BOOK FIFTH.--THE DESCENT.

CHAPTER I--THE HISTORY OF A PROGRESS IN BLACK GLASS TRINKETS

And in the meantime, what had become of that mother who according to the people at Montfermeil, seemed to have abandoned her child? Where was she? What was she doing?

After leaving her little Cosette with the Thenardiers, she had continued her journey, and had reached M. sur M.

This, it will be remembered, was in 1818.

Fantine had quitted her province ten years before. M. sur M. had changed its aspect. While Fantine had been slowly descending from wretchedness to wretchedness, her native town had prospered.

About two years previously one of those industrial facts which are the grand events of small districts had taken place.

This detail is important, and we regard it as useful to develop it at length; we should almost say, to underline it.

From time immemorial, M. sur M. had had for its special industry the imitation of English jet and the black glass trinkets of Germany. This industry had always vegetated, on account of the high price of the raw material, which reacted on the manufacture. At the moment when Fantine returned to M. sur M., an unheard-of transformation had taken place in the production of "black goods." Towards the close of 1815 a man, a stranger, had established himself in the town, and had been inspired with the idea of substituting, in this manufacture, gum-lac for resin, and, for bracelets in particular, slides of sheet-iron simply laid together, for slides of soldered sheet-iron.

This very small change had effected a revolution.

This very small change had, in fact, prodigiously reduced the cost of the raw material, which had rendered it possible in the first place, to raise the price of manufacture, a benefit to the country; in the second place, to improve the workmanship, an advantage to the consumer; in the third place, to sell at a lower price, while trebling the profit, which was a benefit to the manufacturer.

Thus three results ensued from one idea.

In less than three years the inventor of this process had become rich, which is good, and had made every one about him rich, which is better. He was a stranger in the Department. Of his origin, nothing was known; of the beginning of his career, very little. It was rumored that he had

come to town with very little money, a few hundred francs at the most.

It was from this slender capital, enlisted in the service of an ingenious idea, developed by method and thought, that he had drawn his own fortune, and the fortune of the whole countryside.

On his arrival at M. sur M. he had only the garments, the appearance, and the language of a workingman.

It appears that on the very day when he made his obscure entry into the little town of M. sur M., just at nightfall, on a December evening, knapsack on back and thorn club in hand, a large fire had broken out in the town-hall. This man had rushed into the flames and saved, at the risk of his own life, two children who belonged to the captain of the gendarmerie; this is why they had forgotten to ask him for his passport. Afterwards they had learned his name. He was called Father Madeleine.

CHAPTER II--MADELEINE

He was a man about fifty years of age, who had a preoccupied air, and who was good. That was all that could be said about him.

Thanks to the rapid progress of the industry which he had so admirably re-constructed, M. sur M. had become a rather important centre of trade. Spain, which consumes a good deal of black jet, made enormous purchases there each year. M. sur M. almost rivalled London and Berlin in this branch of commerce. Father Madeleine's profits were such, that at the end of the second year he was able to erect a large factory, in which there were two vast workrooms, one for the men, and the other for women. Any one who was hungry could present himself there, and was sure of finding employment and bread. Father Madeleine required of the men good will, of the women pure morals, and of all, probity. He had separated the work-rooms in order to separate the sexes, and so that the women and girls might remain discreet. On this point he was inflexible. It was the only thing in which he was in a manner intolerant. He was all the more firmly set on this severity, since M. sur M., being a garrison town, opportunities for corruption abounded. However, his coming had been a boon, and his presence was a godsend. Before Father Madeleine's arrival, everything had languished in the country; now everything lived with a healthy life of toil. A strong circulation warmed everything and penetrated everywhere. Slack seasons and wretchedness were unknown. There was no pocket so obscure that it had not a little money in it; no dwelling so lowly that there was not some little joy within it.

Father Madeleine gave employment to every one. He exacted but one thing: Be an honest man. Be an honest woman.

As we have said, in the midst of this activity of which he was the cause and the pivot, Father Madeleine made his fortune; but a singular thing in a simple man of business, it did not seem as though that were his chief care. He appeared to be thinking much of others, and little of himself. In 1820 he was known to have a sum of six hundred and thirty thousand francs lodged in his name with Laffitte; but before reserving these six hundred and thirty thousand francs, he had spent more than a million for the town and its poor.

The hospital was badly endowed; he founded six beds there. M. sur M. is divided into the upper and the lower town. The lower town, in which he lived, had but one school, a miserable hovel, which was falling to ruin: he constructed two, one for girls, the other for boys. He allotted a salary from his own funds to the two instructors, a salary twice as large as their meagre official salary, and one day he said to some one who expressed surprise, "The two prime functionaries of the state are the nurse and the schoolmaster." He created at his own expense an infant school, a thing then almost unknown in France, and a fund for aiding old and infirm workmen. As his factory was a centre, a new quarter, in which there were a good many indigent families, rose rapidly around him; he established there a free dispensary.

At first, when they watched his beginnings, the good souls said, "He's a jolly fellow who means to get rich." When they saw him enriching the country before he enriched himself, the good souls said, "He is an ambitious man." This seemed all the more probable since the man was religious, and even practised his religion to a certain degree, a thing which was very favorably viewed at that epoch. He went regularly to low mass every Sunday. The local deputy, who nosed out all rivalry everywhere, soon began to grow uneasy over this religion. This deputy had been a member of the legislative body of the Empire, and shared the religious ideas of a father of the Oratoire, known under the name of Fouche, Duc d'Otrante, whose creature and friend he had been. He indulged in gentle raillery at God with closed doors. But when he beheld the wealthy manufacturer Madeleine going to low mass at seven o'clock, he perceived in him a possible candidate, and resolved to outdo him; he took a Jesuit confessor, and went to high mass and to vespers. Ambition was at that time, in the direct acceptation of the word, a race to the steeple. The poor profited by this terror as well as the good God, for the honorable deputy also founded two beds in the hospital, which made twelve.

Nevertheless, in 1819 a rumor one morning circulated through the town to the effect that, on the representations of the prefect and in consideration of the services rendered by him to the country, Father Madeleine was to be appointed by the King, mayor of M. sur M. Those who had pronounced this new-comer to be "an ambitious fellow," seized with delight on this opportunity which all men desire, to exclaim, "There!

what did we say!" All M. sur M. was in an uproar. The rumor was well founded. Several days later the appointment appeared in the Moniteur. On the following day Father Madeleine refused.

In this same year of 1819 the products of the new process invented by Madeleine figured in the industrial exhibition; when the jury made their report, the King appointed the inventor a chevalier of the Legion of Honor. A fresh excitement in the little town. Well, so it was the cross that he wanted! Father Madeleine refused the cross.

Decidedly this man was an enigma. The good souls got out of their predicament by saying, "After all, he is some sort of an adventurer."

We have seen that the country owed much to him; the poor owed him everything; he was so useful and he was so gentle that people had been obliged to honor and respect him. His workmen, in particular, adored him, and he endured this adoration with a sort of melancholy gravity. When he was known to be rich, "people in society" bowed to him, and he received invitations in the town; he was called, in town, Monsieur Madeleine; his workmen and the children continued to call him Father Madeleine, and that was what was most adapted to make him smile. In proportion as he mounted, throve, invitations rained down upon him. "Society" claimed him for its own. The prim little drawing-rooms on M. sur M., which, of course, had at first been closed to the artisan, opened both leaves of their folding-doors to the millionnaire. They made a thousand advances to him. He refused.

This time the good gossips had no trouble. "He is an ignorant man, of no education. No one knows where he came from. He would not know how to behave in society. It has not been absolutely proved that he knows how to read."

When they saw him making money, they said, "He is a man of business." When they saw him scattering his money about, they said, "He is an ambitious man." When he was seen to decline honors, they said, "He is an adventurer." When they saw him repulse society, they said, "He is a brute."

In 1820, five years after his arrival in M. sur M., the services which he had rendered to the district were so dazzling, the opinion of the whole country round about was so unanimous, that the King again appointed him mayor of the town. He again declined; but the prefect resisted his refusal, all the notabilities of the place came to implore him, the people in the street besought him; the urging was so vigorous that he ended by accepting. It was noticed that the thing which seemed chiefly to bring him to a decision was the almost irritated apostrophe addressed to him by an old woman of the people, who called to him from her threshold, in an angry way: "A good mayor is a useful thing. Is he drawing back before the good which he can do?"

This was the third phase of his ascent. Father Madeleine had become Monsieur Madeleine. Monsieur Madeleine became Monsieur le Maire.

CHAPTER III--SUMS DEPOSITED WITH LAFFITTE

On the other hand, he remained as simple as on the first day. He had gray hair, a serious eye, the sunburned complexion of a laborer, the thoughtful visage of a philosopher. He habitually wore a hat with a wide brim, and a long coat of coarse cloth, buttoned to the chin. He fulfilled his duties as mayor; but, with that exception, he lived in solitude. He spoke to but few people. He avoided polite attentions; he escaped quickly; he smiled to relieve himself of the necessity of talking; he gave, in order to get rid of the necessity for smiling, The women said of him, "What a good-natured bear!" His pleasure consisted in strolling in the fields.

He always took his meals alone, with an open book before him, which he read. He had a well-selected little library. He loved books; books are cold but safe friends. In proportion as leisure came to him with fortune, he seemed to take advantage of it to cultivate his mind. It had been observed that, ever since his arrival at M. sur M.. his language had grown more polished, more choice, and more gentle with every passing year. He liked to carry a gun with him on his strolls, but he rarely made use of it. When he did happen to do so, his shooting was something so infallible as to inspire terror. He never killed an inoffensive animal. He never shot at a little bird.

