BOOK FIFTH.--FOR A BLACK HUNT, A MUTE PACK

CHAPTER I--THE ZIGZAGS OF STRATEGY

An observation here becomes necessary, in view of the pages which the reader is about to peruse, and of others which will be met with further on.

The author of this book, who regrets the necessity of mentioning himself, has been absent from Paris for many years. Paris has been transformed since he quitted it. A new city has arisen, which is, after a fashion, unknown to him. There is no need for him to say that he loves Paris: Paris is his mind's natal city. In consequence of demolitions and reconstructions, the Paris of his youth, that Paris which he bore away religiously in his memory, is now a Paris of days gone by. He must be permitted to speak of that Paris as though it still existed. It is possible that when the author conducts his readers to a spot and says, "In such a street there stands such and such a house," neither street nor house will any longer exist in that locality. Readers may verify the facts if they care to take the trouble. For his own part, he is unacquainted with the new Paris, and he writes with the old Paris before his eyes in an illusion which is precious to him. It is a delight to him to dream that there still lingers behind him something of that which he

beheld when he was in his own country, and that all has not vanished. So long as you go and come in your native land, you imagine that those streets are a matter of indifference to you; that those windows, those roofs, and those doors are nothing to you; that those walls are strangers to you; that those trees are merely the first encountered haphazard; that those houses, which you do not enter, are useless to you; that the pavements which you tread are merely stones. Later on, when you are no longer there, you perceive that the streets are dear to you; that you miss those roofs, those doors; and that those walls are necessary to you, those trees are well beloved by you; that you entered those houses which you never entered, every day, and that you have left a part of your heart, of your blood, of your soul, in those pavements. All those places which you no longer behold, which you may never behold again, perchance, and whose memory you have cherished, take on a melancholy charm, recur to your mind with the melancholy of an apparition, make the holy land visible to you, and are, so to speak, the very form of France, and you love them; and you call them up as they are, as they were, and you persist in this, and you will submit to no change: for you are attached to the figure of your fatherland as to the face of your mother.

May we, then, be permitted to speak of the past in the present? That said, we beg the reader to take note of it, and we continue.

Jean Valjean instantly quitted the boulevard and plunged into the streets, taking the most intricate lines which he could devise,

returning on his track at times, to make sure that he was not being followed.

This manoeuvre is peculiar to the hunted stag. On soil where an imprint of the track may be left, this manoeuvre possesses, among other advantages, that of deceiving the huntsmen and the dogs, by throwing them on the wrong scent. In venery this is called false re-imbushment.

The moon was full that night. Jean Valjean was not sorry for this. The moon, still very close to the horizon, cast great masses of light and shadow in the streets. Jean Valjean could glide along close to the houses on the dark side, and yet keep watch on the light side. He did not, perhaps, take sufficiently into consideration the fact that the dark side escaped him. Still, in the deserted lanes which lie near the Rue Poliveau, he thought he felt certain that no one was following him.

Cosette walked on without asking any questions. The sufferings of the first six years of her life had instilled something passive into her nature. Moreover,--and this is a remark to which we shall frequently have occasion to recur,--she had grown used, without being herself aware of it, to the peculiarities of this good man and to the freaks of destiny. And then she was with him, and she felt safe.

Jean Valjean knew no more where he was going than did Cosette. He trusted in God, as she trusted in him. It seemed as though he also were clinging to the hand of some one greater than himself; he thought he

felt a being leading him, though invisible. However, he had no settled idea, no plan, no project. He was not even absolutely sure that it was Javert, and then it might have been Javert, without Javert knowing that he was Jean Valjean. Was not he disguised? Was not he believed to be dead? Still, queer things had been going on for several days. He wanted no more of them. He was determined not to return to the Gorbeau house. Like the wild animal chased from its lair, he was seeking a hole in which he might hide until he could find one where he might dwell.

Jean Valjean described many and varied labyrinths in the Mouffetard quarter, which was already asleep, as though the discipline of the Middle Ages and the yoke of the curfew still existed; he combined in various manners, with cunning strategy, the Rue Censier and the Rue Copeau, the Rue du Battoir-Saint-Victor and the Rue du Puits l'Ermite. There are lodging houses in this locality, but he did not even enter one, finding nothing which suited him. He had no doubt that if any one had chanced to be upon his track, they would have lost it.

As eleven o'clock struck from Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, he was traversing the Rue de Pontoise, in front of the office of the commissary of police, situated at No. 14. A few moments later, the instinct of which we have spoken above made him turn round. At that moment he saw distinctly, thanks to the commissary's lantern, which betrayed them, three men who were following him closely, pass, one after the other, under that lantern, on the dark side of the street. One of the three entered the alley leading to the commissary's house. The one who marched at their

head struck him as decidedly suspicious.

"Come, child," he said to Cosette; and he made haste to quit the Rue Pontoise.

He took a circuit, turned into the Passage des Patriarches, which was closed on account of the hour, strode along the Rue de l'Epee-de-Bois and the Rue de l'Arbalete, and plunged into the Rue des Postes.

At that time there was a square formed by the intersection of streets, where the College Rollin stands to-day, and where the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Genevieve turns off.

It is understood, of course, that the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Genevieve is an old street, and that a posting-chaise does not pass through the Rue des Postes once in ten years. In the thirteenth century this Rue des Postes was inhabited by potters, and its real name is Rue des Pots.

The moon cast a livid light into this open space. Jean Valjean went into ambush in a doorway, calculating that if the men were still following him, he could not fail to get a good look at them, as they traversed this illuminated space.

In point of fact, three minutes had not elapsed when the men made their appearance. There were four of them now. All were tall, dressed in long, brown coats, with round hats, and huge cudgels in their hands. Their

great stature and their vast fists rendered them no less alarming than did their sinister stride through the darkness. One would have pronounced them four spectres disguised as bourgeois.

They halted in the middle of the space and formed a group, like men in consultation. They had an air of indecision. The one who appeared to be their leader turned round and pointed hastily with his right hand in the direction which Jean Valjean had taken; another seemed to indicate the contrary direction with considerable obstinacy. At the moment when the first man wheeled round, the moon fell full in his face. Jean Valjean recognized Javert perfectly.

CHAPTER II--IT IS LUCKY THAT THE PONT D'AUSTERLITZ BEARS CARRIAGES

Uncertainty was at an end for Jean Valjean: fortunately it still lasted for the men. He took advantage of their hesitation. It was time lost for them, but gained for him. He slipped from under the gate where he had concealed himself, and went down the Rue des Postes, towards the region of the Jardin des Plantes. Cosette was beginning to be tired. He took her in his arms and carried her. There were no passers-by, and the street lanterns had not been lighted on account of there being a moon.

He redoubled his pace.

In a few strides he had reached the Goblet potteries, on the front of which the moonlight rendered distinctly legible the ancient inscription:--

> De Goblet fils c'est ici la fabrique;[14]
> Venez choisir des cruches et des broos,
> Des pots a fleurs, des tuyaux, de la brique.
> A tout venant le Coeur vend des Carreaux.

He left behind him the Rue de la Clef, then the Fountain Saint-Victor, skirted the Jardin des Plantes by the lower streets, and reached the quay. There he turned round. The quay was deserted. The streets were

deserted. There was no one behind him. He drew a long breath.

