BOOK FIFTH.--THE EXCELLENCE OF MISFORTUNE

CHAPTER I--MARIUS INDIGENT

Life became hard for Marius. It was nothing to eat his clothes and his watch. He ate of that terrible, inexpressible thing that is called de la vache enrage; that is to say, he endured great hardships and privations. A terrible thing it is, containing days without bread, nights without sleep, evenings without a candle, a hearth without a fire, weeks without work, a future without hope, a coat out at the elbows, an old hat which evokes the laughter of young girls, a door which one finds locked on one at night because one's rent is not paid, the insolence of the porter and the cook-shop man, the sneers of neighbors, humiliations, dignity trampled on, work of whatever nature accepted, disgusts, bitterness, despondency. Marius learned how all this is eaten, and how such are often the only things which one has to devour. At that moment of his existence when a man needs his pride, because he needs love, he felt that he was jeered at because he was badly dressed, and ridiculous because he was poor. At the age when youth swells the heart with imperial pride, he dropped his eyes more than once on his dilapidated boots, and he knew the unjust shame and the poignant blushes of wretchedness. Admirable and terrible trial from which the feeble emerge

base, from which the strong emerge sublime. A crucible into which destiny casts a man, whenever it desires a scoundrel or a demi-god.

For many great deeds are performed in petty combats. There are instances of bravery ignored and obstinate, which defend themselves step by step in that fatal onslaught of necessities and turpitudes. Noble and mysterious triumphs which no eye beholds, which are requited with no renown, which are saluted with no trumpet blast. Life, misfortune, isolation, abandonment, poverty, are the fields of battle which have their heroes; obscure heroes, who are, sometimes, grander than the heroes who win renown.

Firm and rare natures are thus created; misery, almost always a step-mother, is sometimes a mother; destitution gives birth to might of soul and spirit; distress is the nurse of pride; unhappiness is a good milk for the magnanimous.

There came a moment in Marius' life, when he swept his own landing, when he bought his sou's worth of Brie cheese at the fruiterer's, when he waited until twilight had fallen to slip into the baker's and purchase a loaf, which he carried off furtively to his attic as though he had stolen it. Sometimes there could be seen gliding into the butcher's shop on the corner, in the midst of the bantering cooks who elbowed him, an awkward young man, carrying big books under his arm, who had a timid yet angry air, who, on entering, removed his hat from a brow whereon stood drops of perspiration, made a profound bow to the butcher's astonished

wife, asked for a mutton cutlet, paid six or seven sous for it, wrapped it up in a paper, put it under his arm, between two books, and went away. It was Marius. On this cutlet, which he cooked for himself, he lived for three days.

On the first day he ate the meat, on the second he ate the fat, on the third he gnawed the bone. Aunt Gillenormand made repeated attempts, and sent him the sixty pistoles several times. Marius returned them on every occasion, saying that he needed nothing.

He was still in mourning for his father when the revolution which we have just described was effected within him. From that time forth, he had not put off his black garments. But his garments were quitting him. The day came when he had no longer a coat. The trousers would go next. What was to be done? Courfeyrac, to whom he had, on his side, done some good turns, gave him an old coat. For thirty sous, Marius got it turned by some porter or other, and it was a new coat. But this coat was green. Then Marius ceased to go out until after nightfall. This made his coat black. As he wished always to appear in mourning, he clothed himself with the night.

In spite of all this, he got admitted to practice as a lawyer. He was supposed to live in Courfeyrac's room, which was decent, and where a certain number of law-books backed up and completed by several dilapidated volumes of romance, passed as the library required by the regulations. He had his letters addressed to Courfeyrac's quarters.

When Marius became a lawyer, he informed his grandfather of the fact in a letter which was cold but full of submission and respect. M. Gillenormand trembled as he took the letter, read it, tore it in four pieces, and threw it into the waste-basket. Two or three days later, Mademoiselle Gillenormand heard her father, who was alone in his room, talking aloud to himself. He always did this whenever he was greatly agitated. She listened, and the old man was saying: "If you were not a fool, you would know that one cannot be a baron and a lawyer at the same time."

CHAPTER II--MARIUS POOR

It is the same with wretchedness as with everything else. It ends by becoming bearable. It finally assumes a form, and adjusts itself. One vegetates, that is to say, one develops in a certain meagre fashion, which is, however, sufficient for life. This is the mode in which the existence of Marius Pontmercy was arranged:

He had passed the worst straits; the narrow pass was opening out a little in front of him. By dint of toil, perseverance, courage, and will, he had managed to draw from his work about seven hundred francs a year. He had learned German and English; thanks to Courfeyrac, who had put him in communication with his friend the publisher, Marius filled the modest post of utility man in the literature of the publishing house. He drew up prospectuses, translated newspapers, annotated editions, compiled biographies, etc.; net product, year in and year out, seven hundred francs. He lived on it. How? Not so badly. We will explain.