Although he was no longer young, it was thought that he was still prodigiously strong. He offered his assistance to any one who was in

need of it, lifted a horse, released a wheel clogged in the mud, or stopped a runaway bull by the horns. He always had his pockets full of money when he went out; but they were empty on his return. When he passed through a village, the ragged brats ran joyously after him, and surrounded him like a swarm of gnats.

It was thought that he must, in the past, have lived a country life, since he knew all sorts of useful secrets, which he taught to the peasants. He taught them how to destroy scurf on wheat, by sprinkling it and the granary and inundating the cracks in the floor with a solution of common salt; and how to chase away weevils by hanging up orviot in bloom everywhere, on the walls and the ceilings, among the grass and in the houses.

He had "recipes" for exterminating from a field, blight, tares, foxtail, and all parasitic growths which destroy the wheat. He defended a rabbit warren against rats, simply by the odor of a guinea-pig which he placed in it.

One day he saw some country people busily engaged in pulling up nettles; he examined the plants, which were uprooted and already dried, and said: "They are dead. Nevertheless, it would be a good thing to know how to make use of them. When the nettle is young, the leaf makes an excellent vegetable; when it is older, it has filaments and fibres like hemp and flax. Nettle cloth is as good as linen cloth. Chopped up, nettles are good for poultry; pounded, they are good for horned cattle. The seed of

the nettle, mixed with fodder, gives gloss to the hair of animals; the root, mixed with salt, produces a beautiful yellow coloring-matter. Moreover, it is an excellent hay, which can be cut twice. And what is required for the nettle? A little soil, no care, no culture. Only the seed falls as it is ripe, and it is difficult to collect it. That is all. With the exercise of a little care, the nettle could be made useful; it is neglected and it becomes hurtful. It is exterminated. How many men resemble the nettle!" He added, after a pause: "Remember this, my friends: there are no such things as bad plants or bad men. There are only bad cultivators."

The children loved him because he knew how to make charming little trifles of straw and cocoanuts.

When he saw the door of a church hung in black, he entered: he sought out funerals as other men seek christenings. Widowhood and the grief of others attracted him, because of his great gentleness; he mingled with the friends clad in mourning, with families dressed in black, with the priests groaning around a coffin. He seemed to like to give to his thoughts for text these funereal psalmodies filled with the vision of the other world. With his eyes fixed on heaven, he listened with a sort of aspiration towards all the mysteries of the infinite, those sad voices which sing on the verge of the obscure abyss of death.

He performed a multitude of good actions, concealing his agency in them as a man conceals himself because of evil actions. He penetrated houses

privately, at night; he ascended staircases furtively. A poor wretch on returning to his attic would find that his door had been opened, sometimes even forced, during his absence. The poor man made a clamor over it: some malefactor had been there! He entered, and the first thing he beheld was a piece of gold lying forgotten on some piece of furniture. The "malefactor" who had been there was Father Madeleine.

He was affable and sad. The people said: "There is a rich man who has not a haughty air. There is a happy man who has not a contented air."

Some people maintained that he was a mysterious person, and that no one ever entered his chamber, which was a regular anchorite's cell, furnished with winged hour-glasses and enlivened by cross-bones and skulls of dead men! This was much talked of, so that one of the elegant and malicious young women of M. sur M. came to him one day, and asked: "Monsieur le Maire, pray show us your chamber. It is said to be a grotto." He smiled, and introduced them instantly into this "grotto." They were well punished for their curiosity. The room was very simply furnished in mahogany, which was rather ugly, like all furniture of that sort, and hung with paper worth twelve sous. They could see nothing remarkable about it, except two candlesticks of antique pattern which stood on the chimney-piece and appeared to be silver, "for they were hall-marked," an observation full of the type of wit of petty towns.

Nevertheless, people continued to say that no one ever got into the room, and that it was a hermit's cave, a mysterious retreat, a hole, a

tomb.

It was also whispered about that he had "immense" sums deposited with Laffitte, with this peculiar feature, that they were always at his immediate disposal, so that, it was added, M. Madeleine could make his appearance at Laffitte's any morning, sign a receipt, and carry off his two or three millions in ten minutes. In reality, "these two or three millions" were reducible, as we have said, to six hundred and thirty or forty thousand francs.

CHAPTER IV--M. MADELEINE IN MOURNING

At the beginning of 1820 the newspapers announced the death of M. Myriel, Bishop of D----, surnamed "Monseigneur Bienvenu," who had died in the odor of sanctity at the age of eighty-two.

The Bishop of D---- to supply here a detail which the papers omitted--had been blind for many years before his death, and content to be blind, as his sister was beside him.

Let us remark by the way, that to be blind and to be loved, is, in fact, one of the most strangely exquisite forms of happiness upon this earth, where nothing is complete. To have continually at one's side a woman, a daughter, a sister, a charming being, who is there because you need her and because she cannot do without you; to know that we are indispensable to a person who is necessary to us; to be able to incessantly measure one's affection by the amount of her presence which she bestows on us, and to say to ourselves, "Since she consecrates the whole of her time to me, it is because I possess the whole of her heart"; to behold her thought in lieu of her face; to be able to verify the fidelity of one being amid the eclipse of the world; to regard the rustle of a gown as the sound of wings; to hear her come and go, retire, speak, return, sing, and to think that one is the centre of these steps, of this speech; to manifest at each instant one's personal attraction; to feel one's self all the more powerful because of one's infirmity; to become in one's obscurity, and through one's obscurity, the star around which

this angel gravitates,--few felicities equal this. The supreme happiness of life consists in the conviction that one is loved; loved for one's own sake--let us say rather, loved in spite of one's self; this conviction the blind man possesses. To be served in distress is to be caressed. Does he lack anything? No. One does not lose the sight when one has love. And what love! A love wholly constituted of virtue! There is no blindness where there is certainty. Soul seeks soul, gropingly, and finds it. And this soul, found and tested, is a woman. A hand sustains you; it is hers: a mouth lightly touches your brow; it is her mouth: you hear a breath very near you; it is hers. To have everything of her, from her worship to her pity, never to be left, to have that sweet weakness aiding you, to lean upon that immovable reed, to touch Providence with one's hands, and to be able to take it in one's arms,--God made tangible,--what bliss! The heart, that obscure, celestial flower, undergoes a mysterious blossoming. One would not exchange that shadow for all brightness! The angel soul is there, uninterruptedly there; if she departs, it is but to return again; she vanishes like a dream, and reappears like reality. One feels warmth approaching, and behold! she is there. One overflows with serenity, with gayety, with ecstasy; one is a radiance amid the night. And there are a thousand little cares. Nothings, which are enormous in that void. The most ineffable accents of the feminine voice employed to lull you, and supplying the vanished universe to you. One is caressed with the soul. One sees nothing, but one feels that one is adored. It is a paradise of shadows.

It was from this paradise that Monseigneur Welcome had passed to the other.

The announcement of his death was reprinted by the local journal of M. sur M. On the following day, M. Madeleine appeared clad wholly in black, and with crape on his hat.

This mourning was noticed in the town, and commented on. It seemed to throw a light on M. Madeleine's origin. It was concluded that some relationship existed between him and the venerable Bishop. "He has gone into mourning for the Bishop of D----" said the drawing-rooms; this raised M. Madeleine's credit greatly, and procured for him, instantly and at one blow, a certain consideration in the noble world of M. sur M. The microscopic Faubourg Saint-Germain of the place meditated raising the quarantine against M. Madeleine, the probable relative of a bishop. M. Madeleine perceived the advancement which he had obtained, by the more numerous courtesies of the old women and the more plentiful smiles of the young ones. One evening, a ruler in that petty great world, who was curious by right of seniority, ventured to ask him, "M. le Maire is doubtless a cousin of the late Bishop of D----?"

He said, "No, Madame."

"But," resumed the dowager, "you are wearing mourning for him."

He replied, "It is because I was a servant in his family in my youth."

Another thing which was remarked, was, that every time that he encountered in the town a young Savoyard who was roaming about the country and seeking chimneys to sweep, the mayor had him summoned, inquired his name, and gave him money. The little Savoyards told each other about it: a great many of them passed that way.

CHAPTER V--VAGUE FLASHES ON THE HORIZON

Little by little, and in the course of time, all this opposition subsided. There had at first been exercised against M. Madeleine, in virtue of a sort of law which all those who rise must submit to, blackening and calumnies; then they grew to be nothing more than ill-nature, then merely malicious remarks, then even this entirely disappeared; respect became complete, unanimous, cordial, and towards 1821 the moment arrived when the word "Monsieur le Maire" was pronounced at M. sur M. with almost the same accent as "Monseigneur the Bishop" had been pronounced in D---- in 1815. People came from a distance of ten leagues around to consult M. Madeleine. He put an end to differences, he prevented lawsuits, he reconciled enemies. Every one took him for the judge, and with good reason. It seemed as though he had for a soul the book of the natural law. It was like an epidemic of veneration, which in the course of six or seven years gradually took possession of the whole district.