He gained the Pont d'Austerlitz.

Tolls were still collected there at that epoch.

He presented himself at the toll office and handed over a sou.

"It is two sous," said the old soldier in charge of the bridge. "You are carrying a child who can walk. Pay for two."

He paid, vexed that his passage should have aroused remark. Every flight should be an imperceptible slipping away.

A heavy cart was crossing the Seine at the same time as himself, and on its way, like him, to the right bank. This was of use to him. He could traverse the bridge in the shadow of the cart.

Towards the middle of the Bridge, Cosette, whose feet were benumbed, wanted to walk. He set her on the ground and took her hand again.

The bridge once crossed, he perceived some timber-yards on his right. He directed his course thither. In order to reach them, it was necessary to risk himself in a tolerably large unsheltered and illuminated space.
He did not hesitate. Those who were on his track had evidently lost the scent, and Jean Valjean believed himself to be out of danger. Hunted,

yes; followed, no.

A little street, the Rue du Chemin-Vert-Saint-Antoine, opened out between two timber-yards enclosed in walls. This street was dark and narrow and seemed made expressly for him. Before entering it he cast a glance behind him.

From the point where he stood he could see the whole extent of the Pont d'Austerlitz.

Four shadows were just entering on the bridge.

These shadows had their backs turned to the Jardin des Plantes and were on their way to the right bank.

These four shadows were the four men.

Jean Valjean shuddered like the wild beast which is recaptured.

One hope remained to him; it was, that the men had not, perhaps, stepped on the bridge, and had not caught sight of him while he was crossing the large illuminated space, holding Cosette by the hand.

In that case, by plunging into the little street before him, he might escape, if he could reach the timber-yards, the marshes, the market-gardens, the uninhabited ground which was not built upon.

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

Three hundred paces further on, he arrived at a point where the street forked. It separated into two streets, which ran in a slanting line, one to the right, and the other to the left.

Jean Valjean had before him what resembled the two branches of a Y. Which should he choose? He did not hesitate, but took the one on the right.

Why?

Because that to the left ran towards a suburb, that is to say, towards inhabited regions, and the right branch towards the open country, that is to say, towards deserted regions.

However, they no longer walked very fast. Cosette's pace retarded Jean Valjean's.

He took her up and carried her again. Cosette laid her head on the shoulder of the good man and said not a word.

He turned round from time to time and looked behind him. He took care to keep always on the dark side of the street. The street was straight in his rear. The first two or three times that he turned round he saw nothing; the silence was profound, and he continued his march somewhat

reassured. All at once, on turning round, he thought he perceived in the portion of the street which he had just passed through, far off in the obscurity, something which was moving.

He rushed forward precipitately rather than walked, hoping to find some side-street, to make his escape through it, and thus to break his scent once more.

He arrived at a wall.

This wall, however, did not absolutely prevent further progress; it was a wall which bordered a transverse street, in which the one he had taken ended.

Here again, he was obliged to come to a decision; should he go to the right or to the left.

He glanced to the right. The fragmentary lane was prolonged between buildings which were either sheds or barns, then ended at a blind alley. The extremity of the cul-de-sac was distinctly visible,--a lofty white wall.

He glanced to the left. On that side the lane was open, and about two hundred paces further on, ran into a street of which it was the affluent. On that side lay safety.

At the moment when Jean Valjean was meditating a turn to the left, in an effort to reach the street which he saw at the end of the lane, he perceived a sort of motionless, black statue at the corner of the lane and the street towards which he was on the point of directing his steps.

It was some one, a man, who had evidently just been posted there, and who was barring the passage and waiting.

Jean Valjean recoiled.

The point of Paris where Jean Valjean found himself, situated between the Faubourg Saint-Antoine and la Rapee, is one of those which recent improvements have transformed from top to bottom,--resulting in disfigurement according to some, and in a transfiguration according to others. The market-gardens, the timber-yards, and the old buildings have been effaced. To-day, there are brand-new, wide streets, arenas, circuses, hippodromes, railway stations, and a prison, Mazas, there; progress, as the reader sees, with its antidote.

Half a century ago, in that ordinary, popular tongue, which is all compounded of traditions, which persists in calling the Institut les Quatre-Nations, and the Opera-Comique Feydeau, the precise spot whither Jean Valjean had arrived was called le Petit Picpus. The Porte Saint-Jacques, the Porte Paris, the Barriere des Sergents, the Porcherons, la Galiote, les Celestins, les Capucins, le Mail, la Bourbe, l'Arbre de Cracovie, la Petite-Pologne--these are the names of old Paris

which survive amid the new. The memory of the populace hovers over these relics of the past.

Le Petit-Picpus, which, moreover, hardly ever had any existence, and never was more than the outline of a quarter, had nearly the monkish aspect of a Spanish town. The roads were not much paved; the streets were not much built up. With the exception of the two or three streets, of which we shall presently speak, all was wall and solitude there. Not a shop, not a vehicle, hardly a candle lighted here and there in the windows; all lights extinguished after ten o'clock. Gardens, convents, timber-yards, marshes; occasional lowly dwellings and great walls as high as the houses.

Such was this quarter in the last century. The Revolution snubbed it soundly. The republican government demolished and cut through it. Rubbish shoots were established there. Thirty years ago, this quarter was disappearing under the erasing process of new buildings. To-day, it has been utterly blotted out. The Petit-Picpus, of which no existing plan has preserved a trace, is indicated with sufficient clearness in the plan of 1727, published at Paris by Denis Thierry, Rue Saint-Jacques, opposite the Rue du Platre; and at Lyons, by Jean Girin, Rue Merciere, at the sign of Prudence. Petit-Picpus had, as we have just mentioned, a Y of streets, formed by the Rue du Chemin-Vert-Saint-Antoine, which spread out in two branches, taking on the left the name of Little Picpus Street, and on the right the name of the Rue Polonceau. The two limbs of the Y were connected at the apex

as by a bar; this bar was called Rue Droit-Mur. The Rue Polonceau ended there; Rue Petit-Picpus passed on, and ascended towards the Lenoir market. A person coming from the Seine reached the extremity of the Rue Polonceau, and had on his right the Rue Droit-Mur, turning abruptly at a right angle, in front of him the wall of that street, and on his right a truncated prolongation of the Rue Droit-Mur, which had no issue and was called the Cul-de-Sac Genrot.

It was here that Jean Valjean stood.

As we have just said, on catching sight of that black silhouette standing on guard at the angle of the Rue Droit-Mur and the Rue Petit-Picpus, he recoiled. There could be no doubt of it. That phantom was lying in wait for him.

What was he to do?

The time for retreating was passed. That which he had perceived in movement an instant before, in the distant darkness, was Javert and his squad without a doubt. Javert was probably already at the commencement of the street at whose end Jean Valjean stood. Javert, to all appearances, was acquainted with this little labyrinth, and had taken his precautions by sending one of his men to guard the exit. These surmises, which so closely resembled proofs, whirled suddenly, like a handful of dust caught up by an unexpected gust of wind, through Jean Valjean's mournful brain. He examined the Cul-de-Sac Genrot; there he

was cut off. He examined the Rue Petit-Picpus; there stood a sentinel. He saw that black form standing out in relief against the white pavement, illuminated by the moon; to advance was to fall into this man's hands; to retreat was to fling himself into Javert's arms. Jean Valjean felt himself caught, as in a net, which was slowly contracting; he gazed heavenward in despair.

