BOOK SECOND.--EPONINE

CHAPTER I--THE LARK'S MEADOW

Marius had witnessed the unexpected termination of the ambush upon whose track he had set Javert; but Javert had no sooner quitted the building, bearing off his prisoners in three hackney-coaches, than Marius also glided out of the house. It was only nine o'clock in the evening. Marius betook himself to Courfeyrac. Courfeyrac was no longer the imperturbable inhabitant of the Latin Quarter, he had gone to live in the Rue de la Verrerie "for political reasons"; this quarter was one where, at that epoch, insurrection liked to install itself. Marius said to Courfeyrac: "I have come to sleep with you." Courfeyrac dragged a mattress off his bed, which was furnished with two, spread it out on the floor, and said: "There."

At seven o'clock on the following morning, Marius returned to the hovel, paid the quarter's rent which he owed to Ma'am Bougon, had his books, his bed, his table, his commode, and his two chairs loaded on a hand-cart and went off without leaving his address, so that when Javert returned in the course of the morning, for the purpose of questioning Marius as to the events of the preceding evening, he found only Ma'am Bougon, who answered: "Moved away!"

Ma'am Bougon was convinced that Marius was to some extent an accomplice of the robbers who had been seized the night before. "Who would ever have said it?" she exclaimed to the portresses of the quarter, "a young man like that, who had the air of a girl!"

Marius had two reasons for this prompt change of residence. The first was, that he now had a horror of that house, where he had beheld, so close at hand, and in its most repulsive and most ferocious development, a social deformity which is, perhaps, even more terrible than the wicked rich man, the wicked poor man. The second was, that he did not wish to figure in the lawsuit which would insue in all probability, and be brought in to testify against Thenardier.

Javert thought that the young man, whose name he had forgotten, was afraid, and had fled, or perhaps, had not even returned home at the time of the ambush; he made some efforts to find him, however, but without success.

A month passed, then another. Marius was still with Courfeyrac. He had learned from a young licentiate in law, an habitual frequenter of the courts, that Thenardier was in close confinement. Every Monday, Marius had five francs handed in to the clerk's office of La Force for Thenardier.

As Marius had no longer any money, he borrowed the five francs from

Courfeyrac. It was the first time in his life that he had ever borrowed money. These periodical five francs were a double riddle to Courfeyrac who lent and to Thenardier who received them. "To whom can they go?" thought Courfeyrac. "Whence can this come to me?" Thenardier asked himself.

Moreover, Marius was heart-broken. Everything had plunged through a trap-door once more. He no longer saw anything before him; his life was again buried in mystery where he wandered fumblingly. He had for a moment beheld very close at hand, in that obscurity, the young girl whom he loved, the old man who seemed to be her father, those unknown beings, who were his only interest and his only hope in this world; and, at the very moment when he thought himself on the point of grasping them, a gust had swept all these shadows away. Not a spark of certainty and truth had been emitted even in the most terrible of collisions. No conjecture was possible. He no longer knew even the name that he thought he knew. It certainly was not Ursule. And the Lark was a nickname. And what was he to think of the old man? Was he actually in hiding from the police? The white-haired workman whom Marius had encountered in the vicinity of the Invalides recurred to his mind. It now seemed probable that that workingman and M. Leblanc were one and the same person. So he disguised himself? That man had his heroic and his equivocal sides. Why had he not called for help? Why had he fled? Was he, or was he not, the father of the young girl? Was he, in short, the man whom Thenardier thought that he recognized? Thenardier might have been mistaken. These formed so many insoluble problems. All this, it is true, detracted

nothing from the angelic charms of the young girl of the Luxembourg. Heart-rending distress; Marius bore a passion in his heart, and night over his eyes. He was thrust onward, he was drawn, and he could not stir. All had vanished, save love. Of love itself he had lost the instincts and the sudden illuminations. Ordinarily, this flame which burns us lights us also a little, and casts some useful gleams without. But Marius no longer even heard these mute counsels of passion. He never said to himself: "What if I were to go to such a place? What if I were to try such and such a thing?" The girl whom he could no longer call Ursule was evidently somewhere; nothing warned Marius in what direction he should seek her. His whole life was now summed up in two words; absolute uncertainty within an impenetrable fog. To see her once again; he still aspired to this, but he no longer expected it.