One single man in the town, in the arrondissement, absolutely escaped this contagion, and, whatever Father Madeleine did, remained his opponent as though a sort of incorruptible and imperturbable instinct kept him on the alert and uneasy. It seems, in fact, as though there existed in certain men a veritable bestial instinct, though pure and upright, like all instincts, which creates antipathies and sympathies, which fatally separates one nature from another nature, which does not hesitate, which feels no disquiet, which does not hold its peace,

and which never belies itself, clear in its obscurity, infallible, imperious, intractable, stubborn to all counsels of the intelligence and to all the dissolvents of reason, and which, in whatever manner destinies are arranged, secretly warns the man-dog of the presence of the man-cat, and the man-fox of the presence of the man-lion.

It frequently happened that when M. Madeleine was passing along a street, calm, affectionate, surrounded by the blessings of all, a man of lofty stature, clad in an iron-gray frock-coat, armed with a heavy cane, and wearing a battered hat, turned round abruptly behind him, and followed him with his eyes until he disappeared, with folded arms and a slow shake of the head, and his upper lip raised in company with his lower to his nose, a sort of significant grimace which might be translated by: "What is that man, after all? I certainly have seen him somewhere. In any case, I am not his dupe."

This person, grave with a gravity which was almost menacing, was one of those men who, even when only seen by a rapid glimpse, arrest the spectator's attention.

His name was Javert, and he belonged to the police.

At M. sur M. he exercised the unpleasant but useful functions of an inspector. He had not seen Madeleine's beginnings. Javert owed the post which he occupied to the protection of M. Chabouillet, the secretary of the Minister of State, Comte Angeles, then prefect of police at Paris.

When Javert arrived at M. sur M. the fortune of the great manufacturer was already made, and Father Madeleine had become Monsieur Madeleine.

Certain police officers have a peculiar physiognomy, which is complicated with an air of baseness mingled with an air of authority. Javert possessed this physiognomy minus the baseness.

It is our conviction that if souls were visible to the eyes, we should be able to see distinctly that strange thing that each one individual of the human race corresponds to some one of the species of the animal creation; and we could easily recognize this truth, hardly perceived by the thinker, that from the oyster to the eagle, from the pig to the tiger, all animals exist in man, and that each one of them is in a man. Sometimes even several of them at a time.

Animals are nothing else than the figures of our virtues and our vices, straying before our eyes, the visible phantoms of our souls. God shows them to us in order to induce us to reflect. Only since animals are mere shadows, God has not made them capable of education in the full sense of the word; what is the use? On the contrary, our souls being realities and having a goal which is appropriate to them, God has bestowed on them intelligence; that is to say, the possibility of education. Social education, when well done, can always draw from a soul, of whatever sort it may be, the utility which it contains.

This, be it said, is of course from the restricted point of view of the

terrestrial life which is apparent, and without prejudging the profound question of the anterior or ulterior personality of the beings which are not man. The visible I in nowise authorizes the thinker to deny the latent I. Having made this reservation, let us pass on.

Now, if the reader will admit, for a moment, with us, that in every man there is one of the animal species of creation, it will be easy for us to say what there was in Police Officer Javert.

The peasants of Asturias are convinced that in every litter of wolves there is one dog, which is killed by the mother because, otherwise, as he grew up, he would devour the other little ones.

Give to this dog-son of a wolf a human face, and the result will be Javert.

Javert had been born in prison, of a fortune-teller, whose husband was in the galleys. As he grew up, he thought that he was outside the pale of society, and he despaired of ever re-entering it. He observed that society unpardoningly excludes two classes of men,--those who attack it and those who guard it; he had no choice except between these two classes; at the same time, he was conscious of an indescribable foundation of rigidity, regularity, and probity, complicated with an inexpressible hatred for the race of bohemians whence he was sprung. He entered the police; he succeeded there. At forty years of age he was an inspector.

During his youth he had been employed in the convict establishments of the South.

Before proceeding further, let us come to an understanding as to the words, "human face," which we have just applied to Javert.

The human face of Javert consisted of a flat nose, with two deep nostrils, towards which enormous whiskers ascended on his cheeks. One felt ill at ease when he saw these two forests and these two caverns for the first time. When Javert laughed,--and his laugh was rare and terrible,--his thin lips parted and revealed to view not only his teeth, but his gums, and around his nose there formed a flattened and savage fold, as on the muzzle of a wild beast. Javert, serious, was a watchdog; when he laughed, he was a tiger. As for the rest, he had very little skull and a great deal of jaw; his hair concealed his forehead and fell over his eyebrows; between his eyes there was a permanent, central frown, like an imprint of wrath; his gaze was obscure; his mouth pursed up and terrible; his air that of ferocious command.

This man was composed of two very simple and two very good sentiments, comparatively; but he rendered them almost bad, by dint of exaggerating them,--respect for authority, hatred of rebellion; and in his eyes, murder, robbery, all crimes, are only forms of rebellion. He enveloped in a blind and profound faith every one who had a function in the state, from the prime minister to the rural policeman. He covered with scorn,

aversion, and disgust every one who had once crossed the legal threshold of evil. He was absolute, and admitted no exceptions. On the one hand, he said, "The functionary can make no mistake; the magistrate is never the wrong." On the other hand, he said, "These men are irremediably lost. Nothing good can come from them." He fully shared the opinion of those extreme minds which attribute to human law I know not what power of making, or, if the reader will have it so, of authenticating, demons, and who place a Styx at the base of society. He was stoical, serious, austere; a melancholy dreamer, humble and haughty, like fanatics. His glance was like a gimlet, cold and piercing. His whole life hung on these two words: watchfulness and supervision. He had introduced a straight line into what is the most crooked thing in the world; he possessed the conscience of his usefulness, the religion of his functions, and he was a spy as other men are priests. Woe to the man who fell into his hands! He would have arrested his own father, if the latter had escaped from the galleys, and would have denounced his mother, if she had broken her ban. And he would have done it with that sort of inward satisfaction which is conferred by virtue. And, withal, a life of privation, isolation, abnegation, chastity, with never a diversion. It was implacable duty; the police understood, as the Spartans understood Sparta, a pitiless lying in wait, a ferocious honesty, a marble informer, Brutus in Vidocq.

Javert's whole person was expressive of the man who spies and who withdraws himself from observation. The mystical school of Joseph de Maistre, which at that epoch seasoned with lofty cosmogony those things

which were called the ultra newspapers, would not have failed to declare that Javert was a symbol. His brow was not visible; it disappeared beneath his hat: his eyes were not visible, since they were lost under his eyebrows: his chin was not visible, for it was plunged in his cravat: his hands were not visible; they were drawn up in his sleeves: and his cane was not visible; he carried it under his coat. But when the occasion presented itself, there was suddenly seen to emerge from all this shadow, as from an ambuscade, a narrow and angular forehead, a baleful glance, a threatening chin, enormous hands, and a monstrous cudgel.

In his leisure moments, which were far from frequent, he read, although he hated books; this caused him to be not wholly illiterate. This could be recognized by some emphasis in his speech.

As we have said, he had no vices. When he was pleased with himself, he permitted himself a pinch of snuff. Therein lay his connection with humanity.

The reader will have no difficulty in understanding that Javert was the terror of that whole class which the annual statistics of the Ministry of Justice designates under the rubric, Vagrants. The name of Javert routed them by its mere utterance; the face of Javert petrified them at sight.

Such was this formidable man.

Javert was like an eye constantly fixed on M. Madeleine. An eye full of suspicion and conjecture. M. Madeleine had finally perceived the fact; but it seemed to be of no importance to him. He did not even put a question to Javert; he neither sought nor avoided him; he bore that embarrassing and almost oppressive gaze without appearing to notice it. He treated Javert with ease and courtesy, as he did all the rest of the world.

It was divined, from some words which escaped Javert, that he had secretly investigated, with that curiosity which belongs to the race, and into which there enters as much instinct as will, all the anterior traces which Father Madeleine might have left elsewhere. He seemed to know, and he sometimes said in covert words, that some one had gleaned certain information in a certain district about a family which had disappeared. Once he chanced to say, as he was talking to himself, "I think I have him!" Then he remained pensive for three days, and uttered not a word. It seemed that the thread which he thought he held had broken.

Moreover, and this furnishes the necessary corrective for the too absolute sense which certain words might present, there can be nothing really infallible in a human creature, and the peculiarity of instinct is that it can become confused, thrown off the track, and defeated. Otherwise, it would be superior to intelligence, and the beast would be found to be provided with a better light than man.

Javert was evidently somewhat disconcerted by the perfect naturalness and tranquillity of M. Madeleine.

One day, nevertheless, his strange manner appeared to produce an impression on M. Madeleine. It was on the following occasion.

CHAPTER VI--FATHER FAUCHELEVENT

One morning M. Madeleine was passing through an unpaved alley of M. sur M.; he heard a noise, and saw a group some distance away. He approached. An old man named Father Fauchelevent had just fallen beneath his cart, his horse having tumbled down.

This Fauchelevent was one of the few enemies whom M. Madeleine had at that time. When Madeleine arrived in the neighborhood, Fauchelevent, an ex-notary and a peasant who was almost educated, had a business which was beginning to be in a bad way. Fauchelevent had seen this simple workman grow rich, while he, a lawyer, was being ruined. This had filled him with jealousy, and he had done all he could, on every occasion, to injure Madeleine. Then bankruptcy had come; and as the old man had nothing left but a cart and a horse, and neither family nor children, he had turned carter.