CHAPTER IV--THE GROPINGS OF FLIGHT

In order to understand what follows, it is requisite to form an exact idea of the Droit-Mur lane, and, in particular, of the angle which one leaves on the left when one emerges from the Rue Polonceau into this lane. Droit-Mur lane was almost entirely bordered on the right, as far as the Rue Petit-Picpus, by houses of mean aspect; on the left by a solitary building of severe outlines, composed of numerous parts which grew gradually higher by a story or two as they approached the Rue Petit-Picpus side; so that this building, which was very lofty on the Rue Petit-Picpus side, was tolerably low on the side adjoining the Rue Polonceau. There, at the angle of which we have spoken, it descended to such a degree that it consisted of merely a wall. This wall did not abut directly on the Street; it formed a deeply retreating niche, concealed by its two corners from two observers who might have been, one in the Rue Polonceau, the other in the Rue Droit-Mur.

Beginning with these angles of the niche, the wall extended along the Rue Polonceau as far as a house which bore the number 49, and along the Rue Droit-Mur, where the fragment was much shorter, as far as the gloomy building which we have mentioned and whose gable it intersected, thus forming another retreating angle in the street. This gable was sombre of aspect; only one window was visible, or, to speak more correctly, two shutters covered with a sheet of zinc and kept constantly closed.

The state of the places of which we are here giving a description is

rigorously exact, and will certainly awaken a very precise memory in the mind of old inhabitants of the quarter.

The niche was entirely filled by a thing which resembled a colossal and wretched door; it was a vast, formless assemblage of perpendicular planks, the upper ones being broader than the lower, bound together by long transverse strips of iron. At one side there was a carriage gate of the ordinary dimensions, and which had evidently not been cut more than fifty years previously.

A linden-tree showed its crest above the niche, and the wall was covered with ivy on the side of the Rue Polonceau.

In the imminent peril in which Jean Valjean found himself, this sombre building had about it a solitary and uninhabited look which tempted him. He ran his eyes rapidly over it; he said to himself, that if he could contrive to get inside it, he might save himself. First he conceived an idea, then a hope.

In the central portion of the front of this building, on the Rue Droit-Mur side, there were at all the windows of the different stories ancient cistern pipes of lead. The various branches of the pipes which led from one central pipe to all these little basins sketched out a sort of tree on the front. These ramifications of pipes with their hundred elbows imitated those old leafless vine-stocks which writhe over the fronts of old farm-houses.

This odd espalier, with its branches of lead and iron, was the first thing that struck Jean Valjean. He seated Cosette with her back against a stone post, with an injunction to be silent, and ran to the spot where the conduit touched the pavement. Perhaps there was some way of climbing up by it and entering the house. But the pipe was dilapidated and past service, and hardly hung to its fastenings. Moreover, all the windows of this silent dwelling were grated with heavy iron bars, even the attic windows in the roof. And then, the moon fell full upon that facade, and the man who was watching at the corner of the street would have seen Jean Valjean in the act of climbing. And finally, what was to be done with Cosette? How was she to be drawn up to the top of a three-story house?

He gave up all idea of climbing by means of the drain-pipe, and crawled along the wall to get back into the Rue Polonceau.

When he reached the slant of the wall where he had left Cosette, he noticed that no one could see him there. As we have just explained, he was concealed from all eyes, no matter from which direction they were approaching; besides this, he was in the shadow. Finally, there were two doors; perhaps they might be forced. The wall above which he saw the linden-tree and the ivy evidently abutted on a garden where he could, at least, hide himself, although there were as yet no leaves on the trees, and spend the remainder of the night.

Time was passing; he must act quickly.

He felt over the carriage door, and immediately recognized the fact that it was impracticable outside and in.

He approached the other door with more hope; it was frightfully decrepit; its very immensity rendered it less solid; the planks were rotten; the iron bands--there were only three of them--were rusted. It seemed as though it might be possible to pierce this worm-eaten barrier.

On examining it he found that the door was not a door; it had neither hinges, cross-bars, lock, nor fissure in the middle; the iron bands traversed it from side to side without any break. Through the crevices in the planks he caught a view of unhewn slabs and blocks of stone roughly cemented together, which passers-by might still have seen there ten years ago. He was forced to acknowledge with consternation that this apparent door was simply the wooden decoration of a building against which it was placed. It was easy to tear off a plank; but then, one found one's self face to face with a wall.

CHAPTER V--WHICH WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE WITH GAS LANTERNS

At that moment a heavy and measured sound began to be audible at some distance. Jean Valjean risked a glance round the corner of the street. Seven or eight soldiers, drawn up in a platoon, had just debouched into the Rue Polonceau. He saw the gleam of their bayonets. They were advancing towards him; these soldiers, at whose head he distinguished Javert's tall figure, advanced slowly and cautiously. They halted frequently; it was plain that they were searching all the nooks of the walls and all the embrasures of the doors and alleys.

This was some patrol that Javert had encountered--there could be no mistake as to this surmise--and whose aid he had demanded.

Javert's two acolytes were marching in their ranks.

At the rate at which they were marching, and in consideration of the halts which they were making, it would take them about a quarter of an hour to reach the spot where Jean Valjean stood. It was a frightful moment. A few minutes only separated Jean Valjean from that terrible precipice which yawned before him for the third time. And the galleys now meant not only the galleys, but Cosette lost to him forever; that is to say, a life resembling the interior of a tomb.

There was but one thing which was possible.

Jean Valjean had this peculiarity, that he carried, as one might say, two beggar's pouches: in one he kept his saintly thoughts; in the other the redoubtable talents of a convict. He rummaged in the one or the other, according to circumstances.

Among his other resources, thanks to his numerous escapes from the prison at Toulon, he was, as it will be remembered, a past master in the incredible art of crawling up without ladder or climbing-irons, by sheer muscular force, by leaning on the nape of his neck, his shoulders, his hips, and his knees, by helping himself on the rare projections of the stone, in the right angle of a wall, as high as the sixth story, if need be; an art which has rendered so celebrated and so alarming that corner of the wall of the Conciergerie of Paris by which Battemolle, condemned to death, made his escape twenty years ago.

Jean Valjean measured with his eyes the wall above which he espied the linden; it was about eighteen feet in height. The angle which it formed with the gable of the large building was filled, at its lower extremity, by a mass of masonry of a triangular shape, probably intended to preserve that too convenient corner from the rubbish of those dirty creatures called the passers-by. This practice of filling up corners of the wall is much in use in Paris.

This mass was about five feet in height; the space above the summit of this mass which it was necessary to climb was not more than fourteen feet.

The wall was surmounted by a flat stone without a coping.

Cosette was the difficulty, for she did not know how to climb a wall. Should he abandon her? Jean Valjean did not once think of that. It was impossible to carry her. A man's whole strength is required to successfully carry out these singular ascents. The least burden would disturb his centre of gravity and pull him downwards.

A rope would have been required; Jean Valjean had none. Where was he to get a rope at midnight, in the Rue Polonceau? Certainly, if Jean Valjean had had a kingdom, he would have given it for a rope at that moment.

All extreme situations have their lightning flashes which sometimes dazzle, sometimes illuminate us.

