BOOK SEVENTH.--THE CHAMPMATHIEU AFFAIR

CHAPTER I--SISTER SIMPLICE

The incidents the reader is about to peruse were not all known at M. sur M. But the small portion of them which became known left such a memory in that town that a serious gap would exist in this book if we did not narrate them in their most minute details. Among these details the reader will encounter two or three improbable circumstances, which we preserve out of respect for the truth.

On the afternoon following the visit of Javert, M. Madeleine went to see Fantine according to his wont.

Before entering Fantine's room, he had Sister Simplice summoned.

The two nuns who performed the services of nurse in the infirmary, Lazariste ladies, like all sisters of charity, bore the names of Sister Perpetue and Sister Simplice.

Sister Perpetue was an ordinary villager, a sister of charity in a coarse style, who had entered the service of God as one enters any other service. She was a nun as other women are cooks. This type is not

so very rare. The monastic orders gladly accept this heavy peasant earthenware, which is easily fashioned into a Capuchin or an Ursuline. These rustics are utilized for the rough work of devotion. The transition from a drover to a Carmelite is not in the least violent; the one turns into the other without much effort; the fund of ignorance common to the village and the cloister is a preparation ready at hand, and places the boor at once on the same footing as the monk: a little more amplitude in the smock, and it becomes a frock. Sister Perpetue was a robust nun from Marines near Pontoise, who chattered her patois, droned, grumbled, sugared the potion according to the bigotry or the hypocrisy of the invalid, treated her patients abruptly, roughly, was crabbed with the dying, almost flung God in their faces, stoned their death agony with prayers mumbled in a rage; was bold, honest, and ruddy.

Sister Simplice was white, with a waxen pallor. Beside Sister Perpetue, she was the taper beside the candle. Vincent de Paul has divinely traced the features of the Sister of Charity in these admirable words, in which he mingles as much freedom as servitude: "They shall have for their convent only the house of the sick; for cell only a hired room; for chapel only their parish church; for cloister only the streets of the town and the wards of the hospitals; for enclosure only obedience; for gratings only the fear of God; for veil only modesty." This ideal was realized in the living person of Sister Simplice: she had never been young, and it seemed as though she would never grow old. No one could have told Sister Simplice's age. She was a person--we dare not say a woman--who was gentle, austere, well-bred, cold, and who had never lied.

She was so gentle that she appeared fragile; but she was more solid than granite. She touched the unhappy with fingers that were charmingly pure and fine. There was, so to speak, silence in her speech; she said just what was necessary, and she possessed a tone of voice which would have equally edified a confessional or enchanted a drawing-room. This delicacy accommodated itself to the serge gown, finding in this harsh contact a continual reminder of heaven and of God. Let us emphasize one detail. Never to have lied, never to have said, for any interest whatever, even in indifference, any single thing which was not the truth, the sacred truth, was Sister Simplice's distinctive trait; it was the accent of her virtue. She was almost renowned in the congregation for this imperturbable veracity. The Abbe Sicard speaks of Sister Simplice in a letter to the deaf-mute Massieu. However pure and sincere we may be, we all bear upon our candor the crack of the little, innocent lie. She did not. Little lie, innocent lie--does such a thing exist? To lie is the absolute form of evil. To lie a little is not possible: he who lies, lies the whole lie. To lie is the very face of the demon. Satan has two names; he is called Satan and Lying. That is what she thought; and as she thought, so she did. The result was the whiteness which we have mentioned--a whiteness which covered even her lips and her eyes with radiance. Her smile was white, her glance was white. There was not a single spider's web, not a grain of dust, on the glass window of that conscience. On entering the order of Saint Vincent de Paul, she had taken the name of Simplice by special choice. Simplice of Sicily, as we know, is the saint who preferred to allow both her breasts to be torn off rather than to say that she had been born at Segesta when she had

been born at Syracuse--a lie which would have saved her. This patron saint suited this soul.

Sister Simplice, on her entrance into the order, had had two faults which she had gradually corrected: she had a taste for dainties, and she liked to receive letters. She never read anything but a book of prayers printed in Latin, in coarse type. She did not understand Latin, but she understood the book.

This pious woman had conceived an affection for Fantine, probably feeling a latent virtue there, and she had devoted herself almost exclusively to her care.

M. Madeleine took Sister Simplice apart and recommended Fantine to her in a singular tone, which the sister recalled later on.

On leaving the sister, he approached Fantine.

Fantine awaited M. Madeleine's appearance every day as one awaits a ray of warmth and joy. She said to the sisters, "I only live when Monsieur le Maire is here."

She had a great deal of fever that day. As soon as she saw M. Madeleine she asked him:--

"And Cosette?"

He replied with a smile:--

"Soon."

M. Madeleine was the same as usual with Fantine. Only he remained an hour instead of half an hour, to Fantine's great delight. He urged every one repeatedly not to allow the invalid to want for anything. It was noticed that there was a moment when his countenance became very sombre. But this was explained when it became known that the doctor had bent down to his ear and said to him, "She is losing ground fast."

Then he returned to the town-hall, and the clerk observed him attentively examining a road map of France which hung in his study. He wrote a few figures on a bit of paper with a pencil.

CHAPTER II--THE PERSPICACITY OF MASTER SCAUFFLAIRE

From the town-hall he betook himself to the extremity of the town, to a Fleming named Master Scaufflaer, French Scaufflaire, who let out "horses and cabriolets as desired."

In order to reach this Scaufflaire, the shortest way was to take the little-frequented street in which was situated the parsonage of the parish in which M. Madeleine resided. The cure was, it was said, a worthy, respectable, and sensible man. At the moment when M. Madeleine arrived in front of the parsonage there was but one passer-by in the street, and this person noticed this: After the mayor had passed the priest's house he halted, stood motionless, then turned about, and retraced his steps to the door of the parsonage, which had an iron knocker. He laid his hand quickly on the knocker and lifted it; then he paused again and stopped short, as though in thought, and after the lapse of a few seconds, instead of allowing the knocker to fall abruptly, he placed it gently, and resumed his way with a sort of haste which had not been apparent previously.

M. Madeleine found Master Scaufflaire at home, engaged in stitching a harness over.

"Master Scaufflaire," he inquired, "have you a good horse?"

"Mr. Mayor," said the Fleming, "all my horses are good. What do you mean

by a good horse?"

"I mean a horse which can travel twenty leagues in a day."

"The deuce!" said the Fleming. "Twenty leagues!"

"Yes."

"Hitched to a cabriolet?"

"Yes."

"And how long can he rest at the end of his journey?"

"He must be able to set out again on the next day if necessary."

"To traverse the same road?"

"Yes."

"The deuce! the deuce! And it is twenty leagues?"

M. Madeleine drew from his pocket the paper on which he had pencilled some figures. He showed it to the Fleming. The figures were 5, 6, 8 1/2.

"You see," he said, "total, nineteen and a half; as well say twenty

leagues."

"Mr. Mayor," returned the Fleming, "I have just what you want. My little white horse--you may have seen him pass occasionally; he is a small beast from Lower Boulonnais. He is full of fire. They wanted to make a saddle-horse of him at first. Bah! He reared, he kicked, he laid everybody flat on the ground. He was thought to be vicious, and no one knew what to do with him. I bought him. I harnessed him to a carriage. That is what he wanted, sir; he is as gentle as a girl; he goes like the wind. Ah! indeed he must not be mounted. It does not suit his ideas to be a saddle-horse. Every one has his ambition. 'Draw? Yes. Carry? No.' We must suppose that is what he said to himself."

"And he will accomplish the trip?"

"Your twenty leagues all at a full trot, and in less than eight hours. But here are the conditions."

"State them."

"In the first place, you will give him half an hour's breathing spell midway of the road; he will eat; and some one must be by while he is eating to prevent the stable boy of the inn from stealing his oats; for I have noticed that in inns the oats are more often drunk by the stable men than eaten by the horses."

"Some one will be by."

"In the second place--is the cabriolet for Monsieur le Maire?"

"Yes."

"Does Monsieur le Maire know how to drive?"

"Yes."

"Well, Monsieur le Maire will travel alone and without baggage, in order not to overload the horse?"

"Agreed."

"But as Monsieur le Maire will have no one with him, he will be obliged to take the trouble himself of seeing that the oats are not stolen."

"That is understood."

"I am to have thirty francs a day. The days of rest to be paid for also--not a farthing less; and the beast's food to be at Monsieur le Maire's expense."

M. Madeleine drew three napoleons from his purse and laid them on the table.

"Here is the pay for two days in advance."

"Fourthly, for such a journey a cabriolet would be too heavy, and would fatigue the horse. Monsieur le Maire must consent to travel in a little tilbury that I own."

"I consent to that."

"It is light, but it has no cover."

"That makes no difference to me."

"Has Monsieur le Maire reflected that we are in the middle of winter?"

M. Madeleine did not reply. The Fleming resumed:--

"That it is very cold?"

M. Madeleine preserved silence.

Master Scaufflaire continued:--

"That it may rain?"

M. Madeleine raised his head and said:--

"The tilbury and the horse will be in front of my door to-morrow morning at half-past four o'clock."

"Of course, Monsieur le Maire," replied Scaufflaire; then, scratching a speck in the wood of the table with his thumb-nail, he resumed with that careless air which the Flemings understand so well how to mingle with their shrewdness:--

"But this is what I am thinking of now: Monsieur le Maire has not told me where he is going. Where is Monsieur le Maire going?"

He had been thinking of nothing else since the beginning of the conversation, but he did not know why he had not dared to put the question.

"Are your horse's forelegs good?" said M. Madeleine.

"Yes, Monsieur le Maire. You must hold him in a little when going down hill. Are there many descends between here and the place whither you are going?"

"Do not forget to be at my door at precisely half-past four o'clock to-morrow morning," replied M. Madeleine; and he took his departure.

The Fleming remained "utterly stupid," as he himself said some time

afterwards.

The mayor had been gone two or three minutes when the door opened again; it was the mayor once more.

He still wore the same impassive and preoccupied air.

"Monsieur Scaufflaire," said he, "at what sum do you estimate the value of the horse and tilbury which you are to let to me,--the one bearing the other?"

"The one dragging the other, Monsieur le Maire," said the Fleming, with a broad smile.

"So be it. Well?"

"Does Monsieur le Maire wish to purchase them or me?"

"No; but I wish to guarantee you in any case. You shall give me back the sum at my return. At what value do you estimate your horse and cabriolet?"

"Five hundred francs, Monsieur le Maire."

"Here it is."

M. Madeleine laid a bank-bill on the table, then left the room; and this time he did not return.

Master Scaufflaire experienced a frightful regret that he had not said a thousand francs. Besides the horse and tilbury together were worth but a hundred crowns.

The Fleming called his wife, and related the affair to her. "Where the devil could Monsieur le Maire be going?" They held counsel together. "He is going to Paris," said the wife. "I don't believe it," said the husband.

M. Madeleine had forgotten the paper with the figures on it, and it lay on the chimney-piece. The Fleming picked it up and studied it. "Five, six, eight and a half? That must designate the posting relays." He turned to his wife:--

"I have found out."

"What?"

"It is five leagues from here to Hesdin, six from Hesdin to Saint-Pol, eight and a half from Saint-Pol to Arras. He is going to Arras."

Meanwhile, M. Madeleine had returned home. He had taken the longest way to return from Master Scaufflaire's, as though the parsonage door had

been a temptation for him, and he had wished to avoid it. He ascended to his room, and there he shut himself up, which was a very simple act, since he liked to go to bed early. Nevertheless, the portress of the factory, who was, at the same time, M. Madeleine's only servant, noticed that the latter's light was extinguished at half-past eight, and she mentioned it to the cashier when he came home, adding:--

"Is Monsieur le Maire ill? I thought he had a rather singular air."

This cashier occupied a room situated directly under M. Madeleine's chamber. He paid no heed to the portress's words, but went to bed and to sleep. Towards midnight he woke up with a start; in his sleep he had heard a noise above his head. He listened; it was a footstep pacing back and forth, as though some one were walking in the room above him. He listened more attentively, and recognized M. Madeleine's step. This struck him as strange; usually, there was no noise in M. Madeleine's chamber until he rose in the morning. A moment later the cashier heard a noise which resembled that of a cupboard being opened, and then shut again; then a piece of furniture was disarranged; then a pause ensued; then the step began again. The cashier sat up in bed, quite awake now, and staring; and through his window-panes he saw the reddish gleam of a lighted window reflected on the opposite wall; from the direction of the rays, it could only come from the window of M. Madeleine's chamber. The reflection wavered, as though it came rather from a fire which had been lighted than from a candle. The shadow of the window-frame was not shown, which indicated that the window was wide open. The fact that this

window was open in such cold weather was surprising. The cashier fell asleep again. An hour or two later he waked again. The same step was still passing slowly and regularly back and forth overhead.

The reflection was still visible on the wall, but now it was pale and peaceful, like the reflection of a lamp or of a candle. The window was still open.

This is what had taken place in M. Madeleine's room.

CHAPTER III--A TEMPEST IN A SKULL

The reader has, no doubt, already divined that M. Madeleine is no other than Jean Valjean.

We have already gazed into the depths of this conscience; the moment has now come when we must take another look into it. We do so not without emotion and trepidation. There is nothing more terrible in existence than this sort of contemplation. The eye of the spirit can nowhere find more dazzling brilliance and more shadow than in man; it can fix itself on no other thing which is more formidable, more complicated, more mysterious, and more infinite. There is a spectacle more grand than the sea; it is heaven: there is a spectacle more grand than heaven; it is the inmost recesses of the soul.

To make the poem of the human conscience, were it only with reference to a single man, were it only in connection with the basest of men, would be to blend all epics into one superior and definitive epic. Conscience is the chaos of chimeras, of lusts, and of temptations; the furnace of dreams; the lair of ideas of which we are ashamed; it is the pandemonium of sophisms; it is the battlefield of the passions. Penetrate, at certain hours, past the livid face of a human being who is engaged in reflection, and look behind, gaze into that soul, gaze into that obscurity. There, beneath that external silence, battles of giants, like those recorded in Homer, are in progress; skirmishes of dragons and hydras and swarms of phantoms, as in Milton; visionary circles, as in

Dante. What a solemn thing is this infinity which every man bears within him, and which he measures with despair against the caprices of his brain and the actions of his life!

Alighieri one day met with a sinister-looking door, before which he hesitated. Here is one before us, upon whose threshold we hesitate. Let us enter, nevertheless.

We have but little to add to what the reader already knows of what had happened to Jean Valjean after the adventure with Little Gervais. From that moment forth he was, as we have seen, a totally different man. What the Bishop had wished to make of him, that he carried out. It was more than a transformation; it was a transfiguration.

He succeeded in disappearing, sold the Bishop's silver, reserving only the candlesticks as a souvenir, crept from town to town, traversed France, came to M. sur M., conceived the idea which we have mentioned, accomplished what we have related, succeeded in rendering himself safe from seizure and inaccessible, and, thenceforth, established at M. sur M., happy in feeling his conscience saddened by the past and the first half of his existence belied by the last, he lived in peace, reassured and hopeful, having henceforth only two thoughts,--to conceal his name and to sanctify his life; to escape men and to return to God.

These two thoughts were so closely intertwined in his mind that they formed but a single one there; both were equally absorbing and

imperative and ruled his slightest actions. In general, they conspired to regulate the conduct of his life; they turned him towards the gloom; they rendered him kindly and simple; they counselled him to the same things. Sometimes, however, they conflicted. In that case, as the reader will remember, the man whom all the country of M. sur M. called M. Madeleine did not hesitate to sacrifice the first to the second--his security to his virtue. Thus, in spite of all his reserve and all his prudence, he had preserved the Bishop's candlesticks, worn mourning for him, summoned and interrogated all the little Savoyards who passed that way, collected information regarding the families at Faverolles, and saved old Fauchelevent's life, despite the disquieting insinuations of Javert. It seemed, as we have already remarked, as though he thought, following the example of all those who have been wise, holy, and just, that his first duty was not towards himself.