Marius occupied in the Gorbeau house, for an annual sum of thirty francs, a den minus a fireplace, called a cabinet, which contained only the most indispensable articles of furniture. This furniture belonged to him. He gave three francs a month to the old principal tenant to come and sweep his hole, and to bring him a little hot water every morning, a fresh egg, and a penny roll. He breakfasted on this egg and roll. His breakfast varied in cost from two to four sous, according as eggs

were dear or cheap. At six o'clock in the evening he descended the Rue Saint-Jacques to dine at Rousseau's, opposite Basset's, the stamp-dealer's, on the corner of the Rue des Mathurins. He ate no soup. He took a six-sou plate of meat, a half-portion of vegetables for three sous, and a three-sou dessert. For three sous he got as much bread as he wished. As for wine, he drank water. When he paid at the desk where Madam Rousseau, at that period still plump and rosy majestically presided, he gave a sou to the waiter, and Madam Rousseau gave him a smile. Then he went away. For sixteen sous he had a smile and a dinner.

This Restaurant Rousseau, where so few bottles and so many water carafes were emptied, was a calming potion rather than a restaurant. It no longer exists. The proprietor had a fine nickname: he was called Rousseau the Aquatic.

Thus, breakfast four sous, dinner sixteen sous; his food cost him twenty sous a day; which made three hundred and sixty-five francs a year. Add the thirty francs for rent, and the thirty-six francs to the old woman, plus a few trifling expenses; for four hundred and fifty francs, Marius was fed, lodged, and waited on. His clothing cost him a hundred francs, his linen fifty francs, his washing fifty francs; the whole did not exceed six hundred and fifty francs. He was rich. He sometimes lent ten francs to a friend. Courfeyrac had once been able to borrow sixty francs of him. As far as fire was concerned, as Marius had no fireplace, he had "simplified matters."

Marius always had two complete suits of clothes, the one old, "for every day"; the other, brand new for special occasions. Both were black. He had but three shirts, one on his person, the second in the commode, and the third in the washerwoman's hands. He renewed them as they wore out. They were always ragged, which caused him to button his coat to the chin.

It had required years for Marius to attain to this flourishing condition. Hard years; difficult, some of them, to traverse, others to climb. Marius had not failed for a single day. He had endured everything in the way of destitution; he had done everything except contract debts. He did himself the justice to say that he had never owed any one a sou. A debt was, to him, the beginning of slavery. He even said to himself, that a creditor is worse than a master; for the master possesses only your person, a creditor possesses your dignity and can administer to it a box on the ear. Rather than borrow, he went without food. He had passed many a day fasting. Feeling that all extremes meet, and that, if one is not on one's guard, lowered fortunes may lead to baseness of soul, he kept a jealous watch on his pride. Such and such a formality or action, which, in any other situation would have appeared merely a deference to him, now seemed insipidity, and he nerved himself against it. His face wore a sort of severe flush. He was timid even to rudeness.

During all these trials he had felt himself encouraged and even uplifted, at times, by a secret force that he possessed within himself. The soul aids the body, and at certain moments, raises it. It is the

only bird which bears up its own cage.

Besides his father's name, another name was graven in Marius' heart, the name of Thenardier. Marius, with his grave and enthusiastic nature, surrounded with a sort of aureole the man to whom, in his thoughts, he owed his father's life,--that intrepid sergeant who had saved the colonel amid the bullets and the cannon-balls of Waterloo. He never separated the memory of this man from the memory of his father, and he associated them in his veneration. It was a sort of worship in two steps, with the grand altar for the colonel and the lesser one for Thenardier. What redoubled the tenderness of his gratitude towards Thenardier, was the idea of the distress into which he knew that Thenardier had fallen, and which had engulfed the latter. Marius had learned at Montfermeil of the ruin and bankruptcy of the unfortunate inn-keeper. Since that time, he had made unheard-of efforts to find traces of him and to reach him in that dark abyss of misery in which Thenardier had disappeared. Marius had beaten the whole country; he had gone to Chelles, to Bondy, to Gourney, to Nogent, to Lagny. He had persisted for three years, expending in these explorations the little money which he had laid by. No one had been able to give him any news of Thenardier: he was supposed to have gone abroad. His creditors had also sought him, with less love than Marius, but with as much assiduity, and had not been able to lay their hands on him. Marius blamed himself, and was almost angry with himself for his lack of success in his researches. It was the only debt left him by the colonel, and Marius made it a matter of honor to pay it. "What," he thought, "when my father lay dying

on the field of battle, did Thenardier contrive to find him amid the smoke and the grape-shot, and bear him off on his shoulders, and yet he owed him nothing, and I, who owe so much to Thenardier, cannot join him in this shadow where he is lying in the pangs of death, and in my turn bring him back from death to life! Oh! I will find him!" To find Thenardier, in fact, Marius would have given one of his arms, to rescue him from his misery, he would have sacrificed all his blood. To see Thenardier, to render Thenardier some service, to say to him: "You do not know me; well, I do know you! Here I am. Dispose of me!" This was Marius' sweetest and most magnificent dream.