Jean Valjean's despairing glance fell on the street lantern-post of the blind alley Genrot.

At that epoch there were no gas-jets in the streets of Paris. At nightfall lanterns placed at regular distances were lighted; they were ascended and descended by means of a rope, which traversed the street from side to side, and was adjusted in a groove of the post. The pulley over which this rope ran was fastened underneath the lantern in a little iron box, the key to which was kept by the lamp-lighter, and the rope itself was protected by a metal case.

Jean Valjean, with the energy of a supreme struggle, crossed the street at one bound, entered the blind alley, broke the latch of the little box with the point of his knife, and an instant later he was beside Cosette once more. He had a rope. These gloomy inventors of expedients work rapidly when they are fighting against fatality.

We have already explained that the lanterns had not been lighted that night. The lantern in the Cul-de-Sac Genrot was thus naturally extinct, like the rest; and one could pass directly under it without even noticing that it was no longer in its place.

Nevertheless, the hour, the place, the darkness, Jean Valjean's absorption, his singular gestures, his goings and comings, all had begun to render Cosette uneasy. Any other child than she would have given vent to loud shrieks long before. She contented herself with plucking Jean Valjean by the skirt of his coat. They could hear the sound of the patrol's approach ever more and more distinctly.

"Father," said she, in a very low voice, "I am afraid. Who is coming yonder?"

"Hush!" replied the unhappy man; "it is Madame Thenardier."

Cosette shuddered. He added:--

"Say nothing. Don't interfere with me. If you cry out, if you weep, the Thenardier is lying in wait for you. She is coming to take you back."

Then, without haste, but without making a useless movement, with firm and curt precision, the more remarkable at a moment when the patrol and Javert might come upon him at any moment, he undid his cravat, passed it round Cosette's body under the armpits, taking care that it should not hurt the child, fastened this cravat to one end of the rope, by means of that knot which seafaring men call a "swallow knot," took the other end of the rope in his teeth, pulled off his shoes and stockings, which he threw over the wall, stepped upon the mass of masonry, and began to raise himself in the angle of the wall and the gable with as much solidity and certainty as though he had the rounds of a ladder under his feet and elbows. Half a minute had not elapsed when he was resting on his knees on the wall.

Cosette gazed at him in stupid amazement, without uttering a word. Jean Valjean's injunction, and the name of Madame Thenardier, had chilled her blood.

All at once she heard Jean Valjean's voice crying to her, though in a very low tone:--

"Put your back against the wall."

She obeyed.

"Don't say a word, and don't be alarmed," went on Jean Valjean.

And she felt herself lifted from the ground.

Before she had time to recover herself, she was on the top of the wall.

Jean Valjean grasped her, put her on his back, took her two tiny hands in his large left hand, lay down flat on his stomach and crawled along on top of the wall as far as the cant. As he had guessed, there stood a building whose roof started from the top of the wooden barricade and descended to within a very short distance of the ground, with a gentle slope which grazed the linden-tree. A lucky circumstance, for the wall was much higher on this side than on the street side. Jean Valjean could only see the ground at a great depth below him.

He had just reached the slope of the roof, and had not yet left the crest of the wall, when a violent uproar announced the arrival of the patrol. The thundering voice of Javert was audible:--

"Search the blind alley! The Rue Droit-Mur is guarded! so is the Rue Petit-Picpus. I'll answer for it that he is in the blind alley."

The soldiers rushed into the Genrot alley.

Jean Valjean allowed himself to slide down the roof, still holding fast

to Cosette, reached the linden-tree, and leaped to the ground. Whether from terror or courage, Cosette had not breathed a sound, though her hands were a little abraded.

CHAPTER VI--THE BEGINNING OF AN ENIGMA

Jean Valjean found himself in a sort of garden which was very vast and of singular aspect; one of those melancholy gardens which seem made to be looked at in winter and at night. This garden was oblong in shape, with an alley of large poplars at the further end, tolerably tall forest trees in the corners, and an unshaded space in the centre, where could be seen a very large, solitary tree, then several fruit-trees, gnarled and bristling like bushes, beds of vegetables, a melon patch, whose glass frames sparkled in the moonlight, and an old well. Here and there stood stone benches which seemed black with moss. The alleys were bordered with gloomy and very erect little shrubs. The grass had half taken possession of them, and a green mould covered the rest.

Jean Valjean had beside him the building whose roof had served him as a means of descent, a pile of fagots, and, behind the fagots, directly against the wall, a stone statue, whose mutilated face was no longer anything more than a shapeless mask which loomed vaguely through the gloom.

The building was a sort of ruin, where dismantled chambers were distinguishable, one of which, much encumbered, seemed to serve as a shed.

The large building of the Rue Droit-Mur, which had a wing on the Rue Petit-Picpus, turned two facades, at right angles, towards this garden.

These interior facades were even more tragic than the exterior. All the windows were grated. Not a gleam of light was visible at any one of them. The upper story had scuttles like prisons. One of those facades cast its shadow on the other, which fell over the garden like an immense black pall.

No other house was visible. The bottom of the garden was lost in mist and darkness. Nevertheless, walls could be confusedly made out, which intersected as though there were more cultivated land beyond, and the low roofs of the Rue Polonceau.

Nothing more wild and solitary than this garden could be imagined. There was no one in it, which was quite natural in view of the hour; but it did not seem as though this spot were made for any one to walk in, even in broad daylight.

Jean Valjean's first care had been to get hold of his shoes and put them on again, then to step under the shed with Cosette. A man who is fleeing never thinks himself sufficiently hidden. The child, whose thoughts were still on the Thenardier, shared his instinct for withdrawing from sight as much as possible.

Cosette trembled and pressed close to him. They heard the tumultuous noise of the patrol searching the blind alley and the streets; the blows of their gun-stocks against the stones; Javert's appeals to the police spies whom he had posted, and his imprecations mingled with words which

could not be distinguished.

At the expiration of a quarter of an hour it seemed as though that species of stormy roar were becoming more distant. Jean Valjean held his breath.

He had laid his hand lightly on Cosette's mouth.

However, the solitude in which he stood was so strangely calm, that this frightful uproar, close and furious as it was, did not disturb him by so much as the shadow of a misgiving. It seemed as though those walls had been built of the deaf stones of which the Scriptures speak.

All at once, in the midst of this profound calm, a fresh sound arose; a sound as celestial, divine, ineffable, ravishing, as the other had been horrible. It was a hymn which issued from the gloom, a dazzling burst of prayer and harmony in the obscure and alarming silence of the night; women's voices, but voices composed at one and the same time of the pure accents of virgins and the innocent accents of children,--voices which are not of the earth, and which resemble those that the newborn infant still hears, and which the dying man hears already. This song proceeded from the gloomy edifice which towered above the garden. At the moment when the hubbub of demons retreated, one would have said that a choir of angels was approaching through the gloom.

Cosette and Jean Valjean fell on their knees.

They knew not what it was, they knew not where they were; but both of them, the man and the child, the penitent and the innocent, felt that they must kneel.

These voices had this strange characteristic, that they did not prevent the building from seeming to be deserted. It was a supernatural chant in an uninhabited house.

While these voices were singing, Jean Valjean thought of nothing. He no longer beheld the night; he beheld a blue sky. It seemed to him that he felt those wings which we all have within us, unfolding.

