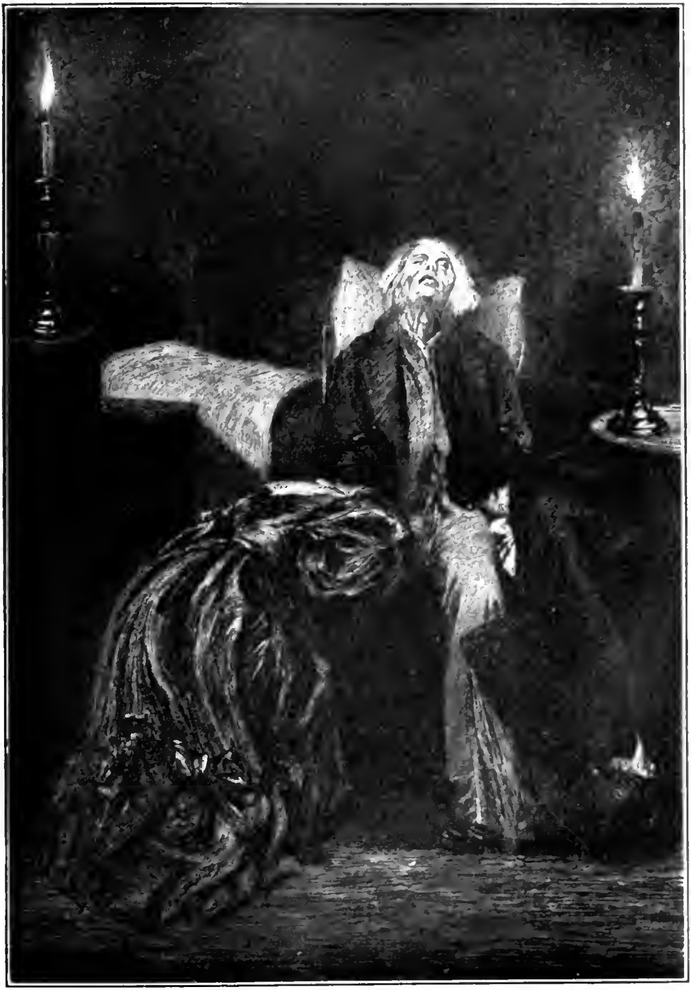
His face paled and smiled. Life was no longer there, it was something else.

His breath sank, his glance grew grander. He was a corpse on which the wings could be felt.

He made a sign to Cosette to draw near, then to Marius; the last minute of the last hour had, evidently, arrived.

He began to speak to them in a voice so feeble that it seemed to come from a distance, and one would have said that a wall now rose between them and him.

"Draw near, draw near, both of you. I love you dearly. Oh! how good it is to die like this! And thou lovest me also, my Cosette. I knew well that thou still felt friendly towards thy poor old man. How kind it was of thee to place that pillow under my loins! Thou wilt weep for me a little, wilt thou not? Not too much. I do not wish thee to have any real griefs. You must enjoy yourselves a great deal, my children. I forgot to tell you that the profit was greater still on the buckles without tongues than on all the rest. A gross of a dozen dozens cost ten francs and sold for sixty. It really was a good business. So there is no occasion for surprise at the six hundred thousand francs, Monsieur Pontmercy. It is honest money. You may be rich with a tranquil mind. Thou must have a carriage, a box at the theatres now and then, and handsome ball dresses, my Cosette, and then, thou must give good dinners to thy friends, and be very happy. I was writing to Cosette a while ago. She will find my letter. I bequeath to her the two candlesticks which stand on the chimney-piece. They are of silver, but to me they are gold, they are diamonds; they change candles which are placed in them into wax-tapers. I do not know whether the person who gave them to me is pleased with me yonder on high. I have done what I could. My children, you will not forget that I am a poor man, you will have me buried in the first plot of earth that you find, under a stone to mark the spot. This is my wish. No name on the stone. If Cosette cares to come for a little while now and then, it will give me pleasure. And you too, Monsieur Pontmercy. I must admit that I have not always loved you. I ask your pardon for that. Now she and you form but one for me. I feel very grateful to you. I am sure that you make Cosette happy. If you only knew, Monsieur Pontmercy, her pretty rosy cheeks were my delight; when I saw her in the least pale, I was sad. In the chest of drawers, there is a bank-bill for five hundred francs. I have not touched it. It is for the poor. Cosette, dost thou see thy little gown yonder on the bed? dost thou recognize it? That was ten years ago, however. How time flies! We have been very happy. All is over. Do not weep, my children, I am not going very far, I shall see you from there, you will only have to look at night, and you will see me smile. Cosette, dost thou remember Montfermeil? Thou wert in the forest, thou wert greatly terrified; dost thou remember how I took hold of the handle of the water-bucket? That was the first time that I touched thy poor, little hand. It was so cold! Ah! your hands were red then, mademoiselle, they are very white now. And the big doll! dost thou remember? Thou didst call her Catherine. Thou regrettedest not having taken her to the convent! How thou didst make me laugh sometimes, my sweet angel! When it had been raining, thou didst float bits of straw on the gutters, and watch them pass away. One day I gave thee a willow battledore and a shuttlecock with yellow, blue and green feathers. Thou hast forgotten it. Thou wert roguish so young! Thou didst play. Thou didst put cherries in thy ears. Those are things of the past. The forests through which one has passed with one's child, the trees under which one has strolled, the convents where one has concealed oneself, the games, the hearty laughs of childhood, are shadows. I imagined that all that belonged to me. In that lay my stupidity. Those Thénardiers were wicked. Thou must forgive them. Cosette, the moment has come to tell thee the name of thy mother. She was called Fantine. Remember that name—Fantine. Kneel whenever thou utterest it. She suffered much. She loved thee dearly. She had as much unhappiness as thou hast had happiness. That is the way God apportions things. He is there on high, he sees us all, and he knows what he does in the midst of his great stars. I am on the verge of departure, my children.



COSETTE AND MARIUS FELL ON THEIR KNEES

Love each other well and always. There is nothing else but that in the world: love for each other. You will think sometimes of the poor old man who died here. Oh my Cosette, it is not my fault, indeed, that I have not seen thee all this time, it cut me to the heart; I went as far as the corner of the street, I must have produced a queer effect on the people who saw me pass, I was like a madman, I once went out without my hat. I no longer see clearly, my children, I had still other things to say, but never mind. Think a little of me. Come still nearer. I die happy. Give me your dear and well-beloved heads, so that I may lay my hands upon them."

Cosette and Marius fell on their knees, in despair, suffocating with tears, each beneath one of Jean Valjean's hands. Those august hands no longer moved.

He had fallen backwards, the light of the candles illuminated him.

His white face looked up to heaven, he allowed Cosette and Marius to cover his hands with kisses.

He was dead.

The night was starless and extremely dark. No doubt, in the gloom, some immense angel stood erect with wings outspread, awaiting that soul.

CHAPTER VI

THE GRASS COVERS AND THE RAIN EFFACES

In the cemetery of Père-Lachaise, in the vicinity of the common grave, far from the elegant quarter of that city of sepulchres, far from all the tombs of fancy which display in the presence of eternity all the hideous fashions of death, in a deserted corner, beside an old wall, beneath a great yew tree over which climbs the wild convolvulus, amid dandelions and mosses, there lies a stone. That stone is no more exempt than others from the leprosy of time, of dampness, of the lichens and from the defilement of the birds. The water turns it green, the air blackens it. It is not near any path, and people are not fond of walking in that direction, because the grass is high and their feet are immediately wet. When there is a little sunshine, the lizards come thither. All around there is a quivering of weeds. In the spring, linnets warble in the trees.

This stone is perfectly plain. In cutting it the only thought was the requirements of the tomb, and no other care was taken than to make the stone long enough and narrow enough to cover a man.

No name is to be read there.

Only, many years ago, a hand wrote upon it in pencil these four lines, which have become gradually illegible beneath the rain and the dust, and which are, to-day, probably effaced:

Il dort. Quoique le sort fût pour lui bien étrange,
Il vivait. Il mourut quand il n'eut plus son ange.
La chose simplement d'elle-même arriva,
Comme la nuit se fait lorsque le jour s'en va.[1]

---

[1] He sleeps. Although his fate was very strange, he lived. He died when he had no longer his angel. The thing came to pass simply, of itself, as the night comes when day is gone.

LETTER TO M. DAELLI

Publisher of the Italian translation of *Les Misérables* in Milan.

Hauteville-House, October 18, 1862.

You are right, sir, when you tell me that *Les Misérables* is written for all nations. I do not know whether it will be read by all, but I wrote it for all. It is addressed to England as well as to Spain, to Italy as well as to France, to Germany as well as to Ireland, to Republics which have slaves as well as to Empires which have serfs. Social problems overstep frontiers. The sores of the human race, those great sores which cover the globe, do not halt at the red or blue lines traced upon the map. In every place where man is ignorant and despairing, in every place where woman is sold for bread, wherever the child suffers for lack of the book which should instruct him and of the hearth which should warm him, the book of *Les Misérables* knocks at the door and says: "Open to me, I come for you."

At the hour of civilization through which we are now passing, and which is still so sombre, the *miserable's* name is Man; he is agonizing in all climes, and he is groaning in all languages.

Your Italy is no more exempt from the evil than is our France. Your admirable Italy has all miseries on the face of it. Does not banditism, that raging form of pauperism, inhabit your mountains? Few nations are more deeply eaten by that ulcer of convents which I have endeavored to fathom. In spite of your possessing Rome, Milan, Naples, Palermo, Turin, Florence, Sienna, Pisa, Mantua, Bologna, Ferrara, Genoa, Venice, a heroic history, sublime ruins, magnificent ruins, and superb cities, you are, like ourselves, poor. You are covered with marvels and vermin. Assuredly, the sun of Italy is splendid, but, alas, azure in the sky does not prevent rags on man.

Like us, you have prejudices, superstitions, tyrannies, fanaticisms, blind laws lending assistance to ignorant customs. You taste nothing of the present nor of the future without a flavor of the past being mingled with it. You have a barbarian, the monk, and a savage, the lazzarone. The social question is the same for you as for us. There are a few less deaths from hunger with you, and a few more from fever; your social hygiene is not much better than ours; shadows, which are Protestant in England, are Catholic in Italy; but, under different names, the *vescovo* is identical with the *bishop,* and it always means night, and of pretty nearly the same quality. To explain the Bible badly amounts to the same thing as to understand the Gospel badly.

Is it necessary to emphasize this? Must this melancholy parallelism be yet more completely verified? Have you not indigent persons? Glance below. Have you not parasites? Glance up. Does not that hideous balance, whose two scales, pauperism and parasitism, so mournfully preserve their mutual equilibrium, oscillate before you as it does before us? Where is your army of schoolmasters, the only army which civilization acknowledges?

Where are your free and compulsory schools? Does every one know how to read in the land of Dante and of Michael Angelo? Have you made public schools of your barracks? Have you not, like ourselves, an opulent war-budget and a paltry budget of education? Have not you also that passive obedience which is so easily converted into soldierly obedience? military establishment which pushes the regulations to the extreme of firing upon Garibaldi; that is to say, upon the living honor of Italy? Let us subject your social order to examination, let us take it where it stands and as it stands, let us view its flagrant offences, show me the woman and the child. It is by the amount of protection with which these two feeble creatures are surrounded that the degree of civilization is to be measured. Is prostitution less heartrending in Naples than in Paris? What is the amount of truth that springs from your laws, and what amount of justice springs from your tribunals? Do you chance to be so fortunate as to be ignorant of the meaning of those gloomy words: public prosecution, legal infamy, prison, the scaffold, the executioner, the death penalty? Italians, with you as with us, Beccaria is dead and Farinace is alive. And then, let us scrutinize your state reasons. Have you a government which comprehends the identity of morality and politics? You have reached the point where you grant amnesty to heroes! Something very similar has been done in France. Stay, let us pass miseries in review, let each one contribute his pile, you are as rich as we. Have you not, like ourselves, two condemnations, religious condemnation pronounced by the priest, and social condemnation decreed by the judge? Oh, great nation of Italy, thou resemblest the great nation of France! Alas! our brothers, you are, like ourselves, *Miserables.*

From the depths of the gloom wherein you dwell, you do not see much more distinctly than we the radiant and distant portals of Eden. Only, the priests are mistaken. These holy portals are before and not behind us.

I resume. This book, *Les Misérables,* is no less your mirror than ours. Certain men, certain castes, rise in revolt against this book,—I understand that. Mirrors, those revealers of the truth, are hated; that does not prevent them from being of use.

As for myself, I have written for all, with a profound love for my own country, but without being engrossed by France more than by any other nation. In proportion as I advance in life, I grow more simple, and I become more and more patriotic for humanity.

This is, moreover, the tendency of our age, and the law of radiance of the French Revolution; books must cease to be exclusively French, Italian, German, Spanish, or English, and become European, I say more, human, if they are to correspond to the enlargement of civilization.

Hence a new logic of art, and of certain requirements of composition which modify everything, even the conditions, formerly narrow, of taste and language, which must grow broader like all the rest.

In France, certain critics have reproached me, to my great delight, with having transgressed the bounds of what they call "French taste"; I should be glad if this eulogium were merited.

In short, I am doing what I can, I suffer with the same universal suffering, and I try to assuage it, I possess only the puny forces of a man, and I cry to all: "Help me!"

This, sir, is what your letter prompts me to say; I say it for you and for your country. If I have insisted so strongly, it is because of one phrase in your letter. You write:—

"There are Italians, and they are numerous, who say: 'This book, *Les Misérables,* is a French book. It does not concern us. Let the French read it as a history, we read it as a romance.'"—Alas! I repeat, whether we be Italians or Frenchmen, misery concerns us all. Ever since history has been written, ever since philosophy has meditated, misery has been the garment of the human race; the moment has at length arrived for tearing off that rag, and for replacing, upon the naked limbs of the Man-People, the sinister fragment of the past with the grand purple robe of the dawn.

If this letter seems to you of service in enlightening some minds and in dissipating some prejudices, you are at liberty to publish it, sir. Accept, I pray you, a renewed assurance of my very distinguished sentiments.

VICTOR HUGO.

NINETY-THREE

TRANSLATED BY
HELEN B. DOLE

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PART FIRST

AT SEA

BOOK FIRST

THE WOODS OF LA SAUDRAIE

During the last of May, 1793, one of the Parisian battalions led into Brittany by Santerre was scouring the terrible woods of La Saudraie in Astillé. The battalion had only three hundred men left, for it had been decimated by the cruel war. It was at the time when after Argonne, Jemmapes, and Valmy, there remained of the first battalion of Paris, originally numbering six hundred volunteers, twenty-seven men; of the second battalion, thirty-three men; and of the third, fifty-seven. It was a time of epic conflicts.

The battalions sent from Paris to La Vendée numbered nine hundred and twelve men. Each battalion had three pieces of cannon. The troops had been quickly raised. On the twenty-fifth of April, Gohier being minister of justice, and Bouchotte minister of war, the section of the *Bon Conseil,* had proposed to send battalions of volunteers to La Vendée. Lubin, member of the commune, had made the report: the first of May, Santerre was ready to send out twelve thousand soldiers, thirty field-pieces and a battalion of gunners. These battalions organized hastily were so well organized, that they serve as models to-day; the companies of the line are made up on the principle governing them; the only change has been in the proportion between the number of soldiers and non-commissioned officers.

On the twenty-eighth of April the commune of Paris gave this order to Santerre's volunteers: "No mercy, no quarter." At the end of May, of the twelve thousand Parisian troops, two-thirds were dead.

The battalion engaged in the woods of La Saudraie was proceeding cautiously. They took their time. They looked to the right and to the left, in front of them and behind them at the same time. Kléber has said: "The soldier has an eye in his back." They had been marching for hours. What time could it be? What part of the day was it? It would have been difficult to say, for there is always a sort of twilight in such wild thickets, and it is never light in these woods.

The forest of La Saudraie was tragic. It was in these woods that the civil war began its crimes in the month of November, 1792. The ferocious cripple, Mousqueton, had come out of these gloomy depths; the number of murders committed there made one's hair stand on end. There was no place more frightful. The soldiers penetrated there cautiously. Everywhere was abundance of flowers; one was surrounded with a trembling wall of branches, from which hung the charming freshness of the foliage; sunbeams here and there made their way through the green shade; on the ground the gladiolus, the yellow swamp flag, the meadow narcissus, the gênotte, the herald of fine weather, and the spring crocus formed the embroidery and decoration of a thick carpet of vegetation, luxuriant in every kind of moss, from that resembling velvet, to that like stars. The soldiers advanced step by step in silence, noiselessly pushing aside the underbrush. The birds warbled above their bayonets.

La Saudraie was one of those thickets where formerly in times of peace they used to hold the Houicheba,—hunting birds at night; now they were hunting men there.

The wood was full of birch trees, beeches, and oaks; the ground flat; the moss and thick grass deadened the sound of the marching men; every path lost itself abruptly among the holly, wild sloe, ferns, hedges of rest-harrow, tall briers; it was impossible to see a man ten feet away.

Occasionally, a heron or a waterfowl passed through the branches, showing that there were swamps near by.

They marched on. They went at haphazard, full of anxiety, and fearing to find what they sought. From time to time they came across traces of encampments, burnt places, trodden-down grass, sticks in the form of a cross, bloody branches. There soup had been made, there mass had been said, there wounds had been dressed. But those who had passed this way had disappeared. Where were they? Far away, perhaps. Perhaps close by, concealed, gun in hand. The woods seemed deserted. The battalion redoubled its precaution. Solitude and suspicion. There was nobody to be seen; the more reason for fearing somebody. They had to do with a forest of ill-repute. An ambuscade was probable.

Thirty grenadiers, detached as scouts and commanded by a sergeant, were marching in advance at a considerable distance from the main body of the troop. The vivandière of the battalion accompanied them. The vivandières join the vanguards from choice. They run a risk, but they expect to see something. Curiosity is one form of feminine bravery.

Suddenly the soldiers in this little squad experienced that thrill familiar to huntsmen, which indicates that they have reached their prey. They had heard something like a whisper in the midst of a thicket, and it seemed that some one had just seen a movement among the leaves. The soldiers made signs to each other.

In the sort of watch and search entrusted to scouts, the officers do not need to take part; whatever must be done is done of itself.

In less than a minute, the spot where the movement had been seen was surrounded; a circle of pointed muskets enclosed it, the obscure centre of the thicket was aimed at from all sides at once, and the soldiers with fingers on the trigger and eyes on the suspected place, only waited for the sergeant's command to riddle it with bullets. The vivandière, however, ventured to look through the brambles, and at the instant when the sergeant was about to cry: "Fire!" this woman cried: "Halt!"

And turning towards the soldiers: "Don't shoot, comrades!"

She rushed headlong into the thicket. They followed her.

There was, indeed, some one there.

In the densest part of the thicket, on the edge of one of those little round clearings made in the woods by the charcoal furnaces in burning roots of trees, in a sort of recess among the branches, a kind of leafy chamber, half open like an alcove, a woman was sitting on the moss, with an infant at the breast, and in her lap the blond heads of two sleeping children.

This was the ambuscade.

"What are you doing here?" cried the vivandière.

The woman raised her head.

The vivandière added fiercely,—

"Are you mad to be here!"

And she continued,—

"A little more and you would have been killed!"

And addressing the soldiers, she added,—

"It is a woman."

"By Jove, we see it is indeed!" said a grenadier.

The vivandière continued,—

"Come into the woods to be massacred! Did ever anybody imagine such stupidity as that?"

The woman stupefied, frightened, petrified, saw all about her as in a dream these guns, these sabres, these bayonets, these fierce faces.

The two children woke up and began to cry.

"I'm hungry," said one.

"I'm afraid," said the other.

The little one went on nursing.

The vivandière spoke to it.

"You are quite right," she said.

The mother was dumb with fright.

The sergeant cried out to her,—

"Don't be afraid, we are the battalion of the *Bonnet-Rouge.*"

The woman trembled from head to foot. She looked at the sergeant, whose rough face showed only his eyebrows, his moustache, and two coals which were his two eyes.

"Formerly the battalion of the *Croix-Rouge,*" added the vivandière.

And the sergeant continued,—

"Who are you, madam?"

The woman looked at him, terrified. She was thin, young, pale, and in rags; she wore the large hood of the Breton peasant, and the woollen cloak fastened at the neck with a string. She let her bare breast be seen with utter indifference. Her feet without stockings or shoes were bleeding.

"She is poor," said the sergeant.

And the vivandière in her soldierly and feminine voice, tenderly withal, resumed,—

"What is your name?"

The woman stammered almost indistinctly,—

"Michelle Fléchard."

Meanwhile the vivandière caressed the little head of the nursing child with her large hand.

"How old is this baby?" she asked.

The mother did not understand. The vivandière persisted.

"I asked you the age of the child."

"Ah!" said the mother, "eighteen months."

"It is too old," said the vivandière. "It ought not to nurse any longer. You must wean it. We will give it some soup."

The mother began to grow calmer. The two little ones which had awakened were more curious than frightened. They admired the plumes.

"Ah!" said the mother, "they are very hungry."

And she added: "I have no more milk."

"They shall have something to eat," cried the sergeant, "and you too. But that is not all. What are your political opinions?"

The woman looked at the sergeant, but gave no answer.

"Did you hear my question?"

She stammered: "I was placed in a convent when very young, but I am married, I am not a nun. The sisters taught me to speak French. The village was set on fire. We escaped in such haste that I did not have time to put on my shoes."

"I ask what are your political opinions?"

"I don't know."

The sergeant continued,—

"There are spies about. If caught, spies are shot. You see. Speak. You are not a gypsy. What is your country?"

She still looked at him, evidently without understanding.

The sergeant asked once more: "What is your country?"

"I do not know," she said.

"What, you don't know your own country."

"Ah! my country, yes, indeed."

"Well, what is your country?"

The woman answered: "It is the farm of Siscoignard, in the parish of Azé."

It was the sergeant's turn to be amazed. He remained lost in thought for a moment, then replied,—

"What did you say?"

"Siscoignard."

"But that is not a country."

"It is my country."

And, after a moment of reflection, the woman added,—

"I understand, sir. You are from France. I am from Brittany."

"Well?"

"It is not the same country."

"But it is the same fatherland!" exclaimed the sergeant.

The woman merely replied,—

"I am from Siscoignard!"

"Have it Siscoignard, then," replied the sergeant. "Does your family belong there?"

"Yes."

"What do they do?"

"They are all dead. I have no relatives now."

The sergeant, who was clever with his tongue, continued to question her.

"People have parents, you devil, or have had them! Who are you? Speak!"

The woman heard in amazement this *ou on en a eu,* which sounded more like the cry of a wild beast than human speech.

The vivandière felt the need of coming to her aid. She renewed her caresses to the nursing child, and patted the cheeks of the other two.

"What do you call the baby?" she asked; "I see it is a girl."

The mother answered: "Georgette."

"And the oldest? he is a man, the scamp."

"René-Jean."

"And the younger one? He is a man, too, and a chubby-faced fellow besides."

"Gros-Alain," said the mother.

"They are pretty little things," said the vivandière; "you seem to be somebody."

Meanwhile, the sergeant persisted in talking.

"Tell me, madam. Have you a house?"

"I had one."

"Where was it?"

"At Azé."

"Why are you not in your house?"

"Because it was burned."

"Who burned it?"

"I don't know. There was a battle."

"Where did you come from?"

"From there."

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know."

"Come to the point. Who are you?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know who you are?"

"We are people who have escaped."

"To what party do you belong?"

"I don't know."

"Do you belong to the Blues? Do you belong to the Whites? Whom are you with?"

"I am with my children."

Here was a pause. The vivandière said,—

"I never had any children. I didn't have time."

The sergeant began again,—

"But your parents. Come, madam, tell us about your parents. My name is Radoub; I am a sergeant; I belong in rue du Cherche-Midi; my father and mother belonged there, too. I can tell you about my parents. Tell us about yours. Tell us who your parents were."

"They were the Fléchards."

"Yes; the Fléchards are the Fléchards, as the Radoubs are the Radoubs. But people have some occupation. What was the occupation of your parents? What did they do? What did they make? What did they *fledge,* these *Fledghards* of yours?"

"They were farmers. My father was infirm and unable to work, because he had been cudgelled by the seigneur, his seigneur, our seigneur, which was a kindness, for my father had poached a rabbit, and the penalty for this offence was death; but the seigneur had mercy and said, 'Give him only a hundred blows,' and my father was made a cripple."

"Go on."

"My grandfather was a Huguenot. The priest had him sent to the galleys. I was very young."

"Go on."

"My husband's father was a salt smuggler. The king had him hanged."

"And your husband, what does he do?"

"At the present time he is fighting."

"For whom?"

"For the king."

"For whom else?"

"Why, for his seigneur?"

"For whom else?"

"Why, for the priest."

"The accursed names of brutes!" exclaimed a grenadier.

The woman shook with fear.

"You see, madam, we are Parisians," said the vivandière kindly.

The woman clasped her hands and cried: "Oh, my Lord Jesus!"

"No superstitions," resumed the sergeant.

The vivandière sat down beside the woman and drew to her the oldest of the children, who made no resistance. Children feel confidence just as they feel afraid, without knowing why. They have a monitor within.

"My poor good woman, you have some pretty brats, at any rate. I can guess their ages. The largest is four years old, his brother three. Indeed that nursing kid is a famous greedy-gut. You see, madame, you have nothing to fear. You shall join the battalion. You can do as I do. I call myself Houzarde; it is a nickname. But I prefer to be called Houzarde rather than Mamzelle Bicomeau, like my mother. I am the vivandière or canteen-woman, as the one is called who serves out the drink when any one is shot or killed. The devil and his train! Our feet are nearly the same size, I will give you some of my shoes. I was in Paris the tenth of August. I gave Westermann a drink. He was walking. I saw Louis XVI., Louis Capet they call him, guillotined. He didn't like it. Why, just listen. They say that the thirteenth of January he was having chestnuts cooked, and laughing with his family! When they forced him to lie down on the *bascule,* as they call it, he had on neither coat nor shoes; he wore only his shirt, a quilted vest, grey cloth breeches, and grey silk stockings. I saw that myself. The carriage he was brought in was painted green. You see, come with us, we have good boys in the battalion; you shall be vivandière number two; I will teach you the profession. Oh! it is very simple! You have your can and your little bell, you go about in the tumult, in the midst of the firing of the platoons, among the cannon shots, in the uproar, shouting: 'Who wants a drink, children?' It is no more difficult than that. I give everybody a drink. Yes, indeed. The Whites as well as the Blues; although I am a Blue, and a good Blue too. But I give everybody a drink. The wounded are thirsty. People die without regard for opinions. When people are dying you ought to press their hands. How silly it is to fight! Come with us. If I am killed you will be my successor. You see, that is the way I seem; but I am a good woman and a brave man. Don't have any fear."

When the vivandière had stopped speaking, the woman murmured: "Our neighbor's name was Marie-Jean, and our servant's Marie-Claude."

In the meantime the Sergeant Radoub was reprimanding the grenadier,—

"Hold your tongue. You have frightened the woman. You mustn't swear before ladies."

"All the same, as far as an honest man can understand it, it is a genuine massacre," replied the grenadier. "The idea of these Chinese peasants having their father-in-law crippled by the seigneur, their grandfather sent to the galleys by the priest, and their father hung by the king, and then insist on fighting. In the name of common sense! And they thrust themselves into a revolt and let themselves be crushed for the seigneur, the priest, and the king!"

"Silence in the ranks," cried the sergeant.

"We'll be silent, sergeant," continued the grenadier, "but that won't prevent its being a pity for a pretty woman like that to run the risk of having her neck broken for the handsome eyes of a priest."

"Grenadier," said the sergeant, "we are not in the Club des Piques at Paris. None of your eloquence."

And he turned towards the woman.

"And your husband, madam? What is he doing? What has he become?"

"He hasn't become anything, because he has been killed."

"Where?"

"In the hedge."

"When?"

"Three days ago."

"Who killed him?"

"I don't know."

"What, you don't know who killed your husband?"

"No."

"Was it a Blue? Was it a White?"

"It was a bullet."

"And three days ago?"

"Yes."

"From which direction?"

"From Ernée. My husband fell. There!"

"And since your husband is dead, what are you going to do?"

"I am carrying away my children."

"Where are you carrying them?"

"Straight ahead."

"Where do you sleep?"

"On the ground."

"What do you get to eat?"

"Nothing."

The sergeant made up the military face of touching his nose with his mustache.

"Nothing."

"That is to say wild plums, mulberries in the brambles, if there are any left from last year, myrtle seeds, fern shoots."

"Yes. As much as to say nothing."

The oldest of the children, seeming to understand, said: "I'm hungry."

The sergeant took a piece of soldier's bread out of his pocket and handed it to the mother. The mother broke the bread in two pieces, and gave them to the children. The little ones eagerly devoured it.

"She hasn't kept any for herself," muttered the sergeant.

"It is because she isn't hungry," said a soldier.

"It's because she is their mother," said the sergeant.

The children interrupted them.

"I want a drink," said one.

"I want a drink," repeated the other.

"Is there no brook in these devilish woods?" said the sergeant.

The vivandière took the copper cup hanging from her belt beside her bell, turned the spigot of the keg which hung from her shoulder by a strap, let a few drops run into the cup, and held it to the children's lips.

The first drank and made a face.

The second one drank and spit it out.

"Why, it's good," said the vivandière.

"Is it Coupe-Figure?" asked the sergeant.

"Yes, and of the best. But they are peasants."

And she wiped the cup.

The sergeant continued,—

"And you are making your escape in this way?"

"I am obliged to."

"Across the country in a bee line."

"I ran with all my might, and then I walked, and then I fell down."

"Poor creature!" said the vivandière.

"People are fighting everywhere," stammered the woman. "I am surrounded on all sides with gunshots. I don't know what it all means. They have killed my husband. I only understand that."

The sergeant thumped the ground with the butt of his musket, and exclaimed,—

"In the name of a jackass, what a beastly war this is!"

The woman continued: "Last night we slept in an *émousse*."

"All four of you?"

"All four of us."

"Slept?"

"Slept."

"Then," said the sergeant, "you slept standing."

And he turned to the soldiers.

"Comrades, a great, old, hollow trunk of a tree, that a man would have to squeeze himself into as if 'twere a knife-case, these shy creatures call that an *émousse*. What do you think about it? They are not obliged to be Parisians."

"Slept in the trunk of a hollow tree!" said the vivandière; "and with three children!"

"And when the little ones bawled," the sergeant went on to say, "it must have been funny enough for those who were passing and saw nothing at all, to hear a tree crying: 'Papa! Mamma!' "

"Fortunately, it is summer-time," sighed the woman.

She looked on the ground, resigned, with an expression in her eyes of that astonishment which comes from sudden misfortune.

The soldiers quietly formed a circle around the pitiful group.

A widow, three orphans, flight, desertion, solitude, mutterings of war all around the horizon, hunger, thirst, no food but grass, no roof but the heavens.

The sergeant approached the woman and looked at the nursing child. The little one left the breast, turned her head gently, looked with her beautiful blue eyes at the frightful hairy face, rough and tawny, which bent over her, and began to smile.

The sergeant straightened himself up, and a great tear was seen to roll down his cheek and rest on the end of his mustache like a pearl.

He raised his voice,—

"After all this, it is my opinion that the battalion ought to become a father. Is it agreed? Let us adopt these three children."

"Long live the Republic!" cried the grenadiers.

"Done," said the sergeant.

And he extended his hands above the heads of mother and children.

"Behold," he said, "the children of the battalion of *Bonnet-Rouge*."

The vivandière leaped for joy.

"Three heads in one bonnet!" she cried.

Then she burst into sobs, embraced the poor widow effusively, and said to her,—

"The baby already looks like a general!"

"Long live the Republic!" repeated the soldiers.

And the sergeant said to the mother,—

"Come, *citoyenne*."

BOOK SECOND

THE CORVETTE "CLAYMORE"

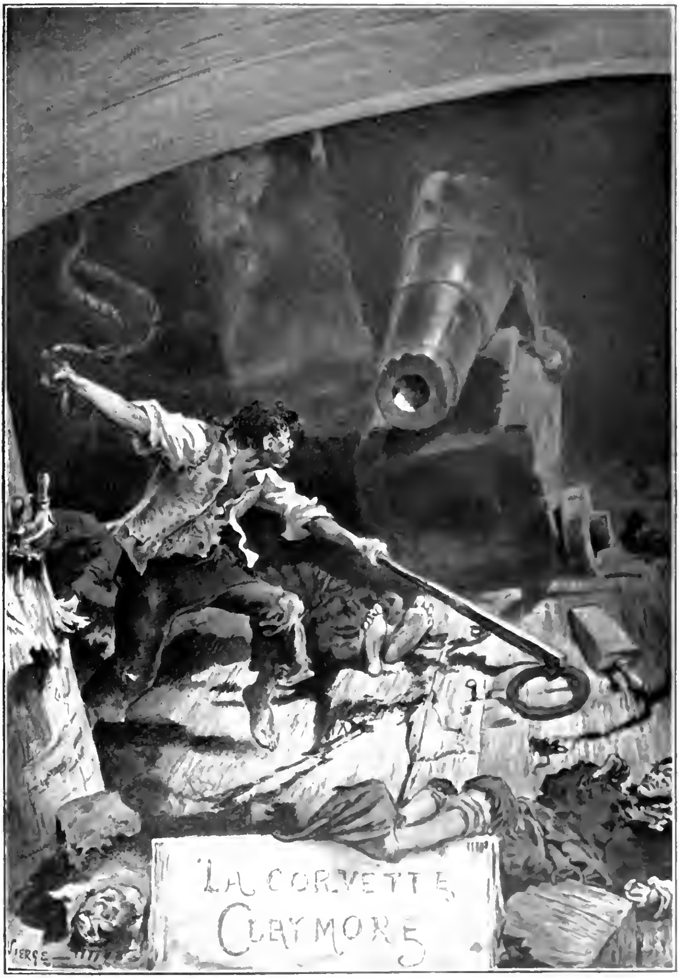
CHAPTER I

ENGLAND AND FRANCE

In the spring of 1793, at the time when France, attacked on all her frontiers at once, was touchingly diverted by the fall of the Girondists, this is what took place in the Channel Islands.

One evening, the first of June, in Jersey, in the little lonely bay of Bonne-nuit, about an hour before sunset, during one of those fogs convenient for escape, because they are dangerous for navigation, a corvette was preparing to set sail. The crew of this vessel was French, but it belonged to the English fleet stationed on the lookout at the eastern point of the island. The Prince of la Tour-d'Auvergne, who belonged to the house of Bouillon, commanded the English Fleet, and it was by his orders, and for an urgent and special service, that the corvette had been detached.

This corvette, enrolled at Trinity House as the "Claymore," was to all appearances a merchant ship, but in reality was a sloop of war. She had the clumsy, peaceful aspect of a merchantman; this was a mere blind, however. She had been built for a double purpose, deception and strength: to deceive, if possible; to fight, if necessary. For the service that she had to perform this night, her cargo between decks had been replaced by thirty carronades of heavy calibre. Either because a storm was in prospect, or to give an innocent appear-


LA CORVETTE
CLAYMORE
VIERGE

HE WAITED FOR THE CANNON TO PASS BY HIM.

ance to the vessel, these thirty carronades were shut in, that is securely fastened within by triple chains, and the mouths pushed up against the closed port holes; there was nothing to be seen from the outside; the port holes were concealed; the lids closed; it was as if the corvette wore a mask. These carronades had wheels with bronze spokes, an ancient model, called *"modèle radié."*

Corvettes usually have no cannons except on the upper deck; this one, constructed for surprise and stratagem, had no guns on the upper deck and as we have just seen, had been built in such a way as to be able to carry a battery between decks.

The "Claymore" was of a heavy, dumpy build, and yet she was a good sailer. Her hull was one of the most solid in all the English navy, and in battle she was almost equal to a frigate, although her mizzen-mast was small, with merely a brigantine rig. Her rudder, of rare scientific shape, had a uniquely curved frame, which had cost fifty pounds sterling in the dockyards of Southampton.

The crew, all French, was composed of emigrant officers and deserted sailors. They were picked men, not one of them was not a good seaman, good soldier, and good royalist. They had a threefold fanaticism: the ship, the sword, and the king.

Half a battalion of marines, which could be disembarked in case of necessity, was scattered among the crew.

The captain of the corvette "Claymore" was a chevalier of Saint-Louis, the Count de Boisberthelot, one of the best officers of the old Royal Navy; the second officer was the chevalier de la Vieuville, who had commanded the company of the French guards, in which Hoche was the sergeant, and her pilot was Philip Gacquoil, the most intelligent sailor in Jersey.

It was evident that this vessel had some extraordinary service before her. Indeed, a man had just gone on board, who had every appearance of starting on an adventure. He was a tall old man, straight and sturdy, with a stern face, whose age it would have been difficult to tell exactly, because he seemed at once old and young; one of those men, full of years and strength, with white locks on his brow and fire in his eye; forty years in point of vigor, and eighty in point of authority.

At the moment he set foot on the corvette, his sea-cloak flew open, and it could be seen that underneath this cloak he was dressed in the wide breeches called *bragoubras,* top boots, and a vest of goat-skin, showing the upper side of the leather embroidered with silk, and the under side with the hair in its rough, natural state, the complete costume of the Breton peasant.

These old-fashioned Breton vests served a double purpose, being worn for festivals as well as work days, and were reversible, showing as was desirable either the hairy or the embroidered side; goat-skin all the week, gala dress on Sunday.

As if to add a studied and exact truthfulness to the peasant costume worn by the old man, it was threadbare at the elbows and knees, and appeared to have been in use a long time, and his cloak, made of coarse material, resembled that of a fisherman. This old man had on the round hat of the day, with high crown and broad brim, which when turned down gives it a rustic appearance, and when caught up with a cord and cockade has a military air. He wore this hat after the peasant fashion with the rim flattened out, without cord or cockade.

Lord Balcarras, governor of the island, and the prince of la Tour-d'Auvergne, had accompanied him in person and installed him on board the vessel. Gélambre, the secret agent of the princes, and formerly one of the bodyguard of the Count d'Artois, had himself seen to the arrangement of his cabin, extending his care and attention, although himself an excellent gentleman, so far as to carry the old man's valise. On leaving him to go ashore again, M. de Gélambre had made a profound bow to this peasant; Lord Balcarras had said to him: "Good luck, general," and the Prince of la Tour-d'Auvergne had said: *"Au revoir,* cousin."

"The peasant" was the name by which the crew began at once to designate their passenger, in the short conversations seamen have together; but without knowing more about him, they understood that this peasant was no more a peasant than the man-of-war was a merchant man.

There was little wind. The "Claymore" left Bonne-nuit, passed in front of Boulay Bay, and was for some time in sight, running along the shore, then she became dim in the increasing darkness, and was lost to view.

An hour later, Gélambre, having returned home to Saint-Hélier, despatched by the Southampton express to the Count d'Artois, at the Duke of York's headquarters, the following four lines,—

"Monseigneur, she has just sailed. Success certain. In a week the whole coast will be on fire from Granville to Saint-Malo."

Four days before, Prieur, the representative of Marne, on a mission to the army on the coast of Cherbourg, and for the time being residing at Granville, had received a message in the same handwriting as the preceding despatch, reading thus,—

"Citizen representative, June 1st, at flood-tide the sloop of war, 'Claymore,' with masked battery, will set sail, to carry to the coast of France a man whose description is as follows: tall, old, white hair, peasant's dress, aristocratic hands. I will send you more details to-morrow. He will land on the second, in the morning. Send word to the cruisers, capture the corvette, have the man guillotined."

CHAPTER II

A NIGHT ON SHIPBOARD, AND CONCERNING THE PASSENGER

The corvette, instead of going to the south and steering towards Saint-Catherine's, bore to the north, then turned to the west and ran resolutely into the arm of the sea between Sark and Jersey, called the passage de la Déroute. There was at that time no lighthouse on any point along these two coasts.

The sun had set, the night was dark, more so than usual in summer; there was a moon, but heavy clouds more like autumn than summer covered the sky like a ceiling, and to judge from all appearances the moon would not be visible till she touched the horizon just before setting. Clouds hung low over the sea, and covered it with fog.

All this darkness was favorable.

The intention of the pilot, Gacquoil, was to leave Jersey on the left and Guernsey on the right, and by a bold course between the Hanois and the Douvres to make for a bay somewhere on the shore of Saint-Malo, not so short a route as by the Minquiers, but safer, because the French cruisers had standing orders to keep especial watch between Saint-Hélier and Granville.

If the wind were favorable, if nothing unexpected occurred, and by setting all sails, Gacquoil hoped to reach the French coast by daybreak.

All was going well; the corvette had just passed Gros-Nez; about nine o'clock it began to grow sulky, as the sailors say, and there was some wind and sea; but the wind was favorable, and the sea strong without being violent. However, occasionally a heavy sea swept over the bow of the vessel.

The "peasant" whom Lord Balcarras had called "general," and to whom the Prince of la Tour d'Auvergne had said, "Cousin" had sea-legs and walked the deck with calm unconcern. He did not seem to notice that the vessel was very much tossed about. Now and then he drew out of his pocket a cake of chocolate, broke off a piece and ate it; although his hair was white, he had all his teeth.

He spoke to no one, except occasionally a few words in a low tone to the captain, who listened with deference, and seemed to consider this passenger more the commander than himself.

The "Claymore," skilfully piloted, sailed, unnoticed in the fog, by the long northern cliff of Jersey, hugging the shore on account of the dangerous reef Pierres-de-Leeq, in the middle of the straits between Jersey and Sark. Gacquoil, standing at the helm signalling la Grève de Leeq, Gros-Nez, and Plimont in turn, guided the vessel through these chains of reefs, groping his way, as it were, but still with the certainty of a man who is at home and knows his way on the ocean. The corvette had no light forward, for fear of betraying its passage in these guarded waters. They congratulated themselves on having the fog. They reached the Grande-Étape; the fog was so thick that the outline of the tall pinnacle could hardly be discerned. Ten o'clock sounded from the tower of Saint-Ouen, a sign that the wind was still abaft. All continued to go well; the sea grew more tempestuous as they drew near to la Corbière.

A little after ten, the Count de Boisberthelot, and the Chevalier de la Vieuville accompanied the man in peasant's garb to his cabin, which was the captain's stateroom. Just as he was about to enter it, lowering his voice, he said to them,—

"You know, gentlemen, the important secret. Be silent till the moment the explosion occurs. You two are the only ones here who know my name."

"We will carry it to the grave," replied Boisberthelot.

"As for me," replied the old man, "if I were to die, I would not utter it."

And he entered his cabin.

CHAPTER III

NOBLE AND PLEBEIAN IN ALLIANCE

THE commander and the second officer went up on deck again and began to talk together, walking side by side. They were evidently speaking about their passenger, and this is very nearly the conversation that the wind scattered in the darkness.

Boisberthelot muttered low in la Vieuville's ear,—

"We shall see if he is a leader."

La Vieuville replied: "At any rate, he is a prince."

"Almost."

"A nobleman in France, but a prince in Brittany."

"Like the la Trémoilles, and like the Rohans."

"To whom he is related."

Boisberthelot continued: "In France and in the king's coaches he is a marquis, as I am a count and as you are a chevalier."

"The coaches are far off!" exclaimed la Vieuville. "We are more likely to ride in a tumbril."

A silence ensued.

Boisberthelot went on,—

"For want of a French prince, they take a Breton prince."

"For want of a thrush—no, for want of an eagle—they take a crow."

"I should prefer a vulture," said Boisberthelot.

And la Vieuville replied: "Of course! a beak and talons."

"We shall see."

"Yes," replied la Vieuville, "it is time there was a leader. I am of Tinténiac's opinion: 'A leader and powder!' Wait, commander, I know nearly all the leaders, possible and impossible; those of to-day, of yesterday, and to-morrow; but not one is the figure-head needed. In this devilish la Vendée, a general is needed who is at the same time an attorney; he must annoy the enemy, dispute the mills, the thickets, the ditches, the pebbles with them, have serious quarrels with them, take advantage of everything, be constantly on the watch, make examples of them; he must neither sleep nor show pity. At the present time, there are heroes in this army of peasants, but there are no captains. D'Elbée is nobody; Lescure is ill; Bonchamps is tender-hearted, he is good, he is stupid; La Rochejacquelin is a splendid sub-lieutenant; Silz is an officer for the open field, unequal to a war of expedients; Cathelineau is an innocent wagoner; Stoffler is a tricky gamekeeper; Bérard is silly; Boulainvilliers is absurd; Charette is horrible; and I will say nothing at all of Gaston the barber. For, by thunder! what is the good of a revolution, and what difference is there between the republicans and ourselves, if we are to let noblemen be commanded by wigmakers?"

"This beastly revolution has taken hold of us, as well."

"An itch that France has caught!"

"Itch of the Third Estate," replied Boisberthelot. "England alone can save us from it."

"She will do it without doubt, captain."

"At any rate, it is hideous."

"Certainly, louts everywhere! The monarchy which has Stofflet for general-in-chief, M. de Maulevrier's gamekeeper, has nothing to envy the republic, with Pache, son of the Duke de Castries's porter, for minister. What counterparts in this war of la Vendée! On one side Santerre, the brewer; on the other, Gaston, the hairdresser!"

"My dear la Vieuville, I make an exception of this Gaston. He hasn't acted badly in his command at Guéménée. He shot three hundred Blues very prettily, after making them dig their own graves."

"Very good; but I could have done just as well myself."

"Indeed, without doubt. And so could I."

"The great deeds of war," continued la Vieuville, "require nobility in those who accomplish them. These are matters for chevaliers, not for wig-makers."

"Still in this Third Estate," replied Boisberthelot, "there are estimable men. Take, for example, the clock-maker Joly. He was a sergeant in the Flanders regiment; he becomes a Vendéan chief; he commands a company on the coast; he has a son, who is a republican, and while the father serves with the Whites, the son serves with the Blues. They meet. Battle. The father takes his son prisoner, and blows his brains out."

"That is good," said la Vieuville.

"A royalist Brutus," replied Boisberthelot.

"That doesn't prevent it from being intolerable to be commanded by a Coquereau, a Jean-Jean, a Moulins, a Focart, a Bouju, a Chouppes!"

"My dear chevalier, the indignation is the same on both sides. We are full of *bourgeois;* they are full of nobles. Do you suppose that the *sans-culottes* are content to be commanded by the Count de Conclaux, the Viscount de Miraud, the Viscount de Beauharnais, the Count de Valence, the Marquis de Custine, and the Duke de Biron!"

"What slop!"

"And the Duke de Chartres!"

"Son of Egalité. Ah, when will he be king, that fellow? Never!"

"He is on his way to the throne. His crimes assist him."

"And his vices hinder him," said Boisberthelot.

Again there was a silence, and Boisberthelot went on to say,—

"He wished, however, for a reconciliation. He came to see the king. I was there at Versailles, when they spat on his back."

"From the grand staircase?"

"Yes."

"They did well."

"We called him, Bourbon le Bourbeaux."

"He is bald, he has pimples, he is a regicide. Bah!"

And la Vieuville added: "I was with him at Ouessant."

"On the 'Saint-Esprit'?"

"Yes."

"If he had obeyed the signal that Admiral d'Orvilliers gave him to keep to the windward, he would have hindered the English from passing."

"Certainly."

"Is it true that he hid himself in the hold?"

"No, but we must say so, all the same."

And la Vieuville burst out laughing.

Boisberthelot continued: "There are some fools yet. Take this Boulainvilliers, of whom you were speaking, la Vieuville; I knew him, I have seen him near to. At first the peasants were armed with pikes; if he didn't get it into his head to make pikemen of them! He wanted to teach them the exercise *de la pique-en-biais et de la pique-trainante-le-fer-devant!* He dreamed of transforming these savages into soldiers of the line. He pretended to teach them how to mass battalions, and to form battalions into hollow squares. He jabbered to them in the old military language; for chief of a squad, he said *'cap d'escade,'* a term applied to corporals under Louis XVI. He was determined to form a regiment with all these poachers; he had regular companies, the sergeants of which formed a circle every evening, receiving the countersign from the colonel's sergeant; he repeated it to the sergeant of the lieutenants, and he repeated it to his neighbor, who passed it to the one nearest, and so on from ear to ear, till the last. He cashiered an officer for not rising with head uncovered to receive the word of command from the mouth of the sergeant. You can judge how that succeeded. This booby couldn't understand that peasants like to be led in peasant-fashion, and that you can't make drilled soldiers out of backwoodsmen. Yes, I know that Boulainvilliers."

They walked on a few steps, each busied with his own thoughts.

Then the conversation continued,—

"By the way, is it true that Dampierre has been killed?"

"Yes, commander."

"Before Condé?"

"In the camp of Pamaro; by a cannon-ball."

Boisberthelot sighed.

"The Count de Dampierres. Another one of us, who was on their side!"

"A pleasant journey to him!" said la Vieuville.

"And the ladies, where are they?"

"At Trieste."

"Still?"

"Still."

And la Vieuville exclaimed: "Oh, this republic! What havoc to so little purpose! To think that this revolution has come about from the deficit of a few millions!"

"Look out for insignificant beginnings."

"Everything is going wrong," replied la Vieuville.

"Yes, la Rouarie is dead; du Dresnay, an idiot. What melancholy leaders all these bishops are: this Coucy, bishop of la Rochelle; this Beaupoil Saint-Aulaire, bishop of Poitiers; this Mercy, bishop of Luçon, Mme. de l'Eschasserie's lover—"

"Her name is Servanteau, you know, commander; l'Eschasserie is the name of her estate."

"And that false bishop of Agra, who is the curate of I don't know what!"

"Of Dol. His name is Guillot de Folleville. He is brave, however, and he fights."

"Priests when we wants soldiers! Bishops, who are no bishops! Generals who are no generals!"

La Vieuville interrupted Boisberthelot.

"Commander, have you the *Moniteur* in your cabin?"

"Yes."

"What are they playing in Paris, now?"

"'Adèle,' 'Paulin' and 'The Cavern.'"

"I should like to see that."

"You will see it. We shall be in Paris in a month."

Boisberthelot thought a moment and added,—

"At the latest. Mr. Windham has told Lord Hood so."

"Then, commander, everything is not going so badly?"

"Gracious! All would go well, if only the war in Brittany were well conducted."

La Vieuville shook his head.

"Commander," he asked, "shall we land the marines?"

"Yes, if the coast is for us; no, if it be hostile. Sometimes war has to break open the doors, sometimes she slips through. Civil war should always have a false key in her pocket. Everything possible will be done. The most important thing is the chief."

And Boisberthelot added thoughtfully,—

"La Vieuville, what would you think of the Chevalier de Dieuzie?"

"The young man?"

"Yes."

"For a commander?"

"Yes."

"That he, again, is an officer for the open field, and for pitched battles. The thicket only knows the peasant."

"Then resign yourself to General Stofflet and to General Cathelineau."

La Vieuville considered a moment and said,—

"We need a prince—a prince of France—a prince of the blood—a real prince."

"Why? He who names a prince—"

"Names a coward. I know it, commander. But it is for the effect on the great, stupid eyes of the louts."

"My dear chevalier, princes would not come."

"We can dispense with them."

Boisberthelot made that mechanical movement of rubbing the forehead with the hand, as if expecting to bring out an idea.

He continued: "At last, let us consider the present general."

"He is a great nobleman."

"Do you believe that he will answer?"

"If he is strong!" said la Vieuville.

"That is to say, cruel," said Boisberthelot.

The count and the chevalier looked at each other.

"Monsieur du Boisberthelot, you have spoken the word. Cruel. Yes, that is what we need. This is a merciless war. It is the time for bloodthirsty men. Regicides have cut off Louis XVI.'s head; we will tear the four limbs from the regicides. Yes, the general necessary is General Inexorable. In Anjou and upper Poitou the chiefs play the magnanimous; they flounder in generosity, nothing succeeds. In the Marais and in the Retz country, the chiefs are terrible, everything moves on. It is because Charette is cruel that he holds out against Parrein. Hyena against hyena."

Boisberthelot had no time to reply to la Vieuville. La Vieuville was suddenly cut short by a cry of despair, and at the same time a noise was heard wholly unlike any other sound. This cry and these sounds came from within the vessel.

The captain and lieutenant rushed towards the gun-deck, but could not get down. All the gunners were pouring up in dismay. Something terrible had just happened.

CHAPTER IV

TORMENTUM BELLI

One of the carronades of the battery, a twenty-four pounder, had broken loose.

This is the most dangerous accident that can possibly take place on shipboard. Nothing more terrible can happen to a sloop of war in open sea and under full sail.

A cannon that breaks its moorings suddenly becomes some strange, supernatural beast. It is a machine transformed into a monster. That short mass on wheels moves like a billiard-ball, rolls with the rolling of the ship, plunges with the pitching, goes, comes, stops, seems to meditate, starts on its course again, shoots like an arrow, from one end of the vessel to the other, whirls around, slips away, dodges, rears, bangs, crashes, kills, exterminates. It is a battering ram capriciously assaulting a wall. Add to this, the fact that the ram is of metal, the wall of wood.

It is matter set free; one might say, that this eternal slave was avenging itself; it seems as if the total depravity concealed in what we call inanimate things had escaped, and burst forth all of a sudden; it appears to lose patience, and to take a strange mysterious revenge; nothing more relentless than this wrath of the inanimate. This enraged lump leaps like a panther, it has the clumsiness of an elephant, the nimbleness of a mouse, the obstinacy of an axe, the uncertainty of the billows, the zigzag of the lightning, the deafness of the grave. It weighs ten thousand pounds, and it rebounds like a child's ball. It spins and then abruptly darts off at right angles.

And what is to be done? How put an end to it? A tempest ceases, a cyclone passes over, a wind dies down, a broken mast can be replaced, a leak can be stopped, a fire extinguished, but what will become of this enormous brute of bronze? How can it be captured? You can reason with a bull-dog, astonish a bull, fascinate a boa, frighten a tiger, tame a lion; but you have no resource against this monster, a loose cannon. You cannot kill it, it is dead; and at the same time it lives. It lives with a sinister life which comes to it from the infinite. The deck beneath it gives it full swing. It is moved by the ship, which is moved by the sea, which is moved by the wind. This destroyer is a toy. The ship, the waves, the winds, all play with it, hence its frightful animation. What is to be done with this apparatus? How fetter this stupendous engine of destruction? How anticipate its comings and goings, its returns, its stops, its shocks? Any one of its blows on the side of the ship may stave it in. How foretell its frightful meanderings? It is dealing with a projectile, which alters its mind, which seems to have ideas, and changes its direction every instant. How check the course of what must be avoided? The horrible cannon struggles, advances, backs, strikes right, strikes left, retreats, passes by, disconcerts expectation, grinds up obstacles, crushes men like flies. All the terror of the situation is in the fluctuations of the flooring. How fight an inclined plane subject to caprices? The ship has, so to speak, in its belly, an imprisoned thunderstorm, striving to escape; something like a thunderbolt rumbling above an earthquake.

In an instant the whole crew was on foot. It was the fault of the gun captain, who had neglected to fasten the screw-nut of the mooring-chain, and had insecurely clogged the four wheels of the gun carriage; this gave play to the sole and the framework, separated the two platforms, and finally the breeching. The tackle had given way, so that the cannon was no longer firm on its carriage. The stationary breeching, which prevents recoil, was not in use at this time. A heavy sea struck the port, the carronade insecurely fastened, had recoiled and broken its chain, and began its terrible course over the deck.

To form an idea of this strange sliding, let one imagine a drop of water running over glass.

At the moment when the fastenings gave way, the gunners were in the battery. Some in groups, others scattered about, busied with the customary work among sailors getting ready for a signal for action. The carronade, hurled forward by the pitching of the vessel, made a gap in this crowd of men and crushed four at the first blow; then sliding back and shot out again as the ship rolled, it cut in two a fifth unfortunate, and knocked a piece of the battery against the larboard side with such force as to unship it. This caused the cry of distress just heard. All the men rushed to the companion-way. The gun deck was vacated in a twinkling.

The enormous gun was left alone. It was given up to itself. It was its own master, and master of the ship. It could do what it pleased. This whole crew, accustomed to laugh in time of battle, now trembled. To describe the terror is impossible.

Captain Boisberthelot and Lieutenant la Vieuville, although both dauntless men, stopped at the head of the companion-way, and dumb, pale, and hesitating, looked down on the deck below. Some one elbowed past and went down.

It was their passenger, the peasant, the man of whom they had just been speaking a moment before.

Reaching the foot of the companion-way, he stopped.

CHAPTER V

VIS ET VIR

THE cannon was rushing back and forth on the deck. One might have supposed it to be the living chariot of the Apocalypse. The marine lantern swinging overhead added a dizzy shifting of light and shade to the picture. The form of the cannon disappeared in the violence of its course, and it looked now black in the light, now mysteriously white in the darkness.

It went on in its destructive work. It had already shattered four other guns and made two gaps in the side of the ship, fortunately above the water-line, but where the water would come in, in case of heavy weather. It rushed frantically against the framework; the strong timbers withstood the shock; the curved shape of the wood gave them great power of resistance; but they creaked beneath the blows of this huge club, beating on all sides at once, with a strange sort of ubiquity. The percussions of a grain of shot shaken in a bottle are not swifter or more senseless. The four wheels passed back and forth over the dead men, cutting them, carving them, slashing them, till the five corpses were a score of stumps rolling across the deck; the heads of the dead men seemed to cry out; streams of blood curled over the deck with the rolling of the vessel; the planks, damaged in several places, began to gape open. The whole ship was filled with the horrid noise and confusion.

The captain promptly recovered his presence of mind and ordered everything that could check and impede the cannon's mad course to be thrown through the hatchway down on the gun deck—mattresses, hammocks, spare sails, rolls of cordage, bags belonging to the crew, and bales of counterfeit assignats, of which the corvette carried a large quantity—a characteristic piece of English villany regarded as legitimate warfare.

But what could these rags do? As nobody dared to go below to dispose of them properly, they were reduced to lint in a few minutes.

There was just sea enough to make the accident as bad as possible. A tempest would have been desirable, for it might have upset the cannon, and with its four wheels once in the air there would be some hope of getting it under control. Meanwhile, the havoc increased.

There were splits and fractures in the masts, which are set into the framework of the keel and rise above the decks of ships like great, round pillars. The convulsive blows of the cannon had cracked the mizzen-mast, and had cut into the main-mast.

The battery was being ruined. Ten pieces out of thirty were disabled; the breeches in the side of the vessel were increasing, and the corvette was beginning to leak.

The old passenger, having gone down to the gun deck, stood like a man of stone at the foot of the steps. He cast a stern glance over this scene of devastation. He did not move. It seemed impossible to take a step forward. Every movement of the loose carronade threatened the ship's destruction. A few moments more and shipwreck would be inevitable.

They must perish or put a speedy end to the disaster; some course must be decided on; but what? What an opponent was this carronade! Something must be done to stop this terrible madness—to capture this lightning—to overthrow this thunderbolt.

Boisberthelot said to la Vieuville,—

"Do you believe in God, chevalier?"

La Vieuville replied: "Yes—no. Sometimes."

"During a tempest?"

"Yes, and in moments like this."

"God alone can save us from this," said Boisberthelot.

Everybody was silent, letting the carronade continue its horrible din.

Outside, the waves beating against the ship responded with their blows to the shocks of the cannon. It was like two hammers alternating.

Suddenly, in the midst of this inaccessible ring, where the escaped cannon was leaping, a man was seen to appear, with an iron bar in his hand. He was the author of the catastrophe, the captain of the gun, guilty of criminal carelessness, and the cause of the accident, the master of the carronade. Having done the mischief, he was anxious to repair it. He had seized the iron bar in one hand, a tiller-rope with a slip noose in the other, and jumped down the hatchway to the gun deck.

Then began an awful sight; a Titanic scene; the contest between gun and gunner; the battle of matter and intelligence, the duel between man and the inanimate.

The man stationed himself in a corner, and with bar and rope in his two hands, he leaned against one of the riders, braced himself on his legs, which seemed two steel posts, and livid, calm, tragic, as if rooted to the deck, he waited.

He waited for the cannon to pass by him.

The gunner knew his gun, and it seemed to him as if the gun ought to know him. He had lived long with it. How many times he had thrust his hand into its mouth! It was his own familiar monster. He began to speak to it as if it were his dog.

"Come!" he said. Perhaps he loved it.

He seemed to wish it to come to him.

But to come to him was to come upon him. And then he would be lost. How could he avoid being crushed? That was the question. All looked on in terror.

Not a breast breathed freely, unless perhaps that of the old man, who was alone in the battery with the two contestants, a stern witness.

He might be crushed himself by the cannon. He did not stir.

Beneath them the sea blindly directed the contest.

At the moment when the gunner, accepting this frightful hand-to-hand conflict, challenged the cannon, some chance rocking of the sea caused the carronade to remain for an instant motionless and as if stupefied. "Come, now!" said the man. It seemed to listen.

Suddenly it leaped towards him. The man dodged the blow.

The battle began. Battle unprecedented. Frailty struggling against the invulnerable. The gladiator of flesh attacking the beast of brass. On one side, brute force; on the other, a human soul.

All this was taking place in semi-darkness. It was like the shadowy vision of a miracle.

A soul—strange to say, one would have thought the cannon also had a soul; but a soul full of hatred and rage. This sightless thing seemed to have eyes. The monster appeared to lie in wait for the man. One would have at least believed that there was craft in this mass. It also chose its time. It was a strange, gigantic insect of metal, having or seeming to have the will of a demon. For a moment this colossal locust would beat against the low ceiling overhead, then it would come down on its four wheels like a tiger on its four paws, and begin to run at the man. He, supple, nimble, expert, writhed away like an adder from all these lightning movements. He avoided a collision, but the blows which he parried fell against the vessel, and continued their work of destruction.

An end of broken chain was left hanging to the carronade. This chain had in some strange way become twisted about the screw of the cascabel. One end of the chain was fastened to the gun-carriage. The other, left loose, whirled desperately about the cannon, making all its blows more dangerous.

The screw held it in a firm grip, adding a thong to a battering-ram, making a terrible whirlwind around the cannon, an iron lash in a brazen hand. This chain complicated the contest.

However, the man went on fighting. Occasionally, it was the man who attacked the cannon; he would creep along the side of the vessel, bar and rope in hand; and the cannon, as if it understood, and as though suspecting some snare, would flee away. The man, bent on victory, pursued it.

Such things cannot long continue. The cannon seemed to say to itself, all of a sudden, "Come, now! Make an end of it!" and it stopped. One felt that the crisis was at hand. The cannon, as if in suspense, seemed to have, or really had—for to all it was a living being—a ferocious malice prepense. It made a sudden, quick dash at the gunner. The gunner sprang out of the way, let it pass by, and cried out to it with a laugh, "Try it again!" The cannon, as if enraged, smashed a carronade on the port side; then, again seized by the invisible sling which controlled it, it was hurled to the starboard side at the man, who made his escape. Three carronades gave way under the blows of the cannon; then, as if blind and not knowing what more to do, it turned its back on the man, rolled from stern to bow, injured the stern and made a breach in the planking of the prow. The man took refuge at the foot of the steps, not far from the old man who was looking on. The gunner held his iron bar in rest. The cannon seemed to notice it, and without taking the trouble to turn around, slid back on the man, swift as the blow of an axe. The man, driven against the side of the ship, was lost. The whole crew cried out with horror.

But the old passenger, till this moment motionless, darted forth more quickly than any of this wildly swift rapidity. He seized a package of counterfeit assignats, and, at the risk of being crushed, succeeded in throwing it between the wheels of the carronade. This decisive and perilous movement could not have been made with more exactness and precision by a man trained in all the exercises described in Durosel's "Manual of Gun Practice at Sea."

The package had the effect of a clog. A pebble may stop a log, the branch of a tree turn aside an avalanche. The carronade stumbled. The gunner, taking advantage of this critical opportunity, plunged his iron bar between the spokes of one of the hind wheels. The cannon stopped. It leaned forward. The man using the bar as a lever, held it in equilibrium. The heavy mass was overthrown, with the crash of a falling bell, and the man, rushing with all his might, dripping with perspiration, passed the slipnoose around the bronze neck of the subdued monster.

It was ended. The man had conquered. The ant had control over the mastodon; the pigmy had taken the thunderbolt prisoner.

The mariners and sailors clapped their hands.

The whole crew rushed forward with cables and chains, and in an instant the cannon was secured.

The gunner saluted the passenger.

"Sir," he said, "you have saved my life."

The old man had resumed his impassive attitude, and made no reply.

CHAPTER VI

THE TWO SCALES OF THE BALANCE

THE man had conquered, but the cannon might be said to have conquered as well. Immediate shipwreck had been avoided, but the corvette was not saved. The damage to the vessel seemed beyond repair. There were five breaches in her sides, one, very large, in the bow; twenty of the thirty carronades lay useless in their frames. The one which had just been captured and chained again was disabled; the screw of the cascabel was sprung, and consequently levelling the gun made impossible. The battery was reduced to nine pieces. The ship was leaking. It was necessary to repair the damages at once, and to work the pumps.

The gun deck, now that one could look over it, was frightful to behold. The inside of an infuriated elephant's cage would not be more completely demolished.

However great might be the necessity of escaping observation, the necessity of immediate safety was still more imperative to the corvette. They had been obliged to light up the deck with lanterns hung here and there on the sides.

However, all the while this tragic play was going on, the crew were absorbed by a question of life and death, and they were wholly ignorant of what was taking place outside the vessel. The fog had grown thicker; the weather had changed; the wind had worked its pleasure with the ship; they were out of their course, with Jersey and Guernsey close at hand, farther to the south than they ought to have been, and in the midst of a heavy sea. Great billows kissed the gaping wounds of the vessel—kisses full of danger. The rocking of the sea threatened destruction. The breeze had become a gale. A squall, a tempest, perhaps, was brewing. It was impossible to see four waves ahead.

While the crew were hastily repairing the damages to the gun deck, stopping the leaks, and putting in place the guns which had been uninjured in the disaster, the old passenger had gone on deck again.

He stood with his back against the main-mast.

He had not noticed a proceeding which had taken place on the vessel. The Chevalier de la Vieuville had drawn up the marines in line on both sides of the main-mast, and at the sound of the boatswain's whistle the sailors formed in line, standing on the yards.

The Count de Boisberthelot approached the passenger.

Behind the captain walked a man, haggard, out of breath, his dress disordered, but still with a look of satisfaction on his face.

It was the gunner who had just shown himself so skilful in subduing monsters, and who had gained the mastery over the cannon.

The count gave the military salute to the old man in peasant's dress, and said to him,—

"General, there is the man."

The gunner remained standing, with downcast eyes, in military attitude.

The Count de Boisberthelot continued,—

"General, in consideration of what this man has done, do you not think there is something due him from his commander?"

"I think so," said the old man.

"Please give your orders," replied Boisberthelot.

"It is for you to give them, you are the captain."

"But you are the general," replied Boisberthelot.

The old man looked at the gunner.

"Come forward," he said.

The gunner approached.

The old man turned towards the Count de Boisberthelot, took off the cross of Saint-Louis from the captain's coat and fastened it on the gunner's jacket.

"Hurrah!" cried the sailors.

The marines presented arms.

And the old passenger pointing to the dazzled gunner, added,—

"Now, have this man shot."

Dismay succeeded the cheering.

Then in the midst of the death-like stillness, the old man raised his voice and said,—

"Carelessness has compromised this vessel. At this very hour, it is perhaps lost. To be at sea is to be in front of the enemy. A ship making a voyage is an army waging war. The tempest is concealed, but it is at hand. The whole sea is an ambuscade. Death is the penalty of any misdemeanor committed in the face of the enemy. No fault is reparable. Courage should be rewarded, and negligence punished."

These words fell one after another, slowly, solemnly, in a sort of inexorable metre, like the blows of an axe upon an oak.

And the man, looking at the soldiers, added,—

"Let it be done."

The man on whose jacket hung the shining cross of Saint-Louis, bowed his head.

At a signal from Count de Boisberthelot, two sailors went below and came back bringing the hammock-shroud; the chaplain, who since they sailed had been at prayer in the officers' quarters, accompanied the two sailors; a sergeant detached twelve marines from the line and arranged them in two files, six by six; the gunner, without uttering a word, placed himself between the two files. The chaplain, crucifix in hand, advanced and stood beside him. "March," said the sergeant,—the platoon marched with slow steps to the bow of the vessel. The two sailors, carrying the shroud, followed. A gloomy silence fell over the vessel. A hurricane howled in the distance.

A few moments later, a light flashed, a report sounded through the darkness, then all was still, and the sound of a body falling into the sea was heard.

The old passenger, still leaning against the mainmast, had crossed his arms, and was buried in thought.

Boisberthelot pointed to him with the forefinger of his left hand, and said to la Vieuville in a low voice,—

"La Vendée has a head."

CHAPTER VII

A VOYAGE IS A LOTTERY

But what was to become of the corvette?

The clouds which all night long had mingled with the waves, at last shut down over the water till the horizon had entirely disappeared, and the sea was, as it were, wrapped in a mantle. Nothing but fog. Always a perilous situation, even for a ship in seaworthy condition.

In addition to the fog there was a heavy swell.

The time had been profitably employed; the corvette had been lightened by throwing overboard everything that could be cleared away of the wreck made by the carronade—the disabled guns, the broken gun carriages, timbers twisted off or unnailed, pieces of broken wood and iron; the port-holes had been opened, and the corpses and human remains wrapped in tarpaulins, slid on planks into the sea.

The sea was beginning to be too rough for safety. Not that a tempest was exactly impending; on the contrary, the hurricane howling behind the horizon seemed to be decreasing in force, and the squall moving to the north; but the waves were still very high, indicating shallow water, and crippled as the vessel was, she had little power of resistance to the shocks of the great waves, and they might be death to her.

Gacquoil was at the helm, thoughtful.

Sea captains are wont to put the best face on the matter, in misfortune.

La Vieuville, who was naturally gay in times of disaster, addressed Gacquoil,—

"Well, pilot," he said, "the hurricane missed us. Its attempt to sneeze came to naught. We shall get out of it. We shall have wind, that is all." Gacquoil replied seriously,—

"A heavy wind makes a heavy sea."

Neither gay nor sad, such is the sailor. His reply had a meaning of alarm in it. For a leaking ship to be in a heavy sea is to fill rapidly. Gacquoil had emphasized this prophecy with a slight frown. Perhaps la Vieuville had spoken these almost jovial and trifling words a little too soon after the disaster of the gun and the gunner. There are things which bode ill luck when at sea. The ocean is secret; one never knows what she will do. It is necessary to be on the watch.

La Vieuville felt the need of becoming serious.

"Where are we, pilot?" he asked.

The pilot replied,—

"We are in the hands of God."

A pilot is a master; it is always best to let him have his own way, and often to have his own say.

Besides, this sort of man speaks but little. La Vieuville walked away.

La Vieuville had asked the pilot a question, the horizon gave the answer.

The sea suddenly burst into sight.

The fog which hung over the waves lifted, all the dark upheaving of the billows was spread out in a mysterious twilight as far as one's eyes could reach, and this is what was seen,—

The sky seemed to have a lid of clouds over it; but the clouds no longer touched the sea; in the east appeared a whiteness, which was the dawn of day; in the west, another fading whiteness, which was the setting of the moon. These two bright places opposite each other, made two narrow bands of pale light along the horizon, between the dark sea and the cloudy sky.

Against these two bright strips were outlined black figures, straight and motionless.

To the west, three high rocks, standing like Celtic cromlechs, stood out against the moonlit sky.

To the east, against the pale morning sky, rose eight sail ranged in order, and at regular distances, in a threatening line.

The three rocks were a reef; the eight sail, a squadron.

Behind the corvette was the Minquiers, a rock of ill repute; before her, the French fleet. In the west, destruction; in the east carnage; she was between a shipwreck and a battle.

For facing the reef, the corvette had a broken hull, disjointed rigging, shattered masts; for facing battle, she had a battery of which twenty-one guns out of thirty were disabled, and the best of her gunners were dead.

The dawn was very faint, and there was still a little night before them. This darkness might even last for some time, being caused principally by high, heavy, dense clouds, having the appearance of a solid arch.

The wind which had at last carried away the low fog was driving the vessel on the Minquiers.

In her excessively weak and disabled condition, she scarcely obeyed the helm, she rolled rather than sailed, and buffeted by the waves gave herself up to their mercy.

The tragic reef of the Minquiers was more rugged then than at the present time. Several of the towers of this citadel of destruction have been worn away by the incessant undermining of the sea; the shape of the reefs is constantly changing; waves are not called *lames** without reason; each tide is a saw-tooth. At this time, to touch on the Minquiers, was to perish.

As for the cruisers, they were the squadron from Cancale, afterwards made famous under the command of that Captain Duchesne whom Léquinio called "Father Duchêne."

The situation was critical. The corvette had unconsciously, while the cannon was loose, deviated from her course and sailed more towards Granville than towards Saint-Malo. Even if she had been manageable and able to carry sail, the Minquiers would have barred her return to Jersey, and the cruisers barred her from reaching France.

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* *Lame* in French means sword-blade as well as billow.

However, there was no tempest, but as the pilot had said there was a heavy sea. The sea tumbling beneath a rough wind, and over the rocky bottom, was wild.

The sea never tells at once what it means to do. There is everything in this abyss, even chicanery. One might almost say that the sea had designs; it advances and retreats, it proposes and retracts, it prepares a squall and then gives up its plan, it promises destruction and does not keep its word, it threatens the North, and strikes the South. All night the corvette "Claymore" had been in the fog, and feared a storm; the sea had just broken its promise, and in a cruel fashion; it had given warning of a tempest and brought out a reef. It was still shipwreck in another form.

To destruction on the rocks was added extermination in battle. One enemy supplemented the other.