CHAPTER III--MARIUS GROWN UP

At this epoch, Marius was twenty years of age. It was three years since he had left his grandfather. Both parties had remained on the same terms, without attempting to approach each other, and without seeking to see each other. Besides, what was the use of seeing each other? Marius was the brass vase, while Father Gillenormand was the iron pot.

We admit that Marius was mistaken as to his grandfather's heart. He had imagined that M. Gillenormand had never loved him, and that that crusty, harsh, and smiling old fellow who cursed, shouted, and stormed and brandished his cane, cherished for him, at the most, only that affection, which is at once slight and severe, of the dotards of comedy. Marius was in error. There are fathers who do not love their children; there exists no grandfather who does not adore his grandson. At bottom, as we have said, M. Gillenormand idolized Marius. He idolized him after his own fashion, with an accompaniment of snappishness and boxes on the ear; but, this child once gone, he felt a black void in his heart; he would allow no one to mention the child to him, and all the while secretly regretted that he was so well obeyed. At first, he hoped that this Buonapartist, this Jacobin, this terrorist, this Septembrist, would return. But the weeks passed by, years passed; to M. Gillenormand's great despair, the "blood-drinker" did not make his appearance. "I could not do otherwise than turn him out," said the grandfather to himself, and he asked himself: "If the thing were to do over again, would I do it?" His pride instantly answered "yes," but his aged head, which he

shook in silence, replied sadly "no." He had his hours of depression. He missed Marius. Old men need affection as they need the sun. It is warmth. Strong as his nature was, the absence of Marius had wrought some change in him. Nothing in the world could have induced him to take a step towards "that rogue"; but he suffered. He never inquired about him, but he thought of him incessantly. He lived in the Marais in a more and more retired manner; he was still merry and violent as of old, but his merriment had a convulsive harshness, and his violences always terminated in a sort of gentle and gloomy dejection. He sometimes said: "Oh! if he only would return, what a good box on the ear I would give him!"

As for his aunt, she thought too little to love much; Marius was no longer for her much more than a vague black form; and she eventually came to occupy herself with him much less than with the cat or the paroquet which she probably had. What augmented Father Gillenormand's secret suffering was, that he locked it all up within his breast, and did not allow its existence to be divined. His sorrow was like those recently invented furnaces which consume their own smoke. It sometimes happened that officious busybodies spoke to him of Marius, and asked him: "What is your grandson doing?" "What has become of him?" The old bourgeois replied with a sigh, that he was a sad case, and giving a fillip to his cuff, if he wished to appear gay: "Monsieur le Baron de Pontmercy is practising pettifogging in some corner or other."

While the old man regretted, Marius applauded himself. As is the case

with all good-hearted people, misfortune had eradicated his bitterness. He only thought of M. Gillenormand in an amiable light, but he had set his mind on not receiving anything more from the man who had been unkind to his father. This was the mitigated translation of his first indignation. Moreover, he was happy at having suffered, and at suffering still. It was for his father's sake. The hardness of his life satisfied and pleased him. He said to himself with a sort of joy that--it was certainly the least he could do; that it was an expiation;--that, had it not been for that, he would have been punished in some other way and later on for his impious indifference towards his father, and such a father! that it would not have been just that his father should have all the suffering, and he none of it; and that, in any case, what were his toils and his destitution compared with the colonel's heroic life? that, in short, the only way for him to approach his father and resemble him, was to be brave in the face of indigence, as the other had been valiant before the enemy; and that that was, no doubt, what the colonel had meant to imply by the words: "He will be worthy of it." Words which Marius continued to wear, not on his breast, since the colonel's writing had disappeared, but in his heart.

And then, on the day when his grandfather had turned him out of doors, he had been only a child, now he was a man. He felt it. Misery, we repeat, had been good for him. Poverty in youth, when it succeeds, has this magnificent property about it, that it turns the whole will towards effort, and the whole soul towards aspiration. Poverty instantly lays material life bare and renders it hideous; hence inexpressible bounds

towards the ideal life. The wealthy young man has a hundred coarse and brilliant distractions, horse races, hunting, dogs, tobacco, gaming, good repasts, and all the rest of it; occupations for the baser side of the soul, at the expense of the loftier and more delicate sides.
The poor young man wins his bread with difficulty; he eats; when he has eaten, he has nothing more but meditation. He goes to the spectacles which God furnishes gratis; he gazes at the sky, space, the stars, flowers, children, the humanity among which he is suffering, the creation amid which he beams. He gazes so much on humanity that he perceives its soul, he gazes upon creation to such an extent that he beholds God. He dreams, he feels himself great; he dreams on, and feels himself tender. From the egotism of the man who suffers he passes to the compassion of the man who meditates. An admirable sentiment breaks forth in him, forgetfulness of self and pity for all. As he thinks of the innumerable enjoyments which nature offers, gives, and lavishes to souls which stand open, and refuses to souls that are closed, he comes to pity, he the millionnaire of the mind, the millionnaire of money. All hatred departs from his heart, in proportion as light penetrates his spirit. And is he unhappy? No. The misery of a young man is never miserable. The first young lad who comes to hand, however poor he may be, with his strength, his health, his rapid walk, his brilliant eyes, his warmly circulating blood, his black hair, his red lips, his white teeth, his pure breath, will always arouse the envy of an aged emperor. And then, every morning, he sets himself afresh to the task of earning his bread; and while his hands earn his bread, his dorsal column gains pride, his brain gathers ideas. His task finished, he returns to