To crown all, his poverty had returned. He felt that icy breath close to him, on his heels. In the midst of his torments, and long before this, he had discontinued his work, and nothing is more dangerous than discontinued work; it is a habit which vanishes. A habit which is easy to get rid of, and difficult to take up again.

A certain amount of dreaming is good, like a narcotic in discreet doses. It lulls to sleep the fevers of the mind at labor, which are sometimes severe, and produces in the spirit a soft and fresh vapor which corrects the over-harsh contours of pure thought, fills in gaps here and there, binds together and rounds off the angles of the ideas. But too much dreaming sinks and drowns. Woe to the brain-worker who allows himself to

fall entirely from thought into revery! He thinks that he can re-ascend with equal ease, and he tells himself that, after all, it is the same thing. Error!

Thought is the toil of the intelligence, revery its voluptuousness. To replace thought with revery is to confound a poison with a food.

Marius had begun in that way, as the reader will remember. Passion had supervened and had finished the work of precipitating him into chimaeras without object or bottom. One no longer emerges from one's self except for the purpose of going off to dream. Idle production. Tumultuous and stagnant gulf. And, in proportion as labor diminishes, needs increase. This is a law. Man, in a state of revery, is generally prodigal and slack; the unstrung mind cannot hold life within close bounds.

There is, in that mode of life, good mingled with evil, for if enervation is baleful, generosity is good and healthful. But the poor man who is generous and noble, and who does not work, is lost. Resources are exhausted, needs crop up.

Fatal declivity down which the most honest and the firmest as well as the most feeble and most vicious are drawn, and which ends in one of two holds, suicide or crime.

By dint of going outdoors to think, the day comes when one goes out to throw one's self in the water.

Excess of revery breeds men like Escousse and Lebras.

Marius was descending this declivity at a slow pace, with his eyes fixed on the girl whom he no longer saw. What we have just written seems strange, and yet it is true. The memory of an absent being kindles in the darkness of the heart; the more it has disappeared, the more it beams; the gloomy and despairing soul sees this light on its horizon; the star of the inner night. She--that was Marius' whole thought. He meditated of nothing else; he was confusedly conscious that his old coat was becoming an impossible coat, and that his new coat was growing old, that his shirts were wearing out, that his hat was wearing out, that his boots were giving out, and he said to himself: "If I could but see her once again before I die!"

One sweet idea alone was left to him, that she had loved him, that her glance had told him so, that she did not know his name, but that she did know his soul, and that, wherever she was, however mysterious the place, she still loved him perhaps. Who knows whether she were not thinking of him as he was thinking of her? Sometimes, in those inexplicable hours such as are experienced by every heart that loves, though he had no reasons for anything but sadness and yet felt an obscure quiver of joy, he said to himself: "It is her thoughts that are coming to me!" Then he added: "Perhaps my thoughts reach her also."

This illusion, at which he shook his head a moment later, was

sufficient, nevertheless, to throw beams, which at times resembled hope, into his soul. From time to time, especially at that evening hour which is the most depressing to even the dreamy, he allowed the purest, the most impersonal, the most ideal of the reveries which filled his brain, to fall upon a notebook which contained nothing else. He called this "writing to her."

It must not be supposed that his reason was deranged. Quite the contrary. He had lost the faculty of working and of moving firmly towards any fixed goal, but he was endowed with more clear-sightedness and rectitude than ever. Marius surveyed by a calm and real, although peculiar light, what passed before his eyes, even the most indifferent deeds and men; he pronounced a just criticism on everything with a sort of honest dejection and candid disinterestedness. His judgment, which was almost wholly disassociated from hope, held itself aloof and soared on high.

In this state of mind nothing escaped him, nothing deceived him, and every moment he was discovering the foundation of life, of humanity, and of destiny. Happy, even in the midst of anguish, is he to whom God has given a soul worthy of love and of unhappiness! He who has not viewed the things of this world and the heart of man under this double light has seen nothing and knows nothing of the true.

The soul which loves and suffers is in a state of sublimity.

However, day followed day, and nothing new presented itself. It merely seemed to him, that the sombre space which still remained to be traversed by him was growing shorter with every instant. He thought that he already distinctly perceived the brink of the bottomless abyss.