La Vieuville cried out with a bold laugh,—

"Shipwreck on one hand, battle on the other. Both sides have thrown double fives."

CHAPTER VIII

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The corvette was now nothing but a wreck.

In the pale, scattered light, in the blackness of the clouds, in the confused shifting of the horizon, in the mysterious wrinkling of the waves, there was a sepulchral solemnity. Except the hostile whistling of the wind, everything was silent. The catastrophe was rising majestically from the depths. It seemed more like an apparition than an attack. Nothing moved on the rocks, nothing stirred on the ships. It was a strange, colossal silence. Were they dealing with reality? It was like a dream passing over the sea. In legends there are such visions: the corvette was, in a certain sense, between a demon reef and a phantom fleet.

The Count de Boisberthelot gave orders in an undertone to La Vieuville, who went down to the gun deck; then the captain seized his spyglass and came and stood at the stern near the pilot.

Gacquoil was bending all his efforts to keep the vessel out of the trough of the sea; for, if it were struck on the side by the wind and the waves, it would inevitably capsize.

"Pilot," said the captain, "where are we?"

"Off the Minquiers."

"On which side?"

"The worst."

"What bottom?"

"Small rocks."

"Can we bring the broadside to bear on them?"

"One can always die," said the pilot.

The captain directed his glance toward the west and examined the Minquiers; then he turned it toward the east and scrutinized the sails in sight.

The pilot continued, as if talking to himself,—

"It is the Minquiers. It serves as a resting-place for the laughing sea-mew and the great black-mantled gull, on their way from Holland."

In the meantime, the captain had counted the ships.

There really were eight vessels correctly disposed and raising their warlike profiles above the water. In the centre stood the lofty hull of a three-decker.

The captain questioned the pilot,—

"Do you know these ships?"

"Certainly!" replied Gacquoil.

"What are they?"

"It is the squadron."

"Of France?"

"Of the devil."

There was silence. The captain continued,—

"Are all the cruisers there?"

"Not all."

In fact, the second of April, Valazé had announced to the Convention that ten frigates and six ships of the line were cruising in the channel. The captain recollected this.

"In all," he said, "the squadron has sixteen vessels. "There are only eight here."

"The rest," said Gacquoil, "are spying along the coast farther down."

The captain, still looking through the glass, murmured: "A three-decker, two first-class frigates, and five of the second class."

"But I too made them out," grumbled Gacquoil.

"Good vessels," said the captain. "I have had some command of them myself."

"For my part," said Gacquoil, "I have seen them close to. I don't mistake one for another. I have their description in my head."

The captain handed his spyglass to the pilot.

"Pilot, can you make out the three-decker distinctly?"

"Yes, commander, it is the 'Côte d'Or.'"

"They have re-named her," said the captain. "She used to be the 'États de Bourgogne.' A new ship. Hundred and twenty-eight guns."

He took a note-book and pencil out of his pocket, and wrote in the former the number one hundred and twenty-eight.

He went on to say: "Pilot, what is the first sail to port?"

"It is the 'Experimenté.'"

"First-class frigate; fifty-two guns. She was fitted out at Brest two months ago."

The captain put the number fifty-two down in his note-book.

"Pilot," he continued, "what is the second sail to port?"

"The 'Dryade.'"

"First-class frigate; forty eighteen pounders. She has been in India. She has a fine naval record."

And he wrote down forty under the number fifty-two; then, raising his head, he said,—

"Now to starboard."

"Commander, these are all second-class frigates. There are five of them."

"What is the first, starting from the three-decker?"

"The 'Résolue.'"

"Thirty-two eighteen pounders. And the second?"

"The 'Richemont.'"

"Same strength. Next?"

"The 'Athée.'"*

"Queer name to go to sea with. Next?"

"The 'Calypso.'"

"What next?"

"The 'Preneuse.'"

"Five frigates of thirty-two guns each."

The captain wrote one hundred and sixty under the first numbers.

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* "Marine Archives." State of the fleet in March, 1793.

"Pilot," he said, "you recognize them well."

"You," replied Gacquoil, "know them well, captain. To recognize is one thing, to know is better."

The captain was looking intently at his note-book, and was adding up the numbers to himself.

"Hundred and twenty-eight, fifty-two, forty, hundred and sixty."

Just at this moment, la Vieuville came up on deck.

"Chevalier," the captain cried out to him, "we are in the face of three hundred and eighty cannon."

"So be it," said la Vieuville.

"You have just been inspecting, la Vieuville; just how many guns have we fit for use?"

"Nine."

"So be it," said Boisberthelot in his turn.

He took the spyglass from the pilot's hands and studied the horizon.

The eight still, black ships seemed motionless, but they were growing larger.

They were approaching imperceptibly.

La Vieuville gave the military salute.

"Commander," he said, "here is my report. I distrusted this corvette 'Claymore.' It is always annoying to embark suddenly on a vessel which does not know you, or that does not love you. English ship—traitor to the French—that slut of a carronade proved it. I have made the inspection. Anchors good. They are not of half-finished iron, but of forged bars soldered with the trip-hammer. The flukes are solid. Cables excellent, easy to pay out, of the regular length, hundred and twenty fathoms. Ammunition in abundance. Six gunners dead. A hundred and seventy-one rounds apiece.

"Because there are only nine guns left," murmured the captain.

Boisberthelot pointed his spyglass toward the horizon. The squadron was still slowly approaching.

There is one advantage about the carronades, three men are enough to work them, but they have one inconvenience, they do not carry as far nor aim as accurately as cannon. So it was necessary to let the squadron come within range of the carronades.

The captain gave his orders in an undertone. Silence reigned on the vessel. No signal to make ready for battle was given, but the order was executed all the same. The corvette was as unfit to fight against men as it was to battle with the waves. Every possible expedient was employed with this remnant of a war vessel. All the hawsers and spare cables were collected together at the gangway, near the tiller ropes, to use for strengthening the masts in case of necessity. The cockpit was prepared for the wounded. According to the naval custom of that day, the deck was barricaded, which was a safeguard against bullets but not against cannon balls. The ball-gauges were brought, although it was a little late to test their calibres; but so many accidents had not been foreseen. Each sailor received a cartridge-box, and placed a pair of pistols and a dirk in his belt. The hammocks were stowed away, the artillery pointed, the musketry prepared, the axes and grappling-irons put in their places, the stores of cartridges and bullets made ready, and the powder-magazine opened. Each man took his post. All this without a word spoken, and as if in a death chamber. It was swift and melancholy.

Then the corvette showed her broadside. She had six anchors, like a frigate. They cast all six of them; the cockbill at the bow, the hedge anchor at the stern, the flood anchor toward the open sea, the ebb anchor toward the rocks, the bower anchor to starboard, and the sheet anchor to port.

The nine carronades remaining in good condition were put into form, all nine of them on one side,—the side toward the enemy.

The squadron had no less silently completed their preparations. The eight vessels now formed a semicircle, of which the "Minquiers" made the chord. The "Claymore," enclosed in this semicircle, and pinioned by its own anchor besides, was backed by the reef; that is to say, by shipwreck.

It was like a pack of hounds around a wild boar, making no sound, but showing their teeth.

It seemed as if one side were waiting for the other.

The gunners of the "Claymore" were stationed by their guns.

Boisberthelot said to la Vieuville,—

"I think it would be well to open fire."

"A flirt's notion," said la Vieuville.

CHAPTER IX

SOME ONE ESCAPES

The passenger had not left the deck, he was watching everything, unmoved.

Boisberthelot approached him.

"Sir," he said, "the preparations are completed. Here we are cramped into our tomb, but we shall not yield. We are prisoners of the squadron or of the reef. To surrender to the enemy or founder on the rocks, we have no other alternative. Only one resource remains, death. To fight is better than shipwreck. I would rather be shot than drowned; if I must die, I prefer fire to water. But to die is our fate, not yours. You are the man chosen by the princes, you have a great mission, to direct the war in la Vendée. Without you, the monarchy may be lost; you must live then. It is our duty to remain here, yours to get away. Go, general,—leave the ship. I will give you a man and a boat. It is not impossible to reach the shore by a roundabout way. It is not yet day, the waves are high, the sea is dark, you will escape. There are times when to flee is to conquer."

With his stern head, the old man made a solemn sign of acquiescence.

The Count de Boisberthelot raised his voice,

"Soldiers and sailors," he cried.

All movement ceased, and from every part of the vessel faces were turned toward the captain.

He continued,—

"The man who is among us represents the king. He has been entrusted to our care, we must preserve him. He is necessary to the throne of France; for want of a prince he will be, at least so we hope, the chief of la Vendée. He is a great general. He was to reach France with us, he must reach it without us. To save his life is to save all."

"Aye, aye, aye!" cried all the voices of the crew.

The captain continued,—

"He, too, will incur serious dangers. To reach the shore is no easy matter. It ought to be a large boat to brave the high sea, but it must be a small one to escape the cruisers. It is important to land at some point which will be safe, and rather in the vicinity of Fougères than of Coutances. It needs a plucky sailor, a good swimmer, and a good oarsman; one who belongs to this country and knows the channel. It is still dark enough for the boat to get away from the vessel without being discovered. And then we shall have smoke which will help to conceal her. Her small size will take her through shallow water. Where the panther is caught, the weasel escapes. There is no help for us; there is for him. The oars will carry the boat away: the hostile ships will not see it; and besides, we will divert their attention meanwhile. Is it agreed?"

"Aye, aye, sir!" cried the crew.

"There is not a minute to lose," continued the captain, "is there a man willing to go?"

A sailor stepped out of the ranks in the darkness and said: "I am."

CHAPTER X

DOES HE ESCAPE?

A FEW moments later, one of those little boats called a "gig," especially designed for the captain's use, left the ship. In this boat there were two men, the old passenger in the stern, and the sailor who had volunteered to go, in the bow. The night was still very dark. The sailor, conforming to the captain's design, rowed vigorously in the direction of the Minquiers. No other way of escape was possible. Some provisions had been thrown in the bottom of the boat, a bag of biscuit, a smoked beef's tongue, and a cask of water.

As soon as the boat touched the water, la Vieuville, scoffer even in the face of destruction, leaned over the stern of the corvette and sneered out this farewell to the boat: "She is a good one for escape, and a fine one for drowning."

"Sir," said the pilot, "jest no more."

The boat quickly rowed off, and was almost immediately a good distance away from the corvette. Wind and waves seconded the oarsman, and the little craft was rapidly making her escape, rocking in the twilight, and concealed in the great furrows of the waves.

A strange, gloomy suspense hung over the sea.

Suddenly, in this vast, tumultuous ocean silence, rose a voice, which, increased by the speaking-trumpet, as by the brazen mask of ancient tragedy, seemed almost superhuman.

It was Captain Boisberthelot who was speaking,—

"Mariners of the king," he cried, "nail the white flag to the main-mast. We are going to see our last sunrise."

And a cannon shot left the corvette.

"Long live the king!" shouted the crew.

Then from the edge of the horizon was heard another cry, immense, distant, confused, but yet distinct,—

"Long live the Republic!"

And a noise like that of three hundred thunderbolts burst over the depths of the ocean.

The battle was beginning.

The sea was covered with fire and smoke.

Clouds of spray made by the shots falling into the water burst from the waves on every side.

The "Claymore" began to shower flame on the eight ships. At the same time, the whole squadron, grouped in a crescent around the "Claymore," opened fire from all its batteries. The horizon was all ablaze. It was like a volcano rising out of the sea. The wind twisted round and round the vast crimson of battle, in the midst of which the ships appeared and disappeared like spectres. In the foreground, the corvette stood out against this red background like a black skeleton.

From the top of the main-mast the white banner with its design of fleur-de-lis could be made out.

The two men in the boat were silent.

The triangular-shaped shoals of the Minquiers, a kind of submarine Trinacrium, are larger than the whole island of Jersey; the sea covers them; their culminating point is a plateau, rising above the highest tides, and separated from this towards the northeast are six mighty rocks ranged in a straight line, giving the effect of a great wall crumbling away here and there. The sound between the plateau and the six rocks is only navigable to craft drawing very little water.

Beyond this sound is the open sea.

The sailor who had taken charge of the boat entered the sound. In this way he put the Minquiers between the battle and the boat. He pulled skilfully through the narrow channel, avoiding the reef to port as well as to starboard; the rocks now concealed the battle. The glare on the horizon, and the furious din of the cannonading began to decrease as the distance became greater; but from the continuance of the reports it was evident that the corvette was still holding her own, and that she intended to exhaust her hundred and seventy-one broadsides to the very last. Soon the boat entered safe water, beyond the reef, beyond the battle, beyond the reach of bullets.

Gradually, the appearance of the sea became less gloomy, shimmering patches abruptly drowned in darkness increased in size, the foam burst into jets of light, pale gleams floated over the tops of the waves. Day dawned.

The boat was out of the reach of the enemy; but the most difficult task was yet to be accomplished. The boat was saved from the cannon shots, but not from shipwreck. It was in a high sea, a mere shell, without deck, without sail, without compass, with nothing to rely on but oars, in the face of the ocean and the storm, an atom at the mercy of monsters.

Then in this boundlessness, in this solitude, lifting a face made pallid by the dawn, the man in the bow of the boat fixed his gaze on the man in the stern and said to him,—

"I am the brother of the one you ordered shot."

BOOK THIRD

HALMALO

CHAPTER I

THE PERSUASIVE POWER OF HUMAN SPEECH*

THE old man slowly raised his head.

The sailor who had just spoken to him was about thirty years old. His face was sea-tanned, his eyes were strange; they had the shrewd glance of the sailor and the open frankness of the peasant. He held the oars firmly in his two hands. He looked gentle.

In his belt he had a dirk, two pistols, and a rosary.

"Who are you?" said the old man.

"I have just told you."

"What do you want of me?"

The man laid down his oars, folded his arms, and replied,—

"To kill you."

"As you like," said the old man.

The other raised his voice.

"Prepare."

"For what?"

"To die."

"Why?" asked the old man.

There was a silence. The sailor seemed confused for a moment by the question. He replied,—

"I say that I mean to kill you."

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* "La parole c'est le verbe,"—Speech is "the Word."

"And I ask why?"

The sailor's eyes flashed,—

"Because you have killed my brother."

The old man replied calmly,—

"I began by saving his life."

"That is true. You saved him first and then killed him."

"It was not I who killed him."

"Who did kill him, then?"

"His own fault."

The sailor stared with open mouth at the old man; then his eyebrows contracted again into a savage frown.

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

"My name is Halmalo, but I can kill you without your knowing my name."

At this moment the sun rose. A sunbeam struck the sailor full in the eyes and vividly lighted up his wild face. The old man regarded him attentively.

The cannonading which still continued, now began to be interrupted and agonizingly irregular. A dense smoke sank down over the horizon. The boat, no longer guided by the oarsman, was drifting to leeward.

The sailor drew one of the pistols out of his belt with his right hand and took his rosary in his left.

The old man rose and drew himself up to his full height.

"Do you believe in God?" he asked.

"Our Father who art in Heaven," replied the sailor, making the sign of the cross.

"Have you a mother?"

"Yes."

He made the sign of the cross a second time. Then he continued,—

"I have said it. I give you one minute, monseigneur." And he cocked his pistol.

"Why do you call me monseigneur?"

"Because you are a seigneur. That is evident."

"Have you a seigneur, yourself?"

"Yes, and a great one. Can one live without a seigneur?"

"Where is he?"

"I don't know. He has left the country. He is the Marquis de Lantenac, Viscount de Fontenay, prince in Brittany; he is the seigneur of the Sept-Forêts (seven forests). I have never seen him, but that doesn't prevent his being my master."

"And if you were to see him, would you obey him?"

"Certainly. I should be a pagan if I didn't obey him! One owes obedience first to God; then to the king, who stands in the place of God; and then to the seigneur, who represents the king. But that is not the question; you have killed my brother, and I must kill you."

The old man replied,—

"In the first place, I killed your brother; I did right."

The sailor tightened his grasp on the pistol.

"Now then."

"Go on," said the old man.

And calmly added, "Where is the priest?"

The sailor looked at him. "The priest?"

"Yes, the priest. I gave your brother a priest, you owe me a priest."

"I have none," said the sailor.

And he added: "Do they have priests in mid-ocean?"

The convulsive reports of the battle were growing more and more distant.

"Those who are dying over yonder have theirs," said the old man.

"It is true," muttered the sailor. "They have the chaplain."

The old man continued: "You will be the means of losing my soul, which is a serious matter."

The sailor bowed his head in thought.

"And in losing my soul," the old man went on to say, "you lose your own. Listen. I pity you. You may do what you wish. As for me, I did my duty just now; first, in saving your brother's life, and then in taking it from him; and I am doing my duty at this moment in trying to save your soul. Consider. It concerns you. Do you hear the cannon shots at this instant? There are men dying over there; there are desperate souls in mortal agony; there are husbands there who will nevermore see their wives; there are fathers who will nevermore see their children; brothers who, like yourself, will never see their brothers again. And whose fault is it? It is the fault of your own brother. You believe in God, do you not? Well, you know that God is suffering at this very moment; God suffers in his Christian son, the king of France, who is a child like the child Jesus, and who is imprisoned in the fortress of the Temple; God suffers in his church in Brittany; God suffers in his insulted cathedrals, in his desecrated Gospels, in his violated houses of prayer; God suffers in his assassinated priests. What did we come to do, we ourselves, in this vessel which is perishing at this very moment? We came to God's assistance. If your brother had been a good servant, if he had faithfully performed the duty of a wise and useful man, the accident would not have happened to the carronade, the corvette would not have been disabled; she would not have gone out of her course; she would not have fallen into the hands of this fleet of destruction, and we should be landing on the shores of France now, all of us, brave warriors and seamen as we are, sword in hand, waving the white banner, numerous, content, joyful, and we should be aiding the brave peasants of la Vendée in saving France, in saving the king, in doing God's work. That is what we came to do, that is what we should be doing, that is what I, the only one left, set out to do. But you are against it. In this contest of the godless against the priests, in this strife of regicides against the king, in this conflict of Satan against God, you are for Satan. Your brother was the first auxiliary of the devil, you are the second. He began, you are finishing it. You are for the regicides against the throne, you are for the godless against the church. You take God's last resource away from him. Because I shall not be there,—I who represent the king,—hamlets will go on burning, families weeping, priests bleeding, Brittany suffering, the king will remain in prison, and Jesus Christ in distress. And who will have done all this? You.

Go on; it is your affair. I counted on you to bring about the contrary. I am deceived. Ah, yes,—it is true,—you are right,—I have killed your brother. Your brother was courageous, I rewarded him; he was guilty, I punished him. He failed in his duty; I have not failed in mine. What I have done, I would do again. And I swear it, by the great Saint Anne d'Auray, who sees us now that, under similar circumstances to those in which I had your brother shot, I would shoot my own son. Now you are the master. Yes. I pity you. You have lied to your captain. You, a Christian, are faithless; you, a Breton, are without honor; I have been entrusted to your loyalty, and accepted by your treason; you give me dead to those to whom you promised me alive. Do you know whom you destroy here? It is yourself. You take my life from the king, and you give your eternity to the devil. Go on; commit your crime; it is well. You sell your part in Paradise cheaply. Because of you, the devil will conquer; because of you, the churches will fall; because of you, the pagans will continue to melt bells into cannon; they will shoot men with that which saved their souls. While I am speaking, the bell which rang for your baptism may be killing your mother. Go on; aid the devil. Don't stop. Yes, I condemned your brother; but know this, that I am an instrument of God. Ah! you judge the means God chooses! Are you going to take it on yourself to judge the thunderbolt which is in heaven? Wretched man, it will judge you. Take care what you do. Do you even know whether I am in a state of grace? No. Go on all the same. Do what you will. You are free to cast me into hell, and to cast yourself in with me. The damnation of us both is in your hands. The one responsible before God will be yourself. We are alone, face to face in the abyss. Go on,—make an end of it,—finish. I am old, and you are young; I am without arms, and you are armed; kill me."

While the old man, standing all the while, uttered these words in a voice above the noise of the sea, the undulations of the billows made him appear now in shadow, now in the light;

the sailor had grown livid; great drops of sweat fell from his brow; he trembled like a leaf; occasionally, he kissed his beads; when the old man had ended, he threw down his pistol and fell on his knees.

"Forgive me, monseigneur! Pardon me," he cried. "You speak like the good God. I am wrong. My brother did wrong. I will do everything to atone for his crime. Dispose of me. Order, and I will obey."

"I forgive you," said the old man.

CHAPTER II

A PEASANT'S MEMORY IS WORTH A CAPTAIN'S KNOWLEDGE

The provisions in the boat were not useless.

The two fugitives, obliged to take a very circuitous route, were thirty-six hours in reaching the shore. They passed a night on the sea; but the night was fine, with too much moon, however, for people who were trying to escape.

They were obliged first to keep away from France, and to reach the open sea towards Jersey.

They heard the final cannonade of the battered corvette, like the final roar of a lion killed by hunters in the woods. Then silence fell over the sea.

This corvette, the "Claymore," died in the same way as the "Vengeur," but glory has ignored it. He who fights against his country is never a hero.

Halmalo was a marvellous mariner. He worked miracles of skill and intelligence; this improvised journey amid the reefs, the billows, and the enemy's watch, was a masterpiece. The wind had decreased and the sea became smoother.

Halmalo avoided the Caux des Minquiers, passed the "Chaussée-aux-Bœufs," and, in order to rest a few hours, took shelter in the little creek situated to the north at low tide, and then rowing back to the south found a way to pass between Granville and the Chausey islands, without being detected either from the lookout at Chausey or at Granville. He entered the bay of Saint-Michael, a bold venture on account of the vicinity of Cancale, an anchorage for the cruisers.

On the evening of the second day, about an hour before sunset, he left Mount Saint-Michael behind him, and started to land on a beach which is always deserted, because its shifting sands are unsafe.

Fortunately, the tide was high.

Halmalo pushed the boat as far up as he could, tried the sand, found it firm, ran aground, and jumped ashore.

The old man stepped over the side of the boat after him, and examined the horizon.

"Monseigneur," said Halmalo, "we are at the mouth of the Couesnon. There is Beauvoir to starboard, and Huisnes to port. The bell tower in front of us is Ardevon."

The old man bent down over the boat, took a biscuit out of it and put it in his pocket, and said to Halmalo,—

"Take the rest."

Halmalo put what remained of the meat, with the rest of the biscuits, in a bag, and threw it over his shoulder. Having done this, he said,—

"Monseigneur, shall I lead the way or follow you?"

"Neither."

Halmalo looked in amazement at the old man.

The old man continued: "Halmalo, we are going to separate. It will not do for us to be together. There must be a thousand or only one."

He paused and drew out of one of his pockets a bow of green silk, very like a cockade, in the centre of which was embroidered a fleur-de-lis, in gold. He continued,—

"Can you read?"

"No."

"Very good. A man who can read is a nuisance. Have you a good memory?"

"Yes."

"Good. Listen, Halmalo. You must go to the right, and I will go to the left. I shall go in the direction of Fougères, and you must go towards Bazouges. Keep your bag, which gives you the appearance of a peasant. Conceal your weapons. Cut a stick for yourself in the hedges. Creep through the rye, which is high. Crawl behind the fences. Climb over the hedges, and go across the fields. Keep at a distance from those you meet. Avoid the roads and bridges. Do not enter Pontorson. Ah! you will have to cross the Couesnon. How will you do that?"

"Swim across."

"Good. And then there is a ford. Do you know where it is?"

"Between Ancey and Vieux-Viel."

"Good. You really belong to the country."

"But night is coming on. Where will monseigneur sleep?"

"I will take care of myself. But where will you sleep?"

"There are hollow trees. Before I was a sailor, I was a peasant."

"Throw away your sailor cap; it will betray you. You will easily find a *carapousse* somewhere."

"Oh, a tarpaulin,—I can find that anywhere. The first fisherman I see will sell me his."

"Good. Now, listen. You know the woods."

"Everywhere."

"All over the country?"

"From Noirmoutier to Laval."

"Do you know their names too?"

"I know the woods, I know their names, I know all about them."

"You will not forget anything?"

"Nothing."

"Good. Now, pay attention. How many leagues can you walk a day?"

"Ten, fifteen, eighteen, twenty, if necessary."

"It will be necessary. Don't lose a word of what I am going to tell you. You must go to the woods of Saint-Aubin."

"Near Lamballe?"

"Yes. On the edge of the ravine between Saint-Rieul, and Plédéliac there is a great chestnut-tree. You must stop there. You will see nobody."

"Which does not prove that nobody will be there, I know."

"You must make the call. Do you know how to make the call?"

Halmalo puffed out his cheeks, turned toward the sea, and the "to-who," of an owl was heard.

It seemed to come from the depths of night; it was a perfect imitation and uncanny.

"Good," said the old man. "You have it."

He handed the green silk bow to Halmalo.

"Here is my badge of command. Take it. It is important that nobody should know my name at present. But this bow will be enough. The fleur-de-lis was embroidered by Madame Royale, in the Temple prison."

Halmalo put one knee on the ground. He received the embroidered bow with trembling, and touched it to his lips; then, stopping, as if afraid to kiss it,—

"May I?" he asked.

"Yes, since you kiss your crucifix."

Halmalo kissed the fleur-de-lis.

"Get up," said the old man.

Halmalo rose and placed the knot in his breast. The old man continued: "Listen carefully to this. This is the order: 'Rise in revolt. No quarter.' Then on the edge of the woods of Saint-Aubin give the call. You must give it three times. The third time you will see a man come out of the ground."

"From a hole under the trees, I know."

"This man is Planchenault, also called Cœur-de-Roi. Show him this knot. He will understand. Then go, whatever way you can, to the woods of Astillé; you will find there a knock-kneed man, surnamed Mousqueton, and who shows pity to nobody. You will tell him that I love him, and that he is to stir up his parishes. You will then go to the woods of Couesbon, which is one league from Ploërmel. Make the call of the owl; a man will come out of a hole; it will be M. Thuault, seneschal of Ploërmel, who has belonged to what is called the Constitutional Assembly, but on the good side. Tell him to arm the castle of Couesbon, belonging to the Marquis de Guer, a refugee. Ravines, groves, uneven ground, good place. M. Thuault is an upright man, and a man of sense. Then go to Saint-Guen-les-Toits, and speak to Jean Chouan, who is, in my eyes, the real chief. Then go to the woods of Ville-Anglose, where you will see Guitter, called

Saint-Martin. Tell him to have an eye on a certain Courmesnil, son-in-law of old Goupil de Préfeln, and who leads the Jacobins of Argentan. Remember all this well. I write nothing, because nothing must be written. La Rouarie wrote out a list, but that lost everything. Then go to the woods of Rougefeu, where Miélette is, who leaps ravines, balancing himself on a long pole."

"That is called a leaping-pole."

"Do you know how to use it?"

"Should I be a Breton, and should I be a peasant, if I didn't? The leaping-pole is our friend. It makes our arms large and our legs long."

"That is to say, it makes the enemy small and the distance short. A good machine."

"Once with my *ferte* I held out against three excise men armed with sabers."

"When was that?"

"Ten years ago."

"Under the king?"

"Indeed it was."

"Did you fight under the king then?"

"Indeed I did."

"Against whom?"

"Faith, I don't know. I was a salt smuggler."

"Good."

"They called that fighting against the gabelles. Are the gabelles the same thing as the king?"

"Yes, no. But it isn't necessary for you to understand that."

"I beg pardon of monseigneur, for having asked monseigneur a question."

"Let us go on. Do you know la Tourgue?"

"Do I know la Tourgue! I come from there."

"How is that?"

"Because I am from Parigné."

"To be sure, la Tourgue adjoins Parigné."

"Do I know la Tourgue! The big round castle which belongs to my seigneur's family. There is a great iron door separating the new building from the old; it couldn't be burst open with a cannon. In the new building is the famous book about Saint Bartholomew, that people come to see out of curiosity. There are frogs in the grass. I played with the frogs there when I was a little boy. And the underground passage! I know. There is, perhaps, no other person but myself who knows it."

"What underground passage? I don't know what you mean."

"It was made for other days, for the times when la Tourgue was besieged. The people inside could escape by passing through a tunnel under the ground which comes out in the forest."

"To be sure there is a subterranean passage of this kind from the castle of 'la Jupellière,' and one from the castle of la Hunaudaye, and from the tower of Champéon; but there is nothing of the kind at la Tourgue."

"Yes, there is, monseigneur. I don't know the passages which monseigneur mentions. I know the one at la Tourgue, because I belong to that country. And besides, there is nobody but myself who knows this way. It is never spoken of. It has been forbidden, because this passage served Monsieur de Rohan, in times of war. My father knew the secret, and he showed it to me. I know the secret of entering it, and the secret of getting out. If I am in the forest I can go into the tower, and if I am in the tower I can go into the forest, without being seen. And when the enemy enters, there is nobody there. That is what la Tourgue is. Ah! I know it." The old man remained silent for a moment.

"You are evidently mistaken; if there were such a secret there, I should know it."

"Monseigneur, I am sure of it. There is a turning stone there."

"Oh, yes! You peasants believe in turning stones, in singing stones, in stones which go to drink in the night from a neighboring brook. All sheer nonsense."

"But as I have made it turn, the stone—"

"As others have heard them sing, comrade. La Tourgue is a strong, secure fortress, easy to defend; but he who counted on getting out through an underground passage would be a simpleton."

"But, monseigneur—"

The old man shrugged his shoulders.

"We have no time to lose. Let us talk business."

This peremptory tone put an end to Halmalo's persistence.

The old man continued,—

"Let us go on. Listen. From Rougefeu, go to the woods of Montchevrier, where Bénédicité is,—the chief of the Twelve. He is another good man. He says his *benedicite* while he is having people shot. In war, no sentimentality. From Montchevrier go to—"

He stopped short.

"I am forgetting the money."

He took from his pocket a purse and a pocketbook and placed them in Halmalo's hands.

"In this pocketbook there are thirty thousand francs in assignats, something like three livres, ten sous: to be sure the assignats are counterfeit, but the genuine ones are worth no more; and in this purse,—pay attention,—there are one hundred louis d'or. I give you all that I have. I do not need anything here. Besides, it is better that no money should be found on my person. To go back again. From Montchevrier go to Antrain, where you will see Monsieur de Frotté. From Antrain go to la Jupellière, where you will see Monsieur de Rochecotte; from la Jupellière to Noirieux, where you will see the Abbé Baudouin. Can you remember all that?"

"As well as my *Pater*."

"You will see Monsieur Dubois-Guy at Saint Brice-en-Cogle, M. de Turpin at Morannes, which is a fortified town, and the Prince de Talmont at Château Gonthier."

"Will a prince speak to me?"

"If I speak to you."

Halmalo took off his cap.

"Everybody will receive you well when they see Madame Royale's fleur-de-lis. Do not forget that you will have to go to places where there are *montagnards* and *patauds*. You must disguise yourself. That is easy enough. These republicans are so stupid, that with a blue blouse, a three-cornered hat and a tricolored cockade, you can go anywhere. There are no longer regiments, there are no longer uniforms, the companies are not numbered; everybody wears whatever rag he pleases. Go to Saint-Mhervé. There you will see Gaulier, called Grand-Pierre. Go to the district of Parmé, where the men blacken their faces. They put gravel and a double charge of powder in their guns in order to make more noise. They do well; but tell them above all to kill, to kill, to kill. Go to the camp of La Vache Noire, which is on a height, in the midst of the wood of La Charnie, then to the camp of L'Avoine, then to the camp of Vert, then to the camp of the Fourmis. Go to the Grand-Bordage, also called the Haut-du-Pré, which is inhabited by a widow whose daughter Treton, called the Englishman, married. The Grand-Bordage is in the parish of Quelaines. You must go to Épineux-le-Chevreuil, Sillé-le-Guillaume, Parannes, and all the men in every wood. You will find friends, and you must send them to the border of the upper and the lower Maine; see Jean Treton in the parish of Vaisges, Sans-Regret at Bignon, Chambord at Bonchamps, the Corbin brothers at Maisoncelles, and Petit-Sans-Peur at Saint-Jean-sur-Erve. He is the same as Bourdoiseau. Having done all this, and given the word of command 'Revolt! No quarter!' you must rejoin the grand army, the royal, catholic army, wherever it may be. You will see MM. d'Elbée, de Lescure, de la Rochejaquelein, all the chiefs who are still alive. Show them my badge of command. They will know what it means. You are only a sailor, but Cathelineau is only a carter. Tell them this from me: 'It is time to unite the two wars, the great and the small.' The great one makes more noise, the small one does more work. La Vendée is good, La Chouannerie is worse, and in civil war the worse is the better. The success of a war is measured by the amount of harm that it does."

He stopped speaking.

"Halmalo, I am telling you all this. You do not understand the words, but you understand the meaning. You won my confidence by the way you managed the boat; you do not know geometry, but you work marvels of skill on the water: he who can steer a boat, can pilot an insurrection; from the way you managed the intricacies of the sea, I am sure that you will be successful in carrying out all my commissions. To return. Tell all this to the chiefs, as near as you can, in your own words, but it will be all right,—

"'I prefer war in the forest to war in the open field; I do not intend to draw up a hundred thousand peasants in line before the shot of the Blues, and Monsieur Carnot's artillery; before the end of a month, I want five hundred thousand slaughterers in ambush in the woods. The republican army is my game. Poaching is waging war. I am the strategist of the thickets.' Well, there is another word that you will not understand; never mind, you will take in this: No quarter! and ambuscades everywhere! I want a guerilla warfare in Vendée. Add that the English are on our side. Let us place the republic between two fires. Europe will help us. Let us put an end to the Revolution. Kings will war against it with kingdoms, let us war against it with parishes. Say that. Do you understand?"

"Yes. We must have fire and blood everywhere."

"That's it."

"No quarter."

"Not for anybody. That's it."

"I am to go everywhere."

"And be on your guard. For in this country it is an easy matter to put a man to death."

"Death doesn't concern me. He who takes his first step may be wearing his last shoes."

"You are a brave man."

"And if I am asked the name of monseigneur?"

"It must not be known yet. Say that you do not know it and that will be the truth."

"Where shall I see monseigneur again?"

"Where I shall be."

"How shall I know it?"

"Because everybody will know it. Before the end of a week, I shall be talked about. I shall make examples; I shall avenge the king and religion, and you will know that it is I of whom they are talking."

"I understand."

"Forget nothing."

"Have no fear."

"Start now. God be with you. Go."

"I will do all that you have told me. I will go. I will speak the word. I will obey. I will command."

"Very well."

"And if I succeed——"

"I will make you chevalier de Saint-Louis."

"Like my brother; and if I do not succeed, you will have me shot?"

"Like your brother."

"Agreed, monseigneur."

The old man bowed his head and seemed lost in deep reverie. When he raised his eyes, he was alone. Halmalo was only a black speck on the horizon.

The sun had just set. The gulls and the hooded sea-mews were flocking in from the sea outside.

That sort of restlessness just before night was felt in the air; the tree-frogs croaked, the kingfishers flew up whistling from the pools of water, the gulls, the rooks, the carabins, made their evening commotion; the birds on the shore called to each other; but not a human sound. It was a profound solitude. Not a sail in the bay, not a peasant on the land. As far as the eye could reach, a desert expanse. The great sand-thistles rustled. The white sky of twilight cast a broad pale gleam over the beach. The ponds in the distance, scattered over the dark plain, looked like sheets of pewter spread out on the ground. The wind blew from the sea.

BOOK FOURTH

TELLMARCH

CHAPTER I

THE TOP OF THE DUNE

The old man waited till Halmalo had disappeared from sight, then he wrapped his cloak about him and set forth. He walked slowly, thoughtfully. He went toward Huisnes, while Halmalo had gone toward Beauvoir.

Behind him, an enormous black triangle, with a cathedral for tiara, and a fortress for breastplate, with its two great towers to the east, one round, the other square, which help the mountain to bear the weight of church and village, rose Mount Saint-Michael, which is to the ocean what Cheops is to the desert.

The quicksands in the bay of Saint-Michael's change their sand-dunes imperceptibly. At that time between Huisnes and Ardevon there was a very high dune, which has now entirely disappeared. This dune, levelled by an equinoctial storm, was exceptional in being ancient, and bearing on its summit a memorial stone erected in the twelfth century in commemoration of a council held at Avranches against the assassins of Saint Thomas of Canterbury. From the top of this dune, the whole country could be seen, and one could get his bearings.

The old man went toward this dune and ascended it. When he had reached the top, he stopped by the monument, sat down on one of the four posts which marked the corners, and began to examine the sort of map lying at his feet. He seemed to be trying to find a route in a country once familiar to him. In this vast landscape, indistinct in the twilight, there was nothing clear but the horizon, a black line on the white sky.

He could see the roofs of eleven towns and villages; he could make out several leagues away, the steeples along the coast, which are very high, in order to serve as landmarks to people at sea.

After a few moments, the old man seemed to have found in the dim twilight what he was looking for; his eyes fastened on an enclosure of trees, walls, and roofs, which could just be seen half way between the plain and the wood; this was a farm; he nodded his head with satisfaction as though saying to himself: "there it is," and he began to trace with his finger in the air a way through the hedges and fields. Now and then he examined a rather indistinct and shapeless object, moving about the principal roof of the farm, and he seemed to ask: "What is it?" It was colorless and confused because of the gloom; it was not a weathercock, because it fluttered, and there was no reason why it should be a flag.

He was weary: he was willing to rest on this spot where he was sitting, and he gave himself up to that sort of vague forgetfulness, which the first moment of repose brings to a tired man. There is an hour of the day which might be called noiseless, it is the quiet twilight hour. It was that hour now. He was enjoying it; he was looking about; he was listening; to what? tranquillity. Even the cruel have their sad moments. Suddenly this tranquillity was, not disturbed, but made more intense, by passing voices; they were the voices of women and children. There are sometimes such unexpected chimes of joy in the darkness. The group from which the voices came could not be seen on account of the thickets, but it was walking along at the foot of the dune, going toward the plain and the forest. These voices came up clear and fresh to the old man lost in thought; they were so near that he caught all they said.

A woman's voice said,—

"We must hurry along, Flécharde. Is this the way?"

"No, it is this way."

And the dialogue continued between the two voices, one loud, the other timid.

"What do you call this farm where we are living now?"

"L'Herbe-en-Pail."

"Are we far from it?"

"About a quarter of an hour."

"Let us hurry, so as to get our soup."

"We really are late."

"We must run. But your babies are tired. We are only two women, we can't carry three brats. And then, Flécharde, you are already carrying one. A regular lump of lead. You have weaned the greedy little thing, but you are always carrying her. A bad habit; oblige me by making her walk. Well! so much the worse, our soup will be cold!"

"Oh, what good shoes you have given me! I should think they were made for me."

"They are better than going barefooted."

"Hurry up now, René-Jean."

"He is the one who has kept us back. He has to speak to every little peasant girl he meets. That is because he is a man."

"To be sure, he is going on five years."

"Tell me, René-Jean, why did you speak to that little girl in the village?"

A child's voice,—that of a boy, replied,—

"Because I know her."

The woman added,—

"What, you know her?"

"Yes," replied the boy, "ever since she played with me this morning."

"Oh, how big he is!" exclaimed the woman, "we have only been in the country three days, he is no larger than my thumb, and he has a sweetheart already."

The voices grew fainter. All sound died away.

CHAPTER II

AURES HABET ET NON AUDIET

THE old man remained still. He was not thinking, hardly even dreaming. All about him was peace, drowsiness, confidence, solitude. It was still daylight on the dune, but almost night on the plain, and entirely so in the woods. The moon was rising in the east. A few stars pierced the pale blue of the zenith. This man, though full of tremendous cares, had plunged himself into the unspeakable tenderness of the infinite. He felt arising in him that obscure dawn of hope, if the word hope can be applied to the expectations of civil war. For the moment, it seemed to him that in escaping from the sea which had been so inexorable to him, and in touching land, all danger had vanished. No one knew his name, he was alone, lost to the enemy, without a trace left behind him, for the surface of the sea betrays nothing, concealed, ignored, not even suspected. He felt a strange, supreme composure. A little more and he would have been asleep.

It was the profound silence over the earth and in the heavens which had for this man, who had been a prey to tumult within and without, such a strange charm in this serene hour.

Nothing was heard except the wind blowing from the sea, but the wind is a continuous bass, which almost ceases to be a sound, it is so habitual.

Suddenly, he started to his feet.

His attention had just been abruptly awakened; he looked about the horizon. Something gave his eye a peculiar fixed expression.

He was looking at the steeple of Cormeray, directly in front of him beyond the plain. Indeed, something extraordinary was taking place in this steeple.

The outline of this steeple was clearly defined; the tower could be seen, surmounted by the spire, and between the tower and the spire, the belfry, square, without screen, and open on all four sides, according to the style of Breton bell towers.

But this belfry appeared alternately open and closed at regular intervals; its lofty window showed all white, then all black; the sky could be seen through, then it was seen no longer; it would be light, then eclipsed, and the opening and shutting followed each other a second apart, with the regularity of a hammer on an anvil.

This steeple in Cormeray was about two leagues away in front of the old man; just about as far to his right on the horizon, he saw the steeple of Baguer-Pican; the belfry of this steeple was opening and shutting in the same way as that in Cormeray.

He looked to his left at the steeple of Tanis; the belfry of the tower at Tanis was opening and shutting just the same as that at Baguer-Pican.

He looked at all the steeples on the horizon, one after another, to the left, the steeples of Courtils, of Précey, of Crollon, and of Croix-Avranchin; to the right, the steeples of Raz-sur-Couesnon, Mordrey, and the Pas; in front of him, the steeple of Pontorson. The belfries of all the steeples were alternately black and white.

What did it all mean?

It signified that all the bells were ringing.

To appear and disappear in this way they must be pulled furiously.

What was it then? evidently the tocsin.

They were sounding the alarm, sounding it frantically, sounding it everywhere, in all the belfries, in every parish, in every village, and not a sound reached his ears.

This was owing to the distance, which prevented the sounds from reaching so far, and because of the sea breeze blowing from the opposite direction, which carried all land noises far away from him.

All these bells madly calling from every side, and at the same time, silence; nothing could be more weird.

The old man looked and listened.

He did not hear the tocsin, but he saw it.

To see the tocsin—a strange sensation.

With whom are these bells angry?

Against whom is this tocsin sounding?

CHAPTER III

THE ADVANTAGE OF LARGE LETTERS

Certainly they were after somebody.

Who?

This man of steel shuddered.

He could not be the one. No one could have found out his coming; it was impossible for the acting representatives to have been informed already; he had hardly landed. The corvette had evidently foundered without a man escaping. And even in the corvette no one knew his name except Boisberthelot and la Vieuville.

The bells continued their wild play. He watched them and counted them mechanically, and his thoughts, driven from one conjecture to another, fluctuated between complete security and terrible uncertainty. However, after all, this tocsin could be explained in many ways, and he finally assured himself by repeating, "Surely, nobody knows of my arrival, and nobody knows my name."

For some moments there had been a slight sound above and behind him. This sound was like the rustling of a leaf on a wind-shaken tree. At first, he paid no heed to it; then, as the sound continued, one might say insisted, he at last turned around. It was a leaf to be sure, but a leaf of paper. The wind was trying to detach a large placard pasted to the monument above his head. This placard had been put up only a short time before, for it was still damp, and yielded to the wind, which had begun to play with it and to unfasten it. The old man had climbed up the dune from the opposite side, and had not seen this placard when he reached the top.

He mounted the post on which he had been sitting, and placed his hand on the corner of the placard which was flapping in the wind; the sky was cloudless, the twilights are long in June; the foot of the dune was dark, but the top was light; a part of the placard was printed in large letters, and there was still enough daylight to read them. He read this,—

"THE FRENCH REPUBLIC, ONE AND INDIVISIBLE.

"We, Prieur de la Marne, active representative of the people near the army of the coast of Cherbourg, order: The former Marquis de Lantenac, viscount de Fontenay, the so-called prince of Brittany, secretly landed on the coast of Granville, is declared an outlaw. A price is put on his head. The sum of sixty thousand livres will be paid to him who will deliver him up, dead or alive. This sum will not be paid in assignats, but in gold. A battalion of the army of the coast of Cherbourg will be sent immediately in pursuit of the former Marquis de Lantenac. The parishes are ordered to lend every assistance. Given at the town hall of Granville, this second day of June, 1793. Signed

"PRIEUR DE LA MARNE."

Underneath this name there was another signature in much smaller characters, which was not legible, because there was so little daylight left.

The old man pulled down his hat over his eyes, drew his cloak closely up under his chin, and went quickly down the dune. It was evidently unsafe to remain longer on this prominent summit.

He had possibly stayed there too long already; the top of the dune was the only point in the whole landscape which still remained visible.

When he reached the foot of the dune and was in darkness, he walked more slowly.

He started to go, as he had planned, towards the farm, probably having good reasons for thinking he would be safe in this direction.

Everything was deserted. It was an hour when there were no passers-by. He stopped behind a thicket, took off his cloak, turned the hairy side of his vest out, fastened his ragged cloak around his neck again by the cord, and started on his way.

It was bright moonlight.

He came to a place where two roads met and where there stood an old stone cross. On the pedestal of the cross, he noticed a white square, probably a placard like the one he had just read. He went nearer to it.

"Where are you going?" said a voice.

He turned around.

A man was there in the thicket, tall like himself, old like himself, like him with white hair, and with garments more ragged. Almost his double. This man was leaning on a long stick.

The man said again,—

"I ask where you are going?"

"In the first place, where am I?" he said, with an almost haughty calmness.

The man replied,—

"You are in the seigneurie of Tanis. I am its beggar, you are its seigneur."

"I?"

"Yes, you, sir, the Marquis de Lantenac."

CHAPTER IV

THE CAIMAND

The Marquis de Lantenac,—henceforth we will call him by his name,—replied gravely,—

"You are right. Deliver me up."

The man continued,—

"We are both at home here: you in the castle, I in the thicket."

"Make an end of it. Do your work. Give me up," said the marquis.

The man continued,—

"You were going to the farm of Herbe-en-Pail, were you not?"

"Yes."

"Don't go there."

"Why?"

"Because the Blues are there."

"How long since?"

"For three days."

"Did the inhabitants of the farm and the hamlet make any resistance?"

"No, they opened all the doors."

"Ah!" said the marquis.

The man pointed to the roof of the farmhouse, which could be seen some distance away, above the trees.

"Do you see the roof, monsieur le marquis?"

"Yes."

"Do you see what is above it?"

"Floating?"

"Yes."

"It is a flag."

"The Tricolor," said the man.

This was the object which had already attracted the marquis's attention when he was on the top of the dune.

"Are they not sounding the tocsin?" asked the marquis.

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Evidently on your account."

"But it can't be heard."

"The wind prevents it."

The man continued, "Have you seen your placard?"

"Yes."

"They are searching for you;" and glancing towards the farm, he added, "There is a half battalion there."

"Of republicans?"

"Parisians."

"Well," said the marquis, "let us go on."

And he took a step in the direction of the farm.

The man seized him by the arm.

"Don't go there."

"And where would you have me go?"

"Home with me."

The marquis looked at the beggar.

"Listen, marquis, my home is not fine, but it is safe. A hut lower than a cave. For a floor, a bed of seaweed; for ceiling, a roof of branches and grass. Come. You would be shot at the farm. With me you will go to sleep. You must be tired; and to-morrow morning the Blues will march away, and you can go wherever you please."

The marquis scrutinized the man.

"On which side are you?" asked the marquis. "Are you republican? Are you a royalist?"

"I am poor."

"Neither royalist nor republican?"

"I think not."

"Are you for or against the king?"

"I have no time for that."

"What do you think of what is going on?"

"I have nothing to live on."

"Why do you come to my assistance?"

"I saw that you were an outlaw. What is the law? So one can be out of it. I don't understand. As for me, am I in the law? am I out of the law? I know nothing about it. To die of hunger, is that to be in the law?"

"How long have you been dying of hunger?"

"All my life."

"And you wish to save me?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because I said, 'There is another poorer than I. I have the right to breathe, he has not.'"

"It is true. And you would save me?"

"Surely. We are brothers, monseigneur. I ask for bread, you ask for life. We are both beggars."

"But do you know that a price has been put on my head?"

"Yes."

"How did you know it?"

"I read the placard."

"You know how to read?"

"Yes, and to write, too. Why should I be a brute?"

"Then, since you know how to read, and since you have read the placard, you know that the man who betrays me will win sixty thousand francs."

"I know it."

"Not in assignats."

"Yes, I know, in gold."

"Do you know that sixty thousand francs is a fortune?"

"Yes."

"And that the one who will deliver me up will make his fortune?"

"Well, what next?"

"His fortune!"

"That is just what I thought. When I saw you, I said to myself, 'Only think of it, the one who betrays this very man, will win sixty thousand francs and make his fortune! Let us hasten to conceal him.' "

The marquis followed the poor man. They entered a thicket. Here was the beggar's den. It was a sort of room that a grand old oak had let this man have in its heart. It was hollowed out under its roots, and covered with its branches. It was dark, low, concealed, out of sight. There was room for two people in it.

"I foresaw that I was going to have a guest," said the beggar.

This sort of underground dwelling, more common than one would suppose in Brittany, is called in the language of the peasants, *"carnichot."* This name also applies to hiding-places made inside of thick walls.

It was furnished with several pots, a pallet of straw or seaweed, washed and dried, with a thick covering of kersey; some tallow dips, with a tinder-box, and hollow twigs of furze for matches.

They bent down, crept along a little way, entered the room, cut up into odd compartments by the great tree-roots, and sat down on a heap of seaweed, which formed the bed. The space between two roots, where they entered, and which served as a doorway, let in some light. Night had come, but the eye adjusts itself to darkness, and there is always a trace of light to be found in darkness. A reflection of moonlight threw a mysterious pallor over the entrance. In a corner there was a jug of water, a loaf of buckwheat bread, and some chestnuts.

"Let us have some supper," said the poor man.

They shared the chestnuts; the marquis added his piece of biscuit: they bit the same loaf of buckwheat, and drank from the jug one after the other.

They talked together.

The marquis began to question the man.

"So, whether anything happens or not, it is all the same to you?"

"Very nearly. You are seigneurs, you people. These are your affairs."

"But what happens—"

"Happens beyond our reach."

The beggar added, "And then there are other things happening still farther away from us, the sun rising, the moon waxing and waning; it is with such things that I am concerned."

He took a sip from the jug, and said,—

"What good, fresh water!" Then he added, "How do you like this water, monseigneur?"

"What is your name?" said the marquis.

"My name is Tellmarch, and they call me the *caimand.*"

"I know. *Caimand* is one of your provincial words."

"Which means beggar. They have named me besides, the old man." He continued: "For forty years I have been called the old man."

"Forty years! Why, you are young."

"I never was young. You are always young, monsieur le marquis. You have the legs of twenty, you climb up the great dune; as for me I can hardly walk at all; a quarter of a league tires me out. Still, we are of the same age; but the rich have an advantage over us, for they eat every day. Eating preserves one."

After a silence, the beggar continued: "Poverty and riches—it is a troublesome problem. That is the cause of calamities. At least, so it seems to me. The poor want to be rich, the rich do not want to be poor. I believe that is at the bottom of it. I don't mix myself up with it. Events are events. I am neither for the debtor nor for the creditor. I know that there is a debt and that it is being paid. That is all. I should have liked it better if they had not killed the king, but it would be difficult for me to tell why. In reply to that they tell me: But once they used to hang men to trees for nothing at all. I myself have seen a man with a wife and seven children hanged for shooting one of the king's deer. There are two sides to be considered."

He was silent again, then added,—

"You understand. I don't know exactly, people come and go, and things happen, but as for me, I am up among the stars."

Tellmarch stopped again to think, then continued,—

"I am a little of a bone-setter, a little of a doctor. I am familiar with herbs, and have some experience with plants; the peasants see me in a brown study and that makes me pass for a sorcerer. Because I dream, they think I know."

"You belong to this country?" asked the marquis.

"I have never been out of it."

"Do you know me?"

"Certainly. The last time I saw you was when you passed through here, two years ago. You went from here to England. Just now I noticed a man on the top of the dune. A tall man. Tall men are rare; Brittany is a country of small men. I looked carefully. I had read the placard. I said wait! And when you came down, it was moonlight and I recognized you."

"But I do not know you."

"You have seen me, but you never looked at me."

And Tellmarch, the *caimand,* added,—

"I used to see you. A beggar does not look with the same eyes as the passers-by."

"Have I ever met you before?"

"Often, for I am your own beggar. I was the poor man at the foot of the road to your castle. You used to give me alms, sometimes; but the giver pays no attention, the receiver watches and observes. A beggar is a spy. But as for me, though often sad, I try not to be a malicious spy. I held out my hand, you saw the hand only, and you dropped in it the alms which I needed in the morning to keep me from dying of hunger at night. I have sometimes been twenty-four hours without eating. Sometimes, a sou saved my life. I owe life to you. I give it back to you."

"'Tis true, you are saving me."

"Yes, I am saving you, monseigneur."

And Tellmarch's voice grew serious.

"On one condition."

"What is that?"

"That you do not come here to work evil."

"I come here to do good," said the marquis.

"Let us go to sleep," said the beggar.

They lay down side by side on the bed of seaweed. The beggar fell asleep immediately. The marquis, although very tired, remained absorbed in thought for a time, then he looked at the poor man in the darkness, and lay down again. Lying on this pallet was like lying on the ground; he took advantage of it to put his ear to the earth and listen. There was a dull humming underground; sound is known to be propagated under the earth; he heard the noise of the bells.

The tocsin was still sounding.

The marquis fell asleep.

CHAPTER V

SIGNED "GAUVAIN"

WHEN he awoke it was day.

The beggar was up, not in the hut, for there was not room to stand upright there, but outside near the entrance. He was leaning on his stick. The sun shone on his face.

"Monseigneur," said Tellmarch, "it has just struck four from the belfry of Tanis. I heard the four strokes. So the wind has changed, it is blowing off shore; I hear no other sound, so the tocsin has ceased. Everything is quiet at the farm and in the hamlet of Herbe-en-Pail. The Blues are either asleep, or have gone. The worst of the danger is over; it would be wise for us to separate. It is my time for going away."

He indicated a point on the horizon.

"I am going that way."

He pointed in the opposite direction.

"You must go this way."

The beggar saluted the marquis solemnly.

Pointing to what was left of the supper, he added: "Carry the chestnuts with you, if you are hungry."

A moment later he had disappeared among the trees.

The marquis rose and went in the direction Tellmarch had pointed out to him.

It was the charming morning hour called in the old Norman peasant tongue, the "piperette du jour,"—the song sparrow of the day. The finches and hedge sparrows were chirping. The marquis followed the path by which they had come the night before. He left the thicket and was again at the parting of the roads marked by the stone cross. The placard was still there, white and almost gay in the light of the rising sun. He remembered that there was something at the bottom of the placard which he could not read the evening before because the letters were so small, and there was so little light. He went up to the pedestal of the cross. The placard ended, just under the signature, "PRIEUR DE LA MARNE" with these two lines in small characters: "The identity of the former Marquis de Lantenac verified, he will be immediately executed. Signed: Chief of battalion, commanding the reconnoitring column, GAUVAIN."

"Gauvain!" said the marquis.

He stopped in deep amazement, his eyes fastened on the placard.

"Gauvain!" he repeated.

He started off, turned back, looked at the cross, retraced his steps and read the placard once more.

Then he walked slowly away. If any one had been near him, they would have heard him murmur in an undertone: "Gauvain!"

At the foot of the cross road where he was stealing along, the roofs of the farm, which lay behind him to his left, could not be seen. He was skirting a steep height, all covered with furze in bloom, of the species called long-thorn. The summit of this height was one of those points of land called in the country a *hure* or head. At the foot of the height the view was abruptly lost in the trees. The foliage was, as it were, soaked in light. All nature rejoices deeply in the morning.

Suddenly, the landscape became terrible. It was like an ambuscade bursting forth. A strange deluge of wild cries and gunshots fell over the fields and woods full of sunlight, and in the direction of the farm a great smoke pierced by bright flames arose, as if the hamlet and the farm were nothing but a bundle of straw burning. It was sudden and fearful, an abrupt change from peace to madness, a burst of hell in the clear dawn, a horror without warning. They were fighting near Herbe-en-Pail. The marquis stopped.

There is no one who, under similar circumstances, would not have felt that curiosity is stronger than danger; one must know, if he has to die in consequence. He climbed up the height, at the foot of which passed the hollow path. From there he might be seen, but he could see. In a few moments he was on the "hure." He looked about him.

To be sure there was firing and a fire. The noise could be heard, the fire could be seen. The farm was the centre of some strange calamity. What was it? Was the farm of Herbe-en-Pail attacked? And by whom? Was it a battle? Was it not rather a military execution? The Blues, as they had been ordered by a revolutionary decree, very often punished refractory farms and villages by setting them on fire; to make an example of them they burned every farm and every hamlet which had not felled the trees prescribed by law, and which had not opened passages through the thickets for the republican cavalry. This had been notably carried out, and very recently, in the parish of Bourgon, near Ernée. Was Herbe-en-Pail in the same condition? It was evident that none of the strategic openings ordered by the decree had been made in the thickets and hedges of Tanis and Herbe-en-Pail. Was this the punishment? Had the advance guard now occupying the farm received orders? Was not this advance-guard a part of one of those investigating columns called *colonnes infernales,* or columns of hell?

The height on the summit of which the marquis had taken up his place of observation, was surrounded on every side by a very wild, dense thicket. This thicket, called the grove of Herbe-en-Pail, but which had the proportions of a wood, extended as far as the farm, and hid in its depths, like all Breton thickets, a network of ravines, paths, and byways, labyrinths where the republican armies would lose themselves.

The execution, if it were an execution, must have been cruel, for it was short. Like all brutal things it was soon over. The atrocity of civil warfare admits of such cruelties. While the marquis, multiplying his conjectures, hesitating to go down, hesitating to remain, was listening and watching, this din of extermination ceased, or rather was dispersed. The marquis was aware of something in the thicket like the scattering of an infuriated and joyous troop. There was a frightful swarming under the trees. They were rushing from the farm into the woods. Drums were beating. No more firing was heard. It was now like a battue; they seemed to be hunting about, pursuing, tracking; it was evident that they were in search of some one: the noise was widespread and deep; it was a medley of words of anger and of triumph, a clamorous uproar; nothing could be distinguished; suddenly, as a feature stands out against smoke, something became articulate and certain in this tumult. It was a name,—a name repeated by a thousand voices, and the marquis heard clearly this cry,—

"Lantenac! Lantenac! the Marquis de Lantenac!"

He was the one for whom they were searching.

CHAPTER VI

THE SUDDEN CHANGES OF CIVIL WAR

SUDDENLY all around him, and on every side at once, the thicket was filled with guns, bayonets, and swords, a tricolored flag arose in the shade, the cry of "Lantenac!" burst on his ear, and at his feet through the brambles and branches passionate faces appeared. The marquis was alone, standing on a summit which could be seen from every point of the wood. He could hardly see those who were crying his name, but all could see him. If there were a thousand guns in the woods, he was a target for them. He could distinguish nothing in the thicket but eager eyes fixed on him.

He took off his hat, turned up the rim, broke a long, dry thorn from a furze-bush, drew a white cockade from his pocket, fastened the brim and the cockade back to the crown of the hat with the thorn, and putting the hat on his head again, so that the raised rim showed his forehead and his cockade, he said in a loud voice, speaking to the whole forest at once,—

"I am the man you are seeking. I am the Marquis de Lantenac, Viscount de Fontenay, Prince of Brittany, Lieutenant-general of the armies of the king. Make an end of it. Aim! Fire!"

And opening his goat-skin vest, he exposed his bare breast.

He dropped his eyes, looking for the pointed guns, and saw himself surrounded with men on their knees.

A great cry arose: "Long live Lantenac! Long live monseigneur! Long live the general!"

At the same time, hats were thrown in the air, swords flourished joyfully, and throughout the whole thicket sticks were seen rising with brown woolen caps whirling on the end of them.

It was a Vendean band which surrounded him. This band fell on their knees when they saw him.

A legend runs that in the old Thuringian forests there used to be strange beings, a race of giants, more and less than men, who were considered by the Romans as horrible beasts, and by the Germans as divine incarnations, and who, according to the occasion, ran the risk of being exterminated or worshipped.

The marquis felt something the same as one of these beings must have done, when, expecting to be treated as a monster, he was straightway worshipped as a god.

All these eyes, full of a terrible fire, were fixed on the marquis with a sort of savage love.

This tumultuous crowd was armed with guns, swords, scythes, poles, sticks; all had large felt hats, or brown caps, with white cockades, a profusion of rosaries and amulets, wide breeches open at the knee, sheepskin jackets, leather gaiters, bare legs, long hair, and while some looked fierce, all had a frank expression in their faces.

A young, handsome-looking man made his way through the kneeling soldiers, and with long strides went up towards the marquis. Like the peasants, this man wore a felt hat with turned-up rim and a white cockade, and a sheepskin jacket, but his hands were white and his linen fine, and he wore outside his vest a scarf of white silk, from which hung a sword with a gold hilt.

When he reached the hure, he threw down his rat, unfastened his scarf, knelt on one knee, presented scarf and sword to the marquis, and said,—

"We were searching for you, and we have found you. Here is the sword of command. These men are now yours. I was their commander, I am promoted to a higher rank, I am your soldier. Accept our homage, monseigneur. Give your orders, general."

Then he made a sign, and the men bearing the tricolored flag, came out of the woods. They climbed up to where the marquis stood, and laid down the flag at his feet. It was the flag that he had just caught a glimpse of through the trees.

"General," said the young man who had presented him with the sword and scarf, "this is the flag we have just taken from the Blues, who were at the farm of Herbe-en-Pail. Monseigneur, my name is Gavard. I belonged to the Marquis de la Rouaire."

"Very good," said the marquis.

And, calm and serious, he put on the scarf. Then he drew the sword, and waving it above his head, he said,—

"Stand, and long live the king!"

All rose to their feet. And through the depths of the wood sounded a wild, triumphant shout: "Long live the king! Long live our marquis! Long live Lantenac!"

The marquis turned toward Gavard.

"How many are you?"

"Seven thousand."

As they were going down from the height, and while the peasants tore away the underbrush before the steps of the Marquis de Lantenac, Gavard continued,—

"Monseigneur, nothing could be more simple. Everything is explained by a word. The people were only waiting for a spark. The notice posted up by the republicans, in making known your presence, has roused the country to insurrection for the king. Besides, we had been secretly informed by the Mayor of Granville, who is one of our men, and the same who saved the Abbé Ollivier. Last night they sounded the tocsin."

"For whom?"

"For you."

"Ah!" said the marquis.

"And here we are," added Gavard.

"And there are seven thousand of you?"

"To-day. To-morrow there will be fifteen thousand. It is the contingent of the country. When Monsieur Henri de la Rochejaquelin set out to join the Catholic army, they sounded the tocsin, and in one night six parishes, Isernay, Corqueux, Échaubroignes, Aubiers, Saint-Aubin, and Nueil, raised ten thousand men for him. They had no ammunition, but they found sixty pounds of blasting-powder at a quarry-master's, and Monsieur de la Rochejaquelin set out with that. We were quite sure that you would be somewhere in this forest, and we were searching for you."

"And you attacked the Blues at the farm of Herbe-en-Pail?"

"The wind had prevented their hearing the tocsin. They suspected nothing; the people of the hamlet, who are a set of louts, had received them well. This morning we invested the farm, the Blues were asleep, and by a turn of the hand the thing was done. I have a horse. Will you condescend to accept it, general?"

"Yes."

A peasant led forward a white horse in military harness. The marquis, without making use of the assistance Gavard offered him, mounted the horse.

"Hurrah!" cried the peasants, for English cries are very much employed on the Breton coast, which has constant intercourse with the Channel Islands.

Gavard gave the military salute, and asked,—

"Where will your headquarters be, monseigneur?"

"At first in the forest of Fougères."

"That is one of your seven forests, marquis."

"We must have a priest."

"We have one."

"Who?"

"The vicar of La Chapelle-Erbrée."

"I know him. He has made the voyage to Jersey."

A priest stepped out of the ranks and said,—

"Three times."

The marquis turned his head.

"Good-morning, vicar. You are going to have some business."

"So much the better, marquis."

"You will have many to confess. Those who wish it. We force nobody."

"Monsieur le Marquis," said the priest, "Gaston, at Guémenée forced the republicans to confession."

"He is a wig-maker," said the marquis; "but death should be free."

Gavard, who had gone to give some orders, returned,—

"General, I await your command."

"At first the rendezvous will be in the forest of Fougères. Let the men disperse and go there."

"The order is given."

"Didn't you tell me that the people of Herbe-en-Pail had received the Blues well?"

"Yes, general."

"Did you burn the farm?"

"Yes."

"Did you burn the hamlet?"

"No."

"Burn it."

"The Blues tried to defend themselves, but they were a hundred and fifty, and we were seven thousand."

"Who are these Blues?"

"Santerre's Blues."

"Who ordered the drums to beat while the king's head was being cut off? So it is a Parisian battalion?"

"A half battalion."

"What is it called?"

"General, 'Battalion of Bonnet-Rouge' is on their flag."

"Wild beasts."

"What is to be done with the wounded?"

"Put an end to them."

"What is to be done with the prisoners?"

"Shoot them."

"There are about eighty."

"Shoot them all."

"There are two women."

"Shoot them also."

"There are three children."

"Bring them here. We will see what can be done with them."

And the marquis started off on his horse.

CHAPTER VII

NO MERCY: THE WATCHWORD OF THE COMMUNE. NO QUARTER: THE WATCHWORD OF THE PRINCES

WHILE this was taking place near Tanis, the beggar was travelling toward Crollan. He penetrated the ravines, under vast hollow bowers, inattentive to everything, attentive to nothing, as he had said himself, dreaming rather than thinking, for thoughts have an aim, but dreams have none, wandering, roving, stopping, eating here and there a bunch of wild sorrel, drinking from the springs, occasionally raising his head to catch distant sounds, then returning to the dazzling fascination of nature, sunning his rags, perhaps hearing the noise of men, but listening to the songs of the birds.

He was old and slow; he could not go far; as he had said to the Marquis de Lantenac, a quarter of a league wearied him; he took a short cut toward la Croix-Avranchin, and it was evening when he returned.

A little way beyond Macey, the path that he followed led over a sort of culminating point free from trees, from which one could see a long distance, and follow the whole horizon from the west to the sea.

His attention was attracted by smoke.

Nothing is more gentle than smoke, nothing more frightful. There is the smoke of peace, and the smoke of villainy. Smoke, the density and color of smoke, it makes all the difference between peace and war, between brotherhood and hatred, between hospitality and the grave, between life and death. Smoke rising through the trees may signify the most charming thing in the world, the hearth; or the most terrible, a conflagration; and all the happiness, as well as all the unhappiness of man, is sometimes centred in the very thing scattered to the wind.

The smoke that Tellmarch saw was alarming.

It was black, with now and then a sudden gleam of redness, as if the coals from which it came were irregular and had begun to die out, and it rose above Herbe-en-Pail.

Tellmarch hastened towards this smoke. He was very weary, but he was anxious to know what it was. He reached the top of a hill adjoining the hamlet and the farm.

Neither hamlet nor farm was there.

A heap of ruins was burning, and this was Herbe-en-Pail.

It is a more impressive sight to see a hut burn than a palace. A hut on fire is lamentable. Devastation falling on misery, a vulture attacking an earthworm, there is a strange contrariety about it that oppresses the heart.

According to the Bible story, the sight of a conflagration changes a human being to a statue; Tellmarch was for a moment such a statue. The spectacle under his eyes made him immovable. This destruction was going on in silence. Not a cry arose; not a human sigh mingled with the smoke; this furnace was struggling to devour this village, and succeeding, without a sound save the snapping of the timbers and the crackling of the thatch. Occasionally, the smoke cleared away, the roofs fallen in, displayed the yawning rooms, the brazier showed its rubies, scarlet rags and poor old crimson-colored furniture appeared in these vermilion interiors, and Tellmarch was dazed with the viciousness of the disaster.

Some trees belonging to a chestnut-grove next the houses had taken fire and were blazing up.

He listened, trying to catch the sound of a voice, an appeal, a cry; nothing stirred except the flames; all was silent except the fire. Had all of them fled?

Where was that group of people living and working at Herbe-en-Pail? What had become of this little people?

Tellmarch came down from the hill.

A funeral enigma confronted him. He approached it slowly and with a steady gaze. He advanced toward this ruin with the slowness of a shadow; he felt like a phantom in this tomb.

He reached what had been the door of the farmhouse; and he looked into the court, which now was without walls and was confounded with the hamlet grouped around it.

What he had seen before was nothing. He had only seen the terrible as yet,—the horrible appeared to him now.

In the middle of the court, there was a black heap, vaguely outlined on one side by flames, on the other by the moon; this heap was a pile of men; these men were dead.

All around this heap there was a great pool, smoking a little; the fire was reflected in this pool; but it had no need of fire to make it red; it was blood.

Tellmarch approached it. He began to examine, one after another, these prostrate bodies; all were corpses.

The moon was shining; the fire too.

These corpses were soldiers. All were barefooted; their shoes had been taken off; their weapons had been taken away, too; they still had on their uniforms, which were blue. Here and there, in the heap of limbs and heads, could be seen hats full of holes with tricolored cockades. They were republicans. They were the Parisians who, the day before, were there all alive, keeping garrison in the farm of Herbe-en-Pail. These men had been executed; this was proved by the symmetrical position of the bodies; they had been struck down on the spot, and with care. They were all dead. Not a death-rattle sounded from the heap.

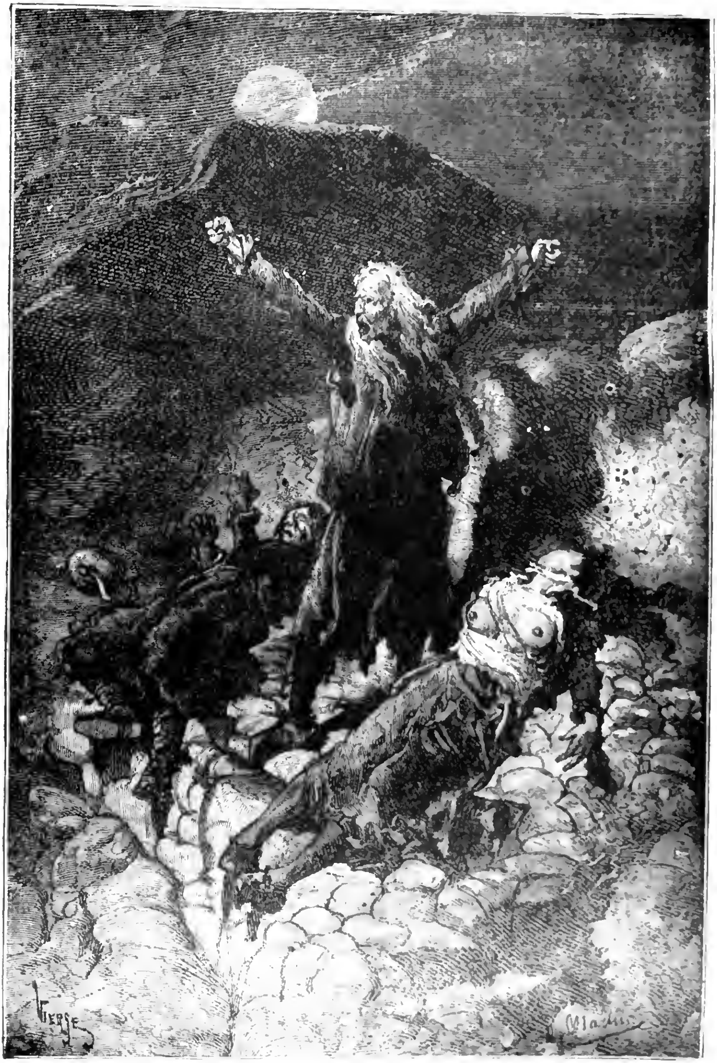
Tellmarch passed the corpses in review without omitting a single one; all were riddled with bullets.

Those who had shot them, probably in haste to go elsewhere, had not taken time to bury them.

As he was going away, his eyes fell on a low wall in the courtyard, and he saw four feet protruding from behind the corner of this wall.

These feet had shoes on; they were smaller than the others; Tellmarch went towards them. They were the feet of women.

Two women were lying side by side behind the wall; they also had been shot.



"IS THERE NOBODY HERE?"

Tellmarch bent over them. One of these women wore a sort of uniform; beside her was a cask, broken and empty; she was a vivandière. She had four bullets in her head. She was dead.

Tellmarch examined the other. She was a peasant woman. She was pallid and her mouth was open. Her eyes were closed. There was no wound on her head. Her clothing, which her wearisome wandering had doubtless torn to rags, had come open in her fall, and exposed her half-naked body. Tellmarch pushed them open still more, and saw a round wound made by a bullet in her shoulder; her collar-bone was broken. He looked at her livid breasts.

"A nursing mother," he murmured.

He touched her. She was not cold.

She had no other injury than the broken collar-bone and the wound on her shoulder.

He placed his hand on her heart and felt a feeble fluttering. She was not dead.

Tellmarch rose to his feet and cried in a terrible voice:—

"Is there nobody here?"

"It is you, the caimand!" replied a voice, so low that he could hardly hear it.

And at the same time a head appeared from a hole in the ruins.

Then another face appeared in another place.

They were two peasants, who were hiding; the only ones who had survived.

The familiar voice of the caimand had reassured them, and brought them out of the nook where they were crouching.

They came up to Tellmarch still all of a tremble.

Tellmarch could have screamed, but he was unable to speak; such are deep emotions.

He pointed to the woman stretched out at his feet.

"Is she still alive?" said one of the peasants.

Tellmarch nodded assent.