ineffable ecstasies, to contemplation, to joys; he beholds his feet set in afflictions, in obstacles, on the pavement, in the nettles, sometimes in the mire; his head in the light. He is firm, serene, gentle, peaceful, attentive, serious, content with little, kindly; and he thanks God for having bestowed on him those two forms of riches which many a rich man lacks: work, which makes him free; and thought, which makes him dignified.

This is what had happened with Marius. To tell the truth, he inclined a little too much to the side of contemplation. From the day when he had succeeded in earning his living with some approach to certainty, he had stopped, thinking it good to be poor, and retrenching time from his work to give to thought; that is to say, he sometimes passed entire days in meditation, absorbed, engulfed, like a visionary, in the mute voluptuousness of ecstasy and inward radiance. He had thus propounded the problem of his life: to toil as little as possible at material labor, in order to toil as much as possible at the labor which is impalpable; in other words, to bestow a few hours on real life, and to cast the rest to the infinite. As he believed that he lacked nothing, he did not perceive that contemplation, thus understood, ends by becoming one of the forms of idleness; that he was contenting himself with conquering the first necessities of life, and that he was resting from his labors too soon.

It was evident that, for this energetic and enthusiastic nature, this could only be a transitory state, and that, at the first shock against

the inevitable complications of destiny, Marius would awaken.

In the meantime, although he was a lawyer, and whatever Father Gillenormand thought about the matter, he was not practising, he was not even pettifogging. Meditation had turned him aside from pleading. To haunt attorneys, to follow the court, to hunt up cases--what a bore! Why should he do it? He saw no reason for changing the manner of gaining his livelihood! The obscure and ill-paid publishing establishment had come to mean for him a sure source of work which did not involve too much labor, as we have explained, and which sufficed for his wants.

One of the publishers for whom he worked, M. Magimel, I think, offered to take him into his own house, to lodge him well, to furnish him with regular occupation, and to give him fifteen hundred francs a year. To be well lodged! Fifteen hundred francs! No doubt. But renounce his liberty! Be on fixed wages! A sort of hired man of letters! According to Marius' opinion, if he accepted, his position would become both better and worse at the same time, he acquired comfort, and lost his dignity; it was a fine and complete unhappiness converted into a repulsive and ridiculous state of torture: something like the case of a blind man who should recover the sight of one eye. He refused.

Marius dwelt in solitude. Owing to his taste for remaining outside of everything, and through having been too much alarmed, he had not entered decidedly into the group presided over by Enjolras. They had remained good friends; they were ready to assist each other on occasion in every

possible way; but nothing more. Marius had two friends: one young, Courfeyrac; and one old, M. Mabeuf. He inclined more to the old man. In the first place, he owed to him the revolution which had taken place within him; to him he was indebted for having known and loved his father. "He operated on me for a cataract," he said.

The churchwarden had certainly played a decisive part.

It was not, however, that M. Mabeuf had been anything but the calm and impassive agent of Providence in this connection. He had enlightened Marius by chance and without being aware of the fact, as does a candle which some one brings; he had been the candle and not the some one.

As for Marius' inward political revolution, M. Mabeuf was totally incapable of comprehending it, of willing or of directing it.

As we shall see M. Mabeuf again, later on, a few words will not be superfluous.

CHAPTER IV--M. MABEUF

On the day when M. Mabeuf said to Marius: "Certainly I approve of political opinions," he expressed the real state of his mind. All political opinions were matters of indifference to him, and he approved them all, without distinction, provided they left him in peace, as the Greeks called the Furies "the beautiful, the good, the charming," the Eumenides. M. Mabeuf's political opinion consisted in a passionate love for plants, and, above all, for books. Like all the rest of the world, he possessed the termination in ist, without which no one could exist at that time, but he was neither a Royalist, a Bonapartist, a Chartist, an Orleanist, nor an Anarchist; he was a bouquinist, a collector of old books. He did not understand how men could busy themselves with hating each other because of silly stuff like the charter, democracy, legitimacy, monarchy, the republic, etc., when there were in the world all sorts of mosses, grasses, and shrubs which they might be looking at, and heaps of folios, and even of 32mos, which they might turn over. He took good care not to become useless; having books did not prevent his reading, being a botanist did not prevent his being a gardener. When he made Pontmercy's acquaintance, this sympathy had existed between the colonel and himself--that what the colonel did for flowers, he did for fruits. M. Mabeuf had succeeded in producing seedling pears as savory as the pears of St. Germain; it is from one of his combinations, apparently, that the October Mirabelle, now celebrated and no less perfumed than the summer Mirabelle, owes its origin. He went to mass rather from gentleness than from piety, and because, as he loved the