At the same time, it must be confessed, nothing just like this had yet presented itself.

Never had the two ideas which governed the unhappy man whose sufferings we are narrating, engaged in so serious a struggle. He understood this confusedly but profoundly at the very first words pronounced by Javert, when the latter entered his study. At the moment when that name, which he had buried beneath so many layers, was so strangely articulated, he was struck with stupor, and as though intoxicated with the sinister eccentricity of his destiny; and through this stupor he felt that shudder which precedes great shocks. He bent like an oak at the approach

of a storm, like a soldier at the approach of an assault. He felt shadows filled with thunders and lightnings descending upon his head. As he listened to Javert, the first thought which occurred to him was to go, to run and denounce himself, to take that Champmathieu out of prison and place himself there; this was as painful and as poignant as an incision in the living flesh. Then it passed away, and he said to himself, "We will see! We will see!" He repressed this first, generous instinct, and recoiled before heroism.

It would be beautiful, no doubt, after the Bishop's holy words, after so many years of repentance and abnegation, in the midst of a penitence admirably begun, if this man had not flinched for an instant, even in the presence of so terrible a conjecture, but had continued to walk with the same step towards this yawning precipice, at the bottom of which lay heaven; that would have been beautiful; but it was not thus. We must render an account of the things which went on in this soul, and we can only tell what there was there. He was carried away, at first, by the instinct of self-preservation; he rallied all his ideas in haste, stifled his emotions, took into consideration Javert's presence, that great danger, postponed all decision with the firmness of terror, shook off thought as to what he had to do, and resumed his calmness as a warrior picks up his buckler.

He remained in this state during the rest of the day, a whirlwind within, a profound tranquillity without. He took no "preservative measures," as they may be called. Everything was still confused, and

jostling together in his brain. His trouble was so great that he could not perceive the form of a single idea distinctly, and he could have told nothing about himself, except that he had received a great blow.

He repaired to Fantine's bed of suffering, as usual, and prolonged his visit, through a kindly instinct, telling himself that he must behave thus, and recommend her well to the sisters, in case he should be obliged to be absent himself. He had a vague feeling that he might be obliged to go to Arras; and without having the least in the world made up his mind to this trip, he said to himself that being, as he was, beyond the shadow of any suspicion, there could be nothing out of the way in being a witness to what was to take place, and he engaged the tilbury from Scaufflaire in order to be prepared in any event.

He dined with a good deal of appetite.

On returning to his room, he communed with himself.

He examined the situation, and found it unprecedented; so unprecedented that in the midst of his revery he rose from his chair, moved by some inexplicable impulse of anxiety, and bolted his door. He feared lest something more should enter. He was barricading himself against possibilities.

A moment later he extinguished his light; it embarrassed him.

It seemed to him as though he might be seen.

By whom?

Alas! That on which he desired to close the door had already entered; that which he desired to blind was staring him in the face,--his conscience.

His conscience; that is to say, God.

Nevertheless, he deluded himself at first; he had a feeling of security and of solitude; the bolt once drawn, he thought himself impregnable; the candle extinguished, he felt himself invisible. Then he took possession of himself: he set his elbows on the table, leaned his head on his hand, and began to meditate in the dark.

"Where do I stand? Am not I dreaming? What have I heard? Is it really true that I have seen that Javert, and that he spoke to me in that manner? Who can that Champmathieu be? So he resembles me! Is it possible? When I reflect that yesterday I was so tranquil, and so far from suspecting anything! What was I doing yesterday at this hour? What is there in this incident? What will the end be? What is to be done?"

This was the torment in which he found himself. His brain had lost its power of retaining ideas; they passed like waves, and he clutched his brow in both hands to arrest them.

Nothing but anguish extricated itself from this tumult which overwhelmed his will and his reason, and from which he sought to draw proof and resolution.

His head was burning. He went to the window and threw it wide open. There were no stars in the sky. He returned and seated himself at the table.

The first hour passed in this manner.

Gradually, however, vague outlines began to take form and to fix themselves in his meditation, and he was able to catch a glimpse with precision of the reality,--not the whole situation, but some of the details. He began by recognizing the fact that, critical and extraordinary as was this situation, he was completely master of it.

This only caused an increase of his stupor.

Independently of the severe and religious aim which he had assigned to his actions, all that he had made up to that day had been nothing but a hole in which to bury his name. That which he had always feared most of all in his hours of self-communion, during his sleepless nights, was to ever hear that name pronounced; he had said to himself, that that would be the end of all things for him; that on the day when that name made its reappearance it would cause his new life to vanish from about

him, and--who knows?--perhaps even his new soul within him, also. He shuddered at the very thought that this was possible. Assuredly, if any one had said to him at such moments that the hour would come when that name would ring in his ears, when the hideous words, Jean Valjean, would suddenly emerge from the darkness and rise in front of him, when that formidable light, capable of dissipating the mystery in which he had enveloped himself, would suddenly blaze forth above his head, and that that name would not menace him, that that light would but produce an obscurity more dense, that this rent veil would but increase the mystery, that this earthquake would solidify his edifice, that this prodigious incident would have no other result, so far as he was concerned, if so it seemed good to him, than that of rendering his existence at once clearer and more impenetrable, and that, out of his confrontation with the phantom of Jean Valjean, the good and worthy citizen Monsieur Madeleine would emerge more honored, more peaceful, and more respected than ever--if any one had told him that, he would have tossed his head and regarded the words as those of a madman. Well, all this was precisely what had just come to pass; all that accumulation of impossibilities was a fact, and God had permitted these wild fancies to become real things!

His revery continued to grow clearer. He came more and more to an understanding of his position.

It seemed to him that he had but just waked up from some inexplicable dream, and that he found himself slipping down a declivity in the middle

of the night, erect, shivering, holding back all in vain, on the very brink of the abyss. He distinctly perceived in the darkness a stranger, a man unknown to him, whom destiny had mistaken for him, and whom she was thrusting into the gulf in his stead; in order that the gulf might close once more, it was necessary that some one, himself or that other man, should fall into it: he had only let things take their course.

The light became complete, and he acknowledged this to himself: That his place was empty in the galleys; that do what he would, it was still awaiting him; that the theft from little Gervais had led him back to it; that this vacant place would await him, and draw him on until he filled it; that this was inevitable and fatal; and then he said to himself, "that, at this moment, he had a substitute; that it appeared that a certain Champmathieu had that ill luck, and that, as regards himself, being present in the galleys in the person of that Champmathieu, present in society under the name of M. Madeleine, he had nothing more to fear, provided that he did not prevent men from sealing over the head of that Champmathieu this stone of infamy which, like the stone of the sepulchre, falls once, never to rise again."

All this was so strange and so violent, that there suddenly took place in him that indescribable movement, which no man feels more than two or three times in the course of his life, a sort of convulsion of the conscience which stirs up all that there is doubtful in the heart, which is composed of irony, of joy, and of despair, and which may be called an outburst of inward laughter.

He hastily relighted his candle.

"Well, what then?" he said to himself; "what am I afraid of? What is there in all that for me to think about? I am safe; all is over. I had but one partly open door through which my past might invade my life, and behold that door is walled up forever! That Javert, who has been annoying me so long; that terrible instinct which seemed to have divined me, which had divined me--good God! and which followed me everywhere; that frightful hunting-dog, always making a point at me, is thrown off the scent, engaged elsewhere, absolutely turned from the trail: henceforth he is satisfied; he will leave me in peace; he has his Jean Valjean. Who knows? it is even probable that he will wish to leave town! And all this has been brought about without any aid from me, and I count for nothing in it! Ah! but where is the misfortune in this? Upon my honor, people would think, to see me, that some catastrophe had happened to me! After all, if it does bring harm to some one, that is not my fault in the least: it is Providence which has done it all; it is because it wishes it so to be, evidently. Have I the right to disarrange what it has arranged? What do I ask now? Why should I meddle? It does not concern me; what! I am not satisfied: but what more do I want? The goal to which I have aspired for so many years, the dream of my nights, the object of my prayers to Heaven,--security,--I have now attained; it is God who wills it; I can do nothing against the will of God, and why does God will it? In order that I may continue what I have begun, that I may do good, that I may one day be a grand and encouraging example, that

it may be said at last, that a little happiness has been attached to the penance which I have undergone, and to that virtue to which I have returned. Really, I do not understand why I was afraid, a little while ago, to enter the house of that good cure, and to ask his advice; this is evidently what he would have said to me: It is settled; let things take their course; let the good God do as he likes!"

Thus did he address himself in the depths of his own conscience, bending over what may be called his own abyss; he rose from his chair, and began to pace the room: "Come," said he, "let us think no more about it; my resolve is taken!" but he felt no joy.

Quite the reverse.

One can no more prevent thought from recurring to an idea than one can the sea from returning to the shore: the sailor calls it the tide; the guilty man calls it remorse; God upheaves the soul as he does the ocean.

After the expiration of a few moments, do what he would, he resumed the gloomy dialogue in which it was he who spoke and he who listened, saying that which he would have preferred to ignore, and listened to that which he would have preferred not to hear, yielding to that mysterious power which said to him: "Think!" as it said to another condemned man, two thousand years ago, "March on!"

Before proceeding further, and in order to make ourselves fully

understood, let us insist upon one necessary observation.

It is certain that people do talk to themselves; there is no living being who has not done it. It may even be said that the word is never a more magnificent mystery than when it goes from thought to conscience within a man, and when it returns from conscience to thought; it is in this sense only that the words so often employed in this chapter, he said, he exclaimed, must be understood; one speaks to one's self, talks to one's self, exclaims to one's self without breaking the external silence; there is a great tumult; everything about us talks except the mouth. The realities of the soul are none the less realities because they are not visible and palpable.

So he asked himself where he stood. He interrogated himself upon that "settled resolve." He confessed to himself that all that he had just arranged in his mind was monstrous, that "to let things take their course, to let the good God do as he liked," was simply horrible; to allow this error of fate and of men to be carried out, not to hinder it, to lend himself to it through his silence, to do nothing, in short, was to do everything! that this was hypocritical baseness in the last degree! that it was a base, cowardly, sneaking, abject, hideous crime!

For the first time in eight years, the wretched man had just tasted the bitter savor of an evil thought and of an evil action.

He spit it out with disgust.

He continued to question himself. He asked himself severely what he had meant by this, "My object is attained!" He declared to himself that his life really had an object; but what object? To conceal his name? To deceive the police? Was it for so petty a thing that he had done all that he had done? Had he not another and a grand object, which was the true one--to save, not his person, but his soul; to become honest and good once more; to be a just man? Was it not that above all, that alone, which he had always desired, which the Bishop had enjoined upon him--to shut the door on his past? But he was not shutting it! great God! he was re-opening it by committing an infamous action! He was becoming a thief once more, and the most odious of thieves! He was robbing another of his existence, his life, his peace, his place in the sunshine. He was becoming an assassin. He was murdering, morally murdering, a wretched man. He was inflicting on him that frightful living death, that death beneath the open sky, which is called the galleys. On the other hand, to surrender himself to save that man, struck down with so melancholy an error, to resume his own name, to become once more, out of duty, the convict Jean Valjean, that was, in truth, to achieve his resurrection, and to close forever that hell whence he had just emerged; to fall back there in appearance was to escape from it in reality. This must be done! He had done nothing if he did not do all this; his whole life was useless; all his penitence was wasted. There was no longer any need of saying, "What is the use?" He felt that the Bishop was there, that the Bishop was present all the more because he was dead, that the Bishop was gazing fixedly at him, that henceforth Mayor Madeleine, with all his

virtues, would be abominable to him, and that the convict Jean Valjean would be pure and admirable in his sight; that men beheld his mask, but that the Bishop saw his face; that men saw his life, but that the Bishop beheld his conscience. So he must go to Arras, deliver the false Jean Valjean, and denounce the real one. Alas! that was the greatest of sacrifices, the most poignant of victories, the last step to take; but it must be done. Sad fate! he would enter into sanctity only in the eyes of God when he returned to infamy in the eyes of men.

"Well," said he, "let us decide upon this; let us do our duty; let us save this man." He uttered these words aloud, without perceiving that he was speaking aloud.

He took his books, verified them, and put them in order. He flung in the fire a bundle of bills which he had against petty and embarrassed tradesmen. He wrote and sealed a letter, and on the envelope it might have been read, had there been any one in his chamber at the moment, To Monsieur Laffitte, Banker, Rue d'Artois, Paris. He drew from his secretary a pocket-book which contained several bank-notes and the passport of which he had made use that same year when he went to the elections.

Any one who had seen him during the execution of these various acts, into which there entered such grave thought, would have had no suspicion of what was going on within him. Only occasionally did his lips move; at other times he raised his head and fixed his gaze upon some point of the

wall, as though there existed at that point something which he wished to elucidate or interrogate.

When he had finished the letter to M. Laffitte, he put it into his pocket, together with the pocket-book, and began his walk once more.

His revery had not swerved from its course. He continued to see his duty clearly, written in luminous letters, which flamed before his eyes and changed its place as he altered the direction of his glance:--

"Go! Tell your name! Denounce yourself!"

In the same way he beheld, as though they had passed before him in visible forms, the two ideas which had, up to that time, formed the double rule of his soul,--the concealment of his name, the sanctification of his life. For the first time they appeared to him as absolutely distinct, and he perceived the distance which separated them. He recognized the fact that one of these ideas was, necessarily, good, while the other might become bad; that the first was self-devotion, and that the other was personality; that the one said, my neighbor, and that the other said, myself; that one emanated from the light, and the other from darkness.

They were antagonistic. He saw them in conflict. In proportion as he meditated, they grew before the eyes of his spirit. They had now attained colossal statures, and it seemed to him that he beheld within

himself, in that infinity of which we were recently speaking, in the midst of the darkness and the lights, a goddess and a giant contending.

He was filled with terror; but it seemed to him that the good thought was getting the upper hand.

He felt that he was on the brink of the second decisive crisis of his conscience and of his destiny; that the Bishop had marked the first phase of his new life, and that Champmathieu marked the second. After the grand crisis, the grand test.

But the fever, allayed for an instant, gradually resumed possession of him. A thousand thoughts traversed his mind, but they continued to fortify him in his resolution.

One moment he said to himself that he was, perhaps, taking the matter too keenly; that, after all, this Champmathieu was not interesting, and that he had actually been guilty of theft.

He answered himself: "If this man has, indeed, stolen a few apples, that means a month in prison. It is a long way from that to the galleys. And who knows? Did he steal? Has it been proved? The name of Jean Valjean overwhelms him, and seems to dispense with proofs. Do not the attorneys for the Crown always proceed in this manner? He is supposed to be a thief because he is known to be a convict."

In another instant the thought had occurred to him that, when he denounced himself, the heroism of his deed might, perhaps, be taken into consideration, and his honest life for the last seven years, and what he had done for the district, and that they would have mercy on him.

But this supposition vanished very quickly, and he smiled bitterly as he remembered that the theft of the forty sous from little Gervais put him in the position of a man guilty of a second offence after conviction, that this affair would certainly come up, and, according to the precise terms of the law, would render him liable to penal servitude for life.

He turned aside from all illusions, detached himself more and more from earth, and sought strength and consolation elsewhere. He told himself that he must do his duty; that perhaps he should not be more unhappy after doing his duty than after having avoided it; that if he allowed things to take their own course, if he remained at M. sur M., his consideration, his good name, his good works, the deference and veneration paid to him, his charity, his wealth, his popularity, his virtue, would be seasoned with a crime. And what would be the taste of all these holy things when bound up with this hideous thing? while, if he accomplished his sacrifice, a celestial idea would be mingled with the galleys, the post, the iron necklet, the green cap, unceasing toil, and pitiless shame.