"What!" he repeated to himself, "shall I not see her again before then!"

When you have ascended the Rue Saint-Jacques, left the barrier on one side and followed the old inner boulevard for some distance, you reach the Rue de la Sante, then the Glaciere, and, a little while before arriving at the little river of the Gobelins, you come to a sort of field which is the only spot in the long and monotonous chain of the boulevards of Paris, where Ruysdeel would be tempted to sit down.

There is something indescribable there which exhales grace, a green meadow traversed by tightly stretched lines, from which flutter rags drying in the wind, and an old market-gardener's house, built in the time of Louis XIII., with its great roof oddly pierced with dormer windows, dilapidated palisades, a little water amid poplar-trees, women, voices, laughter; on the horizon the Pantheon, the pole of the Deaf-Mutes, the Val-de-Grace, black, squat, fantastic, amusing, magnificent, and in the background, the severe square crests of the towers of Notre Dame.

As the place is worth looking at, no one goes thither. Hardly one cart or wagoner passes in a quarter of an hour.

It chanced that Marius' solitary strolls led him to this plot of ground, near the water. That day, there was a rarity on the boulevard, a passer-by. Marius, vaguely impressed with the almost savage beauty of the place, asked this passer-by:--"What is the name of this spot?"

The person replied: "It is the Lark's meadow."

And he added: "It was here that Ulbach killed the shepherdess of Ivry."

But after the word "Lark" Marius heard nothing more. These sudden congealments in the state of revery, which a single word suffices to evoke, do occur. The entire thought is abruptly condensed around an idea, and it is no longer capable of perceiving anything else.

The Lark was the appellation which had replaced Ursule in the depths of Marius' melancholy.--"Stop," said he with a sort of unreasoning stupor peculiar to these mysterious asides, "this is her meadow. I shall know where she lives now."

It was absurd, but irresistible.

And every day he returned to that meadow of the Lark.

CHAPTER II--EMBRYONIC FORMATION OF CRIMES IN THE INCUBATION OF PRISONS

Javert's triumph in the Gorbeau hovel seemed complete, but had not been so.

In the first place, and this constituted the principal anxiety, Javert had not taken the prisoner prisoner. The assassinated man who flees is more suspicious than the assassin, and it is probable that this personage, who had been so precious a capture for the ruffians, would be no less fine a prize for the authorities.

And then, Montparnasse had escaped Javert.

Another opportunity of laying hands on that "devil's dandy" must be waited for. Montparnasse had, in fact, encountered Eponine as she stood on the watch under the trees of the boulevard, and had led her off, preferring to play Nemorin with the daughter rather than Schinderhannes with the father. It was well that he did so. He was free. As for Eponine, Javert had caused her to be seized; a mediocre consolation. Eponine had joined Azelma at Les Madelonettes.

And finally, on the way from the Gorbeau house to La Force, one of the principal prisoners, Claquesous, had been lost. It was not known how this had been effected, the police agents and the sergeants "could

not understand it at all." He had converted himself into vapor, he had slipped through the handcuffs, he had trickled through the crevices of the carriage, the fiacre was cracked, and he had fled; all that they were able to say was, that on arriving at the prison, there was no Claquesous. Either the fairies or the police had had a hand in it. Had Claquesous melted into the shadows like a snow-flake in water? Had there been unavowed connivance of the police agents? Did this man belong to the double enigma of order and disorder? Was he concentric with infraction and repression? Had this sphinx his fore paws in crime and his hind paws in authority? Javert did not accept such comminations, and would have bristled up against such compromises; but his squad included other inspectors besides himself, who were more initiated than he, perhaps, although they were his subordinates in the secrets of the Prefecture, and Claquesous had been such a villain that he might make a very good agent. It is an excellent thing for ruffianism and an admirable thing for the police to be on such intimate juggling terms with the night. These double-edged rascals do exist. However that may be, Claquesous had gone astray and was not found again. Javert appeared to be more irritated than amazed at this.

As for Marius, "that booby of a lawyer," who had probably become frightened, and whose name Javert had forgotten, Javert attached very little importance to him. Moreover, a lawyer can be hunted up at any time. But was he a lawyer after all?

The investigation had begun.