faces of men, but hated their noise, he found them assembled and silent only in church. Feeling that he must be something in the State, he had chosen the career of warden. However, he had never succeeded in loving any woman as much as a tulip bulb, nor any man as much as an Elzevir. He had long passed sixty, when, one day, some one asked him: "Have you never been married?" "I have forgotten," said he. When it sometimes happened to him--and to whom does it not happen?--to say: "Oh! if I were only rich!" it was not when ogling a pretty girl, as was the case with Father Gillenormand, but when contemplating an old book. He lived alone with an old housekeeper. He was somewhat gouty, and when he was asleep, his aged fingers, stiffened with rheumatism, lay crooked up in the folds of his sheets. He had composed and published a Flora of the Environs of Cauteretz, with colored plates, a work which enjoyed a tolerable measure of esteem and which sold well. People rang his bell, in the Rue Mesieres, two or three times a day, to ask for it. He drew as much as two thousand francs a year from it; this constituted nearly the whole of his fortune. Although poor, he had had the talent to form for himself, by dint of patience, privations, and time, a precious collection of rare copies of every sort. He never went out without a book under his arm, and he often returned with two. The sole decoration of the four rooms on the ground floor, which composed his lodgings, consisted of framed herbariums, and engravings of the old masters. The sight of a sword or a gun chilled his blood. He had never approached a cannon in his life, even at the Invalides. He had a passable stomach, a brother who was a cure, perfectly white hair, no teeth, either in his mouth or his mind, a trembling in every limb, a Picard accent, an infantile laugh, the air of

an old sheep, and he was easily frightened. Add to this, that he had no other friendship, no other acquaintance among the living, than an old bookseller of the Porte-Saint-Jacques, named Royal. His dream was to naturalize indigo in France.

His servant was also a sort of innocent. The poor good old woman was a spinster. Sultan, her cat, which might have mewed Allegri's miserere in the Sixtine Chapel, had filled her heart and sufficed for the quantity of passion which existed in her. None of her dreams had ever proceeded as far as man. She had never been able to get further than her cat. Like him, she had a mustache. Her glory consisted in her caps, which were always white. She passed her time, on Sundays, after mass, in counting over the linen in her chest, and in spreading out on her bed the dresses in the piece which she bought and never had made up. She knew how to read. M. Mabeuf had nicknamed her Mother Plutarque.

M. Mabeuf had taken a fancy to Marius, because Marius, being young and gentle, warmed his age without startling his timidity. Youth combined with gentleness produces on old people the effect of the sun without wind. When Marius was saturated with military glory, with gunpowder, with marches and countermarches, and with all those prodigious battles in which his father had given and received such tremendous blows of the sword, he went to see M. Mabeuf, and M. Mabeuf talked to him of his hero from the point of view of flowers.

His brother the cure died about 1830, and almost immediately, as when

the night is drawing on, the whole horizon grew dark for M. Mabeuf. A notary's failure deprived him of the sum of ten thousand francs, which was all that he possessed in his brother's right and his own. The Revolution of July brought a crisis to publishing. In a period of embarrassment, the first thing which does not sell is a Flora. The Flora of the Environs of Cauteretz stopped short. Weeks passed by without a single purchaser. Sometimes M. Mabeuf started at the sound of the bell. "Monsieur," said Mother Plutarque sadly, "it is the water-carrier."
In short, one day, M. Mabeuf quitted the Rue Mesieres, abdicated the functions of warden, gave up Saint-Sulpice, sold not a part of his books, but of his prints,--that to which he was the least attached,--and installed himself in a little house on the Rue Montparnasse, where, however, he remained but one quarter for two reasons: in the first place, the ground floor and the garden cost three hundred francs, and he dared not spend more than two hundred francs on his rent; in the second, being near Faton's shooting-gallery, he could hear the pistol-shots; which was intolerable to him.

He carried off his Flora, his copper-plates, his herbariums, his portfolios, and his books, and established himself near the Salpetriere, in a sort of thatched cottage of the village of Austerlitz, where, for fifty crowns a year, he got three rooms and a garden enclosed by a hedge, and containing a well. He took advantage of this removal to sell off nearly all his furniture. On the day of his entrance into his new quarters, he was very gay, and drove the nails on which his engravings and herbariums were to hang, with his own hands, dug in his garden the

rest of the day, and at night, perceiving that Mother Plutarque had a melancholy air, and was very thoughtful, he tapped her on the shoulder and said to her with a smile: "We have the indigo!"