At length he told himself that it must be so, that his destiny was thus allotted, that he had not authority to alter the arrangements made on

high, that, in any case, he must make his choice: virtue without and abomination within, or holiness within and infamy without.

The stirring up of these lugubrious ideas did not cause his courage to fail, but his brain grow weary. He began to think of other things, of indifferent matters, in spite of himself.

The veins in his temples throbbed violently; he still paced to and fro; midnight sounded first from the parish church, then from the town-hall; he counted the twelve strokes of the two clocks, and compared the sounds of the two bells; he recalled in this connection the fact that, a few days previously, he had seen in an ironmonger's shop an ancient clock for sale, upon which was written the name, Antoine-Albin de Romainville.

He was cold; he lighted a small fire; it did not occur to him to close the window.

In the meantime he had relapsed into his stupor; he was obliged to make a tolerably vigorous effort to recall what had been the subject of his thoughts before midnight had struck; he finally succeeded in doing this.

"Ah! yes," he said to himself, "I had resolved to inform against myself."

And then, all of a sudden, he thought of Fantine.

"Hold!" said he, "and what about that poor woman?"

Here a fresh crisis declared itself.

Fantine, by appearing thus abruptly in his revery, produced the effect of an unexpected ray of light; it seemed to him as though everything about him were undergoing a change of aspect: he exclaimed:--

"Ah! but I have hitherto considered no one but myself; it is proper for me to hold my tongue or to denounce myself, to conceal my person or to save my soul, to be a despicable and respected magistrate, or an infamous and venerable convict; it is I, it is always I and nothing but I: but, good God! all this is egotism; these are diverse forms of egotism, but it is egotism all the same. What if I were to think a little about others? The highest holiness is to think of others; come, let us examine the matter. The I excepted, the I effaced, the I forgotten, what would be the result of all this? What if I denounce myself? I am arrested; this Champmathieu is released; I am put back in the galleys; that is well--and what then? What is going on here? Ah! here is a country, a town, here are factories, an industry, workers, both men and women, aged grandsires, children, poor people! All this I have created; all these I provide with their living; everywhere where there is a smoking chimney, it is I who have placed the brand on the hearth and meat in the pot; I have created ease, circulation, credit; before me there was nothing; I have elevated, vivified, informed with life, fecundated, stimulated, enriched the whole country-side; lacking

me, the soul is lacking; I take myself off, everything dies: and this woman, who has suffered so much, who possesses so many merits in spite of her fall; the cause of all whose misery I have unwittingly been! And that child whom I meant to go in search of, whom I have promised to her mother; do I not also owe something to this woman, in reparation for the evil which I have done her? If I disappear, what happens? The mother dies; the child becomes what it can; that is what will take place, if I denounce myself. If I do not denounce myself? come, let us see how it will be if I do not denounce myself."

After putting this question to himself, he paused; he seemed to undergo a momentary hesitation and trepidation; but it did not last long, and he answered himself calmly:--

"Well, this man is going to the galleys; it is true, but what the deuce! he has stolen! There is no use in my saying that he has not been guilty of theft, for he has! I remain here; I go on: in ten years I shall have made ten millions; I scatter them over the country; I have nothing of my own; what is that to me? It is not for myself that I am doing it; the prosperity of all goes on augmenting; industries are aroused and animated; factories and shops are multiplied; families, a hundred families, a thousand families, are happy; the district becomes populated; villages spring up where there were only farms before; farms rise where there was nothing; wretchedness disappears, and with wretchedness debauchery, prostitution, theft, murder; all vices disappear, all crimes: and this poor mother rears her child; and behold

a whole country rich and honest! Ah! I was a fool! I was absurd!
what was that I was saying about denouncing myself? I really must pay
attention and not be precipitate about anything. What! because it would
have pleased me to play the grand and generous; this is melodrama, after
all; because I should have thought of no one but myself, the idea! for
the sake of saving from a punishment, a trifle exaggerated, perhaps,
but just at bottom, no one knows whom, a thief, a good-for-nothing,
evidently, a whole country-side must perish! a poor woman must die in
the hospital! a poor little girl must die in the street! like dogs; ah,
this is abominable! And without the mother even having seen her child
once more, almost without the child's having known her mother; and
all that for the sake of an old wretch of an apple-thief who, most
assuredly, has deserved the galleys for something else, if not for
that; fine scruples, indeed, which save a guilty man and sacrifice the
innocent, which save an old vagabond who has only a few years to live at
most, and who will not be more unhappy in the galleys than in his hovel,
and which sacrifice a whole population, mothers, wives, children. This
poor little Cosette who has no one in the world but me, and who is, no
doubt, blue with cold at this moment in the den of those Thenardiers;
those peoples are rascals; and I was going to neglect my duty towards
all these poor creatures; and I was going off to denounce myself; and I
was about to commit that unspeakable folly! Let us put it at the worst:
suppose that there is a wrong action on my part in this, and that my
conscience will reproach me for it some day, to accept, for the good of
others, these reproaches which weigh only on myself; this evil action
which compromises my soul alone; in that lies self-sacrifice; in that

alone there is virtue."

He rose and resumed his march; this time, he seemed to be content.

Diamonds are found only in the dark places of the earth; truths are found only in the depths of thought. It seemed to him, that, after having descended into these depths, after having long groped among the darkest of these shadows, he had at last found one of these diamonds, one of these truths, and that he now held it in his hand, and he was dazzled as he gazed upon it.

"Yes," he thought, "this is right; I am on the right road; I have the solution; I must end by holding fast to something; my resolve is taken; let things take their course; let us no longer vacillate; let us no longer hang back; this is for the interest of all, not for my own; I am Madeleine, and Madeleine I remain. Woe to the man who is Jean Valjean! I am no longer he; I do not know that man; I no longer know anything; it turns out that some one is Jean Valjean at the present moment; let him look out for himself; that does not concern me; it is a fatal name which was floating abroad in the night; if it halts and descends on a head, so much the worse for that head."

He looked into the little mirror which hung above his chimney-piece, and said:--

"Hold! it has relieved me to come to a decision; I am quite another man

now."

He proceeded a few paces further, then he stopped short.

"Come!" he said, "I must not flinch before any of the consequences of the resolution which I have once adopted; there are still threads which attach me to that Jean Valjean; they must be broken; in this very room there are objects which would betray me, dumb things which would bear witness against me; it is settled; all these things must disappear."

He fumbled in his pocket, drew out his purse, opened it, and took out a small key; he inserted the key in a lock whose aperture could hardly be seen, so hidden was it in the most sombre tones of the design which covered the wall-paper; a secret receptacle opened, a sort of false cupboard constructed in the angle between the wall and the chimney-piece; in this hiding-place there were some rags--a blue linen blouse, an old pair of trousers, an old knapsack, and a huge thorn cudgel shod with iron at both ends. Those who had seen Jean Valjean at the epoch when he passed through D----in October, 1815, could easily have recognized all the pieces of this miserable outfit.

He had preserved them as he had preserved the silver candlesticks, in order to remind himself continually of his starting-point, but he had concealed all that came from the galleys, and he had allowed the candlesticks which came from the Bishop to be seen.

He cast a furtive glance towards the door, as though he feared that it would open in spite of the bolt which fastened it; then, with a quick and abrupt movement, he took the whole in his arms at once, without bestowing so much as a glance on the things which he had so religiously and so perilously preserved for so many years, and flung them all, rags, cudgel, knapsack, into the fire.

He closed the false cupboard again, and with redoubled precautions, henceforth unnecessary, since it was now empty, he concealed the door behind a heavy piece of furniture, which he pushed in front of it.

After the lapse of a few seconds, the room and the opposite wall were lighted up with a fierce, red, tremulous glow. Everything was on fire; the thorn cudgel snapped and threw out sparks to the middle of the chamber.

As the knapsack was consumed, together with the hideous rags which it contained, it revealed something which sparkled in the ashes. By bending over, one could have readily recognized a coin,--no doubt the forty-sou piece stolen from the little Savoyard.

He did not look at the fire, but paced back and forth with the same step.

All at once his eye fell on the two silver candlesticks, which shone vaguely on the chimney-piece, through the glow.

"Hold!" he thought; "the whole of Jean Valjean is still in them. They must be destroyed also."

He seized the two candlesticks.

There was still fire enough to allow of their being put out of shape, and converted into a sort of unrecognizable bar of metal.

He bent over the hearth and warmed himself for a moment. He felt a sense of real comfort. "How good warmth is!" said he.

He stirred the live coals with one of the candlesticks.

A minute more, and they were both in the fire.

At that moment it seemed to him that he heard a voice within him shouting: "Jean Valjean! Jean Valjean!"

His hair rose upright: he became like a man who is listening to some terrible thing.

"Yes, that's it! finish!" said the voice. "Complete what you are about! Destroy these candlesticks! Annihilate this souvenir! Forget the Bishop! Forget everything! Destroy this Champmathieu, do! That is right! Applaud yourself! So it is settled, resolved, fixed, agreed: here is an old man

who does not know what is wanted of him, who has, perhaps, done nothing, an innocent man, whose whole misfortune lies in your name, upon whom your name weighs like a crime, who is about to be taken for you, who will be condemned, who will finish his days in abjectness and horror. That is good! Be an honest man yourself; remain Monsieur le Maire; remain honorable and honored; enrich the town; nourish the indigent; rear the orphan; live happy, virtuous, and admired; and, during this time, while you are here in the midst of joy and light, there will be a man who will wear your red blouse, who will bear your name in ignominy, and who will drag your chain in the galleys. Yes, it is well arranged thus. Ah, wretch!"

The perspiration streamed from his brow. He fixed a haggard eye on the candlesticks. But that within him which had spoken had not finished. The voice continued:--

"Jean Valjean, there will be around you many voices, which will make a great noise, which will talk very loud, and which will bless you, and only one which no one will hear, and which will curse you in the dark. Well! listen, infamous man! All those benedictions will fall back before they reach heaven, and only the malediction will ascend to God."

This voice, feeble at first, and which had proceeded from the most obscure depths of his conscience, had gradually become startling and formidable, and he now heard it in his very ear. It seemed to him that it had detached itself from him, and that it was now speaking outside

of him. He thought that he heard the last words so distinctly, that he glanced around the room in a sort of terror.

"Is there any one here?" he demanded aloud, in utter bewilderment.

Then he resumed, with a laugh which resembled that of an idiot:--

"How stupid I am! There can be no one!"

There was some one; but the person who was there was of those whom the human eye cannot see.

He placed the candlesticks on the chimney-piece.

Then he resumed his monotonous and lugubrious tramp, which troubled the dreams of the sleeping man beneath him, and awoke him with a start.

This tramping to and fro soothed and at the same time intoxicated him. It sometimes seems, on supreme occasions, as though people moved about for the purpose of asking advice of everything that they may encounter by change of place. After the lapse of a few minutes he no longer knew his position.

He now recoiled in equal terror before both the resolutions at which he had arrived in turn. The two ideas which counselled him appeared to him equally fatal. What a fatality! What conjunction that that Champmathieu

should have been taken for him; to be overwhelmed by precisely the means which Providence seemed to have employed, at first, to strengthen his position!

There was a moment when he reflected on the future. Denounce himself, great God! Deliver himself up! With immense despair he faced all that he should be obliged to leave, all that he should be obliged to take up once more. He should have to bid farewell to that existence which was so good, so pure, so radiant, to the respect of all, to honor, to liberty. He should never more stroll in the fields; he should never more hear the birds sing in the month of May; he should never more bestow alms on the little children; he should never more experience the sweetness of having glances of gratitude and love fixed upon him; he should quit that house which he had built, that little chamber! Everything seemed charming to him at that moment. Never again should he read those books; never more should he write on that little table of white wood; his old portress, the only servant whom he kept, would never more bring him his coffee in the morning. Great God! instead of that, the convict gang, the iron necklet, the red waistcoat, the chain on his ankle, fatigue, the cell, the camp bed all those horrors which he knew so well! At his age, after having been what he was! If he were only young again! but to be addressed in his old age as "thou" by any one who pleased; to be searched by the convict-guard; to receive the galley-sergeant's cudgellings; to wear iron-bound shoes on his bare feet; to have to stretch out his leg night and morning to the hammer of the roundsman who visits the gang; to submit to the curiosity of strangers, who would be

told: "That man yonder is the famous Jean Valjean, who was mayor of M. sur M."; and at night, dripping with perspiration, overwhelmed with lassitude, their green caps drawn over their eyes, to remount, two by two, the ladder staircase of the galleys beneath the sergeant's whip. Oh, what misery! Can destiny, then, be as malicious as an intelligent being, and become as monstrous as the human heart?

And do what he would, he always fell back upon the heartrending dilemma which lay at the foundation of his revery: "Should he remain in paradise and become a demon? Should he return to hell and become an angel?"

What was to be done? Great God! what was to be done?

The torment from which he had escaped with so much difficulty was unchained afresh within him. His ideas began to grow confused once more; they assumed a kind of stupefied and mechanical quality which is peculiar to despair. The name of Romainville recurred incessantly to his mind, with the two verses of a song which he had heard in the past. He thought that Romainville was a little grove near Paris, where young lovers go to pluck lilacs in the month of April.

He wavered outwardly as well as inwardly. He walked like a little child who is permitted to toddle alone.

At intervals, as he combated his lassitude, he made an effort to recover the mastery of his mind. He tried to put to himself, for the last time,

and definitely, the problem over which he had, in a manner, fallen prostrate with fatigue: Ought he to denounce himself? Ought he to hold his peace? He could not manage to see anything distinctly. The vague aspects of all the courses of reasoning which had been sketched out by his meditations quivered and vanished, one after the other, into smoke. He only felt that, to whatever course of action he made up his mind, something in him must die, and that of necessity, and without his being able to escape the fact; that he was entering a sepulchre on the right hand as much as on the left; that he was passing through a death agony,--the agony of his happiness, or the agony of his virtue.

Alas! all his resolution had again taken possession of him. He was no further advanced than at the beginning.

Thus did this unhappy soul struggle in its anguish. Eighteen hundred years before this unfortunate man, the mysterious Being in whom are summed up all the sanctities and all the sufferings of humanity had also long thrust aside with his hand, while the olive-trees quivered in the wild wind of the infinite, the terrible cup which appeared to Him dripping with darkness and overflowing with shadows in the depths all studded with stars.

CHAPTER IV--FORMS ASSUMED BY SUFFERING DURING SLEEP

Three o'clock in the morning had just struck, and he had been walking thus for five hours, almost uninterruptedly, when he at length allowed himself to drop into his chair.

There he fell asleep and had a dream.

This dream, like the majority of dreams, bore no relation to the situation, except by its painful and heart-rending character, but it made an impression on him. This nightmare struck him so forcibly that he wrote it down later on. It is one of the papers in his own handwriting which he has bequeathed to us. We think that we have here reproduced the thing in strict accordance with the text.

Of whatever nature this dream may be, the history of this night would be incomplete if we were to omit it: it is the gloomy adventure of an ailing soul.

Here it is. On the envelope we find this line inscribed, "The Dream I had that Night."

"I was in a plain; a vast, gloomy plain, where there was no grass. It did not seem to me to be daylight nor yet night.

"I was walking with my brother, the brother of my childish years,

the brother of whom, I must say, I never think, and whom I now hardly remember.

"We were conversing and we met some passers-by. We were talking of a neighbor of ours in former days, who had always worked with her window open from the time when she came to live on the street. As we talked we felt cold because of that open window.

"There were no trees in the plain. We saw a man passing close to us. He was entirely nude, of the hue of ashes, and mounted on a horse which was earth color. The man had no hair; we could see his skull and the veins on it. In his hand he held a switch which was as supple as a vine-shoot and as heavy as iron. This horseman passed and said nothing to us.