The song died away. It may have lasted a long time. Jean Valjean could not have told. Hours of ecstasy are never more than a moment.

All fell silent again. There was no longer anything in the street; there was nothing in the garden. That which had menaced, that which had reassured him,--all had vanished. The breeze swayed a few dry weeds on the crest of the wall, and they gave out a faint, sweet, melancholy sound.

CHAPTER VII--CONTINUATION OF THE ENIGMA

The night wind had risen, which indicated that it must be between one and two o'clock in the morning. Poor Cosette said nothing. As she had seated herself beside him and leaned her head against him, Jean Valjean had fancied that she was asleep. He bent down and looked at her. Cosette's eyes were wide open, and her thoughtful air pained Jean Valjean.

She was still trembling.

"Are you sleepy?" said Jean Valjean.

"I am very cold," she replied.

A moment later she resumed:--

"Is she still there?"

"Who?" said Jean Valjean.

"Madame Thenardier."

Jean Valjean had already forgotten the means which he had employed to make Cosette keep silent.

"Ah!" said he, "she is gone. You need fear nothing further."

The child sighed as though a load had been lifted from her breast.

The ground was damp, the shed open on all sides, the breeze grew more keen every instant. The goodman took off his coat and wrapped it round Cosette.

"Are you less cold now?" said he.

"Oh, yes, father."

"Well, wait for me a moment. I will soon be back."

He quitted the ruin and crept along the large building, seeking a better shelter. He came across doors, but they were closed. There were bars at all the windows of the ground floor.

Just after he had turned the inner angle of the edifice, he observed that he was coming to some arched windows, where he perceived a light. He stood on tiptoe and peeped through one of these windows. They all opened on a tolerably vast hall, paved with large flagstones, cut up by arcades and pillars, where only a tiny light and great shadows were visible. The light came from a taper which was burning in one corner. The apartment was deserted, and nothing was stirring in it. Nevertheless, by dint of gazing intently he thought he perceived on the

ground something which appeared to be covered with a winding-sheet, and which resembled a human form. This form was lying face downward, flat on the pavement, with the arms extended in the form of a cross, in the immobility of death. One would have said, judging from a sort of serpent which undulated over the floor, that this sinister form had a rope round its neck.

The whole chamber was bathed in that mist of places which are sparely illuminated, which adds to horror.

Jean Valjean often said afterwards, that, although many funereal spectres had crossed his path in life, he had never beheld anything more blood-curdling and terrible than that enigmatical form accomplishing some inexplicable mystery in that gloomy place, and beheld thus at night. It was alarming to suppose that that thing was perhaps dead; and still more alarming to think that it was perhaps alive.

He had the courage to plaster his face to the glass, and to watch whether the thing would move. In spite of his remaining thus what seemed to him a very long time, the outstretched form made no movement. All at once he felt himself overpowered by an inexpressible terror, and he fled. He began to run towards the shed, not daring to look behind him. It seemed to him, that if he turned his head, he should see that form following him with great strides and waving its arms.

He reached the ruin all out of breath. His knees were giving way beneath

him; the perspiration was pouring from him.

Where was he? Who could ever have imagined anything like that sort of sepulchre in the midst of Paris! What was this strange house? An edifice full of nocturnal mystery, calling to souls through the darkness with the voice of angels, and when they came, offering them abruptly that terrible vision; promising to open the radiant portals of heaven, and then opening the horrible gates of the tomb! And it actually was an edifice, a house, which bore a number on the street! It was not a dream! He had to touch the stones to convince himself that such was the fact.

Cold, anxiety, uneasiness, the emotions of the night, had given him a genuine fever, and all these ideas were clashing together in his brain.

He stepped up to Cosette. She was asleep.

CHAPTER VIII--THE ENIGMA BECOMES DOUBLY MYSTERIOUS

The child had laid her head on a stone and fallen asleep.

He sat down beside her and began to think. Little by little, as he gazed at her, he grew calm and regained possession of his freedom of mind.

He clearly perceived this truth, the foundation of his life henceforth, that so long as she was there, so long as he had her near him, he should need nothing except for her, he should fear nothing except for her. He was not even conscious that he was very cold, since he had taken off his coat to cover her.

Nevertheless, athwart this revery into which he had fallen he had heard for some time a peculiar noise. It was like the tinkling of a bell. This sound proceeded from the garden. It could be heard distinctly though faintly. It resembled the faint, vague music produced by the bells of cattle at night in the pastures.

This noise made Valjean turn round.

He looked and saw that there was some one in the garden.

A being resembling a man was walking amid the bell-glasses of the melon beds, rising, stooping, halting, with regular movements, as though he were dragging or spreading out something on the ground. This person

appeared to limp.

Jean Valjean shuddered with the continual tremor of the unhappy. For them everything is hostile and suspicious. They distrust the day because it enables people to see them, and the night because it aids in surprising them. A little while before he had shivered because the garden was deserted, and now he shivered because there was some one there.

He fell back from chimerical terrors to real terrors. He said to himself that Javert and the spies had, perhaps, not taken their departure; that they had, no doubt, left people on the watch in the street; that if this man should discover him in the garden, he would cry out for help against thieves and deliver him up. He took the sleeping Cosette gently in his arms and carried her behind a heap of old furniture, which was out of use, in the most remote corner of the shed. Cosette did not stir.

From that point he scrutinized the appearance of the being in the melon patch. The strange thing about it was, that the sound of the bell followed each of this man's movements. When the man approached, the sound approached; when the man retreated, the sound retreated; if he made any hasty gesture, a tremolo accompanied the gesture; when he halted, the sound ceased. It appeared evident that the bell was attached to that man; but what could that signify? Who was this man who had a bell suspended about him like a ram or an ox?

As he put these questions to himself, he touched Cosette's hands. They were icy cold.

"Ah! good God!" he cried.

He spoke to her in a low voice:--

"Cosette!"

She did not open her eyes.

He shook her vigorously.

She did not wake.

"Is she dead?" he said to himself, and sprang to his feet, quivering from head to foot.

The most frightful thoughts rushed pell-mell through his mind. There are moments when hideous surmises assail us like a cohort of furies, and violently force the partitions of our brains. When those we love are in question, our prudence invents every sort of madness. He remembered that sleep in the open air on a cold night may be fatal.

Cosette was pale, and had fallen at full length on the ground at his feet, without a movement.

He listened to her breathing: she still breathed, but with a respiration which seemed to him weak and on the point of extinction.

How was he to warm her back to life? How was he to rouse her? All that was not connected with this vanished from his thoughts. He rushed wildly from the ruin.

It was absolutely necessary that Cosette should be in bed and beside a fire in less than a quarter of an hour.

CHAPTER IX--THE MAN WITH THE BELL

He walked straight up to the man whom he saw in the garden. He had taken in his hand the roll of silver which was in the pocket of his waistcoat.

The man's head was bent down, and he did not see him approaching. In a few strides Jean Valjean stood beside him.

Jean Valjean accosted him with the cry:--

"One hundred francs!"

The man gave a start and raised his eyes.

"You can earn a hundred francs," went on Jean Valjean, "if you will grant me shelter for this night."

The moon shone full upon Jean Valjean's terrified countenance.