Only two visitors, the bookseller of the Porte-Saint-Jacques and Marius, were admitted to view the thatched cottage at Austerlitz, a brawling name which was, to tell the truth, extremely disagreeable to him.

However, as we have just pointed out, brains which are absorbed in some bit of wisdom, or folly, or, as it often happens, in both at once, are but slowly accessible to the things of actual life. Their own destiny is a far-off thing to them. There results from such concentration a passivity, which, if it were the outcome of reasoning, would resemble philosophy. One declines, descends, trickles away, even crumbles away, and yet is hardly conscious of it one's self. It always ends, it is true, in an awakening, but the awakening is tardy. In the meantime, it seems as though we held ourselves neutral in the game which is going on between our happiness and our unhappiness. We are the stake, and we look on at the game with indifference.

It is thus that, athwart the cloud which formed about him, when all his hopes were extinguished one after the other, M. Mabeuf remained rather puerilely, but profoundly serene. His habits of mind had the regular swing of a pendulum. Once mounted on an illusion, he went for a very long time, even after the illusion had disappeared. A clock does not stop short at the precise moment when the key is lost.

M. Mabeuf had his innocent pleasures. These pleasures were inexpensive and unexpected; the merest chance furnished them. One day, Mother Plutarque was reading a romance in one corner of the room. She was reading aloud, finding that she understood better thus. To read aloud is to assure one's self of what one is reading. There are people who read very loud, and who have the appearance of giving themselves their word of honor as to what they are perusing.

It was with this sort of energy that Mother Plutarque was reading the romance which she had in hand. M. Mabeuf heard her without listening to her.

In the course of her reading, Mother Plutarque came to this phrase. It was a question of an officer of dragoons and a beauty:--

"--The beauty pouted, and the dragoon--"

Here she interrupted herself to wipe her glasses.

"Bouddha and the Dragon," struck in M. Mabeuf in a low voice. "Yes, it is true that there was a dragon, which, from the depths of its cave, spouted flame through his maw and set the heavens on fire. Many stars had already been consumed by this monster, which, besides, had the claws of a tiger. Bouddha went into its den and succeeded in converting the dragon. That is a good book that you are reading, Mother Plutarque.

There is no more beautiful legend in existence."

And M. Mabeuf fell into a delicious revery.

CHAPTER V--POVERTY A GOOD NEIGHBOR FOR MISERY

Marius liked this candid old man who saw himself gradually falling into the clutches of indigence, and who came to feel astonishment, little by little, without, however, being made melancholy by it. Marius met Courfeyrac and sought out M. Mabeuf. Very rarely, however; twice a month at most.

Marius' pleasure consisted in taking long walks alone on the outer boulevards, or in the Champs-de-Mars, or in the least frequented alleys of the Luxembourg. He often spent half a day in gazing at a market garden, the beds of lettuce, the chickens on the dung-heap, the horse turning the water-wheel. The passers-by stared at him in surprise, and some of them thought his attire suspicious and his mien sinister. He was only a poor young man dreaming in an objectless way.

It was during one of his strolls that he had hit upon the Gorbeau house, and, tempted by its isolation and its cheapness, had taken up his abode there. He was known there only under the name of M. Marius.

Some of his father's old generals or old comrades had invited him to go and see them, when they learned about him. Marius had not refused their invitations. They afforded opportunities of talking about his father. Thus he went from time to time, to Comte Pajol, to General Bellavesne, to General Fririon, to the Invalides. There was music and dancing there. On such evenings, Marius put on his new coat. But he never went to

these evening parties or balls except on days when it was freezing cold, because he could not afford a carriage, and he did not wish to arrive with boots otherwise than like mirrors.

He said sometimes, but without bitterness: "Men are so made that in a drawing-room you may be soiled everywhere except on your shoes. In order to insure a good reception there, only one irreproachable thing is asked of you; your conscience? No, your boots."

All passions except those of the heart are dissipated by revery. Marius' political fevers vanished thus. The Revolution of 1830 assisted in the process, by satisfying and calming him. He remained the same, setting aside his fits of wrath. He still held the same opinions. Only, they had been tempered. To speak accurately, he had no longer any opinions, he had sympathies. To what party did he belong? To the party of humanity. Out of humanity he chose France; out of the Nation he chose the people; out of the people he chose the woman. It was to that point above all, that his pity was directed. Now he preferred an idea to a deed, a poet to a hero, and he admired a book like Job more than an event like Marengo. And then, when, after a day spent in meditation, he returned in the evening through the boulevards, and caught a glimpse through the branches of the trees of the fathomless space beyond, the nameless gleams, the abyss, the shadow, the mystery, all that which is only human seemed very petty indeed to him.

He thought that he had, and he really had, in fact, arrived at the truth

of life and of human philosophy, and he had ended by gazing at nothing but heaven, the only thing which Truth can perceive from the bottom of her well.

