BOOK SIXTH.--JAVERT

CHAPTER I--THE BEGINNING OF REPOSE

M. Madeleine had Fantine removed to that infirmary which he had established in his own house. He confided her to the sisters, who put her to bed. A burning fever had come on. She passed a part of the night in delirium and raving. At length, however, she fell asleep.

On the morrow, towards midday, Fantine awoke. She heard some one breathing close to her bed; she drew aside the curtain and saw M. Madeleine standing there and looking at something over her head. His gaze was full of pity, anguish, and supplication. She followed its direction, and saw that it was fixed on a crucifix which was nailed to the wall.

Thenceforth, M. Madeleine was transfigured in Fantine's eyes. He seemed to her to be clothed in light. He was absorbed in a sort of prayer. She gazed at him for a long time without daring to interrupt him. At last she said timidly:--

"What are you doing?"

M. Madeleine had been there for an hour. He had been waiting for Fantine to awake. He took her hand, felt of her pulse, and replied:--

"How do you feel?"

"Well, I have slept," she replied; "I think that I am better, It is nothing."

He answered, responding to the first question which she had put to him as though he had just heard it:--

"I was praying to the martyr there on high."

And he added in his own mind, "For the martyr here below."

M. Madeleine had passed the night and the morning in making inquiries. He knew all now. He knew Fantine's history in all its heart-rending details. He went on:--

"You have suffered much, poor mother. Oh! do not complain; you now have the dowry of the elect. It is thus that men are transformed into angels. It is not their fault they do not know how to go to work otherwise. You see this hell from which you have just emerged is the first form of heaven. It was necessary to begin there."

He sighed deeply. But she smiled on him with that sublime smile in which two teeth were lacking.

That same night, Javert wrote a letter. The next morning be posted it himself at the office of M. sur M. It was addressed to Paris, and the superscription ran: To Monsieur Chabouillet, Secretary of Monsieur le Prefet of Police. As the affair in the station-house had been bruited about, the post-mistress and some other persons who saw the letter before it was sent off, and who recognized Javert's handwriting on the cover, thought that he was sending in his resignation.

M. Madeleine made haste to write to the Thenardiers. Fantine owed them one hundred and twenty francs. He sent them three hundred francs, telling them to pay themselves from that sum, and to fetch the child instantly to M. sur M., where her sick mother required her presence.

This dazzled Thenardier. "The devil!" said the man to his wife; "don't let's allow the child to go. This lark is going to turn into a milch cow. I see through it. Some ninny has taken a fancy to the mother."

He replied with a very well drawn-up bill for five hundred and some odd francs. In this memorandum two indisputable items figured up over three hundred francs,--one for the doctor, the other for the apothecary who had attended and physicked Eponine and Azelma through two long illnesses. Cosette, as we have already said, had not been ill. It was only a question of a trifling substitution of names. At the foot of the

memorandum Thenardier wrote, Received on account, three hundred francs.

M. Madeleine immediately sent three hundred francs more, and wrote, "Make haste to bring Cosette."

"Christi!" said Thenardier, "let's not give up the child."

In the meantime, Fantine did not recover. She still remained in the infirmary.

The sisters had at first only received and nursed "that woman" with repugnance. Those who have seen the bas-reliefs of Rheims will recall the inflation of the lower lip of the wise virgins as they survey the foolish virgins. The ancient scorn of the vestals for the ambubajae is one of the most profound instincts of feminine dignity; the sisters felt it with the double force contributed by religion. But in a few days Fantine disarmed them. She said all kinds of humble and gentle things, and the mother in her provoked tenderness. One day the sisters heard her say amid her fever: "I have been a sinner; but when I have my child beside me, it will be a sign that God has pardoned me. While I was leading a bad life, I should not have liked to have my Cosette with me; I could not have borne her sad, astonished eyes. It was for her sake that I did evil, and that is why God pardons me. I shall feel the benediction of the good God when Cosette is here. I shall gaze at her; it will do me good to see that innocent creature. She knows nothing at all. She is an angel, you see, my sisters. At that age the wings have

not fallen off."

M. Madeleine went to see her twice a day, and each time she asked him:--

"Shall I see my Cosette soon?"

He answered:--

"To-morrow, perhaps. She may arrive at any moment. I am expecting her."

And the mother's pale face grew radiant.

"Oh!" she said, "how happy I am going to be!"