"What! so it is you, Father Madeleine!" said the man.

That name, thus pronounced, at that obscure hour, in that unknown spot, by that strange man, made Jean Valjean start back.

He had expected anything but that. The person who thus addressed him was a bent and lame old man, dressed almost like a peasant, who wore on his

left knee a leather knee-cap, whence hung a moderately large bell. His face, which was in the shadow, was not distinguishable.

However, the goodman had removed his cap, and exclaimed, trembling all over:--

"Ah, good God! How come you here, Father Madeleine? Where did you enter? Dieu-Jesus! Did you fall from heaven? There is no trouble about that: if ever you do fall, it will be from there. And what a state you are in! You have no cravat; you have no hat; you have no coat! Do you know, you would have frightened any one who did not know you? No coat! Lord God! Are the saints going mad nowadays? But how did you get in here?"

His words tumbled over each other. The goodman talked with a rustic volubility, in which there was nothing alarming. All this was uttered with a mixture of stupefaction and naive kindliness.

"Who are you? and what house is this?" demanded Jean Valjean.

"Ah! pardieu, this is too much!" exclaimed the old man. "I am the person for whom you got the place here, and this house is the one where you had me placed. What! You don't recognize me?"

"No," said Jean Valjean; "and how happens it that you know me?"

"You saved my life," said the man.

He turned. A ray of moonlight outlined his profile, and Jean Valjean recognized old Fauchelevent.

"Ah!" said Jean Valjean, "so it is you? Yes, I recollect you."

"That is very lucky," said the old man, in a reproachful tone.

"And what are you doing here?" resumed Jean Valjean.

"Why, I am covering my melons, of course!"

In fact, at the moment when Jean Valjean accosted him, old Fauchelevent held in his hand the end of a straw mat which he was occupied in spreading over the melon bed. During the hour or thereabouts that he had been in the garden he had already spread out a number of them. It was this operation which had caused him to execute the peculiar movements observed from the shed by Jean Valjean.

He continued:--

"I said to myself, 'The moon is bright: it is going to freeze. What if I were to put my melons into their greatcoats?' And," he added, looking at Jean Valjean with a broad smile,--"pardieu! you ought to have done the same! But how do you come here?"

Jean Valjean, finding himself known to this man, at least only under the name of Madeleine, thenceforth advanced only with caution. He multiplied his questions. Strange to say, their roles seemed to be reversed. It was he, the intruder, who interrogated.

"And what is this bell which you wear on your knee?"

"This," replied Fauchelevent, "is so that I may be avoided."

"What! so that you may be avoided?"

Old Fauchelevent winked with an indescribable air.

"Ah, goodness! there are only women in this house--many young girls. It appears that I should be a dangerous person to meet. The bell gives them warning. When I come, they go."

"What house is this?"

"Come, you know well enough."

"But I do not."

"Not when you got me the place here as gardener?"

"Answer me as though I knew nothing."

"Well, then, this is the Petit-Picpus convent."

Memories recurred to Jean Valjean. Chance, that is to say, Providence, had cast him into precisely that convent in the Quartier Saint-Antoine where old Fauchelevent, crippled by the fall from his cart, had been admitted on his recommendation two years previously. He repeated, as though talking to himself:--

"The Petit-Picpus convent."

"Exactly," returned old Fauchelevent. "But to come to the point, how the deuce did you manage to get in here, you, Father Madeleine? No matter if you are a saint; you are a man as well, and no man enters here."

"You certainly are here."

"There is no one but me."

"Still," said Jean Valjean, "I must stay here."

"Ah, good God!" cried Fauchelevent.

Jean Valjean drew near to the old man, and said to him in a grave voice:--

"Father Fauchelevent, I saved your life."

"I was the first to recall it," returned Fauchelevent.

"Well, you can do to-day for me that which I did for you in the olden days."

Fauchelevent took in his aged, trembling, and wrinkled hands Jean Valjean's two robust hands, and stood for several minutes as though incapable of speaking. At length he exclaimed:--

"Oh! that would be a blessing from the good God, if I could make you some little return for that! Save your life! Monsieur le Maire, dispose of the old man!"

A wonderful joy had transfigured this old man. His countenance seemed to emit a ray of light.

"What do you wish me to do?" he resumed.

"That I will explain to you. You have a chamber?"

"I have an isolated hovel yonder, behind the ruins of the old convent, in a corner which no one ever looks into. There are three rooms in it."

The hut was, in fact, so well hidden behind the ruins, and so cleverly

arranged to prevent it being seen, that Jean Valjean had not perceived it.

"Good," said Jean Valjean. "Now I am going to ask two things of you."

"What are they, Mr. Mayor?"

"In the first place, you are not to tell any one what you know about me. In the second, you are not to try to find out anything more."

"As you please. I know that you can do nothing that is not honest, that you have always been a man after the good God's heart. And then, moreover, you it was who placed me here. That concerns you. I am at your service."

"That is settled then. Now, come with me. We will go and get the child."

"Ah!" said Fauchelevent, "so there is a child?"

He added not a word further, and followed Jean Valjean as a dog follows his master.

Less than half an hour afterwards Cosette, who had grown rosy again before the flame of a good fire, was lying asleep in the old gardener's bed. Jean Valjean had put on his cravat and coat once more; his hat, which he had flung over the wall, had been found and picked up. While

Jean Valjean was putting on his coat, Fauchelevent had removed the bell and kneecap, which now hung on a nail beside a vintage basket that adorned the wall. The two men were warming themselves with their elbows resting on a table upon which Fauchelevent had placed a bit of cheese, black bread, a bottle of wine, and two glasses, and the old man was saying to Jean Valjean, as he laid his hand on the latter's knee:
"Ah! Father Madeleine! You did not recognize me immediately; you save people's lives, and then you forget them! That is bad! But they remember you! You are an ingrate!"

CHAPTER X--WHICH EXPLAINS HOW JAVERT GOT ON THE SCENT

The events of which we have just beheld the reverse side, so to speak, had come about in the simplest possible manner.

When Jean Valjean, on the evening of the very day when Javert had arrested him beside Fantine's death-bed, had escaped from the town jail of M. sur M., the police had supposed that he had betaken himself to Paris. Paris is a maelstrom where everything is lost, and everything disappears in this belly of the world, as in the belly of the sea. No forest hides a man as does that crowd. Fugitives of every sort know this. They go to Paris as to an abyss; there are gulfs which save. The police know it also, and it is in Paris that they seek what they have lost elsewhere. They sought the ex-mayor of M. sur M. Javert was summoned to Paris to throw light on their researches. Javert had, in fact, rendered powerful assistance in the recapture of Jean Valjean. Javert's zeal and intelligence on that occasion had been remarked by M. Chabouillet, secretary of the Prefecture under Comte Angles. M. Chabouillet, who had, moreover, already been Javert's patron, had the inspector of M. sur M. attached to the police force of Paris. There Javert rendered himself useful in divers and, though the word may seem strange for such services, honorable manners.

He no longer thought of Jean Valjean,--the wolf of to-day causes these dogs who are always on the chase to forget the wolf of yesterday,--when, in December, 1823, he read a newspaper, he who never read newspapers;

but Javert, a monarchical man, had a desire to know the particulars of the triumphal entry of the "Prince Generalissimo" into Bayonne. Just as he was finishing the article, which interested him; a name, the name of Jean Valjean, attracted his attention at the bottom of a page. The paper announced that the convict Jean Valjean was dead, and published the fact in such formal terms that Javert did not doubt it. He confined himself to the remark, "That's a good entry." Then he threw aside the paper, and thought no more about it.