This did not prevent him from multiplying his plans, his combinations, his scaffoldings, his projects for the future. In this state of revery, an eye which could have cast a glance into Marius' interior would have been dazzled with the purity of that soul. In fact, had it been given to our eyes of the flesh to gaze into the consciences of others, we should be able to judge a man much more surely according to what he dreams, than according to what he thinks. There is will in thought, there is none in dreams. Revery, which is utterly spontaneous, takes and keeps, even in the gigantic and the ideal, the form of our spirit. Nothing proceeds more directly and more sincerely from the very depth of our soul, than our unpremeditated and boundless aspirations towards the splendors of destiny. In these aspirations, much more than in deliberate, rational coordinated ideas, is the real character of a man to be found. Our chimeras are the things which the most resemble us. Each one of us dreams of the unknown and the impossible in accordance with his nature.

Towards the middle of this year 1831, the old woman who waited on Marius told him that his neighbors, the wretched Jondrette family, had been turned out of doors. Marius, who passed nearly the whole of his days out of the house, hardly knew that he had any neighbors.

"Why are they turned out?" he asked.

"Because they do not pay their rent; they owe for two quarters."

"How much is it?"

"Twenty francs," said the old woman.

Marius had thirty francs saved up in a drawer.

"Here," he said to the old woman, "take these twenty-five francs. Pay for the poor people and give them five francs, and do not tell them that it was I."

CHAPTER VI--THE SUBSTITUTE

It chanced that the regiment to which Lieutenant Theodule belonged came to perform garrison duty in Paris. This inspired Aunt Gillenormand with a second idea. She had, on the first occasion, hit upon the plan of having Marius spied upon by Theodule; now she plotted to have Theodule take Marius' place.

At all events and in case the grandfather should feel the vague need of a young face in the house,--these rays of dawn are sometimes sweet to ruin,--it was expedient to find another Marius. "Take it as a simple erratum," she thought, "such as one sees in books. For Marius, read Theodule."

A grandnephew is almost the same as a grandson; in default of a lawyer one takes a lancer.

One morning, when M. Gillenormand was about to read something in the Quotidienne, his daughter entered and said to him in her sweetest voice; for the question concerned her favorite:--

"Father, Theodule is coming to present his respects to you this morning."

"Who's Theodule?"

"Your grandnephew."

"Ah!" said the grandfather.

Then he went back to his reading, thought no more of his grandnephew, who was merely some Theodule or other, and soon flew into a rage, which almost always happened when he read. The "sheet" which he held, although Royalist, of course, announced for the following day, without any softening phrases, one of these little events which were of daily occurrence at that date in Paris: "That the students of the schools of law and medicine were to assemble on the Place du Pantheon, at midday,--to deliberate." The discussion concerned one of the questions of the moment, the artillery of the National Guard, and a conflict between the Minister of War and "the citizen's militia," on the subject of the cannon parked in the courtyard of the Louvre. The students were to "deliberate" over this. It did not take much more than this to swell M. Gillenormand's rage.

He thought of Marius, who was a student, and who would probably go with the rest, to "deliberate, at midday, on the Place du Pantheon."

As he was indulging in this painful dream, Lieutenant Theodule entered clad in plain clothes as a bourgeois, which was clever of him, and was discreetly introduced by Mademoiselle Gillenormand. The lancer had reasoned as follows: "The old druid has not sunk all his money in a life pension. It is well to disguise one's self as a civilian from time to

time."

Mademoiselle Gillenormand said aloud to her father:--

"Theodule, your grandnephew."

And in a low voice to the lieutenant:--

"Approve of everything."

And she withdrew.

The lieutenant, who was but little accustomed to such venerable encounters, stammered with some timidity: "Good day, uncle,"--and made a salute composed of the involuntary and mechanical outline of the military salute finished off as a bourgeois salute.

"Ah! so it's you; that is well, sit down," said the old gentleman.

That said, he totally forgot the lancer.

Theodule seated himself, and M. Gillenormand rose.

M. Gillenormand began to pace back and forth, his hands in his pockets, talking aloud, and twitching, with his irritated old fingers, at the two watches which he wore in his two fobs.

"That pack of brats! they convene on the Place du Pantheon! by my life! urchins who were with their nurses but yesterday! If one were to squeeze their noses, milk would burst out. And they deliberate to-morrow, at midday. What are we coming to? What are we coming to? It is clear that we are making for the abyss. That is what the descamisados have brought us to! To deliberate on the citizen artillery! To go and jabber in the open air over the jibes of the National Guard! And with whom are they to meet there? Just see whither Jacobinism leads. I will bet anything you like, a million against a counter, that there will be no one there but returned convicts and released galley-slaves. The Republicans and the galley-slaves,--they form but one nose and one handkerchief. Carnot used to say: 'Where would you have me go, traitor?' Fouche replied: 'Wherever you please, imbecile!' That's what the Republicans are like."