"My brother said to me, 'Let us take to the hollow road.'

"There existed a hollow way wherein one saw neither a single shrub nor a spear of moss. Everything was dirt-colored, even the sky. After proceeding a few paces, I received no reply when I spoke: I perceived that my brother was no longer with me.

"I entered a village which I espied. I reflected that it must be Romainville. (Why Romainville?)[5]

"The first street that I entered was deserted. I entered a second street. Behind the angle formed by the two streets, a man was standing

erect against the wall. I said to this Man:--

"'What country is this? Where am I?' The man made no reply. I saw the door of a house open, and I entered.

"The first chamber was deserted. I entered the second. Behind the door of this chamber a man was standing erect against the wall. I inquired of this man, 'Whose house is this? Where am I?' The man replied not.

"The house had a garden. I quitted the house and entered the garden. The garden was deserted. Behind the first tree I found a man standing upright. I said to this man, 'What garden is this? Where am I?' The man did not answer.

"I strolled into the village, and perceived that it was a town. All the streets were deserted, all the doors were open. Not a single living being was passing in the streets, walking through the chambers or strolling in the gardens. But behind each angle of the walls, behind each door, behind each tree, stood a silent man. Only one was to be seen at a time. These men watched me pass.

"I left the town and began to ramble about the fields.

"After the lapse of some time I turned back and saw a great crowd coming up behind me. I recognized all the men whom I had seen in that town. They had strange heads. They did not seem to be in a hurry, yet they

walked faster than I did. They made no noise as they walked. In an instant this crowd had overtaken and surrounded me. The faces of these men were earthen in hue.

"Then the first one whom I had seen and questioned on entering the town said to me:--

"'Whither are you going! Do you not know that you have been dead this long time?'

"I opened my mouth to reply, and I perceived that there was no one near me."

He woke. He was icy cold. A wind which was chill like the breeze of dawn was rattling the leaves of the window, which had been left open on their hinges. The fire was out. The candle was nearing its end. It was still black night.

He rose, he went to the window. There were no stars in the sky even yet.

From his window the yard of the house and the street were visible. A sharp, harsh noise, which made him drop his eyes, resounded from the earth.

Below him he perceived two red stars, whose rays lengthened and

shortened in a singular manner through the darkness.

As his thoughts were still half immersed in the mists of sleep, "Hold!" said he, "there are no stars in the sky. They are on earth now."

But this confusion vanished; a second sound similar to the first roused him thoroughly; he looked and recognized the fact that these two stars were the lanterns of a carriage. By the light which they cast he was able to distinguish the form of this vehicle. It was a tilbury harnessed to a small white horse. The noise which he had heard was the trampling of the horse's hoofs on the pavement.

"What vehicle is this?" he said to himself. "Who is coming here so early in the morning?"

At that moment there came a light tap on the door of his chamber.

He shuddered from head to foot, and cried in a terrible voice:--

"Who is there?"

Some one said:--

"I, Monsieur le Maire."

He recognized the voice of the old woman who was his portress.

"Well!" he replied, "what is it?"

"Monsieur le Maire, it is just five o'clock in the morning."

"What is that to me?"

"The cabriolet is here, Monsieur le Maire."

"What cabriolet?"

"The tilbury."

"What tilbury?"

"Did not Monsieur le Maire order a tilbury?"

"No," said he.

"The coachman says that he has come for Monsieur le Maire."

"What coachman?"

"M. Scaufflaire's coachman."

"M. Scaufflaire?"

That name sent a shudder over him, as though a flash of lightning had passed in front of his face.

"Ah! yes," he resumed; "M. Scaufflaire!"

If the old woman could have seen him at that moment, she would have been frightened.

A tolerably long silence ensued. He examined the flame of the candle with a stupid air, and from around the wick he took some of the burning wax, which he rolled between his fingers. The old woman waited for him. She even ventured to uplift her voice once more:--

"What am I to say, Monsieur le Maire?"

"Say that it is well, and that I am coming down."

CHAPTER V--HINDRANCES

The posting service from Arras to M. sur M. was still operated at this period by small mail-wagons of the time of the Empire. These mail-wagons were two-wheeled cabriolets, upholstered inside with fawn-colored leather, hung on springs, and having but two seats, one for the postboy, the other for the traveller. The wheels were armed with those long, offensive axles which keep other vehicles at a distance, and which may still be seen on the road in Germany. The despatch box, an immense oblong coffer, was placed behind the vehicle and formed a part of it. This coffer was painted black, and the cabriolet yellow.

These vehicles, which have no counterparts nowadays, had something distorted and hunchbacked about them; and when one saw them passing in the distance, and climbing up some road to the horizon, they resembled the insects which are called, I think, termites, and which, though with but little corselet, drag a great train behind them. But they travelled at a very rapid rate. The post-wagon which set out from Arras at one o'clock every night, after the mail from Paris had passed, arrived at M. sur M. a little before five o'clock in the morning.

That night the wagon which was descending to M. sur M. by the Hesdin road, collided at the corner of a street, just as it was entering the town, with a little tilbury harnessed to a white horse, which was going in the opposite direction, and in which there was but one person, a man enveloped in a mantle. The wheel of the tilbury received quite a violent

shock. The postman shouted to the man to stop, but the traveller paid no heed and pursued his road at full gallop.

"That man is in a devilish hurry!" said the postman.

The man thus hastening on was the one whom we have just seen struggling in convulsions which are certainly deserving of pity.

Whither was he going? He could not have told. Why was he hastening? He did not know. He was driving at random, straight ahead. Whither? To Arras, no doubt; but he might have been going elsewhere as well. At times he was conscious of it, and he shuddered. He plunged into the night as into a gulf. Something urged him forward; something drew him on. No one could have told what was taking place within him; every one will understand it. What man is there who has not entered, at least once in his life, into that obscure cavern of the unknown?

However, he had resolved on nothing, decided nothing, formed no plan, done nothing. None of the actions of his conscience had been decisive. He was, more than ever, as he had been at the first moment.

Why was he going to Arras?

He repeated what he had already said to himself when he had hired Scaufflaire's cabriolet: that, whatever the result was to be, there was no reason why he should not see with his own eyes, and judge of matters

for himself; that this was even prudent; that he must know what took place; that no decision could be arrived at without having observed and scrutinized; that one made mountains out of everything from a distance; that, at any rate, when he should have seen that Champmathieu, some wretch, his conscience would probably be greatly relieved to allow him to go to the galleys in his stead; that Javert would indeed be there; and that Brevet, that Chenildieu, that Cochepaille, old convicts who had known him; but they certainly would not recognize him;--bah! what an idea! that Javert was a hundred leagues from suspecting the truth; that all conjectures and all suppositions were fixed on Champmathieu, and that there is nothing so headstrong as suppositions and conjectures; that accordingly there was no danger.

That it was, no doubt, a dark moment, but that he should emerge from it; that, after all, he held his destiny, however bad it might be, in his own hand; that he was master of it. He clung to this thought.

At bottom, to tell the whole truth, he would have preferred not to go to Arras.

Nevertheless, he was going thither.

As he meditated, he whipped up his horse, which was proceeding at that fine, regular, and even trot which accomplishes two leagues and a half an hour.

In proportion as the cabriolet advanced, he felt something within him draw back.

At daybreak he was in the open country; the town of M. sur M. lay far behind him. He watched the horizon grow white; he stared at all the chilly figures of a winter's dawn as they passed before his eyes, but without seeing them. The morning has its spectres as well as the evening. He did not see them; but without his being aware of it, and by means of a sort of penetration which was almost physical, these black silhouettes of trees and of hills added some gloomy and sinister quality to the violent state of his soul.

Each time that he passed one of those isolated dwellings which sometimes border on the highway, he said to himself, "And yet there are people there within who are sleeping!"

The trot of the horse, the bells on the harness, the wheels on the road, produced a gentle, monotonous noise. These things are charming when one is joyous, and lugubrious when one is sad.

It was broad daylight when he arrived at Hesdin. He halted in front of the inn, to allow the horse a breathing spell, and to have him given some oats.

The horse belonged, as Scaufflaire had said, to that small race of the Boulonnais, which has too much head, too much belly, and not enough neck

and shoulders, but which has a broad chest, a large crupper, thin, fine legs, and solid hoofs--a homely, but a robust and healthy race. The excellent beast had travelled five leagues in two hours, and had not a drop of sweat on his loins.

He did not get out of the tilbury. The stableman who brought the oats suddenly bent down and examined the left wheel.

"Are you going far in this condition?" said the man.

He replied, with an air of not having roused himself from his revery:--

"Why?"

"Have you come from a great distance?" went on the man.

"Five leagues."

"Ah!"

"Why do you say, 'Ah?'"

The man bent down once more, was silent for a moment, with his eyes fixed on the wheel; then he rose erect and said:--

"Because, though this wheel has travelled five leagues, it certainly

will not travel another quarter of a league."

He sprang out of the tilbury.

"What is that you say, my friend?"

"I say that it is a miracle that you should have travelled five leagues without you and your horse rolling into some ditch on the highway. Just see here!"

The wheel really had suffered serious damage. The shock administered by the mail-wagon had split two spokes and strained the hub, so that the nut no longer held firm.

"My friend," he said to the stableman, "is there a wheelwright here?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Do me the service to go and fetch him."

"He is only a step from here. Hey! Master Bourgaillard!"

Master Bourgaillard, the wheelwright, was standing on his own threshold. He came, examined the wheel and made a grimace like a surgeon when the latter thinks a limb is broken.

"Can you repair this wheel immediately?"

"Yes, sir."

"When can I set out again?"

"To-morrow."

"To-morrow!"

"There is a long day's work on it. Are you in a hurry, sir?"

"In a very great hurry. I must set out again in an hour at the latest."

"Impossible, sir."

"I will pay whatever you ask."

"Impossible."

"Well, in two hours, then."

"Impossible to-day. Two new spokes and a hub must be made. Monsieur will not be able to start before to-morrow morning."

"The matter cannot wait until to-morrow. What if you were to replace

this wheel instead of repairing it?"

"How so?"

"You are a wheelwright?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Have you not a wheel that you can sell me? Then I could start again at once."

"A spare wheel?"

"Yes."

"I have no wheel on hand that would fit your cabriolet. Two wheels make a pair. Two wheels cannot be put together hap-hazard."

"In that case, sell me a pair of wheels."

"Not all wheels fit all axles, sir."

"Try, nevertheless."

"It is useless, sir. I have nothing to sell but cart-wheels. We are but a poor country here."

"Have you a cabriolet that you can let me have?"

The wheelwright had seen at the first glance that the tilbury was a hired vehicle. He shrugged his shoulders.

"You treat the cabriolets that people let you so well! If I had one, I would not let it to you!"

"Well, sell it to me, then."

"I have none."

"What! not even a spring-cart? I am not hard to please, as you see."

"We live in a poor country. There is, in truth," added the wheelwright, "an old calash under the shed yonder, which belongs to a bourgeois of the town, who gave it to me to take care of, and who only uses it on the thirty-sixth of the month--never, that is to say. I might let that to you, for what matters it to me? But the bourgeois must not see it pass--and then, it is a calash; it would require two horses."

"I will take two post-horses."

"Where is Monsieur going?"

"To Arras."

"And Monsieur wishes to reach there to-day?"

"Yes, of course."

"By taking two post-horses?"

"Why not?"

"Does it make any difference whether Monsieur arrives at four o'clock to-morrow morning?"

"Certainly not."

"There is one thing to be said about that, you see, by taking post-horses--Monsieur has his passport?"

"Yes."

"Well, by taking post-horses, Monsieur cannot reach Arras before to-morrow. We are on a cross-road. The relays are badly served, the horses are in the fields. The season for ploughing is just beginning; heavy teams are required, and horses are seized upon everywhere, from the post as well as elsewhere. Monsieur will have to wait three or four hours at the least at every relay. And, then, they drive at a walk.

There are many hills to ascend."

"Come then, I will go on horseback. Unharness the cabriolet. Some one can surely sell me a saddle in the neighborhood."

"Without doubt. But will this horse bear the saddle?"

"That is true; you remind me of that; he will not bear it."

"Then--"

"But I can surely hire a horse in the village?"

"A horse to travel to Arras at one stretch?"

"Yes."

"That would require such a horse as does not exist in these parts. You would have to buy it to begin with, because no one knows you. But you will not find one for sale nor to let, for five hundred francs, or for a thousand."

"What am I to do?"

"The best thing is to let me repair the wheel like an honest man, and set out on your journey to-morrow."

"To-morrow will be too late."

"The deuce!"

"Is there not a mail-wagon which runs to Arras? When will it pass?"

"To-night. Both the posts pass at night; the one going as well as the one coming."

"What! It will take you a day to mend this wheel?"

"A day, and a good long one."

"If you set two men to work?"

"If I set ten men to work."

"What if the spokes were to be tied together with ropes?"

"That could be done with the spokes, not with the hub; and the felly is in a bad state, too."

"Is there any one in this village who lets out teams?"

"No."

"Is there another wheelwright?"

The stableman and the wheelwright replied in concert, with a toss of the head.

"No."

He felt an immense joy.

It was evident that Providence was intervening. That it was it who had broken the wheel of the tilbury and who was stopping him on the road. He had not yielded to this sort of first summons; he had just made every possible effort to continue the journey; he had loyally and scrupulously exhausted all means; he had been deterred neither by the season, nor fatigue, nor by the expense; he had nothing with which to reproach himself. If he went no further, that was no fault of his. It did not concern him further. It was no longer his fault. It was not the act of his own conscience, but the act of Providence.

He breathed again. He breathed freely and to the full extent of his lungs for the first time since Javert's visit. It seemed to him that the hand of iron which had held his heart in its grasp for the last twenty hours had just released him.

It seemed to him that God was for him now, and was manifesting Himself.

He said himself that he had done all he could, and that now he had nothing to do but retrace his steps quietly.

If his conversation with the wheelwright had taken place in a chamber of the inn, it would have had no witnesses, no one would have heard him, things would have rested there, and it is probable that we should not have had to relate any of the occurrences which the reader is about to peruse; but this conversation had taken place in the street. Any colloquy in the street inevitably attracts a crowd. There are always people who ask nothing better than to become spectators. While he was questioning the wheelwright, some people who were passing back and forth halted around them. After listening for a few minutes, a young lad, to whom no one had paid any heed, detached himself from the group and ran off.

At the moment when the traveller, after the inward deliberation which we have just described, resolved to retrace his steps, this child returned. He was accompanied by an old woman.

"Monsieur," said the woman, "my boy tells me that you wish to hire a cabriolet."

These simple words uttered by an old woman led by a child made the perspiration trickle down his limbs. He thought that he beheld the hand which had relaxed its grasp reappear in the darkness behind him, ready

to seize him once more.

He answered:--

"Yes, my good woman; I am in search of a cabriolet which I can hire."

And he hastened to add:--

"But there is none in the place."

"Certainly there is," said the old woman.

"Where?" interpolated the wheelwright.

"At my house," replied the old woman.

He shuddered. The fatal hand had grasped him again.

The old woman really had in her shed a sort of basket spring-cart. The wheelwright and the stable-man, in despair at the prospect of the traveller escaping their clutches, interfered.

"It was a frightful old trap; it rests flat on the axle; it is an actual fact that the seats were suspended inside it by leather thongs; the rain came into it; the wheels were rusted and eaten with moisture; it would not go much further than the tilbury; a regular ramshackle old

stage-wagon; the gentleman would make a great mistake if he trusted himself to it," etc., etc.

All this was true; but this trap, this ramshackle old vehicle, this thing, whatever it was, ran on its two wheels and could go to Arras.