Some time afterwards, it chanced that a police report was transmitted from the prefecture of the Seine-et-Oise to the prefecture of police in Paris, concerning the abduction of a child, which had taken place, under peculiar circumstances, as it was said, in the commune of Montfermeil. A little girl of seven or eight years of age, the report said, who had been intrusted by her mother to an inn-keeper of that neighborhood, had been stolen by a stranger; this child answered to the name of Cosette, and was the daughter of a girl named Fantine, who had died in the hospital, it was not known where or when.

This report came under Javert's eye and set him to thinking.

The name of Fantine was well known to him. He remembered that Jean Valjean had made him, Javert, burst into laughter, by asking him for a respite of three days, for the purpose of going to fetch that creature's child. He recalled the fact that Jean Valjean had been arrested in Paris at the very moment when he was stepping into the coach for Montfermeil.

Some signs had made him suspect at the time that this was the second occasion of his entering that coach, and that he had already, on the previous day, made an excursion to the neighborhood of that village, for he had not been seen in the village itself. What had he been intending to do in that region of Montfermeil? It could not even be surmised. Javert understood it now. Fantine's daughter was there. Jean Valjean was going there in search of her. And now this child had been stolen by a stranger! Who could that stranger be? Could it be Jean Valjean? But Jean Valjean was dead. Javert, without saying anything to anybody, took the coach from the Pewter Platter, Cul-de-Sac de la Planchette, and made a trip to Montfermeil.

He expected to find a great deal of light on the subject there; he found a great deal of obscurity.

For the first few days the Thenardiers had chattered in their rage. The disappearance of the Lark had created a sensation in the village. He immediately obtained numerous versions of the story, which ended in the abduction of a child. Hence the police report. But their first vexation having passed off, Thenardier, with his wonderful instinct, had very quickly comprehended that it is never advisable to stir up the prosecutor of the Crown, and that his complaints with regard to the abduction of Cosette would have as their first result to fix upon himself, and upon many dark affairs which he had on hand, the glittering eye of justice. The last thing that owls desire is to have a candle brought to them. And in the first place, how explain the fifteen hundred

francs which he had received? He turned squarely round, put a gag on his wife's mouth, and feigned astonishment when the stolen child was mentioned to him. He understood nothing about it; no doubt he had grumbled for awhile at having that dear little creature "taken from him" so hastily; he should have liked to keep her two or three days longer, out of tenderness; but her "grandfather" had come for her in the most natural way in the world. He added the "grandfather," which produced a good effect. This was the story that Javert hit upon when he arrived at Montfermeil. The grandfather caused Jean Valjean to vanish.

Nevertheless, Javert dropped a few questions, like plummets, into Thenardier's history. "Who was that grandfather? and what was his name?" Thenardier replied with simplicity: "He is a wealthy farmer. I saw his passport. I think his name was M. Guillaume Lambert."

Lambert is a respectable and extremely reassuring name. Thereupon Javert returned to Paris.

"Jean Valjean is certainly dead," said he, "and I am a ninny."

He had again begun to forget this history, when, in the course of March, 1824, he heard of a singular personage who dwelt in the parish of Saint-Medard and who had been surnamed "the mendicant who gives alms." This person, the story ran, was a man of means, whose name no one knew exactly, and who lived alone with a little girl of eight years, who knew nothing about herself, save that she had come from Montfermeil.

Montfermeil! that name was always coming up, and it made Javert prick up his ears. An old beggar police spy, an ex-beadle, to whom this person had given alms, added a few more details. This gentleman of property was very shy,--never coming out except in the evening, speaking to no one, except, occasionally to the poor, and never allowing any one to approach him. He wore a horrible old yellow frock-coat, which was worth many millions, being all wadded with bank-bills. This piqued Javert's curiosity in a decided manner. In order to get a close look at this fantastic gentleman without alarming him, he borrowed the beadle's outfit for a day, and the place where the old spy was in the habit of crouching every evening, whining orisons through his nose, and playing the spy under cover of prayer.

"The suspected individual" did indeed approach Javert thus disguised, and bestow alms on him. At that moment Javert raised his head, and the shock which Jean Valjean received on recognizing Javert was equal to the one received by Javert when he thought he recognized Jean Valjean.

However, the darkness might have misled him; Jean Valjean's death was official; Javert cherished very grave doubts; and when in doubt, Javert, the man of scruples, never laid a finger on any one's collar.

He followed his man to the Gorbeau house, and got "the old woman" to talking, which was no difficult matter. The old woman confirmed the fact regarding the coat lined with millions, and narrated to him the episode of the thousand-franc bill. She had seen it! She had handled it! Javert

hired a room; that evening he installed himself in it. He came and listened at the mysterious lodger's door, hoping to catch the sound of his voice, but Jean Valjean saw his candle through the key-hole, and foiled the spy by keeping silent.

On the following day Jean Valjean decamped; but the noise made by the fall of the five-franc piece was noticed by the old woman, who, hearing the rattling of coin, suspected that he might be intending to leave, and made haste to warn Javert. At night, when Jean Valjean came out, Javert was waiting for him behind the trees of the boulevard with two men.

Javert had demanded assistance at the Prefecture, but he had not mentioned the name of the individual whom he hoped to seize; that was his secret, and he had kept it for three reasons: in the first place, because the slightest indiscretion might put Jean Valjean on the alert; next, because, to lay hands on an ex-convict who had made his escape and was reputed dead, on a criminal whom justice had formerly classed forever as among malefactors of the most dangerous sort, was a magnificent success which the old members of the Parisian police would assuredly not leave to a new-comer like Javert, and he was afraid of being deprived of his convict; and lastly, because Javert, being an artist, had a taste for the unforeseen. He hated those well-heralded successes which are talked of long in advance and have had the bloom brushed off. He preferred to elaborate his masterpieces in the dark and to unveil them suddenly at the last.

Javert had followed Jean Valjean from tree to tree, then from corner to corner of the street, and had not lost sight of him for a single instant; even at the moments when Jean Valjean believed himself to be the most secure Javert's eye had been on him. Why had not Javert arrested Jean Valjean? Because he was still in doubt.

It must be remembered that at that epoch the police was not precisely at its ease; the free press embarrassed it; several arbitrary arrests denounced by the newspapers, had echoed even as far as the Chambers, and had rendered the Prefecture timid. Interference with individual liberty was a grave matter. The police agents were afraid of making a mistake; the prefect laid the blame on them; a mistake meant dismissal. The reader can imagine the effect which this brief paragraph, reproduced by twenty newspapers, would have caused in Paris: "Yesterday, an aged grandfather, with white hair, a respectable and well-to-do gentleman, who was walking with his grandchild, aged eight, was arrested and conducted to the agency of the Prefecture as an escaped convict!"

Let us repeat in addition that Javert had scruples of his own; injunctions of his conscience were added to the injunctions of the prefect. He was really in doubt.

Jean Valjean turned his back on him and walked in the dark.