We have just said that she did not recover her health. On the contrary, her condition seemed to become more grave from week to week. That handful of snow applied to her bare skin between her shoulder-blades had brought about a sudden suppression of perspiration, as a consequence of which the malady which had been smouldering within her for many years was violently developed at last. At that time people were beginning to follow the fine Laennec's fine suggestions in the study and treatment of chest maladies. The doctor sounded Fantine's chest and shook his head.

M. Madeleine said to the doctor:--

"Well?"

"Has she not a child which she desires to see?" said the doctor.

"Yes."

"Well! Make haste and get it here!"

M. Madeleine shuddered.

Fantine inquired:--

"What did the doctor say?"

M. Madeleine forced himself to smile.

"He said that your child was to be brought speedily. That that would restore your health."

"Oh!" she rejoined, "he is right! But what do those Thenardiers mean by keeping my Cosette from me! Oh! she is coming. At last I behold happiness close beside me!"

In the meantime Thenardier did not "let go of the child," and gave a hundred insufficient reasons for it. Cosette was not quite well enough to take a journey in the winter. And then, there still remained some petty but pressing debts in the neighborhood, and they were collecting

the bills for them, etc., etc.

"I shall send some one to fetch Cosette!" said Father Madeleine. "If necessary, I will go myself."

He wrote the following letter to Fantine's dictation, and made her sign it:--

"MONSIEUR THENARDIER:--

You will deliver Cosette to this person.

You will be paid for all the little things.

I have the honor to salute you with respect.

"FANTINE."

In the meantime a serious incident occurred. Carve as we will the mysterious block of which our life is made, the black vein of destiny constantly reappears in it.

CHAPTER II--HOW JEAN MAY BECOME CHAMP

One morning M. Madeleine was in his study, occupied in arranging in advance some pressing matters connected with the mayor's office, in case he should decide to take the trip to Montfermeil, when he was informed that Police Inspector Javert was desirous of speaking with him. Madeleine could not refrain from a disagreeable impression on hearing this name. Javert had avoided him more than ever since the affair of the police-station, and M. Madeleine had not seen him.

"Admit him," he said.

Javert entered.

M. Madeleine had retained his seat near the fire, pen in hand, his eyes fixed on the docket which he was turning over and annotating, and which contained the trials of the commission on highways for the infraction of police regulations. He did not disturb himself on Javert's account. He could not help thinking of poor Fantine, and it suited him to be glacial in his manner.

Javert bestowed a respectful salute on the mayor, whose back was turned to him. The mayor did not look at him, but went on annotating this docket.

Javert advanced two or three paces into the study, and halted, without breaking the silence.

If any physiognomist who had been familiar with Javert, and who had made a lengthy study of this savage in the service of civilization, this singular composite of the Roman, the Spartan, the monk, and the corporal, this spy who was incapable of a lie, this unspotted police agent--if any physiognomist had known his secret and long-cherished aversion for M. Madeleine, his conflict with the mayor on the subject of Fantine, and had examined Javert at that moment, he would have said to himself, "What has taken place?" It was evident to any one acquainted with that clear, upright, sincere, honest, austere, and ferocious conscience, that Javert had but just gone through some great interior struggle. Javert had nothing in his soul which he had not also in his countenance. Like violent people in general, he was subject to abrupt changes of opinion. His physiognomy had never been more peculiar and startling. On entering he bowed to M. Madeleine with a look in which there was neither rancor, anger, nor distrust; he halted a few paces in the rear of the mayor's arm-chair, and there he stood, perfectly erect, in an attitude almost of discipline, with the cold, ingenuous roughness of a man who has never been gentle and who has always been patient; he waited without uttering a word, without making a movement, in genuine humility and tranquil resignation, calm, serious, hat in hand, with eyes cast down, and an expression which was half-way between that of a soldier in the presence of his officer and a criminal in the presence of his judge, until it should please the mayor to turn round. All the

sentiments as well as all the memories which one might have attributed to him had disappeared. That face, as impenetrable and simple as granite, no longer bore any trace of anything but a melancholy depression. His whole person breathed lowliness and firmness and an indescribable courageous despondency.

At last the mayor laid down his pen and turned half round.

"Well! What is it? What is the matter, Javert?"

Javert remained silent for an instant as though collecting his ideas, then raised his voice with a sort of sad solemnity, which did not, however, preclude simplicity.

"This is the matter, Mr. Mayor; a culpable act has been committed."

"What act?"