"Is the other woman alive?" asked the other peasant .

Tellmarch shook his head.

The peasant who appeared first added,—

"All the others are dead, are they not? I saw it all. I was in my cellar. How one thanks God in times like these for not having a family! My house was burned. Lord Jesus! they have killed them all. This woman had children. Three children, all little things! The children cried: 'Mother!' The mother cried: 'My children!' They killed the mother and carried away the children. I saw it all, my God! my God! my God! Those who massacred them all have gone. They were satisfied. They took away the little ones and killed the mother. But she is not dead, is she; she is not dead? Tell me, caimand, do you believe you can save her? Do you want us to help you carry her to your carnichot?"

Tellmarch nodded assent.

The woods touched the farm. They quickly fashioned a litter out of leaves and brakes. They placed the woman, still motionless, on the litter and started to go through the thicket, the two peasants carrying the litter, one at her head, the other at her feet, while Tellmarch held the woman's arm, and felt her pulse.

As they went along, the two peasants talked, and, over the bleeding woman, whose pale face was lighted up by the moon, they gave utterance to exclamations of dismay.

"All killed!"

"Everything burned!"

"Ah, Lord God! Is this the way it is going to be now?"

"It was that tall old man who wanted it done."

"Yes, he gave the orders."

"I did not see him when they were shooting. Was he there?"

"No, he had gone. But it is all the same; it was all done by his order."

"Then he was the one who did it all."

"He said: 'Kill! Burn! No quarter!'"

"He is a marquis."

"Yes, for he is our marquis."

"What do they call him?"

"He is Monsieur de Lantenac."

Tellmarch raised his eyes towards heaven first, and muttered between his teeth,—

"If I had known it!"

PART SECOND

IN PARIS

BOOK FIRST

CIMOURDAIN

CHAPTER I

THE STREETS OF PARIS AT THIS PERIOD

THE people lived in public, they ate from tables spread in front of their doors, the women sat on church steps making lint and singing the Marseillaise; Parc Monceaux and the Luxembourg gardens were parade grounds; there were smith's shops in full blast at every crossing; they made guns under the eyes of the passers-by, who applauded them; this was the word in everybody's mouth: "Patience, we are in the midst of revolution." The people smiled heroically. They went to the play as they did in Athens during the Peloponesian War; there were notices posted at the corners of the streets: "The Siege of Thionville." "The Mother of a Family Rescued from the Flames."

"The Club of Sans Souci."

"The Oldest of the Popes Joan."

"The Philosopher-Soldiers."

"The Art of Loving in the Village."

The Germans were at the gates; it was rumored that the king of Prussia had engaged boxes at the opera. Everything was frightful and nobody was frightened. The mysterious law against the suspected, Merlin de Douai's crime, made the guillotine threaten the heads of all. A denounced lawyer, named Séran, sat by his window, in dressing-grown and slippers and played the flute while waiting to be arrested.

Nobody seemed to have time enough. Everybody was in haste. Not a hat without a cockade. The women said: The red cap is becoming to us. Paris seemed to be full of removals. The bric-a-brac shops were encumbered with crowns, mitres, sceptres of gilded wood and decorated with fleurs-de-lis, the relics of royal houses: the destruction of the monarchy was in progress. In old-clothes shops there were copes and rochets to be had for the asking. At the Porcherons' and at Ramponneau's, men decked out in surplices and stoles, mounted on asses, caparisoned with chasubles, had wine from the public-house poured into cathedral ciboria. In Rue Saint-Jacques, barefooted street-pavers stopped a pedler's cart with boots and shoes to sell, clubbed together, and bought fifteen pairs of shoes to send to the convention for our soldiers.

Busts of Franklin, Rousseau, Brutus, and it must be added, of Marat, were everywhere; underneath one of these busts of Marat, in Rue Cloche-Perce, was hung up under glass, in a black wooden frame, a speech against Malouet, with testimony in support of it and these two lines on the margin:

"These details were given me by Sylvain Bailly's mistress, a good patriot who was kindly disposed toward me. Signed: MARAT."

In the Place du Palais Royal, the inscription on the fountain: *Quantos effundit in usus!* was covered over with two great pictures painted in distemper, one representing Cahier de Gerville denouncing the rallying cry of the "Chiffonistes" of Arles to the National Assembly; the other, Louis XVI., brought back from Varennes in his royal coach, and under this coach a plank fastened by ropes, on each end of which was a grenadier with fixed bayonet.

Few large shops were open; haberdashers' and toy shops on wheels were dragged about by women, and were lighted with candles, the tallow dripping over the goods; stalls in the open air were kept by ex-nuns in blond wigs; one stocking-mender, darning stockings in a stall, was a countess: another seamstress was a marchioness: Madame de Boufflers lived in a garret from which she could see her own mansion. Street criers went about, offering newspapers. Those who wore cravats hiding their chins were called "écrouelleux,"—scrofulous. Strolling singers swarmed. The crowd hooted Pitou, the royalist song-writer, formerly so popular, because he had been imprisoned twenty-two times, and was brought before the revolutionary tribunal for having slapped his hindquarters in pronouncing the word *civisme;* seeing that his head was in danger, he exclaimed: "But it is the opposite of my head, which is guilty!" this made the judges laugh, and saved him. This same Pitou made fun of the fashion for Greek and Latin names; his favorite song was about a cobbler named "Cujus," and whose wife he called "Cujusdam."

They made revolutionary songs and dances; they no longer said gentleman and lady, but citizen and citizeness. They danced in ruined cloisters, with church lamps on the altar, with two sticks crossed and bearing four candles under the arched roof, and tombs beneath their feet.

They wore blue tyrant jackets. They had "liberty cap" shirt pins made of red, white, and blue stones. Rue Richelieu was called the Street of the Law; the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, was called the Faubourg of Glory; there was a statue of Nature in the Place de la Bastille.

Certain well-known characters were pointed out: Chatelet, Didier, Nicolas, and Garnier-Delaunay, who stood guard at Duplay, the carpenter's door; Voullaut, who never missed a guillotine day, and followed the wagons carrying the condemned, and who called it, "going to the red mass"; Montflabert, a revolutionary juror, and a marquis, who called himself "Dix-Août" (tenth of August).

People watched the pupils of the Military School as they passed by; they were termed by the decree of the Convention "aspirants to the School of Mars," and by the people, "Robespierre's pages."

The people read the proclamations of Fréron, denouncing those suspected of the crime of "negotiantism." Young swells collected at the door of the mayoralty, to scoff at civil marriages, placing themselves in the way of the bride and bridegroom and saying: "married civilly." At the Invalides the statues of saints and kings had on Phrygian caps. They played cards on the curbstones at the crossings; playing-cards, too, were in a state of revolution; kings were replaced by genii; queens, by the Goddess of Liberty; knaves, by Equality personified; and aces, by characters representing Law.

They tilled the public gardens; they ploughed up the gardens of the Tuileries. With all this, especially among the conquered parties, was mingled a strange, haughty weariness of life; a man wrote to Fouquier-Tinville,—

"Have the kindness to release me from life. Here is my address." Champcenetz was arrested for having cried out in full sight of the Palais-Royal: "When will the revolution of Turkey be? I want to see the republic *à la Porte.*"

Newspapers were everywhere. Wig-makers curled women's wigs in public, while the master read the *Moniteur* aloud; others, surrounded by a crowd, made comments, with vehement gesticulations, on the journal *Entendons-nous,* belonging to Dubois-Crancé, or the *Trompête du Père Belle-rose.* Sometimes, barbers were also pork-butchers; and hams and chitterlings might be seen hanging beside a dummy with golden hair; merchants sold wines of the *emigrés* on the public streets; one merchant proclaimed wines of fifty-two sorts; others sold second-hand harp-shaped clocks, and *duchess* sofas; one wig-maker had this for a sign: "I shave the clergy, comb the hair of the nobility, accommodate the Third Estate."

People went to have their fortunes told by Martin, number 173 Rue d'Anjou, formerly Rue Dauphine. There was lack of bread, there was lack of coal, there was lack of soap; numbers of milch cows might be seen passing along as they came from the provinces. At la Vallée, lamb sold for fifteen francs a pound. An order of the Commune assigned a pound of meat to each person every ten days. The people formed in line in front of the shops; one of these lines has become famous; it reached from the door of a grocer's shop in Rue du

Petit-Carreau to the middle of Rue Montorgueil. Forming the line, was called "holding the cord" on account of a long rope which those in file held in their hands one behind another. The women were brave and sweet in their misery. They spent whole nights awaiting their turn to enter the baker's shops. Expedients were used with success during the revolution; this universal distress was alleviated by two perilous means, the assignat and the maximum; the assignat was the lever, the maximum the fulcrum. This empiricism was the saving of France. The enemy, both in Coblentz and in London, gambled in assignats.

Girls went about selling lavender water, garters, and braids of hair, and dabbling in stocks. On the Perron, in Rue Vivienne, there were stockbrokers with dirty shoes, greasy hair, and fur capes trimmed with fox tails, and *magolets* from Rue de Valois, in polished boots, toothpicks in their mouths, shaggy hats on their heads, to whom the girls spoke familiarly. The people went in pursuit of them as they did of the thieves, whom the royalists called "active citizens." Beyond this, there was very little theft. Cruel destitution, stoical integrity. The barefooted and the starving, with eyes solemnly cast down, passed by the windows of the jewelry shops in the Palais-Égalité. While the Section Antoine was searching the house of Beaumarchais, a woman picked a flower in the garden; the people boxed her ears. Wood cost four hundred francs in silver, a cord; people could be seen in the streets sawing up their beds for wood; in winter-time, the fountains were frozen: two pails of water cost twenty sous; everybody turned water-carrier. A Louis d'or was worth three thousand, nine hundred and fifty francs. A ride in a hackney-coach cost six hundred francs. After using a hackney-coach for a day this conversation was overheard:—

"Coachman, how much do I owe you?"

"Six thousand francs."

A greengrocer woman made twenty thousand francs a day. A beggar said: "For the sake of charity, assist me! I need two hundred and thirty livres to pay for my shoes."

At the entrance to the bridges might be seen colossal figures sculptured and painted by David, which Mercier insulted by calling them: "Enormous wooden puppets." These enormous figures represented Federalism and Coalition overthrown. No faltering among this people. The gloomy joy of having made an end of thrones. Volunteers abounded, exposing their breasts. Each street had its battalion. The flags of the districts came and went, each with its own device. On the flag of the district of the Capucins was this inscription: "Nobody shall shave us." On another: "No more nobility except in the heart." On every wall there were placards large, small, white, yellow, green, red, printed, and written, with this exclamation: "Long live the Republic!" The little children lisped: *"Ça ira!"*

These little children were to be the great future.

Later on, the tragic city was succeeded by the cynical city; the streets of Paris had two very distinct aspects during the revolution, before and after the ninth Thermidor;* the Paris of Saint-Just gave place to the Paris of Tallien; and, these are the continual antitheses of God; immediately after Sinai, la Courtille appeared.

An outburst of public madness now appeared. It was a repetition of what had been seen eighty years before. The people left Louis XIV. as they left Robespierre, with a great need for breath; hence the Regency which opens the century and the directory with which it closes. Two saturnalia after two reigns of terror. France fled from the puritan cloister as from the monarchical cloister, with the joyfulness of an escaped nation.

After the ninth Thermidor, Paris was gay, insanely gay. An unhealthy joy burst forth. The frenzy of dying was succeeded by the frenzy of living, and grandeur outdid itself. They had a Trimalcion called *"Grimod de la Regnière"*; they had the *"Almanach des Gourmands."* They dined to the sound of trumpets in the entresols of the Palais Royal, with orchestras of women beating the drum and sounding the trumpet.

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*July 28, 1793.

The "rigodooner" reigned, bow in hand; they took supper "in oriental fashion" at Méot's house, surrounded with perfumes. The artist Boze painted his daughters, charming, innocent girls of sixteen years, "en guillotines," that is to say in low-necked dresses with red underwaists.

The boisterous dances in the ruined churches were followed by the balls of Ruggieri, of Luquet Wenzel, of Mauduit, of la Montansier; serious women making lint, were followed by sultanas, savages, nymphs; barefooted soldiers covered with blood, mud, and dust, were followed by barefooted women decorated with diamonds; dishonesty appeared simultaneously with immodesty; it had its purveyors in the upper classes, and associations of thieves in the lower classes; a swarm of pickpockets filled Paris, and everybody was obliged to keep watch over his "luc," that was his pocketbook; it was one of the pastimes to go to the Place-du-Palais-de-Justice to see the women-thieves on the stool; they were obliged to fasten their petticoats securely.

As people came from the theatres, street-boys offered cabs, saying: "Citizen and citizeness, there is room for two; they no longer cried: "The old Franciscan" and the "Friend of the People," but in their places "Punch's Letter" and "The Rogues' Petition;" the Marquis de Sade presided over the Section des Piques, in Place Vendome.

The reaction was jocund and ferocious; the "Dragons of Liberty" of '92 came to life again under the name of "Chevaliers of the Dagger." At the same time, there appeared in the booths the type, Jocrisse. They had "The Wonder," and besides these marvellous women the "Inconceivables," they swore by the *"paole victimé,"* and the *"paole verte";* they retrograded from Mirabeau to Bobèche.

Thus Paris sways to and fro; it is the enormous pendulum of civilization; it touches alternately one pole and then the other, Thermopylæ and Gomorrha. After '93 the Revolution passed through a singular occultation, the century seemed to forget to finish what it had begun, some strange orgy was interposed, took the foreground, pushed the frightful apocalypse into the background, veiled the inordinate vision, and burst into a laugh after the fright; tragedy disappeared in parody, and on the edge of the horizon, carnival smoke mysteriously effaced Medusa.

But in '93, where we now are, the streets of Paris still had all the grandiose and wild appearance of the beginning. They had their orators; there was Varlet, who went about in a booth on wheels, from the top of which he harangued to the passers-by; they had their heroes, one of which was called "the captain of the iron-tipped sticks." They had their favorites—Guffroy, author of the pamphlet "Rougiff."* Some of these popular favorites were mischievous; others were healthful. One among them all was honest and fatal; he was Cimourdain.

******Le Rougiff* **or** *Rougyff* **ceased to appear, May 24, 1794.**

CHAPTER II

CIMOURDAIN

Cimourdain was a pure-minded but gloomy man. He had "the absolute" within him. He had been a priest, which is a solemn thing. Man may have, like the sky, a dark and impenetrable serenity; that something should have caused night to fall in his soul is all that is required. Priesthood had been the cause of night within Cimourdain. Once a priest, always a priest.

Whatever causes night in our souls may leave stars. Cimourdain was full of virtues and truths, but they shine out of a dark background.

His history was quickly told. He had been a village priest and a tutor in a great family; then a little inheritance fell to him, and he became free.

He was, above all, an obstinate man. He made use of meditation as one does of pincers, he believed that he had no right to leave an idea till he had thought it out to the end; he thought desperately. He knew all the languages of Europe and others somewhat; this man studied ceaselessly, which helped him to keep his chastity, but there is nothing more dangerous than such repression.

As a priest he had, through pride, chance, or loftiness of soul, kept his vows; but he had not been able to keep his belief. Science had destroyed his faith; dogma had vanished in him. Then examining himself, he had felt as though he were mutilated, and being unable to change himself as a priest, he tried to make himself over as a man, but in an austere fashion; he had been deprived of a family, he adopted his country; he had been refused a wife, he espoused humanity. Such vast repletion is at bottom emptiness.

His parents, peasants, in making a priest of him, had wished to remove him from the people; he had come back to the people.

And he had returned with passionate fondness. He regarded their suffering with a fierce tenderness. First a priest, then philosopher, and lastly, athlete. Louis XV. was still alive when Cimourdain began to feel dimly that he was a republican. Of what republic? The republic of Plato, perhaps, and perhaps also of the republic of Draco.

It was forbidden him to love, he began to hate. He hated lies, monarchy, theocracy, his priestly robes; he hated the present, and he called aloud to the future; he foresaw it, he anticipated it, he imagined it frightful and magnificent; he knew, that for the liberation of this lamentable human misery, something like an avenger, who would be at the same time a liberator, was needed. He worshipped the catastrophe from afar.

In 1789, this catastrophe came, and found him ready. Cimourdain threw himself into this vast plan of human renovation, logically, that means for a mind of his stamp inexorably; logic is pitiless. He had lived during the great years of the Revolution, and had been thrilled by all its commotions: in '89 the fall of the Bastille, the end of torture for the people; in '90, the nineteenth of June, the end of feudalism; in '91 Varennes, the end of royalty; in '92 the coming of the Republic. He had seen the sunrise of the Revolution; he was not a man to be afraid of this giantess; far from that, this growth on every side had given him new life; and although almost an old man,—he was fifty years old, and a priest ages sooner than other men,—he began to grow too. From year to year, he had watched events as they increased in size, and he had grown like them. At first, he had feared that the Revolution would miscarry, he watched it, it was in the right, he insisted that it would succeed; and in proportion to its frightfulness his confidence increased. He wished that this Minerva, crowned with the stars of the future, might be also a Pallas, with Medusa's head for a buckler. He wished that her divine eye might be able in time of need to cast an infernal glare at the demons and pay them back terror for terror.

Thus he had come to '93.

"Ninety-three" was the war of Europe against France, and of France against Paris. And what was the Revolution? It was the victory of France over Europe, and of Paris over France. Hence the immensity of that terrible moment, '93, greater than all the rest of the century.

Nothing could be more tragic than Europe attacking France, and France attacking Paris. A drama with epic proportions.

"Ninety-three" was a year of intensity. The storm was raging then in all its fury and all its grandeur. Cimourdain felt at ease in it. This life of bewilderment, savage and splendid, suited his spread of wings. This man, like the sea-eagle, possessed a deep, internal composure, together with a taste for external danger. Certain winged creatures, ferocious and calm, are made to struggle against mighty winds. Souls of the tempest, like these, exist.

He was capable of exceptional pity, which he reserved alone for the wretched. To the kind of suffering which causes horror, he was ready to devote his life. Nothing was loathsome to him. In this consisted his characteristic kindness. He was hideously and divinely helpful. He sought for ulcers that he might kiss them. Fine actions, ugly in appearance, are the most difficult to perform; these he preferred. One day, at the Hôtel-Dieu, a man was dying, choked by a tumor in his throat, a horrible, fetid abscess, possibly contagious, and which had to be emptied at once. Cimourdain was there. He applied his mouth to the tumor, sucked it, spitting out as his mouth filled, emptied the abscess, and saved the man's life. As he was still wearing the priest's robes at this time, some one said,—

"If you should do that for the king, you would be made a bishop."

"I would not do it for the king!" replied Cimourdain.

This action and this reply made him popular in the dismal quarters of Paris.

So much so that he could do what he pleased with those who suffered, those who wept, and those who threatened. At the time of the indignation against the monopolists,—an indignation so prolific in error,—it was Cimourdain who, without a word, prevented the plundering of a vessel laden with soap at the Saint-Nicholas quay, and scattered the infuriated mob who were stopping the carriages at the barrier of Saint-Lazare.

It was he who, ten days after the tenth of August, led the people to overthrow the statues of the kings. In their fall, they killed; in Place Vendôme a woman, Reine Violet, was crushed by Louis XIV., around whose neck she had put a rope that she was pulling. This statue of Louis XIV. had been standing a hundred years; it was erected the twelfth of August, 1692; it was pulled down the twelfth of August, 1792. In the Place de la Concorde, a man named Guinguerlot, was beaten to death on the pedestal of Louis XV. for having called the demolishers rascals. The statue was broken to pieces. Later, they made it into sous. One arm alone escaped; it was Louis XV.'s right arm that he extended with the gesture of a Roman emperor. It was at Cimourdain's request that the people sent a deputation to carry this arm to Latude, the man who had been buried thirty-seven years in the Bastille. When Latude, with the iron collar about his neck, and chains about his loins, lay rotting alive in the bottom of this prison, by order of the king whose statue dominated Paris, who could have told him that this prison would fall? that this statue would fall? that he would escape from the tomb, and that the monarchy would enter in? that he, the prisoner, would be master of this bronze hand which had signed his warrant? and that nothing would be left of this king of mud but this brazen arm?

Cimourdain was one of those men who had a voice within them, and who listen to it. Such men seem absent-minded; they are not; they are all attention.

Cimourdain knew everything and nothing. He knew everything about science, and nothing at all about life. Hence his inflexibility. His eyes were bandaged like Homer's Themis. He had the blind certainty of the arrow, which sees only the mark and flies to it. In a revolution, nothing is more terrible than a straight line. Cimourdain went straight ahead, as sure as fate.

Cimourdain believed that, in social geneses, the extreme point is the solid earth; an error peculiar to minds which replace reason with logic. He went beyond the Convention; he went beyond the Commune; he belonged to the Évêché.

This convention, called the Évêché because it holds its meetings in a hall of the old Episcopal palace, was rather a complication of men than an assembly. There, as at the Commune, were seen silent and significant spectators who, as Garat said, had as many pistols about them as pockets. The Évêché was a strange mixture,—a mixture both cosmopolitan and Parisian, which is not a contradiction, for Paris is the place where the heart of nations beats. There was the great plebeian incandescence. Compared to the Évêché, the Convention was cold, and the Commune lukewarm. The Évêché was one of those revolutionary formations, like volcanic formations. The Évêché was made up of everything: ignorance, stupidity, integrity, heroism, anger, and the police. Brunswick had agents in it. There were men in it worthy of Sparta, and men worthy of the galleys. Most of them were mad but honest. La Gironde, through the mouth of Isnard, temporary president of the Convention, had uttered this monstrous prediction,—

"Be on your guard, Parisians. There will not be left one stone on another of your city, and people will one day search for the place where Paris stood."

This speech created the Évêché. There were men, and, as we have just said, men of all nations, who had felt the need of gathering close about Paris. Cimourdain joined this group.

This group reacted against reaction. It was born of that public need of violence, which is the terrible and mysterious side of revolutions. Strong in this force, the Évêché began its work immediately. In the commotion of Paris, the Commune made use of the cannon, the Évêché sounded the tocsin.

Cimourdain believed, in his implacable ingenuousness, that everything is right in the service of truth; this fitted him for ruling the extreme parties. Rascals felt that he was honest, and were satisfied. Crimes are flattered to be presided over by a virtue. It both restrains them and pleases them. Palloy, the architect, who planned the destruction of the Bastille and sold the stones to his own profit, and who, when appointed to whitewash Louis XVI.'s dungeon, in his zeal covered the wall with bars, chains and iron collars; Gonchon, the suspected orator of the faubourg Saint-Antoine, whose receipts were afterwards found; Fournier, the American, who, on the seventeenth of July, fired a pistol at Lafayette, which it was said Lafayette had paid for; Henriot, who came out of Bicêtre, and had been valet, mountebank, thief and spy before he was a general, and levelled his guns at the Convention; La Reynie, formerly grand vicar of Chartres, who had replaced his breviary with *Père Duchesne;* all these men respected Cimourdain, and at times, all that was necessary to keep the worst of them from flinching, was to let them feel this terrible, convincing frankness before them in judgment.

In this way, Saint-Just terrified Schneider.

At the same time, the majority of the Évêché, composed largely of poor, violent men, who were good, believed in Cimourdain and followed him. He had as vicar, or aide-de-camp, as one pleases, another republican priest, Danjou, whom the people loved because he was so tall, and they had christened him the Abbé Six-Pieds, or Six-Feet. Cimourdain had led that intrepid chief, called Général la Pique, wherever he pleased, and also that bold Truchon, called the Grand-Nicholas, who tried to save Madame de Lamballe's life, by giving her his arm, and making her jump over the corpses; which would have been successful had it not been for the barber Charlot's cruel jestings.

The Commune watched the Convention, the Évêché watched the Commune; Cimourdain, a just mind, and loathing intrigue, had broken many a mysterious thread in the hands of Pache, whom Beurnonville called the "man in black." Cimourdain, at the Évêché, was on an equality with everybody. He was consulted by Dobsent and Momoro. He spoke Spanish to Gusman, Italian to Pio, English to Arthur, Flemish to Pereyra, German to the Austrian Proly, bastard son of a prince. He created an understanding between these discordant elements. Hence his situation was obscure but strong. Hébert feared him.

Cimourdain had, at this time, and among these tragic groups, the power of the fates. He was a spotless man who thought himself infallible. Nobody had ever seen him shed a tear. Unapproachable, icy virtue. He was the frightfully just man.

There was no half way for a priest in revolution. A priest could only give himself up to this prodigious and atrocious chance, from the lowest or the highest motives; he must be infamous or sublime. Cimourdain was sublime, but sublime in isolation, in inaccessibility, in inhospitable gloom; sublime when surrounded by precipices. The lofty mountains have such forbidding virginity.

Cimourdain had the appearance of an ordinary man, dressed in common clothes, poor in aspect. When young, he had been tonsured; when old, he was bald. The little hair he had was gray. His forehead was broad, and on this forehead there was a sign for a close observer. Cimourdain had an abrupt, impassioned, and solemn way of speaking; his voice, stern, his tone peremptory; his mouth sad and bitter; his eye clear and penetrating, and over all his face there was a strange look of scorn.

Such was Cimourdain.

No one to-day knows his name. History has more than one such terrible Unknown.

CHAPTER III

A HEEL NOT DIPPED IN THE STYX

WAS such a man really a man? Could the servant of the human race have any affection? Had he not too much soul to have any heart? This world-wide embrace, which took in all and everything, could it reserve itself for any one person? Could Cimourdain love? Let us answer, Yes.

When he was young and a tutor in an almost princely mansion, he had one pupil, the son and heir of the family, and he loved him. It is so easy to love a child. What can one not forgive a child? One can pardon him for being a seigneur, a prince, a king. The innocence of his tender years makes one forget the crimes of his race; the feebleness of the creature make one forget the exaggeration of rank. He is so small that one pardons him for being great. The slave pardons him for being the master. The old negro worships the little white boy.

Cimourdain had conceived a passion for his pupil. Childhood is so ineffable that one can pour out all one's affection on it. All the power of loving in Cimourdain had, so to speak, fallen on this child; this sweet, innocent being had become a sort of prey to this heart condemned to solitude. He loved him with all the tenderness at once of father, brother, friend and creator. He was his son, the son not of his flesh, but of his spirit. He was not his father, and this was not his work; but he was the master, and this was his masterpiece. Of this little lord he had made a man. Who knows? a great man, perhaps. For such are dreams. Unknown to the family,—does one need permission to create an intelligence, a will, an integrity?—he had communicated to the young viscount, his pupil, all the progress that he had in himself, he had inoculated him with the dreadful virus of his virtue; he had infused into his veins his convictions, his conscience, his ideals; into this aristocratic brain he had poured the soul of the people.

The mind suckles, intelligence is a breast. There is an analogy between the nurse giving her milk, and the teacher giving his thought. Sometimes the teacher is more the father than the father himself, just as the nurse is more the mother than the mother herself.

This deep spiritual paternity bound Cimourdain closely to his pupil. The mere sight of this child touched him.

Let us add this: it was easy to replace the father, for the child had no father; he was an orphan; his father was dead, his mother was dead; he had no one to watch over him but a blind grandmother, and a great uncle who was away. The grandmother died; the great uncle, the head of the family, a soldier and possessed of great estates, appointed to offices at court, avoided the old family castle, lived at Versailles, went to the army, and left the orphan alone in the solitary towers. So the tutor was master in every sense of the word.

Let us add this, besides; Cimourdain had seen the child who had been his pupil, born. The orphan child when very small had had a serious illness; Cimourdain, at this time of danger, had watched over him day and night; the physician attends the patient, the nurse saves his life, and Cimourdain had saved the child. His pupil owed to him not only his education, his instruction, his knowledge, but he owed to him his recovery and health; his pupil not only owed to him his thoughts, but he owed to him his life. We adore those who owe everything to us. Cimourdain adored this child.

The natural separation of their lives came about. When his education was completed, Cimourdain was obliged to leave the child, grown to a young man. With what cold and unconscionable cruelty those separations are made! How calmly families dismiss the teacher who has left his thought in a child, a nurse who leaves in it her love. Cimourdain, paid and sent away, left high life, and went back to the lower ranks of society; the partition between the great and the lowly was closed again; the young lord, an officer of birth and instantly made captain, set out for a garrison somewhere; the humble tutor already in the bottom of his heart an unsubmissive priest, hastened to go down again to that dark ground-floor of the church, called the lower clergy, and Cimourdain lost sight of his pupil.

The revolution had come; the memory of this being, of whom he had made a man, continued to smoulder in him, hidden but not extinguished by the immensity of public matters.

To model a statue and give it life is a noble work; to model an intelligence and give it truth, is still nobler. Cimourdain was the Pygmalion of a soul.

A mind can have a child.

This pupil, this child, this orphan, was the only being on earth that he loved.

But, even in such an affection, was such a man vulnerable?

We shall see.

BOOK SECOND

THE PUBLIC HOUSE OF RUE DU PAON

CHAPTER I

MINOS, ÆACUS, AND RHADAMANTHUS

In Rue du Paon there was a public house, called a café. This café had a back room, which is now historical. It was there that men, so powerful and so closely watched that they hesitated to speak to one another in public, occasionally met almost secretly. It was there, on the twenty-third of October, 1792, that the famous kiss was exchanged between la Montagne and la Gironde. Although he does not admit it in his "Mémoires," it was there that Garat came for information that gloomy night, when he stopped his carriage on the Port Royal, to listen to the tocsin, after he had put Clavière in a place of safety in Rue de Beaune.

On the twenty-eighth of June, 1793, three men were gathered around a table in this back room. Their chairs did not touch; they were seated on different sides of the table, leaving the fourth vacant. It was about eight o'clock in the evening; it was still light in the street, but dark in the back room, and a hanging lamp, then a luxury, lighted the table.

The first of these three men was pale, young, solemn, with thin lips, and a cold face. He had a nervous twitching in his cheek, which must have hindered him from smiling. He was powdered and gloved, there was not a wrinkle in his light blue coat, well brushed and buttoned up. He wore nankeen breeches, white stockings, a high cravat, a plaited shirt frill, shoes with silver buckles.

The two other men were one, a sort of giant, the other a sort of dwarf. The tall man was carelessly dressed in a loose coat of scarlet cloth, his neck bare in a necktie unfastened and falling below his shirt frill, his vest open for lack of buttons; he wore top-boots; his hair was in disorder, though it showed traces of having been dressed, and there was horsehair in his wig. His face was pitted with smallpox, he had an angry frown between his eyelids, a kindly pucker in the corners of his mouth, thick lips, large teeth, a porter's hand, flashing eyes. The small man was yellow, and looked deformed when he was seated; he carried his head thrown back, his eyes were bloodshot, there were livid spots on his face; he wore a handkerchief tied over his smooth, greasy hair; he had no forehead, and a terrible, enormous mouth. He wore long pantaloons, slippers, a waistcoat which seemed to have been white satin once, and over this waistcoat, a loose jacket, in the folds of which a hard straight line betrayed a dagger.

The first of these men was called Robespierre; the second, Danton; the third, Marat.

They were alone in this room. In front of Danton stood a glass and a wine-bottle covered with dust, suggesting Luther's beer-glass; in front of Marat, a cup of coffee; in front of Robespierre, papers.

Near the papers was seen one of those heavy leaden inkstands, round and ridged, which will be remembered by those who were schoolboys in the beginning of this century. A pen was thrown down beside the inkstand. On the papers was placed a large copper seal bearing the words, "Palloy fecit," and which formed an exact miniature model of the Bastille.

A map of France was spread out in the centre of the table.

Outside the door was stationed Marat's watch dog, that Laurent Basse, porter at number 18 Rue des Cordeliers, who, the thirteenth of July, or about two weeks after this twenty-eighth of June, was to strike the head of a woman named Charlotte Corday, with a chair; she was at this time in Caen, dreaming vague dreams. Laurent Basse was the printer's devil of the

Ami du Peuple. This evening he had been brought by his master to the café in Rue du Paon, and ordered to keep the room closed where Marat, Danton, and Robespierre were, and not to let anybody enter unless it were some one from the Committee of Public Safety, from the Commune, or the Évêché.

Robespierre did not wish to close the door against Saint-Just, Danton did not wish to close it against Pache, Marat did not wish to close it against Gusman.

The conference had already lasted a long time. Its subject was the pile of papers on the table which Robespierre had been reading. The voices began to grow higher. Something like anger was brewing between these three men. Outside, loud words were occasionally heard from within. At this period the custom of public tribunals seemed to have created the right to listen. It was the time when Fabricius Pâris, the copying clerk looked through the key-hole to see what the Committee of Public Safety was doing. Which, by the way, was not in vain, for it was Pâris who warned Danton the night of the thirtieth of March, 1794. Laurent Basse had put his ear to the door of the back room where Danton, Marat, and Robespierre were. Laurent Basse served Marat, but he belonged to the Évêché.

CHAPTER II

MAGNA TESTANTUR VOCE PER UMBRAS

DANTON had just arisen, quickly pushing back his chair.

"Listen," he cried. "There is only one urgency, the Republic in danger. I know but one thing, that is to deliver France from the enemy. For that all means are good. All! All! All! When I am dealing with every danger, I have recourse to every expedient, and when I fear everything, I risk everything. My thought is a lioness. No half-way measures, no prudery in revolution. Nemesis is not a prude. Let us be frightful and useful. Does the elephant look where he puts his foot? Let us crush the enemy."

Robespierre replied gently,—

"I am willing," and he added, "the question is to know where the enemy is."

"It is outside, and I have driven it there," said Danton.

"It is within, and I am watching it," said Robespierre.

"And I will drive it out again," replied Danton.

"You cannot drive away an internal enemy."

"What can be done then?"

"It must be exterminated."

"I give my consent," said Danton in his turn, and he continued: "I tell you it is outside, Robespierre."

"Danton, I tell you it is within."

"Robespierre, it is on the frontier."

"Danton, it is in Vendée."

"Calm yourselves," said a third voice, "it is everywhere; and you are lost."

It was Marat who spoke.

Robespierre looked at Marat and replied calmly,—

"Truce to generalities. I am exact. Here are the facts."

"Pedant!" grumbled Marat.

Robespierre placed his hand on the pile of papers before him, and continued,—

"I have just read you the despatches from Prieur de la Marne. I have just communicated to you the information given by this Gélambre. Danton, listen, foreign war is nothing, civil war is everything. Foreign war is a scratch on the elbow; civil war is an ulcer which eats your vitals. This is the result of all that I have just read to you: La Vendée until now scattered among several chiefs, is on the point of concentrating herself. She is henceforth going to have a single captain ——"

"A central brigand," murmured Danton.

"He is," continued Robespierre, "the man landed near Pontorson the second of June. You have seen what he is. Notice that this landing coincides with the arrest of the acting representatives, Prieur de la Côte d'Or and Romme at Bayeux, by the traitorous district of Calvados, the second of June, the same day."

"And their removal to the castle of Caen," said Danton.

Robespierre went on,—

"I will continue the summing up of the despatches. The forest war is organizing on a vast scale. At the same time, a descent from the English is in preparation: Vendéans and English; that is, Britain with Brittany. The Hurons* of Finisterre speak the same language as the Topinambous† of Cornwall. I have laid before your eyes an intercepted letter from Puisaye, in which it says that 'twenty thousand redcoats distributed among the insurgents will raise a hundred thousand.' When the peasant insurrection is completed, the English will make their descent. This is the plan, follow it on the map."

Robespierre placed his finger on the map and continued,—

**Hurons:* name originally given to the peasants who took part in the Jacquerie, or popular revolution against the nobles.—*Tr.*

†*Topinambous:* name of a tribe in Brazil; applied to any degraded population.—*Tr.*

"The English have the choice of landing from Cancale to Paimpol. Craig would prefer the bay of Saint-Brieuc; Cornwallis, the bay of Saint-Cast. That is mere detail. The left bank of the Loire is guarded by the rebel Vendéan army, and for twenty-eight leagues of open country between Ancenis and Pontorson, forty Norman parishes have promised their aid. The invasion will be made at three points, Plérin, Iffiniac, and Pléneuf; from Plérin they will go to Saint-Brieuc, and from Pléneuf to Lamballe; the second day, they will reach Dinan, where there are nine hundred English prisoners, and at the same time they will occupy Saint Jouan and Saint-Méen, and will leave cavalry there; the third day, two columns will go one toward Jouan-sur-Bédée, the other to Dinan-sur-Becherel, which is a natural fortress, and where they will set up two batteries; the fourth day, they will be at Rennes. Rennes is the key of Brittany. Whoever has Rennes has all. If Rennes is taken, Châteauneuf and Saint-Malo will fall. There are a million cartridges and fifty field-pieces at Rennes."

"Which they would sweep away," murmured Danton.

Robespierre continued,—

"I will finish. From Rennes, three columns will attack—one, Fougères; one, Vitré; the other, Redon. As the bridges are cut away, the enemy will provide themselves with pontoons and madriers,—you have seen this fact, stated precisely,—and they will have guides for the points where the cavalry can ford. From Fougères they will radiate to Avranches; from Redon, to Ancenis; and from Vitré, to Laval. Nantes will surrender, Brest will surrender. Redon opens the way the entire length of the Vilaine, Fougères gives them the road to Normandy, Vitré gives them the road to Paris. In two weeks they will have an army of brigands, with three hundred thousand men, and all Brittany will belong to the King of France."

"That is to say, to the King of England," said Danton.

"No, to the King of France."

And Robespierre added,—

"The King of France is worse. A foreigner can be driven out in fifteen days, but it takes eighteen hundred years to root out a monarchy."

Danton, who had sat down again, put his elbows on the table and rested his head in his hands, deep in thought.

"You see the danger," said Robespierre, "Vitré gives the road to Paris to the English."

Danton raised his head and brought his two great clenched hands down on the map, as though it were an anvil. "Robespierre, didn't Verdun open the way to Paris for the Prussians?"

"Well?"

"Well, we will drive out the English as we drove out the Prussians."

And Danton rose from his seat again.

Robespierre laid his cold hand on Danton's feverish fingers.

"Danton, Champagne was not for the Prussians, and Brittany is for the English. To recapture Verdun was foreign war; to recapture Vitré is civil war."

And Robespierre muttered in a cold, deep voice,—

"A serious difference."

He added,—

"Sit down again, Danton, and look at the map instead of pounding it with your fist."

But Danton clung to his own opinion.

"That is carrying it too far!" he exclaimed, "to look for the catastrophe in the west, when it is coming in the east. Robespierre, I agree with you that England is rising on the ocean; but Spain is rising from the Pyrenees; but Italy is rising from the Alps, and Germany is rising across the Rhine. And the great Russian Bear is at the bottom of it. Robespierre, the danger is in a circle, and we are within it. Coalition without, treason within. In the South, Servant has left the door of France ajar for the King of Spain. In the North, Dumouriez is passing over to the enemy. Moreover, he has always threatened Holland less than Paris. Nerwinde wipes out Jemmapes and Valmy. The philosopher, Rabaut Saint-Etienne, a traitor, like the Protestant that he is, corresponds with the courtier Montesquiou. The army is reduced. There is not a battalion now with more than four hundred men; the brave regiment of Deux Ponts is reduced to a hundred and fifty men; the camp of Pamars has surrendered; there are no more than five hundred bags of flour left at Givet; we are falling back on Landau; Wurmser pressed Kléber; Mayence is yielding bravely; Conde, cowardly; Valenciennes, also. But this does not prevent Chancel, who is defending Valenciennes, and old Féraud, who is defending Condè, from being two heroes, as well as Meunier, who was defending Mayence. But all the others are traitors: Dharville, at Aix-la-Chapelle; Mouton, at Brussels; Valence, at Bréda; Meuilly, at Limbourg; Miranda, at Maëstricht; Stengel, a traitor; Lanou, a traitor; Ligonnier, a traitor; Menou, a traitor; Dillon, a traitor;—hideous coin of Dumouriez. We ought to make examples of them. Custine's countermarches look suspicious to me; I suspect Custine of preferring the lucrative prize of Frankfort to the useful prize of Coblentz. Frankfort can pay four millions of war tribute. Grant it. What is that compared to crushing that nest of refugees? Treason, I call it. Meunier died the thirteenth of June; Kléber is alone. Meantime, Brunswick is increasing and advancing. He sets up the German flag in all the French places that he takes. The Margrave of Brandebourg is the arbiter of Europe; he pockets our provinces, he will appropriate Belgium, you will see; one would say that we were working for Berlin. If that goes on, and if we do not see to it, the French Revolution will have been made for the benefit of Potsdam; its sole result will have been the enlargement of Frederick II.'s little state, and we shall have killed the King of France for the King of Prussia.

And Danton burst into a frightful laugh.

Danton's laugh made Marat smile.

"You each have your hobby; yours, Danton, is Prussia; yours, Robespierre, la Vendée. Now I will give my views. You do not see the real danger; it is here,—the cafés and the gaming-houses. The café of Choiseul is Jacobin, the café Patin is royalist; the café Rendez-Vous attacks the National

Guard, the café of Porte-Saint-Martin defends it; the café of the Regence is against Brissot, the café Corezza is for it; the café Procope swears by Diderot, the café of the Théâtre-Français swears by Voltaire; at the Rotonde they tear up the assignats; the café Saint-Marçéau are in a rage; the café Manouri is debating the question of flour; at the café Foy there is gluttony and uproar; at the Perron, there is the buzzing of the hornet-drones of finance. This is the serious matter."

Danton laughed no longer. Marat continued to smile. The smile of a dwarf, worse than a giant's laugh.

"Are you jesting, Marat?" growled Danton.

Marat gave that convulsive movement of his hip, which was famous. His smile died away.

"Ah, I recognize you, Citizen Danton. It was you who called me that fellow Marat, before the whole convention. Listen. I pardon you. We are passing through a period of folly. Ah, am I jesting? Indeed, what sort of a man am I? I denounced Chazot, I denounced Pétion, I denounced Kersaint, I denounced Moreton, I denounced Dufriche-Valazé, I denounced Ligonnier, I denounced Menou, I denounced Banneville, I denounced Gensonné, I denounced Biron, I denounced Lidon and Chambon; was I wrong? I scent treason in the traitor, and I find it worth while to denounce the criminal before the crime. I am in the habit of saying the day before, what the rest of you say the day after. I am the man who proposed a complete plan of criminal legislation to the assembly. What have I done just now? I have asked that the sections be instructed, in order to discipline them for revolution; I have broken the seals of thirty-two strong boxes; I have reclaimed the diamonds placed in Roland's hands; I have proved that the Brissotins gave blank warrants to the Committee of General Safety; I have noted the omissions in Lindet's report on the crimes of Capet; I voted the execution of the tyrant within twenty-four hours; I defended the battalions, Mauconseil and Republican; I prevented the reading of the letter from Narbonne and from Malouet; I have made a motion in favor of the wounded soldiers; I caused the suppression of the Committee of Six; in the affair of Mons, I foresaw the treason of Dumouriez; I have asked that a hundred thousand relatives of the refugees be taken as hostages for the commissioners surrendered to the enemy; I proposed that all representatives who should cross the barriers be declared traitors; I unmasked the Rolandine faction in the troubles at Marseilles; I insisted that a price should be put on the head of the son of Égalite; I defended Bouchotte; I called for the nominal appeal that Isnard might be driven from the chair; I caused it to be declared that the Parisians were worthy of their country;—that is why I am treated like a dancing-jack by Louvet. Finisterre demanded my expulsion, the city of London hopes to have me exiled, the city of Amiens wishes to have me muzzled, Coburg wants to have me arrested, and Lecointe-Puiraveau proposes to the convention to declare me mad. Ah! Citizen Danton, why did you bring me to your secret meeting, if it was not to have my advice? Did I ask you for permission to come? Far from it. I have no taste for interviews with contra-revolutionists such as Robespierre and yourself. Moreover, I ought to have expected it, you have not understood me; you no more than Robespierre, Robespierre no more than you. So there is no statesman here? you must be taught to spell politics; you must dot your *i's*. What I have said to you, means this: you are both mistaken. The danger is neither in London, as Robespierre believes; nor in Berlin, as Danton believes: it is in Paris. It is in the absence of unity, in the right that each one has to draw his own conclusions; to commence with you two, in minds grovelling in the dust, in the anarchy of wills——"

"Anarchy!" interrupted Danton, "who has caused that if not you?"

Marat did not stop.

"Robespierre, Danton, the danger is in this heap of cafés, in this heap of gaming-houses, in this heap of clubs: club of the Noirs; club of the Fédérés; club of the Dames; club of the Impartiaux, which dates from Clermont-Tonnerre, and was the monarchical club of 1790; a social circle conceived by the priest, Claude Fauché; club of the Bonnets de Laine, founded by the gazeteer, Prudhomme, et cætera; without counting your club of the Jacobins, Robespierre; and your club of the Cordeliers, Danton. The danger is in the famine which caused the bag-porter Blin to hang the baker of the market Palu, François Denis, to the lantern of the Hôtel de Ville, and in the justice which hung the bag-porter Blin for having hung the baker Denis. The danger is in the paper money, which is depreciating. An assignat of a hundred francs fell on the ground in Rue du Temple, and a passer-by, a man of the people, said: 'It is not worth the trouble of picking it up.' The stockjobbers and the monopolists, there lies the danger! To hang the black flag from the Hôtel de Ville, a fine step! You arrest the Baron of Trenck, that is not enough. I would have the neck of that old prison intriguer wrung. Do you think you have escaped from the difficulty because the president of the Convention placed a civic crown on the head of Labertèche, who received forty-one sabre cuts at Jemmapes, and whose eulogist, Chénier became? Comedies and jugglery. Ah! you do not look at Paris! Ah! you look for the danger from afar, when it is near at hand. What good does your police do, Robespierre? For you have your spies: Payan, in the Commune; Coffinhal, in the Revolutionary Tribunal; David, in the Committee of General Safety; Couthon, in the Committee of Public Welfare. You see that I am informed. Well, know this: the danger is above your heads, the danger is under your feet; conspiracy, conspiracy, conspiracy; the people in the streets read the papers together, and shake their heads at one another; six thousand men, without tickets of civism—returned refugees, Muscadins, and Mathevons,—are concealed in cellars and attics, and in the wooden galleries of the Palais-Royal; people form a line in the baker's shop; good women wring their hands on the doorsteps, saying: 'When shall we have peace?' It is of no use for you to shut yourselves up in the hall of the Executive Counsel to be by yourselves, for all that you say is known;

and to prove it, Robespierre, here are the words you said last evening to Saint-Just: 'Barbaroux is beginning to have a big belly, which will hinder him in his flight.' Yes, the danger is everywhere, and, above all, at the centre. In Paris the ex-nobles plot, the patriots go barefooted, the aristocrats, arrested the ninth of March, are already released. The splendid horses, which ought to be put to the cannons on the frontier, spatter us in the streets; bread is worth three francs, twelve sous for four pounds, the theatres play immoral pieces, and Robespierre will have Danton guillotined."

"Ugh!" said Danton.

Robespierre examined the map attentively.

"What we need," cried Marat, abruptly, "is a dictator. Robespierre, you know that I want a dictator."

Robespierre raised his head.

"I know, Marat, either you or me."

"I or you," said Marat.

Danton muttered, between his teeth,—

"The dictatorship, try it!"

Marat saw Danton's frown.

"Wait," he added. "One last effort. Let us come to some agreement. The situation is worth the trouble. Haven't we already come to an agreement about the thirty-first of May? The question as a whole is more serious than Girondism, which is a question of detail. There is truth in what you say; but the truth, the whole truth, the real truth, is what I say. In the South, Federalism; in the West, Royalism; in Paris, the duel of the Convention and the Commune; on the frontiers, the retreat of Custine, and the treason of Dumouriez. What does it all amount to? Dismemberment. What do we need? Union. Our safety lies in that; but we must make haste. Paris must take the management of the Revolution. If we lose an hour, the Vendéans may be at Orleans, and the Prussians in Paris to-morrow. I grant you this, Danton; I yield that to you, Robespierre. So be it. Well, the conclusion is the dictatorship. Let us take the dictatorship, and let us three represent the Revolution. We are the three heads of Cerberus. Of these three heads, one speaks, that is you, Robespierre; the other roars, that is you, Danton——"

"The other bites," said Danton; "that is you, Marat."

"All three bite," said Robespierre.

There was a silence. Then the conversation, full of portentous repartees, began again.

"Listen, Marat; before marrying, we must become acquainted. How did you know what I said yesterday to Saint-Just?"

"That concerns me, Robespierre."

"Marat!"

"It is my duty to enlighten myself, and it is my business to keep myself informed."

"Marat!"

"I love knowledge."

"Marat!"

"Robespierre, I know what you said to Saint-Just, as I know what Danton said to Lacroix; as I know what happens on the Quai des Théatins, in the mansion of Labriffe, a den where the nymphs of emigration repair; as I know what takes place in the houses of the Thilles, near Gonesse, belonging to Valmerange, former administrator of the posts, where Maury and Cazalès used to go, where Sieyès and Vergniaud have gone since, and where now a certain one goes once a week."

As he said "a certain one," Marat looked at Danton.

Danton exclaimed,—

"If I had two atoms of power, this would be terrible."

Marat continued,—

"I know what you said, Robespierre, as I know what happened in the tower of the Temple, when they fattened Louis XVI. there so well, that in the month of September alone, the wolf, the she-wolf, and the cubs ate eighty-six baskets of peaches. At the same time, the people were starving. I know this as I know that Roland was hidden in a house looking out on a back court in Rue de la Harpe; as I know that six hundred pikes of the fourteenth of July were made by Faure, the Duke of Orléans's locksmith; as I know what was done at the house of Saint-Hilaire, Sillery's mistress; on days when there was to be a ball, old Sillery himself rubbed chalk on the floors of the yellow drawing-room in Rue Neuve-des-Mathurin; Buzot and Kersaint dined there. Saladin dined there the twenty-seventh, and with whom, Robespierre? With your friend, Lasource."

"Words, words," murmured Robespierre. "Lasource is not my friend."

And he added thoughtfully,—

"Meanwhile, there are eighteen manufactories of false assignats in London."

Marat continued in a calm voice, but with a slight trembling, which was alarming,—

"You are the *Faction des Importants*. Yes, I know it all, in spite of what Saint-Just calls 'State silence.' "

Marat emphasized these words, looked at Robespierre and went on to say,—

"I know what is said at your table when Lebas invites David to eat the cooking of his betrothed, Elizabeth Duplay, your future sister-in-law, Robespierre. I am the enormous eye of the people, and from the depths of my cellar I look on. Yes, I see; yes, I hear; yes, I know. Little things content you. You admire yourself. Robespierre courts the admiration of his Madame de Chalabre, the daughter of the Marquis de Chalabre, who played whist with Louis XV. the evening of Damiens' execution. Yes, people carry their heads high. Saint-Just lives in a cravat. Legendre is proper, new overcoat and white vest, and a shirt frill to make one forget his apron. Robespierre imagines that history will care to know that he had on an olive frock coat at the Constituante, and a sky-blue coat at the Convention. He has his portrait all over the walls of his room—"

Robespierre interrupted him in a voice even more calm than Marat's.

"And you, Marat, you have yours in all the sewers."

They continued in a conversational tone, the slowness of which emphasized their replies and repartees, and added a strange irony to the threats.

"Robespierre, you have termed those who desire the overthrow of thrones, the 'Don Quixotes of the human race.'"

"And you, Marat, after the fourth of August, in number 559 of your *Ami du Peuple,*—Ah, I have kept the number, it will be useful,—you have asked to have the nobles receive their titles back again. You said: 'A duke is always a duke.'"

"Robespierre, in the meeting of the seventh of December, you said to Garat: 'I am weary of the Revolution.'"

"Just as my brother defended you, Marat, when you were attacked at the Jacobins. What does that prove? Nothing."

"Robespierre, we know the cabinet of the Tuileries, where you said to Garat: 'I am weary of the Revolution.'"

"Marat, it was here in this public-house, that you embraced Barbaroux, the twenty-ninth of October."

"Robespierre, you said to Buzot: 'What is the Republic?'"

"Marat, it was in this public-house that you invited three men from Marseilles to breakfast with you."

"Robespierre, you have a strong marketman, armed with a cudgel, to escort you."

"And you, Marat, the day before the tenth of August, you asked Buzot to help you escape to Marseilles, disguised as a jockey."

"In September, when the courts were in session, you hid yourself, Robespierre."

"And you, Marat, you displayed yourself."

"Robespierre, you flung the red cap on the ground."

"Yes, when a traitor hung it up. What adorns Dumouriez, defiles Robespierre."

"Robespierre, you refused to veil Louis XVI.'s head, while the soldiers were passing by."

"I did better than to veil his head, I cut it off."

Danton interfered, but as oil interferes in fire.

"Robespierre, Marat, calm yourselves."

Marat did not like to be named second. He turned round.

"Why does Danton meddle in this?" he said.

"Why do I meddle? For this reason. To prevent fratricide; to prevent a quarrel between two men who serve the people; because there is enough foreign war, because there is enough civil war, and because there will be too much domestic war; because it was I who brought about the Revolution, and I do not want it spoiled. That is why I am meddling."

Marat replied without raising his voice,—

"You had better meddle with making your accounts."

"My accounts!" exclaimed Danton. "Go ask for them in the defiles of Argonne, in Champagne delivered, in conquered Belgium, in the armies where I have already four times exposed my breast to bullets! Go ask for them in the Place de la Révolution, on the scaffold of the twenty-first of January, on the throne abolished, on the guillotine, that widow—"

Marat interrupted Danton.

"The guillotine is a virgin; men lie with her, but she does not become fruitful."

"What do you know about it, Danton? I would make her pregnant!"

"We shall see," said Marat.

And he smiled.

Danton saw this smile.

"Marat," he exclaimed, "you are a sneak, I am a man for open air and daylight. I hate the life of a reptile. It would not suit me to be a wood-louse. You live in a cellar; I live in the street. You have nothing to say to anybody; any passer-by can see me and speak to me."

"Pretty boy, will you come up where I live?" muttered Marat.

And ceasing to smile, he assumed a peremptory tone.

"Danton, give account of the thirty-three thousand crowns, ready money, that Montmorin paid to you in the name of the king, under pretext of indemnifying you in your capacity of attorney at the Châtelet."

"I was concerned with the fourteenth of July," said Danton, haughtily.

"And the Garde-Meuble? and the crown diamonds?"

"I was concerned with the sixth of October."

"And the plunder committed by your *alter ego,* Lacroix, in Belgium?"

"I was concerned with the twentieth of June."

"And the loans made à la Montansier?"

"I impelled the people to the return from Varennes."

"And the opera house, built with money furnished by you?"

"I armed the sections of Paris."

"And the hundred thousand francs, the secret funds of the Minister of Justice?"

"I caused the tenth of August."

"And the two millions for the Assembly's secret expenses, of which you took a fourth?"

"I stopped the marching enemy and prevented the allied kings from passing."

"Prostitute!" said Marat.

Danton rose.

"Yes," he cried, "I am a harlot, I have sold my body, but I have saved the world."

Robespierre began to bite his nails. He could neither laugh nor smile. Laughing, Danton's lightning, and smiling, Marat's sting, were left out of him.

Danton replied,—

"I am like the ocean; I have my ebb and flow; at low tide my shallow places appear, at high tide my billows are seen."

"Your froth," said Marat.

"My tempest," said Danton.

Marat had risen at the same time as Danton. He too burst forth. The adder suddenly became a dragon.

"Ah!" he cried, "ah, Robespierre! ah, Danton! You are now willing to listen to me! Well, I tell you, you are lost. Your policy results in the impossibility to go any farther;

there is no exit for you; and you have managed to close all the doors before you, except that of the grave."

"That is our greatness," said Danton.

And he shrugged his shoulders.

Marat continued,—

"Danton, take care. Vergniaud, too, has a large mouth, thick lips, and an angry frown; Vergniaud, too, is pock-marked like Mirabeau and like you; that did not prevent the thirty-first of May. Ah! you shrug your shoulders. Sometimes shrugging the shoulders shakes off one's head. Danton, I tell you, your harsh voice, your loose necktie, your Hessian boots, your little suppers, your big pockets, all look to Louisette."

Louisette was the pet name Marat gave to the guillotine.

He continued,—

"And as for you, Robespierre, you are a Modérée, but that will not do you any good. Go, powder yourself, dress your hair, play the coxcomb, wear fine linen, prink, and be curled and painted, but you will go to Place-de-Grève, all the same; read Brunswick's declaration; still you will be treated like the regicide Damiens, and you will look as fine as a new pin while waiting to be quartered alive."

"Echo of Coblentz," said Robespierre between his teeth.

"Robespierre, I am not an echo of anything, I am the outcry of all. Ah! you are young. How old are you, Danton? Thirty-four years. How old are you, Robespierre? Thirty-three. Well, as for me, I have always been alive; I am suffering humanity, I am six thousand years old."

"That is true," replied Danton, "for six thousand years, Cain has been preserved in hatred like a toad in a stone. The rock is broken, and Cain leaps forth among men, and that is Marat."

"Danton!" exclaimed Marat, and a livid light appeared in his eyes.

"Well, what?" said Danton.

Thus these three terrible men went on talking. A quarrel of thunderbolts.

CHAPTER III

THE THRILL OF HIDDEN CHORDS

There was a lull in the conversation; for a moment these Titans each became lost in thought. Lions are disturbed by hydras. Robespierre had grown very pale, and Danton very red. Both trembled. The light died out of Marat's eye; a calmness, an imperious calmness came over the face of this man, the terror of the terrible."

Danton felt that he was conquered, but was unwilling to admit it. He resumed,—

"Marat talks very loud about dictatorship and unity, but he has only one power, that of dissolution."

Robespierre compressed his thin lips, and added,—

"I am of the opinion of Anacharsis Cloots; I say neither Roland nor Marat."

"And for my part," replied Marat, "I say, neither Danton nor Robespierre."

He looked steadily at both and added,—

"Let me give you some advice, Danton. You are in love, you think of marrying again, don't meddle any more with politics, be wise!"

And stepping back towards the door to go out, he gave them this ominous farewell.

"Adieu, gentlemen."

Danton and Robespierre shuddered.

At the same time, a voice rose from the other end of the room, saying,—

"You are wrong, Marat."

All turned round. During Marat's outburst, some one had come in by the rear door, without their notice.

"It is you, Citizen Cimourdain," said Marat. "Good evening."

It was Cimourdain, indeed.

"I say that you are wrong, Marat," he repeated.

Marat turned green, which was his way of growing pale.

Cimourdain added,—

"You are useful, but Robespierre and Danton are necessary. Why do you threaten them? Union, union, citizen! the people want to be united."

This coming in had the effect of cold water, and like the arrival of a stranger in the midst of a family quarrel, it calmed at least the surface, if not the depths.

Cimourdain stepped towards the table.

Danton and Robespierre knew him. They had often noticed in the public tribunes of the Convention, this powerful but obscure man whom the people saluted. Robespierre, always inclined to formality, asked,—

"Citizen, how did you get in?"

"He belongs to the Évêché," replied Marat, in a voice with a strange touch of submission in it.

Marat defied the Convention, led the Commune, and feared the Évêché.

This is a law.

Mirabeau felt Robespierre moving at an unknown depth, Robespierre felt Marat moving, Marat felt Hébert moving, Hébert felt Babeuf moving. As long as the strata underground are quiet, the political man may walk along, but under the most revolutionary there is a subsoil, and the bravest stop in alarm when they feel beneath their feet the movement that they have caused above their heads.

To know how to distinguish the agitation arising from covetousness, from the agitation arising from principles, to fight the one and aid the other, in this lies the genius and the power of great revolutionary leaders.

Danton saw that Marat was yielding.

"Oh! Citizen Cimourdain is welcome," he said.

And he held out his hand to Cimourdain. Then he said,—

"Parbleu, let us explain the situation to Citizen Cimourdain. He comes at just the right moment. I represent the Mountain, Robespierre represents the Committee of Public Welfare, Marat represents the Commune, Cimourdain represents the Évêché. He shall be our umpire."

"So be it," said Cimourdain, solemnly and simply. "What is the question?"

"About la Vendée," replied Robespierre.

"La Vendée!" said Cimourdain.

And he added,—

"There lies the great danger. If the Revolution comes to naught, it will come to naught through la Vendée. One Vendée is more to be feared than ten Germanys. For France to live, Vendée must be killed."

These few words won Robespierre.

Robespierre, however, put this question,—

"Were you not formerly a priest?"

His priestly air did not escape Robespierre. He recognized by his exterior what was in the man.

Cimourdain replied: "Yes, citizen."

"What of that?" exclaimed Danton. "When priests are good, they are worth more than other men. In times of revolution, priests are melted up into men, as bells into money and cannons. Danjou is a priest, Daunou is a priest, Thomas Lindet is bishop of Evreux. Robespierre, you sit at the Convention side by side with Massieu, Bishop of Beauvais. The grand-vicar Vaugeois belonged to the Committee of Insurrection of the tenth of August. Chabot is a Capuchin. It was Dom Gerle who invented the oath of the tennis court; it was the Abbé Audran who caused the National Assembly to be declared superior to the king; it was the Abbé Goutte who asked the Legislature to have the dais taken away from Louis XVI.'s arm-chair; it was the Abbé Grégoire who provoked the abolition of royalty."

"Supported by the player, Collot-d'Herbois," sneered Marat. "The two together did the work; the priest overthrew the throne, the comedian threw down the king."

"Let us return to la Vendée," said Robespierre.

"Well," asked Cimourdain, "what is the matter there? What is this Vendée doing?"

Robespierre replied,—

"She has a chief. She is going to be tremendous."

"Who is this chief, Citizen Robespierre?"

"He is a former Marquis de Lantenac, who calls himself Prince of Brittany."

Cimourdain started.

"I know him," he said. "I have been a priest at his house."

He thought for a moment, and then added,—

"He was fond of women before he became a warrior."

"Like Biron, who was a Lauzun," said Danton.

And Cimourdain added thoughtfully,—

"Yes, he was formerly a man of pleasure. He must be terrible."

"Frightful," said Robespierre. "He burns villages, puts an end to the wounded, massacres the prisoners, shoots the women."

"The women?"

"Yes, among others he had a mother of three children shot. Nobody knows what became of the children. Besides he is a captain. He understands warfare."

"To be sure," replied Cimourdain. "He was in the war with Hanover, and the soldiers said: 'Richelieu uppermost, Lantenac at the bottom.' Lantenac was the real general. Talk about him to your colleague, Dussaulx."

Robespierre remained thoughtful for a moment, then the conversation continued between him and Cimourdain.

"Well, Citizen Cimourdain, this man is in Vendée."

"How long has he been there?"

"Three weeks."

"He must be outlawed."

"That has been done."

"A price must be set on his head."

"It has been done."

"A large sum of money must be offered to the one who captures him."

"It has been done."

"Not in assignats."

"It has been done."

"In gold."

"It has been done."

"And he must be guillotined."

"It will be done."

"By whom?"

"By you."

"By me?"

"Yes, you will be commissioned by the Committee of Public Welfare with full power."

"I accept," said Cimourdain.

Robespierre was swift in his selections, a characteristic of a statesman. He took from the pile before him a sheet of white paper, with this printed heading: French Republic, one and indivisible. Committee of Public Welfare."

Cimourdain continued,—

"Yes, I accept. Terror against terror. Lantenac is cruel. I shall be cruel. War to the death against this man. I will deliver the Republic from him, so it please God."

He stopped, then added,—

"I am a priest; all the same, I believe in God."

"God has gone out of fashion."

"I believe in God," said Cimourdain, unmoved.

With a nod of the head, Robespierre gloomily assented.

Cimourdain continued,—

"To whom shall I be sent as a delegate?"

"The commandant of the reconnoitring column sent against Lantenac. Only, I warn you, he is a noble."

Danton exclaimed,—

"There is another thing that I care very little about. A noble? Well, what of it? It is the same with nobles as with priests. If they are good, they are excellent. Nobility is a prejudice, but one must not have it more in one sense than in another, not more than against it. Robespierre, isn't Saint-Just a noble? Florelle de Saint-Just. Parbleu! Anacharsis Cloots is a baron. Our friend, Charles Hesse, who never misses a meeting of the Cordeliers, is a prince, and brother of the reigning landgrave of Hesse-Rothenburg. Montaut, Marat's intimate friend, is Marquis de Montaut. In the Revolutionary tribunal, there is a member who is a priest, Vilate, and a member who is a noble, Leroy, Marquis de Montflabert. Both are trustworthy."

"And you forget," added Robespierre, "the head of the Revolutionary jury,—

"Antonelle?"

"Who is the Marquis Antonelle?" said Robespierre.

Danton added,—

"Dampierre was a nobleman, who has just given his life before Condé, for the Republic; and Beaurepaire, who blew his brains out rather than open the gates of Verdun to the Prussians, was a nobleman."

"Which does not alter the fact," growled Marat, "that the day Condorcet exclaimed, 'The Gracchi were noblemen!' Danton cried out to him: 'All noblemen are traitors, beginning with Mirabeau, and ending with yourself!'"

Cimourdain's solemn voice now rose.

"Citizen Danton, Citizen Robespierre, perhaps you are right in your confidence, but the people are distrustful, and they are not wrong in their distrust. When a priest is charged to look after a nobleman, the responsibility is increased twofold, and the priest must be inflexible."

"Certainly," said Robespierre.

Cimourdain added: "And inexorable."

Robespierre continued,—

"Well said, Citizen Cimourdain. You will have to deal with a young man. You will have the advantage over him, being twice his age. You will have to direct him, but you must manage him. It seems that he has military talents; all accounts are agreed on that point. He belongs to a corps of the army of the Rhine, which has been detached to go to Vendée. He has reached the frontier, where he is showing admirable intelligence and bravery. He is leading the reconnoitring column in a superior manner. For two weeks, he has held the old Marquis de Lantenac in check. He restrains him and drives him before him. He will end by driving him back to the sea, and overthrowing him there. Lantenac has the art of an old general, and he has the audacity of a young captain. This young man already has enemies, and some are envious of him. The Adjutant-General, Léchelle, is jealous of him."

"This Léchelle," interrupted Danton, "wants to be general in chief! he has nothing to recommend him, but a pun:* a ladder is needed to mount upon a wagon. Nevertheless, Charette is beating him."

"And he doesn't want any one but himself to beat Lantenac," contiued Robespierre. "The misfortune of the Vendéan war lies in such rivalries as these. Heroes badly commanded, that is what our soldiers are. A mere captain of hussars, Chérin, enters Saumur with a trumpet playing. "Ça ira"; he takes Saumur, and might have gone on and taken Cholet, but he had no orders, and stopped. All the commands of la Vendée ought to be changed. The body-guards are scattered, the forces dispersed; a scattered army is a paralyzed army; it is a rock ground to powder. In the camp at Paramé there are nothing but tents. Between Tréguier and Dinan there are a hundred little useless posts which might be made into a division to cover the whole coast. Léchelle, supported by Parrein, is leaving the northern coast unguarded, under pretext of protecting the southern coast, and in this way opening France to the English. To raise half a million peasants, and a descent from England on France, is Lantenac's design. The young commander of the reconnoitring column is pushing on this Lantenac at the point of the sword, and defeating him without Léchelle's permission; but Léchelle is his general; so Léchelle complains of him. Opinions concerning this young man are divided. Léchelle wants to have him shot. Prieur de la Marne wants to make him adjutant-general."

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*Il faut Léchelle pour monter sur Charette.

"This young man," said Cimourdain, "has great qualities, so it seems to me."

"But he has one fault!"

It was Marat who interrupted.

"What is it?" asked Cimourdain.

"Clemency," said Marat.

And Marat added,—

"He is decided in battle and soft-hearted afterwards. That makes him indulgent, that makes him pardon; be merciful, protect the religieuses and nuns, save the wives and the daughters of the aristocracy, release prisoners, set priests at liberty."

"A serious fault," murmured Cimourdain.

"A crime," said Marat.

"Sometimes," said Danton.

"Often," said Robespierre.

"Almost always," added Marat.

"When dealing with the enemies of one's own country, always," said Cimourdain.

Marat turned toward Cimourdain.

"And what would you do with a Republican general who gave a Royalist general his liberty?"

"I should be of Léchelle's opinion, I should have him shot."

"Or guillotined," said Marat.

"Either," said Cimourdain.

Danton began to laugh.

"I should like one as well as the other."

"You are sure to have one or the other," growled Marat.

And his eyes, leaving Danton, turned to Cimourdain.

"So, Citizen Cimourdain, if a Republican general flinches, you would have his head cut off?"

"Within twenty-four hours."

"Well," replied Marat, "I am of Robespierre's opinion; we must send Citizen Cimourdain as a delegate of the Committee of Public Welfare to the commandant of the reconnoitring column of the coast army. What is the name of this commandant?"

Robespierre replied,—

"He is a *ci-devant,* a noble."

And he began to turn over the papers.

"Let us send the priest to guard the noble," said Danton. "I distrust a priest alone; I distrust a noble alone; when they are together, I am not afraid of them; one will watch over the other, and they will do."

The expression of indignation peculiar to Cimourdain's eyebrows deepened; but, finding the observation just at bottom, he began to speak in his harsh voice, without looking toward Danton.

"If the Republican commandant who is entrusted to my care makes a false step, the penalty will be death."

Robespierre, with his eyes still on the papers, said,—

"Here is the name. Citizen Cimourdain, the commandant over whom you will have full power is a former viscount; his name is Gauvain."

Cimourdain grew pale.

"Gauvain!" he exclaimed.

Marat noticed Cimourdain's pale face.

"The Viscount Gauvain!" repeated Cimourdain.

"Yes," said Robespierre.

"Well?" said Marat, fixing his eye on Cimourdain.

There was a pause. Then Marat said,—

"Citizen Cimourdain, on the conditions named by yourself, do you accept the mission of delegate to the commandant, Gauvain? Is it agreed?"

"Agreed," said Cimourdain.

He grew paler and paler.

Robespierre took the pen near him, wrote in his slow and formal handwriting four lines on the sheet of paper with the heading, "COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC WELFARE," signed it, and passed the sheet and the pen to Danton; Danton signed it; and then Marat, who did not take his eyes from Cimourdain's pale face, signed it after Danton.

Robespierre took the sheet of paper again, dated it, and gave it to Cimourdain, who read,—

"YEAR II OF THE REPUBLIC.

"Full power is granted to Citizen Cimourdain, delegated commissioner from the Committee of Public Welfare to Citizen Gauvain, commandant of the reconnoitring column of the coast army.

"ROBESPIERRE. — DANTON. — MARAT."

And below these signatures,—

"Twenty-eighth of June, 1793."

The Revolutionary Calendar, called the Civil Calendar, was not in existence legally at this period, and was not adopted by the Convention, according to the proposition of Romme, till the fifth of October, 1793.

Marat watched Cimourdain while he read the paper.

Marat said in an undertone, as if speaking to himself: "All that will have to be specified by a decree of the Convention, or by a special resolution of the Committee of Public Welfare. There is something yet to be done."

"Citizen Cimourdain," asked Robespierre, "where do you live?"

"Court of Commerce."

"Wait; so do I," said Danton; "you are my neighbor."

Robespierre added,—

"There is not a moment to be lost. To-morrow you will receive your commission in due form, signed by all the members of the Committee of Public Welfare. This is a confirmation of the commission which will accredit you especially with the active representatives Phillippeaux, Prieur de la Marne, Lecointre, Alquier, and others. We know who you are. Your powers are unlimited. You can make Gauvain general or send him to the scaffold. You will have your commission to-morrow at three o'clock. When will you start?"

"At four o'clock," said Cimourdain.

And they separated.

On his way home, Marat informed Simonne Evrard that he should go to the Convention the following day.

BOOK THIRD

THE CONVENTION.

CHAPTER I

THE CONVENTION

We are approaching the mountain top.

Here is the Convention.

The attention must be fixed on this summit.

Never did anything higher appear on man's horizon.

There is Mt. Himalaya, and there is the Convention.

The Convention is perhaps the culminating point in history.

During the lifetime of the Convention, for it lived as an assembly, people did not realize its significance. Its grandeur was exactly what escaped the contemporaries; they were too much frightened to be dazzled. There is a sacred horror about everything grand. It is easy to admire mediocrity and hills; but whatever is too lofty, a genius as well as a mountain, an assembly as well as a masterpiece, seen too near, is appalling. Every summit seems an exaggeration. Climbing wearies. The steepnesses take away one's breath; we slip on the slopes, we are hurt by the sharp points which are its beauty; the foaming torrents betray the precipices, clouds hide the mountain tops; mounting is full of terror, as well as a fall. Hence, there is more dismay than admiration. People have a strange feeling of aversion to anything grand. They see abysses, they do not see sublimity; they see the monster, they do not see the prodigy. Thus the Convention was judged at first. The Convention was measured by the shortsighted, when it was made to be contemplated by eagles.

To-day it is in perspective, and it stands out against the deep sky in a serene and tragic distance—the immense profile of the Revolution.

II

The fourteenth of July gave it birth.

The tenth of August thundered it forth.

The twenty-first of September founded it.

The twenty-first of September, the equinox, the equilibrium, Libra. The balance. In accordance with Romme's suggestion, it was under this sign of Equality and Justice that the Republic was proclaimed. A constellation announced its coming.

The Convention is the first avatar of the people. With the Convention, the great new page is turned, and the future of to-day begins.

Every idea must have a visible covering; every principle must have a dwelling-place; a church is God within four walls; every dogma must have a temple. When the Convention came into existence, there was a first problem to be solved: where to locate the Convention.