He paid what was asked, left the tilbury with the wheelwright to be repaired, intending to reclaim it on his return, had the white horse put to the cart, climbed into it, and resumed the road which he had been travelling since morning.

At the moment when the cart moved off, he admitted that he had felt, a moment previously, a certain joy in the thought that he should not go whither he was now proceeding. He examined this joy with a sort of wrath, and found it absurd. Why should he feel joy at turning back? After all, he was taking this trip of his own free will. No one was forcing him to it.

And assuredly nothing would happen except what he should choose.

As he left Hesdin, he heard a voice shouting to him: "Stop! Stop!" He halted the cart with a vigorous movement which contained a feverish and convulsive element resembling hope.

It was the old woman's little boy.

"Monsieur," said the latter, "it was I who got the cart for you."

"Well?"

"You have not given me anything."

He who gave to all so readily thought this demand exorbitant and almost odious.

"Ah! it's you, you scamp?" said he; "you shall have nothing."

He whipped up his horse and set off at full speed.

He had lost a great deal of time at Hesdin. He wanted to make it good. The little horse was courageous, and pulled for two; but it was the month of February, there had been rain; the roads were bad. And then, it was no longer the tilbury. The cart was very heavy, and in addition, there were many ascents.

He took nearly four hours to go from Hesdin to Saint-Pol; four hours for five leagues.

At Saint-Pol he had the horse unharnessed at the first inn he came to and led to the stable; as he had promised Scaufflaire, he stood beside the manger while the horse was eating; he thought of sad and confusing things.

The inn-keeper's wife came to the stable.

"Does not Monsieur wish to breakfast?"

"Come, that is true; I even have a good appetite."

He followed the woman, who had a rosy, cheerful face; she led him to the public room where there were tables covered with waxed cloth.

"Make haste!" said he; "I must start again; I am in a hurry."

A big Flemish servant-maid placed his knife and fork in all haste; he looked at the girl with a sensation of comfort.

"That is what ailed me," he thought; "I had not breakfasted."

His breakfast was served; he seized the bread, took a mouthful, and then slowly replaced it on the table, and did not touch it again.

A carter was eating at another table; he said to this man:--

"Why is their bread so bitter here?"

The carter was a German and did not understand him.

He returned to the stable and remained near the horse.

An hour later he had quitted Saint-Pol and was directing his course towards Tinques, which is only five leagues from Arras.

What did he do during this journey? Of what was he thinking? As in the morning, he watched the trees, the thatched roofs, the tilled fields pass by, and the way in which the landscape, broken at every turn of the road, vanished; this is a sort of contemplation which sometimes suffices to the soul, and almost relieves it from thought. What is more melancholy and more profound than to see a thousand objects for the first and the last time? To travel is to be born and to die at every instant; perhaps, in the vaguest region of his mind, he did make comparisons between the shifting horizon and our human existence: all the things of life are perpetually fleeing before us; the dark and bright intervals are intermingled; after a dazzling moment, an eclipse; we look, we hasten, we stretch out our hands to grasp what is passing; each event is a turn in the road, and, all at once, we are old; we feel a shock; all is black; we distinguish an obscure door; the gloomy horse of life, which has been drawing us halts, and we see a veiled and unknown person unharnessing amid the shadows.

Twilight was falling when the children who were coming out of school beheld this traveller enter Tinques; it is true that the days were still short; he did not halt at Tinques; as he emerged from the village, a laborer, who was mending the road with stones, raised his head and said

to him:--

"That horse is very much fatigued."

The poor beast was, in fact, going at a walk.

"Are you going to Arras?" added the road-mender.

"Yes."

"If you go on at that rate you will not arrive very early."

He stopped his horse, and asked the laborer:--

"How far is it from here to Arras?"

"Nearly seven good leagues."

"How is that? the posting guide only says five leagues and a quarter."

"Ah!" returned the road-mender, "so you don't know that the road is under repair? You will find it barred a quarter of an hour further on; there is no way to proceed further."

"Really?"

"You will take the road on the left, leading to Carency; you will cross the river; when you reach Camblin, you will turn to the right; that is the road to Mont-Saint-Eloy which leads to Arras."

"But it is night, and I shall lose my way."

"You do not belong in these parts?"

"No."

"And, besides, it is all cross-roads; stop! sir," resumed the road-mender; "shall I give you a piece of advice? your horse is tired; return to Tinques; there is a good inn there; sleep there; you can reach Arras to-morrow."

"I must be there this evening."

"That is different; but go to the inn all the same, and get an extra horse; the stable-boy will guide you through the cross-roads."

He followed the road-mender's advice, retraced his steps, and, half an hour later, he passed the same spot again, but this time at full speed, with a good horse to aid; a stable-boy, who called himself a postilion, was seated on the shaft of the cariole.

Still, he felt that he had lost time.

Night had fully come.

They turned into the cross-road; the way became frightfully bad; the cart lurched from one rut to the other; he said to the postilion:--

"Keep at a trot, and you shall have a double fee."

In one of the jolts, the whiffle-tree broke.

"There's the whiffle-tree broken, sir," said the postilion; "I don't know how to harness my horse now; this road is very bad at night; if you wish to return and sleep at Tinques, we could be in Arras early to-morrow morning."

He replied, "Have you a bit of rope and a knife?"

"Yes, sir."

He cut a branch from a tree and made a whiffle-tree of it.

This caused another loss of twenty minutes; but they set out again at a gallop.

The plain was gloomy; low-hanging, black, crisp fogs crept over the hills and wrenched themselves away like smoke: there were whitish gleams

in the clouds; a strong breeze which blew in from the sea produced a sound in all quarters of the horizon, as of some one moving furniture; everything that could be seen assumed attitudes of terror. How many things shiver beneath these vast breaths of the night!

He was stiff with cold; he had eaten nothing since the night before; he vaguely recalled his other nocturnal trip in the vast plain in the neighborhood of D----, eight years previously, and it seemed but yesterday.

The hour struck from a distant tower; he asked the boy:--

"What time is it?"

"Seven o'clock, sir; we shall reach Arras at eight; we have but three leagues still to go."

At that moment, he for the first time indulged in this reflection, thinking it odd the while that it had not occurred to him sooner: that all this trouble which he was taking was, perhaps, useless; that he did not know so much as the hour of the trial; that he should, at least, have informed himself of that; that he was foolish to go thus straight ahead without knowing whether he would be of any service or not; then he sketched out some calculations in his mind: that, ordinarily, the sittings of the Court of Assizes began at nine o'clock in the morning; that it could not be a long affair; that the theft of the apples would

be very brief; that there would then remain only a question of identity, four or five depositions, and very little for the lawyers to say; that he should arrive after all was over.

The postilion whipped up the horses; they had crossed the river and left Mont-Saint-Eloy behind them.

The night grew more profound.

CHAPTER VI--SISTER SIMPLICE PUT TO THE PROOF

But at that moment Fantine was joyous.

She had passed a very bad night; her cough was frightful; her fever had doubled in intensity; she had had dreams: in the morning, when the doctor paid his visit, she was delirious; he assumed an alarmed look, and ordered that he should be informed as soon as M. Madeleine arrived.

All the morning she was melancholy, said but little, and laid plaits in her sheets, murmuring the while, in a low voice, calculations which seemed to be calculations of distances. Her eyes were hollow and staring. They seemed almost extinguished at intervals, then lighted up again and shone like stars. It seems as though, at the approach of a certain dark hour, the light of heaven fills those who are quitting the light of earth.

Each time that Sister Simplice asked her how she felt, she replied invariably, "Well. I should like to see M. Madeleine."

Some months before this, at the moment when Fantine had just lost her last modesty, her last shame, and her last joy, she was the shadow of herself; now she was the spectre of herself. Physical suffering had completed the work of moral suffering. This creature of five and twenty had a wrinkled brow, flabby cheeks, pinched nostrils, teeth from which the gums had receded, a leaden complexion, a bony neck, prominent

shoulder-blades, frail limbs, a clayey skin, and her golden hair was growing out sprinkled with gray. Alas! how illness improvises old-age!

At mid-day the physician returned, gave some directions, inquired whether the mayor had made his appearance at the infirmary, and shook his head.

M. Madeleine usually came to see the invalid at three o'clock. As exactness is kindness, he was exact.

About half-past two, Fantine began to be restless. In the course of twenty minutes, she asked the nun more than ten times, "What time is it, sister?"

Three o'clock struck. At the third stroke, Fantine sat up in bed; she who could, in general, hardly turn over, joined her yellow, fleshless hands in a sort of convulsive clasp, and the nun heard her utter one of those profound sighs which seem to throw off dejection. Then Fantine turned and looked at the door.

No one entered; the door did not open.

She remained thus for a quarter of an hour, her eyes riveted on the door, motionless and apparently holding her breath. The sister dared not speak to her. The clock struck a quarter past three. Fantine fell back on her pillow.

She said nothing, but began to plait the sheets once more.

Half an hour passed, then an hour, no one came; every time the clock struck, Fantine started up and looked towards the door, then fell back again.

Her thought was clearly perceptible, but she uttered no name, she made no complaint, she blamed no one. But she coughed in a melancholy way. One would have said that something dark was descending upon her. She was livid and her lips were blue. She smiled now and then.

Five o'clock struck. Then the sister heard her say, very low and gently, "He is wrong not to come to-day, since I am going away to-morrow."

Sister Simplice herself was surprised at M. Madeleine's delay.

In the meantime, Fantine was staring at the tester of her bed. She seemed to be endeavoring to recall something. All at once she began to sing in a voice as feeble as a breath. The nun listened. This is what Fantine was singing:--

"Lovely things we will buy
As we stroll the faubourgs through.
Roses are pink, corn-flowers are blue,

I love my love, corn-flowers are blue.

"Yestere'en the Virgin Mary came near my stove, in a broidered mantle clad, and said to me, 'Here, hide 'neath my veil the child whom you one day begged from me. Haste to the city, buy linen, buy a needle, buy thread.'

"Lovely things we will buy
As we stroll the faubourgs through.

"Dear Holy Virgin, beside my stove I have set a cradle with ribbons decked. God may give me his loveliest star; I prefer the child thou hast granted me. 'Madame, what shall I do with this linen fine?'--'Make of it clothes for thy new-born babe.'

"Roses are pink and corn-flowers are blue,
I love my love, and corn-flowers are blue.

"'Wash this linen.'--'Where?'--'In the stream. Make of it, soiling not, spoiling not, a petticoat fair with its bodice fine, which I will embroider and fill with flowers.'--'Madame, the child is no longer here;

what is to be done?'--'Then make of it a winding-sheet in which to bury me.'

"Lovely things we will buy
As we stroll the faubourgs through,
Roses are pink, corn-flowers are blue,
I love my love, corn-flowers are blue."

This song was an old cradle romance with which she had, in former days, lulled her little Cosette to sleep, and which had never recurred to her mind in all the five years during which she had been parted from her child. She sang it in so sad a voice, and to so sweet an air, that it was enough to make any one, even a nun, weep. The sister, accustomed as she was to austerities, felt a tear spring to her eyes.

The clock struck six. Fantine did not seem to hear it. She no longer seemed to pay attention to anything about her.

Sister Simplice sent a serving-maid to inquire of the portress of the factory, whether the mayor had returned, and if he would not come to the infirmary soon. The girl returned in a few minutes.

Fantine was still motionless and seemed absorbed in her own thoughts.

The servant informed Sister Simplice in a very low tone, that the mayor had set out that morning before six o'clock, in a little tilbury harnessed to a white horse, cold as the weather was; that he had gone alone, without even a driver; that no one knew what road he had taken; that people said he had been seen to turn into the road to Arras; that others asserted that they had met him on the road to Paris. That when he went away he had been very gentle, as usual, and that he had merely told the portress not to expect him that night.

While the two women were whispering together, with their backs turned to Fantine's bed, the sister interrogating, the servant conjecturing, Fantine, with the feverish vivacity of certain organic maladies, which unite the free movements of health with the frightful emaciation of death, had raised herself to her knees in bed, with her shrivelled hands resting on the bolster, and her head thrust through the opening of the curtains, and was listening. All at once she cried:--

"You are speaking of M. Madeleine! Why are you talking so low? What is he doing? Why does he not come?"

Her voice was so abrupt and hoarse that the two women thought they heard the voice of a man; they wheeled round in affright.

"Answer me!" cried Fantine.

The servant stammered:--

"The portress told me that he could not come to-day."

"Be calm, my child," said the sister; "lie down again."

Fantine, without changing her attitude, continued in a loud voice, and with an accent that was both imperious and heart-rending:--

"He cannot come? Why not? You know the reason. You are whispering it to each other there. I want to know it."

The servant-maid hastened to say in the nun's ear, "Say that he is busy with the city council."

Sister Simplice blushed faintly, for it was a lie that the maid had proposed to her.

On the other hand, it seemed to her that the mere communication of the truth to the invalid would, without doubt, deal her a terrible blow, and that this was a serious matter in Fantine's present state. Her flush did not last long; the sister raised her calm, sad eyes to Fantine, and said, "Monsieur le Maire has gone away."

Fantine raised herself and crouched on her heels in the bed: her eyes sparkled; indescribable joy beamed from that melancholy face.

"Gone!" she cried; "he has gone to get Cosette."

Then she raised her arms to heaven, and her white face became ineffable; her lips moved; she was praying in a low voice.

When her prayer was finished, "Sister," she said, "I am willing to lie down again; I will do anything you wish; I was naughty just now; I beg your pardon for having spoken so loud; it is very wrong to talk loudly; I know that well, my good sister, but, you see, I am very happy: the good God is good; M. Madeleine is good; just think! he has gone to Montfermeil to get my little Cosette."

She lay down again, with the nun's assistance, helped the nun to arrange her pillow, and kissed the little silver cross which she wore on her neck, and which Sister Simplice had given her.

"My child," said the sister, "try to rest now, and do not talk any more."

Fantine took the sister's hand in her moist hands, and the latter was pained to feel that perspiration.

"He set out this morning for Paris; in fact, he need not even go through Paris; Montfermeil is a little to the left as you come thence. Do you remember how he said to me yesterday, when I spoke to him of Cosette, Soon, soon? He wants to give me a surprise, you know! he made me sign a

letter so that she could be taken from the Thenardiers; they cannot say anything, can they? they will give back Cosette, for they have been paid; the authorities will not allow them to keep the child since they have received their pay. Do not make signs to me that I must not talk, sister! I am extremely happy; I am doing well; I am not ill at all any more; I am going to see Cosette again; I am even quite hungry; it is nearly five years since I saw her last; you cannot imagine how much attached one gets to children, and then, she will be so pretty; you will see! If you only knew what pretty little rosy fingers she had! In the first place, she will have very beautiful hands; she had ridiculous hands when she was only a year old; like this! she must be a big girl now; she is seven years old; she is quite a young lady; I call her Cosette, but her name is really Euphrasie. Stop! this morning I was looking at the dust on the chimney-piece, and I had a sort of idea come across me, like that, that I should see Cosette again soon. Mon Dieu! how wrong it is not to see one's children for years! One ought to reflect that life is not eternal. Oh, how good M. le Maire is to go! it is very cold! it is true; he had on his cloak, at least? he will be here to-morrow, will he not? to-morrow will be a festival day; to-morrow morning, sister, you must remind me to put on my little cap that has lace on it. What a place that Montfermeil is! I took that journey on foot once; it was very long for me, but the diligences go very quickly! he will be here to-morrow with Cosette: how far is it from here to Montfermeil?"

The sister, who had no idea of distances, replied, "Oh, I think that he

will be here to-morrow."

"To-morrow! to-morrow!" said Fantine, "I shall see Cosette to-morrow! you see, good sister of the good God, that I am no longer ill; I am mad; I could dance if any one wished it."