The horse had two broken legs and could not rise. The old man was caught in the wheels. The fall had been so unlucky that the whole weight of the vehicle rested on his breast. The cart was quite heavily laden. Father Fauchelevent was rattling in the throat in the most lamentable manner. They had tried, but in vain, to drag him out. An unmethodical effort, aid awkwardly given, a wrong shake, might kill him. It was impossible to disengage him otherwise than by lifting the vehicle off of him.
Javert, who had come up at the moment of the accident, had sent for a jack-screw.

M. Madeleine arrived. People stood aside respectfully.

"Help!" cried old Fauchelevent. "Who will be good and save the old man?"

M. Madeleine turned towards those present:--

"Is there a jack-screw to be had?"

"One has been sent for," answered the peasant.

"How long will it take to get it?"

"They have gone for the nearest, to Flachot's place, where there is a farrier; but it makes no difference; it will take a good quarter of an hour."

"A quarter of an hour!" exclaimed Madeleine.

It had rained on the preceding night; the soil was soaked.

The cart was sinking deeper into the earth every moment, and crushing the old carter's breast more and more. It was evident that his ribs would be broken in five minutes more.

"It is impossible to wait another quarter of an hour," said Madeleine to

the peasants, who were staring at him.

"We must!"

"But it will be too late then! Don't you see that the cart is sinking?"

"Well!"

"Listen," resumed Madeleine; "there is still room enough under the cart to allow a man to crawl beneath it and raise it with his back. Only half a minute, and the poor man can be taken out. Is there any one here who has stout loins and heart? There are five louis d'or to be earned!"

Not a man in the group stirred.

"Ten louis," said Madeleine.

The persons present dropped their eyes. One of them muttered: "A man would need to be devilish strong. And then he runs the risk of getting crushed!"

"Come," began Madeleine again, "twenty louis."

The same silence.

"It is not the will which is lacking," said a voice.

M. Madeleine turned round, and recognized Javert. He had not noticed him on his arrival.

Javert went on:--

"It is strength. One would have to be a terrible man to do such a thing as lift a cart like that on his back."

Then, gazing fixedly at M. Madeleine, he went on, emphasizing every word that he uttered:--

"Monsieur Madeleine, I have never known but one man capable of doing what you ask."

Madeleine shuddered.

Javert added, with an air of indifference, but without removing his eyes from Madeleine:--

"He was a convict."

"Ah!" said Madeleine.

"In the galleys at Toulon."

Madeleine turned pale.

Meanwhile, the cart continued to sink slowly. Father Fauchelevent rattled in the throat, and shrieked:--

"I am strangling! My ribs are breaking! a screw! something! Ah!"

Madeleine glanced about him.

"Is there, then, no one who wishes to earn twenty louis and save the life of this poor old man?"

No one stirred. Javert resumed:--

"I have never known but one man who could take the place of a screw, and he was that convict."

"Ah! It is crushing me!" cried the old man.

Madeleine raised his head, met Javert's falcon eye still fixed upon him, looked at the motionless peasants, and smiled sadly. Then, without saying a word, he fell on his knees, and before the crowd had even had time to utter a cry, he was underneath the vehicle.

A terrible moment of expectation and silence ensued.

They beheld Madeleine, almost flat on his stomach beneath that terrible weight, make two vain efforts to bring his knees and his elbows together. They shouted to him, "Father Madeleine, come out!" Old Fauchelevent himself said to him, "Monsieur Madeleine, go away! You see that I am fated to die! Leave me! You will get yourself crushed also!" Madeleine made no reply.

All the spectators were panting. The wheels had continued to sink, and it had become almost impossible for Madeleine to make his way from under the vehicle.

Suddenly the enormous mass was seen to quiver, the cart rose slowly, the wheels half emerged from the ruts. They heard a stifled voice crying, "Make haste! Help!" It was Madeleine, who had just made a final effort.

They rushed forwards. The devotion of a single man had given force and courage to all. The cart was raised by twenty arms. Old Fauchelevent was saved.

Madeleine rose. He was pale, though dripping with perspiration. His clothes were torn and covered with mud. All wept. The old man kissed his knees and called him the good God. As for him, he bore upon his countenance an indescribable expression of happy and celestial suffering, and he fixed his tranquil eye on Javert, who was still staring at him.

CHAPTER VII--FAUCHELEVENT BECOMES A GARDENER IN PARIS

Fauchelevent had dislocated his kneepan in his fall. Father Madeleine had him conveyed to an infirmary which he had established for his workmen in the factory building itself, and which was served by two sisters of charity. On the following morning the old man found a thousand-franc bank-note on his night-stand, with these words in Father Madeleine's writing: "I purchase your horse and cart." The cart was broken, and the horse was dead. Fauchelevent recovered, but his knee remained stiff. M. Madeleine, on the recommendation of the sisters of charity and of his priest, got the good man a place as gardener in a female convent in the Rue Saint-Antoine in Paris.

Some time afterwards, M. Madeleine was appointed mayor. The first time that Javert beheld M. Madeleine clothed in the scarf which gave him authority over the town, he felt the sort of shudder which a watch-dog might experience on smelling a wolf in his master's clothes. From that time forth he avoided him as much as he possibly could. When the requirements of the service imperatively demanded it, and he could not do otherwise than meet the mayor, he addressed him with profound respect.

This prosperity created at M. sur M. by Father Madeleine had, besides the visible signs which we have mentioned, another symptom which was none the less significant for not being visible. This never deceives.

When the population suffers, when work is lacking, when there is no commerce, the tax-payer resists imposts through penury, he exhausts and oversteps his respite, and the state expends a great deal of money in the charges for compelling and collection. When work is abundant, when the country is rich and happy, the taxes are paid easily and cost the state nothing. It may be said, that there is one infallible thermometer of the public misery and riches,--the cost of collecting the taxes.
In the course of seven years the expense of collecting the taxes had diminished three-fourths in the arrondissement of M. sur M., and this led to this arrondissement being frequently cited from all the rest by M. de Villele, then Minister of Finance.

Such was the condition of the country when Fantine returned thither. No one remembered her. Fortunately, the door of M. Madeleine's factory was like the face of a friend. She presented herself there, and was admitted to the women's workroom. The trade was entirely new to Fantine; she could not be very skilful at it, and she therefore earned but little by her day's work; but it was sufficient; the problem was solved; she was earning her living.

CHAPTER VIII--MADAME VICTURNIEN EXPENDS THIRTY FRANCS ON MORALITY

When Fantine saw that she was making her living, she felt joyful for a moment. To live honestly by her own labor, what mercy from heaven! The taste for work had really returned to her. She bought a looking-glass, took pleasure in surveying in it her youth, her beautiful hair, her fine teeth; she forgot many things; she thought only of Cosette and of the possible future, and was almost happy. She hired a little room and furnished on credit on the strength of her future work--a lingering trace of her improvident ways. As she was not able to say that she was married she took good care, as we have seen, not to mention her little girl.

At first, as the reader has seen, she paid the Thenardiers promptly. As she only knew how to sign her name, she was obliged to write through a public letter-writer.

She wrote often, and this was noticed. It began to be said in an undertone, in the women's workroom, that Fantine "wrote letters" and that "she had ways about her."

There is no one for spying on people's actions like those who are not concerned in them. Why does that gentleman never come except at nightfall? Why does Mr. So-and-So never hang his key on its nail on Tuesday? Why does he always take the narrow streets? Why does Madame

always descend from her hackney-coach before reaching her house? Why does she send out to purchase six sheets of note paper, when she has a "whole stationer's shop full of it?" etc. There exist beings who, for the sake of obtaining the key to these enigmas, which are, moreover, of no consequence whatever to them, spend more money, waste more time, take more trouble, than would be required for ten good actions, and that gratuitously, for their own pleasure, without receiving any other payment for their curiosity than curiosity. They will follow up such and such a man or woman for whole days; they will do sentry duty for hours at a time on the corners of the streets, under alley-way doors at night, in cold and rain; they will bribe errand-porters, they will make the drivers of hackney-coaches and lackeys tipsy, buy a waiting-maid, suborn a porter. Why? For no reason. A pure passion for seeing, knowing, and penetrating into things. A pure itch for talking. And often these secrets once known, these mysteries made public, these enigmas illuminated by the light of day, bring on catastrophies, duels, failures, the ruin of families, and broken lives, to the great joy of those who have "found out everything," without any interest in the matter, and by pure instinct. A sad thing.

Certain persons are malicious solely through a necessity for talking. Their conversation, the chat of the drawing-room, gossip of the anteroom, is like those chimneys which consume wood rapidly; they need a great amount of combustibles; and their combustibles are furnished by their neighbors.

So Fantine was watched.

In addition, many a one was jealous of her golden hair and of her white teeth.

It was remarked that in the workroom she often turned aside, in the midst of the rest, to wipe away a tear. These were the moments when she was thinking of her child; perhaps, also, of the man whom she had loved.

Breaking the gloomy bonds of the past is a mournful task.

It was observed that she wrote twice a month at least, and that she paid the carriage on the letter. They managed to obtain the address: Monsieur, Monsieur Thenardier, inn-keeper at Montfermeil. The public writer, a good old man who could not fill his stomach with red wine without emptying his pocket of secrets, was made to talk in the wine-shop. In short, it was discovered that Fantine had a child. "She must be a pretty sort of a woman." An old gossip was found, who made the trip to Montfermeil, talked to the Thenardiers, and said on her return: "For my five and thirty francs I have freed my mind. I have seen the child."