First, the Ménage was taken, then the Tuileries. A framework was raised, with scenery, a great camaieu, painted by David, seats systematically arranged, a square tribune, parallel pilasters, with socles like blocks, and long rectilinear stems, rectangular alveoles, where the multitude crowded, and which were called public tribunes; a Roman velarium, Greek draperies, and within these right angles and these straight lines the Convention was established; in this geometrical space the tempest was confined. On the tribune, the red cap was painted in gray. The Royalists began by laughing at this gray red cap, this artificial hall, this monument of pasteboard, this sanctuary of papier-maché, this pantheon of mud and spittle. How quickly all that was to disappear! The columns were of barrel staves, the arches of batten, the bas-reliefs of mastic, the entablatures were of deal boards; the statues were made of plaster, the marbles were paint, the walls were linen; and out of this temporary structure, France has made an everlasting institution.

When the Convention held its sessions in the hall of the Ménage, the walls were completed, covered with notices which had flooded Paris at the time of the return from Varennes. One read thus: "The king returns; whoever cheers him will be beaten, whoever insults him will be hanged." Another, thus: "Peace. Hats on the head. He is going to pass before his judges." Another, thus: "The king has aimed at the nation. He has hung fire; it is the nation's turn to shoot now." Another: "Law! Law!" It was within these walls that the Convention judged Louis XVI.

At the Tuileries, where the Convention began to sit on the tenth of May, 1793, and which was called the National Palace, the place of assembly occupied the entire space between the Pavillon de l'Horloge, called Pavilion of Unity, and the Pavillon Marsan, called Pavilion of Liberty. The Pavillon de Flore was called the Pavilion of Equality. The assembly hall was reached by the grand staircase of Jean Bullant. Under the second story occupied by the assembly, the entire ground floor of the palace was a sort of long guardroom, filled with bundles and camp beds of the armed troops which watched over the Convention. The assembly had a guard of honor, called the "grenadiers of the Convention."

A tricolored ribbon separated the castle, where the assembly was held, from the garden where the people came and went.

III

Let us finish describing the hall where the sessions were held. Everything about that terrible place is full of interest.

What struck one's notice on entering was a lofty statue of Liberty, standing between two large windows.

Forty-two metres long, ten metres wide, eleven metres high, these were the dimensions of what had once been the theatre of the king, and which was to be the theatre of the Revolution. The elegant, magnificent hall built by Vigarani for the courtiers disappeared beneath the rough timber-work which in '93 supported the weight of the people. This framework on which the public tribunes were erected, had for its only point of support, a single post, a detail worthy of note. This post was in one single piece, and was ten metres in length. Few caryatides have accomplished as much as this post; for years it held up the weight of the Revolution. It bore cheering, enthusiasm, insults, noise, tumult, the immense chaos of anger, riot. It never gave way. After the Convention, it saw the Conseil des Anciens. The eighteenth Brumaire relieved it.

Percier then replaced the wooden pillar with columns of marble, which were less durable.

The ideal of architecture is sometimes strange; the architect of the Rue de Rivoli had the trajectory of a cannon-ball for his ideal, the architect of Carlsruhe had a fan for his ideal; a gigantic bureau drawer seems to have been the ideal of the architect who planned the hall where the Convention first sat the tenth of May, 1793; it was long, high, and flat. On one of the long sides of the parallelogram was a wide semicircle; this was the amphitheatre, with seats for the representatives, but without tables or desk; Garan-Coulon, who wrote much, wrote on his knee; opposite the seats was the tribune; in front of the tribune, a bust of Lepelletier-Saint-Fargeau; behind the tribune, the president's armchair.

The head of the bust came a little above the edge of the tribune, which caused its removal later on.

The amphitheatre was composed of nineteen semicircular benches, rising one behind another; portions of the benches prolonged the amphitheatre into the two corners.

Below, in the horseshoe at the foot of the tribune, stood the ushers.

On one side of the tribune, in a black wooden frame, was fastened to the wall a placard nine feet high; bearing on two pages, separated by a sort of sceptre, the declaration of the rights of man; on the other side was an empty space which was filled later by a similar frame containing the constitution of the year II., the two pages of which were separated by a sword. Above the tribune, above the head of the orator, from a deep box divided into two compartments, filled with people, fluttered three great tricolored flags, resting almost horizontally on an altar bearing this word "LAW." Behind this altar rose, like the sentinel of free speech, an enormous Roman fasces, as tall as a column. Colossal statues straight against the wall, faced the representatives. The president had Lycurgas on his right and Solon on his left, above the Mountain was Plato.

The pedestals of these statues were simple dies, placed on a long, projecting cornice extending all around the hall and separating the people from the assembly. The spectators leaned their elbows on this cornice.

The black wooden frame containing the rights of man, reached to the cornice and cut into the design of the entablature, breaking the straight line; this caused Chabot to complain. "It is ugly," he said to Vadier.

The heads of the statues were crowned alternately with wreaths of oak and laurel.

A green drapery, painted with similar crowns in a darker shade of green, fell in deep, straight folds from the cornice of the periphery, and entirely covered the wall of the lower part of the hall occupied by the assembly. Above this drapery, the wall was white and cold. In this wall, as if hollowed out with a punch, with neither moulding nor foliage were two rows of public tribunes, square at the base and round at the top; according to the rule, for Vitruvius was not dethroned; the archivaults were superimposed on the architraves. There were ten tribunes on each of the long sides of the hall, and at each of the two ends two huge boxes; in all, twenty-four. Into these the multitudes flocked.

The spectators in the lower row of tribunes overflowed on all the gunnels, and formed in groups on all the reliefs of the architecture. A long iron bar, securely fastened breast high, served as a railing for the upper tribunes and protected the spectators from the crowding of the throngs coming up the staircase. Once, however, a man was pushed over into the assembly; he fell a little on Massieu, bishop of Beauvais, and so was not killed, and said: "Well! so a bishop is really good for something!"

The hall of the Convention could hold two thousand people; on days of insurrection, three thousand.

The convention had two sessions, one in the daytime, one in the evening.

The back of the president's chair was round, decorated with gilt nails. His table rested on four winged monsters with a single foot, that seemed to have come out of the Apocalypse to be present at the Revolution. They looked as if they had been taken out of Ezekiel's chariot to draw Samson's tumbrel.

On the president's table there was a great bell, almost as large as a church bell, a large copper inkstand, and a folio volume bound in parchment, which contained the official reports.

Decapitated heads, borne on the end of a pike, dripped blood on this table.

The tribune was reached by means of nine steps. These steps were high, steep, and difficult to mount; Gensonné stumbled one day as he was ascending them. "They are scaffold stairs!" he said. "Serve your apprenticeship," exclaimed Carrier.

In the corners of the hall, where the wall seemed too bare, the architect had placed fasces for ornamentation, with the axe outside.

On the right and on the left of the tribune, there were pedestals bearing two candelabra twelve feet high, each with four pairs of lamps. Each public box had similar candelabra. On the pedestals of these candelabra there were carved circles, which the people called "guillotine collars."

The seats of the Assembly rose almost to the cornice of the tribunes; the representatives and the people could converse together.

The exits of the tribunes opened into a labyrinth of corridors, usually filled with a furious din.

The Convention crowded the palace and overflowed into the neighboring mansions, Hôtel de Longueville and Hôtel de Coigny. Hôtel de Coigny was where the royal furniture was removed after the tenth of August, if a letter of Lord Bradford's can be believed. It took two months to dismantle the Tuileries.

The committee had their quarters in the vicinity of the hall; the Committees of Legislature, Agriculture, and Commerce were in the Pavillon Égalité; those of the Marine, Colonies, Finance, Assignats and Public Welfare in the Pavillon Liberté. The Committee of War was in the Pavillon Unité.

The Committee of General Safety communicated directly with the Committee of Public Welfare by means of a dark passage lighted day and night by a reflector, where the spies of every party came and went. People never spoke there.

The bar of the Convention was several times removed. Usually, it was at the president's right hand.

At the ends of the hall, the vertical partitions which closed the concentric semi-circles of the amphitheatre, left between them and the wall two narrow, deep lobbies from which opened two dark square doors. These were means of entrance and exit.

The representatives entered the hall directly by a door opening from the Terrace des Feuillants.

This hall, dimly lighted in the daytime by small windows, poorly lighted in the evening with ghastly lamps, had a strange nocturnal gloom about it. This dim illumination, together with the evening shades, made the sessions by lamplight dismal. The people could not see each other; from one end of the hall to the other, from right to left, groups of indistinct faces insulted each other. People met without recognizing one another. One day as Laignelot was hurrying to the tribune he ran against some one in the inclined passage. "Beg pardon, Robespierre," he said. "Whom do you take me for?" replied a harsh voice. "Beg pardon, Marat," said Laignelot.

Two of the lower tribunes, to the right and left of the president were reserved, for strange to say, there were privileged spectators at the Convention. These were the only tribunes having any drapery. In the centre of the architrave this drapery was caught up by two gold tassels. The tribunes for the people were bare.

The effect of all this was intense, savage, regular. Savage correctness; this is a suggestion of the whole Revolution. The hall of the Convention offers the most complete specimen of what artists have since called "architecture Messidor"; it was massive and slender. The builders of that period took symmetry for beauty. The last word of the Renaissance had been spoken under Louis XV., and a reaction followed. The noble in art had been carried to insipidity, and purity to monotony. There is such a thing as prudery in architecture. After the dazzling orgies in form and color of the eighteenth century, art was put on a diet, and allowed nothing but the straight line. This sort of progress ended in ugliness. Art reduced to a skeleton, was the result. This was the disadvantage of this kind of wisdom and abstinence; the style was so sober that it became lean.

Setting aside all political feeling, and looking at it from an architectural point of view, there was something about this hall that made one shiver. One recalled confusedly, the former theatre, the garlanded boxes, its blue and crimson ceiling, its facetted chandeliers, its girandoles, with diamond reflections, its dove-colored hangings, its profusion of cupids and nymphs on the curtains and draperies, the whole royal and erotic idyl painted, carved and gilded, which had filled this stern place with its smile, and one saw all about him these hard right angles, cold and sharp as steel; it was something like Boucher guillotined by David.

IV

Whoever saw the Assembly never gave a second thought to the hall. Whoever saw the drama gave no thought to the theatre. Nothing was more deformed, nor more sublime. A pile of heroes, a herd of cowards. Wild beasts on a mountain, reptiles in a marsh. There swarmed, jostled, challenged, threatened, fought and lived, all those combatants who are to-day but phantoms.

A gathering of Titans.

On the right, the Gironde,—a legion of thinkers; on the left the Mountain,—a group of athletes. On one side, Buissot, who received the keys of the Bastille; Barbaroux, whom the Marseilles troops obeyed; Kervélégan, who had the battalion of Brest garrisoned in the Faubourg Saint-Marceau, under his hand; Gersonné, who established the supremacy of representatives over generals; the fatal Guadet, to whom the queen showed the sleeping dauphin one night at the Tuileries, Guadet kissed the child's forehead and caused the father to lose his head; Salles, the fanciful denouncer of the intimacies between the Mountain and Austria; Sillery, the humpback of the Right, as Couthon was the cripple of the Left. Lause-Duperret, who when called a "rascal" by a journalist, invited him to dine with him, saying: "I know that rascal means simply a man who does not think as we do"; Rabaut-Saint-Étienne, who commenced his Almanac of 1790 with these words: "The Revolution is ended"; Quinette, one of those who overthrew Louis XVI.; the Jansenist Camus, who framed the civil constitution of the clergy, believed in the miracles of the deacon Pâris, and knelt down every night before a Christ seven feet high, nailed against the wall of his room; Fauchet, a priest who, with Camille Desmoulins, caused the fourteenth of July; Isnard, who committed the crime of saying "Paris will be destroyed," at the same moment that Brunswick said: "Paris will be burned"; Jacob Dupont, the first one to exclaim, "I am an Atheist," and to whom Robespierre replied: "Atheism is aristocratic"; Lanjuinais, a stern, wise, and brave Breton; Ducos, the Euryalus of Boyer-Fonfrède; Rebecqui, the Pylades of Barbaroux, Rebecqui gave in his resignation because Robespierre had not been guillotined; Richaud, who fought the permanency of the Sections; Lasource, who uttered this murderous apophthegm: "Woe to thankful nations!" and who afterwards at the foot of the scaffold, was to contradict himself by hurling this proud speech at those of the Mountain: "We die because the people are asleep, and you will die because the people will awaken;" Biroteau, who had the abolition of inviolability decreed, and was thus unconsciously the forger of the chopping-knife, and erected the scaffold for himself; Charles Villatte, who shielded his conscience behind this protestation: "I do not wish to vote under the knife"; Louvet, the author of *Faublas,* who was to end as a bookseller in the Palais Royal with Lodoïska behind the counter; Mercier, the author of the "Tableau de Paris," who exclaimed: "Every king felt for the nape of his neck the twenty-first of January"; Marec, whose anxiety was the faction of ancient boundaries; the journalist Carra, who said to the executioner at the foot of the scaffold: "It annoys me to die. I should have liked to see what follows"; Vigée, who had the title of grenadier in the second battalion of Mayence-et-Loire, who, when threatened by the public tribunes, cried out: "I ask that at the first murmur of the public tribunes, we withdraw and march to Versailles, sword in hand!" Buzot, destined to die of hunger; Valazé, victim of his own dagger; Condorcet, who was to die at Bourg-la-Reine, changed to Bourg-Égalite, denounced by the Horace he carried in his pocket; Pétion, whose fate was to be worshipped by the multitude in 1792, and devoured by the wolves in 1794; twenty others besides, Pontécoulant, Marboz, Lidon, Saint-Martin, Dussaulx, the translator of "Juvenal," who took part in the campaign of Hanover; Boileau, Bertrand, Lesterp-Beauvais, Lesage, Gomaire, Gardien, Mainville, Duplantier, Lacaze, Antiboul, and at their head a Barnave called Vergniaud.

On the other side, Antoine-Louis-Léon Florelle de Saint-

Just, pale, with a low forehead, regular profile, mysterious eye, exceedingly melancholy, twenty-three years of age; Merlin de Thionville, whom the Germans called Feuer-Teufel, "fire-devil"; Merlin de Douai, the guilty author of the "Law of the Suspected"; Soubrany, whom the people of Paris, on the first Prairial* asked to have for a general; the former priest Lebon, holding a sword in his hand which had once scattered holy water; Billaud-Varennes, who foresaw the magistracy of the future, no judges but arbiters; Fabre d'Églantine, who made a charming discovery, the Republican calendar, just as Rouget de Lisle had a sublime inspiration, the Marseillaise, and neither were guilty of a second offence; the attorney of the Commune, who said: "A dead king is not a man less"; Goujon, who entered Tripstadt, Newstadt, and Spire, and saw the Prussian army flee; Lacroix, a lawyer turned general, made chevalier de Saint-Louis six days before the tenth of August; Fréron Thersite, son of Fréron-Zoïle; Ruth the inexorable investigator of the iron press, destined for a great Republican suicide:—he was to kill himself the day the Republic died; Fouché, with the soul of a demon, and the face of a corpse; Camboulas, the friend of Father Duchesne, who said to Guillotin: "You belong to the club of the Feuillants, but your daughter belongs to the club of the Jacobins; Jagot, who gave this savage reply to those complaining about the nakedness of the prisoner; "A prison is a garment of stone"; Javogues, the terrible spoiler of the tombs of Saint-Denis; Osselin, the proscriber, who hid in his house Madame Charry, one of the proscribed; Bentabolle, who, when he presided, made signs to the tribune to cheer or to hoot; the journalist Robert, the husband of Mademoiselle Kéralio, who wrote: "Neither Robespierre nor Marat come to my house; Robespierre may come whenever he wishes; Marat never"; Garan-Coulon, who had proudly demanded, when Spain interposed in the trial of Louis XVI., that the Assembly should not condescend to read a letter from a king in

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*** The first Prairial occurred on May 20, 1793. — *Tr.***

behalf of a king; Grégoire at first a worthy bishop of the Primitive Church, but who afterwards under the Empire obliterated the Republican Grégoire with Count Grégoire; Amar, who said,—

"The whole earth condemns Louis XVI. To whom then shall we appeal for judgment? To the planets?"

Rouyer, who was opposed to having the cannon fired from the Pont-Neuf, the twenty-first of January, saying,—

"A king's head will not make any more noise in falling than the head of any other man;" Chénier, André's brother; Vadier, one of those who laid a pistol on the tribune; Tanis, who said to Momoro,—

"I want Marat and Robespierre to embrace each other at my table in my house."

"Where do you live?"

"At Charenton."

"I should have been surprised if it were anywhere else," said Momoro. Legendre, who was the butcher of the French Revolution, as Pride was the butcher of the Revolution of England.

"Come, let me knock you down!" he exclaimed to Lanjuinais. And Lanjuinais replied,—

"First let it be decreed that I am an ox." Collot d'Herbois, that melancholy comedian, wearing over his face the ancient mask with two mouths which said yes and no, approving with one what it blamed with the other, branding Carrier at Nantes and defying Châlier at Lyons, sending Robespierre to the scaffold, and Marat to the Panthéon; Génissieux who demanded the penalty of death for those who wore the medallion, *"Louis XVI. martyrisé"*; Léonard Bourdon, the schoolmaster, who offered his house to the old man of Mont Jura; Topsent, the sailor; Goupilleau, the lawyer; Laurent Lecointre, a merchant; Duhem, a physician; Sergent, the sculptor; David, the painter; Joseph Egalité, a prince.

Besides these, Lecointe Puiraveau, who asked to have Marat decreed to be "in a state of lunacy"; Robert Lindet, the disquieting creator of that devil-fish, whose head was the Committee of General Safety, and which covered France with twenty-one thousand arms called the Revolutionary Committees; Lebœuf, about whom Girey-Dupré, in his "Christmas of False Patriots" wrote this verse,—

"Lebœuf saw Legendre and bellowed."

Thomas Paine, an American, and merciful; Anacharsis Cloots, a German baron, a millionaire, atheist, Hébertist, candid; the upright Lebas, friend of the Duplays; Rovère, one of those rare men who are wicked for wickedness' sake, because art for art's sake exists more than people are aware of; Charlier who wished to have the aristocrats formally addressed; Tallien, an elegist and cruel, who will cause the ninth Thermidor from love; Cambacérès, an attorney who will be prince; Carrier, an attorney who will be a tiger; Laplanche, who exclaimed one day: "I demand priority for the alarm-gun"; Thuriot, who wanted to have the jury of the Revolutionary Tribunal vote by acclamation; Bourdon de l'Oise, who challenged Chambon, denounced Paine, and was denounced by Hébert; Fayau who proposed "to send an incendiary army" to la Vendée; Tavaux, who came near being a mediator between la Gironde and the Mountain; Vernier, who asked to have the Girondist Chiefs and the chiefs of the Mountain serve as common soldiers; Rewbell, who shut himself up in Mayence; Bourbotte, who had his horse killed under him, at the taking of Saumur; Guimberteau, who directed the army of the coast of Cherbourg; Jard-Panvilliers, who directed the army of the coast of Rochelle; Lecarpentier, who directed the squadron of Cancale; Roberjot, for whom the ambush of Rastadt was waiting; Prieur de la Marne, who in camp wore his old counter-epaulet of major; Levasseur de la Sarthe, who with a word decided Serrent, commandant of the battalion of Saint-Amand, to commit suicide; Reverchon, Maure, Bernard de Saintes, Charles Richard, Lequinio, and at the head of this group a Mirabeau called Danton.

Outside these two camps, and respected by both, rose a single man, Robespierre.

V

Below crouched Terror, which can be noble, and Fear which is base. Beneath passion, beneath heroism, beneath devotion, beneath rage, was the melancholy crowd of the anonymous. The dregs of the Assembly were called la Plaine. It contained everything drifting; men who doubted, who hesitated, who recoiled, who procrastinated, those who were spies, each fearing somebody. The Mountain was the élite; la Plaine was the common crowd. La Plaine was summed up and condensed in Sieyès.

Sieyès was a deep man who had grown shallow. He had stopped at the Third-Estate and had never been able to rise to the height of the people. Certain minds are so constituted that they never pass beyond mediocrity. Sieyès called Robespierre a tiger, and he called Sieyès a mole. This metaphysician had arrived not at wisdom, but at prudence. He was the courtier, not the servitor of the Revolution. He took a shovel and went to work with the people in the Champ-de-Mars, harnessed to the same wagon with Alexandre de Beauharnais. He advised energy, but never made use of it. He said to the Girondists: "Put the cannon on your side." There are thinkers who are fighters, such as Condorcet with Vergniaud, or Camille Desmoulins with Danton. There are thinkers who are anxious to live; such were with Sieyès.

The most generous vats have their dregs. Below even the Plaine there was the Marais. Hideous stagnation disclosing the transparencies of egotism. There the fearful trembled in dumb expectation. The infamous without shame; latent anger; revolt under servitude. They were cynically frightened; they had all the courage of cowardice; they preferred la Gironde and chose the Mountain; the final result depended on them; they poured out on the successful side; they delivered Louis XVI. to Vergniaud, Vergniaud to Danton, Danton to Robespierre, Robespierre to Tallien. They pilloried Marat while he was alive, and deified Marat after he was dead. They upheld everything till the day when they overthrew everything. Their instinct was to give a decisive push to everything that tottered. In their eyes, as they had been brought into service on condition that there should be solidity, to waver was to betray them. They were numbers, they were force, they were fear. Hence the daring of baseness.

They were the cause of May 31st, the eleventh Germinal, the ninth Thermidor; tragedies knotted by giants and untied by dwarfs.

VI

WITH these men full of passion, were mingled men full of dreams. The Utopia was there in all its forms; in its warlike form, which admitted the scaffold, and in its innocent form which abolished capital punishment; a spectre when facing thrones, an angel when facing the people. Opposed to the fighting minds were the brooding minds. The first had war in their heads; the others, peace; one brain, Carnot, gave birth to fourteen armies; another brain, Jean Derby, meditated an universal democratic confederation. In the midst of this furious eloquence, among these voices howling and raging, there were fecund silences. Lakanal was silent, and thought out public national education; Lanthenas was silent, and created the primary schools; Revellière-Lepaux was silent, and dreamed of elevating philosophy to the dignity of religion. Others busied themselves with questions of detail, less pretentious and more practical. Guyton-Morveaux studied the salubrity of hospitals; Maire, the abolition of actual servitude; Jean-Bon-Saint-André, the suppression of arrest and imprisonment for debt; Romme, the proposition of Chappe; Duboë, the ordering of the archives; Coren-Fustier, the creation of the Cabinet of Anatomy and the Museum of Natural History; Guyomard, river navigation and the damming of the Escaut.

Art had its monomaniacs; January 21st, while the head of the monarchy was falling in the Place de la Revolution, Bézard, representative from l'Oise, went to see a picture by Rubens, found in a garret in Rue Saint-Lazare. Artists, orators, prophets, great men like Danton, petty men like Cloots, gladiators and philosophers, all were striving for the same end,—progress. Nothing disconcerted them. The grandeur of the Convention lay in finding out how much reality there was in what men called the impossible. At one extreme, Robespierre had his eye fixed on Law; at the other extreme, Condorcet had his eye fixed on Duty.

Condorcet was a dreamer and a clear-sighted man; Robespierre was a man of executive ability; and sometimes in the final crises of worn-out societies, execution means extermination. Revolutions have two slopes, ascent and descent, and bear, terraced on these slopes, all the seasons from ice to flowers. Each zone of these slopes produces men suited to its climate, from those who live in the sun to those who live in lightning.

VII

PEOPLE showed each other the corner of the passage on the left where Robespierre whispered in the ear of Garat, Clavière's friend, this terrible epigram: "Clavière has conspired wherever he has respired." In this same nook, convenient for asides and whispered anger, Fabre d'Eglantine had quarrelled with Romme, and reproached him for disfiguring his calendar by changing Fervidor to Thermidor.

People pointed out the corner where the seven representatives of the Haute-Garonne sat, elbow to elbow; the first called to pronounce their verdict on Louis XVI., they replied one after another: Mailhe, "death"; Delmas, "death"; Projean, "death"; Calès, "death"; Ayral, "death"; Julien, "death"; Desaby, "death."

An eternal reverberation which has filled all history, and which, since human justice exists, has always given the echo of the grave to the wall of the tribunal. People pointed out, among this riotous crowd of faces, all those men who had been the cause of the hubbub of tragic votes:—Paganel, who said,—

"Death. A king is of no use until he is dead." Millaud, who said,—

"If death did not exist to-day, it would be necessary to invent it." The old Raffron du Trouillet, who said,—

"Death, come quickly!" Goupilleau, who exclaimed,—

"The scaffold immediately. Slowness aggravates death." Sieyès, who exclaimed with funereal conciseness,—

"Death." Thuriot, who rejected the appeal to the people proposed by Buzot,—

"What! primary assemblies! what! forty-four thousand tribunals! Trial without end. The head of Louis XVI. would have time to turn white before it would fall." Augustin-Bon Robespierre, who exclaimed after his brother,—

"I know nothing of a humanity which slaughters nations, and pardons despots; to ask a reprieve is to substitute an appeal to tyrants for the appeal to the people." Foussedoire, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's substitute, who said,—

"I have a horror of shedding human blood, but the blood of a king is not the blood of a man. Death." Jean-Bon-Saint-André, who said,—

"No free people, unless the tyrant dies." Lavicomterie, who proclaimed this formula,—

"While the tyrant breathes, liberty suffocates. Death." Chateauneuf-Randon, who cried,—

"The death of Louis the Last." Guyardin, who gave utterance to this wish,—

"Let the 'Barrière-Renversée' be executed" (the Barrière-Renversée, or overthrown barrier, was the Barrière du Trône). Tellier, who said,—

"Let a cannon of the size of Louis XVI.'s head be forged, to use against the enemy."

And the indulgents: Gentil, who said,—

"I vote for imprisonment. To make a Charles I. is to make a Cromwell." Bancal, who said,—

"Exile. I want to see the first king of the universe condemned to learn a trade in order to earn his living." Albouys, who said,—

"Banishment. Let this living spectre go to wander about thrones." Zangiacomi, who said,—

"Let us keep Capet alive for a scarecrow." Chaillon, who said,—

"Let him live, I would not put to death one whom Rome would canonize."

While these sentences were falling from these stern lips, and one after another became historical, in the tribunes, women wearing low-necked dresses and jewels, holding the list, counted the voices and pricked each vote with a pin.

Wherever tragedy enters in, horror and pity remain.

To see the Convention during any period of its reign was to see the judgment of the last Capet over again; the legend of January 21st seemed mingled with all its proceedings; the dreadful assembly was full of those fatal breaths, which had blown over the old torch of monarchy lighted for eighteen centuries, and had put it out; the decisive trial for all kings in one king was like the crisis in the great war on the Past; at whatever session of the Convention one was present, the shadow cast by the scaffold of Louis XVI. seemed to brood over it; the spectators related to each other the resignation of Kersaint, the resignation of Roland, how Duchâtel, the deputy of the Deux-Sèvres, being ill, was brought on his bed, and, while dying, voted for the king's life, which caused Marat to laugh; people looked around for the representative, forgotten by history to-day, who, after that session of thirty-seven hours, dropped on his bench overcome with weariness and sleep, and, awakened by the usher when it was his turn to vote, opened his eyes, said: "Death!" and fell asleep again.

At the time Louis XVI. was condemned to die, Robespierre had eighteen months longer to live; Danton, fifteen months;

Vergniaud, nine months; Marat, five months and three weeks; Lepelletier-Saint-Fargeau, one day. Short and terrible breath from human mouths!

VIII

The people had one window opening on the Convention, the public tribunes, and when this was insufficient they opened the door, and the street entered the Assembly.

These invasions of the multitude into the senate are one of the most extraordinary sights of history. These irruptions were usually cordial. The street-crossing fraternized with the curule-chair. But it was a terrible cordiality which the people showed one day when in three hours they took the cannon and forty thousand guns, from the Invalides.

Each instant the session was interrupted by a march of men; deputations, petitions, homages, offerings were received at the bar. The pike of honor from the Faubourg-Saint-Antoine entered, borne by women. The English offered twenty thousand shoes to our bare-footed soldiers.

"Citizen Arnoux," said the *Moniteur,* "priest of Aubignan, commandant of the battalion de la Drôme, asks to march to the frontiers, and to have his parish preserved for him."

Delegates came from the sections, bringing on handbarrows, dishes, patens, chalices, monstrances, piles of gold, silver, and silver-gilt, as offerings to the country from this multitude in rags, and asked as a recompense permission to dance the carmagnole, or Revolutionary dance, before the Convention. Chenard, Narbonne, and Vallière came singing verses in honor of the Mountain.

The Section of Mont-Blanc brought the bust of Lepelletier, and a woman placed a red cap on the head of the president, who kissed it; "the citizenesses of the Section du Mail" threw flowers to "the legislators"; the "pupils of the country" came, to the sound of music, to thank the Convention for having "prepared the prosperity of the age"; the women from the

Section of the Gardes-Françaises offered roses: the women from the Section of the Champs-Élysées offered a wreath of oak leaves; the women from the Section of the Temple came to the bar to take the oath "to marry none but true Republicans"; the Section of Molière presented a medal of Franklin, which was decreed to be suspended from the crown of the statue of Liberty; the Enfants-Trouvés, declared "children of the Republic" filed in, dressed in the national uniform; the young girls from the Section of Ninety-two came in long, white dresses, and the following day the *Moniteur* contained this line: "The president received a bouquet from the hands of a young beauty."

The orators saluted the crowds; sometimes they flattered them, they said: "You are infallible, you are irreproachable, you are sublime"; the people have a childish side, they like these sugar plums. Sometimes the disturbance went through the Assembly, entering in a rage and going out peacefully, as the Rhône passes through Lake Leman, looking like mud when it enters, and deep blue when it leaves it.

Sometimes it was less pacific, and Henriot had gridirons for heating the cannon balls brought to the door of the Tuileries.

IX

At the same time the Assembly freed itself from the revolution; it produced civilization. A furnace, but a forge. In this vat where terror boiled, progress fermented. Out of this chaos of shadow and this stormy flight of clouds, shone immense rays of light parallel to the eternal laws. Rays which have remained on the horizon and forever visible in the sky of the people, and which are justice, toleration, goodness, reason, truth, love.

The Convention promulgated this great axiom: "The liberty of one citizen ends where the liberty of another citizen begins," which comprises in two lines the entire law of human society. It declared indigence sacred; it declared infirmity sacred, in the blind and the deaf-mutes who became wards of the State; maternity sacred, in the girl-mother, whom it consoled and relieved; childhood sacred, in the orphan that it caused to be adopted by the country; innocence sacred, in the acquittal of the accused, whom it indemnified. It branded the slave trade; it abolished slavery. It proclaimed civic joint responsibility. It decreed gratuitous instruction. It organized national education: by the normal school in Paris, by the central school in the principal towns, and primary schools in the Commune. It created conservatories and museums. It decreed unity of the Code, unity of weights and measures, unity of calculation by the decimal system. It established the finances of France, and caused public credit to follow the long monarchical bankruptcy. It brought the telegraph into use, gave endowed hospitals for the aged, clean hospitals to the sick, the Polytechnic school to instruction, the Bureau of Longitudes to science, the institute to the human mind.

It was cosmopolitan as well as national. Of the eleven thousand two hundred and ten decrees passed by the Convention, one-third have a political aim, two-thirds have a humanitarian aim. It declared morals to be the universal foundation of society, and conscience the universal foundation of law. And all this—slavery abolished, brotherhood proclaimed, humanity protected, human conscience rectified, the law of work transformed to a privilege, and from being onerous made helpful, national wealth strengthened, childhood brightened and assisted, letters and science propagated, light shed on every summit, help for all the wretched, encouragement of all principals,—all this the Convention brought about, having in its vitals that hydra, la Vendée, and on its shoulders that pile of tigers, the kings.

X

Tremendous stage! All stypes; human, inhuman, and superhuman were there. Epic gathering of antagonism;

Guillotine avoiding David, Bagire insulting Chabot, Guadet jeering at Saint-Just, Vergniaud scorning Danton, Louvet attacking Robespierre, Buzot denouncing Égalité, Chambon branding Pache,—all execrating Marat.

And how many other names ought to be recorded still. Armonville, called Bonnet-Rouge, because he would only sit in a Phrygian cap, a friend of Robespierre, and wishing "after Louis XVI. to have Robespierre guillotined" from a love of equilibrium; Massieu, a colleague and double of that good Lamourette, a bishop made to leave his name to a kiss; Lehardy du Morbihan stigmatizing the priests of Brittany; Barère, a man of majorities, who presided when Louis XVI. appeared at the bar, and who was to Paméla what Louvet was to Lodoïska: the orator Daunou, who said, "Let us gain time"; Dubois Crancé, in whose ear Marat stooped to whisper; the Marquis de Chateauneuf; Laclos, Hérault de Séchelles, who drew back before Henriot, exclaiming, "Gunners, to your guns!" Julien who compared the Mountain to Thermopylæ; Gamon, who wished to have one of the public tribunes reserved solely for women; Laloy, who bestowed the honors of the session on Bishop Gobel, who came to the Convention to lay down the mitre and to don the red cap; Lecomte, who exclaimed, "So the honors are for any who will lay down his priestly robes!" Féraud, whose head Boissy-d'Anglas saluted, leaving it an open question to history, whether Boissy-d'Anglas saluted the head, that is to say the victim, or the pike, that is to say the assassins; the two brothers Duprat, one a Montagnard, the other, a Girondist, who hated each other, as did the two brothers Chénier.

At this tribune were spoken those giddy words which sometimes, though unknown to him who has uttered them, produce the prophetic accent of revolutions, and in consequence of which material facts seem abruptly to assume a strange discontent and passion, as if they had taken offence at the things they had just heard; passing events seem incensed at what is spoken; catastrophes arise full of wrath, and as if exasperated by the words of men. So a voice in the mountain is enough to let loose an avalanche. A word too much may be followed by a caving in. If the word had not been spoken, it would not have happened. It seems sometimes as if events were irascible.

It was in this way, by the chance word of an orator misunderstood, that Madame Elizabeth's head was made to fall. At the Convention, intemperance of language was allowable. Threats flew and crossed each other in a discussion like firebrands in a conflagration.

Péton. Robespierre comes to the point.

Robespierre. The point is yourself, Péton. I will come to it, and you will see it.

A Voice. Death to Marat.

Marat. The day Marat dies there will be no more Paris, and the day Paris perishes, there will be no more Republic.

Billaud-Varennes rises and says: "We are willing."—Barrère interrupts him: "You speak like a king." Another day Phillipeaux said: "A member has drawn his sword on me."

Audouin. President, call the assassin to order.

The President. Attention.

Audouin. President, I call you to order myself.

The people laughed rudely.

Lecointre. The priest of Chant-de-Bout complains of Fauchet, his bishop, who forbids him to marry.

A Voice. I don't see why Fauchet, who has his mistresses, wishes to prevent others from having wives.

Another Voice. Priest take a wife!

The tribunes joined in the conversation. They addressed the Assembly familiarly. One day Representative Ruamps went up into the tribune. One of his hips was much larger than the other. One of the spectators cried out to him: "Turn that to the right side, for you have a cheek like David." Such were the liberties that people took with the Convention. Once, however, in the tumult of April 11th, 1793, the president caused a disorderly spectator in the tribune to be arrested.

One day the session had old Buonarotti for a witness.

Robespierre takes the floor and speaks two hours, looking at Danton, sometimes straight in the eye, which was serious, sometimes askance, which was worse. He thundered to the end, however. He ended in an explosion of indignation, full of ominous words: "We know the intriguers, we know the corruptors and the corrupted, we know the traitors; they are in this assembly. They hear us, we see them and our eyes do not leave their faces. Let them look above their heads, and they will see the sword of the law; let them look into their consciences and they will see their infamy. Let them be on their guard." And when Robespierre had ended, Danton with his face turned to the ceiling, his eyes half-closed, one arm over the back of his seat, throws himself back and is heard to hum,—

> "Cadet Roussel fait des discours
> Qui ne sont pas longs quand ils sont courts."*

The imprecations called for retorts.—Conspirator!—Assassin!—Villain!—Factionist!—Moderate!—They denounced each other to the bust of Brutus which was there. Apostrophes, insults, challenges. Angry looks from one side to the other, threatening fists, pistols half shown, daggers half drawn. Tremendous blazing of the tribune. Some talked as if they were leaning against the guillotine. Heads wagged, ominous and terrible. Montagnards, Girondins, Feuillants, Modérantistes, Terroristes, Jacobins, Cordeliers, eighteen regicide priests.

All these men! A mass of smoke driven in every direction.

XI

Minds a prey to the wind.

But this wind a miraculous wind.

To be a member of the Convention was to be a billow of

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*Roussel's speeches are of the sort
That are not long when they are short.

the ocean. And this was true of the greatest. The impelling force came from above. In the Convention there was a will power belonging to all and belonging to none. This will power was an idea, indomitable and boundless, which blew from the height of heaven into the darkness below. We call this the Revolution. When this idea passed, it overcame one and lifted up another; it carried away some on the top of the wave, and shipwrecked others. This idea knew where it was going, and drove the gulf before it. To impute the Revolution to men is to impute the tide to the billows.

Revolution is an action of the Unknown. Call it good action or bad, according as you aspire to the future or the past, but leave it to whatever has caused it. It seems the common work of great events and great individuals combined, but it is in reality the resultant of events. Events spend, men pay. Events dictate, men sign. July 14 is signed Camille Desmoulins, August 10 is signed Danton, September 2 is signed Marat, September 21 is signed Grégoire, January 21 is signed Robespierre; but Desmoulins, Danton, Marat, Grégoire, and Robespierre are mere clerks. The immense and awful author of these great pages has a name, God; and a mark, Fate. Robespierre believed in God. Of course!

Revolution is one form of the inherent phenomenon which presses us on every side, and which we call necessity.

Before this mysterious complication of benefits and suffering arises the "Why?" of history.

"Because." This, the reply of one who knows nothing, is also the reply of one who knows everything.

In the presence of these climacteric catastrophes which destroy and give life to civilization, one hesitates to judge the details. To blame or praise men on account of the result, is almost like praising or blaming figures on account of the sum total. Whatever is to happen, happens; whatever is to blow, blows. The eternal serenity does not suffer from these north winds. Above Revolution, Truth and Justice reign, as the starry heavens above the tempest.

XII

Such was this boundless Convention; an intrenched camp of the human race attacked by all the powers of darkness at once, the night fires of a besieged army of ideas, the immense bivouac of minds on the edge of a precipice. Nothing in history can be compared to this gathering, both senate and populace, conclave and street crossing, areopagus and public square, tribunal and the accused.

The Convention always yielded to the wind; but the wind came from the mouth of the people and was the breath of God.

And to-day, after eighty years have passed, each time that the Convention comes up before the thought of a man, whatever he may be, historian or philosopher, that man stops and meditates. It is impossible not to give attention to this great procession of shades.

CHAPTER II

MARAT IN THE LOBBY

As he had announced to Simonne Évrard, Marat went to the Convention the next day after the meeting in Rue du Paon.

At the Convention there was present a Maratist marquis, Louis de Montaut, the one who later on presented a decimal clock, surmounted by a bust of Marat, to the Convention.

As Marat entered, Chabot had just approached Montaut.

"Ci-devant," he said.

Montaut raised his eyes.

"Why do you call me ci-devant?"

"Because that is what you are."

"I?"

"Since you were a marquis."

"Never."

"Bah!"

"My father was a soldier, my grandfather was a weaver."

"What are you singing about, Montaut?"

"My name is not Montaut."

"What is it then?"

"I call myself Maribon."

"Indeed," said Chabot, "it is all the same to me."

And he added between his teeth,—

"He won't be a marquis."

Marat stopped in the passageway at the left and looked at Montaut and Chabot.

Every time that Marat entered, it created a commotion, but at a distance from him. All around him it was silent. Marat paid no attention to it. He scorned the "croaking in the marsh."

In the obscurity of the lower row of seats, Conpé de l'Oise, Prunelle, Villars, a bishop who later became a member of the French Academy, Boutroue, Petit, Plaichard, Bonet, Thibaudeau, Valdruche, pointed him out one to another.

"See, Marat!"

"Is he ill?"

"Yes, for he is in his dressing-gown."

"In his dressing-gown?"

"By Heavens, yes!"

"He dares to do anything."

"He dares to come to the Convention in this way!"

"Since he came here one day crowned with laurels, he may as well come in his dressing-gown!"

"Face of copper, teeth of verdigris."

"His dressing-gown looks new."

"What is it made of?"

"Of rep."

"Striped."

"Look at his lapels."

"They are fur."

"Tiger skin."

"No, ermine."

"Imitation."

"And he has on stockings."

"That is strange."

"And buckles on his shoes."

"Of silver!"

"The sabots of Camboulas will not forgive him that."

On the other benches they pretended not to see Marat. The people talked of other things. Santhonax addressed Dussaulx.

"Dussaulx, you know—"

"What?"

"The ci-devant Count de Brienne?"

"Who was at la Force with the ci-devant duke de Villeroy?"

"Yes."

"I knew both of them. Well?"

"They were so much frightened that they saluted all the red caps of all the turnkeys, and one day they refused to play a game of piquet because they were given a pack of cards with kings and queens."

"Well?"

"They were guillotined yesterday."

"Both of them?"

"Both of them."

"On the whole, how did they behave in prison?"

"Like cowards."

"And how were they on the scaffold?"

"Fearless."

And Dussaulx uttered this exclamation,—

"It is easier to die than to live."

Barère was in the midst of reading a report concerning la Vendée. Nine hundred men of Morbihan had set out with cannon to the relief of Nantes. Redon was threatened by the peasants. Paimbœuf was attacked. A fleet was cruising about Maindrin to prevent invasion. From Ingrande to Maure, the entire left bank of the Loire was bristling with Royalist batteries. Ten thousand peasants had possession of Pornic. They were crying, "Long live the English!" A letter from Santerre to the Convention, which Barère read, ended thus: "Seven thousand peasants have attacked Vannes. We repulsed them and they left four cannon in our hands"—

"And how many prisoners?" interrupted a voice.

Barère continued,—"Postscript of the letter: 'We have no prisoners, because we no longer take any.' "*

Marat, always immovable, was not listening; he seemed to be absorbed by his own stern thoughts. In his hand he held a paper which he crumpled between his fingers, and if any one had unfolded this paper he could have read these lines in Momoro's handwriting and which were probably a reply to some question asked by Marat.

**Moniteur*, Vol. XIX., p. 81.

"Nothing can be done against the sovereign power of the delegated commissioners, above all, against the delegates of the Committee of Public Welfare. It was in vain that Génisseux said, in the session of May sixth: 'Each commissioner is more than a king.' it was of no use. They have power over life and death. Massade, at Angers; Trullard, at Saint-Amand; Nyon, near General Marcé's; Parrein, with the army of the Sables; Millier, with the army of the Niort;—each is all-powerful. The club of the Jacobins has gone so far as to name Parrein, brigadier-general. Circumstance pardons everything. A delegate from the Committee of Public Welfare holds in check a commander-in-chief."

Marat finished crumpling the paper, put it in his pocket, and went slowly toward Montaut and Chabot, who were still talking and had not seen him enter.

Chabot was saying,—

"Maribon or Montaut, listen to this: I come from the Committee of Public Welfare."

"And what are they doing there?"

"They are sending a noble to watch a priest."

"Ah!"

"A noble like yourself—"

"I am not a noble," said Montaut.

"To a priest—"

"Like yourself."

"I am not a priest," said Chabot.

Both burst out laughing.

"Give the particulars of the story," continued Montaut.

"Here they are. A priest called Cimourdain has been delegated with full powers to a viscount named Gauvain; this viscount has command of the investigating column of the coast army. The question is to prevent the noble from cheating, and the priest from treason."

"That is very simple," replied Montaut; "all that is necessary is to introduce death into the matter."

"I come for that," said Marat.

They raised their heads.

"Good morning, Marat," said Chabot, "you come but seldom to our sessions."

"My physician has ordered baths for me," replied Marat.

"You must beware of baths," replied Chabot. "Seneca died in a bath."

Marat smiled.

"Chabot, there is no Nero here."

"You are here," said a harsh voice.

It was Danton who passed by on his way up to his seat.

Marat did not turn around.

He bent his head down between the two faces of Montaut and Chabot.

"Listen, I have come for a serious matter, one of us three must propose to-day the draft of a decree to the Convention."

"Not I," said Montaut, "they would not listen to me. I am a marquis."

"They would not listen to me," said Chabot, "I am a Capuchin."

"And they would not listen to me," said Marat, "I am Marat."

There was a silence between them.

It was not easy to question Marat when he was absorbed in thought. However, Montaut ventured to ask,—

"Marat, what is the decree you wish for?"

"A decree for punishing with death any military leader who lets a rebel prisoner escape."

Chabot interrupted him.

"This decree already exists; it was voted the last of April."

"Then it is as good as a dead letter," said Marat. "All through la Vendée they are letting prisoners go, and giving them protection with impunity."

"Marat, that is because the decree is not in force."

"Chabot, it must be given new life."

"Without doubt."

"And to do that, it is necessary to speak to the Convention."

"The end will be reached," added Montaut, "if the Committee of Public Welfare have the decree posted up in all the communes of la Vendée and make two or three good examples."

"Of the great leaders," continued Chabot. "Of the generals."

Marat growled: "To be sure, that will do."

"Marat," continued Chabot, "go yourself and say so to the Committee of Public Welfare."

Marat looked at him full in the face, which was not agreeable even for Chabot.

"Chabot," he said, "the Committee of Public Welfare is at Robespierre's house; I do not go to Robespierre's house."

"I will go myself," said Montaut.

"Good," said Marat.

The following day an order from the Committee of Public Welfare was sent in every direction, commanding notices to be put up in the towns and villages of Vendée, and the strict execution of the decree of death to any one conniving in the escape of brigands and rebel prisoners.

This decree was but a first step; the Convention was to go still farther. Some months later, the eleventh Brumaire, year II. (November, 1793), with regard to Laval which had opened its doors to the Vendéan fugitives, it decreed that any town which should give asylum to the rebels should be demolished and destroyed.

In their turn the princes of Europe, in the Duke of Brunswick's manifesto, inspired by the refugees, and framed by the Marquis de Linnon, intendant of the Duke of Orleans, declared that all Frenchmen taken armed should be shot, and that if a hair fell from the king's head, Paris should be razed. Cruelty against barbarism.

PART THIRD

IN VENDÉE

BOOK FIRST

LA VENDEE

CHAPTER I

THE FORESTS

At that time there were seven terrible forests in Brittany. The Vendéan war was a priestly revolt. The forests were an auxiliary to this revolt. The spirits of darkness give one another aid.

The seven Black Forests of Brittany were the forest of Fougères, which bars the way between Dol and Avranches; the forest of Princé, eight leagues in circumference; the forest of Paimpont, full of ravines and brooks, almost inaccessible from the side of Baignon, but easily penetrated from Concornet, a royalist market-town; the forest of Rennes, from which was heard the tocsin of the republican parishes, always numerous near the towns (it was there that Puysaye ruined Focard); the forest of Machecoul, where the wild beast Charette had his den; the forest of la Garnache, which belonged to la Trémoille, Gauvain, and the Rohans; the forest of Broceliande, which belonged to the fairies.

A nobleman in Brittany had the title of "Seigneur of the Seven Forests." It was the Viscount de Fontenay, a Breton prince.

For the Breton prince was entirely distinct from the French prince. The Rohans were Breton princes. Garnier de Saintes, in his report to the Convention, the fifteenth Nivose, year II., thus described the Prince de Talmont: "That Capet of the brigands, Sovereign of the Marne and of Normandy."

The history of the forests of Brittany, from 1792 to 1800, would form a history by itself, and it would mingle like a legend in the great scheme of la Vendée.

History has its truth, so has legend. Legendary truth is of a different nature from historical truth. Legendary truth is invention, the result of which is reality. Still, history and legend have the same end, depicting man eternal in the man of the passing moment.

La Vendée can only be fully explained by supplementing history with legend; history is necessary for the effect as a whole, and legend for the detail.

We may say that la Vendée is worth the trouble. La Vendée is a prodigy.

That war of the Ignorant, so stupid and so splendid, abominable and magnificent, desolated France and made it proud. La Vendée is a scar which is a glory.

At certain times human society has its problems; problems which are resolved into light for the wise, and for the ignorant into obscurity, violence, and barbarity. The philosopher hesitates to bestow blame. He takes account of the trouble that is caused by the problems. The problems do not pass without casting beneath them a shadow like that of clouds.

If you would understand la Vendée, imagine this antagonism: on one side the French Revolution; on the other, the Breton peasant. Opposite these unequalled events, seriously threatening all benefits at once, outburst of angry civilization, outburst of mad progress, boundless and unintelligible improvment, place this savage, serious and strange, this man with a clear eye and long hair, living on milk and chestnuts, limited to his thatched roof, his hedge, and his ditch, distinguishing each neighboring hamlet by the sound of its bell, using water only for drink, wearing a leather jacket ornamented with arabesques in silk, uneducated and wearing embroidered garments, tatooing his clothes as his ancestors the Celts tatooed their faces, respecting a master in his executioner, speaking a dead language, which causes him to dwell in a mental tomb, goading his oxen, whetting his scythe, hoeing his grain, kneading his buckwheat bread, venerating first his plough, then his grandmother, believing in the Blessed Virgin and the White Lady, a devotee before the altar and also before the tall, mysterious stone standing in the midst of the moor, a husbandman in the field, a fisherman on the sea-coast, a poacher in the thicket, loving his kings, his seigneurs, his priests, his lice; thoughtful, often perfectly still for hours together on the great deserted sandy shore, listening gloomily to the sound of the sea.

And ask yourself if this blind being could accept this light.

CHAPTER II

THE MEN

The peasant is dependent on two things; the field which yields his nourishment, the wood where he hides.

It would be difficult for one to imagine what the forests of Brittany were; they were towns. Nothing could be more silent, more mute and wild than those inextricable tangles of thorns and branches; those widespread thickets were the dwelling-places of silence and repose, no desert could seem more dead and more sepulchral.

If the trees could have been cut away suddenly and with a single stroke, like lightning, a swarm of men would have come abruptly into view.

Round, narrow pits, screened outside with coverings of stones and branches, first placed vertically, then horizontally, spread out underground like tunnels, ending in dark, gloomy chambers; that is what Cambyses found in Egypt, and Westermann found in Brittany; the former were in the desert, the latter in Brittany; in the caves of Egypt there were dead men, in the caves of Brittany there were living beings. One of the wildest clearings in the wood of Misdon, completely perforated with galleries and cells where a mysterious people came and went, was called "la Grande ville." Another clearing not less deserted above ground, and not less inhabited below, was called "la Place royale."

This subterranean life had existed in Brittany, from time immemorial. Man had always fled before man there. Hence these dens of reptiles hollowed out under the trees. They dated back to the Druids, and some of these crypts were as ancient as the cromlechs. The larvæ of legend and the monsters of history, all passed over this black country, Tewtatès, Cæsar, Hoël, Néomènes, Geoffrey of England, Alain-gant-de-fer, Pierre Mauclerc, the French house of Blois, the English house of Montford, kings and dukes, the nine barons of Brittany, the judges of the Grands-Jours, the counts of Nantes quarrelling with the counts of Rennes, highwaymen, banditti, the Free companies, René II., Viscount de Rohan, the governors for the king, the "good Duke de Chaulnes," hanging peasants under Madame de Sévigné's window; in the fifteenth century, the seigneurial butcheries; in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the religious wars; in the eighteenth century, thirty thousand dogs trained to hunt men; under this frightful trampling underfoot the people resolved to disappear. The Troglodytes to escape the Celts, the Celts to escape the Romans, the Britons to escape the Normans, the Huguenots to escape the Catholics, the smugglers to escape the excisemen,—each in turn took refuge first in the forests, then under the ground. The resource of wild beasts. Thus it is that tryanny reduces nations. For two thousand years, despotism in all its forms, conquests, feudalism, fanaticism, the exchequer, all hunted down this wretched, desperate Brittany; a sort of inexorable battue, which only ceased in one form to begin under another. The men went to ground.

Dismay, which is a kind of anger, was all ready in their souls, the caves were all ready in the woods, when the French Republic burst forth. Brittany rose in revolt, finding herself oppressed by this forced deliverance, the customary mistake of slaves.

CHAPTER III

MEN AND FORESTS IN CONNIVANCE

The tragic forests of Brittany resumed their old rôle again and became the servants and accomplices of this rebellion, as they had been of all the others.

The subsoil of these forests was a sort of madrepore, pierced and traversed in every direction by a labyrinth of saps, cells, and galleries. Each of these blind cells sheltered five or six men. The difficulty was in getting air there. There are certain strange figures, which explain this powerful organization of the widespread peasant revolt. In Ille-et-Vilaine, in the forest of Pertre, asylum of the Prince of Talmont, not a breath could be heard, not a human footstep was to be found, and yet there were six thousand men there with Focard. In Morbihan, in the forest of Meulac, no one was seen, and yet eight thousand men were there. These two forests, the Pertre and Meulac are not numbered among the great forests of Brittany. If one entered them it was terrible. These deceitful thickets, full of combatants crouching in a sort of underground labyrinth, were like enormous concealed sponges, from which, under pressure of that gigantic foot, the Revolution, gushed forth civil war.

Invisible battalions were lying in wait. These unknown armies meandered beneath the Republican troops, came suddenly out of the ground and then went back again, leaping forth in vast numbers and vanished out of sight, it was everywhere and nowhere; an avalanche, then dust, giants with the gift of diminishing in size; giants for fighting, dwarfs for disappearing. Jaguars with the habits of moles.

Besides the forests there were the woods. Just as below cities there are villages, so below forests there are thickets.

The forests were bound together by a maze of woods spreading in every direction. The ancient castles, which were fortresses; hamlets, which were camps; freeholds which were enclosures of ambushes and snares; farms, surrounded with trenches and palisades of trees,—these were the meshes of that net which caught the Republican armies.

This whole was called the Bocage.

There was the wood of Misdon, in the centre of which was a pond, and which belonged to Jean Chouan; there was the wood of Gennes, belonging to Taillefer; there was the wood of la Huisserie, belonging to Gouge-le-Bruant; the wood of la Charnie, belonging to Courtillé-le-Bàtard, called the apostle Saint-Paul, chief of the camp of the Vache-Noire; the wood of Burgault, belonging to that puzzling Monsieur Jacques, destined to a mysterious end in the vault of Juvardeil; there was the wood of Charreau, where Pimousse and Petit-Prince, attacked by the garrison of Châteauneuf, seized the grenadiers in the republican ranks around the waist and carried them away prisoner; the wood of la Heureuserie, scene of the rout of the post of the Longue-Faye; the wood of Aulne, from which the route between Rennes and Laval could be seen; the wood of la Gravelle, which a prince of la Trémoille won in playing bowls; the wood of Lorges on the Côtes-de-Nord, where Charles de Boishardy ruled after Bernard de Villeneuve; the wood of Bagnard near Fontenay, where Lescure challenged Chalbos, who, although one against five, accepted the offer; the wood of la Durondais, formerly disputed by Alain le Redru and Hérispoux, son of Charles the Bald; the wood of Croqueloup, on the boundary of that moor where Coquereau sheared the prisoners; the wood of la Croix-Bataille which lent its aid to the Homeric insults given by Jambe-d'Argent to Morière and by Morière to Jambe d'Argent; the wood of la Saudraie, which we have seen scoured by a Parisian battalion. There were many others besides.

In several of these forests and woods, there were not only subterreanean villages grouped about the leader's burrow, but there were also veritable hamlets of low huts concealed under the trees, and so numerous that sometimes the forest was filled with them. Often their smoke betrayed them. Two of these hamlets in the wood of Misdon have become famous, Lorrière, near Létang, and the group of huts called Rue-de-Bau, on the side of Saint-Ouen-les-Toits.

The women lived in the huts, and the men, in the caves. For this war they made use of the galleries of fairies and the old Celtic mines. They brought food to the men buried in the caves. There were those who were forgotten and died of hunger. Besides, there were some who were not bright enough to know how to open their pits. Usually, the cover, made of moss and branches, was so artistically fashioned that although impossible to distinguish it outside in the grass, it was very easily opened and closed from within. These retreats were hollowed out with great care. They threw the earth which they removed from the cave into some neighboring pond. The walls inside and the ground were covered with ferns and moss. They called this habitation "la loge." They thrived in them, although they were without daylight, without fire, without bread, and without air.

To rise without precaution among the living, and to exhume themselves unseasonably was a serious matter. They might find themselves among the legs of a marching army. Terrible woods; snares with a double trap. The Blues did not dare to enter; the Whites did not dare to leave.

CHAPTER IV

THEIR LIFE UNDERGROUND

THE men in these dens became restless. Sometimes at night, in spite of the danger, they would leave them and go forth to dance on the neighboring moor. Or else they prayed, to kill time. "All day long," said Bourdoiseau, "Jean Chouan made us tell our beads."

It was almost impossible when the time came round, to prevent those of the lower Maine from leaving to take part in the Fête de la Gerbe. Some had their own ideas. Denys, called Tranche-Montagne, disguised himself as a woman to go to see the comedy at Laval; then he went back to his cave.

They would suddenly make away with themselves, leaving the dungeon for the grave.

Sometimes they would raise the cover of their hole and listen for distant fighting; they followed the struggle with their ears. The firing of the Republicans was regular, that of the Royalists, intermittent; this was their guide. If the firing of the platoons ceased suddenly, it was a sign that the Royalists were worsted; if the irregular firing continued and seemed to disappear in the distance, it was a sign that they had the advantage. The Whites always pursued; the Blues never, for the country was against them.

These underground warriors were admirably drilled. Nothing was swifter than their communications, nothing more mysterious. They had broken down all the bridges, they had destroyed all the wagons, and yet they found a way to tell each other everything and to warn each other in season. Relays of emissaries were established from forest to forest, from village to village, from farm to farm, from hut to hut, from bush to bush.

This stupid-looking peasant went along carrying messages in his stick, which was hollow.

A former constituent, Boétidoux, to enable them to go from one end of Brittany to the other, furnished them with Republican passports of the new design, with a blank for their names, of which this traitor had large bundles. It was impossible to detect them. "Secrets entrusted to more than four hundred thousand individuals," said Puysaye,* "were religiously kept."

It seemed that this square, enclosed on the south by the boundary of the Sables to Thouars, on the east by the boundary of Thouars to Saumur and by the river of Thoué, on the north by the Loire, and on the west by the ocean, had a common nervous system, so that, not a point of this ground could stir without the whole being set in motion. In a twinkling, they were informed of Noirmoutier at Luçon, and the camp of La Loué knew what was going on in the camp of Croix-Morineau. One would have said that the birds had something to do with it. Hoche wrote, the seventh Messidor, year III.: "One would have believed that they had telegraphs."

They had clans, like the Scotch. Each parish had its captain. My father took part in that war, and I am able to say something about it.

***Vol. II., page 35.**

CHAPTER V

THEIR LIFE IN TIME OF WAR

MANY of them had no arms but pikes. They had plenty of good fowling-pieces. There were no more skilful marksmen than the poachers of the Bocage and the smugglers of Loroux.

They were strange, frightful, fearless warriors. The decree to raise three hundred thousand men caused the tocsin to sound in six hundred villages. The crackling of fire burst from every point at once. Le Poitou and Anjou exploded the same day. We may say that the first peal of thunder was heard before 1792, the eighth of July, a month before the tenth of August, on the moor of Kerbader. Alain Redeler, to-day forgotten, was the forerunner of La Rochejaquelein and Jean Chouan. The Royalists compelled all able-bodied men to march, under pain of death. They requisitioned horses, wagons, and provisions. Immediately, Sapinaud had three thousand soldiers; Cathelineau, ten thousand; Stofflet, twenty thousand, and Charette was master of Noirmontier. The Viscount de Scépeaux roused Haut Anjou; the Chevalier de Dieuzie, l'Entre-Vilaine-et-Loire; Tristan-l'Hermite, the Bas-Maine; the barber Gaston, the town of Guéménée; and the Abbé Bornier, all the rest. A little thing was enough to raise these multitudes.

In the tabernacle of a priest who had taken the oaths, a *prête jureur* as he was called, they placed a large black cat which jumped out suddenly during the mass. "It is the devil!" cried the peasants, and a whole canton rose in revolt. A breath of fire came from the confessionals.

For attacking the Blues and for leaping ravines, they had a long stick, fifteen feet in length, the *ferte,* a weapon and an aid to flight. In the thickest of the conflict, when the peasants were attacking the Republican squares, if they met a cross or a chapel on the battlefield, all would fall on their knees, repeating their prayers under fire; as soon as their beads were told, those who were left jumped to their feet and rushed on the enemy. Alas, what giants! They loaded their guns as they ran, that was their talent. They could be made to believe anything; some priests showed them other priests whose necks they had reddened with a drawn cord, and said to them: "These are the guillotined brought back to life." They had their fits of chivalry; they honored Fesque, a Republican ensign, who let himself be sabred without dropping his flag. These peasants jested; they called the married priests Republicans: *des sans-calottes devenus sans-culottes.*

At first, they were afraid of the cannons; afterwards they jumped on them with their sticks and took them. To begin with, they took a fine bronze cannon, which they named the Missionary; then another dating back to the Catholic wars and on which were engraved the arms of Richelieu and a figure of the Virgin; they called it Marie-Jeanne. When they lost Fontenay, they lost Marie-Jeanne, around which six hundred peasants fell without flinching; then they recaptured Fontenay in order to recapture Marie-Jeanne, and they brought it back under the flag embroidered with a fleur-de-lis, covering it with flowers, and made the women kiss it as they passed by. But two cannons were very little. Stofflet had taken Marie-Jeanne; Cathelineau, jealous, left Poir-en-Mange, besieged Jallais, and took a third cannon; Forest attacked Saint Florent and took a fourth. Two other captains, Chouppes and Saint-Pol, did better; they represented cannons with trunks of trees and gunners with manikins, and with this artillery, which they laughed about heartily, they drove back the Blues at Mareuil. This was the period of their greatness.

Later, when Chalbos routed La Marsonnière, the peasants left thirty-two cannon, with the arms of England, behind them on the dishonored battlefield. Then England paid the French princes, and they sent "the funds to Monseigneur," Nantiat wrote, the tenth of May, 1794, "because Pitt had been told that it was proper to do so." Mellinet, in a report the thirty-first of March, said: "The cry of the rebels is: 'Long live the English!' "

The peasants lingered behind to plunder. These devotees were robbers. Savages have vices. It was through these that civilization captured them later. Puysaye says, Vol. II., page 187: "I have several times saved the town of Plélan from pillage." And further on, page 434, he abstains from entering Montfort: "I made a circuit to prevent the pillage of the houses of the Jacobins." They plundered Cholet; they sacked Challans. After having missed Granville, they pillaged Ville-Dieu. They called the countrymen who joined the Blues, "the Jacobin crowd," and they made an end of these sooner than any others. They loved carnage like soldiers, and massacre like brigands. To shoot the "Patauds" that is the *bourgeois*, pleased them; they called it "se décarémer," or *unlenting*. At Fontenay, one of their priests, the Curé Barbotin, struck down an old man with his sabre. At Saint-Germain-sur-Ille,* one of their captains, a nobleman, shot the attorney of the Commune dead, and took his watch. At Machecoul, they cut down the Republicans regularly, at the rate of thirty a day for five weeks; each chain of thirty was called "the rosary." They placed the chain in front of a ditch and shot the men; as they were shot they fell into the ditch sometimes alive, but they were buried all the same. We have already seen this custom. Joubert, president of the district, had his hands sawed off. They put sharp-edged handcuffs, forged for the purpose, on the prisoners of the Blues. They put them to death in the public square, to the sound of war cries. Charette, who signed: "Fraternity; Chevalier Charette," and who, like Marat, wore a handkerchief on his head, tied above his eyebrows, burned the city of Pornic and the inhabitants in their houses.

At this time, Carrier was frightful. Terror answered to

***Puysaye, Vol. II., page 35.**

terror. The insurgent Breton had almost the same appearance as the insurgent Greek, with his short jacket, gun slung over his shoulder, leggings and wide breeches similar to the Greek fustand; the peasant boy resembled the Greek klephth. Henri de la Rochejaquelein, at the age of twenty-one, set out for this war with a stick and a pair of pistols.

The Vendéan army numbered a hundred and fifty-four divisions. They made regular sieges; they held Bressuire blockaded for three days. One Good Friday, ten thousand peasants cannonaded the town of the Sables with red hot balls. They succeeded in destroying fourteen Republican cantonments, from Montigné to Courbeveilles, in one single day.

On the high wall at Thouars, this superb dialogue was heard between La Rochejaquelin and a peasant boy,—

"Carl!"

"Here I am."

"Let me climb up on your shoulders."

"All right."

"Your gun."

"Take it."

And la Rochejaquelein leaped into the town, and the towers which Duguesclin had besieged were taken without ladders.

They preferred a cartridge to a louis d'or. They wept when they lost sight of their own belfry. To flee seemed easy to them; then their chiefs would exclaim: "Throw away your sabots, but keep your guns!" When ammunition gave out, they told their beads and took powder from the ammunition wagons of the Republicans; later, d'Elbée demanded powder from the English. When the enemy drew near, if they had any wounded, they concealed them in the tall wheat or among the virgin ferns, and after the affair was ended came back to get them.

They wore no uniforms. Their clothing was in tatters. Peasants and noblemen were dressed in the first rags they could find. Roger Mouliniers wore a turban and a cloak taken from the wardrobe of the theatre of La Fleche; the

Chevalier de Beauvilliers wore an attorney's robe and a woman's hat over a woollen cap. All wore the white scarf and belt; the different ranks were distinguished by knots. Stofflet had a red knot; La Rochejaquelein, a black knot; Wimpfen, a semi-Girondist, who never left Normandy, wore the brassart of the Carabots of Caen. They had women in their ranks; Madame de Lescure, who became Madame de Rochejaquelein later; Thérese de Mollien, La Rouaire's mistress, who burned the list of the parish chiefs; Madame de La Rochefoucauld, beautiful, young, sword in hand, rallying the peasants at the foot of the great towers of the castle of Puy-Rousseau; and Antoinette Adams, called Chevalier Adams, who was so courageous that after her capture, when she was shot, they stood out of respect.

This epic time was cruel. The people were mad. Madame de Lescure purposely made her horse walk over the disabled republicans lying on the ground; "dead," said she; perhaps they were only wounded.

Sometimes the men were traitors; the women, never. Mademoiselle Fleury of the Théâtre Français left Rouarie for Marat, but from love. The captains were often as ignorant as the soldiers; Monsieur de Sapinaud did not know how to spell; he wrote *"orions"* for *aurions, "couté"* instead of *côté.*

The leaders hated each other; the captains of the Marais cried: "Down with those of the High Country!" Their cavalry was not very numerous, and difficult to bring together. Puysaye wrote: "A man who would cheerfully give me his two sons grows cold if I ask for one of his horses." Fertes, pitchforks, scythes, guns old and new, hunting knives, spits, cudgels tipped and studded with iron, such were their arms; some of them carried crosses made of dead men's bones.

They made their attacks with loud cries, springing forth suddenly on every hand, from the woods, the hills, the underbrush, hollow paths; they formed crescents, killing, exterminating, blasting, and disappearing. When they passed through a Republican town, they cut down the Tree of Liberty, burned it and danced in a circle around the fire. All their pleasures were at night. This was the Vendéan rule, always to be unexpected. They would go fifteen leagues in silence without bending a blade of grass on their way. When evening came after determining between the chiefs and the war council, the place where they were to surprise the Republican posts the next morning, they would load their guns, mumble their prayers, take off their sabots, and file in long columns through the woods, barefooted, over the heather and moss, without a sound, without a word, without a breath. A march of cats in the darkness.

CHAPTER VI

THE SOUL OF THE EARTH ABSORBED BY MEN

La Vendée during the revolt numbered no less than five hundred thousand men, women, and children. Half a million of soldiers, these were the figures given by Tuffin de la Rouarie.

The federalists gave their assistance; the Gironde was a party to la Vendée, la Lozère sent thirty thousand men to the Bocage. Eight departments united; five in Brittany, three in Normandy. Évreux, which fraternized with Caen, was represented in the rebellion by Chaumont, its mayor, and Gardembas, one of its leading men. Buzot, Gorsas, and Barbaroux, at Caen; Brissot, at Moulins; Chassan, at Lyons; Rabaut Saint-Étienne, at Nismes; Meillen and Duchâtel, in Brittany, —all these mouths blew the furnace.

There were two Vendées: Great Vendée, which carried on the forest war; and Little Vendée, which carried on the war of the thickets,—that was the slight difference which separated Charette from Jean Chouan. Little Vendée was innocent; Great Vendée was corrupt. Little Vendée was more important. Charette was made marquis, lieutenant-general of the king's armies, and was decorated with the great cross of Saint Louis; Jean Chouan remained Jean Chouan. Charette inclined to the bandit, Jean Chouan was more of a knight-errant.

As for those magnanimous chiefs, Bonchamps, Lescure, la Rochejaquelin, they were mistaken. The great Catholic army was a foolish attempt; disaster was inevitable. Can one imagine a tempest of peasants attacking Paris? a coalition of villages besieging the Panthéon? a pack of Christmas carols and orisons barking around the Marseillaise? a crowd of sabots rushing on a legion of intellects? Le Mans and Savenay punished this madness. It was impossible for la Vendée to pass the Loire. She could accomplish anything except this stride. Civil war does not conquer. Crossing the Rhine is the crowning work of Cæsar and the additional glory of Napoleon; crossing the Loire kills la Rochejaquelein.

The true sphere of la Vendée is within her own boundaries, there she is more than invulnerable, she is intangible. The Vendéan at home is a smuggler, a farmer, soldier, shepherd, poacher, sharpshooter, goatherd, bellringer, peasant, spy, assassin, sacristan, wild beast of the woods.

La Rochejaquelein is only Achilles; Jean Chouan is Proteus.

La Vendée miscarried.

Other revolts have been successful; the Swiss insurrection for example. There was this difference between a mountainous revolt like the Swiss, and a forest revolt like the Vendéan, that almost always, because of the fatal influence of environment, the one is struggling for an ideal, and the other for prejudices. One soars, the other crawls. One fights for humanity; the other, for solitude. One desires liberty; the other, isolation. One defends the Commune; the other, the parish.—"Communism! Communism!" cried the heroes of Marat.—One has to do with precipices; the other, with quagmires. One is the man of torrents and foamy waters; the other, the man of stagnant puddles where fever lurks. The head of one is among the stars; that of the other, in the thicket. The one is on a summit; the other, in a shadow.

Education arising from mountain tops and lowlands is not the same.

The mountain is a citadel; the forest, an ambuscade: one inspires boldness; the other, strategy. Antiquity placed the gods on pinnacles, and satyrs in grooves. The satyr is the savage; half man, half beast. Free countries have their Apennines, their Alps, their Pyrenees, an Olympus. Parnassus is a mountain. Mount Blanc was the colossal auxiliary of William Tell; behind and above the great contests of spirits, against the darkness which fills the poems of India, the Himalayas are seen. Greece, Spain, Italy, Helvetia, have the mountain for a type; Cimmeria, Germany, or Brittany have the woods. The forest is barbarous.

The formation of the ground affects many of man's actions. It is more of an accomplice than is realized. In sight of some wild landscapes, one is tempted to exonerate man, and incriminate creation; one feels the silent rebellion of nature; the desert is sometimes injurious to conscience, especially an unenlightened conscience; conscience may be gigantic, as with Jesus and Socrates; it may be dwarfed, as with Atreus and Judas. A small conscience quickly becomes reptile; the shady forest trees, the brambles, the thorns, the marshes under the branches, are a fatal habitation for it; it is mysteriously permeated there by evil persuasions. Optical illusions, inexplicable shadows, terrors of the hour or place, throw men into a sort of fear, half religious, half brutal, which in ordinary times engenders superstition, and in periods of violence, brutality. Hallucinations hold the torch which lights the path of murder. There is a touch of madness in the brigand. Wonderful nature has a double meaning, which dazzles great minds and blinds uncultivated souls. When man is ignorant, when the desert is filled with visions, the darkness of solitude is added to the darkness of intelligence; hence, in man, the possibilities of perdition.

Certain rocks, certain ravines, certain copses, certain wild openings through the trees at evening, impel man to mad and awful deeds. One might almost say that there are evil places.

What tragic deeds that gloomy hill between Baignon and Plélan has witnessed.

Wide horizons lead the soul to broad ideas; circumscribed horizons engender narrow ideas; this sometimes condemns great hearts to become small minded: as, for example, Jean Chouan.

Broad ideas hated by narrow ideas,—this is the very struggle of progress.

Country, Fatherland,—these two words comprise the whole Vendéan war; a quarrel of the local idea with the universal idea; peasants against patriots.

CHAPTER VII

LA VENDÉE WAS THE END OF BRITTANY

Brittany is an old rebel. Every time that it had revolted for two thousand years, it had been in the right; the last time it was in the wrong. Still, in reality, against the Revolution as against the monarchy, against the acting representatives as against the governing dukes and peers, against the assignats as against the subsidies, whoever the combatants might be, Nicolas Rapin, François de la Noue, Captain Pluviaut and Lady de la Garnache, or Stofflet, Coquereau, and Lechandelier de Pierreville, under Monsieur de Rohan against the king, and under Monsieur de La Rochejaquelein for the king, Brittany was always waging the same war,—the war of the local mind against the central mind.

These ancient provinces were like a pond; these sluggish waters were averse to running; the winds blowing over them did not give them life, it irritated them. France ended at Finisterre; the field given to man terminated there, and there the march of generations stopped. Halt! cried the ocean to the earth, and barbarism to civilization. Every time that the centre, Paris, gives an impulse, whether it comes from royalty or the Republic, whether it be in the direction of despotism or liberty, it is a novelty and Brittany bristles. Let us be in peace. What do they want of us? The Marais takes its pitchfork, the Bocage takes its carbine. All our attempts, our initiative in legislation and education, our encyclopædias, our philosophies, our geniuses, our glories, have come to naught before the Houroux; the tocsin in Bazouges threatens the French revolution, the moor of Faou revolts against our stormy public squares, and the bell of Haut-des-Prés declares war on the tower of the Louvre.