"An inferior agent of the authorities has failed in respect, and in the gravest manner, towards a magistrate. I have come to bring the fact to your knowledge, as it is my duty to do."

"Who is the agent?" asked M. Madeleine.

"I," said Javert.

"You?"

"I."

"And who is the magistrate who has reason to complain of the agent?"

"You, Mr. Mayor."

M. Madeleine sat erect in his arm-chair. Javert went on, with a severe air and his eyes still cast down.

"Mr. Mayor, I have come to request you to instigate the authorities to dismiss me."

M. Madeleine opened his mouth in amazement. Javert interrupted him:--

"You will say that I might have handed in my resignation, but that does not suffice. Handing in one's resignation is honorable. I have failed in my duty; I ought to be punished; I must be turned out."

And after a pause he added:--

"Mr. Mayor, you were severe with me the other day, and unjustly. Be so to-day, with justice."

"Come, now! Why?" exclaimed M. Madeleine. "What nonsense is this?

What is the meaning of this? What culpable act have you been guilty of towards me? What have you done to me? What are your wrongs with regard to me? You accuse yourself; you wish to be superseded--"

"Turned out," said Javert.

"Turned out; so it be, then. That is well. I do not understand."

"You shall understand, Mr. Mayor."

Javert sighed from the very bottom of his chest, and resumed, still coldly and sadly:--

"Mr. Mayor, six weeks ago, in consequence of the scene over that woman, I was furious, and I informed against you."

"Informed against me!"

"At the Prefecture of Police in Paris."

M. Madeleine, who was not in the habit of laughing much oftener than Javert himself, burst out laughing now:--

"As a mayor who had encroached on the province of the police?"

"As an ex-convict."

The mayor turned livid.

Javert, who had not raised his eyes, went on:--

"I thought it was so. I had had an idea for a long time; a resemblance; inquiries which you had caused to be made at Faverolles; the strength of your loins; the adventure with old Fauchelevant; your skill in marksmanship; your leg, which you drag a little;--I hardly know what all,--absurdities! But, at all events, I took you for a certain Jean Valjean."

"A certain--What did you say the name was?"

"Jean Valjean. He was a convict whom I was in the habit of seeing twenty years ago, when I was adjutant-guard of convicts at Toulon. On leaving the galleys, this Jean Valjean, as it appears, robbed a bishop; then he committed another theft, accompanied with violence, on a public highway on the person of a little Savoyard. He disappeared eight years ago, no one knows how, and he has been sought, I fancied. In short, I did this thing! Wrath impelled me; I denounced you at the Prefecture!"

M. Madeleine, who had taken up the docket again several moments before this, resumed with an air of perfect indifference:--

"And what reply did you receive?"

"That I was mad."

"Well?"

"Well, they were right."

"It is lucky that you recognize the fact."

"I am forced to do so, since the real Jean Valjean has been found."

The sheet of paper which M. Madeleine was holding dropped from his hand; he raised his head, gazed fixedly at Javert, and said with his indescribable accent:--

"Ah!"

Javert continued:--

"This is the way it is, Mr. Mayor. It seems that there was in the neighborhood near Ailly-le-Haut-Clocher an old fellow who was called Father Champmathieu. He was a very wretched creature. No one paid any attention to him. No one knows what such people subsist on. Lately, last autumn, Father Champmathieu was arrested for the theft of some cider apples from--Well, no matter, a theft had been committed, a wall scaled, branches of trees broken. My Champmathieu was arrested. He still had

the branch of apple-tree in his hand. The scamp is locked up. Up to this point it was merely an affair of a misdemeanor. But here is where Providence intervened.

"The jail being in a bad condition, the examining magistrate finds it convenient to transfer Champmathieu to Arras, where the departmental prison is situated. In this prison at Arras there is an ex-convict named Brevet, who is detained for I know not what, and who has been appointed turnkey of the house, because of good behavior. Mr. Mayor, no sooner had Champmathieu arrived than Brevet exclaims: 'Eh! Why, I know that man! He is a fagot![4] Take a good look at me, my good man! You are Jean Valjean!' 'Jean Valjean! who's Jean Valjean?' Champmathieu feigns astonishment. 'Don't play the innocent dodge,' says Brevet. 'You are Jean Valjean! You have been in the galleys of Toulon; it was twenty years ago; we were there together.' Champmathieu denies it. Parbleu! You understand. The case is investigated. The thing was well ventilated for me. This is what they discovered: This Champmathieu had been, thirty years ago, a pruner of trees in various localities, notably at Faverolles. There all trace of him was lost. A long time afterwards he was seen again in Auvergne; then in Paris, where he is said to have been a wheelwright, and to have had a daughter, who was a laundress; but that has not been proved. Now, before going to the galleys for theft, what was Jean Valjean? A pruner of trees. Where? At Faverolles. Another fact. This Valjean's Christian name was Jean, and his mother's surname was Mathieu. What more natural to suppose than that, on emerging from the galleys, he should have taken his mother's name for the purpose of