The gossip who did this thing was a gorgon named Madame Victurnien, the guardian and door-keeper of every one's virtue. Madame Victurnien was fifty-six, and re-enforced the mask of ugliness with the mask of age. A quavering voice, a whimsical mind. This old dame had once been

young--astonishing fact! In her youth, in '93, she had married a monk who had fled from his cloister in a red cap, and passed from the Bernardines to the Jacobins. She was dry, rough, peevish, sharp, captious, almost venomous; all this in memory of her monk, whose widow she was, and who had ruled over her masterfully and bent her to his will. She was a nettle in which the rustle of the cassock was visible. At the Restoration she had turned bigot, and that with so much energy that the priests had forgiven her her monk. She had a small property, which she bequeathed with much ostentation to a religious community. She was in high favor at the episcopal palace of Arras. So this Madame Victurnien went to Montfermeil, and returned with the remark, "I have seen the child."

All this took time. Fantine had been at the factory for more than a year, when, one morning, the superintendent of the workroom handed her fifty francs from the mayor, told her that she was no longer employed in the shop, and requested her, in the mayor's name, to leave the neighborhood.

This was the very month when the Thenardiers, after having demanded twelve francs instead of six, had just exacted fifteen francs instead of twelve.

Fantine was overwhelmed. She could not leave the neighborhood; she was in debt for her rent and furniture. Fifty francs was not sufficient to cancel this debt. She stammered a few supplicating words. The

superintendent ordered her to leave the shop on the instant. Besides, Fantine was only a moderately good workwoman. Overcome with shame, even more than with despair, she quitted the shop, and returned to her room. So her fault was now known to every one.

She no longer felt strong enough to say a word. She was advised to see the mayor; she did not dare. The mayor had given her fifty francs because he was good, and had dismissed her because he was just. She bowed before the decision.

CHAPTER IX--MADAME VICTURNIEN'S SUCCESS

So the monk's widow was good for something.

But M. Madeleine had heard nothing of all this. Life is full of just such combinations of events. M. Madeleine was in the habit of almost never entering the women's workroom.

At the head of this room he had placed an elderly spinster, whom the priest had provided for him, and he had full confidence in this superintendent,--a truly respectable person, firm, equitable, upright, full of the charity which consists in giving, but not having in the same degree that charity which consists in understanding and in forgiving. M. Madeleine relied wholly on her. The best men are often obliged to delegate their authority. It was with this full power, and the conviction that she was doing right, that the superintendent had instituted the suit, judged, condemned, and executed Fantine.

As regards the fifty francs, she had given them from a fund which M. Madeleine had intrusted to her for charitable purposes, and for giving assistance to the workwomen, and of which she rendered no account.

Fantine tried to obtain a situation as a servant in the neighborhood; she went from house to house. No one would have her. She could not leave town. The second-hand dealer, to whom she was in debt for her furniture--and what furniture!--said to her, "If you leave, I will have

you arrested as a thief." The householder, whom she owed for her rent, said to her, "You are young and pretty; you can pay." She divided the fifty francs between the landlord and the furniture-dealer, returned to the latter three-quarters of his goods, kept only necessaries, and found herself without work, without a trade, with nothing but her bed, and still about fifty francs in debt.

She began to make coarse shirts for soldiers of the garrison, and earned twelve sous a day. Her daughter cost her ten. It was at this point that she began to pay the Thenardiers irregularly.

However, the old woman who lighted her candle for her when she returned at night, taught her the art of living in misery. Back of living on little, there is the living on nothing. These are the two chambers; the first is dark, the second is black.

Fantine learned how to live without fire entirely in the winter; how to give up a bird which eats a half a farthing's worth of millet every two days; how to make a coverlet of one's petticoat, and a petticoat of one's coverlet; how to save one's candle, by taking one's meals by the light of the opposite window. No one knows all that certain feeble creatures, who have grown old in privation and honesty, can get out of a sou. It ends by being a talent. Fantine acquired this sublime talent, and regained a little courage.

At this epoch she said to a neighbor, "Bah! I say to myself, by only

sleeping five hours, and working all the rest of the time at my sewing, I shall always manage to nearly earn my bread. And, then, when one is sad, one eats less. Well, sufferings, uneasiness, a little bread on one hand, trouble on the other,--all this will support me."

It would have been a great happiness to have her little girl with her in this distress. She thought of having her come. But what then! Make her share her own destitution! And then, she was in debt to the Thenardiers! How could she pay them? And the journey! How pay for that?

The old woman who had given her lessons in what may be called the life of indigence, was a sainted spinster named Marguerite, who was pious with a true piety, poor and charitable towards the poor, and even towards the rich, knowing how to write just sufficiently to sign herself Marguerite, and believing in God, which is science.

There are many such virtuous people in this lower world; some day they will be in the world above. This life has a morrow.

At first, Fantine had been so ashamed that she had not dared to go out.

When she was in the street, she divined that people turned round behind her, and pointed at her; every one stared at her and no one greeted her; the cold and bitter scorn of the passers-by penetrated her very flesh and soul like a north wind.

It seems as though an unfortunate woman were utterly bare beneath the sarcasm and the curiosity of all in small towns. In Paris, at least, no one knows you, and this obscurity is a garment. Oh! how she would have liked to betake herself to Paris! Impossible!

She was obliged to accustom herself to disrepute, as she had accustomed herself to indigence. Gradually she decided on her course. At the expiration of two or three months she shook off her shame, and began to go about as though there were nothing the matter. "It is all the same to me," she said.

She went and came, bearing her head well up, with a bitter smile, and was conscious that she was becoming brazen-faced.

Madame Victurnien sometimes saw her passing, from her window, noticed the distress of "that creature" who, "thanks to her," had been "put back in her proper place," and congratulated herself. The happiness of the evil-minded is black.

Excess of toil wore out Fantine, and the little dry cough which troubled her increased. She sometimes said to her neighbor, Marguerite, "Just feel how hot my hands are!"

Nevertheless, when she combed her beautiful hair in the morning with an old broken comb, and it flowed about her like floss silk, she experienced a moment of happy coquetry.

CHAPTER X--RESULT OF THE SUCCESS

She had been dismissed towards the end of the winter; the summer passed, but winter came again. Short days, less work. Winter: no warmth, no light, no noonday, the evening joining on to the morning, fogs, twilight; the window is gray; it is impossible to see clearly at it. The sky is but a vent-hole. The whole day is a cavern. The sun has the air of a beggar. A frightful season! Winter changes the water of heaven and the heart of man into a stone. Her creditors harrassed her.

Fantine earned too little. Her debts had increased. The Thenardiers, who were not promptly paid, wrote to her constantly letters whose contents drove her to despair, and whose carriage ruined her. One day they wrote to her that her little Cosette was entirely naked in that cold weather, that she needed a woollen skirt, and that her mother must send at least ten francs for this. She received the letter, and crushed it in her hands all day long. That evening she went into a barber's shop at the corner of the street, and pulled out her comb. Her admirable golden hair fell to her knees.

"What splendid hair!" exclaimed the barber.

"How much will you give me for it?" said she.

"Ten francs."

"Cut it off."

She purchased a knitted petticoat and sent it to the Thenardiers. This petticoat made the Thenardiers furious. It was the money that they wanted. They gave the petticoat to Eponine. The poor Lark continued to shiver.

Fantine thought: "My child is no longer cold. I have clothed her with my hair." She put on little round caps which concealed her shorn head, and in which she was still pretty.

Dark thoughts held possession of Fantine's heart.

When she saw that she could no longer dress her hair, she began to hate every one about her. She had long shared the universal veneration for Father Madeleine; yet, by dint of repeating to herself that it was he who had discharged her, that he was the cause of her unhappiness, she came to hate him also, and most of all. When she passed the factory in working hours, when the workpeople were at the door, she affected to laugh and sing.

An old workwoman who once saw her laughing and singing in this fashion said, "There's a girl who will come to a bad end."

She took a lover, the first who offered, a man whom she did not love, out of bravado and with rage in her heart. He was a miserable scamp,

a sort of mendicant musician, a lazy beggar, who beat her, and who abandoned her as she had taken him, in disgust.

She adored her child.

The lower she descended, the darker everything grew about her, the more radiant shone that little angel at the bottom of her heart. She said, "When I get rich, I will have my Cosette with me;" and she laughed. Her cough did not leave her, and she had sweats on her back.

One day she received from the Thenardiers a letter couched in the following terms: "Cosette is ill with a malady which is going the rounds of the neighborhood. A miliary fever, they call it. Expensive drugs are required. This is ruining us, and we can no longer pay for them. If you do not send us forty francs before the week is out, the little one will be dead."

She burst out laughing, and said to her old neighbor: "Ah! they are good! Forty francs! the idea! That makes two napoleons! Where do they think I am to get them? These peasants are stupid, truly."

Nevertheless she went to a dormer window in the staircase and read the letter once more. Then she descended the stairs and emerged, running and leaping and still laughing.

Some one met her and said to her, "What makes you so gay?"

She replied: "A fine piece of stupidity that some country people have written to me. They demand forty francs of me. So much for you, you peasants!"

As she crossed the square, she saw a great many people collected around a carriage of eccentric shape, upon the top of which stood a man dressed in red, who was holding forth. He was a quack dentist on his rounds, who was offering to the public full sets of teeth, opiates, powders and elixirs.

Fantine mingled in the group, and began to laugh with the rest at the harangue, which contained slang for the populace and jargon for respectable people. The tooth-puller espied the lovely, laughing girl, and suddenly exclaimed: "You have beautiful teeth, you girl there, who are laughing; if you want to sell me your palettes, I will give you a gold napoleon apiece for them."