Sadness, uneasiness, anxiety, depression, this fresh misfortune of being forced to flee by night, to seek a chance refuge in Paris for Cosette

and himself, the necessity of regulating his pace to the pace of the child--all this, without his being aware of it, had altered Jean Valjean's walk, and impressed on his bearing such senility, that the police themselves, incarnate in the person of Javert, might, and did in fact, make a mistake. The impossibility of approaching too close, his costume of an emigre preceptor, the declaration of Thenardier which made a grandfather of him, and, finally, the belief in his death in prison, added still further to the uncertainty which gathered thick in Javert's mind.

For an instant it occurred to him to make an abrupt demand for his papers; but if the man was not Jean Valjean, and if this man was not a good, honest old fellow living on his income, he was probably some merry blade deeply and cunningly implicated in the obscure web of Parisian misdeeds, some chief of a dangerous band, who gave alms to conceal his other talents, which was an old dodge. He had trusty fellows, accomplices' retreats in case of emergencies, in which he would, no doubt, take refuge. All these turns which he was making through the streets seemed to indicate that he was not a simple and honest man. To arrest him too hastily would be "to kill the hen that laid the golden eggs." Where was the inconvenience in waiting? Javert was very sure that he would not escape.

Thus he proceeded in a tolerably perplexed state of mind, putting to himself a hundred questions about this enigmatical personage.

It was only quite late in the Rue de Pontoise, that, thanks to the brilliant light thrown from a dram-shop, he decidedly recognized Jean Valjean.

There are in this world two beings who give a profound start,--the mother who recovers her child and the tiger who recovers his prey. Javert gave that profound start.

As soon as he had positively recognized Jean Valjean, the formidable convict, he perceived that there were only three of them, and he asked for reinforcements at the police station of the Rue de Pontoise. One puts on gloves before grasping a thorn cudgel.

This delay and the halt at the Carrefour Rollin to consult with his agents came near causing him to lose the trail. He speedily divined, however, that Jean Valjean would want to put the river between his pursuers and himself. He bent his head and reflected like a blood-hound who puts his nose to the ground to make sure that he is on the right scent. Javert, with his powerful rectitude of instinct, went straight to the bridge of Austerlitz. A word with the toll-keeper furnished him with the information which he required: "Have you seen a man with a little girl?" "I made him pay two sous," replied the toll-keeper. Javert reached the bridge in season to see Jean Valjean traverse the small illuminated spot on the other side of the water, leading Cosette by the hand. He saw him enter the Rue du Chemin-Vert-Saint-Antoine; he remembered the Cul-de-Sac Genrot arranged there like a trap, and of the

sole exit of the Rue Droit-Mur into the Rue Petit-Picpus. He made sure of his back burrows, as huntsmen say; he hastily despatched one of his agents, by a roundabout way, to guard that issue. A patrol which was returning to the Arsenal post having passed him, he made a requisition on it, and caused it to accompany him. In such games soldiers are aces. Moreover, the principle is, that in order to get the best of a wild boar, one must employ the science of venery and plenty of dogs. These combinations having been effected, feeling that Jean Valjean was caught between the blind alley Genrot on the right, his agent on the left, and himself, Javert, in the rear, he took a pinch of snuff.

Then he began the game. He experienced one ecstatic and infernal moment; he allowed his man to go on ahead, knowing that he had him safe, but desirous of postponing the moment of arrest as long as possible, happy at the thought that he was taken and yet at seeing him free, gloating over him with his gaze, with that voluptuousness of the spider which allows the fly to flutter, and of the cat which lets the mouse run. Claws and talons possess a monstrous sensuality,--the obscure movements of the creature imprisoned in their pincers. What a delight this strangling is!

Javert was enjoying himself. The meshes of his net were stoutly knotted. He was sure of success; all he had to do now was to close his hand.

Accompanied as he was, the very idea of resistance was impossible, however vigorous, energetic, and desperate Jean Valjean might be.

Javert advanced slowly, sounding, searching on his way all the nooks of the street like so many pockets of thieves.

When he reached the centre of the web he found the fly no longer there.

His exasperation can be imagined.

He interrogated his sentinel of the Rues Droit-Mur and Petit-Picpus; that agent, who had remained imperturbably at his post, had not seen the man pass.

It sometimes happens that a stag is lost head and horns; that is to say, he escapes although he has the pack on his very heels, and then the oldest huntsmen know not what to say. Duvivier, Ligniville, and Desprez halt short. In a discomfiture of this sort, Artonge exclaims, "It was not a stag, but a sorcerer." Javert would have liked to utter the same cry.

His disappointment bordered for a moment on despair and rage.

It is certain that Napoleon made mistakes during the war with Russia, that Alexander committed blunders in the war in India, that Caesar made mistakes in the war in Africa, that Cyrus was at fault in the war in Scythia, and that Javert blundered in this campaign against Jean Valjean. He was wrong, perhaps, in hesitating in his recognition of the

exconvict. The first glance should have sufficed him. He was wrong in not arresting him purely and simply in the old building; he was wrong in not arresting him when he positively recognized him in the Rue de Pontoise. He was wrong in taking counsel with his auxiliaries in the full light of the moon in the Carrefour Rollin. Advice is certainly useful; it is a good thing to know and to interrogate those of the dogs who deserve confidence; but the hunter cannot be too cautious when he is chasing uneasy animals like the wolf and the convict. Javert, by taking too much thought as to how he should set the bloodhounds of the pack on the trail, alarmed the beast by giving him wind of the dart, and so made him run. Above all, he was wrong in that after he had picked up the scent again on the bridge of Austerlitz, he played that formidable and puerile game of keeping such a man at the end of a thread. He thought himself stronger than he was, and believed that he could play at the game of the mouse and the lion. At the same time, he reckoned himself as too weak, when he judged it necessary to obtain reinforcement. Fatal precaution, waste of precious time! Javert committed all these blunders, and none the less was one of the cleverest and most correct spies that ever existed. He was, in the full force of the term, what is called in venery a knowing dog. But what is there that is perfect?

Great strategists have their eclipses.

The greatest follies are often composed, like the largest ropes, of a multitude of strands. Take the cable thread by thread, take all the petty determining motives separately, and you can break them one after

the other, and you say, "That is all there is of it!" Braid them, twist them together; the result is enormous: it is Attila hesitating between Marcian on the east and Valentinian on the west; it is Hannibal tarrying at Capua; it is Danton falling asleep at Arcis-sur-Aube.

However that may be, even at the moment when he saw that Jean Valjean had escaped him, Javert did not lose his head. Sure that the convict who had broken his ban could not be far off, he established sentinels, he organized traps and ambuscades, and beat the quarter all that night. The first thing he saw was the disorder in the street lantern whose rope had been cut. A precious sign which, however, led him astray, since it caused him to turn all his researches in the direction of the Cul-de-Sac Genrot. In this blind alley there were tolerably low walls which abutted on gardens whose bounds adjoined the immense stretches of waste land. Jean Valjean evidently must have fled in that direction. The fact is, that had he penetrated a little further in the Cul-de-Sac Genrot, he would probably have done so and have been lost. Javert explored these gardens and these waste stretches as though he had been hunting for a needle.

At daybreak he left two intelligent men on the outlook, and returned to the Prefecture of Police, as much ashamed as a police spy who had been captured by a robber might have been.