concealing himself, and have called himself Jean Mathieu? He goes to Auvergne. The local pronunciation turns Jean into Chan--he is called Chan Mathieu. Our man offers no opposition, and behold him transformed into Champmathieu. You follow me, do you not? Inquiries were made at Faverolles. The family of Jean Valjean is no longer there. It is not known where they have gone. You know that among those classes a family often disappears. Search was made, and nothing was found. When such people are not mud, they are dust. And then, as the beginning of the story dates thirty years back, there is no longer any one at Faverolles who knew Jean Valjean. Inquiries were made at Toulon. Besides Brevet, there are only two convicts in existence who have seen Jean Valjean; they are Cochepaille and Chenildieu, and are sentenced for life.
They are taken from the galleys and confronted with the pretended Champmathieu. They do not hesitate; he is Jean Valjean for them as well as for Brevet. The same age,--he is fifty-four,--the same height, the same air, the same man; in short, it is he. It was precisely at this moment that I forwarded my denunciation to the Prefecture in Paris. I was told that I had lost my reason, and that Jean Valjean is at Arras, in the power of the authorities. You can imagine whether this surprised me, when I thought that I had that same Jean Valjean here. I write to the examining judge; he sends for me; Champmathieu is conducted to me--"

"Well?" interposed M. Madeleine.

Javert replied, his face incorruptible, and as melancholy as ever:--

"Mr. Mayor, the truth is the truth. I am sorry; but that man is Jean Valjean. I recognized him also."

M. Madeleine resumed in, a very low voice:--

"You are sure?"

Javert began to laugh, with that mournful laugh which comes from profound conviction.

"O! Sure!"

He stood there thoughtfully for a moment, mechanically taking pinches of powdered wood for blotting ink from the wooden bowl which stood on the table, and he added:--

"And even now that I have seen the real Jean Valjean, I do not see how I could have thought otherwise. I beg your pardon, Mr. Mayor."

Javert, as he addressed these grave and supplicating words to the man, who six weeks before had humiliated him in the presence of the whole station-house, and bade him "leave the room,"--Javert, that haughty man, was unconsciously full of simplicity and dignity,--M. Madeleine made no other reply to his prayer than the abrupt question:--

"And what does this man say?"

"Ah! Indeed, Mr. Mayor, it's a bad business. If he is Jean Valjean, he has his previous conviction against him. To climb a wall, to break a branch, to purloin apples, is a mischievous trick in a child; for a man it is a misdemeanor; for a convict it is a crime. Robbing and housebreaking--it is all there. It is no longer a question of correctional police; it is a matter for the Court of Assizes. It is no longer a matter of a few days in prison; it is the galleys for life. And then, there is the affair with the little Savoyard, who will return, I hope. The deuce! there is plenty to dispute in the matter, is there not? Yes, for any one but Jean Valjean. But Jean Valjean is a sly dog. That is the way I recognized him. Any other man would have felt that things were getting hot for him; he would struggle, he would cry out--the kettle sings before the fire; he would not be Jean Valjean, et cetera. But he has not the appearance of understanding; he says, 'I am Champmathieu, and I won't depart from that!' He has an astonished air, he pretends to be stupid; it is far better. Oh! the rogue is clever! But it makes no difference. The proofs are there. He has been recognized by four persons; the old scamp will be condemned. The case has been taken to the Assizes at Arras. I shall go there to give my testimony. I have been summoned."