"What are my palettes?" asked Fantine.

"The palettes," replied the dental professor, "are the front teeth, the two upper ones."

"How horrible!" exclaimed Fantine.

"Two napoleons!" grumbled a toothless old woman who was present. "Here's

a lucky girl!"

Fantine fled and stopped her ears that she might not hear the hoarse voice of the man shouting to her: "Reflect, my beauty! two napoleons; they may prove of service. If your heart bids you, come this evening to the inn of the Tillac d'Argent; you will find me there."

Fantine returned home. She was furious, and related the occurrence to her good neighbor Marguerite: "Can you understand such a thing? Is he not an abominable man? How can they allow such people to go about the country! Pull out my two front teeth! Why, I should be horrible! My hair will grow again, but my teeth! Ah! what a monster of a man! I should prefer to throw myself head first on the pavement from the fifth story! He told me that he should be at the Tillac d'Argent this evening."

"And what did he offer?" asked Marguerite.

"Two napoleons."

"That makes forty francs."

"Yes," said Fantine; "that makes forty francs."

She remained thoughtful, and began her work. At the expiration of a quarter of an hour she left her sewing and went to read the Thenardiers' letter once more on the staircase.

On her return, she said to Marguerite, who was at work beside her:--

"What is a miliary fever? Do you know?"

"Yes," answered the old spinster; "it is a disease."

"Does it require many drugs?"

"Oh! terrible drugs."

"How does one get it?"

"It is a malady that one gets without knowing how."

"Then it attacks children?"

"Children in particular."

"Do people die of it?"

"They may," said Marguerite.

Fantine left the room and went to read her letter once more on the staircase.

That evening she went out, and was seen to turn her steps in the direction of the Rue de Paris, where the inns are situated.

The next morning, when Marguerite entered Fantine's room before daylight,--for they always worked together, and in this manner used only one candle for the two,--she found Fantine seated on her bed, pale and frozen. She had not lain down. Her cap had fallen on her knees.
Her candle had burned all night, and was almost entirely consumed.
Marguerite halted on the threshold, petrified at this tremendous wastefulness, and exclaimed:--

"Lord! the candle is all burned out! Something has happened."

Then she looked at Fantine, who turned toward her her head bereft of its hair.

Fantine had grown ten years older since the preceding night.

"Jesus!" said Marguerite, "what is the matter with you, Fantine?"

"Nothing," replied Fantine. "Quite the contrary. My child will not die of that frightful malady, for lack of succor. I am content."

So saying, she pointed out to the spinster two napoleons which were glittering on the table.

"Ah! Jesus God!" cried Marguerite. "Why, it is a fortune! Where did you get those louis d'or?"

"I got them," replied Fantine.

At the same time she smiled. The candle illuminated her countenance. It was a bloody smile. A reddish saliva soiled the corners of her lips, and she had a black hole in her mouth.

The two teeth had been extracted.

She sent the forty francs to Montfermeil.

After all it was a ruse of the Thenardiers to obtain money. Cosette was not ill.

Fantine threw her mirror out of the window. She had long since quitted her cell on the second floor for an attic with only a latch to fasten it, next the roof; one of those attics whose extremity forms an angle with the floor, and knocks you on the head every instant. The poor occupant can reach the end of his chamber as he can the end of his destiny, only by bending over more and more.

She had no longer a bed; a rag which she called her coverlet, a mattress on the floor, and a seatless chair still remained. A little rosebush which she had, had dried up, forgotten, in one corner. In the other

corner was a butter-pot to hold water, which froze in winter, and in which the various levels of the water remained long marked by these circles of ice. She had lost her shame; she lost her coquetry. A final sign. She went out, with dirty caps. Whether from lack of time or from indifference, she no longer mended her linen. As the heels wore out, she dragged her stockings down into her shoes. This was evident from the perpendicular wrinkles. She patched her bodice, which was old and worn out, with scraps of calico which tore at the slightest movement. The people to whom she was indebted made "scenes" and gave her no peace. She found them in the street, she found them again on her staircase. She passed many a night weeping and thinking. Her eyes were very bright, and she felt a steady pain in her shoulder towards the top of the left shoulder-blade. She coughed a great deal. She deeply hated Father Madeleine, but made no complaint. She sewed seventeen hours a day; but a contractor for the work of prisons, who made the prisoners work at a discount, suddenly made prices fall, which reduced the daily earnings of working-women to nine sous. Seventeen hours of toil, and nine sous a day! Her creditors were more pitiless than ever. The second-hand dealer, who had taken back nearly all his furniture, said to her incessantly, "When will you pay me, you hussy?" What did they want of her, good God! She felt that she was being hunted, and something of the wild beast developed in her. About the same time, Thenardier wrote to her that he had waited with decidedly too much amiability and that he must have a hundred francs at once; otherwise he would turn little Cosette out of doors, convalescent as she was from her heavy illness, into the cold and the streets, and that she might do what she liked with herself, and die

if she chose. "A hundred francs," thought Fantine. "But in what trade can one earn a hundred sous a day?"

"Come!" said she, "let us sell what is left."

The unfortunate girl became a woman of the town.

CHAPTER XI--CHRISTUS NOS LIBERAVIT

What is this history of Fantine? It is society purchasing a slave.

From whom? From misery.

From hunger, cold, isolation, destitution. A dolorous bargain. A soul for a morsel of bread. Misery offers; society accepts.

The sacred law of Jesus Christ governs our civilization, but it does not, as yet, permeate it; it is said that slavery has disappeared from European civilization. This is a mistake. It still exists; but it weighs only upon the woman, and it is called prostitution.

It weighs upon the woman, that is to say, upon grace, weakness, beauty, maternity. This is not one of the least of man's disgraces.

At the point in this melancholy drama which we have now reached, nothing is left to Fantine of that which she had formerly been.

She has become marble in becoming mire. Whoever touches her feels cold. She passes; she endures you; she ignores you; she is the severe and dishonored figure. Life and the social order have said their last word for her. All has happened to her that will happen to her. She has felt everything, borne everything, experienced everything, suffered everything, lost everything, mourned everything. She is resigned, with

that resignation which resembles indifference, as death resembles sleep. She no longer avoids anything. Let all the clouds fall upon her, and all the ocean sweep over her! What matters it to her? She is a sponge that is soaked.

At least, she believes it to be so; but it is an error to imagine that fate can be exhausted, and that one has reached the bottom of anything whatever.

Alas! What are all these fates, driven on pell-mell? Whither are they going? Why are they thus?

He who knows that sees the whole of the shadow.

He is alone. His name is God.

CHAPTER XII--M. BAMATABOIS'S INACTIVITY

There is in all small towns, and there was at M. sur M. in particular, a class of young men who nibble away an income of fifteen hundred francs with the same air with which their prototypes devour two hundred thousand francs a year in Paris. These are beings of the great neuter species: impotent men, parasites, cyphers, who have a little land, a little folly, a little wit; who would be rustics in a drawing-room, and who think themselves gentlemen in the dram-shop; who say, "My fields, my peasants, my woods"; who hiss actresses at the theatre to prove that they are persons of taste; quarrel with the officers of the garrison to prove that they are men of war; hunt, smoke, yawn, drink, smell of tobacco, play billiards, stare at travellers as they descend from the diligence, live at the cafe, dine at the inn, have a dog which eats the bones under the table, and a mistress who eats the dishes on the table; who stick at a sou, exaggerate the fashions, admire tragedy, despise women, wear out their old boots, copy London through Paris, and Paris through the medium of Pont-A-Mousson, grow old as dullards, never work, serve no use, and do no great harm.

M. Felix Tholomyes, had he remained in his own province and never beheld Paris, would have been one of these men.

If they were richer, one would say, "They are dandies;" if they were poorer, one would say, "They are idlers." They are simply men without employment. Among these unemployed there are bores, the bored, dreamers,

and some knaves.

At that period a dandy was composed of a tall collar, a big cravat, a watch with trinkets, three vests of different colors, worn one on top of the other--the red and blue inside; of a short-waisted olive coat, with a codfish tail, a double row of silver buttons set close to each other and running up to the shoulder; and a pair of trousers of a lighter shade of olive, ornamented on the two seams with an indefinite, but always uneven, number of lines, varying from one to eleven--a limit which was never exceeded. Add to this, high shoes with little irons on the heels, a tall hat with a narrow brim, hair worn in a tuft, an enormous cane, and conversation set off by puns of Potier. Over all, spurs and a mustache. At that epoch mustaches indicated the bourgeois, and spurs the pedestrian.

The provincial dandy wore the longest of spurs and the fiercest of mustaches.

It was the period of the conflict of the republics of South America with the King of Spain, of Bolivar against Morillo. Narrow-brimmed hats were royalist, and were called morillos; liberals wore hats with wide brims, which were called bolivars.

Eight or ten months, then, after that which is related in the preceding pages, towards the first of January, 1823, on a snowy evening, one of these dandies, one of these unemployed, a "right thinker," for he wore

a morillo, and was, moreover, warmly enveloped in one of those large cloaks which completed the fashionable costume in cold weather, was amusing himself by tormenting a creature who was prowling about in a ball-dress, with neck uncovered and flowers in her hair, in front of the officers' cafe. This dandy was smoking, for he was decidedly fashionable.