Terrible blunder.

The Vendéan insurrection was a dismal mistake.

A colossal skirmish, chicanery of Titans, boundless rebellion, destined to leave to history but a single word,—a word notorious and black; committing suicide for the absent, devoted to egoism, spending its time in offering great bravery to cowardice, without calculation, without stratagem, without tactics, without plan, without aim, without a chief, without responsibility; showing to what extent will can be powerless; chivalric and savage; absurdity in rut, building a parapet of shadows against the light; ignorance making a long, stupid, superb resistance to truth, justice, right, reason, and deliverance; the dismay of eight years, the ravage of fourteen departments, the devastation of fields, the destruction of crops, burning villages, ruining towns, pillaging houses, the massacre of women and children, a torch in the cottages, a sword in the hearts of the people, the terror of civilization, the hope of Pitt; such was this war,—an unconscious attempt at parricide,

Taken all in all, by demonstrating the necessity of penetrating in every way the old Breton shadow and of piercing that thicket with all the arrows of light at once, la Vendée has been of service to progress. Catastrophes have a gloomy way of settling matters.

BOOK SECOND

THE THREE CHILDREN

CHAPTER I

PLUS QUAM CIVILIA BELLA

THE summer of 1792 had been very rainy; the summer of 1793 was very hot. In consequence of the civil war, there were, so to speak, no roads in Brittany. People went about there, however, thanks to the beauty of the summer. The best route is dry ground.

At the end of a serene July day, about an hour after sunset, a man on horseback, who came from the direction of Avranches, stopped before the little inn called the Croix-Branchard, at the entrance of Pontorson, and the sign of which bore this inscription, that was still legible a few years ago: "Good cider on draught." It had been hot all day, but the wind was beginning to blow.

This traveller was wrapped in a wide cloak, which covered the horse's back. He wore a broad-brimmed hat with a tricolored cockade, a bold thing to do in this country of hedges and gunshots, where a cockade was a target. His cloak tied at the neck was thrown back to leave his arms free, and underneath was seen a tricolored belt and two pistols sticking out of the belt. A sabre hung down beyond the cloak.

As the horse stopped, the door of the inn opened, and the innkeeper came out with a lantern in his hand. It was just between daylight and darkness; it was light on the road and dark in the house.

The host looked at the cockade.

"Citizen," said he, "do you stop here?"

"No."

"Where are you going then?"

"To Dol."

"In that case, return to Avranches or stay at Pontorson."

"Why?"

"Because they are fighting in Dol."

"Ah!" said the cavalier.

And he added,—

"Give some oats to my horse."

The host brought a bucket, emptied a bag of oats into it and unbridled the horse, which began to snort and to eat.

The conversation continued,—

"Citizen, is this a horse of requisition?"

"No."

"Is it yours?"

"Yes. I bought it and paid for it."

"Where do you come from?"

"From Paris."

"Not directly?"

"No."

"I knew it, the roads are closed. But the post-wagon still runs."

"As far as Alençon. I left it there."

"Ah! soon there will be no more posts in France. There are no more horses. A horse worth three hundred francs brings six hundred, and fodder is high. I have been post-master, and now I keep a cook-shop. Out of thirteen hundred and thirteen post-masters, two hundred have resigned. Citizen, have you travelled under the new tariff?"

"Of the first of May,—yes."

"Twenty sous per post in a carriage, twelve sous in a cab, five sous in a wagon. Did you buy this horse at Alençon?"

"Yes."

"You have been riding all day, to-day?"

"Since daybreak."

"And yesterday?"

"And the day before."

"I see that. You came by way of Domfront and Mortain?"

"And Avranches."

"Take my advice and rest yourself, citizen. You must be tired. Your horse is."

"Horses have a right to be tired, but men have not."

The host fixed his eyes again on the traveller. He had a solemn, calm, stern face, framed in gray hair.

The innkeeper glanced along the road, which was deserted as far as he could see, and said,—

"And you are travelling alone like this?"

"I have an escort."

"Where is it?"

"My sabre and my pistols."

The innkeeper went to get a pail of water, and watered the horse, and while the horse was drinking, the host contemplated the traveller, and said to himself, "All the same, he looks like a priest."

The cavalier continued,—

"You say that they are fighting at Dol?"

"Yes. It ought to be beginning this very minute."

"Who are fighting?"

"A ci-devant against a ci-devant."

"What did you say?"

"I say that a ci-devant who is for the Republic is fighting against a ci-devant who is for the king."

"But there is no king now."

"There is the little one. And the strange part of it is that the two ex-nobles are two relatives."

The cavalier listened attentively. The innkeeper went on:

"One is young, the other, old; it is a grand-nephew fighting against his great uncle. The uncle is a Royalist; the nephew, a patriot. The uncle commands the Whites, the nephew commands the Blues. Ah! they will give no quarter, be sure of that. It is war to the death."

"To the death?"

"Yes, citizen. Wait, would you like to see the polite speeches they throw at each others' heads? Here is a notice the old man found a way to have posted up everywhere, on all the houses and all the trees, and which he had stuck up even on my door."

The host held his lantern near a square of paper fastened to one of the leaves of his double-door, and as the notice was in large letters, the cavalier was able to read from his horse,—

"The Marquis de Lantenac has the honor to inform his grand-nephew, Monsieur the Viscount Gauvain, that if Monsieur le Marquis has the good fortune to capture his person, he will have Monsieur le Viscount quietly shot."

"And," continued the innkeeper, "here is the reply."

He turned around and threw the light from his lantern on another notice posted opposite the first on the other leaf of the door. The traveller read,—

"Gauvain warns Lantenac that if he takes him he will have him shot."

"Yesterday," said the host, "the first placard was pasted up on my door, and this morning, the second. The reply was not long coming."

The traveller, in an undertone, as if talking to himself, uttered these few words, which the innkeeper heard without taking in their full meaning,—

"Yes, it is more than civil war, it is domestic war. It is necessary, and it is well. The great rejuvenations of peoples are at this price."

And the traveller, raising his hand to his hat and fixing his eyes on the second notice, saluted it.

The host continued,—

"You see, citizen, this is how it is. In the cities and the large towns we are for the Revolution, in the country they are against it; that is to say, in the cities they are French, in the villages they are Breton. It is a war of bourgeois against the peasants. They call us boors, we call them clowns. The nobles and the priests are with them."

"Not all," interrupted the cavalier.

"Beyond a doubt, citizen, for we have here a viscount against a marquis."

And he added in a low voice to himself,—

"And I believe that I am speaking to a priest."

The cavalier continued,—

"And which is winning?"

"The viscount at present. But he has a hard time. The old man is terrible. These people belong to the family of Gauvain, nobles of this country here. It is a family with two branches; there is the large branch, the chief of which is called the Marquis de Lantenac, and the small branch, the chief of which is called the Viscount Gauvain. The two branches are now fighting. Such a thing is not seen among the trees, but it is seen among men. This Marquis de Lantenac is all-powerful in Brittany; among the peasants he is a prince. The day he landed he had eight thousand men in no time; in a week, three hundred parishes were raised. If he had been able to take a corner of the coast, the English would have landed. Fortunately, this Gauvain was there, who is his grand-nephew,—a strange occurrence. He is the Republican commander, and he repulsed his great-uncle. And, then, as luck would have it, this Lantenac, on his arrival, while massacring a lot of prisoners, had caused two women to be shot, one of whom had three children who had been adopted by a battalion from Paris. This made them a terrible battalion. It was called the battalion of Bonnet-Rouge. There are not many of these Parisians left, but they are furious soldiers. They have been incorporated into Commandant Gauvain's division. Nothing withstands them. They are determined to avenge the death of the women, and have the children again. Nobody knows what the old man has done with these little things. That is what enrages the Parisian grenadiers. If these children had not been mixed up in it, I suppose this war would not be what it is. The viscount is a good, brave young man. But the old man is a terrible marquis. The peasants call it the war of Saint Michael against Beelzebub. You know, perhaps, that Saint Michael is an angel of this part of the country. He has a mountain in the bay. He is said to have overthrown the devil and to have buried him under another mountain which is near here, and is called Tombelaine."

"Yes," murmured the cavalier, "Tumba Beleni, the tomb of Belus, of Bel, of Belial, of Beelzebub."

"I see that you know about it."

And the host said, aside to himself,—

"He knows Latin, and he is surely a priest."

Then he added: "Well, citizen, for the peasants, it is that war over again. It is evident that to them Saint Michael is the Royalist general, and Beelzebub is the patriot commander; but if there is a devil, it is surely Lantenac, and if there is an angel it is Gauvain. Won't you take something, citizen?"

"I have my gourd and a piece of bread. But you have not told me what is going on in Dol."

"This is it. Gauvain is commanding the exploring column of the coast. Lantenac's aim was to rouse a general insurrection, to strengthen Lower Brittany with Lower Normandy, to open the doors to Pitt, and to increase the great Vendéan army with twenty thousand English and two hundred thousand peasants. Gauvain cut short this plan. He holds the coast, and is driving Lantenac into the interior and the English into the sea. Lantenac was here and he drove him away; he has taken Pont-au-Beau away from him, he has driven him from Avranches, he has driven him from Villedieu, he has prevented him from reaching Granville. He is manœuvring to drive him back into the forest of Fougères and to surround him there. All was going well yesterday. Gauvain was here with his column. Suddenly, there is an alarm. The old man, who is shrewd, makes a point; they learn that he is marching on Dol. If he takes Dol, and if he establishes a battery on Mont-Dol, for he has cannon, there is a point of the coast where the English can land, and all is lost. That is why, as there was not a minute to lose, Gauvain, who is a level-headed man, took counsel with no one but himself; did not ask for orders, nor wait for them, sounded the signal to saddle, put to his artillery, collected his troops, drew his sabre, and that is how, while Lantenac was rushing on Dol, Gauvain was rushing on Lantenac. It is at Dol that these two Breton heads are going to butt. It will be a proud collision. They are there now."

"How long does it take to go to Dol?"

"For a troop with wagons, at least three hours; but they are there."

The traveller put his hand behind his ear and said,—

"To be sure, it seems to me that I hear the cannon."

The host listened.

"Yes, citizen; and the musketry. The fight has begun. You will have to spend the night here. There is no good in going there."

"I cannot stop. I must continue my journey."

"You are wrong. I don't know your business, but the risk is great, and unless it concerns what you hold dearest in the world—"

"That is just it," replied the cavalier.

"Something like your own son—"

"Very nearly," said the cavalier.

The innkeeper raised his head and said to himself,—

"And yet this citizen seems to me like a priest."

Then, after some thought, he added,—

"After all, a priest may have children."

"Put my horse's bridle back," said the traveller. "How much do I owe you?"

And he paid him.

The host set back the trough and the bucket by the side of the wall, and then came toward the traveller.

"Since you are bound to go on, take my advice. It is clear that you are going to Saint-Malo. Well, don't go through Dol. There are two routes, the road through Dol, and the road along the sea coast. One is as short as the other. The road along by the sea goes through Saint Georges de Brehaigne Cherrueix, and Hirelle-Vivier. You leave Dol to the south and Cancal to the north. Citizen, at the end of the street, you will find the place where the two roads meet; the one to Dol is to the left, the one to Saint-Georges de Brehaigne is to the right. Listen to me now; if you go through Dol, you will fall in the massacre. That is why you must not take the left; take the right."

"Thank you," said the traveller.

And he spurred on his horse.

It had grown quite dark, he plunged into the night.

The innkeeper lost sight of him.

When the traveller came to the end of the street where the two roads branched off, he heard the innkeeper's voice cry out from the distance,—

"Go to the right!"

He went to the left.

CHAPTER II

DOL

Dol, a Spanish town of France in Brittany, as it is termed in the old charters, is not a town but a street. A grand old gothic street, all bordered on the right and on the left by houses with pillars, standing irregularly and making angles and corners in the street, which is everywhere wide. The rest of the town is nothing but a network of lanes running into this large street from opposite directions, and ending there like brooks in a river. The town, without gates or walls, open, overshadowed by Mont-Dol, could not withstand a siege; but the street could withstand one. These promontories of houses that could still be seen there fifty years ago, and the two-pillared galleries which bordered them, formed a very solid battle-ground, capable of great resistance. There were as many fortresses as there were houses, and it was necesssary to take one after another. The old market house was very nearly in the middle of the street.

The innkeeper of the Croix-Branchard had told the truth, a furious conflict filled Dol at the time he was speaking. A nocturnal duel between the Whites who had reached there in the morning, and the Blues who had unexpectedly arrived there in the evening, had suddenly burst forth in the town. The forces were unequal, the Whites numbered six thousand, the Blues fifteen hundred, but their fury was equally divided. Strange to say, the fifteen hundred attacked the six thousand.

On one side, a riotous crowd; on the other, a phalanx. On one side, six thousand peasants with sacred hearts on their leather jackets, white ribbons on their round hats, Christian devices on their brassarts, rosaries hanging from their belts, armed with more pitchforks than sabres, and carbines without bayonets, dragging cannons by means of ropes, poorly equipped, badly disciplined, meanly armed, full of frenzy; on the other side, fifteen hundred soldiers wearing three-cornered hats with the tricolored cockade, coats with full skirts and wide lappels, shoulder belts crossed, copper-hilted swords, guns with long bayonets, erect, well-trained, docile, and fierce, knowing how to obey like people who know how to command, volunteers, too, but volunteers for their country, in rags, moreover, and shoeless. For the monarchy, paladin peasants; for the republic, barefooted heroes. And the soul of each of these two troops was its chief: that of the royalists, an old man; of the republicans, a young man. On one side, Lantenac; on the other, Gauvain.

Besides gigantic young figures, such as Danton, Saint-Just, and Robespierre, the Revolution had young figures which were ideal, like Hoche and Marceau. Gauvain was one of these figures.

Gauvain was thirty years old, with Herculean form, a prophetic, serious eye, and the laugh of a child. He did not smoke, he did not drink, he did not swear. He carried a toilet case throughout the war, he took great care of his nails, his teeth, and his hair, which was brown and abundant; during halts he himself shook his military cloak, riddled with bullets and white with dust. Although he always rushed recklessly into the midst of the battle, he had never been wounded. His very gentle voice had, when necessary, a sharp tone of command. He set the example of sleeping on the ground, in wind, in rain, in snow, rolled up in his cloak, and his graceful head resting on a stone. He was a soul both heroic and innocent. The sword in his hand transfigured him. He had that effeminate appearance which in battle is terrible.

At the same time, he was a thinker and a philosopher—a young sage; Alcibiades to look at, Socrates to listen to.

This young man had at once become a leader in this great improvisation, the French Revolution.

His division, formed by himself, like the Roman legion, was a sort of complete little army; it was composed of infantry and cavalry; it had scouts, pioneers, sappers, pontooniers; and just as the Roman legion had catapults, this had cannons. Three pieces drawn by horses strengthened the column, and at the same time left it easily handled.

Lantenac also was a warrior and still more formidable. He was both more reflective and more daring. The real old heroes have more coolness than the young men because they are farther from the sunrise, and more audacious because they are nearer death. What have they to lose? so little! Hence, Lantenac's rash movements, which were at the same time so skilful. But in the main, in this obstinate hand-to-hand conflict, Gauvain almost always had the advantage. It was more good fortune than anything else. All good luck, even good luck which is terrible, belongs to youth. Victory is in some respects like a young girl.

Lantenac was incensed against Gauvain; first, because Gauvain was opposed to him, then because he was his relative. What right had he to be a Jacobin? this Gauvain! this scamp! his heir, for the marquis had no children; a grand-nephew, almost a grandson! "Ah," said this *quasi* grandfather, "if I get my hand on him, I will kill him like a dog!"

Besides, the Republic had reason to be troubled about this Marquis de Lantenac. He had hardly landed when he made them tremble. His name had run through the Vendéan insurrection like a train of powder, and Lantenac became at once the centre. In a revolt of this kind, where all are jealous of each other, and each has his bush or his ravine, the coming of a superior rallies the scattered chiefs, who are equals among themselves. Almost all the captains of the woods joined Lantenac, and from far and near, they obeyed him. One alone had left him; he had been the first to join him,—Gavard. Why? Because he was a man of trust. Gavard had known all the secrets, and adopted all the plans of the old system of civil warfare, that Lantenac came to supplant and replace. One cannot follow in the steps of a man of trust; the shoe of la Rouarie did not fit Lantenac. Gavard had gone to join Bonchamp.

Lantenac, as a soldier, belonged to the school of Frederick II.; he knew how to combine the greater war with the less. He wished to have neither a "confused mass," like the great catholic and royal army, a multitude destined to be destroyed; nor a scattering in the thickets and copses, good for harassing, powerless to overthrow. The guerilla does not terminate, or terminates unfortunately; it begins by attacking a Republic, and ends by robbing a stage coach. Lantenac did not intend to carry on this Breton war either wholly in the open field, as La Rochejaquelein had done, or wholly in the forest, like Jean Chouan; neither Vendée nor Chouannerie; he wanted real war; to make use of the peasant, but to support him with the soldier. He wished to have bands of men for strategy, and regiments for tactics. He found these village armies, able to disappear so suddenly, excellent for attack, ambuscade and surprise; but he felt that they were too fluid; they were like water in his hand; he wished to create a solid point in this wavering and scattered war; he wished to add to this wild forest army, regular troops, which would be the pivot of the peasant's manœuvres. A profound and awful thought; if it had succeeded, la Vendée would have been impregnable.

But where could he find regular troops? where find soldiers? where find regiments? where find an army ready made? In England. This was Lantenac's determination: to land the English. Thus party conscience capitulates; the white cockade concealed from his sight the red coat. Lantenac had but one thought: to get possession of a point of the sea-coast, and to give it up to Pitt. That is why, seeing Dol without defence, he rushed on it, in order, through Dol, to have Mont-Dol; and through Mont-Dol, the coast.

The place was well chosen. The cannon on Mont-Dol would sweep le Fresnois on one side, and Saint-Brelade on the other; would keep the cruisers from Cancale at a distance, and would make the coast from Raz-sur-Couesnon to Saint-Mêloir-des-Ondes, open to invasion.

To make this decisive move successful, Lantenac had brought with him a little more than six thousand men, the stoutest among the bands at his disposal, and all his artillery, ten sixteen-pound culverins, one eight-pounder, and a four-pounder. He proposed to establish a strong battery on Mont-Dol, on this principle, that a thousand shots from ten cannons would accomplish more than fifteen hundred shots with five cannons.

Success seemed certain. He had six thousand men. He had nothing to fear in the direction of Avranches but Gauvain and his fifteen hundred men, and in the direction of Dinan, only Léchelle. Léchelle, it is true, had twenty-five thousand men, but he was twenty leagues away. Lantenac was confident of success with regard to Léchelle, on account of the great distance against the great number; and, with regard to Gauvain, on account of the small number against the short distance. We may add that Léchelle was an idiot, and later on he allowed his twenty-five thousand men to be destroyed on the moors of la Croix-Bataille; a defeat which he paid for with suicide.

So Lantenac felt perfectly secure. His entrance into Dol was sudden and severe. The Marquis de Lantenac had a hard reputation; he was known to be merciless. No resistance was attempted. The terrified inhabitants shut themselves up in their houses. The six thousand Vendéans took up their quarters in the town with boorish confusion; it was almost a fair ground, without quartermasters, without definite camp, bivouacking at haphazard, cooking in the open air, scattering about in the churches, leaving their guns for their rosaries. Lantenac hastened with some artillery officers to reconnoitre Mont-Dol, leaving the lieutenancy to Gouge-le-Bruant, whom he had appointed field-sergeant.

This Gouge-le-Bruant has left a faint trace in history. He had two nicknames, "Brise-bleu," on account of his slaughtering of patriots, and "l'Imânus," because he had in him something strangely, unutterably horrible. "Imânus," derived from *immanis*, is an old word of Low Norman origin, expressing the superhuman and quasi-divine ugliness, in the frightful, in devils, satyrs, and ogres. An ancient manuscript said: *"d'mes daeux iers j'vis l'imânus."* The old men of the Bocage, to-day have no knowledge of Gouge-le-Bruant, nor of the meaning of Brise-bleu; but they have a confused idea of l'Imânus. L'Imânus is connected with local superstition. They still speak of l'Imânus at Trémorel and Plumaugat, two villages where Gouge-le-Bruant left the print of his ominous foot. In la Vendée, others were savage. Gouge-le-Bruant was barbarous. He was a kind of cacique, tatooed with rude letters and fleurs-de-lis; in his face shone the hideous and almost superhuman glare of a soul unlike any other human being. He was infernally brave in battle, and atrocious afterward. He had a heart full of tortuous intricacies, ready for every kind of devotion, inclined to all sorts of madness. Did he reason? Yes, but as serpents crawl: in circles. He left heroism to come to murder. It was impossible to guess whence arose his resolutions, often magnificent on account of their monstrosity. He was capable of every unexpected horror. He had an epic ferocity.

Hence this misshapen nickname, "l'Imânus."

The Marquis de Lantenac had confidence in his cruelty.

It was a fact that l'Imânus excelled in cruelty; but in strategy and tactics he was less superior, and perhaps the marquis was wrong to make him field-sergeant. However that may be, he left l'Imânus behind him, with orders to take his place and watch everything.

Gouge-le-Bruant, more of a warrior than a soldier, was more fit to slaughter a clan than to guard a city, but yet he stationed main guards.

When evening had come, as the Marquis de Lantenac was on his way back to Dol, after having decided on the situation of the projected battery, he suddenly heard the cannon. He looked. A red smoke was rising from the great street. There was a surprise, an irruption, an attack; they were fighting in the town.

Although it was hard to astonish him, he was stupefied.

He was not expecting anything of the kind. Who could be there? Evidently, it was not Gauvain. It would be foolish to attack with one against four. Was it Léchelle? But what a forced march to have made! Léchelle was improbable; Gauvain, impossible.

Lantenac spurred on his horse; on his way he met the inhabitants in flight; he questioned them, they were mad with fear. They cried: "The Blues! the Blues!" and when he reached the town, the situation was desperate.

This is what had happened.

CHAPTER III

SMALL ARMIES AND GREAT BATTLES

On reaching Dol, the peasants, as we have just seen, were scattered through the town, each working his own pleasure, as it happens when people "obey out of friendship," as the Vendéans expressed it. The sort of obedience which makes heroes but not troopers. They had stowed away their artillery with the baggage under the arches of the old market house, and weary, drinking, eating, telling their beads, they lay down helter-skelter through the great street, which was rather blocked up than guarded. As night came on, most of them fell asleep, with their heads on their sacks, some with their wives beside them; for the peasant women often follow the peasants; in Vendée, pregnant women served as spies. It was a mild July night; the constellations shone brilliantly in the deep blue black of the sky. All this bivouac, which was more like the halt of a caravan than the encampment of an army, was beginning to sleep peacefully. Suddenly, in the glimmering twilight, those who had not yet closed their eyes saw three cannons pointed at the end of the great street.

It was Gauvain. He had surprised the main guards, he was in the town, and he held the head of the street with his column.

A peasant jumped up, cried *"Qui vive?"* and fired off his gun, a cannon shot gave answer. Then a furious discharge of musketry burst forth. The entire drowsy multitude leaped to their feet; a rude awakening. They had gone to sleep under the stars and woke under fire.

The first moment was terrible, there is nothing so tragic as the swarming of a bewildered multitude. They pounced on their arms, they screamed, they ran, many fell. The peasant boys, assaulted in this way, did not know what to do and began to shoot each other. The people, astounded, rushed out of their houses, went back, came out again, and wandered about in the confusion, like maniacs. Families called out to each other. A dismal fight, with women and children intermingled. Hissing bullets streaked through the darkness. There was firing from every dark corner. Everything was smoke and tumult. The entanglement of the baggage wagons and carts added to it. The horses kicked. The people trampled on the wounded. Shrieks rose from the ground. Some from horror, others from amazement. Soldiers and officers were looking for one another. In the midst of all this, there were some gloomily indifferent. A woman nursing her new-born babe, was sitting by a portion of a wall, against which leaned her husband, whose leg had been broken, and while his blood was flowing, he was calmly loading his carbine and shooting at random, killing those before him in the darkness. Men lying on their bellies shot through the wheels of the wagons. Occasionally, arose an uproarious shouting. The great voice of the cannon drowned everything else. It was frightful.

It was like the felling of trees; they all lay one above another. Gauvain, in ambush, fired with a steady shot and lost few of his men.

However, the intrepid disorder of the peasants ended in an attempt to defend themselves; they retreated under the market-house, a vast, dark redoubt, a forest of stone pillars. There they regained a footing; anything resembling a wood gave them confidence. L'Imânus did his best to make up for the absence of Lantenac. They had cannon, but, much to Gauvain's astonishment, they made no use of it; this was because the artillery officers had gone with the marquis to investigate Mont Dol, and the peasants only understood the culverines and eight-pounders; but they riddled with bullets the Blues who cannonaded them. The peasants answered the grapeshot with musketry. They were now under shelter.

They had piled up the drays, the carts, the baggage, all the barrels in the old market, and improvised a high barricade with openings, through which they passed their carbines. Their shooting through these holes was deadly. All this was quickly accomplished. In a quarter of an hour the market had an impenetrable front.

This became serious for Gauvain. This market, suddenly transformed into a citadel, was unlooked for. The peasants were there in a solid mass. Gauvain had been successful in surprising them and failed in routing them. He had dismounted. Holding his sword in his hand, under his crossed arms, he stood in the flare of a torch which lighted up his battery, watching all this darkness attentively.

His tall figure in this bright light made him visible to the men behind the barricade. He was their aim, but he was not aware of it.

The discharge of bullets sent from the barricade fell all around Gauvain, who was absorbed in thought.

But against all these carbines he had the cannon. The cannon ball always gets the advantage. He who has artillery has victory. His battery, if made good use of, assured him the superiority.

Suddenly, there was a flash of lightning from the market so full of darkness, something like a peal of thunder was heard, and a cannon ball went through a house above Gauvain's head.

The barricade answered cannon shot with cannon shot.

What had happened? Something new. The artillery was no longer on one side alone.

A second cannon ball followed the first and buried itself in the wall near Gauvain. A third knocked off his hat.

These balls were of large calibre. They came from a sixteen-pounder.

"They are aiming at you, commandant," cried the artillerymen. And they put out the torch. Gauvain, as if in a dream, picked up his hat.

Some one indeed was aiming at Gauvain; it was Lantenac.

The marquis had just entered the barricade from the opposite side.

L'Imânus ran toward him.

"Monseigneur, we have been surprised."

"By whom?"

"I do not know."

"Is the road open from Dinan?"

"I think so."

"We must begin a retreat."

"It has begun. Many have already escaped."

"We mustn't escape; we must retreat. Why haven't you used the artillery?"

"They lost their heads, and then the officers were not here."

"I will attend to it."

"Monseigneur, I have sent all that I could of the baggage, the women, and everything of no use, towards Fougères. What is to be done with the three little children?"

"Ah! those children?"

"Yes."

"They are our hostages. Have them taken to la Tourgue."

Having said this, the marquis went to the barricade. The coming of the chief put a new face on the matter. The barricade was badly constructed for artillery, as there was room for but two cannons; the marquis put in position two sixteen-pounders, for which they made embrasures. As he was leaning over one of the cannons, looking at the battery of the enemy through the embrasure, he noticed Gauvain.

"It is he!" he cried out.

Then he took the sponge and rammer himself, loaded the piece, adjusted the sight and aimed.

Three times he aimed at Gauvain and missed him. The third shot only succeeded in knocking off his hat.

"Stupid!" muttered Lantenac. "A little lower and I should have had his head."

Suddenly the torch went out, and he had nothing before him but darkness.

"So be it," he said.

And turning toward the peasant gunner, he cried,—

"Fire away!"

Gauvain, on his side, was no less in earnest. The situation grew more serious. A new phase of the struggle presented itself. The barricade had begun to make use of cannon. Who knew but it might pass from the defensive to the offensive? He had before him, not counting the dead and those who had fled, at least five thousand combatants, and he himself had only twelve hundred able men left. What would become of the Republicans, if the enemy should notice their small number? The *rôles* would be reversed. They were attacking, they would be attacked. If the barricade were to make a sortie all would be lost.

What was to be done? attacking the barricade front was not to be dreamed of; to attempt at main force would be risky; twelve hundred men could not drive out five thousand. To hasten matters was impossible, to wait would be fatal. They must come to an end. But how?

Gauvain belonged to the country, he knew the town; he knew that back of the old market, where the Vendéans were embattled, was a maze of narrow, winding lanes.

He turned to his lieutenant who was that brave Captain Guéchamp, famous later for clearing the forest of Concise, where Jean Chouan was born, and for preventing the taking of Bourgneuf, by barring the rebels from the dyke of the pond of la Chaîne.

"Guéchamp," he said, "I leave you in command. Fire with all your might. Riddle the barricade with cannon balls. Keep all those people busy."

"I understand," said Guéchamp.

"Mass the whole column with arms loaded, and hold them ready for attack."

He spoke a few words additional in Guéchamp's ear.

"I understand," said Guéchamp.

Gauvain continued,—

"Are all our drummers on hand?"

"Yes."

"We have nine. Keep two, give me seven."

The seven drummers ranged themselves silently before Gauvain.

Then Gauvain cried,—

"Battalion of Bonnet-Rouge!"

Twelve men, with a sergeant, left the main body of the troops.

"I ask for the whole battalion," said Gauvain.

"Here we are!" replied the sergeant.

"Twelve of you!"

"There are twelve of us left."

"Very good," said Gauvain.

This sergeant was the rough, but kind-hearted, trooper Radoub, who had adopted in the name of the battalion the three children found in the wood of La Saudraie.

Only half a battalion, it will be remembered, had been exterminated at Herbe-en-Pail, and Radoub had the good luck not to form a part of it.

A forage wagon was near; Gauvain pointed it out to the sergeant.

"Sergeant, have your men make ropes of straw and twist them around their guns to prevent any sound if they knock against each other."

In a moment's time the order had been executed, in silence and darkness.

"It is done," said the sergeant.

"Soldiers, take off your shoes," added Gauvain.

"We haven't any," said the sergeant.

That made, with the seven drummers, nineteen men; Gauvain was the twentieth.

He cried,—

"Follow me in single file. The drummers behind me, the battalion next. Sergeant, you will command the battalion."

He took the head of the column, and, while the cannonading continued on both sides, these twenty men, gliding along like ghosts, plunged into the deserted lanes.

They marched some time in this way, winding along by the houses. Everything seemed dead in the town; the citizens were crouching in the cellars. There was not a door which was not barred, not a blind which was not closed. No light anywhere.

The great street was making a furious din in the midst of this silence; the cannonading still continued; the Republican battery and the Royalist barricade were angrily spitting out all their volleys.

After twenty minutes of winding about, Gauvain, who led the way with certainty in the darkness, reached the end of a lane running into the principal street; only it was on the other side of the market.

The position was reversed. On this side there was no intrenchment,—such is the everlasting imprudence of those who build barricades,—the market was open and they could enter under the arches, where some baggage wagons were harnessed ready for departure. Gauvain and his nineteen men had before them the five thousand Vendéans, but they were behind the Vendéans' backs and not in front of them.

Gauvain spoke in a low voice to the sergeant; they removed the straw from their guns; the twelve grenadiers stationed themselves in order of battle behind the corner of the lane, and the seven drummers held their drumsticks in readiness for orders.

The discharge of artillery was intermittent. Suddenly, in an interval between two reports, Gauvain raised his sword, and, in a voice which sounded like a trumpet in the silence, cried out,—

"Two hundred men to the right, two hundred men to the left, the rest in the centre!"

The twelve guns fired, the seven drums beat the charge.

And Gauvain uttered the terrible cry of the Blues,—

"Charge bayonets!"

The effect was wonderful.

This entire mass of peasants felt that they were surprised from the rear, and imagined that there was a new army behind them. At the same time, the column holding the head of the street and commanded by Guéchamp, hearing the drums, moved forward, beating the charge in return, and rushed in double-quick time on the barricade; the peasants saw that they were between two fires.

A panic exaggerates everything; in a panic, a pistol shot makes as much noise as a cannon, and sounds are magnified by the imagination, and the baying of a hound seems like the roar of a lion. We may add that the peasant takes fear as the thatch takes fire, and peasant's fear increases to defeat, as easily as the burning thatch grows to a conflagration. Their flight was beyond description.

In a few moments, the market was empty, the terrified peasant boys scattered, in spite of the officers. L'Imânus killed two or three of the deserters to no purpose; this cry was heard above everything else: "Escape, if you can!" and this army fled through the streets of the town as though it were a sieve, out into the country, with the swiftness of clouds driven by a storm.

Some escaped in the direction of Châteauneuf, some toward Plerguer, and others toward Antrain.

The Marquis de Lantenac saw this defeat. He spiked the cannons with his own hand, then retired, the last, slowly and coolly, saying,—"The peasants are not to be depended upon, most decidedly. We must have the English."

CHAPTER IV

IT IS THE SECOND TIME

The victory was complete.

Gauvain turned toward the men of the battalion of Bonnet-Rouge, and said,—

"There are only twelve of you, but you are worth a thousand."

Praise from the chief meant the cross of honor at that time.

Guéchamp, sent out of the town by Gauvain, pursued the fugitives and took many of them.

They lighted the torches and ransacked the town.

All who could not escape surrendered. They lighted up the main streets with fire pots. It was strewn with dead and wounded. The end of a battle is always heartrending. A few groups of desperate men here and there still resisted; they were surrounded and they laid down their arms.

Gauvain had noticed in the lawless confusion of the rout, a bold man, a sort of nimble, hardy faun, who had aided the flight of others but had not fled himself. This peasant made masterly use of his carbine, shooting with the barrel, felling with the stock so well that he had broken it; now he had a pistol in one hand and a sword in the other. No one dared approach him. Suddenly, Gauvain saw him totter and lean against a post in the main street. The man had just been wounded. But he still held his sword and pistol. Gauvain put his sword under his arm and went to him.

"Surrender," he said.

The man looked at him steadily. Blood was flowing from a wound under his clothing and making a pool at his feet.

"You are my prisoner," added Gauvain.

The man remained speechless.

"What is your name?"

The man said,—

"My name is Danse-à-l'Ombre."

"You are a brave fellow," said Gauvain.

And he held out his hand to him.

The man replied: "Long live the king!" and collecting all the strength he had left, raising both arms at once, he fired his pistol at Gauvain's heart, and aimed a blow at his head with his sword.

He did this with the swiftness of a tiger; but some one else was quicker still. It was a man on horseback who had just arrived, and had been there for some moments without attracting any one's attention. When this man saw the Vendéan raise his sword and pistol, he threw himself between him and Gauvain. But for this man Gauvain would have been killed. The horse received the shot, the man received the blow from the sabre, and both fell. All this was done before there was time to cry out.

The Vendéan had dropped on the pavement.

The sabre had struck the man full in the face; he was on the ground, unconscious. The horse was killed.

Gauvain went to him.

"Who is this man?" he said.

He looked at him. The blood was pouring from the gash and formed a red mask over the wounded man's face. It was impossible to make out his features. One could see that he had gray hair.

"This man has saved my life," continued Gauvain. "Does any one here know who he is?"

"My commandant," said a soldier, "this man has just entered the town. I saw him when he came. He came by the road from Pontorson."

The surgeon of the column came running with his case. The wounded man was still unconscious. The surgeon examined him and said,—

"A mere cut. It is nothing. It will heal. In a week he will be on his feet. It is a fine sword cut."

The wounded man had a cloak, a tricolored belt, pistols, a sword. They laid him on a litter. They took off his clothes. They brought a pail of fresh water, the surgeon washed the wound, his face began to appear. Gauvain watched him with deep attention.

"Has he any papers about him?" asked Gauvain.

The surgeon felt in a side pocket and drew out a portfolio, which he handed to Gauvain.

In the meantime, the wounded man, refreshed by the cold water, came to himself. His eyelids moved slightly.

Gauvain opened the portfolio; he found in it a sheet of paper folded twice, he unfolded it and read,—

"Committee of Public Welfare. Citizen Cimourdain,—"

He cried out: "Cimourdain!"

This cry made the wounded man open his eyes.

Gauvain was distracted.

"Cimourdain! It is you! This is the second time you have saved my life."

Cimourdain looked at Gauvain. An unutterable joy lighted up his blood-stained face.

Gauvain fell on his knees before the wounded man, crying,—

"My master!"

"Thy father," said Cimourdain.

CHAPTER V

THE DROP OF COLD WATER

They had not seen each other for many years, but their hearts had never been separated; they recognized each other as though they had only parted the day before.

A hospital had been improvised at the hôtel de ville in Dol. They laid Cimourdain on a bed in a little room, next to the large general hall for the wounded. The surgeon, who had sewed up the wound, put an end to the effusions between the two men, saying that Cimourdain must be left to go to sleep. Besides, Gauvain was required by the thousand cares which make the duties and anxieties of victory. Cimourdain remained alone, but he did not sleep; he had two fevers, one from his wound, one from his joy.

He did not sleep, and still it seemed to him that he was not awake. Was it possible? his dream was realized. He was one of those who do not believe in luck and he was lucky. He had found Gauvain again. He had left him a child, and found him a man; he found him great, terrible, fearless. He found him in the midst of triumph, and triumph for the people. Gauvain was the point of support to the Revolution in Vendée, and it was he, Cimourdain, who had given this column to the Republic. This victorious man was his pupil. What he saw radiating from this young form, destined perhaps for the Republican pantheon, was his own thought,—Cimourdain's; his disciple, the child of his mind, was from this time forth a hero, and after a little would be a glory; it seemed to Cimourdain that he saw his own soul made into a genius; it was like Chiron seeing Achilles in battle. Mysterious relation between the priest and the centaur, for the priest is only a man to the waist.

All the dangers of this adventure, together with his sleeplessness after his wound, filled Cimourdain with a sort of mysterious intoxication. A young destiny was arising magnificently, and what added to his deep joy was the fact that he had full power over this life; another success like the one he had just seen, and Cimourdain would have to say but a word for the Republic to trust him with an army. Nothing dazzles like the astonishment at seeing everything succeed.

It was the time when each man had his own military dream, each wished to make a general: Danton wished to make a general of Westermann; Marat, of Rossignol; Hébert, of Ronsin; Robespierre wanted to get rid of them all.

Why not Gauvain? said Cimourdain to himself; and he went on dreaming. The unbounded was before him; he passed from one hypothesis to another; all obstacles vanished; when one has once set his foot on this ladder he does not stop, it is an endless climb, one leaves man to reach the stars. A great general is only a chief of armies; a great captain is at the same time a chief of ideas; Cimourdain imagined Gauvain a great captain. It seemed to him, for dreams move swiftly, that he saw Gauvain on the ocean, repelling the English; on the Rhine, punishing the kings of the North; among the Pyrenees, repulsing the Spanish; in the Alps, making a signal for Rome to rise. There were in Cimourdain two men, a tender man and a gloomy man; both were satisfied; for as the inexorable was his ideal, he had seen Gauvain terrible as well as superb. Cimourdain thought of all that destruction must do before construction could begin, and surely, he thought, this is not the time for emotion. Gauvain will be "at the top"—"*à la hauteur,*"—a phrase of that day. Cimourdain imagined Gauvain crushing the shades of night under his foot, having on a breastplate of light, with a meteoric gleam on his brow, spreading the great ideal wings of Justice, Reason and Progress, and carrying a sword in his hand; an angel, but of destruction.

At the very height of this dream, which was almost an ecstasy, he heard, through the partly open door, talking in the great hospital ward, next his room; he recognized Gauvain's voice; that voice, which in spite of years of absence was always sounding in his ear, and the voice of the child was recognizable in the voice of the man. He listened. There was a sound of steps. Some soldiers said,—

"Commander, this is the man who shot at you. While nobody was noticing him, he dragged himself to a cellar. We have found him. Here he is."

Then Cimourdain heard this conversation between Gauvain and the man,—

"Are you wounded?"

"I am well enough to be shot."

"Put this man in a bed. Dress his wounds, care for him, heal him."

"I want to die."

"You will live. You wished to kill me in the name of the king; I pardon you in the name of the Republic."

A shadow passed over Cimourdain's face. He woke as it were with a start, and he murmured with a sort of ominous despondency,—

"He is surely merciful."

CHAPTER VI

A HEALED BREAST, A BLEEDING HEART

A cut heals quickly; but there was some one elsewhere more seriously wounded than Cimourdain. It was the woman who had been shot at Herbe-en-Pail and had been picked up by the beggar Tellmarch in the great pool of blood.

Michelle Fléchard was in even greater danger than Tellmarch had supposed; there was a wound in her shoulder blade corresponding to the one above her breast; at the same time that the bullet broke her collar bone, another went through her shoulder; but as her lung had not been touched she might recover. Tellmarch was a "philosopher," an expression among the peasants signifying something of a doctor, a little of a surgeon, a little of a sorcerer. He took care of the wounded woman in his den, on his pallet of seaweed, giving her those mysterious things called "simple remedies," and, thanks to him, she lived.

The collar bone knit together, the wounds in her breast and shoulder closed up; after a few weeks the wounded woman was convalescent.

One morning she was able to go out of the carnichot, leaning on Tellmarch; she sat down under the trees in the sun. Tellmarch knew little about her, breast wounds require perfect quiet, and during the agony preceding her recovery, she had hardly spoken a word. When she wished to talk, Tellmarch made her keep silent; but her delirium was persistent, and Tellmarch noticed in her eyes the gloomy coming and going of painful thoughts. This morning she was strong, she could almost walk by herself; a cure is a paternity, and Tellmarch looked at her with happiness. This good old man began to smile. He spoke to her.

"Well, we are on our feet, we have no more wounds."

"Except in the heart," she said.

And she added,—

"So you don't know at all where they are?"

"Who?" asked Tellmarch.

"My children."

That "so" expressed a whole world of thoughts; it meant "since you never speak to me about them, since for so many days you have been by my side without opening your mouth about them, since you have made me keep silence every time I wished to break it, since you seem to fear that I should speak about them, it must be because you have nothing to tell me." Often in wandering and delirium of fever she had called her children, and had seen, for delirium takes note, that the old man did not answer her.

It was because Tellmarch really did not know what to say to her. It is not an easy matter to speak to a mother of her lost children. And, then, what did he know? Nothing. He knew that a mother had been shot, that this mother had been found on the ground by him, that when he had picked her up she was almost a corpse, that this corpse had three children, and that the Marquis de Lantenac, after having the mother shot, had carried away the three children. All his information ended here. What had become of these children? Were they even still living? He knew, for he had made inquiries, that there were two boys, and a little girl hardly weaned. Nothing more. He asked himself a multitude of questions about this unfortunate group, but he could answer none of them. The country people whom he questioned could do no more than shake their heads. Monsieur de Lantenac was a man whom they did not willingly talk about.

People did not like to speak of Lantenac and they did not like to speak to Tellmarch. Peasants have a kind of suspicion peculiar to themselves. They did not love Tellmarch. Tellmarch the Caimand was a disquieting man. Why was he always looking at the sky? What was he doing and what was he thinking about in his long hours of inertness? He was really a strange man. In this country full of war, full of conflagration, full of combustion; where all the men had but one business, devastation; and but one work, carnage; where whoever wished burned a house, cut the throats of a family, massacred a port, plundered a village; where people thought of nothing but laying ambushes for each other, drawing each other into snares, and killing one another; this solitary man, absorbed in nature, as it were, submerged in the vast peace of things, gathering herbs and plants, occupied solely with flowers, birds, and stars, was evidently dangerous. Plainly, he had lost his reason; he did not lie in ambush, he shot nobody. Hence there was a certain dread regarding him.

"This man is mad," said the peasants.

Tellmarch was more than an isolated man, he was a man who was avoided.

No one asked him questions, and no one gave him satisfactory answers. He had consequently not been able to get as much information as he would have wished. The war had spread beyond, they had gone to fight farther away, the Marquis de Lantenac had disappeared from sight, and in Tellmarch's state of mind, war had to put its foot on him before he would notice it.

After these words, "my children," Tellmarch no longer smiled, and the mother was lost in thought. What was passing in her soul? It was like the depths of an abyss. Suddenly she looked up at Tellmarch and cried out again in almost an angry voice,—

"My children!"

Tellmarch bowed his head as though he were guilty. He was thinking of the Marquis de Lantenac, who was certainly not thinking of him; and who, probably, was no longer even aware of his existence. He was calling himself to account for it, saying to himself: "A seigneur, when he is in danger, recognizes you; when he is out of danger, he recognizes you no longer."

And he asked himself: "But, then, why did I save this seigneur?"

And he replied: "Because he is a man."

He thought it over for some time, and added to himself,—

"Am I sure of it?"

And he repeated his bitter remark: "If I had known!"

He was overwhelmed by this adventure, for what he had done puzzled him. It was painful for him to think of it. A good action may, then, be a bad action. He who saves the wolf kills the sheep. He who repairs the vulture's wing is responsible for his claw.

He really felt that he was guilty. This mother's unreasoning anger was justifiable.

However, having saved the mother consoled him for having saved this marquis.

But the children!

The mother was thinking about them, too. Their thoughts were in the same direction, and without speaking to each other, they may have met in the shadows of reverie.

However, her eyes, in whose depths was the darkness of night, fastened on Tellmarch again.

"But it cannot go on like this," she said.

"Hush!" said Tellmarch, putting his finger on his lips.

She continued,—

"You did wrong to save me, and I am angry with you for it. I would rather be dead, because I am sure I should see them. I should know where they are. They would not see me, but I should be near them. One when dead may be able to protect."

He took her arm and felt her pulse.

"Calm yourself, you will bring on the fever again."

She asked him almost harshly,—

"When can I go away?"

"Go away?"

"Yes, walk."

"Never, if you are not reasonable; to-morrow, if you are good."

"What do you call being good?"

"Having confidence in God."

"God! Where has he put my children?"

She was like one deranged. Her voice grew very gentle.

"You understand," she said to him, "I cannot stay like this. You have never had children, I have had them. That makes a difference. One cannot judge of a thing when he does not know what it is. You have never had any children, have you?"

"No," replied Tellmarch.

"As for me, I had nothing else. Without my children, what am I? I wish some one would tell me why I am without my children. I feel sure something has happened, but I do not understand. They have killed my husband, they shot me, but, all the same, I do not understand it."

"Come," said Tellmarch, "the fever is coming on again. Don't talk any more."

She looked at him and was silent.

After this day, she talked no more.

Tellmarch was obeyed more than he wished. She spent long hours crouching at the foot of the old tree, in a dull stupor. She pondered and was silent. Silence offers a strange protection to simple souls suddenly plunged into the gloomy depths of grief. She seemed to have given up understanding it. To a certain degree, despair is unintelligible to the despairing.

Tellmarch looked at her with emotion. In the presence of this suffering, this old man had a woman's thoughts.

"Oh, yes," he said to himself, "her lips do not speak, but her eyes speak; I see what is the matter with her, one all-absorbing thought. To have been a mother and to be a mother no longer! To have been a nurse, and to be so no more! She cannot be resigned to it. She thinks of the little one she nursed not long since. She thinks about it, and thinks about it, and thinks about it. It surely must be delightful to feel a little rosy mouth drawing your soul out of your body, and from your life making a life for itself!"

For his part he was silent too, feeling before such affliction, the powerlessness of words. The silence of an all-absorbing idea is terrible. And how to make this mother's all-absorbing idea listen to reason? Maternity is illogical; one cannot reason with it. What makes a mother sublime is that she is a sort of animal. The maternal instinct is divinely animal. The mother is no longer a woman, she is a female.

Children are her young.

Hence, there is something in the mother inferior and superior to reason. A mother has a guiding scent. The vast mysterious will of creation is in her and guides her. Blindness full of clear-sightedness.

Tellmarch now wanted to make this wretched woman talk; he did not succeed. Once, he said to her,—

"Unfortunately, I am old and unable to walk any longer. I come to the end of my strength before I come to the end of my journey. After a quarter of an hour, my legs refuse to go, and I am obliged to stop; otherwise, I should be able to accompany you. Perhaps in reality it is a good thing that I am not able. I should be more dangerous than useful to you; they tolerate me here; but I am suspected by the Blues as a peasant, and by the peasants as a sorcerer."

He waited for her to reply. She did not even raise her eyes. An all-absorbing idea ends in madness or heroism. But of what heroism was a poor peasant woman capable? Of none. She could be a mother, and that was all. Each day she buried herself more deeply in her thoughts. Tellmarch watched her.

He tried to give her occupation; he brought her thread, needles, and a thimble; and she really began to sew, which pleased the poor caimand; she pondered, but she worked, a sign of health; strength was returning gradually; she mended her linen, her garments, her shoes; but her eye still looked glassy. While she sewed, she hummed unintelligibile songs in a low voice. She murmured names, probably those of her children, but not distinctly enough for Tellmarch to understand. She stopped to listen to the birds, as if they had news to give her. She watched the signs of the weather. Her lips moved. She talked to herself in a low voice. She made a bag and filled it with chestnuts. One morning, Tellmarch saw her starting away, looking at random into the depths of the forest.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

She replied,—

"I am going to look for them."

He did not try to detain her.

CHAPTER VII

THE TWO POLES OF TRUTH

After a few weeks full of all the vicissitudes of civil war, there was nothing else talked of in the country of Fougères, except two men who were opposed to each other, and who, nevertheless, were doing the same work, that is to say, fighting side by side in the great Revolutionary struggle.

The savage Vendéan duel still continued, but la Vendée was losing ground. In l'Ille-et-Vilaine particularly, thanks to the young commandant who at Dol had so opportunely replied to the daring of six thousand Royalists with the daring of fifteen hundred patriots, the insurrection was, if not extinguished, at least, very much lessened and limited. Several more fortunate strokes had followed this, and, of multiplied successes, a new situation was born.

Things had changed in appearance, but a singular complication had unexpectedly arisen.

In all this part of la Vendée the Republic had the supremacy; this was beyond a doubt; but what Republic? In the triumph which was in prospect, two forms of the Republic were present,—the republic of terror, and the republic of mercy; one wishing to conquer by severity, and the other by gentleness. Which would prevail? These two forms, the conciliatory and the implacable, were represented by two men, each with his own influence and authority; one, a military commander, the other, a civil delegate; which of these two men would carry the day?

One of these two men, the delegate, had formidable support; he had come bringing the menacing watchword of the Commune of Paris to Santerre's battalions. "No mercy, no quarter!" To bring everything under his authority, he had the decree of the Convention carrying "pain of death to any one setting at liberty, or helping to escape a captive rebel chief;" he had full power emanating from the Committee of Public Welfare, and an injunction to obey him, as delegate, signed: ROBESPIERRE, DANTON, MARAT. The other, the soldier, had in his behalf only this force, pity.

He had nothing to aid him but his arm, which conquered the enemy, and his heart, which gave them mercy. As a conqueror, he believed he had the right to spare the vanquished.

Hence, the latent but deep conflict between these two men. They were in different clouds, both fighting the rebellion, and each having his own thunderbolt, one, victory; the other, terror.

Throughout the Bocage, they talked of nothing but them; and what added to the anxiety of the attention everywhere fixed on them, was the fact that these two men, so absolutely opposed to each other, were, at the same time, closely united. These two antagonists were two friends. Never were two hearts bound together by a deeper and more profound sympathy; the cruel one had saved the life of the merciful one, and his face bore a scar in consequence. These two were the incarnation, one of death, the other of life; one was the principle of terror; the other, the principle of peace; and they loved each other. Strange problem. Let one imagine Orestes compassionate, and Pylades merciless. Let one imagine Ahriman the brother of Ormuzd.

Let us add that the one called "cruel" was at the same time the most brotherly of men; he dressed the wounded, cared for the sick, spent his days and nights in the hospitals, was affected at the sight of barefooted children, had nothing of his own, gave all to the poor. When there was fighting, he was in the midst of it; he marched at the head of the columns, and in the thickest of the battle, armed, for he had a sabre and two pistols in his belt, and unarmed, for he had never been seen to draw his sabre or touch his pistols. He faced the shots, and gave none in return. They said he had been a priest.

One of these men was Gauvain, the other was Cimourdain.

There was friendship between these two men, but hatred between the two principles; it was like one soul cut in two, and divided; Gauvain really had received a half of Cimourdain's soul, but the gentle half. It seemed as if Gauvain had received the white rays, and Cimourdain had kept for himself what might be called the black rays. This caused an intimate discord. It was impossible for this secret war not to burst forth. One morning the battle began.

Cimourdain said to Gauvain,—

"Where are we?"

"Gauvain replied,—

"You know as well as I do. I have scattered Lantenac's bands. He has only a few men with him. He is driven back into the forest of Fougères. In a week he will be surrounded."

"And in two weeks?"

"He will be captured."

"And then?"

"Have you seen my notice?"

"Yes. Well?"

"He will be shot."

"Mercy again. He must be guillotined."

"For my part," said Gauvain, "I am for military death."

"And I," replied Cimourdain, "am for revolutionary death."

He looked Gauvain in the face, and said,—

"Why did you release those nuns of the convent of Saint-Marc-le-Blanc?"

"I am not making war on women," replied Gauvain.

"These women hate the people. And for hatred a woman is equal to ten men. Why did you refuse to send all that flock of old fanatic priests taken at Louvigné to the Revolutionary tribunal?"

"I am not making war on old men."

"An old priest is worse than a young one. Rebellion is more dangerous when preached by white hairs. People have faith in wrinkles. No false pity, Gauvain. Regicides are liberators. Keep your eye on the tower of the temple."

"The tower of the temple! I would release the dauphin. I am not making war on children."

Cimourdain's eye grew stern.

"Gauvain, know that it is necessary to make war on a woman when her name is Marie Antoinette, on an old man when his name is Pope Pius VI., and on a child, when his name is Louis Capet."

"My master, I am not a politician."

"Try not to be dangerous. Why, when the post of Cossé was attacked, and the rebel Jean Treton, driven back and lost, rushed alone, sword in hand, on the whole column, did you cry, 'Open the ranks—let him pass?' "

"Because one does not set fifteen hundred men to kill a single man."

"Why, at the Cailleterie d' Astillé, when you saw that your soldiers were going to kill the Vendéan, Joseph Bézier, who was wounded, and dragging himself along, did you cry: 'Forward, march! I will attend to him!' and shoot your pistol into the air?"

"Because one does not shoot a man who is down."

"And you did wrong. Both are to-day chiefs of bands; Joseph Bézier is Moustache, and Jean Treton is Jambe d'Argent. In saving these two men, you gave two enemies to the Republic."

"Certainly, I should like to make friends for it and not give it enemies."

"Why did you not have your three hundred peasant prisoners shot after the victory of Landéan?"

"Because as Bonchamp had pardoned the Republican prisoners, I wished to have it said that the Republic pardoned the Royalist prisoners."

"But if you take Lantenac will you pardon him?"

"No."

"Why not, since you pardoned three hundred prisoners?"

"The peasants are ignorant; Lantenac knows what he is doing."

"But Lantenac is a relative of yours?"

"France is the great relative."

"Lantenac is an old man."

"Lantenac is a foreigner. Lantenac has no age. Lantenac is summoning the English. Lantenac is invasion. Lantenac is the enemy of the country. The duel between him and me can only end in his death or mine."

"Gauvain, remember your words."

"My promise is given."

There was a silence and both looked at each other.

Gauvain added,—

"This year of '93 in which we are living will be a bloody date."

"Take care!" exclaimed Cimourdain. "Terrible duties are before us. Accuse no one who is not at fault. How long has the malady been the fault of the physician? Yes, that which characterizes this tremendous year is that it is pitiless. Why? Because it is the great revolutionary year. This present year is the incarnation of the Revolution. The Revolution has an enemy, the Old World, and is pitiless to it, just as the surgeon has an enemy, gangrene, and is pitiless to it. The Revolution exterminates royalty in the king, aristocracy in the noble, despotism in the soldier, superstition in the priest, barbarity in the judge; in short, everything tyrannous in everything which tyrannizes. The operation is frightful, but the Revolution works with a sure hand. As to the amount of sound flesh that it sacrifices, ask Bœrhave what he thinks about it. What tumor can be removed without involving a loss of blood? What fire can be extinguished without requiring a part of the fire? These terrible necessities are the very condition of success. A surgeon resembles a butcher; a healer may give the effect of an executioner. The Revolution devotes itself to its fatal work. It mutilates, but it saves. What! you ask mercy for the virus! you wish it to show clemency toward what is venomous! It does not listen. It holds what has passed, it will finish it. It makes a deep incision in civilization, out of which will emerge the health of the human race. You suffer? Without doubt. How long will it last? during the operation. Then you will live. The Revolution is amputating the world. Hence this hemorrhage, '93."

"The surgeon is calm," said Gauvain, "and the men I see are violent."

"The Revolution," replied Cimourdain, "needs ferocious workmen to assist it. It rejects every hand that trembles. It has faith only in the inexorable. Danton is terrible, Robespierre is inflexible, Saint-Just is immutable, Marat is implacable. Be on your guard, Gauvain. These names are necessary. They are worth whole armies to us. They will terrify Europe."

"And perhaps also the future," said Gauvain.

He stopped and then added,—

"Besides, my master, you make a mistake; I accuse nobody. In my opinion, the chief characteristic of the Revolution is its irresponsibility. No one is innocent, no one is guilty. Louis XVI. is a sheep thrown among lions; he wants to flee, he wants to escape; he tries to defend himself; he would bite if he could. But not every one can be a lion. This desire of his passes for a crime. This sheep, in anger, shows his teeth. 'The traitor!' say the lions, and they devour him. Having done this, they fight among themselves."

"The sheep is a beast."

"And the lions, what are they?"

This reply made Cimourdain thoughtful. He raised his head and said,—

"These lions are consciences, these lions are ideas, these lions are principles."

"They cause the terror."

"Some day the Revolution will be the justification of the terror."

"Fear lest the terror be the calumny of the Revolution."

And Gauvain added,—

"Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, these are dogmas of peace and harmony. Why make them appear frightful? What is it that we wish for? To subject the people to one common Republic. Well, let us not make them afraid. What is the good of intimidation? People are no more attracted by scarecrows than birds are. It is not necessary to do evil in order to accomplish good. The throne is not overturned to leave the scaffold standing. Death to kings and life to nations! Let us knock off the crowns, let us spare the heads! The Revolution is concord and not fright. Gentle ideas are not subserved by pitiless men. Amnesty is in my opinion the most beautiful word in human speech. I will shed blood only while risking my own. Besides, I only know how to fight, and I am only a soldier. But if one cannot pardon, it is not worth while to conquer. During battle, let us be the enemies of our enemies, and after the victory, their brothers."

"Take care!" repeated Cimourdain, for the third time, "Gauvain, you are more to me than a son. Take care!"

And he added thoughtfully,—

"In times like ours, pity may be one form of treason."

Hearing these two men talk was like hearing the conversation of the sword and the axe.

CHAPTER VIII

DOLOROSA

In the meantime, the mother was looking for her little ones.

She went straight ahead. How did she live? Impossible to tell. She herself did not know. She walked days and nights; she begged, she ate grass, she slept on the ground, she slept in the open air, in the thickets, under the stars, sometimes in the rain and the wind.

She roved from village to village, farm to farm, asking for information. She stopped on the thresholds; her dress was in rags; sometimes she was welcomed, sometimes she was driven away. When she could not go into the houses, she went into the woods. She was not acquainted with the country. No region was familiar to her except Siscoignard and the parish of Azé. She had no definite route; she went back on her steps; started on a road that she had already been over; went on useless paths. Sometimes she followed the road, sometimes the tracks of a wagon, sometimes footpaths in the copses. In this life of chance she had worn out her wretched clothing; she had walked first in shoes, then barefooted, then with bleeding feet.

She went into the midst of the war, in the midst of the firing, hearing nothing, seeing nothing, avoiding nothing, looking for her children. As everything was in revolt, there were no policemen, no mayors, no authorities. She had to do only with those whom she met. She spoke to them, she asked,—

"Have you seen three little children anywhere?"

The passers-by raised their heads.

"Two boys and a girl," she said.

She continued,—

"René-Jean, Gros-Alain, Georgette? You have not seen them?"

She went on.

"The oldest four years and a half, the little one twenty months old."

She added,—

"Do you know where they are? They have taken them away from me."

The people looked at her, and that was all.

Seeing that they did not understand, she said,—

"They are mine, that is why."

The people went on their way. Then she would stop and say no more, tearing her breast with her nails.

One day, however, a peasant listened to her. The good man began to ponder.

"Wait," he said. "Three children?"

"Yes."

"Two boys."

"And a girl."

Then he asked again,—

"Are you looking for them?"

"Yes."

"I have heard tell of a seigneur who took three little children, and had them with him."

"Where is this man?" she cried. "Where are they?"

The peasant replied,—

"Go to la Tourgue."

"Shall I find my children there?"

"Probably you will."

"You said?"

"La Tourgue."

"What is la Tourgue?"

"It is a place."

"Is it a village? a castle? a farm?"

"I have never been there."

"Is it far?"

"It is not near."

"In what direction?"

"In the direction of Fougères."

"How do you get there?"

"You are in Ventortes," said the peasant; "you leave Ernée on the left and Coxelles on the right, you pass by Lorchamps and you cross the Leroux."

And the peasant pointed toward the west.

"Right ahead of you all the way, in the direction of the sunset."

Before the peasant had dropped his arm she had started.

The peasant called out,—

"But take care. They are fighting over there."

She did not turn round to reply to him, but continued on her way.

CHAPTER IX

A PROVINCIAL BASTILLE

I. — La Tourgue

The traveller of forty years ago, who entered the forest of Fougères from the side of Laignelet, and came out on the side of Parigné, was confronted with a forbidding object on the edge of these dark woods. As he emerged from the thicket, la Tourgue arose abruptly before him.

Not the living la Tourgue, but the dead la Tourgue. La Tourgue rent, ruined, scarred, dismantled. A ruin is to an edifice what a ghost is to a man.

There was no more gloomy sight than la Tourgue. Before one's eyes was a lofty round tower, standing alone in a corner of the wood, like a malefactor. This tower, rising from a perpendicular rock, was almost Roman in appearance, it was so regular and solid, and the idea of power was so mingled with the idea of ruin in this mighty mass. It was slightly Roman, for it was Romanesque; it was begun in the ninth century and finished in the twelfth, after the third Crusade. The impost mouldings of its archways told its age.

If the traveller approached it, climbed up its escarpment, noticed a breach, took his risk in entering, went inside, he found it empty. It was something like the inside of a stone trumpet placed upright on the ground. From top to bottom there were no partitions; there was no roof, no ceiling, no floor; there were arch stones and chimney-pieces, and embrasures for ancient cannon; at different heights, bands of granite corbels, and some cross-beams, marking the stories; the beams were covered with the lime of night birds; the colossal wall was fifteen feet thick at the base, and twelve at the summit;

here and there were crevices and holes which had been doorways, through which could be seen dark staircases inside the wall. The passer-by who came in here in the evening would have heard the cries of the brown owl, herons, goat-suckers, and other birds; and would have seen under his feet brambles, stones, and reptiles; and above his head, through a black circle, which was the top of the tower and seemed like the mouth of an enormous well, the stars.

There was a tradition in the country that in the upper stories of this tower there were secret doors, like the doors in the tombs of the kings of Judah, made of a single stone turning on a pivot, opening, then closing and losing itself in the wall; a style of architecture brought back from the Crusades with the pointed arch. When these doors were closed it was impossible to find them, they were so well blended with the other stones in the wall. Such doors may be seen at the present time in the mysterious cities of Anti-Lebanon, escaped from the twelve towns which were buried by the earthquakes in the time of Tiberius.

II. — The Breach

The breach which formed the entrance to the ruin was the opening to a mine. For a connoisseur familiar with Errard, Sardi and Pagan, this mine had been constructed according to rule. The fire chamber, shaped like a mitre, was proportioned to the power of the keep it had to rip open. It must have held at least two hundredweight of powder. It was reached by a winding passage, which is more advantageous than a straight one; the caving in caused by the mine laid bare, where the stones were torn away, the saucission having the diameter of a hen's egg. The explosion had made a deep hole in the wall, through which the besiegers must have been able to enter. This tower had evidently sustained regular sieges at different times; it was riddled with grapeshot; and the grapeshot did not all belong to the same period; each projectile has its own way of marking a rampart; and all had left their scar on this keep, from the stone cannon balls of the fourteenth century to the iron cannon balls of the eighteenth.

The breach opened into what must have been the ground floor. Opposite the breach in the wall of the tower, opened the door to a crypt cut out in the rock, and extending in the foundations of the tower under the entire hall of the ground floor.

This crypt, three quarters filled up, was cleared out in 1835, under the direction of Monsieur Auguste le Prévost, the Antiquary of Bernay.

III. — The Dungeon

This crypt was the oubliette.

Every keep has its dungeon. This keep, like many torture chambers of the same period, had two stories. The first story, which was reached by the door, was a large arched room on a level with the hall of the ground floor. On the wall of this room were seen two parallel, vertical grooves, extending from one side to the other across the arched ceiling, where they made a deep indentation, giving the impression of two wheel tracks. They were two wheel tracks in reality. These two grooves had been hollowed out by two wheels. Formerly, in feudal times, victims had been quartered in this room, by a less noisy process than with the four horses. They had two wheels there, so strong and so large that they touched the walls and the arched ceiling; an arm and a leg of the prisoner were fastened to each of the wheels, then the wheels were revolved in opposite directions, which tore the man asunder. It required force, and this caused the grooves hollowed out in the stone ground by the wheels. At the present time, a room of this kind may still be seen at Vianden.

Under this room there was another. This was the real dungeon. It was not entered by a door, it was penetrated through a hole; the victim, naked, was let down by a rope under the armpits, into the lower chamber, through a hole in the centre of the pavement of the room above. If he persisted in living, food was thrown to him through this hole. A hole of this kind may still be seen at Bouillon.

Air came through this hole. The lower room, dug out under the hall of the ground floor, was rather a well than a room. There was water at the bottom and it was filled with an icy draught. This draught, which was death to the prisoner below, kept the prisoner above alive; it made it possible to breathe in the prison. The prisoner above, groping about under his arched ceiling, received no air except through this hole. Moreover, whoever went down there, or fell down there never came out again. The prisoner had to keep away from it in the darkness. One false step might make the prisoner of the upper chamber a prisoner of the lower. This was ever before him. If he clung to life this hole was his danger; if he was weary of it, this hole was his resource. The upper story was the dungeon; the lower story, the tomb. A superposition resembling the society of that time.

This was what our ancestors called a *"cul-de-basse-fosse."* As such a thing has gone out of existence, the name has no meaning for us. Thanks to the Revolution, we can utter these words with indifference.

Outside the tower, above the breach which forty years ago was the only entrance, was an opening larger than the other loopholes, from which hung an iron grating, broken and loose.

IV. — THE LITTLE CASTLE ON THE BRIDGE

On the opposite side of the breach, a bridge of stone with three arches very little injured, was joined to this tower. The bridge had supported a building, some fragments of which were still remaining. There was nothing left of this building, which showed evidence of a conflagration, but charred timbers, a sort of framework through which the daylight penetrated, and which rose near the tower, like a skeleton beside a ghost.

This ruin is now entirely demolished, and not a trace of it is left. One day and one peasant were enough to undo the work of many centuries and many kings.

La Tourgue is a peasant abbreviation for la Tour-Gauvain, just as la Jupelle is an abbreviation of la Jupellière, and as the name of that humpbacked chief, Pinson-le-Tort, means Pinson-le-Tortu.

La Tourgue, which was in ruins forty years ago, and to-day is only a name, in 1793 was a fortress. It was the old bastille of the Gauvain family, guarding the western entrance to the forest of Fougères, a forest which is hardly a grove now.

This citadel was built on one of those great blocks of schist which abound between Mayenne and Dinan, and are scattered everywhere through the thickets and moors, as though the giants had been throwing stones at each others' heads.

The tower comprised the whole fortress; under the tower was the rock, at the foot of the rock one of those streams of water which the month of January changes to a torrent, and the month of June dries up entirely.

Simplified to this extent, the fortress in the middle ages was almost impregnable. The bridge weakened it. The Gothic Gauvains had built it without a bridge. It was reached by one of those movable foot bridges, which could be destroyed by a single axe blow. While the Gauvains were viscounts, it pleased them thus, and they were satisfied with it; but when they became marquises, and when they left the cave for the court, they threw three arches across the torrent, and made themselves accessible from the plain, just as they had made themselves accessible to the king. The marquises of the seventeenth century and the marchionesses of the eighteenth did not care to be impregnable. Imitating Versailles took the place of keeping up the ancestral traditions.

In front of the tower on the western side was a very high table-land, extending to the plains; this table-land almost touched the tower, and was only separated from it by a very deep ravine, through which flowed the watercourse which is a tributary of the Couesnon. The bridge connecting the fortress and the table-land was built high on piers; and on these piers was constructed a building like that at Chenonceaux in the Mansard style, and more habitable than the tower. But manners were still very rude; the seigneurs held to the custom of living in the rooms of the keep, which were like dungeons. As for the building on the bridge, which was a sort of chatelet, it contained a long corridor which served as an entrance and was called the guard hall; above this guard hall, which was a sort of entresol, was the library; above the library, a granary. Long windows with little panes of Bohemian glass, pilasters between the windows, medallions carved in the wall; three stories; on the lower floor were the halberds and muskets; on the next, the books; on the next, bags of oats; all this was rather savage and very princely.

The tower beside it was fierce.

It rose above this coquettish building in all its gloomy haughtiness. From the platform, the bridge could be destroyed.

The two edifices, one rude, the other elegant, clashed rather than complemented each other. The two styles were not harmonious; although it seems as if two semicircles ought to be similar, nothing resembles a Roman semicircle less than a classic archivault. This tower, suited to the forest, was a strange neighbor to this bridge worthy of Versailles. Imagine Alain Barbe-Torte giving his arm to Louis XIV. The combination was terrible. A strange ferocity resulted from the union of these two majesties.

From a military point of view, the bridge, we must insist, almost betrayed the tower. It adorned it and disarmed it; in gaining ornamentation it had lost strength. The bridge placed it on a footing with the table-land. Although still impregnable on the side of the forest, it was now vulnerable on the side of the plain. Once it commanded the table-land, now it was commanded by the table-land. An enemy established there would quickly become master of the bridge. The library and the granary were to the advantage of the besieger, and against the fortress. A library and a granary are alike in this respect, that books and straw are both combustible. It is all the same to a besieger, making use of fire, whether he burns Homer or a bundle of hay, provided it burns. The French proved this to the Germans when they burned the library at Heidelberg, and the Germans proved it to the French when they burned the library at Strasburg. Adding this bridge to la Tourgue was strategically a mistake; but in the seventeenth century, under Colbert and Louvois, the Gauvain princes, as well as the princes of Rohan and the princes of la Trémoille, believed that they would never be besieged again.

However, the builders of the bridge had taken some precautions. First, they had taken the possibility of fire into account; under the three windows on the side next the water they had hung crosswise, to hooks which could still be seen a half century ago, a strong ladder for escape, as long as the height of the first two stories of the bridge, a height greater than three ordinary stories. Second, they had taken the possibility of assault into account; they had isolated the bridge from the tower by means of a low, heavy iron door; this door was arched; it was locked with a large key, kept in a hiding-place known to the keeper alone, and once closed, this door could defy the battering ram, and almost withstand cannon balls.

It was necessary to pass through the bridge to reach this door, and to pass through this door to enter the tower. There was no other entrance.

V. — The Iron Door

The second story of the chatelet on the bridge, raised on the piers, corresponded to the second story of the tower; the iron door had been placed at this height to make it more secure.

The iron door opened from the side of the bridge into the library, and from the side of the tower into a great arched hall with a pillar in the centre. This hall, as has already been said, was in the second story of the keep. It was round, like the tower; long loopholes, looking out on the plains, lighted it. The wall was quite rough and bare, and nothing concealed the stones, which were very symmetrically laid. This hall was reached by a winding staircase made inside the wall, a thing easily done when the walls are fifteen feet thick. In the Middle Ages, a town was taken street by street; a street, house by house; a house, room by room. They besieged a fortress, story by story.

La Tourgue was in this respect very ingeniously arranged, very churlish, and very unapproachable. A spiral staircase, extremely steep and inaccessible, led from one story to another; the doors were slanting and not so high as a man, and it was necessary to bow one's head in order to pass through; but a bowed head meant a head knocked off, and at each door the besieged awaited the besiegers.

Below the round hall with the column were two similar rooms, which formed the first story and the ground floor, and above there were three; above these six rooms placed one upon another, the tower was closed over with a roof of stone, which was the platform, and reached by a narrow watch-tower.

The fifteen feet, the thickness of the wall, which they must have had to cut through in order to place the iron door in the middle, imbedded it in a long coving, so that when the door closed, it was as much on the side of the tower as on the side of the bridge, under a porch six or seven feet deep; when it was open the two porches formed one and made the entrance arch.

Under the porch on the side of the bridge, inside the wall, was a low gate with a St. Gilles's staircase, leading to the corridor on the first floor, under the library; this was still another difficulty for the besieger. The chatelet on the bridge presented nothing but a perpendicular wall on the side next the table-land, and the bridge ended there. A drawbridge, applied to a low door, put it in communication with the table-land, and this drawbridge, never lowered except on an inclined plane, on account of the height, gave entrance to the long corridor, called the hall of the guards. Once master of this corridor, the besieger, in order to reach the iron door, was obliged to tear away the St. Gilles's staircase leading to the second story.

VI. — The Library

The library was an oblong hall of the same width and length as the bridge, and having a single door, the iron door. A false swinging door, padded with green cloth, and opening with a push, screened the arched entrance to the tower on the inside. The wall of the library from top to bottom, and from floor to ceiling was covered with cabinets having glass doors, in the beautiful style of carpentry of the seventeenth century.