The magistrate had thought it advisable not to put one of these men of the band of Patron Minette in close confinement, in the hope that he would chatter. This man was Brujon, the long-haired man of the Rue du Petit-Banquier. He had been let loose in the Charlemagne courtyard, and the eyes of the watchers were fixed on him.

This name of Brujon is one of the souvenirs of La Force. In that hideous courtyard, called the court of the Batiment-Neuf (New Building), which the administration called the court Saint-Bernard, and which the robbers called the Fosseaux-Lions (The Lion's Ditch), on that wall covered with scales and leprosy, which rose on the left to a level with the roofs, near an old door of rusty iron which led to the ancient chapel of the ducal residence of La Force, then turned in a dormitory for ruffians, there could still be seen, twelve years ago, a sort of fortress roughly carved in the stone with a nail, and beneath it this signature:--

BRUJON, 1811.

The Brujon of 1811 was the father of the Brujon of 1832.

The latter, of whom the reader caught but a glimpse at the Gorbeau house, was a very cunning and very adroit young spark, with a bewildered and plaintive air. It was in consequence of this plaintive air that the magistrate had released him, thinking him more useful in the Charlemagne

yard than in close confinement.

Robbers do not interrupt their profession because they are in the hands of justice. They do not let themselves be put out by such a trifle as that. To be in prison for one crime is no reason for not beginning on another crime. They are artists, who have one picture in the salon, and who toil, none the less, on a new work in their studios.

Brujon seemed to be stupefied by prison. He could sometimes be seen standing by the hour together in front of the sutler's window in the Charlemagne yard, staring like an idiot at the sordid list of prices which began with: garlic, 62 centimes, and ended with: cigar, 5 centimes. Or he passed his time in trembling, chattering his teeth, saying that he had a fever, and inquiring whether one of the eight and twenty beds in the fever ward was vacant.

All at once, towards the end of February, 1832, it was discovered that Brujon, that somnolent fellow, had had three different commissions executed by the errand-men of the establishment, not under his own name, but in the name of three of his comrades; and they had cost him in all fifty sous, an exorbitant outlay which attracted the attention of the prison corporal.

Inquiries were instituted, and on consulting the tariff of commissions posted in the convict's parlor, it was learned that the fifty sous could be analyzed as follows: three commissions; one to the Pantheon, ten

sous; one to Val-de-Grace, fifteen sous; and one to the Barriere de Grenelle, twenty-five sous. This last was the dearest of the whole tariff. Now, at the Pantheon, at the Val-de-Grace, and at the Barriere de Grenelle were situated the domiciles of the three very redoubtable prowlers of the barriers, Kruideniers, alias Bizarre, Glorieux, an ex-convict, and Barre-Carosse, upon whom the attention of the police was directed by this incident. It was thought that these men were members of Patron Minette; two of those leaders, Babet and Gueulemer, had been captured. It was supposed that the messages, which had been addressed, not to houses, but to people who were waiting for them in the street, must have contained information with regard to some crime that had been plotted. They were in possession of other indications; they laid hand on the three prowlers, and supposed that they had circumvented some one or other of Brujon's machinations.

About a week after these measures had been taken, one night, as the superintendent of the watch, who had been inspecting the lower dormitory in the Batiment-Neuf, was about to drop his chestnut in the box--this was the means adopted to make sure that the watchmen performed their duties punctually; every hour a chestnut must be dropped into all the boxes nailed to the doors of the dormitories--a watchman looked through the peep-hole of the dormitory and beheld Brujon sitting on his bed and writing something by the light of the hall-lamp. The guardian entered, Brujon was put in a solitary cell for a month, but they were not able to seize what he had written. The police learned nothing further about it.

What is certain is, that on the following morning, a "postilion" was flung from the Charlemagne yard into the Lions' Ditch, over the five-story building which separated the two court-yards.

What prisoners call a "postilion" is a pellet of bread artistically moulded, which is sent into Ireland, that is to say, over the roofs of a prison, from one courtyard to another. Etymology: over England; from one land to another; into Ireland. This little pellet falls in the yard. The man who picks it up opens it and finds in it a note addressed to some prisoner in that yard. If it is a prisoner who finds the treasure, he forwards the note to its destination; if it is a keeper, or one of the prisoners secretly sold who are called sheep in prisons and foxes in the galleys, the note is taken to the office and handed over to the police.