Each time that the woman passed in front of him, he bestowed on her, together with a puff from his cigar, some apostrophe which he considered witty and mirthful, such as, "How ugly you are!--Will you get out of my sight?--You have no teeth!" etc., etc. This gentleman was known as M. Bamatabois. The woman, a melancholy, decorated spectre which went and came through the snow, made him no reply, did not even glance at him, and nevertheless continued her promenade in silence, and with a sombre regularity, which brought her every five minutes within reach of this sarcasm, like the condemned soldier who returns under the rods. The small effect which he produced no doubt piqued the lounger; and taking advantage of a moment when her back was turned, he crept up behind her with the gait of a wolf, and stifling his laugh, bent down, picked up a handful of snow from the pavement, and thrust it abruptly into her back, between her bare shoulders. The woman uttered a roar, whirled round, gave a leap like a panther, and hurled herself upon the man, burying her nails in his face, with the most frightful words which could fall from the guard-room into the gutter. These insults, poured forth in a voice roughened by brandy, did, indeed, proceed in hideous wise from a mouth which lacked its two front teeth. It was Fantine.

At the noise thus produced, the officers ran out in throngs from the cafe, passers-by collected, and a large and merry circle, hooting and applauding, was formed around this whirlwind composed of two beings, whom there was some difficulty in recognizing as a man and a woman: the man struggling, his hat on the ground; the woman striking out with feet and fists, bareheaded, howling, minus hair and teeth, livid with wrath, horrible.

Suddenly a man of lofty stature emerged vivaciously from the crowd, seized the woman by her satin bodice, which was covered with mud, and said to her, "Follow me!"

The woman raised her head; her furious voice suddenly died away. Her eyes were glassy; she turned pale instead of livid, and she trembled with a quiver of terror. She had recognized Javert.

The dandy took advantage of the incident to make his escape.

CHAPTER XIII--THE SOLUTION OF SOME QUESTIONS CONNECTED WITH THE MUNICIPAL POLICE

Javert thrust aside the spectators, broke the circle, and set out with long strides towards the police station, which is situated at the extremity of the square, dragging the wretched woman after him. She yielded mechanically. Neither he nor she uttered a word. The cloud of spectators followed, jesting, in a paroxysm of delight. Supreme misery an occasion for obscenity.

On arriving at the police station, which was a low room, warmed by a stove, with a glazed and grated door opening on the street, and guarded by a detachment, Javert opened the door, entered with Fantine, and shut the door behind him, to the great disappointment of the curious, who raised themselves on tiptoe, and craned their necks in front of the thick glass of the station-house, in their effort to see. Curiosity is a sort of gluttony. To see is to devour.

On entering, Fantine fell down in a corner, motionless and mute, crouching down like a terrified dog.

The sergeant of the guard brought a lighted candle to the table. Javert seated himself, drew a sheet of stamped paper from his pocket, and began to write.

This class of women is consigned by our laws entirely to the discretion

of the police. The latter do what they please, punish them, as seems good to them, and confiscate at their will those two sorry things which they entitle their industry and their liberty. Javert was impassive; his grave face betrayed no emotion whatever. Nevertheless, he was seriously and deeply preoccupied. It was one of those moments when he was exercising without control, but subject to all the scruples of a severe conscience, his redoubtable discretionary power. At that moment he was conscious that his police agent's stool was a tribunal. He was entering judgment. He judged and condemned. He summoned all the ideas which could possibly exist in his mind, around the great thing which he was doing. The more he examined the deed of this woman, the more shocked he felt. It was evident that he had just witnessed the commission of a crime. He had just beheld, yonder, in the street, society, in the person of a freeholder and an elector, insulted and attacked by a creature who was outside all pales. A prostitute had made an attempt on the life of a citizen. He had seen that, he, Javert. He wrote in silence.

When he had finished he signed the paper, folded it, and said to the sergeant of the guard, as he handed it to him, "Take three men and conduct this creature to jail."

Then, turning to Fantine, "You are to have six months of it." The unhappy woman shuddered.

"Six months! six months of prison!" she exclaimed. "Six months in which to earn seven sous a day! But what will become of Cosette? My daughter!

my daughter! But I still owe the Thenardiers over a hundred francs; do you know that, Monsieur Inspector?"

She dragged herself across the damp floor, among the muddy boots of all those men, without rising, with clasped hands, and taking great strides on her knees.

"Monsieur Javert," said she, "I beseech your mercy. I assure you that I was not in the wrong. If you had seen the beginning, you would have seen. I swear to you by the good God that I was not to blame! That gentleman, the bourgeois, whom I do not know, put snow in my back. Has any one the right to put snow down our backs when we are walking along peaceably, and doing no harm to any one? I am rather ill, as you see. And then, he had been saying impertinent things to me for a long time: 'You are ugly! you have no teeth!' I know well that I have no longer those teeth. I did nothing; I said to myself, 'The gentleman is amusing himself.' I was honest with him; I did not speak to him. It was at that moment that he put the snow down my back. Monsieur Javert, good Monsieur Inspector! is there not some person here who saw it and can tell you that this is quite true? Perhaps I did wrong to get angry. You know that one is not master of one's self at the first moment. One gives way to vivacity; and then, when some one puts something cold down your back just when you are not expecting it! I did wrong to spoil that gentleman's hat. Why did he go away? I would ask his pardon. Oh, my God! It makes no difference to me whether I ask his pardon. Do me the favor to-day, for this once, Monsieur Javert. Hold! you do not know that in

prison one can earn only seven sous a day; it is not the government's fault, but seven sous is one's earnings; and just fancy, I must pay one hundred francs, or my little girl will be sent to me. Oh, my God! I cannot have her with me. What I do is so vile! Oh, my Cosette! Oh, my little angel of the Holy Virgin! what will become of her, poor creature? I will tell you: it is the Thenardiers, inn-keepers, peasants; and such people are unreasonable. They want money. Don't put me in prison! You see, there is a little girl who will be turned out into the street to get along as best she may, in the very heart of the winter; and you must have pity on such a being, my good Monsieur Javert. If she were older, she might earn her living; but it cannot be done at that age. I am not a bad woman at bottom. It is not cowardliness and gluttony that have made me what I am. If I have drunk brandy, it was out of misery. I do not love it; but it benumbs the senses. When I was happy, it was only necessary to glance into my closets, and it would have been evident that I was not a coquettish and untidy woman. I had linen, a great deal of linen. Have pity on me, Monsieur Javert!"

She spoke thus, rent in twain, shaken with sobs, blinded with tears, her neck bare, wringing her hands, and coughing with a dry, short cough, stammering softly with a voice of agony. Great sorrow is a divine and terrible ray, which transfigures the unhappy. At that moment Fantine had become beautiful once more. From time to time she paused, and tenderly kissed the police agent's coat. She would have softened a heart of granite; but a heart of wood cannot be softened.

"Come!" said Javert, "I have heard you out. Have you entirely finished? You will get six months. Now march! The Eternal Father in person could do nothing more."

At these solemn words, "the Eternal Father in person could do nothing more," she understood that her fate was sealed. She sank down, murmuring, "Mercy!"

Javert turned his back.

The soldiers seized her by the arms.

A few moments earlier a man had entered, but no one had paid any heed to him. He shut the door, leaned his back against it, and listened to Fantine's despairing supplications.

At the instant when the soldiers laid their hands upon the unfortunate woman, who would not rise, he emerged from the shadow, and said:--

"One moment, if you please."

Javert raised his eyes and recognized M. Madeleine. He removed his hat, and, saluting him with a sort of aggrieved awkwardness:--

"Excuse me, Mr. Mayor--"

The words "Mr. Mayor" produced a curious effect upon Fantine. She rose to her feet with one bound, like a spectre springing from the earth, thrust aside the soldiers with both arms, walked straight up to M. Madeleine before any one could prevent her, and gazing intently at him, with a bewildered air, she cried:--

"Ah! so it is you who are M. le Maire!"

Then she burst into a laugh, and spit in his face.

M. Madeleine wiped his face, and said:--

"Inspector Javert, set this woman at liberty."

Javert felt that he was on the verge of going mad. He experienced at that moment, blow upon blow and almost simultaneously, the most violent emotions which he had ever undergone in all his life. To see a woman of the town spit in the mayor's face was a thing so monstrous that, in his most daring flights of fancy, he would have regarded it as a sacrilege to believe it possible. On the other hand, at the very bottom of his thought, he made a hideous comparison as to what this woman was, and as to what this mayor might be; and then he, with horror, caught a glimpse of I know not what simple explanation of this prodigious attack. But when he beheld that mayor, that magistrate, calmly wipe his face and say, "Set this woman at liberty," he underwent a sort of intoxication of amazement; thought and word failed him equally; the sum total of

possible astonishment had been exceeded in his case. He remained mute.