A person who had seen her a quarter of an hour previously would not have understood the change; she was all rosy now; she spoke in a lively and natural voice; her whole face was one smile; now and then she talked, she laughed softly; the joy of a mother is almost infantile.

"Well," resumed the nun, "now that you are happy, mind me, and do not talk any more."

Fantine laid her head on her pillow and said in a low voice: "Yes, lie down again; be good, for you are going to have your child; Sister Simplice is right; every one here is right."

And then, without stirring, without even moving her head, she began to stare all about her with wide-open eyes and a joyous air, and she said nothing more.

The sister drew the curtains together again, hoping that she would fall into a doze. Between seven and eight o'clock the doctor came; not hearing any sound, he thought Fantine was asleep, entered softly, and approached the bed on tiptoe; he opened the curtains a little, and, by

the light of the taper, he saw Fantine's big eyes gazing at him.

She said to him, "She will be allowed to sleep beside me in a little bed, will she not, sir?"

The doctor thought that she was delirious. She added:--

"See! there is just room."

The doctor took Sister Simplice aside, and she explained matters to him; that M. Madeleine was absent for a day or two, and that in their doubt they had not thought it well to undeceive the invalid, who believed that the mayor had gone to Montfermeil; that it was possible, after all, that her guess was correct: the doctor approved.

He returned to Fantine's bed, and she went on:--

"You see, when she wakes up in the morning, I shall be able to say good morning to her, poor kitten, and when I cannot sleep at night, I can hear her asleep; her little gentle breathing will do me good."

"Give me your hand," said the doctor.

She stretched out her arm, and exclaimed with a laugh:--

"Ah, hold! in truth, you did not know it; I am cured; Cosette will

arrive to-morrow."

The doctor was surprised; she was better; the pressure on her chest had decreased; her pulse had regained its strength; a sort of life had suddenly supervened and reanimated this poor, worn-out creature.

"Doctor," she went on, "did the sister tell you that M. le Maire has gone to get that mite of a child?"

The doctor recommended silence, and that all painful emotions should be avoided; he prescribed an infusion of pure chinchona, and, in case the fever should increase again during the night, a calming potion. As he took his departure, he said to the sister:--

"She is doing better; if good luck willed that the mayor should actually arrive to-morrow with the child, who knows? there are crises so astounding; great joy has been known to arrest maladies; I know well that this is an organic disease, and in an advanced state, but all those things are such mysteries: we may be able to save her."

CHAPTER VII--THE TRAVELLER ON HIS ARRIVAL TAKES PRECAUTIONS FOR DEPARTURE

It was nearly eight o'clock in the evening when the cart, which we left on the road, entered the porte-cochere of the Hotel de la Poste in Arras; the man whom we have been following up to this moment alighted from it, responded with an abstracted air to the attentions of the people of the inn, sent back the extra horse, and with his own hands led the little white horse to the stable; then he opened the door of a billiard-room which was situated on the ground floor, sat down there, and leaned his elbows on a table; he had taken fourteen hours for the journey which he had counted on making in six; he did himself the justice to acknowledge that it was not his fault, but at bottom, he was not sorry.

The landlady of the hotel entered.

"Does Monsieur wish a bed? Does Monsieur require supper?"

He made a sign of the head in the negative.

"The stableman says that Monsieur's horse is extremely fatigued."

Here he broke his silence.

"Will not the horse be in a condition to set out again to-morrow

morning?"

"Oh, Monsieur! he must rest for two days at least."

He inquired:--

"Is not the posting-station located here?"

"Yes, sir."

The hostess conducted him to the office; he showed his passport, and inquired whether there was any way of returning that same night to M. sur M. by the mail-wagon; the seat beside the post-boy chanced to be vacant; he engaged it and paid for it. "Monsieur," said the clerk, "do not fail to be here ready to start at precisely one o'clock in the morning."

This done, he left the hotel and began to wander about the town.

He was not acquainted with Arras; the streets were dark, and he walked on at random; but he seemed bent upon not asking the way of the passers-by. He crossed the little river Crinchon, and found himself in a labyrinth of narrow alleys where he lost his way. A citizen was passing along with a lantern. After some hesitation, he decided to apply to this man, not without having first glanced behind and in front of him, as though he feared lest some one should hear the question which he was

about to put.

"Monsieur," said he, "where is the court-house, if you please."

"You do not belong in town, sir?" replied the bourgeois, who was an oldish man; "well, follow me. I happen to be going in the direction of the court-house, that is to say, in the direction of the hotel of the prefecture; for the court-house is undergoing repairs just at this moment, and the courts are holding their sittings provisionally in the prefecture."

"Is it there that the Assizes are held?" he asked.

"Certainly, sir; you see, the prefecture of to-day was the bishop's palace before the Revolution. M. de Conzie, who was bishop in '82, built a grand hall there. It is in this grand hall that the court is held."

On the way, the bourgeois said to him:--

"If Monsieur desires to witness a case, it is rather late. The sittings generally close at six o'clock."

When they arrived on the grand square, however, the man pointed out to him four long windows all lighted up, in the front of a vast and gloomy building.

"Upon my word, sir, you are in luck; you have arrived in season. Do you see those four windows? That is the Court of Assizes. There is light there, so they are not through. The matter must have been greatly protracted, and they are holding an evening session. Do you take an interest in this affair? Is it a criminal case? Are you a witness?"

He replied:--

"I have not come on any business; I only wish to speak to one of the lawyers."

"That is different," said the bourgeois. "Stop, sir; here is the door where the sentry stands. You have only to ascend the grand staircase."

He conformed to the bourgeois's directions, and a few minutes later he was in a hall containing many people, and where groups, intermingled with lawyers in their gowns, were whispering together here and there.

It is always a heart-breaking thing to see these congregations of men robed in black, murmuring together in low voices, on the threshold of the halls of justice. It is rare that charity and pity are the outcome of these words. Condemnations pronounced in advance are more likely to be the result. All these groups seem to the passing and thoughtful observer so many sombre hives where buzzing spirits construct in concert all sorts of dark edifices.

This spacious hall, illuminated by a single lamp, was the old hall of the episcopal palace, and served as the large hall of the palace of justice. A double-leaved door, which was closed at that moment, separated it from the large apartment where the court was sitting.

The obscurity was such that he did not fear to accost the first lawyer whom he met.

"What stage have they reached, sir?" he asked.

"It is finished," said the lawyer.

"Finished!"

This word was repeated in such accents that the lawyer turned round.

"Excuse me sir; perhaps you are a relative?"

"No; I know no one here. Has judgment been pronounced?"

"Of course. Nothing else was possible."

"To penal servitude?"

"For life."

He continued, in a voice so weak that it was barely audible:--

"Then his identity was established?"

"What identity?" replied the lawyer. "There was no identity to be established. The matter was very simple. The woman had murdered her child; the infanticide was proved; the jury threw out the question of premeditation, and she was condemned for life."

"So it was a woman?" said he.

"Why, certainly. The Limosin woman. Of what are you speaking?"

"Nothing. But since it is all over, how comes it that the hall is still lighted?"

"For another case, which was begun about two hours ago."

"What other case?"

"Oh! this one is a clear case also. It is about a sort of blackguard; a man arrested for a second offence; a convict who has been guilty of theft. I don't know his name exactly. There's a bandit's phiz for you! I'd send him to the galleys on the strength of his face alone."

"Is there any way of getting into the court-room, sir?" said he.

"I really think that there is not. There is a great crowd. However, the hearing has been suspended. Some people have gone out, and when the hearing is resumed, you might make an effort."

"Where is the entrance?"

"Through yonder large door."

The lawyer left him. In the course of a few moments he had experienced, almost simultaneously, almost intermingled with each other, all possible emotions. The words of this indifferent spectator had, in turn, pierced his heart like needles of ice and like blades of fire. When he saw that nothing was settled, he breathed freely once more; but he could not have told whether what he felt was pain or pleasure.

He drew near to many groups and listened to what they were saying. The docket of the session was very heavy; the president had appointed for the same day two short and simple cases. They had begun with the infanticide, and now they had reached the convict, the old offender, the "return horse." This man had stolen apples, but that did not appear to be entirely proved; what had been proved was, that he had already been in the galleys at Toulon. It was that which lent a bad aspect to his case. However, the man's examination and the depositions of the witnesses had been completed, but the lawyer's plea, and the speech of the public prosecutor were still to come; it could not be

finished before midnight. The man would probably be condemned; the attorney-general was very clever, and never missed his culprits; he was a brilliant fellow who wrote verses.

An usher stood at the door communicating with the hall of the Assizes. He inquired of this usher:--

"Will the door be opened soon, sir?"

"It will not be opened at all," replied the usher.

"What! It will not be opened when the hearing is resumed? Is not the hearing suspended?"

"The hearing has just been begun again," replied the usher, "but the door will not be opened again."

"Why?"

"Because the hall is full."

"What! There is not room for one more?"

"Not another one. The door is closed. No one can enter now."

The usher added after a pause: "There are, to tell the truth, two

or three extra places behind Monsieur le President, but Monsieur le President only admits public functionaries to them."

So saying, the usher turned his back.

He retired with bowed head, traversed the antechamber, and slowly descended the stairs, as though hesitating at every step. It is probable that he was holding counsel with himself. The violent conflict which had been going on within him since the preceding evening was not yet ended; and every moment he encountered some new phase of it. On reaching the landing-place, he leaned his back against the balusters and folded his arms. All at once he opened his coat, drew out his pocket-book, took from it a pencil, tore out a leaf, and upon that leaf he wrote rapidly, by the light of the street lantern, this line: M. Madeleine, Mayor of M. sur M.; then he ascended the stairs once more with great strides, made his way through the crowd, walked straight up to the usher, handed him the paper, and said in an authoritative manner:--

"Take this to Monsieur le President."

The usher took the paper, cast a glance upon it, and obeyed.

CHAPTER VIII--AN ENTRANCE BY FAVOR

Although he did not suspect the fact, the mayor of M. sur M. enjoyed a sort of celebrity. For the space of seven years his reputation for virtue had filled the whole of Bas Boulonnais; it had eventually passed the confines of a small district and had been spread abroad through two or three neighboring departments. Besides the service which he had rendered to the chief town by resuscitating the black jet industry, there was not one out of the hundred and forty communes of the arrondissement of M. sur M. which was not indebted to him for some benefit. He had even at need contrived to aid and multiply the industries of other arrondissements. It was thus that he had, when occasion offered, supported with his credit and his funds the linen factory at Boulogne, the flax-spinning industry at Frevent, and the hydraulic manufacture of cloth at Boubers-sur-Canche. Everywhere the name of M. Madeleine was pronounced with veneration. Arras and Douai envied the happy little town of M. sur M. its mayor.

The Councillor of the Royal Court of Douai, who was presiding over this session of the Assizes at Arras, was acquainted, in common with the rest of the world, with this name which was so profoundly and universally honored. When the usher, discreetly opening the door which connected the council-chamber with the court-room, bent over the back of the President's arm-chair and handed him the paper on which was inscribed the line which we have just perused, adding: "The gentleman desires to

be present at the trial," the President, with a quick and deferential movement, seized a pen and wrote a few words at the bottom of the paper and returned it to the usher, saying, "Admit him."

The unhappy man whose history we are relating had remained near the door of the hall, in the same place and the same attitude in which the usher had left him. In the midst of his revery he heard some one saying to him, "Will Monsieur do me the honor to follow me?" It was the same usher who had turned his back upon him but a moment previously, and who was now bowing to the earth before him. At the same time, the usher handed him the paper. He unfolded it, and as he chanced to be near the light, he could read it.

"The President of the Court of Assizes presents his respects to M. Madeleine."

He crushed the paper in his hand as though those words contained for him a strange and bitter aftertaste.

He followed the usher.

A few minutes later he found himself alone in a sort of wainscoted cabinet of severe aspect, lighted by two wax candles, placed upon a table with a green cloth. The last words of the usher who had just quitted him still rang in his ears: "Monsieur, you are now in the council-chamber; you have only to turn the copper handle of yonder door,

and you will find yourself in the court-room, behind the President's chair." These words were mingled in his thoughts with a vague memory of narrow corridors and dark staircases which he had recently traversed.

The usher had left him alone. The supreme moment had arrived. He sought to collect his faculties, but could not. It is chiefly at the moment when there is the greatest need for attaching them to the painful realities of life, that the threads of thought snap within the brain. He was in the very place where the judges deliberated and condemned. With stupid tranquillity he surveyed this peaceful and terrible apartment, where so many lives had been broken, which was soon to ring with his name, and which his fate was at that moment traversing. He stared at the wall, then he looked at himself, wondering that it should be that chamber and that it should be he.

He had eaten nothing for four and twenty hours; he was worn out by the jolts of the cart, but he was not conscious of it. It seemed to him that he felt nothing.

He approached a black frame which was suspended on the wall, and which contained, under glass, an ancient autograph letter of Jean Nicolas Pache, mayor of Paris and minister, and dated, through an error, no doubt, the 9th of June, of the year II., and in which Pache forwarded to the commune the list of ministers and deputies held in arrest by them. Any spectator who had chanced to see him at that moment, and who had watched him, would have imagined, doubtless, that this letter struck him

as very curious, for he did not take his eyes from it, and he read it two or three times. He read it without paying any attention to it, and unconsciously. He was thinking of Fantine and Cosette.

As he dreamed, he turned round, and his eyes fell upon the brass knob of the door which separated him from the Court of Assizes. He had almost forgotten that door. His glance, calm at first, paused there, remained fixed on that brass handle, then grew terrified, and little by little became impregnated with fear. Beads of perspiration burst forth among his hair and trickled down upon his temples.

At a certain moment he made that indescribable gesture of a sort of authority mingled with rebellion, which is intended to convey, and which does so well convey, "Pardieu! who compels me to this?" Then he wheeled briskly round, caught sight of the door through which he had entered in front of him, went to it, opened it, and passed out. He was no longer in that chamber; he was outside in a corridor, a long, narrow corridor, broken by steps and gratings, making all sorts of angles, lighted here and there by lanterns similar to the night taper of invalids, the corridor through which he had approached. He breathed, he listened; not a sound in front, not a sound behind him, and he fled as though pursued.

When he had turned many angles in this corridor, he still listened. The same silence reigned, and there was the same darkness around him. He was out of breath; he staggered; he leaned against the wall. The stone was cold; the perspiration lay ice-cold on his brow; he straightened himself

up with a shiver.

Then, there alone in the darkness, trembling with cold and with something else, too, perchance, he meditated.

He had meditated all night long; he had meditated all the day: he heard within him but one voice, which said, "Alas!"

A quarter of an hour passed thus. At length he bowed his head, sighed with agony, dropped his arms, and retraced his steps. He walked slowly, and as though crushed. It seemed as though some one had overtaken him in his flight and was leading him back.

He re-entered the council-chamber. The first thing he caught sight of was the knob of the door. This knob, which was round and of polished brass, shone like a terrible star for him. He gazed at it as a lamb might gaze into the eye of a tiger.

He could not take his eyes from it. From time to time he advanced a step and approached the door.

Had he listened, he would have heard the sound of the adjoining hall like a sort of confused murmur; but he did not listen, and he did not hear.

Suddenly, without himself knowing how it happened, he found himself near

the door; he grasped the knob convulsively; the door opened.

He was in the court-room.

CHAPTER IX--A PLACE WHERE CONVICTIONS ARE IN PROCESS OF FORMATION

He advanced a pace, closed the door mechanically behind him, and remained standing, contemplating what he saw.

It was a vast and badly lighted apartment, now full of uproar, now full of silence, where all the apparatus of a criminal case, with its petty and mournful gravity in the midst of the throng, was in process of development.