Six large windows, three on each side, one above each arch, lighted this library. From the top of the plateau outside, one could look through these windows and see the inside. Between the windows, on carved oak terminals, stood six marble busts: Hermolaüs, of Byzantium; Athenæus, the grammarian of Naukratos; Suidas; Casaubon; Clovis, king of France; and his chancellor Anachalus, who, by the way, was no more a chancellor than Clovis was a king.

There were books of every kind in this library. One has become famous. It was an old quarto with prints, bearing the title, "Saint Bartholomew," in large letters; and the subtitle, "Gospel according to Saint Bartholomew, preceded by a dissertation by Pantœnus, a Christian philosopher, on the question whether this gospel should be considered apocryphal, and whether Saint Bartholomew be the same as Nathaniel."

This book, thought to be the only copy, rested on a desk in the centre of the library. In the last century, people went to see it out of curiosity.

VII. — The Granary

The granary, which, like the library, had the oblong form of the bridge, was merely the space under the timber-work of the roof. It made a large hall and was filled with straw and hay, and lighted by six garret windows. Its only adornment was a figure of Saint Barnabas, carved on the door, with this verse beneath it,—

Barnabus sanctus falcem jubet ire per herbam.

A wide, lofty tower, with six stories, penetrated by an occasional loophole, having for its only means of entrance and exit an iron door opening on a castle bridge, closed by a drawbridge; behind the tower, the forest; in front of the tower, a plateau covered with heath; under the bridge, between the tower and the plateau, a deep ravine, narrow and full of brambles; a torrent in winter, a brook in spring, a stony ditch in summer; such was the Tour-Gauvain, called la Tourgue.

CHAPTER X

THE HOSTAGES

July passed, August came, a blast of heroism and cruelty blew over France; two spectres had just crossed the horizon, Marat with a dagger in his side, Charlotte Corday headless; everything was becoming terrible.

As for la Vendée, beaten in great strategic measures, she took refuge in small ones, more frightful, as we have already said; this war was now an immense skirmish in the woods.

The disasters to the great army called Catholic and Royal were beginning: a decree sent the army of Mayence to la Vendée; eight thousand Vendéans were killed at Ancenis; the Vendéans were repulsed at Nantes, driven out of Montaigu, expelled from Thouars, driven from Noirmoutier, thrown headlong from Cholet, Mortagne, and Saumur; they evacuated Parthenay; they abandoned Clisson; they lost ground at Châtillon; they lost a flag at Saint-Hilaire; they were defeated at Pornic, at the Sables, at Fontenay, Doué, the Château d'Eau, the Ponts-de-Cé; they were held in check at Luçon; retreated from Châtaigneraye; were routed at Roche-sur-Yon: but, on the one hand, they were threatening la Rochelle, and, on the other, in the Guernsey waters, an English fleet, commanded by General Craig, carrying several English regiments together with the best officers of the French marine, was only waiting for a signal from the Marquis de Lantenac, to disembark.

This disembarkation might give back victory to the royalist insurrection. But Pitt was a State malefactor; treason is to statesmanship what the dagger is to the panoply; Pitt stabbed our country and betrayed his own; betraying his country was dishonoring it; England under him, and through him, waged a Punic war. She spied, cheated, lied. A poacher and a forger, no means were scorned by her; she even descended to the minutiæ of hatred. She caused a monopoly of tallow, which cost five francs a pound; a letter from Prizant, Pitt's agent in Vendée, was taken from an Englishman at Lille, containing these lines,—

"I beg you not to be sparing of money. We hope that the assassinations will be done with prudence; disguised priests and women are the suitable persons for this undertaking. Send sixty thousand livres to Rouen, and fifty thousand livres to Caen."

This letter was read by Barère to the Convention the first of August. This treachery was answered by Parrein's cruelties, and later on by Carrier's atrocities. The Republicans of Metz and the Republicans of the South asked permission to march against the rebels. A decree ordered the forming of twenty-four companies of pioneers to burn the hedges and fences of the Bocage. An unprecedented crisis. The war only ceased in one direction to begin again in another. "No mercy! no prisoners!" was the cry of both parties. History was full of a terrible darkness.

In this month of August, la Tourgue was besieged.

One evening, as the stars were beginning to shine, in the quiet of a dog day twilight, when not a leaf trembled in the forest, not a blade of grass stirred on the moor, through the silence of the approaching darkness, the sound of a horn was heard. The sound of this horn came from the top of the tower.

This horn was answered by a trumpet which sounded from below.

At the top of the tower there was an armed man; below, in the darkness, there was a camp.

A swarm of black figures could be made out in the dim light around the Tour-Gauvain. This swarm was a bivouac. Fires were beginning to be lighted under the trees in the forest and in the heather on the plateau, piercing the darkness here and there with bright points of light, as if the earth wished to shine with stars as well as the sky. Gloomy stars, —those of war! The bivouac, in the direction of the plateau, reached as far as the plains, and in the direction of the forest, it extended into the thicket. La Tourgue was blockaded.

The extent of the besieger's bivouac indicated a numerous force.

The camp was situated close to the fortress, and on the side of the tower reached to the rock, and on the side of the bridge, to the edge of the ravine.

There was a second blast from the horn, followed by a second blowing of the trumpet.

This horn questioned, and the trumpet gave answer.

The horn was the tower asking the camp, "Can we speak to you?" And the trumpet replied, "Yes."

At this period, as the Vendéans were not considered warriors by the Convention, and as a decree had forbidden the exchange of flags of truce with "these brigands," they supplied, as best they could, the means of communication which the right of nations authorizes in ordinary warfare, and forbids in civil warfare. So on occasion, there was a certain understanding arranged between the peasant's horn and the soldier's trumpet. The first call was only to attract attention, the second call put the question, "Will you listen?" If after this second call the trumpet was silent, it meant refusal; if the trumpet answered, it meant consent. This signified a few moments' truce.

The trumpet having replied to the second call, the man on the top of the tower spoke, and these were his words,—

"Ye men who hear me, I am Gouge-le-Bruant, called Brise-bleu, because I have put an end to so many of your men; and called also l'Imânus, because I shall kill still more than I have killed; I had my finger cut off by a sabre stroke on the barrel of my gun, during the attack at Granville, and you had my father and mother, and my sister Jacqueline, eighteen years old, guillotined at Laval;—this is who I am."

"I speak to you in the name of Monseigneur the Marquis

Gauvain de Lantenac, Viscount de Fontenay, Prince of Brittany, seigneur of the seven forests, my master.

"Know first, that before Monseigneur le Marquis shut himself up in this tower where you have blockaded him, he distributed the war among six chiefs, his lieutenants; he gave to Delière the country between the road to Brest and the road to Ernée; to Treton, the country between la Roë and Laval; to Jacquet, called Taillefer, the boundary of the Upper Maine; to Gaulier, called Great Peter, Château-Gontier; to Lecomte, Craon; Fougères to Monsieur Dubois-Guy; and all la Mayenne to Monsieur de Rochambeau; in order that you might accomplish nothing by taking this fortress, and that even if Monseigneur le Marquis should die, la Vendée of God and the king should not die.

"Know this, that what I tell you is to warn you.

"Monseigneur is here by my side. I am the mouth through which his words pass. Ye men, who besiege us, keep silence.

"This is what it is important for you to hear,—

"Do not forget that the war that you are waging against us is unjust. We are people living in our own country, and we are fighting honestly, and we are simple and pure beneath the will of God, as the grass beneath the dew. The Republic has attacked us; it came to disturb us in our fields, it has burned our houses and our crops, and cannonaded our farms, and our women and children have been obliged to flee barefooted into the woods while the winter birds were still singing.

"You, who are present and hear what I say, have driven us into the forest, and you are surrounding us in this tower; you have killed or scattered those who were united to us; you have cannon; you have joined to your column, the garrisons and posts of Mortain, Barenton, Teilleul, Landivy, d'Evran, Tinteniac and Vitré, and the result is that you are attacking us with four thousand five hundred soldiers, and we have but nineteen men for our defence.

"We have provisions and ammunition.

"You have succeeded in contriving a mine and in blowing up a piece of our rock and a piece of our wall.

"That made a hole at the foot of the tower, and this hole is a breach, through which you can enter, although it is not open to the sky, and the tower, still strong and firm, forms an arch above it.

"Now you are preparing to attack us.

"And we, first, Monseigneur le Marquis, who is Prince of Brittany and secular Prior of the abbey of Saint-Marie de Lantenac, where daily mass was established by Queen Jeanne; and next, the other defenders of the tower, among whom are Monsieur l'Abbé Turmeau, in war, Grand-Francœur; my comrade Guinoiseau, captain of Camp-Vert; my comrade, Chante-en-Hiver, captain of the camp of l'Avoine; my comrade, la Musette, captain of the camp of the Fourmis; and myself, a peasant, who was born in the market-town of Daon, through which the brook Moriandre flows,—we all of us have one thing to say to you.

"Men who are at the foot of this tower, listen.

"We have in our hands three prisoners, three children. These children were adopted by one of your battalions, and they are yours. We offer to give up these three children to you.

"On one condition.

"That is that you will let us go free.

"If you refuse, listen attentively. You can attack us in only two ways; by means of the breach, from the side of the forest; or by means of the bridge, from the side of the plateau. The building on the bridge is three stories high; in the lower story, I, l'Imânus, I who speak to you, have had six tons of tar and one hundred fagots of dried heath placed there; in the upper story, there is straw; the middle story is full of books and papers; the iron door leading from the bridge to the tower is closed, and monseigneur has the key; and I have made an opening under the door, and through this opening passes a sulphur slow-match, one end of which is in the hogsheads of tar, and the other within my reach, inside the tower; I shall set fire to it whenever it seems good to me. If you refuse to let us out, the three children will be placed in the second story of the bridge, between the story where the sulphur match ends and where the tar is, and the story filled with straw, and the iron door will be fastened on them. If you attack by the bridge you will be the ones to set fire to the building; if you attack by the breach, we shall be the ones; if you attack by the breach and the bridge at the same time, the fire will be set by you and by us; and in any case the children will perish.

"Now, accept or refuse.

"If you accept, we leave.

"If you refuse, the children die.

"I have said my say."

The man who spoke from the top of the tower was silent.

A voice from below cried out,—

"We refuse."

This voice was short and stern. Another voice, less harsh, but firm, added,—

"We give you twenty-four hours to surrender at discretion."

Silence ensued, and the same voice continued,—

"To-morrow at this hour, if you do not surrender, we shall begin the attack."

And the first voice added,—

"And then, no quarter."

To this savage voice, another replied from the top of the tower. Between two battlements a tall shadow bent forward, in which, by the light of the stars, could be made out the formidable face of the Marquis de Lantenac, and his face which looked into the darkness as if trying to find some one, cried,

"Hold, it is you, priest!"

"Yes, it is I, traitor!" replied the harsh voice from below.

CHAPTER XI

TERRIBLE AS IN ANCIENT DAYS

The relentless voice really was Cimourdain's; the younger and less imperious voice was Gauvain's.

The Marquis de Lantenac had not been mistaken in recognizing the Abbé Cimourdain.

In a few weeks Cimourdain, as we know, had become famous in this country made bloody by civil war; there was no more ominous notoriety than his; people said: "Marat, in Paris; Châlier, in Lyons; Cimourdain, in Vendée." They cursed the Abbé Cimourdain in proportion as they had once revered him; such is the effect of a priest renouncing his robes. Cimourdain was a cause of horror. The stern are unfortunate; whoever sees their deeds condemns them, but if their consciences could be seen they would, perhaps, be forgiven. A Lycurgus, who is not explained seems a Tiberius. The two men, the Marquis de Lantenac and the Abbé Cimourdain, were equal in the balance of hatred; the malediction of the Royalists against Cimourdain was counterbalanced by the execration of the Republicans against Lantenac. Each of these two men was a monster in the eyes of the opposite party; to such an extent that it produced this singular fact, that while Prieur de la Marne, at Granville, was putting a price on Lantenac's head, Charette, at Noirmoutier, was setting a price on the head of Cimourdain.

We may say that these two men, the marquis and the priest, were to a certain extent the same man. The bronze mask of civil war has two profiles; one turned toward the past, the other turned toward the future; both equally tragic. Lantenac was the first of these profiles, Cimourdain was the second; only Lantenac's bitter sneer was full of darkness and night, while Cimourdain's fatal brow glowed with the light of morning.

In the meantime, the siege of la Tourgue had a respite.

Thanks to the intervention of Gauvain, as we have just seen, a sort of twenty-four hours' truce had been agreed upon.

L'Imânus had indeed been well posted, and in consequence of Cimourdain's requisition Gauvain now had under his command four thousand five hundred men, as many National Guards as troops of the line, and with these he was surrounding Lantenac in la Tourgue; and he had been able to point twelve pieces of cannon at the fortress, a masked battery of six pieces on the edge of the forest toward the tower, and an open battery of six pieces on the plateau toward the bridge. He had been able to spring the mine and make a breach at the foot of the tower.

So, at the expiration of the twenty-four hours' truce, the struggle was going to begin under the following conditions,—

There were four thousand five hundred men on the plateau and in the forest.

In the tower, nineteen.

The names of these nineteen besieged men may be found by history among the lists of outlaws. Possibly, we shall come across them.

Cimourdain would have liked to have Gauvain made adjutant-general to command these four thousand five hundred men, who made almost an army. But Gauvain had refused, saying, "When Lantenac has been taken we will see. I have not yet done anything to deserve it."

Great commands with humble rank were, moreover, customary among the Republicans. Later on, Bonaparte was both colonel of artillery and general-in-chief of the army of Italy.

The Tour-Gauvain had a strange fate; it was attacked by a Gauvain, and it was a Gauvain who defended it. This caused some restraint in the attack, but not in the defence, for Monsieur de Lantenac was one of those men who have no regard for anything, and besides he had lived chiefly at Versailles, and had no superstitious feeling for la Tourgue, which he was hardly acquainted with. He had taken refuge because it was the only place, and that was all; but he had no scruple about destroying it. Gauvain was more respectful.

The weak point of the fortress was the bridge; but the library on the bridge contained the family archives; if the attack was made there, the burning of the bridge was inevitable; it seemed to Gauvain that burning the archives was attacking his ancestors. La Tourgue was the family mansion of the Gauvains; all their fiefs of Brittany centred about this tower, just as all the fiefs of France centred about the tower of the Louvre; the family relics of the Gauvains were there; he himself had been born there; the tortuous fatalities of life had brought him as a man to attack these walls which had protected him as a child. Should he be so irreverent toward this dwelling as to reduce it to ashes? Perhaps Gauvain's own cradle was in some corner of the granary over the library. Some reflections become emotions. Gauvain felt moved before the ancient family mansion. That is why he spared the bridge. He had limited himself to rendering all egress and escape impossible by this way, and out of respect guarded the bridge with a battery, and had chosen the opposite side for attack. Hence the mine and the sap at the foot of the tower.

Cimourdain had allowed him to do this; he reproached himself for it, because his severity frowned on all this Gothic rubbish, and he did not wish to be any more indulgent towards buildings than towards men. To care for a castle was a beginning of clemency. Now, clemency was Gauvain's weak side. Cimourdain, we know, watched him with his gloomy eyes and arrested this inclination. However, he himself, and he admitted it with anger, did not look on la Tourgue again without a secret thrill; he felt moved by that studious hall where the first books were which he had taught Gauvain to read; he had been priest of the neighboring village, Parigné; he, Cimourdain, had lived in the top of the castle on the bridge; in the library was where he used to hold the little Gauvain on his knees while he learned the alphabet; between these four old walls he had seen his dearly beloved pupil, the son of his soul, grow as a man and increase as a mind. This library, this castle, these walls, full of his blessings on the child, should he overthrow them and burn them? He pitied them. Not without remorse.

He had let Gauvain begin the siege on the opposite side. La Tourgue had its savage side, the tower, and its civilized side, the library. Cimourdain had allowed Gauvain to make a breach only on the savage side.

Moreover, this old dwelling, attacked by a Gauvain, defended by a Gauvain, was returning, in the midst of the French Revolution, to its feudal customs. Wars between relatives make up the entire history of the Middle Ages; the Eteocles and Polynices are Gothic as well as Greek, and Hamlet does at Elsinore what Orestes did in Argos.

CHAPTER XII

A SCHEME FOR ESCAPE

The whole night was spent on both sides in making preparations.

As soon as the ominous conference just heard, was ended, Gauvain's first care was to call his lieutenant.

Guéchamp, whom it is necessary to know somewhat, was a man of secondary abilities, honest, fearless, ordinary, a better soldier than leader, strictly intelligent to the point where it was his duty to understand no further, never compassionate, inaccessible to corruption of any sort, to venality which corrupts conscience, as well as to pity which corrupts justice. Over his soul and his heart he had these two shades, discipline and order, as a horse has blinders over his two eyes, and he walked straight before him in the space which they left free to him. His gait was unswerving, but his path was narrow.

Moreover, he was a man to be depended upon; stern in command, unflinching in obedience.

Gauvain immediately addressed Guéchamp,—

"Guéchamp, a ladder."

"Commandant, we have none."

"We must have one."

"For climbing?"

"No, for rescue."

Guéchamp reflected and replied,—

"I understand. But for what you want, it must be very high."

"At least three stories."

"Yes, commander, that is very nearly the height."

"And it must exceed this to be sure of success."

"Certainly."

"How does it happen that you are without a ladder?"

"Commander, you did not consider the matter of besieging la Tourgue from the plateau; you were satisfied to blockade it from this side; you wanted to attack it, not by the bridge, but by the tower. We have paid no attention to anything but the mine and gave up the escalade. That is why we have no ladders."

"Have one made immediately."

"A ladder three stories high cannot be improvised."

"Fasten together several short ladders."

"It is necessary to have short ones."

"Find them."

"They are not to be found. The peasants destroy the ladders everywhere, just as they break up the wagons and cut away the bridges."

"It is true; they want to paralyze the Republic."

"They want to make it impossible for us either to transport baggage, pass a river, or scale a wall."

"I must have a ladder, nevertheless."

"Now I think about it, commander, there is a large carpenter's shop at Javené, near Fougères. They may have one there."

"There is not a moment to lose."

"When do you wish to have the ladder?"

"To-morrow at this time at the very latest."

"I will send an express to Javené post haste. He will carry the order of requisition. There is cavalry stationed at Javené, which will furnish the escort. The ladder could be here to-morrow, before sunset."

"That is good, that will do," said Gauvain. "Be quick about it. Go."

Ten minutes later, Guéchamp returned and said to Gauvain,—

"Commander, the express has left for Javené."

Gauvain went up on the plateau, and remained a long time looking steadily at the bridge castle, which was just across the ravine. The gable of the châtelet, with no opening except the low entrance closed by raising the drawbridge, faced the escarpment of the ravine. To reach the foot of the piers of the bridge from the plateau, it was necessary to descend along this steep cliff, which was not impossible, through the underbrush. But, once in the ditch, the assailants would be exposed to all the projectiles that could be rained down from the three stories. Gauvain came to the conclusion that, in view of the present state of the siege, the real assault must be by the breach in the tower.

He took every precaution to prevent the possibility of escape; he completed the close investment of la Tourgue; he drew the ranks of his battalions close together in such a way that nothing could pass through them. Gauvain and Cimourdain divided the investment of the fortress; Gauvain kept the side toward the forest, and gave the side next the plateau to Cimourdain. It was agreed that while Gauvain, aided by Guéchamp, was carrying on the assault by sapping, Cimourdain, with all the linstocks of the battery ready for use, should guard the bridge and the ravine.

CHAPTER XIII

WHAT THE MARQUIS DOES

WHILE everything without was making ready for the attack, everything within was making ready for resistance.

There is a real analogy in calling a tower a "douve,"* and a tower is sometimes pierced by a mine as a cask is by an augur. A bunghole, as it were, is bored through the wall. This is what happened at la Tourgue.

The powerful blast made by two or three hundredweight of powder had made a breach right through the enormous wall. This breach started at the foot of the tower, went through the thickest part of the wall, and ended in a rude arch in the ground floor of the fortress. In order to make this breach practicable for the assault, the besiegers had enlarged it outside and shaped it with cannon shots.

The ground floor into which this breach opened was a large round hall, quite bare, with a central column holding up the keystone of the arch. This hall, the largest in the keep, was no less than forty feet in diameter. Each story in the tower formed a similar room, but smaller, with little cells in the embrasures of the loopholes. The hall on the ground floor had no loopholes, no air holes, no windows; about as much daylight and fresh air as a tomb.

The door to the oubliettes, made of iron rather than wood, was in the hall of the ground floor. Another door in this hall opened on a staircase leading to the upper rooms. All the staircases were built in the thickness of the wall.

The besiegers had an opportunity to reach this low hall through the breach which they had made. This hall taken, it remained for them to take the tower.

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*Douve, a stave or cask.

No one had ever been able to breathe in this low hall. No one had ever spent twenty-four hours there without being asphyxiated. Now, owing to the breach, it was possible to live there.

This is why the beleaguered did not close the breach.

Moreover, what would be the advantage? The cannon would open it again.

They fixed an iron cresset into the wall, placed a torch in it, and this lighted the ground floor.

Now, how could they defend themselves there?

To wall up the breach was easy, but of no use. A retirade would be more desirable. A retirade is an intrenchment at right angles, a sort of chevronned barricade, which admits of converging the musketry on the assailants, and, while leaving the breach open outside, obstructs it on the inside. The materials were not lacking; they constructed a retirade, with embrasures through which to pass the barrels of the guns. The angle of the retirade rested on the central column; the two sides touched the wall. Having got this ready, they put fougades in suitable places.

The marquis directed everything. Inspirer, disposer, guide, and master,—appalling soul.

Lantenac belonged to that race of warriors of the eighteenth century who, when eighty years old, saved cities. He resembled the Count d'Alberg who, when he was nearly a centenarian, drove the King of Poland from Riga.

"Courage, friends!" said the marquis; "in the beginning of this century, in 1713, at Bender, Charles XII., shut up in a house, with three hundred Swedes, resisted twenty thousand Turks."

They barricaded the two lower stories, they fortified the rooms, they embattled the alcoves, they strengthened the doors with joists driven down with mallets, forming a sort of flying buttresses; but the spiral staircase which communicated with each story they had to leave open, as it was necessary to have free passage through it; to cut this off from the besieger was to cut it off from the besieged. The defence of strongholds always has some such weak side.

The marquis, indefatigable, as robust as a young man, lifted beams, carried stones, set an example, worked, commanded, helped, fraternized, laughed with this savage clan, but still he was always the seigneur, haughty, easy, elegant, cruel.

He allowed no one to reply to him.

He said: "If one half of you were to revolt, I would have that half shot by the other, and I would defend the place with the rest." Such things make a chief adored.

CHAPTER XIV

WHAT L'IMÂNUS DOES

While the marquis was engaged with the breach and the tower, l'Imânus was engaged with the bridge. At the beginning of the siege, the ladder of escape, which hung horizontally outside and underneath the windows of the second story, had been taken away by order of the marquis, and put by l'Imânus in the hall of the library. Perhaps it was this ladder which Gauvain wished to replace. The windows of the entresol of the first story, called "hall of the guards," were protected by a triple row of iron bars fastened in the stonework, and it was impossible to get in or out through them.

There were no bars at the library windows, but they were very high.

L'Imânus had three men, who, like himself, were full of resolution, and capable of anything. These men were Hoisnard, called Branche-d'Or, and the two brothers Pique-en-bois. L'Imânus took a dark lantern, opened the iron door, and carefully inspected the three stories of the bridge châtelet. Hoisnard Branch-d'Or was as implacable as l'Imânus, having had a brother killed by the Republicans.

L'Imânus examined the upper story, overflowing with hay and straw, and the lower story into which he had brought some firepots in addition to the hogshead of tar; he had the pile of heather fagots placed close to the hogshead of tar, and he made sure that the sulphur match, one end of which was in the bridge and the other in the tower, was in good condition. He poured out on the floor under the hogsheads and over the fagots a pool of tar, in which he placed the end of the sulphur slow-match; then in the hall of the library, between the ground floor where the tar was and the granary where the straw was, he had placed the three cribs in which were René-Jean, Gros-Alain, and Georgette, sound asleep. They carried the cribs very gently, in order not to waken the little ones.

They were very simple little country cribs, a sort of very low osier baskets, that stand on the floor, allowing the child to get out alone and without assistance. Near each crib, l'Imânus had placed a porringer of soup with a wooden spoon. The ladder for escape, unfastened from its hooks, had been laid on the floor against the wall; l'Imânus had the three cribs arranged, end to end, along the other wall, opposite the ladder. Then, thinking that a draught of air might be useful, he opened wide all six of the library windows. It was a summer night, hot and sultry.

He sent the brothers Pique-en-Bois to open the windows in the upper and lower stories; he noticed on the eastern façade of the building, a large, old, dried-up ivy, the color of tinder, covering one entire side of the bridge from top to bottom, and framing the windows of the three stories. He thought that this ivy would do no harm. L'Imânus took a last look around; after this the four men went out of the châtelet and went back to the keep. L'Imânus fastened the heavy iron door with a double lock, carefully examined the enormous, formidable fastening, and, with a nod of satisfaction, looked at the sulphur slow-match, which passed through the hole he had made, and was henceforth the only communication between the tower and the bridge.

This match started from the round room, passed under the iron door, entered under the coving, went down the staircase leading to the ground floor of the bridge, meandered over the winding stairs, crept along the floor of the corridor in the entresol, and ended in the pool of tar over the pile of dry fagots. L'Imânus calculated that it would take about a quarter of an hour for this match to set fire to the pool of tar in the library, after it had been lighted in the interior of the tower. Having made all these arrangements, and finished all this inspection, he carried the key of the iron door back to the Marquis de Lantenac, who put it in his pocket.

It was important to watch all the besieger's movements. L'Imânus, with his herdsman's horn in his belt, stationed himself like a vidette in the watch tower of the platform, on the top of the tower. While watching with an eye on the forest, and an eye on the plateau, he had beside him in the embrasure of the watch-tower window, a powder flask, a linen bag filled with musket-balls, and some old newspapers, which he tore up to make into cartridges.

When the sun appeared, its rays illumined, in the forest, eight battalions, their swords by their sides, cartridge boxes on their backs, bayonets in their guns, ready for the assault; on the plateau a battery of cannons, with ammunition wagons, cartridges and boxes of grapeshot; in the fortress, nineteen men loading blunderbusses, muskets, and pistols, and in the three cribs, three sleeping children.

BOOK THIRD

THE MASSACRE OF SAINT-BARTHOLOMEW

CHAPTER I

The children awoke.

The little girl first.

The awakening of children is like the opening of flowers; it seems as if a perfume came from their fresh souls.

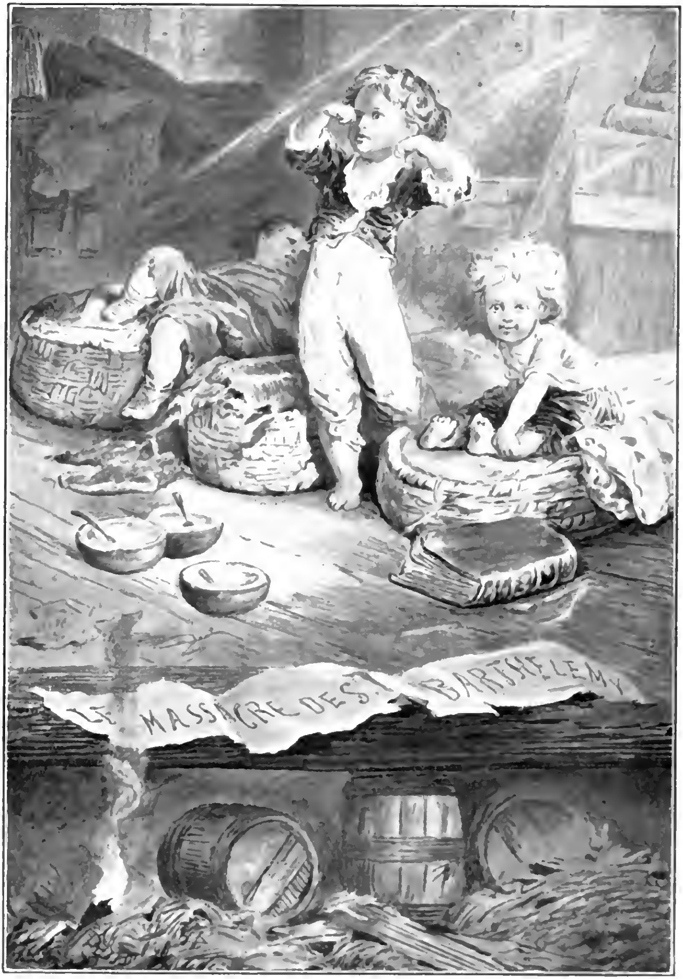
Georgette, the one twenty months old, the youngest of the three, who was still nursing in May, raised her little head, sat up, looked at her feet, and began to prattle.

A ray of morning light fell on her crib; it would have been hard to tell which was the rosier, Georgette's foot or the dawn.

The other two were still asleep; men are more dull; Georgette, happy and serene, went on prattling.

René-Jean was dark, Gros-Alain was sandy, Georgette was fair. These shades of hair, in harmony with the age during childhood, may change later on. René-Jean looked like a little Hercules; he was sleeping on his stomach, with his two fists doubled up over his eyes. Both of Gros-Alain's legs were hanging out of his little bed.

All three were in rags; the clothes that the battalion of Bonnet-Rouge had given them were in tatters; they hadn't even a shirt on them; the two boys were almost naked, Georgette was dressed in a rag which had once been a skirt and was now nothing but a bodice. Who took care of these children? It was impossible to tell. No mother. These savage


LE MASSACRE DES.T BARTHELEMY

GEORGETTE, RENÉ-JEAN AND GROS-ALAIN.

peasants, fighting, and dragging them along with them from forest to forest, gave them their share of soup. That was all. The little ones got on as they could. They had everybody for master, and no one for a father. But children's tatters are full of light. They were charming.

Georgette went on prattling.

What a bird sings, a child prattles. It is the same hymn. An indistinct hymn, lisped, profound. The child, more than the bird, has the mysterious destiny of man before it. Hence, the melancholy feeling of those who listen, mingled with the joy of the little one who sings. The sublimest song to be heard on earth is the lisping of the human soul on the lips of children. This confused whispering of a thought, which is as yet only an instinct, contains a strange, unconscious appeal to eternal justice; perhaps it is a protestation on the threshold, before entering; a humble but poignant protestation; this ignorance smiling at the Infinite compromises all creation in the fate which is to be given to the feeble, helpless being. Misfortune, if it comes, will be an abuse of confidence.

The murmur of a child is more and less than speech; there are no notes, and yet it is a song; there are no syllables, and yet it is a language; this murmur had its beginning in heaven, and will not have its end on earth; it is before birth, and it will continue hereafter. This babbling is composed of what the child said when he was an angel, and of what he will say when he becomes a man; the cradle has a Yesterday, as much as the tomb has a To-morrow; this to-morrow and this yesterday blend their double mystery in this unintelligible warbling; and nothing proves God, eternity, the responsibility, the duality of fate, like this awe-inspiring shadow on these rosy souls.

What Georgette was prattling about did not make her sad, for her whole lovely face beamed with a smile. Her mouth smiled, her eyes smiled, the dimples in her cheeks smiled. This smile revealed a mysterious acceptation of the morning. The soul has faith in light. The sky was blue, the weather was warm, it was beautiful. The frail creature, without knowing anything, without understanding anything, softly bathed in reverie where no thought is, felt secure in this nature, in these honest trees, in this sincere verdure, in this pure, peaceful country, in these sounds from nests, from brooks, flies, leaves, above which the vast innocence of the sun shone resplendent.

After Georgette, René-Jean, the oldest, the largest, the one who was four years old, awoke. He rose to his feet, gave a manly jump over the side of his basket, looked at his porringer, thought it quite natural, sat down on the floor and began to eat his soup.

Georgette's prattling had not wakened Gros-Alain, but at the sound of the spoon in the porringer, he turned over with a start, and opened his eyes. Gros-Alain was the one three years old. He saw his porringer, it was within reach, he took it and without getting out of bed placed the porringer on his knees, took the spoon in his hand, and like René-Jean began to eat.

Georgette did not hear them, and the undulations of her voice seemed to modulate the rocking of a dream. Her large open eyes were looking up and were divine; whether the ceiling or the heavens be above a child's head, it is always the sky which is reflected in its eyes.

When René-Jean had finished, he scraped the bottom of the porringer with his spoon, sighed, and said with dignity,—

"I have eaten my soup."

This woke Georgette from her reverie.

"Poupoupe," said she.

And seeing that René-Jean had eaten his, and that Gros-Alain was eating, she took the porringer of soup beside her, and began also to eat, carrying her spoon much oftener to her ear than to her mouth.

From time to time, she renounced civilization and ate with her fingers.

Gros-Alain after having scraped the bottom of the porringer as his brother had done, went to join him and ran behind him.

CHAPTER II

SUDDENLY, there was heard from without and below, on the side of the forest, the blast of a trumpet, a sort of flourish, haughty and stern. To this trumpet blast, the sound of a horn replied from the top of the tower.

This time it was the trumpet which called, and the horn which gave answer.

There was a second trumpet call, followed by a second sounding of the horn.

Then from the edge of the forest rose a distant but clear voice, which cried distinctly these words,—

"Brigands! a summons! If at sunset, you have not surrendered at discretion, we attack you."

A voice roared out in reply from the platform of the tower,—

"Attack us, then."

The voice below added, —

"A cannon will be fired, as a last warning, half an hour before the assault."

And the voice from above repeated,—

"Attack us."

These voices did not reach the children's ears, but the trumpet and the horn sounded higher and farther, and Georgette at the first blast of the trumpet raised her head and stopped eating; at the sound of the horn, she put her spoon in her porringer; at the second trumpet blast, she lifted the little forefinger of her right hand, and letting it fall and raising it again alternatively, marked the cadences of the flourish which prolonged the second blowing of the horn; when the horn and the trumpet were silent, she remained thoughtful, her finger in the air, and murmured, half aloud, "Misic."

We think that she meant "music."

The two oldest, René-Jean and Gros-Alain, had paid no attention to the horn and the trumpet; they were absorbed by something else; a woodlouse was crossing the library.

Gros-Alain noticed it and exclaimed,—

"There's a bug."

René-Jean ran to look at it.

Gros-Alain added,—

"It stings."

"Don't hurt it," said René-Jean.

And both began to watch it moving along.

In the meantime, Georgette finished her soup; she looked at her brothers. René-Jean and Gros-Alain were in the embrasure of a window, bending intently over the woodlouse their foreheads touched and their hair mingled; they were holding their breath in wonder, and examining the insect which had stopped and did not move, little pleased with so much admiration.

Georgette, seeing that her brothers were looking at something, wanted to know what it was. It was not an easy matter for her to reach them, but she undertook it; the journey bristled with difficulties; there were things on the floor; overthrown stools, piles of old papers, packing cases, unnailed and empty, chests, heaps of all sorts of things, around which she had to make her way, a perfect archipelago of reefs; Georgette ventured.

She began by getting out of her basket, the first difficulty; then she penetrated the reefs, meandered through the straits, pushed aside a stool, crawled between two trunks, went over a heap of papers, climbing up one side, rolling down the other, sweetly exposing her poor little bare body, and thus reached what a sailor would call the open sea, that is to say quite a wide space of unobstructed floor, where there were no more dangers; then she started forward, crossed this space, which was the whole width of the hall, on all fours, with the agility of a cat, and reached the window; here there was a formidable obstacle; the great ladder lying against the wall just reached to this window, and the end of it passed a little beyond the embrasure; this made a sort of cape to double between Georgette and her brothers; she stopped to meditate; having finished her interior monologue, she made up her mind; she resolutely grasped with her rosy fingers one of the rounds, which were vertical and not horizontal, as the ladder lay on one side; she tried to raise herself on her feet and fell back; she tried again twice, and failed; the third time she succeeded; then standing up straight, supporting herself with the rungs one after another, she began to walk along the ladder; when she reached the end, her support failed; she tumbled over, but seizing in her little hands the end of one of the side pieces, which was enormous, she pulled herself up again, rounded the promontory, looked at René-Jean and Gros-Alain and laughed.

CHAPTER III

At this moment, René-Jean, satisfied with his observations concerning the woodlouse, raised his head and said,—

"It is a female."

Georgette's laugh made René-Jean laugh, and René-Jean's laugh made Gros-Alain laugh.

Georgette sat down beside her brothers, and they formed a sort of little club together on the floor.

But the woodlouse had disappeared.

Georgette's laugh had given him a chance to crawl into a hole in the floor.

Other events followed that of the woodlouse.

First some swallows flew by.

Their nests were probably under the edge of the roof. Somewhat disturbed by the children they flew close to the window, describing wide circles in the air, and uttering their gentle springtime call. This made the three children raise their eyes, and the woodlouse was forgotten.

Georgette pointed her finger towards the swallows, and exclaimed,—

"Chickies!"

René-Jean reprimanded her,—

"They are not chickens, they are birds."

"Boords," said Georgette.

And all three looked at the swallows.

Then a bee flew in.

Nothing is so like a soul as a bee. It goes from flower to flower as a soul from star to star, and it gathers honey as a soul gathers light.

This one made a great noise as he came in buzzing at the top of his voice, and he seemed to say: "I have just seen the roses, and now I come to see the children. What is going on here?"

A bee is a housewife, and it scolds while it sings.

As long as the bee remained, the children never took their eyes from it.

The bee explored the whole library, searched the corners, darted about as though it were at home in its hive, and making music on the wing, roved from bookcase to bookcase, looking at the titles of the books through the glass-windows, as though it were a mind.

His visit over, he went out.

"He has gone home," said René-Jean.

"It is a monster," said Gros-Alain.

"No," replied René-Jean, "it is a fly."

"Fly," said Georgette.

Thereupon, Gros-Alain, who had just found on the floor a string with a knot in one end of it, took the other end of it between his thumb and forefinger, made a sort of little mill with the cord, and watched it turn with deep interest.

As for Georgette, having gotten down on all fours again, and taken up her capricious roving, she had discovered a venerable armchair covered with moth-eaten tapestry, from which the hair was escaping through numerous holes. She stopped by this chair. She made the holes larger and pulled out the hair as if her life depended upon it.

Suddenly she raised her finger, which meant: "Listen!"

The two brothers turned their heads.

An indistinct, distant noise was heard from without; it was probably the attacking camp executing some strategic movement in the forest; horses neighed, drums beat, caissons rolled along, chains clanked, military signals called to each other and gave answer, confusion of savage sounds which as they mingled grew into a sort of harmony; the children listened, delighted.

"The good God is doing that," said René-Jean.

CHAPTER IV

The noise ceased.

René-Jean remained thoughtful.

How are ideas formed and scattered in these little brains? What is the mysterious commotion in their memories so dim and as yet so short? In this sweet, pensive mind arose a mixture of the good God, prayer, folded hands, a strange tender smile that used to rest on them, and that they had no longer, and René-Jean murmured, half aloud: "Mamma."

"Mamma," said Gros-Alain.

"M'ma," said Georgette.

And then René-Jean began to jump.

Seeing him jump, Gros-Alain jumped too.

Gros-Alain followed René-Jean's example in all his movements and gestures; Georgette not so much. Three years copies four years; but twenty months keeps its independence.

Georgette remained seated, saying a word now and then. Georgette did not put words together.

She was a thinker; she spoke in apothegms. She was monosyllabic.

Nevertheless, after a time, their example affected her, and she finally tried to do as her brothers were doing, and these three little pairs of bare feet began to dance, to run and totter in the dust on the old, polished oak floor, under the serious eyes of the marble busts, toward which Georgette occasionally cast an anxious glance, murmuring,—

"The mummums!"

In Georgette's language a mummum was anything which looked like a man without really being one. Beings seem like phantoms to young children.

Georgette, swaying rather than walking, followed her brothers, but generally she preferred to go on all fours.

Suddenly, René-Jean, as he was approaching a window, raised his head, then dropped it and ran to hide in the corner of the wall made by the window embrasure.

He had just seen some one looking at him. It was a soldier of the Blues from the encampment on the plateau who, taking advantage of the truce and perhaps infringing on it a little, had ventured to the edge of the ravine where he could look into the library. Seeing René-Jean hide, Gros-Alain ran to hide; he took refuge beside René-Jean, and Georgette hid behind them. They stayed there in silence, perfectly still, and Georgette put her finger on her lips. After a few moments René-Jean ventured to put out his head; the soldier was still there. René-Jean drew his head back quickly; and the three little ones did not dare to breathe. This lasted for some time. At last Georgette grew tired of being afraid, and was bold enough to look out. The soldier had gone. They began to run and play again.

Gros-Alain, besides imitating and admiring René-Jean, had a specialty,—that of making discoveries. His brother and sister saw him suddenly whirl wildly around, dragging after him a little wagon with four wheels, which he had brought to light from some corner.

This doll's carriage had been in the dust for years, forgotten,—a good neighbor to the books of geniuses and the busts of wise men. It was perhaps one of the toys which Gauvain had played with when he was a child.

Gros-Alain had made a whip with the string, and was snapping it; it was very fine. Such are discoverers. When they do not discover America, they discover little carts. It is always thus.

But it must be shared. René-Jean wanted to draw the wagon, and Georgette wanted to get into it.

She tried to sit down in it. René-Jean was the horse. Gros-Alain was the driver.

But the driver did not understand his business, the horse had to teach him.

René-Jean cried to Gros-Alain,—

"Say, 'Go along.' "

"Go 'long!" repeated Gros-Alain.

The wagon upset. Georgette tumbled out. Angels can scream. Georgette screamed.

Then she felt half inclined to cry.

"Young lady," said René-Jean, "you are too big."

"I big," said Georgette.

And her size consoled her for her fall.

The cornice of entablature under the windows was very wide, the dust of the fields blown from the heather on the plateau had collected in heaps there; the rains had made earth of this dust; the wind had brought seeds to it, so that a briar had taken advantage of this bit of earth to take root there. This briar was the perennial variety called fox mulberry. It was August, the mulberry bush was covered with berries, and a branch of the briar came in through the window. This branch hung down almost to the floor.

Gros-Alain, after discovering the string, and discovering the wagon was the one to discover this briar. He went toward it.

He picked a berry and ate it.

"I'm hungry," said René-Jean.

And Georgette, galloping along on her knees and hands, came following after.

The three plundered the branch and ate all the berries. They were daubed and stained, and all red with the crimson juice of the berries; the three little seraphs were changed to three little fauns, which would have shocked Dante and charmed Virgil. They laughed aloud.

Occasionally, the briar pricked their fingers. No pleasure without pain.

Georgette held out her finger, from which oozed a little drop of blood, to René-Jean and said pointing to the briar, "Pricks."

Gros-Alain, who had been scratched too, looked scornfully at the briar and said,—

"It is a beast."

"No," replied René-Jean, "it is a stick."

"A naughty stick," added Gros-Alain.

Georgette again felt like crying, but she began to laugh.

CHAPTER V

In the meantime, René-Jean, possibly jealous of his younger brother, Gros-Alain's discoveries, had conceived a great plan. For some time, while he was picking the berries and pricking his fingers, his eyes had been frequently turning toward the reading-desk mounted on a pivot and standing by itself like a monument in the middle of the library. On this desk was displayed the famous volume of "Saint Bartholomew."

It was really a magnificent and notable folio. This "Saint Bartholomew" had been published in Cologne by the famous publisher of the Bible in 1682, Blœuw, in Latin, Cœsius. It had been printed on movable wooden types, held in position with a band made of ox-sinew.

It was printed, not on Holland paper, but on that beautiful Arabian paper so much admired by Édrisi, made of silk and cotton, and always retaining its whiteness.

The binding was of gilded leather, and the clasps of silver; the fly leaves were of that parchment which the parchment-makers of Paris swore they would buy in the Halle Saint Mathurin and "nowhere else."

This volume was full of woodcuts and copper engravings, and geographical maps of many countries; it was prefaced with a protestation of printers, paper-makers and booksellers against the edict of 1635, placing a tax on "leather, beer, cloven-footed animals, sea-fish, and paper," and on the reverse page of the frontispiece, there was a dedication addressed to the Gryphes, who are to Lyons what the Elzévirs are to Amsterdam.

All this resulted in a famous volume, almost as rare as the *Apostol* at Moscow.

It was a beautiful book; that was why René-Jean looked at it; perhaps too intently. The volume was open just where there was a large engraving representing Saint Bartholomew carrying his skin over his arm. This engraving could be seen from below. When all the berries had been eaten, René-Jean looked at it with a terrible longing, and Georgette, whose eyes followed her brother's, noticed the engraving and said, "Pickshur."

This word seemed to determine René-Jean. Then, to the great amazement of Gros-Alain, he did an extraordinary thing.

A great oak chair stood in a corner of the library; René-Jean walked to this chair, seized it and dragged it all by himself to the desk. Then when the chair touched the desk, he got up on it and placed his two hands on the book.

Having reached this height, he felt that it was necessary to be generous; he took the "pickshur" by the upper corner and carefully tore it out; Saint Bartholomew's picture tore crosswise, but that was not René-Jean's fault; he left all the left side, with one eye and a little of the old apocryphal evangelist's halo, in the book, and offered the other half of the saint, and all his skin, to Georgette. Georgette took the saint and said,—

"Mummum."

"Give me one!" cried Gros-Alain.

The first torn page is like the first drop of blood shed. It decides slaughter.

René-Jean turned the leaf; after the saint came the commentator Pantœnus; René-Jean bestowed Pantœnus on Gros-Alain.

In the meantime, Georgette tore her large piece into two small ones; then the two small ones into four; so that history might say, that after having been flayed in Armenia, Saint Bartholomew was quartered in Brittany.

CHAPTER VI

Having finished the quartering, Georgette held out her hand to René-Jean, saying, "More."

After the saint and the commentator came stern portraits of the glossarists. The earliest was Gavantus; René-Jean tore Gavantus out and placed him in Georgette's hand.

All Saint Bartholomew's glossarists followed. Giving is a privilege. René-Jean kept nothing for himself. Gros-Alain and Georgette were gazing at him; this was enough; he was satisfied with the admiration of his public.

René-Jean, inexhaustible and magnanimous, offered Fabricio Pignatelli to Gros-Alain, and Father Stilting to Georgette; he offered Alphonse Tostat to Gros-Alain, and *Cornelius a Lapide* to Georgette; Gros-Alain had Henry Hammond, and Georgette had Roberti, besides a view of the town of Douai, where he was born in 1619. Gros-Alain received the protestation of the paper-makers, and Georgette had the dedication to the Gryphes bestowed upon her. Then there were the maps. René-Jean distributed these. He gave Ethiopia to Gros-Alain, and Lycaonia to Georgette. When this was done, he threw the book on the floor.

It was a terrible moment. Gros-Alain and Georgette, with an ecstasy of delight mingled with fear, saw René-Jean frown, brace his legs, contract his hands, and push the massive folio volume off the desk. A majestic old book losing countenance is a tragic sight. The heavy volume, displaced, hung for a moment from the desk, hesitated, balanced itself, then fell down; and, torn, rumpled, lacerated, out of its binding, its clasps broken, flattened itself out lamentably on the floor. Fortunately, it did not fall on the children.

They were bewildered, not crushed. The adventures of conquerors do not always end as well.

Like all glorious deeds, it made a great noise and a cloud of dust.

Having thrown down the book, René-Jean dismounted from the chair.

There was a moment of silence and awe; victory has its terrors. The children took hold of each other's hands, and drew away, to contemplate the great dilapidated volume.

But after some consideration, Gros-Alain started towards the book with determination and gave it a kick.

This was enough. There is such a thing as an appetite for destruction. René-Jean gave it a kick, Georgette gave it a kick, which made her tumble down, but in a sitting posture; she took advantage of this to throw herself on Saint Bartholomew; the spell was broken; René-Jean rushed on it, Gros-Alain made a dash for it; joyous, wild, triumphant, pitiless, tearing the engravings, slashing the leaves, pulling out the bookmarks, scratching the binding, ripping off the gilt leather, pulling out the nails from the silver corners, breaking the parchment, marring the noble text, working with feet, hands, nails, and teeth, rosy, laughing, cruel, these three angels of destruction swooped down on the defenceless evangelist.

They annihilated Armenia, Judea, Benevento, where there are relics of the saint; Nathaniel, who is possibly the same as Bartholomew; Pope Gelasius, who declared the Bartholomew-Nathaniel gospel to be apocryphal, all the heads, all the maps, and the inexorable destruction of the old book absorbed them to such a degree that a mouse passed by without their noticing it.

It was an extermination.

To pull to pieces history, legend, science, miracles, true or false, church Latin, superstitions, fanaticisms, mysteries, to tear up a whole religion from top to bottom, is a work for three giants, as well as three children; the hours passed quickly over this labor, but they came to an end; nothing was left of Saint Bartholomew.

When this was at an end, when the last page was torn out, when the last engraving was destroyed, when nothing was left of the book but fragments of the text and pictures, in a skeleton of a binding, René-Jean jumped to his feet, looked at the floor strewn with all these scattered leaves, and clapped his hands.

Gros-Alain clapped his hands.

Georgette took one of the leaves from the floor, got up, leaned against the window, which came just to her chin, and began to tear the large page into little pieces, and throw them out.

Seeing this, René-Jean and Gros-Alain began to do the same. They picked up the leaves and tore them in pieces, picked up and tore them again and again, throwing the pieces out of the window as Georgette had done; and page by page, reduced to scraps by these destructive little fingers, almost the entire ancient book blew away in the wind. Georgette looked thoughtfully after these swarms of bits of white paper scattered by all the breezes of the air, and said,—

"Butterf'ies."

And the massacre ended with a vanishing into thin air.

CHAPTER VII.

Such was the second putting to death of Saint Bartholomew, who had already been martyred in the year 49 of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Meanwhile, evening was approaching, the heat was increasing, the air was full of drowsiness, Georgette's eyes grew heavy, René-Jean went to his crib, drew out the bag of straw which took the place of a mattress, dragged it to the window, stretched himself out on it, and said: "Let us go to bed."

Gros-Alain put his head on René-Jean, Georgette put her head on Gros-Alain, and the three malefactors went to sleep.

Hot breezes came in through the open windows; the perfume of wild flowers, blown from the ravines and hills, floated in, mingled with the evening zephyrs; space was calm and merciful; everything beamed, everything was at peace, everything loved everything else; the sun caressed creation with light; everywhere was felt that harmony which arises from the colossal sweetness of things; there was something of maternity in the Infinite; creation is a miracle in full bloom, its immensity is perfected by its goodness; it seemed as if some invisible power could be felt taking those mysterious precautions which, in the terrible conflict of life, protect the weak against the strong; at the same time it was beautiful, the splendor breathed forth mansuetude.

The landscape, full of an ineffable drowsiness, had that magnificent wavy appearance which the alternations of light and shade give to prairies and rivers; the smoke rose towards the clouds, as a dream towards a vision; flocks of birds whirled above la Tourgue; swallows looked in at the windows, and seemed to have come to see if the children were sleeping well.

They were gracefully grouped, one on the other, still, half-naked, in loving attitudes; they were adorable and pure, all three together were not nine years old, they had dreams of Paradise, which were reflected on their mouths in vague smiles; God, perhaps, was speaking in their ears; they were those whom every human tongue calls weak and blessed, they were innocents worthy of reverence; everything kept silence, as though the breath from their sweet breasts was of consequence to the universe, and was listened to by all creation; the leaves did not rustle, the grass did not quiver. It seemed as if the wide starry world held its breath, that it might not disturb these three humble, angelic sleepers, and nothing was so sublime as the immense respect of nature toward these little creatures.

The sun was going down, and almost touched the horizon. Suddenly, in the midst of this profound peace, there shot forth a bright light, coming from the forest, then a furious noise. A cannon had just been fired. The echoes seized this noise and turned it into an uproarious din. The rumbling, prolonged from hill to hill, was monstrous. It awoke Georgette.

She raised her head a little, lifted her little finger, listened, and said,

"Boom!"

The sound died away, and silence returned. Georgette laid her head down on Gros-Alain, and went to sleep again.

BOOK FOURTH

THE MOTHER

CHAPTER I

DEATH PASSES BY

THIS same evening, the mother, whom we have seen making her way almost by chance, had been walking all day long. Moreover it was the story of all her days, to go straight on and never stop. For her sleep of exhaustion in the first corner that she came to was no more rest than what she ate here and there, as birds go picking about, was food. She ate and slept just enough to keep her from falling down dead.

She had spent the night before in a deserted house; civil war causes such ruins. She had found, in a neglected field, four walls, an open door, a little straw under a portion of the roof, and she slept on this straw and under this roof, feeling the rats run over the straw, and seeing the stars shine through the roof. She had slept some hours, then she awoke in the middle of the night and started on her journey again, in order to travel as far as possible before the full heat of the day. For those travelling on foot in summer, midnight is more agreeable than midday.

She followed to the best of her ability the general route indicated to her by the peasant at Vautortes; she went as nearly as possible toward the west. Any one near her would have heard her say repeatedly, in a low voice, "La Tourgue." Besides the names of her three children, she knew nothing but this word.

As she walked along, she was deep in meditation. She thought of all the adventures which she had been through; she thought of all she had suffered, of all she had received; of the encounters, the indignities, the conditions made, the bargains proposed and undergone, sometimes for a shelter, sometimes for a piece of bread, sometimes merely to get some one to show her the way. A wretched woman is more unfortunate than a wretched man, because she is an instrument of pleasure. Frightful wandering on foot. But nothing made any difference to her so long as she found her children.

Her first encounter to-day had been a village on the way; it was scarcely daybreak, everything was still bathed in the gloom of night, still some doors were already ajar in the principal street of the village, and some curious heads were looking out of the windows. The inhabitants seemed as agitated as a hive which has been disturbed. This was on account of a sound of wheels and chains which had been heard.

In the square in front of the church, an astounded group, with upturned faces, was looking at something coming down the road toward the village from the top of a hill.

It was a wagon with four wheels, drawn by five horses harnessed with chains. On the wagon could be made out a heap which looked like a pile of long joists, in the middle of which was something strange and shapeless; it was covered over with an awning, which had the appearance of a shroud.

Ten men on horseback rode in front of the wagon, and ten others behind. These men wore three-cornered hats, and rising above their shoulders could be seen points, which were apparently bare swords. All this procession, advancing slowly, stood out in clearly defined black against the horizon. The wagon looked black, the horses looked black, the cavaliers looked black. The pale morning light gleamed behind them.

It entered the village and went toward the square.

It began to grow light as the wagon came down the hill, and the procession could be seen distinctly; it seemed like a march of ghosts, for not a word escaped the men.

The riders were military men. They had, indeed, drawn swords. The awning was black.

The wretched, wandering mother entered the village, and drew near the gathering of peasants just as the team and the mounted men were coming into the square. In the group of spectators, voices whispered questions and answers,—

"What is that?"

"It is the guillotine passing by."

"Where does it come from?"

"From Fougères."

"Where is it going?"

"I do not know. They say that it is going to a castle toward Parigné."

"Parigné!"

"Let it go wherever it will, provided it doesn't stop here."

This great wagon with its burden covered with a sort of shroud; these horses; these military men; the noise of these chains; the silence of these riders; the dim light,—all this was ghastly.

The procession crossed the square and left the village; the village was in a hollow between two hills. After a quarter of an hour, the peasants, who had remained as though petrified, saw the gloomy procession come into sight again on the top of the hill toward the west. The large wheels jolted over the road, the horses' chains clanked in the morning wind, the sabres glistened; the sun was rising, there was a turn in the road, they all disappeared.

This was just the moment when Georgette, in the hall of the library, awoke beside her brothers, who were still asleep, and said good morning to her rosy feet.

CHAPTER II

DEATH SPEAKS

The mother watched this dark object pass by, but had not understood it, nor tried to understand, for she had another vision before her eyes,—her children lost in the darkness.

She also went out of the village, a little after the procession which had just filed past, and followed the same road, at some distance behind the second squad of policemen. Suddenly, the word "guillotine" came into her mind.

"Guillotine!" she said to herself; this peasant woman, Michelle Fléchard, did not know what it was, but her instinct warned her against it; she shuddered without being able to tell why; it seemed horrible to her to walk behind it, and she turned to the left, went out of the road, and entered some woods, which were the forest of Fougères.

After roaming for some time, she noticed a church tower and some roofs; it was one of the villages on the borders of the wood; she entered it. She was hungry.

This village was one of those where the Republicans had established military posts.

She went as far as the square where the town hall was.

In this village, too, there was agitation and anxiety. A crowd was gathering in front of a flight of steps which were the entrance to the town hall. On these steps were seen a man escorted by soldiers, holding in his hand a large, unrolled placard. On this man's right stood a drummer, and on his left a bill-poster, carrying a pot of paste and a brush.

On the balcony above the door stood the mayor, wearing a tricolored scarf with his peasant's dress.

The man with the placard was a public crier.

He had on a shoulder belt from which hung a little bag, which indicated that he went from village to village, and that he had something to cry throughout the country.

He had just unrolled the placard as Michelle Fléchard drew near, and he began to read it. He said in a loud voice,—

"The French Republic. One and indivisible."

The drum rolled. There was a sort of undulation in the crowd. Some took off their caps; others pulled their hats down over their eyes. At this time, and in this country, a person's opinions could almost be told by the headgear; hats were Royalist; caps were Republican. The murmur of confused voices ceased, the people listened, the crier read,—

"In virtue of the orders to us given, and the power to us delegated, by the Committee of Public Welfare—"

There was a second rolling of the drum. The crier continued,—

"And in execution of the decree of the National Convention, which outlaws rebels taken armed, and which orders capital punishment to whoever gives them shelter or helps them to escape."

One peasant asked his neighbor in a low voice,—

"What is capital punishment?"

The neighbor replied, "I don't know."

The crier waved the placard.

"In accordance with Article 17 of the law of the thirtieth of April, giving full power to delegates and sub-delegates against the rebels, are outlawed—"

He paused and added,—

"The individuals designated by the name and surnames which follow—"

The crowd was all attention.

The voice of the crier thundered,—

"Lantenac, brigand."

"That is monseigneur," murmured a peasant.

And this was whispered through the crowd, "That is monseigneur."

The crier added,—

"Lantenac, ci-devant marquis, brigand."

"L'Imânus, brigand."

Two peasants looked at each other askance.

"That is Gouge-le-Bruant."

"Yes, it is Brise-Bleu."

The crier went on reading the list,—

"Grand-Francœur, brigand."

The crowd murmured,—

"He is a priest."

"Yes, monsieur the Abbé Turmeau."

"Yes, he is a curé somewhere near the wood of la Chapelle."

"And a brigand," said a man in a cap.

The crier read,—

"Boisnouveau, brigand. The two brothers Pique-en-bois, brigands. Houzard, brigand—"

"That is Monsieur de Quélen," said a peasant.

"Panier, brigand—"

"That is Monsieur Sepher."

"Place-Nette, brigand—"

"That is Monsieur Jamois."

The crier continued his reading without paying attention to these comments.

"Guinoiseau, brigand. Chatenay, called Robi, brigand—"

A peasant whispered: "Guinoiseau is the same as le Blond, Chatenay is Saint-Ouen."

"Hoisnard, brigand," added the crier.

And in the crowd was heard,—

"He is from Ruillé."

"Yes, that is Branche d'Or."

"He had his brother killed at the attack at Pontorson."

"Yes, Hoisnard-Malonnière."

"A fine young man, nineteen years old."

"Attention," said the crier, "here is the end of the list,"—

"Belle-Vigne, brigand. La Musette, brigand. Sabretout, brigand. Brin-d'Amour, brigand—"

A boy nudged a girl's elbow. The girl smiled.

The crier went on,—

"Chante-en-hiver, brigand. Le Chat, brigand—"

A peasant said: "That is Moulard."

"Tabouze, brigand—"

A peasant said: "That is Gauffre."

"There are two of the Gauffres," added a woman.

"Both good fellows," growled a rustic.

The crier shook the placard and the drum beat a ban.

The crier began to read again,—

"The above named, in whatever place they may be taken, will be immediately put to death after their identity has been established."

There was a stir in the crowd.

The crier added,—

"Whoever gives them shelter, or helps them to escape will be taken before a court martial and put to death. Signed—"

There was a profound silence.

"Signed: The Delegate of the Committee of Public Welfare, CIMOURDAIN."

"A priest," said a peasant.

"The former curé of Parigné," said another.

A citizen added,—

"Turmeau and Cimourdain. A White priest and a Blue priest."

"Both black," said another citizen.

The mayor, standing on the balcony, raised his hat and cried,—

"Long live the Republic!"

The beating of the drum announced that the crier had finished. Indeed, he made a sign with his hand.

"Attention," he said. "Here are the four last lines of the notice of the government. They are signed by the chief of the reconnoitring column of the coasts of the north commanded by Gauvain."

"Listen!" cried the voices of the crowd.

And the crier read,—

"Under pain of death—"

All were silent.

"It is forbidden, in fulfilment of the above order, to aid and assist the nineteen rebels above named, who are at the present time invested and surrounded in la Tourgue."

"Hey?" said a voice.

It was a woman's voice. It was the voice of the mother.

CHAPTER III

MURMURINGS OF THE PEASANTS

MICHELLE FLECHARD was in the midst of the crowd. She had not listened, but one can hear what one does not listen to. She had heard this word la Tourgue. She raised her head.

"Hey!" she repeated, "la Tourgue?"

The people stared at her. She looked as though she were demented. She was in rags. Voices murmured,—

"She looks like a brigand."

A peasant woman carrying some buckwheat cakes in a basket approached her, and said in an undertone,—

"Hold your tongue."

Michelle Fléchard looked at the woman in amazement. Again she failed to understand. This name la Tourgue had passed by like a flash of lightning, and then it grew dark again. Had she no right to ask questions? What was the matter with them, that they looked at her so?

In the meantime, the drum had beaten a last ban, the bill-poster had pasted up the placard, the mayor had gone into the town hall, the crier had departed for some other village, and the crowd had scattered.

A group remained in front of the placard. Michelle Fléchard joined this group.

They were commenting on the names of those men who were outlawed.

There were peasants and citizens in the group; that is to say, Whites and Blues.

A peasant said,—

"No matter, they do not count everybody. Nineteen is only nineteen. They do not count Riou, they do not count Benjamin Moulins, they do not count Goupil, of the parish of Andouillé."

"Nor Lorieul, of Monjean," said another.

Others added,—

"Nor Brice-Denys."

"Nor François Dudonet."

"Yes, the one from Laval."

"Nor Huet, from Launey-Villiers."

"Nor Grégis."

"Nor Pilon."

"Nor Filleul."

"Nor Ménicent."

"Nor Guéharrée."

"Nor the three brothers Logerais."

"Nor Monsieur Lechandelier de Pierreville."

"Fools!" said a stern old man with white hair. "They have them all if they take Lantenac."

"They haven't taken him yet," muttered one of the young fellows.

The old man replied,—

"If Lantenac is taken, the soul is taken. If Lantenac is dead, la Vendée is killed."

"Who is this Lantenac, then?" asked a citizen.

A citizen replied: "He is a ci-devant."

And another added: "He is one of those who shoot women."

Michelle Fléchard heard that, and said: "That is true."

The people turned round.

And she added: "Because they shot me."

These words had a strange effect; it was as though one thought dead was found alive. They began to examine her, somewhat askance.

She was really distressing to look at; trembling at everything, scared, shivering, having a wildly anxious look, and so frightened that she was frightful. In a woman's despair there is a strange helplessness which is terrible. It is like seeing a being suspended at the extremity of fate. But the peasants looked at it more roughly. One of them growled: "She may be a spy."

"Hold your tongue and go away," said the good woman who had already spoken to her, in a low voice.

Michelle Fléchard replied,—

"I am not doing any harm. I am looking for my children."

The good woman looked at those who were looking at Michelle Fléchard, tapped her forehead, winked, and said,—

"She is half-witted."

Then she took her aside and gave her a buckwheat biscuit.

Michelle Fléchard, without thanking her, bit eagerly into the biscuit.

"Yes," said the peasants, "she eats like a pig, she is half-witted."

And the rest of the group scattered. They all went away one after another.

When Michelle Fléchard had finished eating, she said to the peasant woman: "It is good; I have had something to eat. Now for la Tourgue!"

"See how she clings to that!" exclaimed the peasant woman.

"I must go to la Tourgue. Tell me the way to la Tourgue."

"Never," said the peasant woman. "You want to be killed, do you? Besides, I don't know. Ah, so you are really mad? Listen, my poor woman, you look tired. Will you rest in my house?"

"I cannot rest," said the mother.

"Her feet are all raw," muttered the peasant woman.

Michelle Fléchard added,—

"As I tell you, they have taken my children from me. A little girl and two little boys. I come from the carnichot in the forest. You can ask Tellmarch the Caimand about me. And then the man I met in the field down there. It was the Caimand who made me well. It seems that I had something broken. All these are things that have happened. Besides, there was the sergeant Radoub. You can ask him. He will tell you. For he it was who found us in the wood. Three. I tell you three children. And the oldest is called René-Jean. I can prove all this. The other is called Gros-Alain, and the other is called Georgette. My husband is dead. They killed him. He was a farmer in Siscoignard. You look like a good woman. Show me my way. I am not mad; I am a mother. I have lost my children. I am looking for them. I do not know exactly where I have come from. Last night I slept on some straw in a barn. La Tourgue is where I am going. I am not a thief. You see that I am telling the truth. You ought to help me find my children. I do not belong to this country. I have been shot, but I do not know where."

The peasant woman shook her head, and said,—

"Listen, traveller. In times of revolution one must not say things that will not be understood. You may be arrested for it."

"But la Tourgue!" cried the mother. "Madam, for the love of the child Jesus, and the holy, good Virgin in Paradise, I beseech you, madam, I beg you, I implore you, tell me how to go to reach la Tourgue!"

The peasant woman grew angry.

"I do not know! and, if I knew, I would not tell you! It is a bad place there. It is not best to go there."

"Nevertheless, I am going there," said the mother.

And she started on.

The peasant woman saw her going away, and grumbled,—

"She ought to have something to eat."

She ran after Michelle Fléchard, and put a buckwheat biscuit in her hand.

"There's something for your supper."

Michelle Fléchard took the buckwheat bread, did not reply, did not turn her head, and went on her way.

She went out of the village. As she came to the last houses she met three little ragged and barefooted children passing by. She went to them, and said,—

"These are two girls and a boy."

And when she saw how they eyed her bread, she gave it to them.

The children seized it, but were afraid of her.

She plunged into the forest.

CHAPTER IV

A MISTAKE

In the meantime, the following had been taking place that same morning before daybreak, in the gloomy depths of the forest, on the section of road leading from Javené to Lécousse.

All the roads in le Bocage are sunken, but the highway from Javené to Parigné, through Lécousse, is one of the most completely embanked. Moreover, it is winding. It is a ravine rather than a road. It starts from Vitré, and once had the distinction of jolting Madame de Sevigné's coach. It is walled in, as it were, by hedges on right and left. No better place for an ambuscade.

This very morning, an hour before Michelle Fléchard, from another part of the forest, reached the village where she had seen the sepulchral vision of the cart escorted by mounted men, the thickets through which the Javené highway runs, after crossing the bridge over the Couesnon, were full of invisible men. All were hidden by interlacing branches.

These men were all peasants, dressed in the *grigo,* that sheepskin jacket worn by the Breton kings in the sixth century, and the peasants in the eighteenth. These men were armed; some with guns, others with axes. Those who had the axes had just made, in a clearing, a sort of funeral pyre of dry sticks and logs, all ready for the fire. Those who had guns were grouped on both sides of the road, in expectant attitudes. Any one who could have peered through the foliage would have seen everywhere fingers on triggers, and muzzles of carbines pointed through the embrasures made by the interlacing boughs. These men were lying in wait.

All their guns were focussed on the road, which began to gleam white in the morning dawn.

In this twilight, muffled voices were conversing.

"Are you sure of this?"

"Surely; that is what they say."

"Will it pass by here?"

"They say it's in these parts."

"It must not leave."

"We must burn it."

"Here are three villages met for that."

"Yes, but the escort?"

"The escort must be killed."

"But is it coming this way?"

"That's what they say."

"It'll come from Vitré, then?"

"Why not?"

"Why, they said it was coming from Fougères."

"Whether from Fougères or Vitré, it comes from the devil."

"That's so."

"And must go back to him."

"Yes."

"Was it going to Parigné?"

"So it seems."

"It won't get there."

"No."

"No, no, no."

"Attention!"

Indeed, prudence was now becoming imperative, for day was breaking.

Suddenly, the men in ambush held their breath. A noise of wheels and horses was heard. They peered through the branches and could distinctly see a long wagon, an escort on horseback, something on the wagon; it was coming toward them.

"There it is!" said the one who appeared to be the chief.

"Yes," said one of the men on the watch, "with the escort."

"How many men in the escort?"

"Twelve."

"They said there were twenty."

"Twelve or twenty, let us kill them all."

"Wait till they are in full range."

Soon after, at a turn in the road, the wagon and escort appeared.

"Long live the king!" cried the chief peasant.

A hundred guns fired at once.

When the smoke disappeared, the escort had disappeared too. Seven of the horsemen had fallen, five had fled. The peasants ran to the wagon.

"Hold on," cried the chief; "it is not the guillotine. It is a ladder."

The wagon, indeed, had for its sole burden a long ladder.

The two horses had fallen, wounded; the driver had been killed, but not purposely.

"It's all the same," said the chief, "a ladder with an escort is suspicious. It was going toward Parigné. It was for scaling la Tourgue, most certainly."

"Let us burn the ladder," cried the peasants.

As for the funereal wagon, which they were looking for, it took another road, and was already two leagues away, in the village where Michelle Fléchard saw it passing along at sunrise.

CHAPTER V

VOX IN DESERTO

After leaving the three children to whom she gave her bread, Michelle Fléchard began to rove at random through the wood.

Since no one would show her the way she must find it for herself. Every few moments she would sit down, then she would get up, and then sit down again. She felt that dismal weariness, which first affects the muscles and then passes to the bones, a slavish weariness. She was a slave in reality,—a slave to her lost children. She must find them; every lost instant might be their destruction; whoever has such a duty has no rights; she was forbidden to pause, even for breath. But she was very weary. In such a state of exhaustion the possibility of one step more is a question. Could it be done? She had been walking since morning. She had seen no village, not even a house. At first she took the right path, then the wrong one, and finally she lost her way entirely among the branches, one just like another. Was she approaching the end? Was she touching the limit of her Passion? She was in the Via Dolorosa, and felt the agony of the "last station." Was she going to fall down on the road and die there? At one particular moment it seemed impossible for her to go any farther; the sun was sinking, the forest was dark, paths were covered up in the grass, and she did not know what to do. She had nothing left but God. She began to call, no one replied.

She looked about her, she saw an opening among the branches, she went toward it, and suddenly found herself out of the woods.

Before her was a narrow vale like a trench, at the bottom of which, over the stones, ran a clear streamlet of water. Then, for the first time, she became aware how very thirsty she was. She went to the brook, knelt down and drank.

She took advantage of being on her knees to repeat her prayers.

When she arose, she tried to get her bearings.

She crossed the brook.

Beyond the little vale there stretched away as far as the eye could reach, a wide plateau covered with low underbrush, which sloped up from the brook and filled the whole horizon. The forest was a solitude, the plateau was a desert. In the forest, behind each bush, there was a chance of meeting some one; on the plateau, as far as one could see, there was nothing. A few birds, which seemed to be escaping from something, flew into the heather.

Then, before this immense deserted plain, feeling her knees give way, as though she had become insane, the desperate mother flung this strange cry into the solitude: "Is there any one here?"

And she waited for the reply.

There was an answer.

A heavy, deep voice burst forth; this voice came from the edge of the horizon; it was reverberated from echo to echo; it resembled a peal of thunder or a cannon; and it seemed as if this voice replied to the mother's question and said: "Yes."

Then all was silent.

The mother rose, with new life; there was some one there. It seemed to her that now she had some one to speak to; she had just relieved her thirst and prayed; her strength returned, she began to ascend the slope in the direction from which she had heard that enormous distant voice.

Suddenly, she saw rising from the extreme edge of the horizon a tall tower. The tower stood alone in this wild landscape; a ray from the setting sun lighted it up. She was more than a league away from it. Behind this tower, a wide expanse of verdure lost itself in the haze; this was the forest of Fougères.

This tower appeared to her to be on the very point of the horizon from which had come that roaring voice that seemed to her like a call. Had this tower made the noise?

Michelle Fléchard reached the top of the plateau; she had nothing more before her except the plain.

She walked toward the tower.

CHAPTER VI

THE SITUATION

THE moment had come.

The inexorable held the merciless.

Cimourdain had Lantenac in his grasp.

The old Royalist rebel was taken in his ancestral seat, it was evident that he could not escape; and Cimourdain intended to have the marquis beheaded at his own home, on the spot, on his own territory, and in a certain sense in his own house, in order that the feudal dwelling should see the head of the feudal master fall, and that it might be a memorable example.

This is why he had sent to Fougères for the guillotine. It has just been seen on the way.

To kill Lantenac was to kill la Vendée; to kill la Vendée was to save France. Cimourdain did not hesitate. This man was familiar with the cruelty of duty.

The marquis seemed to be lost; in regard to this, Cimourdain felt easy, but in another respect he was anxious. The struggle would certainly be a frightful one; Gauvain would direct it, and would perhaps desire to take part in it; there was something of the soldier in this young chief; he was a man to throw himself into this hand-to-hand encounter; supposing he should be killed? Gauvain! his child! the sole affection that he had on earth! Gauvain had been fortunate thus far, but good fortune becomes weary. Cimourdain trembled. His destiny was strange in this respect, that he was between two Gauvains, one of whom he wished to die, the other to live.