"That is true," said Theodule.

M. Gillenormand half turned his head, saw Theodule, and went on:--

"When one reflects that that scoundrel was so vile as to turn carbonaro! Why did you leave my house? To go and become a Republican! Pssst! In the first place, the people want none of your republic, they have common sense, they know well that there always have been kings, and that there always will be; they know well that the people are only the people, after all, they make sport of it, of your republic--do you understand, idiot? Is it not a horrible caprice? To fall in love with Pere Duchesne,

to make sheep's-eyes at the guillotine, to sing romances, and play on the guitar under the balcony of '93--it's enough to make one spit on all these young fellows, such fools are they! They are all alike. Not one escapes. It suffices for them to breathe the air which blows through the street to lose their senses. The nineteenth century is poison. The first scamp that happens along lets his beard grow like a goat's, thinks himself a real scoundrel, and abandons his old relatives. He's a Republican, he's a romantic. What does that mean, romantic? Do me the favor to tell me what it is. All possible follies. A year ago, they ran to Hernani. Now, I just ask you, Hernani! antitheses! abominations which are not even written in French! And then, they have cannons in the courtyard of the Louvre. Such are the rascalities of this age!"

"You are right, uncle," said Theodule.

M. Gillenormand resumed:--

"Cannons in the courtyard of the Museum! For what purpose? Do you want to fire grape-shot at the Apollo Belvedere? What have those cartridges to do with the Venus de Medici? Oh! the young men of the present day are all blackguards! What a pretty creature is their Benjamin Constant! And those who are not rascals are simpletons! They do all they can to make themselves ugly, they are badly dressed, they are afraid of women, in the presence of petticoats they have a mendicant air which sets the girls into fits of laughter; on my word of honor, one would say the poor creatures were ashamed of love. They are deformed, and they complete

themselves by being stupid; they repeat the puns of Tiercelin and Potier, they have sack coats, stablemen's waistcoats, shirts of coarse linen, trousers of coarse cloth, boots of coarse leather, and their rigmarole resembles their plumage. One might make use of their jargon to put new soles on their old shoes. And all this awkward batch of brats has political opinions, if you please. Political opinions should be strictly forbidden. They fabricate systems, they recast society, they demolish the monarchy, they fling all laws to the earth, they put the attic in the cellar's place and my porter in the place of the King, they turn Europe topsy-turvy, they reconstruct the world, and all their love affairs consist in staring slily at the ankles of the laundresses as these women climb into their carts. Ah! Marius! Ah! you blackguard! to go and vociferate on the public place! to discuss, to debate, to take measures! They call that measures, just God! Disorder humbles itself and becomes silly. I have seen chaos, I now see a mess. Students deliberating on the National Guard,--such a thing could not be seen among the Ogibewas nor the Cadodaches! Savages who go naked, with their noddles dressed like a shuttlecock, with a club in their paws, are less of brutes than those bachelors of arts! The four-penny monkeys! And they set up for judges! Those creatures deliberate and ratiocinate! The end of the world is come! This is plainly the end of this miserable terraqueous globe! A final hiccough was required, and France has emitted it. Deliberate, my rascals! Such things will happen so long as they go and read the newspapers under the arcades of the Odeon. That costs them a sou, and their good sense, and their intelligence, and their heart and their soul, and their wits. They emerge thence, and decamp from their

families. All newspapers are pests; all, even the Drapeau Blanc! At bottom, Martainville was a Jacobin. Ah! just Heaven! you may boast of having driven your grandfather to despair, that you may!"

"That is evident," said Theodule.

And profiting by the fact that M. Gillenormand was taking breath, the lancer added in a magisterial manner:--

"There should be no other newspaper than the Moniteur, and no other book than the Annuaire Militaire."

M. Gillenormand continued:--

"It is like their Sieyes! A regicide ending in a senator; for that is the way they always end. They give themselves a scar with the address of thou as citizens, in order to get themselves called, eventually, Monsieur le Comte. Monsieur le Comte as big as my arm, assassins of September. The philosopher Sieyes! I will do myself the justice to say, that I have never had any better opinion of the philosophies of all those philosophers, than of the spectacles of the grimacer of Tivoli! One day I saw the Senators cross the Quai Malplaquet in mantles of violet velvet sown with bees, with hats a la Henri IV. They were hideous. One would have pronounced them monkeys from the tiger's court. Citizens, I declare to you, that your progress is madness, that your humanity is a dream, that your revolution is a crime, that your republic

is a monster, that your young and virgin France comes from the brothel, and I maintain it against all, whoever you may be, whether journalists, economists, legists, or even were you better judges of liberty, of equality, and fraternity than the knife of the guillotine! And that I announce to you, my fine fellows!"

"Parbleu!" cried the lieutenant, "that is wonderfully true."

M. Gillenormand paused in a gesture which he had begun, wheeled round, stared Lancer Theodule intently in the eyes, and said to him:--

"You are a fool."