At the one end of the hall, the one where he was, were judges, with abstracted air, in threadbare robes, who were gnawing their nails or closing their eyelids; at the other end, a ragged crowd; lawyers in all sorts of attitudes; soldiers with hard but honest faces; ancient, spotted woodwork, a dirty ceiling, tables covered with serge that was yellow rather than green; doors blackened by handmarks; tap-room lamps which emitted more smoke than light, suspended from nails in the wainscot; on the tables candles in brass candlesticks; darkness, ugliness, sadness; and from all this there was disengaged an austere and august impression, for one there felt that grand human thing which is called the law, and that grand divine thing which is called justice.

No one in all that throng paid any attention to him; all glances were directed towards a single point, a wooden bench placed against a small door, in the stretch of wall on the President's left; on this bench,

illuminated by several candles, sat a man between two gendarmes.

This man was the man.

He did not seek him; he saw him; his eyes went thither naturally, as though they had known beforehand where that figure was.

He thought he was looking at himself, grown old; not absolutely the same in face, of course, but exactly similar in attitude and aspect, with his bristling hair, with that wild and uneasy eye, with that blouse, just as it was on the day when he entered D----, full of hatred, concealing his soul in that hideous mass of frightful thoughts which he had spent nineteen years in collecting on the floor of the prison.

He said to himself with a shudder, "Good God! shall I become like that again?"

This creature seemed to be at least sixty; there was something indescribably coarse, stupid, and frightened about him.

At the sound made by the opening door, people had drawn aside to make way for him; the President had turned his head, and, understanding that the personage who had just entered was the mayor of M. sur M., he had bowed to him; the attorney-general, who had seen M. Madeleine at M. sur M., whither the duties of his office had called him more than once, recognized him and saluted him also: he had hardly perceived it; he was

the victim of a sort of hallucination; he was watching.

Judges, clerks, gendarmes, a throng of cruelly curious heads, all these he had already beheld once, in days gone by, twenty-seven years before; he had encountered those fatal things once more; there they were; they moved; they existed; it was no longer an effort of his memory, a mirage of his thought; they were real gendarmes and real judges, a real crowd, and real men of flesh and blood: it was all over; he beheld the monstrous aspects of his past reappear and live once more around him, with all that there is formidable in reality.

All this was yawning before him.

He was horrified by it; he shut his eyes, and exclaimed in the deepest recesses of his soul, "Never!"

And by a tragic play of destiny which made all his ideas tremble, and rendered him nearly mad, it was another self of his that was there! all called that man who was being tried Jean Valjean.

Under his very eyes, unheard-of vision, he had a sort of representation of the most horrible moment of his life, enacted by his spectre.

Everything was there; the apparatus was the same, the hour of the night, the faces of the judges, of soldiers, and of spectators; all were the same, only above the President's head there hung a crucifix, something

which the courts had lacked at the time of his condemnation: God had been absent when he had been judged.

There was a chair behind him; he dropped into it, terrified at the thought that he might be seen; when he was seated, he took advantage of a pile of cardboard boxes, which stood on the judge's desk, to conceal his face from the whole room; he could now see without being seen; he had fully regained consciousness of the reality of things; gradually he recovered; he attained that phase of composure where it is possible to listen.

M. Bamatabois was one of the jurors.

He looked for Javert, but did not see him; the seat of the witnesses was hidden from him by the clerk's table, and then, as we have just said, the hall was sparely lighted.

At the moment of this entrance, the defendant's lawyer had just finished his plea.

The attention of all was excited to the highest pitch; the affair had lasted for three hours: for three hours that crowd had been watching a strange man, a miserable specimen of humanity, either profoundly stupid or profoundly subtle, gradually bending beneath the weight of a terrible likeness. This man, as the reader already knows, was a vagabond who had been found in a field carrying a branch laden with ripe apples, broken

in the orchard of a neighbor, called the Pierron orchard. Who was this man? an examination had been made; witnesses had been heard, and they were unanimous; light had abounded throughout the entire debate; the accusation said: "We have in our grasp not only a marauder, a stealer of fruit; we have here, in our hands, a bandit, an old offender who has broken his ban, an ex-convict, a miscreant of the most dangerous description, a malefactor named Jean Valjean, whom justice has long been in search of, and who, eight years ago, on emerging from the galleys at Toulon, committed a highway robbery, accompanied by violence, on the person of a child, a Savoyard named Little Gervais; a crime provided for by article 383 of the Penal Code, the right to try him for which we reserve hereafter, when his identity shall have been judicially established. He has just committed a fresh theft; it is a case of a second offence; condemn him for the fresh deed; later on he will be judged for the old crime." In the face of this accusation, in the face of the unanimity of the witnesses, the accused appeared to be astonished more than anything else; he made signs and gestures which were meant to convey No, or else he stared at the ceiling: he spoke with difficulty, replied with embarrassment, but his whole person, from head to foot, was a denial; he was an idiot in the presence of all these minds ranged in order of battle around him, and like a stranger in the midst of this society which was seizing fast upon him; nevertheless, it was a question of the most menacing future for him; the likeness increased every moment, and the entire crowd surveyed, with more anxiety than he did himself, that sentence freighted with calamity, which descended ever closer over his head; there was even a glimpse of a possibility

afforded; besides the galleys, a possible death penalty, in case his identity were established, and the affair of Little Gervais were to end thereafter in condemnation. Who was this man? what was the nature of his apathy? was it imbecility or craft? Did he understand too well, or did he not understand at all? these were questions which divided the crowd, and seemed to divide the jury; there was something both terrible and puzzling in this case: the drama was not only melancholy; it was also obscure.

The counsel for the defence had spoken tolerably well, in that provincial tongue which has long constituted the eloquence of the bar, and which was formerly employed by all advocates, at Paris as well as at Romorantin or at Montbrison, and which to-day, having become classic, is no longer spoken except by the official orators of magistracy, to whom it is suited on account of its grave sonorousness and its majestic stride; a tongue in which a husband is called a consort, and a woman a spouse; Paris, the centre of art and civilization; the king, the monarch; Monseigneur the Bishop, a sainted pontiff; the district-attorney, the eloquent interpreter of public prosecution; the arguments, the accents which we have just listened to; the age of Louis XIV., the grand age; a theatre, the temple of Melpomene; the reigning family, the august blood of our kings; a concert, a musical solemnity; the General Commandant of the province, the illustrious warrior, who, etc.; the pupils in the seminary, these tender levities; errors imputed to newspapers, the imposture which distills its venom through the columns of those organs; etc. The lawyer had, accordingly, begun with an

explanation as to the theft of the apples,--an awkward matter couched in fine style; but Benigne Bossuet himself was obliged to allude to a chicken in the midst of a funeral oration, and he extricated himself from the situation in stately fashion. The lawyer established the fact that the theft of the apples had not been circumstantially proved. His client, whom he, in his character of counsel, persisted in calling Champmathieu, had not been seen scaling that wall nor breaking that branch by any one. He had been taken with that branch (which the lawyer preferred to call a bough) in his possession; but he said that he had found it broken off and lying on the ground, and had picked it up. Where was there any proof to the contrary? No doubt that branch had been broken off and concealed after the scaling of the wall, then thrown away by the alarmed marauder; there was no doubt that there had been a thief in the case. But what proof was there that that thief had been Champmathieu? One thing only. His character as an ex-convict. The lawyer did not deny that that character appeared to be, unhappily, well attested; the accused had resided at Faverolles; the accused had exercised the calling of a tree-pruner there; the name of Champmathieu might well have had its origin in Jean Mathieu; all that was true,--in short, four witnesses recognize Champmathieu, positively and without hesitation, as that convict, Jean Valjean; to these signs, to this testimony, the counsel could oppose nothing but the denial of his client, the denial of an interested party; but supposing that he was the convict Jean Valjean, did that prove that he was the thief of the apples? that was a presumption at the most, not a proof. The prisoner, it was true, and his counsel, "in good faith," was obliged to admit it,

had adopted "a bad system of defence." He obstinately denied everything, the theft and his character of convict. An admission upon this last point would certainly have been better, and would have won for him the indulgence of his judges; the counsel had advised him to do this; but the accused had obstinately refused, thinking, no doubt, that he would save everything by admitting nothing. It was an error; but ought not the paucity of this intelligence to be taken into consideration? This man was visibly stupid. Long-continued wretchedness in the galleys, long misery outside the galleys, had brutalized him, etc. He defended himself badly; was that a reason for condemning him? As for the affair with Little Gervais, the counsel need not discuss it; it did not enter into the case. The lawyer wound up by beseeching the jury and the court, if the identity of Jean Valjean appeared to them to be evident, to apply to him the police penalties which are provided for a criminal who has broken his ban, and not the frightful chastisement which descends upon the convict guilty of a second offence.

The district-attorney answered the counsel for the defence. He was violent and florid, as district-attorneys usually are.

He congratulated the counsel for the defence on his "loyalty," and skilfully took advantage of this loyalty. He reached the accused through all the concessions made by his lawyer. The advocate had seemed to admit that the prisoner was Jean Valjean. He took note of this. So this man was Jean Valjean. This point had been conceded to the accusation and could no longer be disputed. Here, by means of a clever

autonomasia which went back to the sources and causes of crime, the district-attorney thundered against the immorality of the romantic school, then dawning under the name of the Satanic school, which had been bestowed upon it by the critics of the Quotidienne and the Oriflamme; he attributed, not without some probability, to the influence of this perverse literature the crime of Champmathieu, or rather, to speak more correctly, of Jean Valjean. Having exhausted these considerations, he passed on to Jean Valjean himself. Who was this Jean Valjean? Description of Jean Valjean: a monster spewed forth, etc. The model for this sort of description is contained in the tale of Theramene, which is not useful to tragedy, but which every day renders great services to judicial eloquence. The audience and the jury "shuddered." The description finished, the district-attorney resumed with an oratorical turn calculated to raise the enthusiasm of the journal of the prefecture to the highest pitch on the following day: And it is such a man, etc., etc., etc., vagabond, beggar, without means of existence, etc., etc., inured by his past life to culpable deeds, and but little reformed by his sojourn in the galleys, as was proved by the crime committed against Little Gervais, etc., etc.; it is such a man, caught upon the highway in the very act of theft, a few paces from a wall that had been scaled, still holding in his hand the object stolen, who denies the crime, the theft, the climbing the wall; denies everything; denies even his own identity! In addition to a hundred other proofs, to which we will not recur, four witnesses recognize him--Javert, the upright inspector of police; Javert, and three of his former companions in infamy, the convicts Brevet, Chenildieu, and

Cochepaille. What does he offer in opposition to this overwhelming unanimity? His denial. What obduracy! You will do justice, gentlemen of the jury, etc., etc. While the district-attorney was speaking, the accused listened to him open-mouthed, with a sort of amazement in which some admiration was assuredly blended. He was evidently surprised that a man could talk like that. From time to time, at those "energetic" moments of the prosecutor's speech, when eloquence which cannot contain itself overflows in a flood of withering epithets and envelops the accused like a storm, he moved his head slowly from right to left and from left to right in the sort of mute and melancholy protest with which he had contented himself since the beginning of the argument. Two or three times the spectators who were nearest to him heard him say in a low voice, "That is what comes of not having asked M. Baloup." The district-attorney directed the attention of the jury to this stupid attitude, evidently deliberate, which denoted not imbecility, but craft, skill, a habit of deceiving justice, and which set forth in all its nakedness the "profound perversity" of this man. He ended by making his reserves on the affair of Little Gervais and demanding a severe sentence.

At that time, as the reader will remember, it was penal servitude for life.

The counsel for the defence rose, began by complimenting Monsieur l'Avocat-General on his "admirable speech," then replied as best he could; but he weakened; the ground was evidently slipping away from

under his feet.

CHAPTER X--THE SYSTEM OF DENIALS

The moment for closing the debate had arrived. The President had the accused stand up, and addressed to him the customary question, "Have you anything to add to your defence?"

The man did not appear to understand, as he stood there, twisting in his hands a terrible cap which he had.

The President repeated the question.

This time the man heard it. He seemed to understand. He made a motion like a man who is just waking up, cast his eyes about him, stared at the audience, the gendarmes, his counsel, the jury, the court, laid his monstrous fist on the rim of woodwork in front of his bench, took another look, and all at once, fixing his glance upon the district-attorney, he began to speak. It was like an eruption. It seemed, from the manner in which the words escaped from his mouth,--incoherent, impetuous, pell-mell, tumbling over each other,--as though they were all pressing forward to issue forth at once. He said:--

"This is what I have to say. That I have been a wheelwright in Paris, and that it was with Monsieur Baloup. It is a hard trade. In the wheelwright's trade one works always in the open air, in courtyards, under sheds when the masters are good, never in closed workshops, because space is required, you see. In winter one gets so cold that one

beats one's arms together to warm one's self; but the masters don't like it; they say it wastes time. Handling iron when there is ice between the paving-stones is hard work. That wears a man out quickly. One is old while he is still quite young in that trade. At forty a man is done for. I was fifty-three. I was in a bad state. And then, workmen are so mean! When a man is no longer young, they call him nothing but an old bird, old beast! I was not earning more than thirty sous a day. They paid me as little as possible. The masters took advantage of my age--and then I had my daughter, who was a laundress at the river. She earned a little also. It sufficed for us two. She had trouble, also; all day long up to her waist in a tub, in rain, in snow. When the wind cuts your face, when it freezes, it is all the same; you must still wash. There are people who have not much linen, and wait until late; if you do not wash, you lose your custom. The planks are badly joined, and water drops on you from everywhere; you have your petticoats all damp above and below. That penetrates. She has also worked at the laundry of the Enfants-Rouges, where the water comes through faucets. You are not in the tub there; you wash at the faucet in front of you, and rinse in a basin behind you. As it is enclosed, you are not so cold; but there is that hot steam, which is terrible, and which ruins your eyes. She came home at seven o'clock in the evening, and went to bed at once, she was so tired. Her husband beat her. She is dead. We have not been very happy. She was a good girl, who did not go to the ball, and who was very peaceable. I remember one Shrove-Tuesday when she went to bed at eight o'clock. There, I am telling the truth; you have only to ask. Ah, yes! how stupid I am! Paris is a gulf. Who knows Father Champmathieu there? But M. Baloup does, I

tell you. Go see at M. Baloup's; and after all, I don't know what is wanted of me."

The man ceased speaking, and remained standing. He had said these things in a loud, rapid, hoarse voice, with a sort of irritated and savage ingenuousness. Once he paused to salute some one in the crowd. The sort of affirmations which he seemed to fling out before him at random came like hiccoughs, and to each he added the gesture of a wood-cutter who is splitting wood. When he had finished, the audience burst into a laugh. He stared at the public, and, perceiving that they were laughing, and not understanding why, he began to laugh himself.

It was inauspicious.

The President, an attentive and benevolent man, raised his voice.

He reminded "the gentlemen of the jury" that "the sieur Baloup, formerly a master-wheelwright, with whom the accused stated that he had served, had been summoned in vain. He had become bankrupt, and was not to be found." Then turning to the accused, he enjoined him to listen to what he was about to say, and added: "You are in a position where reflection is necessary. The gravest presumptions rest upon you, and may induce vital results. Prisoner, in your own interests, I summon you for the last time to explain yourself clearly on two points. In the first place, did you or did you not climb the wall of the Pierron orchard, break the branch, and steal the apples; that is to say, commit the crime

of breaking in and theft? In the second place, are you the discharged convict, Jean Valjean--yes or no?"

The prisoner shook his head with a capable air, like a man who has thoroughly understood, and who knows what answer he is going to make. He opened his mouth, turned towards the President, and said:--

"In the first place--"

Then he stared at his cap, stared at the ceiling, and held his peace.