The cannon shot which had disturbed Georgette in her basket and called the mother out of the depths of solitude had done more than that. Whether it was by chance or from the intention of the gunner, the ball, which, however, was only a ball of warning, had struck, broken, and half torn away the iron bars which masked and closed the great loophole in the first story of the tower. The besieged had not had time to repair this injury.

The besieged were boastful. They had very little ammunition. Their situation, we insist, was even more critical than the besiegers supposed. If they had enough powder they would have blown up la Tourgue, with themselves and the enemy in it; this was their dream; but all their reserves were exhausted. They had hardly thirty shots apiece. They had plenty of guns, blunderbusses and pistols, and but few cartridges. They had loaded all their arms, in order to be able to keep up a continuous fire; but how long would this fire last? It would be necessary to use it lavishly and to husband it at the same time. Here was the difficulty.

Fortunately,—ominous good fortune,—the contest would be principally man to man, and with side-arms, with sabre and dagger. There would be more hand-to-hand fighting than shooting. They would cut each other to pieces; this was what they hoped for.

The interior of the tower seemed impregnable. In the lower hall where the breach penetrated was the retirade, that barricade scientifically constructed by Lantenac, which obstructed the entrance. Behind the retirade, a long table was covered with loaded arms,—blunderbusses, carbines, and muskets, and with sabres, axes, and daggers. As they had no powder to blow up the tower, they were unable to make use of the crypt of the oubliette communicating with the lower hall, and the marquis had ordered the door to this vault to be closed.

Above the lower hall was the round room of the first story, which could only be reached by a very narrow Saint-Gilles's staircase; this room, furnished like the lower hall with a table covered with arms all ready for use, was lighted by the large loophole, the grating of which had just been smashed by a cannon ball; above this room the spiral staircase led to the round room in the second story, where the iron door opened into the bridge-châtelet.

This room in the second story was called both the "room with the iron door" and the "room of mirrors," on account of the number of little mirrors hung up on old rusty nails against the bare stone, a strange mixture of elegance and barbarism. As upper rooms cannot be defended to advantage, this room of mirrors was what Manesson-Mallet, the authority on fortified places, calls "the last post where the besieged can capitulate."

As we have already said, it was important to prevent the besiegers from reaching this room.

This round room in the second story was lighted by loopholes; but a torch was burning there. This torch, placed in an iron cresset like the one in the lower hall, had been lighted by L'Imânus, who had placed the end of the sulphur slow match close beside it. Terrible foresight.

At the end of the lower hall, on a long table made of boards, there was food, as in a Homeric cavern; large plates of rice; of "fur," which is a porridge of buckwheat; of "godnivelle," a hash of veal; rolls of "houichepote," a paste made of flour and fruit cooked in water; and jugs of cider. Any one who wished could eat and drink.

The firing of the cannon put them all on guard. They had only half an hour more before them. L'Imânus, from the top of the tower, was watching the approach of the besiegers. Lantenac had commanded them not to fire, and to let them draw near. He had said,—

"There are four thousand five hundred of them. It is useless to kill them outside. Don't kill until they are inside. Once inside, we shall be equal."

And he added, with a laugh, "Equality, Fraternity." It was agreed that when the enemy began to advance, L'Imânus should sound a note of warning from his horn.

All, in silence, stationed behind the retirade or on the stairs, waited, with one hand on their muskets, the other on their rosaries.

To sum up, this was the situation:

For the assailants, a breach to penetrate; a barricade to storm; three halls, one above another, to take by main force, one by one; two winding staircases to carry, step by step, under a shower of fire. For the besieged—death.

CHAPTER VII

PRELIMINARIES

GAUVAIN on his side was arranging the attack. He gave his last instructions to Cimourdain, who, it will be remembered, without taking part in the action was to guard the plateau; and to Guéchamp, who was to wait with the main part of the army in the camp of the forest. It was understood that neither the masked battery in the woods nor the open battery on the plateau should fire, unless there was a sortie or an attempt to escape. Gauvain reserved for himself the command of the attacking column. This is what troubled Cimourdain.

The sun had just set.

A tower in an open field is like a ship on the open sea. It must be attacked in the same way. It is rather a boarding than an assault. No cannon. Nothing useless. What is the good of cannonading walls fifteen feet thick? A porthole, some storming it, others passing it, axes, knives, pistols, fists, and teeth. This is what takes place.

Gauvain felt that there was no other means of carrying la Tourgue. An attack where the combatants see the whites of each other's eyes is most deadly. He was familiar with the formidable interior of the tower, having lived there as a child. He was deep in thought.

In the meantime, a few steps from him, his lieutenant, Guéchamp, with a spyglass in his hand, was scrutinizing the horizon toward Parigné. Suddenly Guéchamp exclaimed,—

"Ah, at last!"

This exclamation roused Gauvain from his reverie.

"What is it, Guéchamp?"

"Commander, there is the ladder."

"The escape ladder?"

"Yes."

"What? Hasn't it come yet?"

"No, commander. I was anxious about it. The express which I sent to Javené has returned."

"I know it."

"He announced that, in the carpenter's shop at Javené, he had found a ladder of the required length, that he had it requisitioned, that he had the ladder put on a wagon, that he obtained an escort of twelve horsemen, and that he had seen the wagon, the escort, and the ladder start for Parigné. After which he returned post haste."

"And gave us this report, and he added that as the wagon was drawn by strong horses, and started about two o'clock in the morning, it would be here before sunset. I know all that. Well?"

"Well, commander, the sun has just set and the wagon with the ladder has not yet come."

"Is it possible? Nevertheless, we must begin the attack. The hour has come. If we delay, the besieged will think we are retreating."

"Commander, you can begin the attack."

"But we must have the escape ladder."

"Of course."

"But it is not here."

"It is here."

"How is that?"

"That is why I said, 'Ah! at last!' The wagon had not come; I took my spyglass and examined the road from Parigné to la Tourgue, and, commander, I am satisfied. The wagon is yonder with the escort; it is coming down the slope. You can see it."

Gauvain took his spyglass and looked.

"To be sure. Here it is. There is not enough daylight left to make it all out. But I see the escort; that is plain enough. But the escort seems to me to be larger than you told me, Guéchamp."

"It seems so to me, too."

"They are about a quarter of a league away."

"Commander, the escape ladder will be here in a quarter of an hour."

"We can begin the attack."

It was really a wagon which was coming, but it was not the one they thought.

Gauvain, turning around, saw behind him Sergeant Radoub, erect, his eyes downcast, in attitude of military salute.

"What is it, Sergeant Radoub?"

"Citizen commander, we, the men of the battalion of Bonnet-Rouge, have a favor to ask of you."

"What is it?"

"To have us killed."

"Ah!" said Gauvain.

"Will you do us this kindness?"

"But—that depends on circumstances," said Gauvain.

"You see, commander, since the affair at Dol you have been careful of us. There are still twelve of us."

"Well?"

"This humiliates us."

"You are the reserve."

"We would rather be the advance-guard."

"But I need you to decide the final success of an action. I hold you in reserve."

"Too much so."

"No matter. You are in the column, you march with it."

"In the rear. Paris has the right to march ahead."

"I will think about it, Sergeant Radoub."

"Think about it to-day, commander. There is going to be an engagement. There will be a rough tripping-up, on one side or the other. It will be lively. La Tourgue will burn the fingers of those who touch it. We ask the privilege of being in the fight."

The sergeant stopped short, twisted his moustache, and added in a different tone,—

"And then you see, commander, our babies are in that tower. Our children are there, the children of the battalion, our three children. The terrible face of Gribouille-mon-cul-to-baise, of Bris-bleu, of l'Imânus, that Gouge-le-Bruand, that Bouge-le-Gruand, that Fouge-le-Truand, that thunderbolt of God, man of the devil, threatens our children. Our children, our little ones, commander. When the tower quakes and tumbles, we do not want any harm to come to them. Do you understand this, master? we do not want any harm to happen to them. Just now, I took advantage of the truce to go up on the plateau, and I saw them through a window; yes, they are really there, you can see them from the edge of the ravine, and I saw them, and they were afraid of me, the darlings. Commander, if a single hair falls from the heads of those little cherubs, I swear a thousand times by all that is holy that I, Sergeant Radoub, that I will do something desperate. And this is what all the battalion say: 'We want the children saved, or we want to be all killed. This is our right, yes, to be all killed.' And now, good luck and reverence."

Gauvain held out his hand to Radoub, and said,—

"You are a brave man. You shall be in the attacking column. I will divide you. I will put six of you with the vanguard, that the troops may be sure to advance, and I will put six of you in the rearguard, to keep them from retreating."

"Shall I still command the twelve?"

"Certainly."

"Thank you, commander. For I belong to the vanguard." Radoub saluted his commander and went back to the ranks.

Gauvain took out his watch, spoke a few words in Guéchamp's ear, and the attacking column began to form.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SUMMONS AND THE REPLY

In the meantime, Cimourdain, who had not yet taken up his position on the plateau and was still at Gauvain's side, stepped to a trumpeter.

"Blow the trumpet," he said to him.

The trumpet sounded, the horn replied.

A blast from the trumpet and an answering blast from the horn rang out again.

"What is it?" asked Gauvain of Guéchamp. "What does Cimourdain want?"

Cimourdain had approached the tower with a white handkerchief in his hand.

He spoke.

"Men who are in the tower, do you know me?"

The voice of l'Imânus replied from the top of the tower,—

"Yes."

Then the two voices began to converse, and this was heard,—

"I am the envoy of the Republic."

"You are the former curé of Parigné."

"I am the delegate of the Committee of Public Welfare."

"You are a priest."

"I am the representative of the Law."

"You are a renegade."

"I am the messenger of the Revolution."

"You are an apostate."

"I am Cimourdain."

"You are the devil."

"Do you know me?"

"We hate you."

"Would you be satisfied to have me in your power?"

"There are eighteen of us here who would give our heads in exchange for yours."

"Well, I have come to give myself up to you."

From the top of the tower was heard a burst of savage laughter, and this exclamation,—

"Come on."

There was deep silence in the camp as they awaited the result.

Cimourdain added,—

"On one condition."

"What is it?"

"Listen."

"Speak."

"You hate me?"

"Yes."

"As for me, I love you. I am your brother."

The voice from the top of the tower replied,—

"Yes, Cain."

Cimourdain replied with a singular inflexion, both loud and gentle,—

"Insult me, but listen. I have come to parley with you. Yes, you are my brothers. You are poor misguided men. I am your friend. I am light speaking to ignorance. Light always comprises brotherly love. Besides, have we not all the same mother, our native land? Well, listen to me. You will know later, or your children will know, or your children's children, that all that is taking place at this moment is done in fulfilment of the laws above, and that God has caused this Revolution. While waiting for the time when all minds, even yours, will understand this, and all fanaticism, even yours, will vanish, will any one pity your darkness? I have come to you to offer you my life; I do more, I extend my hand to you. I ask you the favor of destroying my life to save your own. I have full power, and what I say I am able to perform. It is a critical moment; I am making a last effort. Yes, he who speaks to you is a citizen, and in this citizen, yes, there is a priest. The citizen is fighting against you, but the priest implores you. Listen to me. Many of you have wives and children. I take the defence of your children and your wives. I take their defence against you. Oh, my brothers—"

"Go on, preach away!" sneered l'Imânus.

Cimourdain continued,—

"My brothers, do not let the accursed hour come. There will be bloodshed here. Many of us who are here before you will not see to-morrow's sun; yes, many of us will perish, and you, all of you, will die. Have mercy on yourselves. Why shed all this blood when it is useless? Why kill so many men when two would suffice?"

"Two?" said l'Imânus.

"Yes. Two."

"Who?"

"Lantenac and myself."

And Cimourdain raised his voice,—

"Two men are enough; Lantenac for us, myself for you. This is what I offer you, and it will be the saving of all your lives; give us Lantenac and take me. Lantenac will be guillotined, and you will have me to dispose of as you like."

"Priest," howled l'Imânus, "if we had you we would burn you over a slow fire."

"I am willing," said Cimourdain.

And he added,—

"You, condemned, who are in this tower can all be alive and free; in an hour I bring you safety. Do you accept it?"

L'Imânus thundered,—

"You are not only a villain; you are mad. Ah, indeed, why do you come to disturb us? who asked you to come to speak to us? we, give up monseigneur! what do you mean?"

"His head, and I offer you—"

"Your hide. For we would skin you like a dog, Curé Cimourdain. Well, no, your hide is not worth his head; get you gone."

"The struggle will be terrible; once more, for the last time reflect."

Night fell during the exchange of these ominous words, which were heard inside the tower as well as without. The Marquis de Lantenac kept silent and let them alone. Leaders indulge in such portentous deeds of selfishness. This is one of the rights of responsibility. L'Imânus shouted to those beyond Cimourdain, exclaiming,—

"Men who attack us, we have told you our propositions; they have been made, and we have nothing to change about them. Accept them; if not, woe be unto you! do you consent? we will give up the three children here to you, and you shall let us all go free and unharmed."

"All of you, yes," replied Cimourdain, "except one."

"Which one?"

"Lantenac."

"Monseigneur! give up Monseigneur! never!"

"We must have Lantenac."

"Never!"

"We cannot negotiate, except on this condition."

"Then begin."

Silence ensued.

L'Imânus, after sounding the signal with his horn, went down again; the marquis took the sword in his hand; the nineteen men besieged gathered in silence in the lower hall, behind the retirade, and knelt down; they heard the measured tread of the attacking column advancing toward the tower in the darkness; the sound drew nearer; suddenly, they felt that they were close upon them, at the very mouth of the breach. Then all kneeling down held their guns and their blunderbusses through the cracks in the retirade, and one of them, Grand-Francœur, the priest Turneau, rose, and, a drawn sword in his right hand, a crucifix in his left, said in a solemn voice,—

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

All fired at once, and the struggle began.

CHAPTER IX

TITANS AGAINST GIANTS

It was indeed frightful.

This hand-to-hand struggle surpassed all that could have been imagined.

To find anything equal to it, one must go back to the great combats of Æschylus or to the carnage of old feudal times; or to those "attacks with short arms," which lasted till the seventeenth century, when fortified places were penetrated by means of "fausse-brayes;" tragic assaults in which, says the old sergeant of the province of Alentijo, "when the mines have done their work, the besiegers will advance carrying planks covered with sheets of tin, armed with round shields and mantlets, and provided with plenty of grenades, causing the defenders to abandon the retrenchments or retirades, and, having taken possession, they will vigorously repulse the besieged."

The place of attack was horrible; it was one of those breaches called technically "vaulted breaches;" that is to say, as will be remembered, an opening going through the wall from one side to the other, and not a rupture open to the sky. The powder had worked like a gimlet. The effect of the explosion had been so violent that the tower had been rent more than forty feet above the mine, but it was only a crack, and the practicable opening, serving as a breach and penetrating into the lower hall, resembled a spear thrust which pierces, rather than an axe blow which cleaves.

It was a puncture in the side of the tower, a long, deep fracture, something like a horizontal wall under ground, a passage winding and rising like an intestine through a wall fifteen feet thick, a peculiar shapeless cylinder full of obstacles, snares, explosions, where a man would hit his forehead against the rocks, and would stumble over the rubbish and lose his sight in the darkness.

The assailants had before them this dark porch, like the mouth of an abyss with all the stones of the jagged wall for upper and lower jaws; the jaws of a shark have not more teeth than this terrible rent. It was necessary to enter and to come out by this hole.

Within, there was a rain of fire, outside rose the retirade, *Outside,* that is to say, in the lower hall on the ground floor.

Only in the encounter of sappers in covered galleries when the countermine cuts the mine, or in the carnage on the gun decks of vessels which grapple each other in naval battles, is such ferocity displayed. To fight at the bottom of a ditch is horrible to the last degree. It is frightful to have a battle under a roof.

At the moment when the first swarm of besiegers entered, the whole retirade was covered with lightning, and it was something like a thunderstorm bursting underground. The thunderbolts of the assailants replied to the thunderbolts of the ambuscade. Report answered report; Gauvain's voice shouted,—

"Break them in!"

Then Lantenac's cry: "Hold firm against the enemy!" Then the cry of l'Imânus: "On, men of the Main!" Then the clashing of sword against sword, and blow on blow, terrible discharges, all devastating. The torch fastened against the wall, lighted dimly all this horror. It was impossible to distinguish anything; it was in a reddish blackness; whoever entered there was suddenly deaf and blind,—deafened by the noise, blinded by the smoke. Disabled men were lying in the midst of the rubbish. Corpses were trodden down, the wounded were trampled upon, broken limbs were crushed, while howls of anguish arose; men had their feet bitten by the dying; now and then, there were moments of silence more hideous than the din.

They seized each other by the throat, groans were heard, then the gnashing of teeth, the death rattle, imprecations; and the thundering began again. A stream of blood began to flow from the tower through the breach, and ran out into the darkness. This dismal pool steamed outside in the grass.

It seemed as if the tower itself were bleeding, as if a giant were wounded.

Wonderful to say, those outside heard hardly any sound. The night was very dark, and all around the fortress, on the plain and in the forest, there was a sort of funereal stillness. Inside, it was like hell; outside, it was like the grave. This conflict of men killing each other in the darkness, these volleys of musketry, this din, this madness, all this tumult died away under the walls and arches; the noise lacked air, and suffocation was added to slaughter. Outside the tower, there was scarcely a sound. The little children slept through it all.

The fury increased, the retirade held its own. Nothing is more difficult to storm than this kind of a barricade, with a re-entering angle. If the besieged had numbers against them, their position was in their favor. The attacking column lost a great many men. Stretched out in a long line outside, at the foot of the tower, it plunged slowly into the opening made by the breach and contracted, like an adder going into its hole.

Gauvain, with the imprudence of a young general, was in the lower hall, in the thickest of the fight, in the midst of all the firing. We may add that he had the confidence of a man who had never been wounded. As he turned round to give an order, a blaze of musketry lighted up a face close beside him.

"Cimourdain!" he exclaimed, "what are you doing here?"

It really was Cimourdain. Cimourdain replied,—

"I come to be near you."

"But you will be killed!"

"Well, what are you doing here yourself?"

"But I am needed here. You are not."

"Since you are here, I must be here also."

"No, my master."

"Yes, my child."

Cimourdain stayed near Gauvain.

The dead were heaped up on the floors of the lower hall.

Although the retirade was not yet forced, the greater number would evidently conquer at last. The assailants were exposed to the enemy's fire, and the besieged were protected. Ten besiegers fell to one besieged, but the besiegers were replaced. The besiegers increased and the besieged decreased.

The nineteen besieged were all behind the retirade, the attack being there. There were dead and wounded among them; fifteen at the outside were still fighting. One of the fiercest among them, Chante-en-Hiver, had been frightfully wounded. He was a thick-set Breton, with curly hair, of the small, lively type. He had one of his eyes put out and his jawbone broken. He could still walk. He dragged himself up the winding staircase and went into the room on the first story, hoping to be able to say his prayers there and die.

He leaned back against the wall near the loophole to try to get a little air.

Below, the massacre before the retirade was growing more and more horrible. In an interval between two volleys, Cimourdain raised his voice.

"Besieged!" he cried, "why shed blood any longer? You are taken. Surrender. Remember that we are four thousand five hundred against nineteen, that is to say, more than two hundred to one. Surrender."

"Let us put an end to this sentimentality," replied the Marquis de Lantenac.

And twenty bullets answered Cimourdain.

The retirade did not reach as high as the arched roof; this allowed the besieged to shoot over it, but it also allowed the besiegers to scale it.

"Attack the retirade!" cried Gauvain. "Is there any one willing to scale the retirade?"

"I am," said Sergeant Radoub.

CHAPTER X

RADOUB

THEN the assailants were dumbfounded at what took place. Radoub had entered through the breach at the head of the attacking column, with six others, and, out of these six men of the Prussian battalion, four had already fallen. After he had cried: "I am!" he was seen not to advance but to retreat, and bending down, stooping, crawling almost between the legs of the combatants, he reached the opening of the breach and went out. Was this flight? would such a man flee? what could it mean?

When outside the breach, Radoub, still blinded by the smoke, rubbed his eyes as if to put aside the horror and the darkness, and by the light of the stars looked at the wall of the tower. He gave a nod of satisfaction, as if to say, "I was not mistaken."

Radoub had noticed that the deep cleft made by the explosion of the mine reached above the breach to the loophole in the first story, the iron grating of which had been broken through and displaced by a cannon ball. The network of broken bars was hanging, half torn away, and a man would be able to creep through.

A man could creep through, but could he climb up there? By the cleft, yes, on condition that he was like a cat.

This was just what Radoub was. He belonged to that race which Pindar calls "agile athletes." An old soldier may be a young man; Radoub, who had been a French Guard, was not forty years old. He was a nimble Hercules.

Radoub laid his musket on the ground, removed his shoulder belt, took off his coat and vest, and kept only his two pistols, which he put in the belt of his trousers, and his bare sword, which he took between his teeth. The handles of the two pistols protruded above his belt.

Thus freed from all encumbrances, and followed in the darkness by the eyes of all those in the attacking column who had not yet entered the breach, he began to mount the stones in the cleft of the wall, like the steps of a staircase. Being without shoes was an advantage to him; nothing clings like a bare foot; he curled his toes into the holes between the stones. He pulled himself up by main force, he braced himself with his knees. The ascent was rough. It was something like climbing over the teeth of a saw. "It is fortunate," he thought, "that there is no one in the room of the first story, for they would not let me climb in this way."

He had no less than forty feet to climb thus. As he mounted, hindered somewhat by the protruding handles of his pistols, the cleft grew narrower and the ascent became more and more difficult; at the same time, the risk of falling increased with the depth of the precipice.

At last he came to the edge of the loophole; he removed the twisted and broken grating so that he had room enough to pass through; by a powerful effort he raised himself up, placed his knee on the cornice of the window-sill, seized the end of a bar on the right, in one hand, and with the other a bar on the left, and rose to his waist in front of the embrasure of the loophole, his sword between his teeth, hanging by his two hands above the abyss.

He had but one more effort to make to enter the hall in the first story.

But a face appeared in the loophole.

Radoub suddenly saw before him in the dim light something frightful. An eye destroyed, a shattered jaw, a face covered with blood.

This one-eyed mask looked at him.

This mask had two hands; these two hands came out of the darkness and approached Radoub; one, with a single grasp, snatched the two pistols from his belt, the other removed his sword from between his teeth.

Radoub was disarmed. His knee was slipping on the inclined plane of the cornice, his two hands grasping the ends of the iron bars could hardly hold him, and he had beneath him forty feet of precipice.

This face and these hands belonged to Chante-en-hiver. Chante-en-hiver, suffocated by the smoke pouring up from below, had succeeded in entering the embrasure of the loophole, and here the outside air had revived him, the coolness of the night had stanched his blood, and he had regained a little strength; suddenly, he saw Radoub's form rise up outside in front of the opening, then as Radoub, clinging to the bars with both hands, had only the choice of falling or being disarmed, Chante-en-hiver, calm and frightful, took the pistols out of his belt and his sword from between his teeth.

An extraordinary duel began. A duel between the unarmed and the wounded.

Without doubt, the dying man had the advantage. One bullet would be enough to hurl Radoub into the yawning gulf under his feet.

Fortunately for Radoub, Chante-en-hiver, having both pistols in one hand, could shoot neither of them and was forced to make use of the sword. He thrust the point of it into Radoub's shoulder. This thrust wounded Radoub and saved him.

Radoub, without arms, but having all his strength, scorned his wound, which did not reach to the bone, sprang forward, let go the bars, and leaped into the embrasure.

Then he found himself face to face with Chante-en-hiver who had thrown the sword behind him, and now held the two pistols in his two hands.

Chante-en-hiver, on his knees, aimed at Radoub, who was almost close up to the muzzle; but his weakened arm trembled and he did not immediately shoot.

Radoub took advantage of this respite to burst out laughing.

"Tell me, ugly mug," he cried, "do you think I am going to be afraid of your à-la-mode beef jaws? Sapristi, how they have battered your pretty face!"

Chante-en-hiver was still aiming at him.

Radoub continued,—

"It's not a thing to talk about, but the grapeshot crimped your mouth very prettily. My poor boy, Bellona has smashed your physiognomy. Go ahead, go ahead, spit out your little pistol shot, my good fellow."

The pistol went off and the bullet passed so near Radoub's head that it tore off half of his ear. Chante-en-hiver raised his other arm with the second pistol, but Radoub did not give him time to aim.

"I have had enough of you taking my ears off," he cried. "You have wounded me twice, now it is my turn."

And he rushed at Chante-en-hiver, knocked his arm up, making the pistol go off aimlessly, and seized hold of his dislocated jaw.

Chante-en-hiver shrieked and fainted away.

Radoub stepped over him and left him in the embrasure.

"Now that I have let you know my ultimatum," said he, "don't move again. Stay there, you rascally sneak. You may rest assured that I am not going to amuse myself now with slaughtering you. Crawl about on the floor at your ease, fellow-citizen of my old shoes. Die; you can still do that. You will soon know what nonsense your curé has been telling you. Depart into the great regions of mystery, peasant."

And he sprang into the hall of the first story.

"You can't see a thing here," he growled.

Chante-en-hiver writhed convulsively and shrieked with agony. Radoub turned around.

"Silence! do me the kindness of keeping quiet, unworthy citizen. I will have nothing more to do with you. I scorn to put an end to you. Let me have peace."

And he ran his hand through his hair in perplexity, as he looked at Chante-en-hiver.

"Ah, now what am I going to do? all this is very good, but here I am without arms. I had two shots to fire. You wasted them for me, you beast! and made such a smoke about it that it would blind a dog!"

And hitting his torn ear,—

"Ow!" he said. And he added,—

"It was very forward of you to confiscate one of my ears; but indeed, I would rather lose that than anything else, for it was only an ornament. You scratched my shoulder too, but that is nothing. Die, clown, I forgive you."

He listened, the tumult in the lower hall was frightful. The fight was more furious than ever.

"They are getting on well down there. Never mind they are howling 'Long live the king.' They are dying nobly."

His feet hit against his sword on the floor. He picked it up, and said to Chante-en-hiver, who no longer stirred and was perhaps dead,—

"You see, woodsman, this is what I wanted, my sword or 'zut,' it is the same thing. I will take it out of friendship. But I must have my pistols. Devil take you, savage! Now what shall I do? I am no good here."

He groped along through the hall, trying to see and to get his bearings. Suddenly in the darkness, behind the central column, he made out a long table, and on this table something which shone indistinctly. He felt of it. They were blunderbusses, pistols, carbines, a row of firearms laid in order and seeming to be waiting for hands to lay hold of them; it was the reserve of weapons prepared by the besieged for the second phase of the assault; a perfect arsenal.

"A refreshment table!" exclaimed Radoub, and he pounced on them wildly.

Then he became terrible.

The door leading to the staircase communicating with the upper and lower stories was seen to be wide open beside the table loaded with arms. Radoub dropped his sword, seized a pistol in each hand and fired them together at random through the door into the stairway, then he seized a blunderbuss and discharged that, then he seized a musketoon loaded to the muzzle with buckshot, and discharged that. The musketoon, pouring forth fifteen bullets, seemed like a volley of grape-shot. Then Radoub, getting his breath, cried into the stairway in a thundering voice,—

"Long live Paris."

And seizing another musketoon larger than the first, he aimed it under the archway of the Saint-Gilles's staircase and waited.

The confusion in the lower hall was indescribable. Unexpected surprises like this demoralize resistance. Two of the bullets of Radoub's triple discharges had hit; one had killed the elder of the two brothers, Pique-en-bois, the other had killed Houzard, who was Monsieur de Quélen.

"They are upstairs!" cried the marquis.

This cry brought about the instant abandonment of the retirade; a flock of birds could not be scattered more quickly, and they each tried to rush first into the stairway. The marquis encouraged this flight.

"Be quick," he said. "It is courageous to escape now, let us all go up to the second story! there we will begin again."

He was the last to leave the retirade.

This bravery saved him.

Radoub, in ambush on the first landing of the staircase, his finger on the trigger of the blunderbuss, was on the watch for the rout. Those who first appeared around the corner received the discharge full in the face, and fell as if struck by lightning. If the marquis had been one of them he would have been killed.

Before Radoub had time to seize a new weapon, the rest passed by, the marquis last, and slower than the others. They believed the room on the first floor to be filled with the enemy; they did not stop there, but went on to the second story to the hall of mirrors. There was the iron door, the sulphur slow match was there, and there it would be necessary to capitulate or die.

Gauvain, as surprised as they were by the gunshots from the stairway and not being able to explain the assistance which had come to him, without trying to understand had taken advantage of it, had leaped with his men over the retirade, and drove the besieged at the point of the sword up to the first story.

There he found Radoub.

Radoub saluted him and said,—

"One minute, commander. It was I who did this. I remembered Dol. I did as you did. I put the enemy between two fires."

"A good pupil," said Gauvain, with a smile.

After being in the dark for some time one's eyes become accustomed to it, like those of night birds; Gauvain noticed that Radoub was covered with blood.

"But you are wounded, comrade."

"Never mind that, commander. What difference does it make, an ear more or less? I have a sword cut too, but that is of no consequence. In breaking a pane of glass one always gets cut somewhat. But it is only a little of my blood."

They came to a sort of halt in the hall of the first story, taken by Radoub. A lantern was brought. Cimourdain rejoined Gauvain. They stopped to consider. It was indeed time to reflect. The besiegers were not in the secret of the besieged. They were ignorant of their lack of ammunition. They did not know that the defenders of the place were short of powder; the second story was the last post of resistance; the besiegers knew that the staircase might be mined.

One thing was certain, that the enemy could not escape. Those who were not dead were as good as under lock and key. Lantenac was in a trap.

With this certainty, they could take a little time to try to find out the best possible course to pursue. They already had many dead. It was necessary to try not to lose too many men in this last assault. There would probably be a tough outburst at first to quell.

The combat was interrupted. The besiegers, masters of the ground floor and of the next story, were waiting for the general's order to go on. Gauvain and Cimourdain were holding counsel. Radoub listened in silence to their deliberation.

He ventured again to salute his general timidly,—

"Commander?"

"What is it, Radoub?"

"Have I the right to a slight reward?"

"Certainly. Ask what you like."

"I should like to be the first to go up."

It was impossible to refuse him. Besides, he would have done it without permission.

CHAPTER XI

THE DESPERATE

While they were taking counsel in the first story, they were building a barricade in the second. Success is madness, defeat is rage. The two stories were about to clash in desperate encounter. To touch victory is intoxicating. Below there was hope, which would be the greatest of all human forces if it were not for despair.

Above, there was despair.

A calm, cold, ominous despair.

On reaching this hall of refuge, beyond which there was nothing left for them, the first care of the besieged was to bar the entrance. It would be of no use to fasten the door. It would be better to block up the stairway. In a case like this, an obstacle through which it is possible to see and to fight is of more value than a fastened door.

The torch placed by l'Imânus in a cresset on the wall, near the sulphur slow match, gave them light.

In this hall on the second floor there was one of those large, heavy oak chests in which clothing and linen were kept before the invention of furniture with drawers. They dragged this chest, and stood it on end in the doorway of the staircase. It fitted in firmly and obstructed the entrance. It left only a narrow space open near the arch, large enough to let a man through, excellent for killing the assailants, one by one. It was doubtful if men would risk themselves there.

Having blocked up the entrance, they took a respite.

They counted their number.

Of the nineteen, only seven were left, including l'Imânus. All were wounded except l'Imânus and the marquis.

The five who were wounded, but very active,—for in the heat of battle, all wounds not mortal allow men to come and go,—were Chatenay, called Robi, Guinoiseau, Hoisnard, Branche-d'Or, Brin-d'Amour and Grand-Francœur. All the rest were dead.

They had no ammunition. The cartridge boxes were exhausted. They counted the cartridges. How many shots for the seven had they? Four.

They had reached the moment when there was nothing left but to fall. They were driven to the very precipice, yawning and awful; it would have been difficult to be nearer the edge.

In the meantime, the attack was beginning; but slowly and all the more sure. The sound of the besiegers' gunstocks was heard as they hit against the staircase, step by step.

No means of escape. Through the library? There were six cannons on the plateau pointed at it, with matches lighted. Through the rooms above? what would be the use? They only lead to the plateau. Then their only means of escape would be to throw themselves from the top to the bottom of the tower.

The seven survivors of this epic band saw themselves inexorably imprisoned and held by this thick wall, which protected them and betrayed them. They were not yet taken; but they were already prisoners.

The marquis addressed them,—

"My friends, it is all over."

And after a silence he added,—

"Grand-Francœur, be the Abbé Turmeau once more."

All knelt down, with their rosaries in their hands. The knocking of the assailants' muskets came nearer. Grand Francœur, covered with blood from the bullet which had grazed his skull and torn off the skin covered with hair, raised his crucifix in his right hand. The marquis, a skeptic at heart, placed one knee on the ground.

"Let each one," said Grand-Francœur, "confess his faults aloud. Monseigneur, speak."

The marquis replied,—

"I have killed."

"I have killed," said Hoisnard.

"I have killed," said Guinoiseau.

"I have killed," said Brin-d'Amour.

"I have killed," said Chatenay.

"I have killed," said l'Imânus."

And Grand-Francœur added,—

"In the name of the Most Holy Trinity, I absolve you. May your souls depart in peace."

"Amen!" replied all the others.

The marquis arose.

"Now," said he, "let us die."

"And let us kill," said l'Imânus.

The blows from the muskets began to shake the chest which barred the door.

"Think on God," said the priest. "Earth no longer exists for us."

"Yes," added the marquis, "we are in the tomb."

All bowed their heads and beat their breasts. The marquis and the priest alone remained standing. Their eyes were fixed on the floor, the priest was praying, the peasants were praying, the marquis was deep in thought; the chest, as though it were struck by hammers, gave forth a lugubrious, hollow sound.

At this moment, a quick, strong voice rang out behind them, crying,—

"I told you the truth, monseigneur."

The heads of all turned around in amazement.

A hole had just opened in the wall.

A stone perfectly jointed with the others, but not cemented, and turning on a pivot above and below, had just revolved on itself like a turnstile, and in turning had opened the wall. The stone having turned on its axis, made a double opening and offered two passages, one to the right, the other to the left, narrow, but large enough to allow a man to pass through. Outside this unexpected door could be seen the first steps of a spiral staircase.

The face of a man appeared in the opening.

The marquis recognized Halmalo.

CHAPTER XII

A DELIVERER

"Is it you, Halmalo?"

"It is, monseigneur. You see now that turning stones do exist, and that it is possible to escape through here. I have come in time. But be quick. In ten minutes you will be in the midst of the forest."

"God is great," said the priest.

"Save yourself, monseigneur," cried they all.

"All of you first," said the marquis.

"You first, monseigneur," said the Abbé Turmeau.

"I shall be the last."

And the marquis added in a stern voice,—

"No struggle for generosity. We have no time to be magnanimous. You are wounded. I command you to live and to flee. Be quick and take advantage of this means of escape. Thank you, Halmalo."

"Monsieur le marquis," said the Abbé Turmeau. "Are we going to be separated?"

"Without doubt, below. We can only escape each for himself."

"Monseigneur, will you appoint a rendezvous?"

"Yes. A clearing in the forest, the Pierre-Gauvain. Do you know the place?"

"We all know it."

"I will be there to-morrow at noon. Let all who can walk be found there."

"We will be there."

"And we will begin the war over again," said the marquis.

In the meanwhile, Halmalo pressing against the turning stone had just noticed that it no longer moved. The opening could not be closed.

"Monseigneur," he said, "let us hurry, the stone resists now. I was able to open the passage, but I shall not be able to close it."

Indeed, after long disuse the stone was, as it were, stiffened on its hinges. It would be impossible to stir it henceforth.

"Monseigneur," added Halmalo, "I hoped to close the passage, and that when the Blues entered, they would find no one here, and failing to understand it would believe that you had all vanished into smoke. But here, the stone will not move. The enemy will see the place open, and will be able to pursue us. But do not lose a moment. Quick! all down the stairs."

L'Imânus placed his hand on Halmalo's shoulder,—

"Comrade, how long will it take to go through this passage and reach a place of safety in the forest?"

"No one is seriously wounded?" asked Halmalo.

They replied,—

"No one."

"In that case, a quarter of an hour will be enough."

"So," replied l'Imânus, "if the enemy should enter here in a quarter of an hour?"

"They could pursue us, but they would not reach us."

"But," said the marquis, "they will be here in five minutes, that old chest will not hinder them long. A few blows with the but ends of their muskets will finish it. A quarter of an hour! who will keep them back for a quarter of an hour?"

"I will," said l'Imânus.

"You, Gouge-le-Bruant?"

"I, monseigneur. Listen. Out of six, five of you are wounded. As for me, I haven't a scratch."

"Neither have I," said the marquis.

"You are the chief, monseigneur; I am the soldier. The chief and the soldier are two different men."

"I know it, we have each a different duty."

"No, monseigneur, you and I have the same duty; that is to save you."

L'Imânus turned toward his comrades.

"Comrades, the enemy must be held in check and their pursuit retarded as long as possible. Listen! I have all my strength, I have not lost a drop of blood; as I am not wounded, I shall hold out longer than any of the rest of you. Go, all of you; leave me your guns, I shall make good use of them. I shall undertake to keep back the enemy a good half hour. How many loaded pistols are there?"

"Four."

"Put them on the floor."

They did as he desired.

"That is right; I will remain. They will find some one to speak to. Now, quick, go all of you."

Critical situations make short thanks. They hardly took time to press his hand.

"I shall see you soon," said the marquis.

"No, monseigneur, I hope not. Not soon; I am going to die."

One after another they all entered the narrow staircase, the wounded going first. As they were descending, the marquis took the pencil from his note-book in his pocket, and wrote some words on the stone which could no longer be turned, and which left the passage open.

"Come, monseigneur, there is no one left but you," said Halmalo.

And Halmalo started to go down.

The marquis followed him.

L'Imânus was left alone.

CHAPTER XIII

THE EXECUTIONER

The four pistols had been placed on the flags, for this hall had no floor; l'Imânus picked up two of them, one in each hand.

He went cautiously toward the entrance to the staircase, which was obstructed and screened by the chest.

The assailants evidently feared some surprise. One of those final explosions which are the catastrophe of the conqueror as well as the conquered. The last attack was as slow and cautious as the first had been impetuous.

They had not been able, they had not wished, perhaps, to break through the chest with violence; they had demolished the bottom by beating it in with their muskets, and had made holes in the cover with their bayonets, and through these holes they tried to see into the hall before venturing to enter it.

The light from the lanterns with which they illuminated the staircase came through these holes.

L'Imânus noticed an eye looking through one of these holes. He quickly aimed the barrel of one of his pistols at this hole and pulled the trigger. The shot went off, and l'Imânus was rejoiced to hear a horrible cry. The bullet had put out the eye and gone through the head of the soldier who was looking through the hole, and the man had just tumbled backwards down the stairs.

The assailants had broken through the lower part of the cover in two quite large places and had made two kinds of loopholes in it; l'Imânus took advantage of one of these holes to pass his arms through, and to fire his second pistol at random into the throng of besiegers. The ball probably rebounded, for several cries were heard, as if three or four had been killed or wounded, and a great tumult among the men followed in the stairway, as they lost their footing and fell back.

L'Imânus threw down the two pistols which he had discharged and took the two others; then, with the two pistols in his two hands he looked through the holes in the chest.

He ascertained the first effect produced.

The assailants had gone back down the stairs. The dying were writhing on the steps; on account of the winding he could only see three or four stairs.

L'Imânus waited.

"So much time gained," he thought.

Just then he saw a man on his belly, crawling up the stairs, and at the same moment the head of a soldier, lower down, appeared behind the central pillar of the spiral.

L'Imânus aimed at this head and fired. There was a cry, a soldier fell, and l'Imânus changed from his left hand to his right, the last loaded pistol remaining.

At the same time he felt a frightful pain, and it was his turn to shriek. A sword had entered his bowels. A hand, the hand of a man who was crawling, had just passed through the second loophole in the lower part of the chest, and this hand had plunged a sword into l'Imânus's belly.

The wound was frightful. His bowels were cut from one side to the other.

L'Imânus did not fall. He ground his teeth and said, —

"That is good!"

Then tottering and dragging himself along, he went back to the torch burning beside the iron door; he laid down his pistol and took the torch, and holding with his left hand his bowels, which were gushing out, he lowered the torch with his right, and lighted the sulphur match.

The fire caught, the match blazed. I'Imânus left the torch still burning on the floor, took his pistol again, and having fallen on the flags, but lifting himself up again, blew the match with the little breath he had left.

The flame ran along, passed under the iron door, and reached the castle bridge.

Then seeing his accursed success, more satisfied, perhaps, with his crime than with his valor, this man who had just been a hero and was now nothing but an assassin, and was about to die, smiled.

"They will remember me," he murmured; "in these little ones. I avenge our little one, the king in the Temple."

CHAPTER XIV

L'IMÂNUS ALSO ESCAPES

At this very instant a great noise was heard, the chest violently pushed, gave way, letting a man pass who rushed into the hall, sword in hand.

"It is I, Radoub, if you want to know it. I am tired of waiting; I am running a risk. No matter, I have just ripped open one. Now I will attack you all. How many are there of you?"

It was Radoub, indeed, and he was alone. After the slaughter just made by l'Imânus in the stairway, Gauvain, fearing a masked fougade, had recalled his men and consulted Cimourdain.

In this darkness, through which the torch, almost extinguished, faintly gleamed, Radoub, sword in hand, on the threshold, repeated his question.

"I am alone. How many are you?"

Hearing nothing, he went forward. One of those jets of light occasionally given forth by a dying fire, and which might be called sobs of light, flashed from the torch and lighted up the whole hall.

Radoub caught sight of one of those little mirrors fastened to the wall, went towards it, looked at his blood-stained face and hanging ear, and said,—

"What a hideous mutilation."

Then he turned round, astounded to see the hall empty.

"There is nobody here," he exclaimed. "The effective force is zero."

He noticed the turned stone, the opening in the staircase.

"Ah! I see. The key to the fields. Come on, men, all of you! Comrades, come on! they are all gone. They have vanished, melted away, slunk away, decamped. This jug of an old tower was cracked. Here is the hole through which they escaped, the rascals! how can one expect to get the better of Pitt and Cobourg with such trickery as this! the devil himself came to their aid! There is no one here at all!"

Just then a pistol was fired, a bullet grazed his elbow and was flattened against the wall.

"But there is some one here, after all. Who was so kind as to be so polite to me?"

"I was," said a voice.

Radoub looked around and made out something in the dim light which proved to be l'Imânus.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "I have one of them. The others have escaped, but you will not escape."

"Do you think so?" replied l'Imânus.

Radoub took a step and stopped.

"Hallo, you man on the floor, who are you?"

"I am one who is down and who laughs at those who are on their feet."

"What is that in your right hand?"

"A pistol."

"And in your left hand?"

"My bowels."

"I take you prisoner."

"I defy you to do so."

And l'Imânus, bending over the burning match, blew his last breath on the fire and died.

A few moments later, Gauvain and Cimourdain and all the others entered the hall. All saw the opening. They explored the recesses, they examined the stairway. It led into the ravine. They assured themselves that the enemy had escaped. They shook l'Imânus. He was dead. Gauvain, with a lantern in his hand, examined the stone, which had given escape to the besieged; he had heard of this turning stone, but he, too, considered the legend as a fable. As he was looking at the stone he noticed something written with a pencil; he held the lantern near and read this,—

"*Au revoir, monsieur le vicomte.* — LANTENAC."

Guéchamp had rejoined Gauvain. Pursuit was evidently useless. Their escape was complete; the whole country was in favor of the fugitive; the thicket, the ravine, the copse, the natives; they were, doubtless, already far away; there was no way to find them; and the whole forest of Fougères was an immense hiding-place.

What was to be done? All would have to be begun over again. Gauvain and Guéchamp expressed their disappointment and their conjectures.

Cimourdain listened in solemn silence.

"By the way, Guéchamp," said Gauvain, "where is the ladder?"

"Commander, it has not come."

"But still we saw a wagon escorted by mounted men."

Guéchamp replied,—

"It did not bring the ladder."

"What did it bring, then?"

"The guillotine," said Cimourdain.

CHAPTER XV

NEVER PUT A WATCH AND A KEY IN THE SAME POCKET

The Marquis de Lantenac was not so far away as they thought.

He was, nevertheless, perfectly safe, and beyond their reach. He had followed Halmalo.

The stairway down which he had gone with Halmalo, after the other fugitives, ended very near the ravine and the arches of the bridge, by a narrow arched passageway. This passageway terminated in a deep natural fissure in the ground, opening into the ravine on one side, and on the other into the forest.

This fissure, entirely concealed from sight, wound under impenetrable vegetation. It would be impossible to capture a man there. A fugitive, having once reached this fissure, had only to crawl away like an adder, and was safe from pursuit. The entrance to the secret passage from the stairway was so obstructed by brambles that those who had made this subterranean passage considered it useless to close it in any other way.

The marquis had nothing to do now but to go on. There was no need of troubling himself about a disguise. Since his arrival in Brittany, he had not taken off his peasant's costume, considering himself thus more of a great seigneur.

He merely took off his sword, the belt of which he unfastened and threw down.

When Halmalo and the marquis emerged from the passage into the fissure, the five others, Guinoiseau, Hoisnard, Branche-d'Or, Brin-d'Amour, Chatenay, and the Abbé Turmeau had disappeared.

"They were not long in getting away," said Halmalo.

"Follow their example," said the marquis.

"Does monseigneur wish me to leave him?"

"Certainly. I have already told you so. One can only escape alone. One can pass when two cannot. Together, we should attract attention. You would be the cause of their capturing me, and I should be the cause of their capturing you."

"Does monseigneur know the country?"

"Yes."

"Will monseigneur go to the rendezvous at the Pierre Gauvain?"

"To-morrow, at noon."

"I shall be there. We shall be there."

Halmalo interrupted himself.

"Ah! monseigneur, when I think that we were together on the open sea, that we were alone, that I wanted to kill you, that you were my seigneur, that you could have told me so, and that you did not tell me! what a man you are!"

The marquis went on to say,—

"England; there is no other resource. The English must be in France in two weeks."

"I shall have many accounts to give to monseigneur. I have fulfilled his commissions."

"We will talk about that to-morrow."

"Good-by till to-morrow, monseigneur."

"By the way, are you hungry?"

"Possibly, monseigneur. I was in such haste to reach you that I do not know that I have eaten anything to-day."

The marquis took a cake of chocolate from his pocket, broke it in two, gave one half to Halmalo, and began to eat the other.

"Monseigneur," said Halmalo, "to your right is the ravine, to your left the forest."

"Very good. Leave me. Go your way."

Halmalo obeyed. He plunged into the darkness. A sound of brambles crackling was heard, then nothing more. After a few seconds it would have been impossible to retrace his footsteps. This land of the Bocage, rough and inextricable, was the fugitive's aid. People did not disappear there; they vanished. It was this facility for swift passing out of sight which made our armies hesitate before this ever-retreating Vendée, and before its combatants—such formidable fugitives.

The marquis remained motionless. He was one of those men who tried to have no feelings; but he could not restrain the emotion of breathing free air after having breathed so much blood and carnage. To feel himself perfectly safe after having been completely lost; after seeing the tomb so near, to take possession of absolute security; to escape from death and come back to life, all this, even for a man like Lantenac, was a shock; and although he had passed through similar experience before, he could not restrain his imperturbable soul from violent emotion for some minutes. He acknowledged to himself that he was happy. He quickly subdued this feeling, which almost resembled joy.

He took out his watch and made it strike. What time was it?

To his great astonishment it was only ten o'clock.

When one has gone through one of these sudden changes of fortune in human life, when everything has been questioned, one is always amazed to find that minutes so full are no longer than others.

The warning cannon had been fired a little before sunset, and La Tourgue had been approached by the attacking column a half hour later, between seven and eight o'clock, just at nightfall. So, this colossal struggle, begun at eight o'clock, was over at ten. This whole *epopée* had lasted one hundred and twenty minutes. Sometimes the rapidity of lightning is mingled with catastrophes. Events are so surprisingly short.

If we stop to reflect, it is the contrary which is really astonishing; a resistance of two hours with so small a number against a number so large was extraordinary, and surely it was not short or soon over, this battle of nineteen against four thousand.

But it was time to be on his way. Halmalo must be far distant, and the marquis decided that there was no need of staying there any longer. He put his watch back into his vest, not into the same pocket, for he had just noticed that it was in contact with the key of the iron door, which l'Imânus had brought to him, and that the crystal of his watch was liable to be broken against this key, and he prepared to reach the forest in his turn. As he was about to turn to the left it seemed to him as if he saw a dim light.

He turned around, and through the thicket, clearly defined against a red background, and suddenly made visible in its least details, he saw a great blaze in the ravine. Only a few strides separated him from the ravine. He went towards it, then changed his mind, finding that it was no use to expose himself to this bright light; whatever it might be it did not concern him, after all; he took the direction which Halmalo had shown him, and went a few steps toward the forest.

Suddenly, deeply buried and hidden under the brambles as he was, he heard a terrible cry above his head; this cry seemed to come from the very edge of the plateau above the ravine. The marquis raised his eyes and stopped.

BOOK FIFTH

IN DAEMONE DEUS

CHAPTER I

FOUND BUT LOST

When Michelle Fléchard caught sight of the tower reddened by the setting sun she was more than a league away from it. Although she could hardly walk a step, she never hesitated to traverse this league. Women are weak, but mothers are strong. She had walked.

The sun had set; twilight came, then thick darkness; as she walked along she heard from the distance eight o'clock, then nine, ring out from a belfry which could not be seen. This belfry was probably that of Parigné. Now and then she stopped to listen to certain strange sounds like dull blows, which were possibly some of the mysterious noises of the night.

She went on straight ahead, breaking away the furze bushes and the sharp heath under her bleeding feet. She was guided by a feeble light, coming from the distant keep, making it stand out, and giving a mysterious radiance to this tower. This light became brighter as the sound of blows grew more distinct, then it went out.

The vast plateau where Michelle Fléchard was passing along was nothing but grass and heather, without a house or a tree; it rose imperceptibly, and as far as one could see, rested its long, straight, hard line against the dark, starry horizon. What kept her up in this ascent was the fact that the tower was continually before her eyes.

She saw it slowly increase in size.

The muffled reports and the pale gleams of light coming from the tower, as we have just said, were intermittent; they would cease, then begin again, offering a strange, cruel enigma to the wretched mother in distress.

Suddenly they ceased; both sound and light, all disappeared; there was a moment of perfect silence, a sort of melancholy peace ensued.

At this very moment, Michelle Fléchard reached the edge of the plateau. She saw at her feet a ravine, the bottom of which was lost in the thick darkness of the night; at some distance on the top of the plateau an entanglement of wheels, taluses, and embrasures, which was a battery of cannons, and in front of her, dimly illumined by the lighted matches of the battery, an enormous edifice which seemed built with shadows blacker than all the other shadows which surrounded her.

This edifice was composed of a bridge, the arches of which plunged into the ravine, and of a sort of castle rising above the bridge, and the castle and the bridge were joined to a lofty, dark, round object, which was the tower towards which the mother had walked from so great a distance.

The lights were seen to come and go through the windows of the tower, and from the noise proceeding from it one would have guessed that it was filled with a crowd of men, and the shadows of some of them were cast above, even on the platform.

Near the battery there was an encampment, the mounted sentries of which Michelle Fléchard had noticed; but in the darkness among the brambles, she had not been seen by them.

She had come to the edge of the plateau, so near the bridge that it seemed to her as if she could almost touch it with her hand. The depth of the ravine separated her from it. In the darkness she could make out the three stories of the castle on the bridge.

All measure of time had been blotted out of her mind, and she remained long absorbed and dumb before this yawning chasm and this shadowy building.

What was it? what was going on there? was it la Tourgue?

she was dizzy with a strange expectation, so that she could hardly tell whether she was just arriving or going away. She asked herself why she was there.

She looked, she listened.

Suddenly, she could no longer see anything. A cloud of smoke rose between her and what she was looking at. A keen smarting sensation made her shut her eyes. She had hardly closed her eyelids when they grew red and became luminous. She opened them again.

It was no longer night before her, it was light as day; but a kind of funereal daylight, the daylight which comes from a fire. The beginning of a conflagration was before her eyes.

The black smoke had grown scarlet and in it there was a great flame; this flame appeared, then disappeared, with the ferocious twisting peculiar to lightning and snakes.

This flame came out like a tongue from something resembling a mouth, and which was a window full of fire. This window, grated with iron bars already red hot, was one of those in the lower story of the castle built on the bridge. This window was the only feature of the whole building which could be seen. The smoke covered everything, even the plateau, and only the edge of the ravine, black against the red flame, could be made out.

Michelle Fléchard looked on in astonishment. Smoke is a cloud; a cloud is a dream; she no longer knew what she saw. Ought she to go away? ought she to remain? she felt almost beyond reality.

A breath of wind passed by and broke through the curtain of smoke, and through the rent the tragic bastille, suddenly disclosed, rose visible in its entirety,—keep, bridge, châtelet; dazzling, terrible, magnificently gilded by the fire, illuminated by it from top to bottom. Michelle Fléchard, in the ominous distinctness of the fire, could see it all.

The lower story of the castle built on the bridge was burning.

Above it, the two other stories could be seen, still untouched, but as if borne in a basket of flames. From the edge of the plateau, where Michelle Fléchard was, the interior could be dimly seen through the rifts between the fire and the smoke. All the windows were open. Through the windows in the second story, which were very large, Michelle Fléchard could see, against the walls, the bookcases, which seemed to her to be filled with books, and, in front of one of the windows, on the floor, in the dim light, a little confused group; something which looked indistinct and huddled together, like a nest or a brood, and which looked as if it moved now and then.

She looked at it.

What was this little group of shadows?

Occasionally, it came into her mind that it resembled living forms; she was feverish, she had eaten nothing since morning, she had walked without resting, she was worn out, she felt as though she were in a sort of hallucination which she instinctively mistrusted; still, her eyes becoming more and more fixed, could not leave that dark heap of objects, probably inanimate, and apparently motionless, lying there on the floor of that hall above the fire.

Suddenly, the fire, as if it had a will power, sent forth from below, one of its jets, toward the great dead ivy covering the same front at which Michelle Fléchard was looking. It seemed as if the flame had just discovered this network of dry branches; a spark seized it eagerly, and began to mount along the shoots with the frightful swiftness of a train of powder. In a twinkling, the flame reached the second story. Then, from above, it lighted up the interior of the first. A sudden blaze brought into relief three little beings fast asleep.

It was a charming little heap,—arms and legs intertwined, eyelids closed, a smile on their fair faces.

The mother recognized her children.

She uttered a frightful cry.

This cry of inexpressible anguish is only given to mothers. Nothing is more fierce, and nothing more touching. When a woman utters it, one would think it was a she-wolf; when a she-wolf gives it, it sounds like a woman.

This cry of Michelle Fléchard's was a howl. Hecuba bayed, says Homer.

It was this cry which the Marquis de Lantenac had just heard.

We have seen that he stopped.

The marquis was between the outlet of the passage through which Halmalo had helped him to escape and the ravine. Through the brambles intertwined above him, he saw the bridge in flames, la Tourgue red from the reflection, and, through the opening between two branches, he saw above his head, on the other side, on the edge of the platform, opposite the burning castle and in the full light of the fire, haggard, pitiful figure, a woman bending over the ravine.

This figure was no longer Michelle Fléchard; it was Medusa. The wretched are terrible. The peasant woman was transformed into one of the Eumenides. This country woman, vulgar, ignorant, unreasoning, had suddenly assumed the epic proportions of despair. Great sorrows have a gigantic power of enlarging the soul; this mother represented maternity; everything which sums up humanity is superhuman; she rose then, on the edge of this ravine, before this conflagration, before this crime, like a power from the grave; her cry was like that of a wild beast, and her gestures like those of a goddess; her face, from which proceeded imprecations, seemed like a masque of flame. Nothing could be more sovereign than the lightning of her eyes bathed in tears; her eyes flashed lightning on the fire.

The marquis listened. This fell on his ear; he heard something strangely inarticulate and heartrending, more like sobs than words.

"Ah! my God! my children! those are my children! help! fire! fire! fire! but you are bandits! is there no one there? but my children will be burned! Ah! how terrible! Georgette! my children! Gros-Alain, René-Jean! but what does it mean? who put my children there? they are asleep. I am mad! it is impossible! Help!"

Meanwhile there was a great confusion in la Tourgue and on the plateau. The whole camp ran round the fire, which had just burst out. The besiegers, after being concerned with the firing, were now concerned with the fire. Gauvain, Cimourdain, Guéchamp, gave orders. What was to be done? there were but a few buckets of water to be drawn from the shallow brook in the ravine. Their distress increased. The whole edge of the plateau was covered with frightened faces looking on.

It was a frightful sight.

They looked on, and could do nothing.

The flames, by means of the ivy which had taken fire, had reached the upper story. There it had found the granary full of straw and seized upon it. The whole granary was now burning.

The flames danced; the joyfulness of flames is a doleful thing. It seemed as if some malicious breath were fanning the fire in this funereal pile. It might have been thought that the grim l'Imânus was wholly there, changed to a whirlwind of sparks, living in the murderous life of the conflagration, and as if this monster of a soul had turned to fire.

The story where the library was had not yet been reached, the height of its ceiling, and the thickness of its walls retarded the time when it would take fire, but the fatal moment was drawing near; the fire in the first story licked it, and the flames in the third story caressed it. The awful kiss of death touched it. Below, a cellar of lava, above, an arch of embers; if a hole should break through the ceiling, the children would be buried in the live coals. René-Jean, Gros-Alain, and Georgette were not yet awake, they were sleeping the deep, quiet sleep of childhood; and through the folds of flame and smoke, which alternately covered and disclosed the windows, they could be seen in this grotto of fire, behind this meteoric blaze, peaceful, graceful, motionless, like three confiding child-Jesuses, asleep in a hell; and a tiger would have wept to see these roses in this furnace and these cradles in this tomb.

Meanwhile, the mother was wringing her hands.

"Fire! fire! I say. Are they all deaf that they do not come? They are burning my children! Come, you men over yonder. I have walked days and days, and this is how I find them. Fire! help! the angels! Indeed they are angels! What have those innocent little creatures done? the men shot me, and now they are burning them! Who does such things? Help! save my children! Don't you hear me? One would take pity on a dog! My children! they are asleep! Ah! Georgette! I see her dear little stomach! René-Jean! Gros-Alain! Those are their names. You see that I am their mother. It is abominable that such a thing as this should happen. I have walked days and nights, as I told a woman this morning. Help! help! fire! You are monsters! It is horrible! the oldest is not five years old, the little one less than two. I see their little bare legs. They are asleep, good, holy Virgin! the hand of Heaven gave them to me, and the hand of hell is taking them from me. And I have walked so far! My children that I fed from my breast! And I thought I was unfortunate not to find them! Have pity on me! I want my children, I must have my children! And yet they are in the fire! See how my poor feet are all covered with blood. Help! It is not possible that there are men on the earth who would leave these poor little ones to die like this! Help! murder! The like of this was never seen before. Ah, you brigands! What is this frightful house? You stole them away from me to kill them! Jesus have pity! I want my children. Oh, I do not know what I can do! I cannot let them die! help! help! help! Oh, if they should die like this I should hate God!"

During the mother's awful supplication, voices were heard on the plateau and in the ravine.

"A ladder!"

"There is no ladder!"

"Water!"

"There is no water!"

"Up there in the tower, in the second story, there is a door."

"It is of iron."

"Burst it open!"

"It cannot be done!"

And the mother redoubled her desperate appeals,—

"Fire! help! Hurry! Oh, kill me! My children, my children! Ah! the horrible fire! Take them out of it, or throw me in, too!"

In the intervals between her cries was heard the calm crackling of the fire.

The marquis felt in his pocket and touched the key to the iron door. Then bending down under the archway through which he had made his escape, he went back into the passage from which he had just come out.

CHAPTER II

FROM THE STONE DOOR TO THE IRON DOOR

A WHOLE army in despair over an impossible rescue; four thousand men unable to help three children; such was the situation.

They had no ladder; the ladder sent from Javené had not arrived; the conflagration increased like the opening of a crater; to try to put it out with water from the brook in the ravine, which was almost dry, was ridiculous; it would be like throwing a glass of water on a volcano.

Cimourdain, Guéchamp, and Radoub had gone down into the ravine; Gauvain had gone back into the hall in the second story of La Tourgue, where were the turning stone, the secret way of escape, and the iron door of the library. It was there that l'Imânus had lighted the sulphur match; it was there that the fire had started.

Gauvain had taken twenty sappers with him. The only resource was to break open the iron door. It was fatally closed.

They began by using axes. The axes broke. A sapper said,—

"Steel is like glass against this iron."

The door was made of double sheets of wrought iron, bolted together, each three fingers in thickness.

They took iron bars and tried to pry open the door. The iron bars broke.

"Like matches," said the sapper.

Gauvain, dubious, murmured,—

"Nothing but a cannon-ball could open this door. We should have to bring a cannon up here."

"But how?" said the sapper.

There was a moment of despair. All these powerless arms hung motionless. Dumb, conquered, dismayed, these men were considering the horrible immovable door. A red reflection passed underneath. The fire was increasing behind it.

The frightful corpse of l'Imânus was there, ominously victorious.

A few minutes more, perhaps, and everything would give way.

What was to be done? there was no more hope.

Gauvain in exasperation cried, with his eye fixed on the turning stone in the wall and on the exit left open by the fugitives,—

"And yet here is where the Marquis de Lantenac made his escape!"

"And where he returns," said a voice.

And a white head appeared in the stone framework of the secret door.

It was the marquis.

Gauvain had not seen him so near for many years. He drew back.

All who were there remained in the same position, petrified.

The marquis had a large key in his hand. He cast a haughty look at the sappers in front of him, walked to the iron door, bent under the arch and put the key into the keyhole. The lock grated, the door opened, a gulf of flame met their eyes, the marquis entered it.

He went into it with a firm step, holding his head high.

All followed him with their eyes, shuddering.

The marquis had taken but a few steps in the burning hall, when the floor, undermined by the fire and shaken by his footsteps, fell in behind him, leaving a precipice between him and the door. The marquis never turned his head but went straight on. He disappeared in the smoke.

Nothing more was seen of him.

Had he been able to go farther? Had a new pit of fire opened under him? Had he only succeeded in being lost himself? They could not tell. They had nothing before them but a wall of smoke and flame. The marquis was beyond it, dead or alive.

CHAPTER III

THE CHILDREN AWAKEN

In the meantime, the children had at last opened their eyes.

The fire, which had not yet reached the library, threw a rosy glow on the ceiling. The children were not familiar with this kind of a dawn. They looked at it. Georgette contemplated it.

All the splendors of the fire were displayed there; the black hydra and the scarlet dragon appeared in the shapeless smoke, superbly dark and vermilion. Long tongues of flame blew off and lighted up the darkness, and it seemed like a battle of comets running one after another.

A fire is prodigal; the live coals are full of jewels, which are scattered to the winds; it is not without reason that charcoal is identical with the diamond.

In the wall of the third story, cracks opened, through which the embers poured down into the ravine cascades of precious stones; the heaps of straw and oats burning in the granary began to stream through the windows in avalanches of gold dust, the oats became amethysts, and the straws, carbuncles.

"Pretty," said Georgette.

All three had risen.

"Ah!" cried the mother; "they are waking up!"

René-Jean got up, then Gros-Alain got up, then Georgette got up.

René-Jean stretched out his arms, went towards the window and said,—

"I'm warm."

"I warm," repeated Georgette.

The mother called to them.

"My children : René! Alain! Georgette!"

The children looked around them. They tried to find out what it all meant. When men are terrified, children are only curious. It is difficult to frighten those who are easily astonished; ignorance causes fearlessness. Children have so little claim on hell, that if they should see it they would admire it.

The mother repeated,—

"René! Alain! Georgette!"

René-Jean turned his head; this voice attracted his attention; children have short memories, but their power of recollection is quick; to them the past is but yesterday. René-Jean saw his mother, found it quite natural, and, surrounded as he was by strange objects, feeling a vague need of support, he cried,—

"Mamma!"

"Mamma!" said Gros-Alain.

"Mamma!" said Georgette.

And she held out her little arms.

And the mother shrieked, "My children!"

All three came to the window; fortunately, the fire was not on that side.

"I am too warm," said René-Jean.

He added,—

"It burns."

And he looked at his mother.

"Come, mamma."

"Tum, mamma," repeated Georgette.

The mother with disordered hair, all scratched, and bleeding, had let herself roll through the brambles into the ravine. Cimourdain was there with Guéchamp, as helpless below as Gauvain was above. The soldiers, in despair at being of no use, swarmed around them. The heat was intolerable, but no one felt it. They considered the escarpment of the bridge, the height of the arches, the elevation of the stories, the inaccessible windows, and the necessity for prompt action. Three stories to climb; no means of accomplishing it.

Radoub, wounded, with a sword-cut in his shoulder, and one ear torn off, dripping with sweat and blood, came running up; he saw Michelle Fléchard.

"Hold on," said he, "you are the woman who was shot! so you have come back to life again?"

"My children," said the mother.

"You are right," replied Radoub; "we have no time to spend with ghosts."

He began to scale the bridge, a futile attempt; he buried his nails in the stone, he climbed up a little way; but the courses were smooth, not a break, not a relief, the wall was as correctly pointed as though it had been new, and Radoub fell back.

The dreadful fire continued; in the window frame, now all red, could be seen the three fair heads. Then Radoub shook his fist towards heaven, as if looking for some one, and said,—

"Is this thy dealing, good God?"

The mother on her knees clasped the piers of the bridge, crying, "Mercy!"

Heavy cracking was heard above the snapping of the fire. The panes of glass in the bookcases in the library cracked, and fell with a crash. It was evident that the woodwork was yielding. No human power could avail. A moment more and all would be destroyed. They were waiting for the fatal moment. The little voices were heard calling: "Mamma! Mamma!" The people were in a paroxysm of despair. Suddenly, at the window next the one where the children were, against the crimson background of the flames, appeared a tall form.

Every head was raised, every eye became fixed. A man was up there, a man was in the library, a man was in the furnace. This form stood out black against the flames, but it had white hair. They recognized the Marquis de Lantenac.

He disappeared, then he appeared again.

The terrible old man rose before the window with an enormous ladder. It was the escape ladder which had been placed in the library, and which he had gone to look for, and had dragged from the side of the wall to the window. He seized it by one end, and with the masterly agility of an athlete he slid it out of the window, supporting it on a jutting of the wall, and let it down to the bottom of the ravine. Radoub, below, wild with delight, held out his hands, took the ladder, held it firmly in his arms, and cried: "Long live the Republic!"

The marquis replied: "Long live the King!"

And Radoub growled: "You may cry anything you like, and say all the foolish things you will, you are from the good God, all the same."

The ladder was fixed in place; communication was established between the burning hall and the ground; twenty men ran forward, with Radoub at their head, and in a twinkling they placed themselves in a row on the rounds, like masons carrying stones. It made it a living ladder over the ladder of wood. Radoub at the top of the ladder touched the window. He was facing the fire.

The little army, scattered in the heather and on the slopes, pressed forward, distracted by every emotion at once, rushed over the plateau into the ravine, on the platform of the tower.

The marquis disappeared again, then re-appeared bringing one of the children.

There was a tremendous clapping of hands.

It was the first that the marquis had happened to seize.

It was Gros-Alain.

Gros-Alain cried: "I'm afraid."

The marquis gave Gros-Alain to Radoub, who passed him down behind to a soldier, who passed him to another, and, while Gros-Alain, very much frightened and crying, was being taken thus from arm to arm to the bottom of the ladder, the marquis, after a moment's absence came back to the window with René-Jean struggling and crying. The little fellow struck Radoub just as the marquis passed him on to the sergeant.

The marquis went back into the hall full of flames. Georgette was left alone. He went to her. She smiled. This man of stone felt something moist come into his eyes. He asked: "What is your name?"

"'Orgette," she said.

He took her in his arms; she was still smiling, and just as he gave her to Radoub this conscience so lofty and yet so dark was dazzled by her innocence, and the old man gave the child a kiss.

"It is the little girl!" said the soldiers; and Georgette in her turn passed down from hand to hand to the ground, amidst cries of adoration.

They clapped their hands, they stamped their feet; the old grenadiers sobbed, and she smiled at them. The mother was at the foot of the ladder, panting for breath, beside herself, intoxicated with all this surprise, suddenly exalted from hell into paradise; excess of joy bruises the heart in its way. She held out her arms, she received first Gros-Alain, then René-Jean, then Georgette, she covered them with kisses, then she burst out laughing and fell down in a faint.

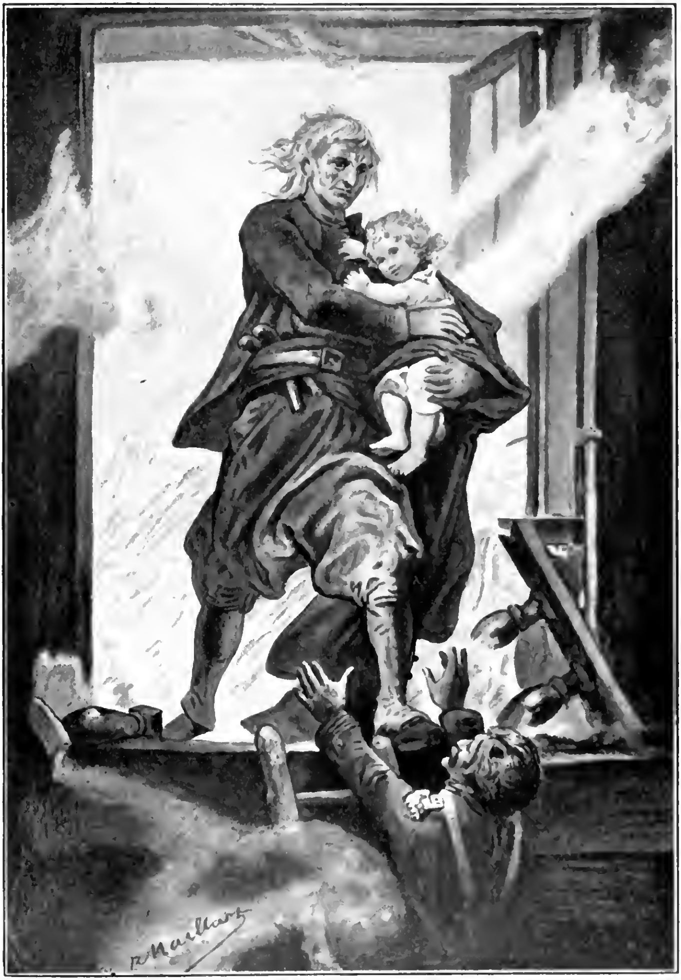
A great cry arose: "All are saved!"

Indeed, all were saved, except the old man.

But no one gave him a thought; perhaps, he did not even think of himself.

He remained at the edge of the window for some moments, in thought, as if he wished to give the gulf of flame time to decide upon its action. Then, slowly, deliberately, proudly, he stepped out through the window, and, without turning round, straight, erect, leaning back against the rounds, with the fire behind him, facing the precipice, he began to descend the ladder in silence, with the majesty of a phantom.

Those who were on the ladder hastened down; all present shuddered. This man coming from above filled them all with a holy horror, as though he had been a vision. But he plunged solemnly into the darkness before him; while they drew back, he was approaching them; the marble pallor of his face was without a change; his ghostly eyes had not a gleam of light; at each step that he took towards these men, whose frightened eyes were fixed on him in the darkness, he seemed taller, the



HE TOOK HER IN HIS ARMS.

ladder trembled and creaked under his solemn step, and he seemed like the statue of a commander going down into the tomb.

When the marquis was at the bottom, when he had reached the last round and had placed his foot on the ground, a hand was laid on his collar. He turned around.

"I arrest you," said Cimourdain.

"I sanction it," said Lantenac.

BOOK SIXTH

THE BATTLE AFTER THE VICTORY

CHAPTER I

LANTENAC TAKEN

THE marquis had really descended into the tomb.

They led him away.

The crypt dungeon in the ground floor of la Tourgue was immediately re-opened under Cimourdain's stern eye; a lamp, a jug of water, some hard tack, were placed in it, a bundle of straw was thrown into it, and, in less than a quarter of an hour after the moment when the priest's hand had seized the marquis, the door of the dungeon was closed on Lantenac.

Having done this, Cimourdain went to find Gauvain; just then the distant church of Parigné sounded eleven o'clock in the evening; Cimourdain said to Gauvain,—

"I am going to convoke a court martial; you will not take part in it. You are a Gauvain, and Lantenac is a Gauvain. You are too nearly related to be a judge; and I blame Égalite for having judged Capet. The court martial will be composed of three judges: an officer, Captain Guéchamp; a sub-officer, Sergeant Radoub; and myself, who will preside. Nothing of all this will concern you. We shall conform to the decree of the Convention; we shall limit ourselves to the establishing the identity of the former Marquis de Lantenac. To-morrow, the court-martial; the day after, the guillotine. La Vendée is dead.

Gauvain made no answer, and Cimourdain, preoccupied with the final duty which remained for him to perform, left him. Cimourdain had hours to appoint and places to select. Like Lequinio at Granville, like Talien at Bordeaux, like Châlier at Lyons, and like Saint-Just at Strasbourg, he was in the habit of being present in person at executions, as it was considered a good example; the judge came to see the executioner do his work; a custom borrowed by the terror of '93 from the parliaments of France and the Inquisition of Spain.

Gauvain, too, was preoccupied.