The words had produced no less strange an effect on Fantine. She raised her bare arm, and clung to the damper of the stove, like a person who is reeling. Nevertheless, she glanced about her, and began to speak in a low voice, as though talking to herself:--

"At liberty! I am to be allowed to go! I am not to go to prison for six months! Who said that? It is not possible that any one could have said that. I did not hear aright. It cannot have been that monster of a mayor! Was it you, my good Monsieur Javert, who said that I was to be set free? Oh, see here! I will tell you about it, and you will let me go. That monster of a mayor, that old blackguard of a mayor, is the cause of all. Just imagine, Monsieur Javert, he turned me out! all because of a pack of rascally women, who gossip in the workroom. If that is not a horror, what is? To dismiss a poor girl who is doing her work honestly! Then I could no longer earn enough, and all this misery followed. In the first place, there is one improvement which these gentlemen of the police ought to make, and that is, to prevent prison contractors from wronging poor people. I will explain it to you, you see: you are earning twelve sous at shirt-making, the price falls to nine sous; and it is not enough to live on. Then one has to become whatever one can. As for me, I had my little Cosette, and I was actually forced to become a bad woman. Now you understand how it is that that blackguard of a mayor caused all the mischief. After that I stamped on that gentleman's hat in front of the officers' cafe; but he had spoiled

my whole dress with snow. We women have but one silk dress for evening wear. You see that I did not do wrong deliberately--truly, Monsieur Javert; and everywhere I behold women who are far more wicked than I, and who are much happier. O Monsieur Javert! it was you who gave orders that I am to be set free, was it not? Make inquiries, speak to my landlord; I am paying my rent now; they will tell you that I am perfectly honest. Ah! my God! I beg your pardon; I have unintentionally touched the damper of the stove, and it has made it smoke."

M. Madeleine listened to her with profound attention. While she was speaking, he fumbled in his waistcoat, drew out his purse and opened it. It was empty. He put it back in his pocket. He said to Fantine, "How much did you say that you owed?"

Fantine, who was looking at Javert only, turned towards him:--

"Was I speaking to you?"

Then, addressing the soldiers:--

"Say, you fellows, did you see how I spit in his face? Ah! you old wretch of a mayor, you came here to frighten me, but I'm not afraid of you. I am afraid of Monsieur Javert. I am afraid of my good Monsieur Javert!"

So saying, she turned to the inspector again:--

"And yet, you see, Mr. Inspector, it is necessary to be just. I understand that you are just, Mr. Inspector; in fact, it is perfectly simple: a man amuses himself by putting snow down a woman's back, and that makes the officers laugh; one must divert themselves in some way; and we--well, we are here for them to amuse themselves with, of course! And then, you, you come; you are certainly obliged to preserve order, you lead off the woman who is in the wrong; but on reflection, since you are a good man, you say that I am to be set at liberty; it is for the sake of the little one, for six months in prison would prevent my supporting my child. 'Only, don't do it again, you hussy!' Oh! I won't do it again, Monsieur Javert! They may do whatever they please to me now; I will not stir. But to-day, you see, I cried because it hurt me. I was not expecting that snow from the gentleman at all; and then as I told you, I am not well; I have a cough; I seem to have a burning ball in my stomach, and the doctor tells me, 'Take care of yourself.' Here, feel, give me your hand; don't be afraid--it is here."

She no longer wept, her voice was caressing; she placed Javert's coarse hand on her delicate, white throat and looked smilingly at him.

All at once she rapidly adjusted her disordered garments, dropped the folds of her skirt, which had been pushed up as she dragged herself along, almost to the height of her knee, and stepped towards the door, saying to the soldiers in a low voice, and with a friendly nod:--

"Children, Monsieur l'Inspecteur has said that I am to be released, and I am going."

She laid her hand on the latch of the door. One step more and she would be in the street.

Javert up to that moment had remained erect, motionless, with his eyes fixed on the ground, cast athwart this scene like some displaced statue, which is waiting to be put away somewhere.

The sound of the latch roused him. He raised his head with an expression of sovereign authority, an expression all the more alarming in proportion as the authority rests on a low level, ferocious in the wild beast, atrocious in the man of no estate.

"Sergeant!" he cried, "don't you see that that jade is walking off! Who bade you let her go?"

"I," said Madeleine.

Fantine trembled at the sound of Javert's voice, and let go of the latch as a thief relinquishes the article which he has stolen. At the sound of Madeleine's voice she turned around, and from that moment forth she uttered no word, nor dared so much as to breathe freely, but her glance strayed from Madeleine to Javert, and from Javert to Madeleine in turn, according to which was speaking.

It was evident that Javert must have been exasperated beyond measure before he would permit himself to apostrophize the sergeant as he had done, after the mayor's suggestion that Fantine should be set at liberty. Had he reached the point of forgetting the mayor's presence? Had he finally declared to himself that it was impossible that any "authority" should have given such an order, and that the mayor must certainly have said one thing by mistake for another, without intending it? Or, in view of the enormities of which he had been a witness for the past two hours, did he say to himself, that it was necessary to recur to supreme resolutions, that it was indispensable that the small should be made great, that the police spy should transform himself into a magistrate, that the policeman should become a dispenser of justice, and that, in this prodigious extremity, order, law, morality, government, society in its entirety, was personified in him, Javert?

However that may be, when M. Madeleine uttered that word, I, as we have just heard, Police Inspector Javert was seen to turn toward the mayor, pale, cold, with blue lips, and a look of despair, his whole body agitated by an imperceptible quiver and an unprecedented occurrence, and say to him, with downcast eyes but a firm voice:--

"Mr. Mayor, that cannot be."

"Why not?" said M. Madeleine.

"This miserable woman has insulted a citizen."

"Inspector Javert," replied the mayor, in a calm and conciliating tone, "listen. You are an honest man, and I feel no hesitation in explaining matters to you. Here is the true state of the case: I was passing through the square just as you were leading this woman away; there were still groups of people standing about, and I made inquiries and learned everything; it was the townsman who was in the wrong and who should have been arrested by properly conducted police."

Javert retorted:--

"This wretch has just insulted Monsieur le Maire."

"That concerns me," said M. Madeleine. "My own insult belongs to me, I think. I can do what I please about it."

"I beg Monsieur le Maire's pardon. The insult is not to him but to the law."

"Inspector Javert," replied M. Madeleine, "the highest law is conscience. I have heard this woman; I know what I am doing."

"And I, Mr. Mayor, do not know what I see."

"Then content yourself with obeying."

"I am obeying my duty. My duty demands that this woman shall serve six months in prison."

M. Madeleine replied gently:--

"Heed this well; she will not serve a single day."

At this decisive word, Javert ventured to fix a searching look on the mayor and to say, but in a tone of voice that was still profoundly respectful:--

"I am sorry to oppose Monsieur le Maire; it is for the first time in my life, but he will permit me to remark that I am within the bounds of my authority. I confine myself, since Monsieur le Maire desires it, to the question of the gentleman. I was present. This woman flung herself on Monsieur Bamatabnois, who is an elector and the proprietor of that handsome house with a balcony, which forms the corner of the esplanade, three stories high and entirely of cut stone. Such things as there are in the world! In any case, Monsieur le Maire, this is a question of police regulations in the streets, and concerns me, and I shall detain this woman Fantine."

Then M. Madeleine folded his arms, and said in a severe voice which no one in the town had heard hitherto:--

"The matter to which you refer is one connected with the municipal police. According to the terms of articles nine, eleven, fifteen, and sixty-six of the code of criminal examination, I am the judge. I order that this woman shall be set at liberty."

Javert ventured to make a final effort.

"But, Mr. Mayor--"

"I refer you to article eighty-one of the law of the 13th of December, 1799, in regard to arbitrary detention."

"Monsieur le Maire, permit me--"

"Not another word."

"But--"

"Leave the room," said M. Madeleine.

Javert received the blow erect, full in the face, in his breast, like a Russian soldier. He bowed to the very earth before the mayor and left the room.

Fantine stood aside from the door and stared at him in amazement as he passed.

Nevertheless, she also was the prey to a strange confusion. She had just seen herself a subject of dispute between two opposing powers. She had seen two men who held in their hands her liberty, her life, her soul, her child, in combat before her very eyes; one of these men was drawing her towards darkness, the other was leading her back towards the light. In this conflict, viewed through the exaggerations of terror, these two men had appeared to her like two giants; the one spoke like her demon, the other like her good angel. The angel had conquered the demon, and, strange to say, that which made her shudder from head to foot was the fact that this angel, this liberator, was the very man whom she abhorred, that mayor whom she had so long regarded as the author of all her woes, that Madeleine! And at the very moment when she had insulted him in so hideous a fashion, he had saved her! Had she, then, been mistaken? Must she change her whole soul? She did not know; she trembled. She listened in bewilderment, she looked on in affright, and at every word uttered by M. Madeleine she felt the frightful shades of hatred crumble and melt within her, and something warm and ineffable, indescribable, which was both joy, confidence and love, dawn in her heart.

When Javert had taken his departure, M. Madeleine turned to her and said to her in a deliberate voice, like a serious man who does not wish to weep and who finds some difficulty in speaking:--

"I have heard you. I knew nothing about what you have mentioned. I

believe that it is true, and I feel that it is true. I was even ignorant of the fact that you had left my shop. Why did you not apply to me? But here; I will pay your debts, I will send for your child, or you shall go to her. You shall live here, in Paris, or where you please. I undertake the care of your child and yourself. You shall not work any longer if you do not like. I will give all the money you require. You shall be honest and happy once more. And listen! I declare to you that if all is as you say,--and I do not doubt it,--you have never ceased to be virtuous and holy in the sight of God. Oh! poor woman."

This was more than Fantine could bear. To have Cosette! To leave this life of infamy. To live free, rich, happy, respectable with Cosette; to see all these realities of paradise blossom of a sudden in the midst of her misery. She stared stupidly at this man who was talking to her, and could only give vent to two or three sobs, "Oh! Oh! Oh!"

Her limbs gave way beneath her, she knelt in front of M. Madeleine, and before he could prevent her he felt her grasp his hand and press her lips to it.

Then she fainted.