M. Madeleine had turned to his desk again, and taken up his docket, and was turning over the leaves tranquilly, reading and writing by turns, like a busy man. He turned to Javert:--

"That will do, Javert. In truth, all these details interest me but little. We are wasting our time, and we have pressing business on hand. Javert, you will betake yourself at once to the house of the woman Buseaupied, who sells herbs at the corner of the Rue Saint-Saulve. You will tell her that she must enter her complaint against carter Pierre Chesnelong. The man is a brute, who came near crushing this woman and her child. He must be punished. You will then go to M. Charcellay, Rue Montre-de-Champigny. He complained that there is a gutter on the adjoining house which discharges rain-water on his premises, and is undermining the foundations of his house. After that, you will verify the infractions of police regulations which have been reported to me in the Rue Guibourg, at Widow Doris's, and Rue du Garraud-Blanc, at Madame Renee le Bosse's, and you will prepare documents. But I am giving you a great deal of work. Are you not to be absent? Did you not tell me that you were going to Arras on that matter in a week or ten days?"

"Sooner than that, Mr. Mayor."

"On what day, then?"

"Why, I thought that I had said to Monsieur le Maire that the case was to be tried to-morrow, and that I am to set out by diligence to-night."

M. Madeleine made an imperceptible movement.

"And how long will the case last?"

"One day, at the most. The judgment will be pronounced to-morrow evening at latest. But I shall not wait for the sentence, which is certain; I shall return here as soon as my deposition has been taken."

"That is well," said M. Madeleine.

And he dismissed Javert with a wave of the hand.

Javert did not withdraw.

"Excuse me, Mr. Mayor," said he.

"What is it now?" demanded M. Madeleine.

"Mr. Mayor, there is still something of which I must remind you."

"What is it?"

"That I must be dismissed."

M. Madeleine rose.

"Javert, you are a man of honor, and I esteem you. You exaggerate your fault. Moreover, this is an offence which concerns me. Javert, you deserve promotion instead of degradation. I wish you to retain your

post."

Javert gazed at M. Madeleine with his candid eyes, in whose depths his not very enlightened but pure and rigid conscience seemed visible, and said in a tranquil voice:--

"Mr. Mayor, I cannot grant you that."

"I repeat," replied M. Madeleine, "that the matter concerns me."

But Javert, heeding his own thought only, continued:--

"So far as exaggeration is concerned, I am not exaggerating. This is the way I reason: I have suspected you unjustly. That is nothing. It is our right to cherish suspicion, although suspicion directed above ourselves is an abuse. But without proofs, in a fit of rage, with the object of wreaking my vengeance, I have denounced you as a convict, you, a respectable man, a mayor, a magistrate! That is serious, very serious. I have insulted authority in your person, I, an agent of the authorities! If one of my subordinates had done what I have done, I should have declared him unworthy of the service, and have expelled him. Well? Stop, Mr. Mayor; one word more. I have often been severe in the course of my life towards others. That is just. I have done well. Now, if I were not severe towards myself, all the justice that I have done would become injustice. Ought I to spare myself more than others? No! What! I should be good for nothing but to chastise others, and not myself! Why, I

should be a blackguard! Those who say, 'That blackguard of a Javert!' would be in the right. Mr. Mayor, I do not desire that you should treat me kindly; your kindness roused sufficient bad blood in me when it was directed to others. I want none of it for myself. The kindness which consists in upholding a woman of the town against a citizen, the police agent against the mayor, the man who is down against the man who is up in the world, is what I call false kindness. That is the sort of kindness which disorganizes society. Good God! it is very easy to be kind; the difficulty lies in being just. Come! if you had been what I thought you, I should not have been kind to you, not I! You would have seen! Mr. Mayor, I must treat myself as I would treat any other man. When I have subdued malefactors, when I have proceeded with vigor against rascals, I have often said to myself, 'If you flinch, if I ever catch you in fault, you may rest at your ease!' I have flinched, I have caught myself in a fault. So much the worse! Come, discharged, cashiered, expelled! That is well. I have arms. I will till the soil; it makes no difference to me. Mr. Mayor, the good of the service demands an example. I simply require the discharge of Inspector Javert."

All this was uttered in a proud, humble, despairing, yet convinced tone, which lent indescribable grandeur to this singular, honest man.

"We shall see," said M. Madeleine.

And he offered him his hand.

Javert recoiled, and said in a wild voice:--

"Excuse me, Mr. Mayor, but this must not be. A mayor does not offer his hand to a police spy."

He added between his teeth:--

"A police spy, yes; from the moment when I have misused the police. I am no more than a police spy."

Then he bowed profoundly, and directed his steps towards the door.

There he wheeled round, and with eyes still downcast:--

"Mr. Mayor," he said, "I shall continue to serve until I am superseded."

He withdrew. M. Madeleine remained thoughtfully listening to the firm, sure step, which died away on the pavement of the corridor.