A cold wind was blowing in the forest. Gauvain, leaving Guéchamp to give the necessary orders, went to his tent in the meadow on the border of the wood, at the foot of la Tourgue, and got his hooded cloak and wrapped himself up in it. This cloak was edged with the simple braid which, according to the Republican fashion for sober ornaments, designated the commander-in-chief. He began to walk about in this bloody meadow, where the assault had begun. He was alone there. The fire was still burning, although of no consequence now; Radoub was with the children and their mother, almost as maternal as she; the châtelet on the bridge was nearly burned to the ground, the sappers were attending to the fire, men were digging ditches, burying the dead, caring for the wounded; the retirade had been destroyed, the corpses removed from the rooms and stairways, the place made clean after the carnage, the terrible filth of victory swept away, the soldiers, with military quickness, did what might be called the house-work after the battle. Gauvain saw nothing of all this.

So deep in thought was he that he scarcely glanced at the post near the breach, doubled by Cimourdain's orders.

He could see his breach in the darkness about two hundred feet from the corner of the meadow where he had, as it were, taken refuge. He saw the black opening. It was there that the attack had begun, three hours before; it was through this that Gauvain had entered the tower; there on the ground-floor was where the retirade had been; the door leading to the dungeon where the marquis was confined was on this ground floor. The men posted at the breach guarded the dungeon.

While he was straining his eyes to make out this breach, these words, like a knell, came back confusedly to his ear: "To-morrow, the court martial; the day after, the guillotine."

The fire, which had been isolated, and on which the sappers threw all the water they could obtain, did not die out without a struggle, and occasional flames still leaped forth; now and then the crackling of the ceilings and the crash of one story falling on another was heard; then eddies of sparks whirled through the air as though a torch had been shaken, a bright light illuminated the farthest horizon, and the shadow of la Tourgue, grown suddenly gigantic, stretched out as far as the forest.

Gauvain walked slowly back and forth in this shadow, in front of the breach of assault. Occasionally, he crossed his hands behind his head, covered with the hood of his war-cloak. He was lost in thought.

CHAPTER II

FREEDOM OR DEATH—WHICH?

His thoughts were fathomless.

An unexpected change of opinion had just taken place in him.

The Marquis de Lantenac had been transfigured.

Gauvain had been a witness of this transfiguration.

He would never have believed that such things could result from any complication of events. Never, even in his dreams, had he imagined that anything of the kind could happen.

The unforeseen, that strange, haughty power which plays with man, had seized Gauvain and held him fast.

Gauvain had before him an impossibility become a reality, visible, palpable, inevitable, inexorable.

What did he, Gauvain, think of this?

It was not a matter to be evaded; it must be decided.

A question was asked him; he could not escape from it.

Asked by whom?

By events.

And not alone by events.

For when events which are changeable, ask us a question, justice, which is immutable, calls upon us to reply.

Behind the cloud, which casts a shadow over us, there is a star, giving us a ray of light.

We can no more escape from the light than from the shadow.

Gauvain went through an examination.

He was in the presence of some one.

Before a formidable judge.

His own conscience.

Gauvain felt everything wavering within him. His firmest resolutions, his most carefully made promises, his most irrevocable decisions, everything was swaying in the depths of his will.

There are earthquakes in the soul.

The more he reflected on what he had just seen, the more he was disturbed.

Gauvain, a Republican, believed himself to be, and really was just.

A superior justice had just been revealed to him.

Above Revolutionary justice there is human justice.

What was taking place was not to be evaded; the fact was solemn; Gauvain was a part of this fact; he was in it, and could not get out of it; and, although Cimourdain had said to him, "This no longer concerns you," he felt something as a tree does when it is pulled up by the roots.

Every man has his base; if this base is shaken it causes a profound disturbance; Gauvain felt this disturbance.

He pressed his head between his hands, as if to press out the truth; to get at the exact bearings of such a situation was not an easy matter, nothing could be more difficult; he had formidable figures before him, of which he must get the sum total; to do the addition of destiny, how bewildering! he undertook it; he tried to give an account of himself; he endeavored to collect his ideas, to discipline the struggling forces which he felt within him, and to recapitulate the facts.

He laid them out before his mind.

Who has never taken a similar account of himself, and questioned himself, in extreme circumstances, on the course to pursue, whether to advance or retreat?

Gauvain had just seen a miraculous spectacle.

A celestial battle had taken place at the same time as the terrestrial.

The battle of good against evil.

A terrific soul had just been vanquished.

Gauvain had just seen a miracle performed in the case of a man full of all that is bad:—violence, error, blindness, unhealthy obstinacy, pride, selfishness.

The victory of humanity over man.

Humanity had conquered the inhuman.

And by what means? in what way? how had it overcome the giant of anger and hatred? What arms had it used? what engine of war? The cradle.

Gauvain had just been dazzled. In the midst of civil war, in the midst of the conflagration of all enmity and all vengeance, in the darkest and maddest moment of the tumult; just as the crime was giving forth all its fire and hatred, all its blackness; at that instant in conflict when everything becomes a projectile, when the struggle is so shrouded in darkness, that justice, honesty, and truth are lost sight of; —suddenly the Unknown, the mysterious monitor of souls, poured forth resplendently, above all human light and darkness, the great light eternal.

Above the dismal encounter, between the false and the relative, out of the depths, the face of truth had suddenly appeared.

All at once, the strength of the weak had intervened.

Three poor beings, almost newborn, unconscious, deserted, orphaned, alone, lisping, smiling, were seen face to face with civil war, retaliation, the frightful logic of reprisals, murder, carnage, fratricide, rage, malice, all the Gorgons, and yet triumphant. He had seen the failure and defeat of an infamous fire, set to commit a crime; he had seen atrocious intentions baffled and frustrated; he had seen the ancient feudal ferocity, the old inexorable disdain, the pretended experience of the necessities of war, the reason of State, all the arrogant determinations of a cruel old age, vanish before the blue eyes of those who had scarcely begun to live; and it was very natural, for one who has not yet lived can have done no harm; it was justice, it was truth, it was purity, and the mighty angels of heaven are in little children.

A useful spectacle; advice; a lesson; the frantic participants in a merciless war had suddenly seen, in the face of all the crimes, of all the outrages, of all the fanaticism, of the murderer, of vengeance stirring the funeral pile, of death coming with a torch in his hand, above the enormous legion of sins, arise this all-conquering power, innocence.

And innocence had been victorious.

And one could say: "No, civil war does not exist; barbarity does not exist; hatred does not exist; crime does not exist; darkness does not exist: this aurora, childhood, is sufficient to scatter all these spectres.

Never, in any struggle, had Satan been more visible, nor God.

This battle had had a human conscience for its arena.

The conscience of Lantenac.

Now, it was beginning over again, more furious and still more decisive, perhaps in another conscience.

The conscience of Gauvain.

What a battle-field is man!

We are slaves to these gods, to these monsters, to these giants,—our thoughts.

Often, these terrible combatants trample our souls under foot.

Gauvain meditated.

The Marquis de Lantenac, surrounded, blockaded, condemned, outlawed; held fast, like the wild beast in the circus, like a snail in pincers; shut up in his home, now become his prison; enclosed on all sides by a wall of iron and of fire,—had succeeded in getting away; he had performed a miracle of escape. He had made that master-stroke, the most difficult of all in such a war, flight. He had taken possession of the forest, to intrench himself there; of the country, to fight in it; of the darkness, to disappear in it. He had again become the terrible one, coming and going; the sinister wanderer; the captain of the invisible; the chief of underground men; the master of the woods. Gauvain had the victory; Lantenac had liberty. Lantenac, henceforth, had security, a boundless course before him, an inexhaustible choice of places of refuge. He was intangible, lost to sight, unapproachable. The lion had been taken in a snare, and had escaped from it.

Well, he had returned to it.

The Marquis de Lantenac had voluntarily, spontaneously, of his own free will, left the forest, darkness, security, liberty, to return undauntedly into the most frightful danger. Once, Gauvain had seen him, when he rushed into the fire at the risk of being swallowed up by it; a second time, when he came down the ladder to give himself up to his enemies—that ladder, a means of safety to others, for him a means of destruction.

And why had he done this?

To save three children.

And now, what was going to be done with him?

He would be guillotined.

Were these three children his own? No. Did they belong to his family? No. To his rank? No. For three poor little ones, foundlings, unknown, in rags, barefooted, this nobleman, this prince, this old man, saved, delivered, a conqueror, —for escape is a triumph,—had risked everything, compromised everything, put all things into doubt; and, while he was delivering the children, he proudly surrendered his life, —his life till then so terrible, now so majestic, he offered it up.

And what were they going to do with it?

Accept it.

The Marquis de Lantenac had the choice between the life of others and his own; in this superb option, he had chosen death.

And they were going to grant it to him.

They were going to kill him.

What a reward for heroism!

To respond to an act of generosity with an act of cruelty!

To give this stab to the Revolution!

What a belittling of the Republic!

While a man of prejudices and slavish ideas, suddenly transformed, was returning to humanity, they, the men of freedom and enfranchisement, clung to civil war, to the routine of blood, to fratricide.

And the lofty divine law of pardon, of abnegation, of redemption, of sacrifice, existed for the combatants of error, and did not exist for the soldiers of truth!

What! not engage in this struggle of magnanimity! Be resigned to this defeat; the stronger to become the weaker, the victors to become murderers, and to have it said that on the side of the monarchy there were those who saved children, and on the side of the Republic those who killed old men!

He would see this great soldier, this powerful octogenarian, this unarmed warrior, stolen rather than taken, captured while doing a good deed, bound with his own permission, with the sweat of a splendid self-sacrifice still on his brow, mount the steps of the scaffold as one mounts the degrees of an apotheosis! And they would put this head, around which would soar in supplication the three souls of the little angels he had saved, under the chopping knife. And before this punishment so infamous for the executioners, a smile would be seen on the face of this man, and on the face of the Republic, a blush!

And this would take place in the presence of Gauvain, the chief!

And, although able to prevent it, he would refrain from doing so! And he could content himself with this haughty dismissal,—"this no longer concerns you!" And he was not to perceive that in a deed so monstrous, between the one who accomplishes it and the one who allows it to be done; the one who allows it to be done is the worst, because he is a coward!

But the death of this man, had he not promised it? he, Gauvain, the merciful man, had he not declared that Lantenac was an exception, and that he would give Lantenac up to Cimourdain?

This head, it was his debt. Well, he was paying. That was all.

But was it the same life?

Thus far, Gauvain had only seen in Lantenac the barbarous warrior, the fanatic supporter of royalty and feudalism, the slaughterer of prisoners, the assassin set loose by war, the deadly man. He had not feared this man; this proscriber, he would proscribe him; this implacable one would find him implacable. Nothing could be more simple, the way was marked out, and dismally easy to follow, everything had been foreseen, they would kill him who killed others, they were in the straight line of horror. This line had been unexpectedly broken, an unforeseen turning revealed a new horizon, a metamorphosis had taken place. An unknown Lantenac entered on the scene. A hero came forth from the monster; more than a hero, —a man. More than a soul, —a heart. It was no longer a murderer that Gauvain had before him, but a saviour. Gauvain was overcome by a flood of celestial light. Lantenac had just struck him with a thunderbolt of kindness.

And Lantenac transformed would not transform Gauvain! What! this blow of light would have no counterblow. The man of the past would go ahead, and the man of the future remain behind! The man of cruelty and superstition would spread sudden wings, and would soar above and see crawling under him, in the mire and in the darkness, the man of ideals! Gauvain would remain in the old cruel rut, while Lantenac would rise.

Still another thing.

The family!

This blood that he was going to shed,—for to allow it to be shed was the same as shedding it himself. Was it not his own blood, Gauvain's? his grandfather was dead, but his great-uncle was alive; and this great-uncle was the Marquis de Lantenac. Would not the brother who was in the grave rise to prevent the other from entering it? would he not order his grandson henceforth to respect that crown of white hair, sister to his own halo? had there not passed between Gauvain and Lantenac the indignant glance of a spectre?

Was the aim of the Revolution then to pervert man's nature? had it been brought about to destroy the family, to stifle humanity? far from it. It was to affirm these supreme realities, and not to deny them that '89 had risen. Overthrowing the bastilles was delivering humanity; abolishing feudalism was founding the family. The author being the starting point of authority, and authority being included in the author, there can be no other authority than fraternity; hence the legitimacy of the queen bee, who creates her people and, being mother, is queen; hence the absurdity of the man king who, as he is not the father, cannot be the master; hence the suppression; hence the Republic. What is all this? it is the family, it is humanity, it is the Revolution. The Revolution is the accession of the people, and at bottom the people is man.

The question was whether, when Lantenac had just returned to humanity, Gauvain would return to the family.

The question was whether the uncle and the nephew would be united in the superior light, or whether the nephew would respond to the uncle's progress by taking a backward step.

The question, in this pathetic debate between Gauvain and his conscience stood thus, and seemed to solve itself: to save Lantenac.

Yes, but France?

Here the face of the perplexing problem suddenly changed.

What! France at bay! France betrayed, opened, dismantled! She was without a moat, Germany had crossed the Rhine; she was without a wall, Italy had passed the Alps, and Spain, the Pyrenees. She had the great gulf, the ocean, left. She had that in her favor. She could depend on that, and, a giantess, supported by the mighty sea, could fight against the whole earth. An impregnable situation after all.

Well, no, this situation would fail her. This ocean was no longer hers. In this ocean there was England. England, it is true, did not know how to cross it. Well, a man was going to throw a bridge across to her, a man was going to hold out his hand to her, a man was going to say to Pitt, to Craig, to Cornwallis, to Dundas, to the Pirates: "Come!" A man was going to cry: "England, take France!"

And this man was the Marquis de Lantenac!

They held this man. After three months of chasing, of pursuit, of desperation, they had finally captured him. The hand of the Revolution had just been laid on the wretch; the clenched hand of '93 had taken the royalist murderer by the collar; through one of the effects of that mysterious premeditation from on high which mingles with human affairs, this parricide was now awaiting punishment in his own family-dungeon; the feudal man was in the feudal oubliette; the stones of his own castle rose against him and closed over him, and he who wished to betray his own country was betrayed by his own house.

God had evidently planned all this; the hour of justice had come, the Revolution had taken this public enemy prisoner; he could no longer wage war, he could no longer fight, he could no longer do any harm; in this Vendée, where there were so many arms, he was the only man with brains; to put an end to him was to put an end to the civil war; they had possession of him; tragic but fortunate catastrophe; after so much massacre and carnage, he was there, the man who had killed others, and whose turn it was to die.

And if he should find some one to save him!

Cimourdain, that is to say '93, held Lantenac, that is to say the monarchy, and if he should find some one to snatch its prey from this claw of bronze! Lantenac, the man in whom concentrated that sheaf of scourges called the past, the Marquis de Lantenac was in the tomb, the heavy, eternal door was closed on him, and if some one should come from outside to slide the bolt! this social malefactor was dead, and with him the revolt, the fratricidal contest, the beastly war, and if some one should bring him back to life!

Oh! how this death's head would laugh!

How this spectre would say, "Very good, here I am alive; idiots!"

How he would set himself to his hideous work again! How Lantenac would plunge again, implacable and full of delight, into the gulf of hatred and of war! The very next day how the people would again see houses burning, prisoners massacred, the wounded finished, women shot!

And, after all, did not Gauvain exaggerate this deed which fascinated him so?

Three children were lost; Lantenac had saved them.

But who was the cause of their being lost?

Was it not Lantenac?

Who had put those cradles into the fire?

Was it not l'Imânus?

Who was l'Imânus?

The lieutenant of the marquis.

The general is the one responsible.

So the incendiary and the assassin was Lantenac.

What had he done that was so admirable?

He had not carried out his purpose—nothing more.

After having planned the crime he had retreated from it. It had seemed to him too horrible. The mother's cry had awakened in him those inmost depths of human pity, a sort of storehouse of universal life, which exists in all souls, even the most hardened. At this cry he had retraced his steps. From the night into which he had plunged, he had gone back towards the daylight. After having done the crime, he undid it. All his merit lay in this, that he had not been a monster at the very last.

And for so little give him back everything! give him back space, the fields, the flames, the air, daylight; give him back the forest, which he would use to protect his bandits; give him back liberty, which he would use for servitude, give him back life, which he would use for death!

As for trying to come to an understanding with him, as for any desire to treat with this proud soul, as for proposing to give him his liberty conditionally, as for asking him to consent, provided his life was saved, to abstain henceforth from all hostility and all revolt,—what a mistake such an offer would be, what an advantage they would give him, what scorn they would strike against, as he would buffet the question with his reply, as he would say: "Keep your shame for yourselves! Kill me!"

There was really nothing to be done with this man but to kill him or to set him free. There was no way of access to this man.

He was always ready to take flight or to sacrifice himself; he was his own eagle and his own precipice. A strange soul.

Kill him? What an anxiety! Set him free? What a responsibility!

If Lantenac should be saved, the war with la Vendée would have to be begun all over again, as with a hydra, as long as its head is not cut off. In a twinkling, and with the swiftness of a meteor, the flame, extinguished by the disappearance of this man, would blaze forth again. Lantenac would not rest until he had realized that execrable plan of placing, like the cover of a tomb, the monarchy over the Republic, and England over France. To save Lantenac was to sacrifice France; Lantenac's life meant the death of a multitude of innocent beings, men, women, and children, taken in the toils of domestic war; it meant the landing of the English, the retreat of the Revolution, towns plundered, the people slaughtered, Brittany bleeding, the prey given back to the lion's claws. And Gauvain, in the midst of all sorts of uncertain glimmerings and contradictory lights, saw dimly outlined in his thoughts this problem rising before him: setting the tiger at liberty.

And then the question came back again under its first aspect; the stone of Sisyphus, which is nothing but the quarrel of man with himself, fell down again: Was Lantenac this tiger?

Perhaps he had been, but was he any longer? Gauvain went through those winding mazes of the mind coiling about itself, which make thought resemble an adder. Really, even after examination, could he deny Lantenac's devotion, his stoic abnegation, his superb disinterestedness? What! In the presence of all the open mouths of civil war to testify to humanity! What! in the conflict of inferior truths to bring in truth superior! what! to prove that above royalties, above revolutions, above earthly questions, there is the immense emotion of the human soul; the protection due to the weak from the strong; safety due to those who are lost, from those who are safe; paternity due to all children, from all old men! To prove these magnificent things, and prove them by the gift of his life! What! to be a general, and renounce strategy, battle, revenge! What! to be a royalist, to take the scales, to place on one side the king of France, a monarchy of fifteen centuries, the re-establishing of old laws, the restoration of ancient society, and on the other, three little insignificant peasants, and to find the king, the throne, the sceptre, and the fifteen centuries of monarchy tip the beam, against this weight of three innocent children! What! all that go for nothing! What! one who had done that remain a tiger and deserve to be treated like a wild beast!

No! no! no! it was not a monster of a man who had just illuminated civil war with the light of a divine action! The sword-bearer had been metamorphosed into an angel of light. Infernal Satan had returned as the celestial Lucifer. Lantenac had been redeemed from all his barbarities by an act of sacrifice; in losing himself materially, he had saved himself morally; he had become innocent; he had signed his own pardon. Does not the right to pardon one's self exist? Henceforth, he would be worthy of worship.

Lantenac had just been extraordinary. It was now Gauvain's turn.

Gauvain was called upon to respond to him.

The struggling of good and evil passions at this moment were turning the world into chaos; Lantenac, ruling over this chaos, had just freed humanity from it; it was now for Gauvain to free the family from it.

What was he going to do?

Would Gauvain disappoint trust in God?

No. And he stammered in his inmost heart: "We must save Lantenac."

Well, that is good. Go on, help the English. Be a deserter. Pass over to the enemy. Save Lantenac and betray France.

And he shuddered.

Thy solution is no solution at all, oh dreamer! Gauvain saw in the darkness the ominous smile of the sphinx.

This situation was a sort of terrible meeting of roads, where struggling truths come to an end and confront each other, and where man's three highest ideas, humanity, the family, the fatherland, look each other steadily in the face.

Each of these voices in turn began to speak, and each in turn spoke the truth. How to choose? Each in turn seemed to find the union of wisdom and justice, and said: "Do this." Was this what he ought to do? YES. No. Reason said one thing, sentiment said another; the two counsels were contrary. Reasoning is only reason; sentiment is often conscience; one comes from man, the other from above.

That is why sentiment has less clearness and more power.

But what strength in stern reason!

Gauvain hesitated.

Fierce perplexities.

Two abysses opened in front of Gauvain. To destroy the marquis? or to save him? It would be necessary to plunge into one or the other.

Which of these two abysses was duty?

CHAPTER III

THE GENERAL'S CLOAK

It was indeed a question of duty.

Duty rose forbidding, before Cimourdain; terrible, before Gauvain.

Plain, before one; complex, varied, tortuous, before the other.

The hour of midnight struck, then one o'clock in the morning.

Without being aware of it, Gauvain had imperceptibly approached the entrance of the breach.

The fire now only threw a diffused reflection and was dying out.

The plateau, on the other side of the tower, was lighted with the reflection, and became visible occasionally, and then was eclipsed as the smoke covered the fire. This blaze, flaring up suddenly and then cut off by sudden darkness, robbed objects of their proportions, and gave the sentinels in the camp the appearance of ghosts. Gauvain, as he meditated, vaguely watched the flames and smoke come and go. This appearance and disappearance of light before his eyes was strangely analogous to the appearance and disappearance of truth in his mind.

Suddenly, between two clouds of smoke, a flame from the dying bed of coals vividly lighted up the top of the plateau and brought out the crimson form of a wagon. Gauvain looked at this wagon; it was surrounded by horsemen wearing military caps. It seemed to him that it was the wagon which Guéchamp's spyglass had brought into sight on the horizon, some hours before, just as the sun was setting. Some men were on the wagon, and seemed busy unloading it. What they were taking from the wagon seemed heavy, and occasionally gave out a sound like iron; it would have been difficult to tell what it was; it looked like framework; two of them got down and placed a box upon the ground, which, to judge from its shape, contained some triangular object.

The flame died out, everything disappeared in the darkness; Gauvain, with his eyes still fastened on the spot, wondered what there was over there in the darkness.

The lanterns were lighted, there was coming and going on the plateau; but the forms moving about were confused, and, moreover, Gauvain, below, and on the other side of the ravine, could not see what was on the very edge of the plateau.

Voices were talking, but he could not tell what they said. Now and then, blows sounded on wood. He heard, too, a strange metallic grating, like the sound of the whetting of a scythe.

Two o'clock struck.

Gauvain went slowly towards the breach, like one who would willingly take two steps forward and three back. Recognizing, in the dim light, the cloak and braided hood of the commander, the sentinels presented arms at his approach. Gauvain went into the hall on the ground floor, now transformed into a guardroom. A lantern was hanging from the arch. It gave just light enough to enable one to cross the hall without stepping on the men belonging to the post, who were lying on the straw on the floor, and for the most part asleep.

They had laid down there; a few hours before, they had been fighting there; the grapeshot, scattered under them in grains of iron and lead, which had not been entirely swept away, disturbed their rest somewhat; but they were weary, and sank to sleep again. This hall had been the place of horror; here had been the attack; here they had roared, howled, gnashed their teeth, given blows, killed, expired; many of them had fallen dead on the pavement where they were now lying asleep; this straw which served them for beds had drunk up the blood of their comrades; now, it was over, the blood was stanched, the sabres were dried, the dead were dead; they were sleeping peacefully. Such is war. And then, to-morrow, everybody will sleep the same sleep.

As Gauvain entered, some of these drowsy men rose, among others, the officer commanding the post. Gauvain pointed to the door of the dungeon,—

"Open for me," he said.

The bolts were drawn, the door opened.

Gauvain went into the dungeon.

The door closed behind him.

BOOK SEVENTH

FEUDALISM AND REVOLUTION

CHAPTER I

THE ANCESTOR

A LAMP stood on the flagstones of the crypt, beside the square air-hole of the oubliette.

The jug filled with water, the soldier's bread, and a bundle of straw were also on the floor. As the crypt was hewn out of the rock, the prisoner who had a fancy for setting his straw on fire would have his trouble for his pains; no risk of fire for the prison; certain asphyxiation for the prisoner.

When the door turned on its hinges, the marquis was walking about his dungeon; a mechanical going to and fro, peculiar to all caged wild beasts.

At the noise made by opening and then closing the door, he raised his head, and the lamp on the floor between Gauvain and the marquis shone full on these two men, now face to face.

They looked at each other, and this look was such that it made them both motionless.

The marquis burst out laughing, and exclaimed,—

"Good-morning, sir. It is many years since I have had the good fortune to meet you. You are very kind to come to see me. I thank you. I ask for nothing better than to have a little talk. It was beginning to be tedious. Your friends are losing time, establishing identity, court-martial, all these formalities take a long time. I should be quicker about it. I am at home here. Have the goodness to come in. Well, what do you think of all that is going on? It is original, isn't it? Once there was a king and queen; the king was the king; the queen was France. They cut off the king's head, and married the queen to Robespierre; this gentleman and this lady had a daughter whom they named the guillotine, and it seems that I am to make her acquaintance to-morrow morning. I shall be charmed to do so,—as I am to see you. Have you come for that? Have you risen in rank? Shall you be the executioner? If it is merely a visit of friendship, I am touched by it. Monsieur le Vicomte, perhaps you no longer know what a nobleman is. Well, here is one; that is, myself. Look at him. It is strange. He believes in God, he believes in tradition, he believes in the family, he believes in his forefathers, he believes in the example of his father, in fidelity, in loyalty, in the duty towards his prince, in respect for old laws, in virtue, in justice; and he would have you shot with pleasure. I beg of you, have the kindness to sit down. On the floor, it is true; for there are no easy-chairs in this drawing-room; but he who lives in the mire can sit on the floor. I do not say this to offend you, for what we call mire, you call the nation. Doubtless, you will not compel me to cry 'Liberty! Equality! Fraternity!' This was once a room in my own house; formerly, the seigneurs put peasants here; now, the peasants put seigneurs here. This nonsense is called a Revolution. It seems that I am to have my head cut off in thirty-six hours. I see no inconvenience in that. But, if they were polite, they would have sent me my snuff-box, which is up in the room of mirrors, where you played when a child, and where I used to trot you on my knee. Sir, I am going to tell you one thing; you are called Gauvain, and, strange to say, you have noble blood in your veins, by Heaven! the same blood as mine, and that blood which makes me a man of honor, makes you a blackguard. Such are circumstances. You will tell me that it is not your fault. Nor mine. By Heaven! one may be a malefactor without being aware of it. It is in the air one breathes; in times like ours, one is not responsible for his acts; the Revolution makes a rascal of everybody; and our great criminals are great innocents. What blockheads! Beginning with yourself. Allow me to admire you. Yes, I admire a boy like you, who, a man of rank, of good position in the State, having noble blood to shed for noble causes, viscount of this Tour-Gauvain, prince of Brittany, a duke by right, and a peer by inheritance, which is nearly all that can be desired here below, by a man of good sense,—amuses himself, being what he is, by being what you are, so that he seems to his enemies like a villain, and to his friends like an idiot. By the way, give my regards to monsieur the Abbé Cimourdain."

The marquis spoke easily, calmly, without emphasizing any of his words, in his social tone of voice, his eye clear and quiet, both hands in his pockets. He stopped speaking, drew a long breath, and went on,—

"I will not conceal from you the fact that I did what I could to kill you. Just as you see me, I have myself personally aimed a cannon at you. A discourteous proceeding, I admit; but it would be depending on a bad maxim to imagine that an enemy in war should try to be agreeable to you. For we are at war, my nephew. Everything is fire and blood. Nevertheless, it is true that the king has been killed. Fine times!"

He stopped again, then went on,—

"To think that none of these things would have happened if Voltaire had been hanged and Rousseau had been sent to the galleys! Ah! People of intelligence, what a shame! Ah, what do you reproach this monarchy with? It is true, they sent the Abbé Pucelle to his abbey in Corbigny, giving him the choice of an equipage, and all the time he wished in which to make the journey; and as for your Monsieur Titon, who, if you please, had been a very dissipated man, and who frequented the houses of loose women before taking part in the miracles of Deacon Pâris,—he, I say, was transferred from the castle of Vincennes to the castle of Ham in Picardy, which is, I confess, a pretty detestable place. There were grievances; I remember very well; I have also protested in my time; I was as stupid as you are!"

The marquis felt in his pocket, as though searching for his snuff-box, and went on,—

"But not so bad. We talked for the sake of talking. There was also a meeting in the way of investigations and petitions; and then came these philosophers, but they burned their works instead of their bodies; and court intriguers got themselves mixed up in it. We had all these boobies,—Turgot, Quesnay, Malesherbes, the physiocrats, etc.,—and the quarrel began again. It was all the fault of these scribblers and poetasters. The Encyclopédia! Diderot! d'Alembert! Ah, those rascally good-for-nothings! The idea of a man of good birth like the King of Prussia getting taken in by them. If I had been he, I should have squelched all paper scratchers. Ah! we Gauvains used to be great lovers of justice in old days! Here, on the wall, you can see the marks left by the quartering-wheels! We did not allow any nonsense. No, no; no scribblers. As long as there are men like Arouët, there will be Marats. As long as there are low fellows who use their pens, there will be knaves who use their daggers; as long as there is ink, there will be blots; as long as the paw of man holds the goose quill, frivolous stupidities will engender cruel stupidities. Books cause crimes. The word 'chimæra' has two meanings: it signifies 'dream' and it signifies 'monster.' How dear we have to pay for trash. What is the meaning of your song about 'rights'? Rights of man! rights of the people! All that is empty enough, stupid enough, imaginary enough, senseless enough! Now, when I say: 'Havaise, sister of Conan II., brought the County of Brittany to Hoël, Count de Nantes, and Cornwall, who left the throne to Alain Fergant, uncle to Bertha, who married Alain le Noir, Seigneur of la Roche-sur-Yon, and had by him Conan le Petit, grandfather of Guy or Gauvain de Thouars, our ancestor,' I make a definite statement, and there is a right for you. But your idiots, your knaves, your miserable wretches, what do they call their rights? Deicide and regicide. Ah! how hideous it all is! Ah, the scoundrels! I am sorry for you, sir; for you are of the proudest blood of Brittany; you and I have for our grandfather Gauvain de Thouars; we have, moreover, among our ancestors that great Duc de Montbazon, who was a peer of France, and honored with the Collar of the Orders, who attacked the suburb of Tours and was wounded at the battle of Arques, and died, Master of the Hounds, in his own house of Couzières in Touraine, at the age of eighty-six. I might name to you also the Duc de Landunois, son of the Lady of la Garnache, of Claude de Lorraine, Duc de Chevreuse and of Henri de Lenoncourt, and of Françoise de Laval-Boisdauphin. But what is the use? Monsieur has the honor of being an idiot, and he claims the right of being the equal of my groom. Know this: I was an old man when you were still a brat. I have wiped your nose for you, and I could do it still. In growing to the stature of a man, you have succeeded in belittling yourself. Since we last met, we have each gone in our own way: I, in the direction of honesty; you, in the opposite direction. Ah! I do not know how this will end; but these gentlemen, your friends, are noble beggars! Ah! yes; it is fine; I am in perfect sympathy with all these splendid signs of progress; in the army, the punishment of giving the drunken soldier a pint of cold water for three days running has been abolished; you have your maximum, your convention, your Bishop Gobel, your Monsieur Chaumette and Monsieur Hébert, and you have wiped out all the past at one fell swoop, from the Bastille to the Almanach. You are putting vegetables in place of saints. All right, citizens, be our masters, rule, take your ease, do what you please, do not stand on ceremony. But it will not in the least prevent religion from being religion, or royalty from filling fifteen hundred years of our history, and the old French nobles, even after you have cut off their heads, from standing higher than you.

"As to your quibbles about the historic right of royal families, we shrug our shoulders at it. Chilpéric, in reality, was only a monk named Daniel; Rainfroi set up Chilpéric to annoy Charles Martel. We know these things as well as you do. That is not the point. This is the question: to be a great Kingdom, to be the ancient France, to be this magnificent land of system, according to which first the sacred person of the monarch, absolute lord of the state, is regarded, then the princes, then the crown officers in charge of the army on land and sea, of the artillery, and the direction and superintendence of finances. Then came the judges of the higher and lower courts, followed by the officials engaged in the revenues and receipts of custom, and lastly the police of the kingdom in its three orders. There was something fine and noble in this system. You have destroyed it. You have destroyed provinces, like the miserable ignoramuses that you are, without having an idea of what the provinces were. The genius of France is made up of the very genius of the continent, and each one of the provinces of France represented a virtue of Europe. The ingenuousness of Germany was in Picardy; the generosity of Sweden, in Champaign; the industry of Holland, in Burgundy; the activity of Poland, in Languedoc; the sobriety of Spain, in Gascony; the wisdom of Italy, in Provence; the subtility of Greece, in Normandy; the fidelity of Switzerland, in Dauphiné.

"You knew nothing of all that. You have broken, shattered, smashed, destroyed, and you have been blindly acting like brutes. Ah! you will have no more nobility. Very well, your wishes will be gratified. Mourn for them. You will have no more paladins, no more heroes. Farewell, grandeur of old! Find me an Assas now! You are all afraid for your skins! You will have no more chevaliers like Fontenoy, who saluted before dealing the death blow. You will have no more combatants like those who fought in silk stockings at the siege of Lérida; you will have no more of those proud tournaments when plumes flashed by like meteors; you are a people which has run its course; you will endure invasion, which is a rape. If Alaric II. returned from the dead he would not find himself confronting Clovis; if Abdérame came back he would not find Charles Martel to face him. If the Saxons came back they would not find Pepin. You will have no more heroes like Agnadel, Rocroy, Lens, Staffarde, Nerwinde, Steinkirk, La Marsaille, Raucoux, Lawfeld, Mahon. You will no longer have a Marignan with François I.; no longer Bouvines, with Philippe-Auguste taking prisoner with one-hand Renaud, Count of Bologna, and with the other, Ferrand, Count of Flanders. You will have Azincourt, but you will have no Sieur de Bacqueville, grand bearer of the oriflamme, wrapping himself in his banner, to meet his death. Go! go! do your work! Be the new men! Become pigmies!"

The marquis was silent for a moment and then continued,—

"But leave us great. Kill the kings, kill the nobles, kill the priests, slaughter, destroy, massacre, trample everything under foot; grind the ancient maxims under your heels, trample on the throne, stamp down the altar, blot out God, dance on the ruins! That is your affair. You are traitors and cowards, incapable of devotion and sacrifice. I have spoken. Now have me guillotined, monsieur le vicomte. I have the honor to be your most humble servant."

And he added,—

"Ah! I tell you the truth about yourself! What difference will it make to me? I am dead."

"You are free," said Gauvain.

And Gauvain stepped toward the marquis, took off his commander's cloak, threw it over Lantenac's shoulders and pulled the hood down over his eyes. They were of the same height.

"Well, what is this that you are doing?" said the marquis.

Gauvain raised his voice and cried: "Lieutenant, open the door!"

The door opened.

Gauvain said: "Take care to close the door behind me." And he pushed the astonished marquis outside.

The lower hall changed to a guardroom, as will be remembered, was lighted only by a horn lantern, making objects dimly visible, and the darkness there was more powerful than the light. In this faint glimmer, those of the soldiers who were not asleep saw walk through their midst towards the entrance a tall man wearing the braided cloak and hood of the commander-in-chief; they gave the military salute, and the man passed on.

The marquis slowly crossed the guardroom, made his way through the breach, hitting his head more than once, and went out.

The sentinel, thinking it was Gauvain, presented arms.

When he was outside, with the grass of the fields under his feet, two hundred paces from the forest, with space, night, liberty, life, before him, he stopped and stood still for a moment like a man who has offered no resistance, who has yielded to surprise, and having taken advantage of an open door, tries to find out whether he has acted well or ill, hesitates before going farther, and listens to a last thought. After a few moments of careful reflection, he raised his right hand, snapped his thumb and middle finger, and said: *"Ma foi!"*

And he went on his way.

The door of the dungeon had closed again. Gauvain was inside.

CHAPTER II

THE COURT-MARTIAL

COURTS-MARTIAL at that time were endowed with very nearly discretional powers. Dumas, at the legislative Assembly, had sketched out a plan for military legislation, revised later on by Talot, at the Council of the Five Hundred, but a final code for councils of war was not framed till the time of the empire. It is from the empire, by the way, that dates the obligation imposed upon military tribunals to begin taking votes from officers of inferior rank. This law was not in existence at the time of the Revolution.

In 1793, the presiding officer of a military tribunal was practically the whole tribunal himself; he chose the members, classed the orders of rank, regulated the mode of voting; he was master as well as judge.

Cimourdain had selected for the council-room of the court-martial this same hall on the ground floor where the retirade had been and where the guardroom was now. He intended to make short work of everything, the way from the prison to the tribunal, and the passage from the tribunal to the scaffold.

At noon, in conformance with his orders, the court was in session with the following adjuncts,—three straw-seated chairs, a deal table, two lighted candles, a stool in front of the table.

The chairs were for the judges and the stool for the accused. At each end of the table there was another stool, one for the commissioner-auditor, who was a quartermaster, the other for the clerk, who was a corporal.

On the table was a stick of red sealing-wax, the copper seal of the Republic, two inkstands, some sheets of white paper, and two printed placards, spread out open, one containing the declaration of outlawing, the other the decree of the convention.

Behind the middle chair was a group of tricolored flags; in these times of rude simplicity, decorations were quickly made, and it took little time to change a guardroom into a court of justice.

The middle chair, destined for the presiding officer, faced the door of the dungeon.

The soldiers were the public.

Two gendarmes guarded the stool.

Cimourdain was seated on the middle chair, having Captain Guéchamp on his right as first judge, and on his left the Sergeant Radoub, as second judge.

He wore his hat with the tricolored plume, his sabre at his side, his two pistols in his belt. His scar, which was a vivid red, added to his ferocious appearance.

Radoub had at last allowed his wound to be dressed. Around his head he had a handkerchief on which a bloodstain was slowly increasing in size.

At noon before the court had opened, an express, whose horse could be heard pawing the ground outside, stood near the table of the tribunal. Cimourdain was writing. He wrote this, —

> "Citizens, members of the Committee of Public Welfare, —
> Lantenac is taken. He will be executed to-morrow."

He dated the despatch, signed it, folded it, sealed it, and gave it to the messenger, who had started away.

Having done this, Cimourdain said in a loud voice, —

"Open the dungeon."

The two gendarmes drew back the bolts, opened the dungeon and went in. Cimourdain raised his head, folded his arms, looked at the door, and cried, —

"Bring in the prisoner."

A man appeared between the two gendarmes, under the arch of the open door.

It was Gauvain.

Cimourdain shuddered.

"Gauvain!" he exclaimed.

And he added, —

"I demand the prisoner."

"I am the prisoner," said Gauvain.

"You?"

"I myself."

"But where is Lantenac?"

"He is free."

"Free!"

"Yes."

"Escaped?"

"Escaped."

Cimourdain trembling stammered, —

"To be sure, this castle is his, he knows all the means of exit; perhaps the oubliette communicates with some way out; I ought to have thought that he would find some way to escape; he would need no one's aid for that."

"He was aided," said Gauvain.

"To escape?"

"To escape."

"Who aided him?"

"I did."

"You!"

"Yes."

"You are dreaming!"

"I entered the dungeon; I was alone with the prisoner; I took off my cloak, I threw it over his shoulders, I pulled the hood down over his eyes; he went out in my place, and I remain in his. Here I am."

"You did not do that!"

"I did do it."

"It is impossible."

"It is a fact!"

"Bring Lantenac here!"

"He is no longer here. The soldiers, seeing the commander's cloak, took him for me, and let him pass. It was still night."

"You are mad."

"I am telling you the truth."

There was a silence. Cimourdain stammered,—

"Then you deserve——"

"Death," said Gauvain.

Cimourdain was as pale as a corpse. He was as motionless as a man who has been struck by lightning. It seemed as if he could no longer breathe. Great drops of sweat stood on his forehead.

He steadied his voice and said, —

"Gendarmes, seat the accused."

Gauvain sat down on the stool.

Cimourdain added, —

"Gendarmes, draw your swords."

This was the customary formality when the accused was under sentence of capital punishment.

The gendarmes drew their swords.

Cimourdain's voice had regained its usual tone.

"Accused," he said, "rise."

He no longer addressed Gauvain familiarly.

CHAPTER III

THE VOTES

GAUVAIN rose.

"What is your name?" asked Cimourdain.

Gauvain replied, "Gauvain."

Cimourdain questioned him further.

"Who are you?"

"I am commander-in-chief of the reconnoitring column of the Coasts of the North."

"Are you a relative or connection of the man who has escaped?"

"I am his grand-nephew."

"Are you familiar with the decree of the Convention?"

"I see the notice of it on your table."

"What have you to say to this decree?"

"That I countersigned it, that I ordered it to be carried out, and that it was I who had the placard printed, and that my name is at the bottom of it."

"Choose a defender."

"I will defend myself."

"You may speak."

Cimourdain had grown calm again. Only his calmness was less like the composure of a man than the tranquillity of a rock.

Gauvain remained silent for a moment, and, as it were, collecting his thoughts.

Cimourdain spoke again.

"What have you to say in your defence?"

Gauvain slowly raised his head, without looking at anybody, and replied: —

"This: one thing prevented me from seeing any other; a good action, seen too near, concealed a hundred criminal actions from my eyes; on one side an old man, on the other, children, all this came between me and duty. I forgot the villages burned, the fields ravaged, the prisoners massacred, the wounded murdered, the women shot. I forgot France betrayed to England; I liberated the murderer of his country. I am guilty. In speaking thus, I seem to speak against myself; it is a mistake. I am speaking for myself. When the guilty person confesses his fault, he saves the only thing worth the trouble of saving — honor."

"Is this," replied Cimourdain, "all that you have to say for your defence?"

"I will add that being the chief, I owe an example, and that you, for your part, being the judge, owe one too."

"What example do you demand?"

"My death."

"Do you think it just?"

"And necessary."

"Be seated."

The quartermaster, as commissioner-auditor, rose and gave a reading; first of the sentence, which outlawed the *ci-devant* Marquis de Lantenac; secondly, the decree of the Convention inflicting punishment of death on any one aiding the escape of a rebel prisoner. It ended with some lines printed "to carry aid and assistance" to the above-named rebel at the bottom of the notice of the decree, forbidding any one "under pain of death," and signed, —

"*The commander-in-chief of the reconnoitring column*, GAUVAIN."

Having finished these readings, the commissioner-auditor sat down again.

Cimourdain folded his arms and said, —

"Accused, pay attention. Audience, listen, look, and be silent. You have the law before you. It will now be put to vote. The sentence will be given according to the simple majority. Each judge will give his opinion in turn, aloud, in presence of the accused, justice having nothing to conceal.

Cimourdain continued, —

"The first judge has the floor. Speak, Captain Guéchamp."

Captain Guéchamp appeared to see neither Cimourdain nor Gauvain. He dropped his eyelids, which concealed his motionless eyes fixed on the notice of the decree, and considering it as one considers an abyss. He said, —

"The law is positive. A judge is more and less than a man; he is less than a man, for he has no heart; he is more than a man, because he has the sword. In the year 414 of Rome, Manlius put his son to death for the crime of having won a victory without his order. Violated discipline demands an expiation. In this case it is the law which has been violated; and the law is still higher than discipline. In consequence of an outburst of pity, the country is again placed in danger. Pity may have the proportions of a crime. Commander Gauvain has caused the escape of the rebel Lantenac. Gauvain is guilty. I vote death."

"Write it down, clerk," said Cimourdain.

The clerk wrote, "Captain Guéchamp : death."

Gauvain raised his voice,—

"Guéchamp," he said, "you have voted well, and I thank you."

Cimourdain proceeded, —

"The second judge has the floor. Speak, Sergeant Radoub."

Radoub rose, turned towards Gauvain and saluted the accused. Then he cried out, —

"If it is so, then, guillotine me, for I give you here, in the sight of God, my most sacred word of honor that I should like to have done, first what the old man did, and then what my commander has done. When I saw that man, eighty years old, throw himself into the fire to save three babies, I said, 'Good man, you are brave!' and when I learn that my commander has saved this old man from your beast of a guillotine, by a thousand saints I say, 'My commander, you ought to be my general, and you are a true man, and as for me, by thunder! I would give you the cross of Saint Louis, if there were still crosses, and if there were still saints, and if there were still Louis!'

"Ah! are you going to be idiots now? If it was for such things as this that we won the battle of Jemmapes, the battle of Valmy, the battle of Fleurus, and the battle of Wattignies, then it must be admitted. What! Here Commander Gauvain, for four months, has been leading these jackasses of royalists to the beat of the drum, and saving the Republic by his sword, and did a thing at Dol which required a pretty amount of cleverness, and when you have this man here, you try to have him no longer! And instead of making him your general, you want to chop off his head! I say that it is enough to make one throw himself head first over the parapet of the Pont-Neuf, and that if you yourself, Citizen Gauvain, my commander, were my corporal instead of my general, I would tell you that what you said just now was infernal nonsense. The old man did well in saving the children, you did well to save the old man; and if people are to be guillotined for good deeds, then get you gone to all the devils, for I don't know at all what it is about. There is no reason at all for stopping anywhere. All this is not true, is it? I pinch myself to know whether I am awake. I do not understand. So the old man ought to have let the babies burn alive, my commander ought to let the old man's head be cut off. Yes, and then guillotine me. I like the one idea as much as the other. I suppose if the little ones had died, the battalion of Bonnet-Rouge would have been dishonored. Is that what you wanted? Then let us eat each other. I know my politics as well as you. I belonged to the club in the section of the Piques. Sapristi! We are growing brutal at last! I sum it all up according to my way of looking at it. I do not like things which have the inconvenience of making us unable to tell at all where we are. Why the devil do we have each other killed? Why kill our chief? Not that, Lisette. I want my chief! I must have my chief. I love him better to-day than I did yesterday. But to send him to the guillotine, why, you make me laugh! We want none of this: I have listened. You may say whatever you like, but it is not possible."

And Radoub sat down. His wound had opened again. A thread of blood came out from under the bandage and ran down his neck, from the place where his ear had been.

Cimourdain turned towards Radoub, —

"Do you vote that the accused be absolved?"

"I vote," said Radoub, "to have him made general."

"I ask if you vote to have him acquitted."

"I vote to have him made the first in the Republic."

"Sergeant Radoub, do you vote to have the Commandant Gauvain acquitted, —yes or no?"

"I vote to have my head cut off instead of his."

"Acquittal," said Cimourdain. "Write, clerk."

The clerk wrote, "Sergeant Radoub: acquittal."

Then the clerk said, —

"One voice for death. One voice for acquittal."

It was Cimourdain's turn to vote.

He rose. He took off his hat and laid it on the table.

He was no longer pale nor livid. His face was the color of earth.

If all present had been lying in their shrouds, the silence would not have been more profound.

Cimourdain said in a solemn voice, slowly, and with decision, —

"Accused Gauvain, the cause has been heard. In the name of the Republic, the court-martial, by the majority of two to one —

He stopped, there was a moment of suspense; did he hesitate before death? did he hesitate before life? All held their breath. Cimourdain continued, —

"Condemn you to death."

His face expressed the torture of an awful triumph.

When Jacob compelled the angel whom he had overthrown in the darkness to bless him, he must have worn that terrible smile.

It was only a glimmer, and it passed away. Cimourdain became again like marble, sat down, put his hat on his head, and added,—

"Gauvain, you will be executed to-morrow at sunrise."

Gauvain rose, saluted him, and said,—

"I thank the court."

"Lead away the condemned," said Cimourdain.

Cimourdain made a sign, the door of the dungeon was opened, Gauvain went in, the dungeon was closed. The two gendarmes remained on guard at each side of the door, with drawn sabres.

They carried away Radoub, who had just fallen unconscious.

CHAPTER IV

AFTER CIMOURDAIN AS A JUDGE, CIMOURDAIN AS MASTER

A CAMP is a wasp's nest. Especially in times of Revolution. The civic sting which is in the soldier acts readily and quickly, and does not hesitate to attack the chief after having driven away the enemy.

The valiant troop which had taken la Tourgue made various complaints; at first against the Commander Gauvain, when they learned of Lantenac's escape. When they saw Gauvain come out of the dungeon which they supposed held Lantenac, it was like an electric shock, and in less than a minute the whole corps was informed. A murmur burst forth from the little army; the first murmur was,—

"They are judging Gauvain. But it is only a sham. Oh, yes, have great faith in ex-nobles and in priests! We have just seen a viscount save a marquis, and we shall see a priest pardon a noble!"

When they learned of Gauvain's sentence, there was a second murmur, "That is too much! our chief, our brave chief, our young commander, a hero! He is a viscount, well it is all the more credit to him for being a Republican! What! he, the liberator of Pontorson, of Villedieu, of Pont-àu-Beau! The conqueror of Dol and of La Tourgue! He through whom we are invincible; he who is the sword of the Republic in la Vendée! The man who, for five months, has held the Chouans at bay, and made up for all the folly of Léchelle and the rest! This Cimourdain dares condemn him to death! Why? Because he had saved an old man who had saved three children! A priest kill a soldier!"

Thus the victorious but discontented camp grumbled. A sullen anger surrounded Cimourdain. Four thousand men against one; it seems as if this must be strength; not at all. These four thousand men were a multitude, and Cimourdain was a will.

They knew that Cimourdain frowned easily, and nothing more was needed to hold the army in respect. In these times of severity, it was enough for the shadow of the Committee of Public Welfare to be behind a man to make this man feared, and to make an imprecation end in a whisper, and the whisper end in silence. After as well as before these murmurs, Cimourdain remained the arbiter of Gauvain's fate, and the fate of all. They knew there was nothing to ask of him, and that he would obey nothing but his conscience, a superhuman voice heard by himself alone.

Everything depended on him; what he had done as judge-martial, alone, he could undo as civil delegate. He alone was able to pardon him. He had full power; by a sign he could set Gauvain free; he was the master of life and of death; he was commander of the guillotine. At this tragic time he was the man above all others.

They could only wait.

Night came on.

CHAPTER V

THE DUNGEON

THE hall of justice had become the guardroom again; the watch was doubled, as the day before; two sentinels guarded the door of the closed dungeon.

About midnight a man holding a lantern in his hand crossed the guardroom, made himself known, and had the dungeon opened.

It was Cimourdain.

He went in and the door remained ajar behind him.

The dungeon was dark and silent. Cimourdain took a step into the darkness, set the lantern on the floor, and stood still. He heard the regular breathing of a man asleep. Cimourdain listened thoughtfully to this peaceful sound.

Gauvain was on the bundle of straw on the floor of the dungeon. It was his breath which was heard. He was sound asleep.

Cimourdain went forward with the least possible noise, came close to Gauvain and began to look at him; a mother looking at her sleeping babe would have no more tender and unspeakable fondness in her face. This sight was perhaps too much for Cimourdain; Cimourdain pressed both hands over his eyes, as children do sometimes, and remained motionless for a moment. Then he knelt down and raised Gauvain's hand gently to his lips.

Gauvain stirred. He opened his eyes, with the vague surprise of one suddenly awakened. The lantern feebly lighted the dungeon. He recognized Cimourdain.

"Ah!" he said, "it is you, my master."

And he added,—

"I was dreaming that death kissed my hand."

Cimourdain shuddered, as we sometimes do at the abrupt invasion of a surge of thoughts; sometimes this tide is so high and so stormy that it seems as if it would drown the soul. Nothing escaped from the depths of Cimourdain's heart. He could only say,—

"Gauvain!"

And they looked at each other; Cimourdain with his eyes full of those flames which burn tears, Gauvain with his gentlest smile.

Gauvain rose on his elbow and said,—

"This scar which I see on your face is from the sabre cut that you received for me. Yesterday, again, you were in the struggle beside me and on account of me. If Providence had not placed you near my cradle, where should I be to-day? In darkness. If I have any idea of duty, it has come from you. I was born bound. Prejudices are ligatures; you removed these bands from me, you have given me liberty of growth, and of what was only a mummy you made a child once more. You gave a consciousness to the abortion that would otherwise have been. Had it not been for you, I should have grown up a dwarf. I exist through you. I was only a seigneur, you made me a citizen. I was only a citizen, you made me an intellect; you made me fit, as a man, for this earthly life, and, as a soul, for the life celestial. You gave me the key of truth, that I might enter the reality of human life, and the key of light, that I might go beyond. Oh! my master, I thank you. You have created me."

Cimourdain sat down on the straw beside Gauvain, and said to him,—

"I have come to take supper with you."

Gauvain broke up the black bread and offered it to him. Cimourdain took a piece of it; then Gauvain passed him the jug of water.

"Drink first," said Cimourdain.

Gauvain drank and passed the jug to Cimourdain, who drank after him. Gauvain only took one swallow.

Cimourdain took a long draught.

At this supper, Gauvain ate and Cimourdain drank, a sign of calmness in one and of feverishness in the other.

A strange, terrible serenity was in this dungeon. The two men talked.

Gauvain said,—

"Great things are being planned. What the Revolution is doing at this moment is mysterious. Behind its visible work there is a work invisible. One conceals the other. The visible work is cruel, the invisible work is sublime. At this moment I can see everything very clearly. It is strangely beautiful. It was necessary to make use of the materials of the past. Hence this extraordinary 93. Under a scaffolding of barbarism, a temple of civilization is building."

"Yes," replied Cimourdain. "Out of things temporal will arise the definitive. The definitive, that is to say right and duty, in parallel lines, proportional and progressive taxes, obligatory military service, levelling without deviation, and above all and through all, that straight line, law. The Republic of the Absolute."

"I prefer," said Gauvain, "the Republic of the Ideal." He hesitated, then continued,—

"Oh, my master, in all that you have just said, where do you place devotion, sacrifice, abnegation, the magnanimous intertwining of benevolence, love? Putting everything in equilibrium is good; making everything harmonious is better. Above the scales is the lyre. Your republic doses, measures, and rules man; mine carries him up into the clear sky; that is the difference between a theorem and an eagle."

"You will be lost in the clouds."

"And you in mathematics."

"Harmony is a dream."

"There are unknown quantities in Algebra."

"I would have man made according to Euclid."

"And I," said Gauvain, "I would rather have him made according to Homer."

Cimourdain's stern smile rested on Gauvain, as if to hold back this soul.

"Poetry. Place no truth in poets."

"Yes, I know that saying. Put no trust in breezes, sunbeams, put no trust in perfumes, put no trust in flowers, put no trust in constellations."

"None of them will give you anything to eat."

"How do you know? Ideas, too, are food. To think is to eat."

"No abstractions. The Republic is two and two make four. When I have given to each what belongs to him—"

"It will remain for you to give to each what does not belong to him."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean the vast reciprocal concession that each owes to all, and all owe to each, and which is the whole social law."

"There is nothing beyond strict law."

"There is everything."

"I see nothing but justice."

"For my part I see higher."

"What is there above justice?"

"Equity."

Occasionally, they stopped, as if to catch glimpses of light.

Cimourdain resumed,—

"I challenge you to explain."

"I will do so. You would have military service obligatory; against whom? Against other men. But I would not have any military service at all. I want peace. You would have the wretched assisted, but I would have misery suppressed. You would have proportional taxes. I would have no taxes at all. I want the common expenses reduced to their simplest form, and paid by the overplus of society."

"What do you mean by that?"

"This: first, to suppress every form of parasite; that represented by the priest, that represented by the judge, that represented by the soldier. Then make some use of your waste riches; you throw manure into the sewers, throw it on the fields. Three-quarters of the soil is waste land; clear up

France. Put an end to useless pastures, divide the communal lands. Let every man have a piece of ground, and every piece of ground have a man. It would multiply the products of society a hundredfold. France, at the present time, only gives her peasants meat four days in the year; if well cultivated, she ought to feed three hundred millions of men, —all Europe. Utilize nature, that great auxiliary so much scorned. Make all the winds, all the waterfalls, all the magnetic effluvia work for you. The globe has a network of subterranean veins; in this network there is a prodigious circulation of water, oil, and fire; pierce the veins of the globe, and let this water gush forth for your fountains, this oil for your lamps, this fire for your hearths. Reflect on the motion of the waves, the flux and reflux, the ebb and flow of the tides. What is the ocean? An enormous force wasted. How stupid the earth is not to make use of the ocean."

"You are lost in a dream."

"That is to say, in actual facts."

Gauvain went on,—

"And woman,—what use do you make of her?"

Cimourdain replied,—

"Let her be what she is, the servant of man."

"Yes. On one condition."

"What?"

"That man shall be the servant of woman."

"Is that your belief?" exclaimed Cimourdain. "Man a servant! Never. Man is master. I admit but one royalty, that of the fireside. Man is king at home."

"Yes. On one condition."

"What is that?"

"That woman be queen there."

"That is to say that you want for man and for woman——"

"Equality."

"Equality! Are you dreaming? The two beings are different."

"I say equality. I did not say identity."

There was a pause again, like a sort of truce between these two minds exchanging flashes of thought. Cimourdain broke the silence.

"And the child? To whom would you give it?"

"First to the father who begets it, then to the mother who bears it, then to the master to teach it, then to the city to make a man of it, then to the country, which is the mother supreme, then to humanity, which is the great ancestor."

"You say nothing of God."

"Each of these steps,—father, mother, master, city, country, humanity,—is a round in the ladder which leads up to God."

Cimourdain was silent. Gauvain went on,—

"When one is at the top of the ladder, one has reached God. God opens the door; there is nothing to do but to go in."

Cimourdain made the gesture of a person who is calling some one back.

"Gauvain, come back to earth. We want to realize possibilities."

"Begin by not making them impossible."

"The possible can always be realized."

"Not always. If Utopia is maltreated it is killed. Nothing is more defenceless than the egg."

"But it is necessary to seize Utopia, place it under the yoke of reality, and frame it, in fact. Abstract ideas must be transformed to concrete ideas; what it loses in beauty it will gain in utility; it will be less but better. Right must enter into law; and when right has become law, it is absolute. This is what I call the possible."

"The possible is more than that."

"Ah! you are dreaming again."

"The possible is a mysterious bird always hovering above man."

"It must be caught."

"Alive."

Gauvain continued,—

"My motto is: Always forward. If God had wished man to go backward, he would have put an eye in the back of his head. Let us always look towards the sunrise, development, birth. Whatever falls encourages whatever is trying to rise. The shattering of the old tree is a call to the young tree. Each century will do its work; to-day, civic; to-morrow, humane. To-day the question of right, to-morrow the question of wage. Wage and right are the same word in reality. Man does not live to receive no wage; God, in giving life, contracts a debt: right is innate wage; wage is acquired right."

Gauvain spoke with the assurance of a prophet. Cimourdain listened. The rôles were exchanged, and now it seemed as if the pupil had become the master.

Cimourdain murmured, —

"You go too fast."

"Perhaps it is because I am somewhat pressed for time," said Gauvain, with a smile.

And he added, —

"O my master, this is the difference between our two Utopias. You want the barracks obligatory, while I want a school. You dream of a man as a soldier, I dream of him as a citizen. You want him to be terrible. I would have him thoughtful. You would found a republic of swords, would found—"

He hesitated, —

"I would found a republic of intellects?"

Cimourdain looked at the pavement of the dungeon and said, —

"And till then what would you have?"

"What now exists."

"Then you absolve the present moment?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because it is a tempest. A tempest always knows what it is about. For one oak struck by lightning, how many forests purified! Civilization had a pestilence, this great gale is sweeping it away. It does not discriminate enough, perhaps. Can it do otherwise? It has such a rough cleansing to perform. Before the horror of miasma, I understand the fury of the blast."

Gauvain continued, —

"Moreover, what is the tempest to me, if I have the compass? and what difference can events make to me, if I have my conscience?"

And he added in a low voice, which was solemn as well, —

"There is one who must always be allowed to do his will."

"Who?" asked Cimourdain.

Gauvain pointed above his head. Cimourdain followed the direction of his finger, and through the ceiling of the dungeon it seemed to him as if he saw the starry heavens.

They were again silent.

Cimourdain took up the discourse.

"Society greater than nature! I tell you it is not possible, it is a dream."

"It is its aim. Otherwise, what is the good of society? Remain in nature; be savages. Otaheite is a paradise. Only, in that paradise they do not think. Much better an intelligent hell than a stupid paradise. But no, let us have no hell. Let us have human society. Greater than nature. Yes. If you add nothing to nature, why leave nature? then, be content with work like the ant, and with honey like the bee. Remain the stupid workman rather than sovereign intelligence. If you add something to nature, you will necessarily be greater than she is. To add is to increase, and to increase is to enlarge. Society is nature made sublime. I would have everything which beehives lack, everything which ant-hills lack, monuments, arts, poetry, heroes, geniuses; to carry everlasting burdens is not the law of man. No, no, no; no more pariahs, no more slaves, no more convicts, no more condemned! I would have each attribute of man a symbol of civilization, and a pattern of progress; I want liberty in the mind, equality in the heart, fraternity in the soul. No! no more bondage! man was made, not to drag chains, but to spread his wings. No more of a man as a reptile. I would have the larva transformed to a lepidopter; I would have the earthworm changed to a living flower, and fly away. I would have——"

He stopped. His eye grew bright.

His lips moved, he ceased speaking.

The door had been left open. Noises from outside penetrated into the dungeon. Sounds of distant trumpets were heard. It was probably the réveillé; then gun stocks striking the ground as the sentinels were relieved; then, quite near the tower, as far as could be judged in the darkness, a sound, as if they were moving boards and planks, with dull, intermittent thuds, like the blows of a hammer. Cimourdain listened, and grew pale. Gauvain did not hear it. His reverie grew more and more profound. It seemed as if he no longer breathed, he was so absorbed in what he saw in the visions that haunted his brain. His frame underwent gentle tremors. The dawn-like brightness in his eyes increased.

Some time passed thus. Cimourdain asked,—

"What are you thinking about?"

"The future," said Gauvain.

And he relapsed into thought again. Cimourdain rose from the bed of straw where they were sitting together. Gauvain did not notice him. Cimourdain, with his eyes fixed with infinite affection on the young dreamer, stepped slowly backwards to the door, and went out. The dungeon was closed.

CHAPTER VI

NEVERTHELESS, THE SUN RISES

DAYLIGHT did not delay appearing on the horizon. Just as day dawned, a strange, motionless, amazing object, which the birds of heaven were not familiar with, came into sight on the plateau of la Tourgue, above the forest of Fougères.

It had been placed there in the night; it was set up, rather than built. From a distance, its straightened lines stood out against the horizon, having the appearance of a Hebrew letter or one of those Egyptian hieroglyphics which formed a part of the alphabet of the ancient enigma.

At first sight, the idea that this object awakened was the idea of uselessness. It stood there among the blossoming heather. One asked what purpose it could serve. Then one felt a shudder come over.

It was a sort of trestle-work, with four posts for legs. At the end of the trestle rose two high joists, upright and straight, joined together at the top by a crossbeam, from which was suspended a triangle which looked black against the blue morning sky. At the other end of the framework there was a ladder. Between the two joists below, under the triangle, could be seen a sort of panel composed of two movable sections which, when fitted together, showed a round hole about the size of a man's neck. The upper section of the panel slipped into a groove in such a way that it could be raised or lowered. For the time being, the two semicircles which, when united, formed the collar, were apart. At the foot of the two posts was seen a plank, which moved on hinges and looked like a balance. Beside this plank, there was a long basket, and between the two posts, in front, and at the end of the trestle, a square basket.

It was painted red.

Everything was of wood, except the triangle, which was of iron. One felt that this had been built by men, it was so ugly, mean, petty; and that it was worthy of being set up there by genii, it was so formidable.

This misshapen structure was the guillotine.

In front, a few feet away, in the ravine, there was another monster, la Tourgue. A monster of stone offering a counterpart to the monster of wood, and, we may add, when man has touched wood and stone, the wood and stone are no longer merely wood and stone, but become a part of man.

An edifice is a dogma, a machine is an idea.

La Tourgue was that fatal result of the past which is called the Bastille in Paris, the Tower of London in England, the Spielberg in Germany, the Escurial in Spain, the Kremlin in Moscow, the castle of Saint-Angelo in Rome.

Fifteen hundred years were condensed in la Tourgue, the Middle Ages, vassalage, serfdom, feudalism; in the guillotine, one year, '93; and these twelve months counterbalanced these fifteen centuries.

La Tourgue was the monarchy; the guillotine was the Revolution.

Tragic comparison.

On one side, debt; on the other, maturity. On one side, the inextricable Gothic complication, the serf, the seigneur, the slave, the master, the commonalty, the nobility, the complex code with its ramification of customs, judge and priest in coalition, innumerable bonds, the treasury, the salt taxes, the mortmain, the capitations, the exceptions, the perogatives, the prejudices, the fanaticisms, the royal privilege of bankruptcy, the sceptre, the throne, the regal will, divine right; on the other side, this simple thing,—a chopping-knife.

On one side, a knot; on the other, an axe.

La Tourgue had long stood alone in this wilderness. It stood there filled with enormous tragedy; with its macchicolations, out of which had been poured boiling oil, burning pitch, and melted lead; with its oubliettes, paved with bones;

with its quartering room; its funereal form had dominated this forest; it had had fifteen centuries of cruel repose in this shady spot; it had been the sole power, the sole object of awe, and the sole terror in this land; it had reigned; it had been the unique example of barbarism: suddenly, there arose before it and against it something,—more than something,—some one as horrible as itself—the Guillotine.

Stone sometimes seems to have strange eyes. A statue observes, a tower watches, the façade of a building contemplates.

La Tourgue seemed to examine the guillotine.

It seemed to query it.

"What is that?"

That object seemed to have come up out of the earth.

And, in reality, it had come up out of the earth.

In the fatal earth had germinated the ill-favored tree. Out of this earth, watered with so much sweat, with so many tears, with so much blood;—out of this earth, where so many trenches had been dug, so many tombs, so many caves, so many ambushes;—out of this earth, where had rotted all kinds of dead, deprived of life by all kinds of tyranny;—out of this earth placed over so many abysses, and where had been buried so many dreadful crimes, seeds of horror;—out of this deep earth had arisen, on a notable day, this strange avenger, this cruel swordbearer, and '93 had said to the old world: "Here I am!"

And the guillotine had the right to say to the keep: "I am thy daughter."

And at the same time the keep—for these fatal objects live with a mysterious vitality—felt that it was killed by her.

La Tourgue, in the face of this terrible apparition, felt strangely frightened. It seemed as if it were afraid. The huge mass of granite was majestical and infamous; this plank, with its triangle, was worse. The declining omnipotence felt all the horror of the new omnipotence.

Criminal history surveyed justiciary history. The violence of the past was compared with the violence of the present:

the ancient fortress, the ancient prison, the ancient seigneurie, where victims had shrieked as they were torn limb from limb; the building of war and of murder, now useless, disabled, profaned, dismantled, laid bare, a heap of stone, worth no more than a heap of ashes, hideous, magnificent, and dead, full of the dizziness of centuries of horror,—watched the terrible living hour of the present pass by.

Yesterday frowned on to-day, the old cruelty verified and submitted to the new power, that which was a mere nothingness opened its ghastly eyes before this terror, and the phantom regarded the spectre.

Nature is pitiless; she will not consent to withdraw her flowers, her music, her perfumes and her sunbeams from before the face of human abomination; she overwhelms man with the contrast between divine beauty and the ugliness of society; she spares him neither the wing of a butterfly, nor the song of a bird; in the midst of murder, in the midst of vengeance, in the midst of barbarity he must submit to the sight of holy things; he cannot get away from the vast reproach of the universal sweetness and the implacable serenity of the blue sky. The deformity of human laws must be exposed in their nakedness, in the midst of the dazzling beauty of the eternal. Man breaks and crushes, man destroys, man kills; the summer is summer still, the lily is the lily still, the stars of heaven are the stars of heaven still.

Never had the fresh sky of early dawn been more charming than on this morning. A mild breeze stirred the heather, the mists hovered gently over the trees, the forest of Fougères, permeated with the breath of the brooks, was steaming in the dawn like a great censer filled with incense; the blue firmament, the whiteness of the clouds, the clear transparency of the waters, the verdure, that harmonious scale of color from aquamarine to emerald, the groups of brotherly trees, the carpet of grass, the far-stretching plains,—all possessed that purity which is the eternal counsel of nature to man.

In the midst of all this was exposed the frightful shame of human beings; in the midst of all this appeared the fortress and the scaffold, war and punishment, the two figures of the bloodthirsty eld and the bloody present; the night-owl of the past, and the bat of the twilight of the future.

In the presence of creation, blooming, balmy, loving and lovely, the splendid heavens deluged la Tourgue and the guillotine with the light of morning, and seemed to say to man: "See my work, and behold what you are doing."

Such are the terrible uses that the sun makes of his rays.

This spectacle had spectators.

The four thousand men belonging to the little reconnoitring army were ranged in order of battle on the plain. They surrounded the guillotine on three sides, in such a way as to form around it, in a geometrical figure, the shape of a letter E; the battery placed in the centre of the upright line made the notch of the E. The red machine was enclosed in these three battle fronts, a sort of wall of soldiers, reaching on two sides to the very edge of the escarpment of the plateau, the fourth side, the open side, was the ravine itself, and faced la Tourgue.

This made a long square, in the midst of which was the scaffold. As the day approached, the shadow of the guillotine decreased on the grass.

The artillery-men were at their guns, the matches lighted.

A gentle blue smoke was rising from the ravine; it came from the dying fire of the burning bridge.

This smoke covered without concealing la Tourgue, the high platform of which dominated the whole horizon. Between this platform and the guillotine there was only the ravine. They could talk across it.

The table of the tribunal and the chair draped with tricolored flags had been brought to this platform. The day was dawning behind la Tourgue, and making the mass of the fortress stand out black, and above it in the chair of the tribunal, and under the drapery of flags, the form of a man sitting motionless, with folded arms.

This man was Cimourdain. As on the day before, he wore his civil delegate's dress, the hat with tricolored cockade on his head, his sabre by his side, and his pistols in his belt.

He was silent. All were silent. The soldiers stood with their guns grounded, their eyes downcast. Their elbows touched, but they did not speak. They were thinking confusedly about this war,—so many battles, the fusillades of the hedges so bravely faced, the swarms of furious peasants driven before their breath, the citadels taken, the battles won, the victories, and it seemed to them now that all this glory turned to shame. A gloomy expectation oppressed the hearts of all.

On the platform of the guillotine they saw the executioner, walking back and forth. The increasing brightness of the morning majestically filled the sky.

Suddenly, there was heard that muffled sound made by drums covered with crape. The funereal rumbling came nearer; the ranks opened, and a procession entered the square, and went towards the scaffold.

At first the black drums; then a company of grenadiers, with arms lowered; then a platoon of gendarmes, with drawn swords; then the condemned,—Gauvain.

Gauvain walked free. Neither his feet nor his hands were bound. He was in undress uniform; he carried his sword.

Behind him came another platoon of gendarmes.

Gauvain still wore that expression of thoughtful joy on his face, which had lighted it up when he said to Cimourdain, "I am thinking of the future." Nothing could be more ineffably sublime than this lasting smile.

On reaching the melancholy spot, he first looked towards the top of the tower. He disdained the guillotine.

He knew that Cimourdain would consider it his duty to be present at the execution. His eyes sought him on the platform. He found him there.

Cimourdain was pale and cold. Those near him could not hear him breathe.

When he saw Gauvain, he did not stir.

Meanwhile, Gauvain was approaching the scaffold.

As he walked along, he looked at Cimourdain, and Cimourdain looked at him. It seemed as if Cimourdain strengthened himself with that look.

Gauvain reached the foot of the scaffold. He mounted it. The officer commanding the grenadiers followed him. He unfastened his sword and gave it to the officer, he took off his cravat and gave it to the executioner.

He was like a vision. Never had he looked so beautiful. His brown hair floated in the wind; it was not the custom to cut off the hair at that time. His white neck was like a woman's, his heroic, sovereign eye was like an archangel's. He was on the scaffold, deep in thought. This place, too, is a summit. Gauvain stood there, superbly calm. The sun wrapped him about as with a halo of glory.

It was necessary, nevertheless, to bind the criminal. The executioner came with a rope in his hand.

At this moment, when the soldiers saw their young captain so evidently destined to the knife, they could contain themselves no longer; the hearts of these warriors burst. That enormous thing, the sob of an army, was heard. A shout arose,—

"Mercy! mercy!"

Some fell on their knees; others threw down their guns and raised their arms toward the platform where Cimourdain was.

A grenadier mounted the steps to the guillotine, crying, "Will you receive a substitute? Take me." All repeated frantically, "Mercy! mercy!" and if this had been heard by lions, they would have been moved or frightened, for soldiers' tears are terrible.

The executioner stopped, not knowing what to do.

Then a short, low voice, which could be heard by all, it was so gruesome, cried from the top of the tower,—

"Enforce the law!"

They recognized that inexorable tone. Cimourdain had spoken. A shudder passed over the army.

The executioner hesitated no longer. He approached, holding his cord.

"Wait," said Gauvain.

He turned towards Cimourdain, with his right hand, which was still free, waved a farewell to him, and then let it be bound.

After it was bound, he said to the executioner,—

"Pardon. One moment more."

And he cried,—

"Long live the Republic!"

They laid him on the plank. That lovely proud head was placed in the infamous collar. The executioner laid back his hair gently, he pressed the spring, the triangle became detached and slipped down slowly at first, then quickly; a hideous sound was heard—

At the same instant another sound was heard. A pistol shot responded to the blow of the axe. Cimourdain had just seized one of the pistols which he had in his belt, and, as Gauvain's head rolled into the basket, Cimourdain sent a bullet through his own heart. The blood poured from his mouth; he fell down dead.

And these two souls, tragic sisters, departed together, the darkness of one mingling with the light of the other.

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