"Prisoner," said the district-attorney, in a severe voice; "pay attention. You are not answering anything that has been asked of you. Your embarrassment condemns you. It is evident that your name is not Champmathieu; that you are the convict, Jean Valjean, concealed first under the name of Jean Mathieu, which was the name of his mother; that you went to Auvergne; that you were born at Faverolles, where you were a pruner of trees. It is evident that you have been guilty of entering, and of the theft of ripe apples from the Pierron orchard. The gentlemen of the jury will form their own opinion."

The prisoner had finally resumed his seat; he arose abruptly when the district-attorney had finished, and exclaimed:--

"You are very wicked; that you are! This what I wanted to say; I could not find words for it at first. I have stolen nothing. I am a man who

does not have something to eat every day. I was coming from Ailly; I was walking through the country after a shower, which had made the whole country yellow: even the ponds were overflowed, and nothing sprang from the sand any more but the little blades of grass at the wayside. I found a broken branch with apples on the ground; I picked up the branch without knowing that it would get me into trouble. I have been in prison, and they have been dragging me about for the last three months; more than that I cannot say; people talk against me, they tell me, 'Answer!' The gendarme, who is a good fellow, nudges my elbow, and says to me in a low voice, 'Come, answer!' I don't know how to explain; I have no education; I am a poor man; that is where they wrong me, because they do not see this. I have not stolen; I picked up from the ground things that were lying there. You say, Jean Valjean, Jean Mathieu! I don't know those persons; they are villagers. I worked for M. Baloup, Boulevard de l'Hopital; my name is Champmathieu. You are very clever to tell me where I was born; I don't know myself: it's not everybody who has a house in which to come into the world; that would be too convenient. I think that my father and mother were people who strolled along the highways; I know nothing different. When I was a child, they called me young fellow; now they call me old fellow; those are my baptismal names; take that as you like. I have been in Auvergne; I have been at Faverolles. Pardi. Well! can't a man have been in Auvergne, or at Faverolles, without having been in the galleys? I tell you that I have not stolen, and that I am Father Champmathieu; I have been with M. Baloup; I have had a settled residence. You worry me with your nonsense, there! Why is everybody pursuing me so furiously?"

The district-attorney had remained standing; he addressed the President:--

"Monsieur le President, in view of the confused but exceedingly clever denials of the prisoner, who would like to pass himself off as an idiot, but who will not succeed in so doing,--we shall attend to that,--we demand that it shall please you and that it shall please the court to summon once more into this place the convicts Brevet, Cochepaille, and Chenildieu, and Police-Inspector Javert, and question them for the last time as to the identity of the prisoner with the convict Jean Valjean."

"I would remind the district-attorney," said the President, "that Police-Inspector Javert, recalled by his duties to the capital of a neighboring arrondissement, left the court-room and the town as soon as he had made his deposition; we have accorded him permission, with the consent of the district-attorney and of the counsel for the prisoner."

"That is true, Mr. President," responded the district-attorney. "In the absence of sieur Javert, I think it my duty to remind the gentlemen of the jury of what he said here a few hours ago. Javert is an estimable man, who does honor by his rigorous and strict probity to inferior but important functions. These are the terms of his deposition: 'I do not even stand in need of circumstantial proofs and moral presumptions to give the lie to the prisoner's denial. I recognize him perfectly. The name of this man is not Champmathieu; he is an ex-convict named Jean

Valjean, and is very vicious and much to be feared. It is only with extreme regret that he was released at the expiration of his term. He underwent nineteen years of penal servitude for theft. He made five or six attempts to escape. Besides the theft from Little Gervais, and from the Pierron orchard, I suspect him of a theft committed in the house of His Grace the late Bishop of D---- I often saw him at the time when I was adjutant of the galley-guard at the prison in Toulon. I repeat that I recognize him perfectly.'"

This extremely precise statement appeared to produce a vivid impression on the public and on the jury. The district-attorney concluded by insisting, that in default of Javert, the three witnesses Brevet, Chenildieu, and Cochepaille should be heard once more and solemnly interrogated.

The President transmitted the order to an usher, and, a moment later, the door of the witnesses' room opened. The usher, accompanied by a gendarme ready to lend him armed assistance, introduced the convict Brevet. The audience was in suspense; and all breasts heaved as though they had contained but one soul.

The ex-convict Brevet wore the black and gray waistcoat of the central prisons. Brevet was a person sixty years of age, who had a sort of business man's face, and the air of a rascal. The two sometimes go together. In prison, whither fresh misdeeds had led him, he had become something in the nature of a turnkey. He was a man of whom his superiors

said, "He tries to make himself of use." The chaplains bore good testimony as to his religious habits. It must not be forgotten that this passed under the Restoration.

"Brevet," said the President, "you have undergone an ignominious sentence, and you cannot take an oath."

Brevet dropped his eyes.

"Nevertheless," continued the President, "even in the man whom the law has degraded, there may remain, when the divine mercy permits it, a sentiment of honor and of equity. It is to this sentiment that I appeal at this decisive hour. If it still exists in you,--and I hope it does,--reflect before replying to me: consider on the one hand, this man, whom a word from you may ruin; on the other hand, justice, which a word from you may enlighten. The instant is solemn; there is still time to retract if you think you have been mistaken. Rise, prisoner. Brevet, take a good look at the accused, recall your souvenirs, and tell us on your soul and conscience, if you persist in recognizing this man as your former companion in the galleys, Jean Valjean?"

Brevet looked at the prisoner, then turned towards the court.

"Yes, Mr. President, I was the first to recognize him, and I stick to it; that man is Jean Valjean, who entered at Toulon in 1796, and left in 1815. I left a year later. He has the air of a brute now; but it must be

because age has brutalized him; he was sly at the galleys: I recognize him positively."

"Take your seat," said the President. "Prisoner, remain standing."

Chenildieu was brought in, a prisoner for life, as was indicated by his red cassock and his green cap. He was serving out his sentence at the galleys of Toulon, whence he had been brought for this case. He was a small man of about fifty, brisk, wrinkled, frail, yellow, brazen-faced, feverish, who had a sort of sickly feebleness about all his limbs and his whole person, and an immense force in his glance. His companions in the galleys had nicknamed him I-deny-God (Je-nie Dieu, Chenildieu).

The President addressed him in nearly the same words which he had used to Brevet. At the moment when he reminded him of his infamy which deprived him of the right to take an oath, Chenildieu raised his head and looked the crowd in the face. The President invited him to reflection, and asked him as he had asked Brevet, if he persisted in recognition of the prisoner.

Chenildieu burst out laughing.

"Pardieu, as if I didn't recognize him! We were attached to the same chain for five years. So you are sulking, old fellow?"

"Go take your seat," said the President.

The usher brought in Cochepaille. He was another convict for life, who had come from the galleys, and was dressed in red, like Chenildieu, was a peasant from Lourdes, and a half-bear of the Pyrenees. He had guarded the flocks among the mountains, and from a shepherd he had slipped into a brigand. Cochepaille was no less savage and seemed even more stupid than the prisoner. He was one of those wretched men whom nature has sketched out for wild beasts, and on whom society puts the finishing touches as convicts in the galleys.

The President tried to touch him with some grave and pathetic words, and asked him, as he had asked the other two, if he persisted, without hesitation or trouble, in recognizing the man who was standing before him.

"He is Jean Valjean," said Cochepaille. "He was even called Jean-the-Screw, because he was so strong."

Each of these affirmations from these three men, evidently sincere and in good faith, had raised in the audience a murmur of bad augury for the prisoner,--a murmur which increased and lasted longer each time that a fresh declaration was added to the proceeding.

The prisoner had listened to them, with that astounded face which was, according to the accusation, his principal means of defence; at the first, the gendarmes, his neighbors, had heard him mutter between his

teeth: "Ah, well, he's a nice one!" after the second, he said, a little louder, with an air that was almost that of satisfaction, "Good!" at the third, he cried, "Famous!"

The President addressed him:--

"Have you heard, prisoner? What have you to say?"

He replied:--

"I say, 'Famous!'"

An uproar broke out among the audience, and was communicated to the jury; it was evident that the man was lost.

"Ushers," said the President, "enforce silence! I am going to sum up the arguments."

At that moment there was a movement just beside the President; a voice was heard crying:--

"Brevet! Chenildieu! Cochepaille! look here!"

All who heard that voice were chilled, so lamentable and terrible was it; all eyes were turned to the point whence it had proceeded. A man, placed among the privileged spectators who were seated behind the

court, had just risen, had pushed open the half-door which separated the tribunal from the audience, and was standing in the middle of the hall; the President, the district-attorney, M. Bamatabois, twenty persons, recognized him, and exclaimed in concert:--

"M. Madeleine!"

CHAPTER XI--CHAMPMATHIEU MORE AND MORE ASTONISHED

It was he, in fact. The clerk's lamp illumined his countenance. He held his hat in his hand; there was no disorder in his clothing; his coat was carefully buttoned; he was very pale, and he trembled slightly; his hair, which had still been gray on his arrival in Arras, was now entirely white: it had turned white during the hour he had sat there.

All heads were raised: the sensation was indescribable; there was a momentary hesitation in the audience, the voice had been so heart-rending; the man who stood there appeared so calm that they did not understand at first. They asked themselves whether he had indeed uttered that cry; they could not believe that that tranquil man had been the one to give that terrible outcry.

This indecision only lasted a few seconds. Even before the President and the district-attorney could utter a word, before the ushers and the gendarmes could make a gesture, the man whom all still called, at that moment, M. Madeleine, had advanced towards the witnesses Cochepaille, Brevet, and Chenildieu.

"Do you not recognize me?" said he.

All three remained speechless, and indicated by a sign of the head that they did not know him. Cochepaille, who was intimidated, made a military salute. M. Madeleine turned towards the jury and the court, and said in

a gentle voice:--

"Gentlemen of the jury, order the prisoner to be released! Mr. President, have me arrested. He is not the man whom you are in search of; it is I: I am Jean Valjean."

Not a mouth breathed; the first commotion of astonishment had been followed by a silence like that of the grave; those within the hall experienced that sort of religious terror which seizes the masses when something grand has been done.

In the meantime, the face of the President was stamped with sympathy and sadness; he had exchanged a rapid sign with the district-attorney and a few low-toned words with the assistant judges; he addressed the public, and asked in accents which all understood:--

"Is there a physician present?"

The district-attorney took the word:--

"Gentlemen of the jury, the very strange and unexpected incident which disturbs the audience inspires us, like yourselves, only with a sentiment which it is unnecessary for us to express. You all know, by reputation at least, the honorable M. Madeleine, mayor of M. sur M.; if there is a physician in the audience, we join the President in requesting him to attend to M. Madeleine, and to conduct him to his

home."

M. Madeleine did not allow the district-attorney to finish; he interrupted him in accents full of suavity and authority. These are the words which he uttered; here they are literally, as they were written down, immediately after the trial by one of the witnesses to this scene, and as they now ring in the ears of those who heard them nearly forty years ago:--

"I thank you, Mr. District-Attorney, but I am not mad; you shall see; you were on the point of committing a great error; release this man! I am fulfilling a duty; I am that miserable criminal. I am the only one here who sees the matter clearly, and I am telling you the truth. God, who is on high, looks down on what I am doing at this moment, and that suffices. You can take me, for here I am: but I have done my best; I concealed myself under another name; I have become rich; I have become a mayor; I have tried to re-enter the ranks of the honest. It seems that that is not to be done. In short, there are many things which I cannot tell. I will not narrate the story of my life to you; you will hear it one of these days. I robbed Monseigneur the Bishop, it is true; it is true that I robbed Little Gervais; they were right in telling you that Jean Valjean was a very vicious wretch. Perhaps it was not altogether his fault. Listen, honorable judges! a man who has been so greatly humbled as I have has neither any remonstrances to make to Providence, nor any advice to give to society; but, you see, the infamy from which I have tried to escape is an injurious thing; the galleys make the convict

what he is; reflect upon that, if you please. Before going to the galleys, I was a poor peasant, with very little intelligence, a sort of idiot; the galleys wrought a change in me. I was stupid; I became vicious: I was a block of wood; I became a firebrand. Later on, indulgence and kindness saved me, as severity had ruined me. But, pardon me, you cannot understand what I am saying. You will find at my house, among the ashes in the fireplace, the forty-sou piece which I stole, seven years ago, from little Gervais. I have nothing farther to add; take me. Good God! the district-attorney shakes his head; you say, 'M. Madeleine has gone mad!' you do not believe me! that is distressing. Do not, at least, condemn this man! What! these men do not recognize me! I wish Javert were here; he would recognize me."

Nothing can reproduce the sombre and kindly melancholy of tone which accompanied these words.

He turned to the three convicts, and said:--

"Well, I recognize you; do you remember, Brevet?"

He paused, hesitated for an instant, and said:--

"Do you remember the knitted suspenders with a checked pattern which you wore in the galleys?"

Brevet gave a start of surprise, and surveyed him from head to foot with

a frightened air. He continued:--

"Chenildieu, you who conferred on yourself the name of 'Jenie-Dieu,' your whole right shoulder bears a deep burn, because you one day laid your shoulder against the chafing-dish full of coals, in order to efface the three letters T. F. P., which are still visible, nevertheless; answer, is this true?"

"It is true," said Chenildieu.

He addressed himself to Cochepaille:--

"Cochepaille, you have, near the bend in your left arm, a date stamped in blue letters with burnt powder; the date is that of the landing of the Emperor at Cannes, March 1, 1815; pull up your sleeve!"

Cochepaille pushed up his sleeve; all eyes were focused on him and on his bare arm.

A gendarme held a light close to it; there was the date.

The unhappy man turned to the spectators and the judges with a smile which still rends the hearts of all who saw it whenever they think of it. It was a smile of triumph; it was also a smile of despair.

"You see plainly," he said, "that I am Jean Valjean."

In that chamber there were no longer either judges, accusers, nor gendarmes; there was nothing but staring eyes and sympathizing hearts. No one recalled any longer the part that each might be called upon to play; the district-attorney forgot he was there for the purpose of prosecuting, the President that he was there to preside, the counsel for the defence that he was there to defend. It was a striking circumstance that no question was put, that no authority intervened. The peculiarity of sublime spectacles is, that they capture all souls and turn witnesses into spectators. No one, probably, could have explained what he felt; no one, probably, said to himself that he was witnessing the splendid outburst of a grand light: all felt themselves inwardly dazzled.

It was evident that they had Jean Valjean before their eyes. That was clear. The appearance of this man had sufficed to suffuse with light that matter which had been so obscure but a moment previously, without any further explanation: the whole crowd, as by a sort of electric revelation, understood instantly and at a single glance the simple and magnificent history of a man who was delivering himself up so that another man might not be condemned in his stead. The details, the hesitations, little possible oppositions, were swallowed up in that vast and luminous fact.

It was an impression which vanished speedily, but which was irresistible at the moment.

"I do not wish to disturb the court further," resumed Jean Valjean. "I shall withdraw, since you do not arrest me. I have many things to do. The district-attorney knows who I am; he knows whither I am going; he can have me arrested when he likes."

He directed his steps towards the door. Not a voice was raised, not an arm extended to hinder him. All stood aside. At that moment there was about him that divine something which causes multitudes to stand aside and make way for a man. He traversed the crowd slowly. It was never known who opened the door, but it is certain that he found the door open when he reached it. On arriving there he turned round and said:--

"I am at your command, Mr. District-Attorney."

Then he addressed the audience:--

"All of you, all who are present--consider me worthy of pity, do you not? Good God! When I think of what I was on the point of doing, I consider that I am to be envied. Nevertheless, I should have preferred not to have had this occur."

He withdrew, and the door closed behind him as it had opened, for those who do certain sovereign things are always sure of being served by some one in the crowd.

Less than an hour after this, the verdict of the jury freed the said

Champmathieu from all accusations; and Champmathieu, being at once released, went off in a state of stupefaction, thinking that all men were fools, and comprehending nothing of this vision.