On this occasion, the postilion reached its address, although the person to whom it was addressed was, at that moment, in solitary confinement. This person was no other than Babet, one of the four heads of Patron Minette.

The postilion contained a roll of paper on which only these two lines were written:--

"Babet. There is an affair in the Rue Plumet. A gate on a garden."

This is what Brujon had written the night before.

In spite of male and female searchers, Babet managed to pass the note on from La Force to the Salpetriere, to a "good friend" whom he had and who was shut up there. This woman in turn transmitted the note to another woman of her acquaintance, a certain Magnon, who was strongly suspected by the police, though not yet arrested. This Magnon, whose name the reader has already seen, had relations with the Thenardier, which will be described in detail later on, and she could, by going to see Eponine, serve as a bridge between the Salpetriere and Les Madelonettes.

It happened, that at precisely that moment, as proofs were wanting in the investigation directed against Thenardier in the matter of his daughters, Eponine and Azelma were released. When Eponine came out, Magnon, who was watching the gate of the Madelonettes, handed her Brujon's note to Babet, charging her to look into the matter.

Eponine went to the Rue Plumet, recognized the gate and the garden, observed the house, spied, lurked, and, a few days later, brought to Magnon, who delivers in the Rue Clocheperce, a biscuit, which Magnon transmitted to Babet's mistress in the Salpetriere. A biscuit, in the shady symbolism of prisons, signifies: Nothing to be done.

So that in less than a week from that time, as Brujon and Babet met in the circle of La Force, the one on his way to the examination, the other on his way from it:--

"Well?" asked Brujon, "the Rue P.?"

"Biscuit," replied Babet. Thus did the foetus of crime engendered by Brujon in La Force miscarry.

This miscarriage had its consequences, however, which were perfectly distinct from Brujon's programme. The reader will see what they were.

Often when we think we are knotting one thread, we are tying quite another.

CHAPTER III--APPARITION TO FATHER MABEUF

Marius no longer went to see any one, but he sometimes encountered Father Mabeuf by chance.

While Marius was slowly descending those melancholy steps which may be called the cellar stairs, and which lead to places without light, where the happy can be heard walking overhead, M. Mabeuf was descending on his side.

The Flora of Cauteretz no longer sold at all. The experiments on indigo had not been successful in the little garden of Austerlitz, which had a bad exposure. M. Mabeuf could cultivate there only a few plants which love shade and dampness. Nevertheless, he did not become discouraged. He had obtained a corner in the Jardin des Plantes, with a good exposure, to make his trials with indigo "at his own expense." For this purpose he had pawned his copperplates of the Flora. He had reduced his breakfast to two eggs, and he left one of these for his old servant, to whom he had paid no wages for the last fifteen months. And often his breakfast was his only meal. He no longer smiled with his infantile smile, he had grown morose and no longer received visitors. Marius did well not to dream of going thither. Sometimes, at the hour when M. Mabeuf was on his way to the Jardin des Plantes, the old man and the young man passed each other on the Boulevard de l'Hopital. They did not speak, and only exchanged a melancholy sign of the head. A heart-breaking thing it is that there comes a moment when misery looses bonds! Two men who have

been friends become two chance passers-by.

Royal the bookseller was dead. M. Mabeuf no longer knew his books, his garden, or his indigo: these were the three forms which happiness, pleasure, and hope had assumed for him. This sufficed him for his living. He said to himself: "When I shall have made my balls of blueing, I shall be rich, I will withdraw my copperplates from the pawn-shop, I will put my Flora in vogue again with trickery, plenty of money and advertisements in the newspapers and I will buy, I know well where, a copy of Pierre de Medine's Art de Naviguer, with wood-cuts, edition of 1655." In the meantime, he toiled all day over his plot of indigo, and at night he returned home to water his garden, and to read his books. At that epoch, M. Mabeuf was nearly eighty years of age.

One evening he had a singular apparition.

He had returned home while it was still broad daylight. Mother Plutarque, whose health was declining, was ill and in bed. He had dined on a bone, on which a little meat lingered, and a bit of bread that he had found on the kitchen table, and had seated himself on an overturned stone post, which took the place of a bench in his garden.

Near this bench there rose, after the fashion in orchard-gardens, a sort of large chest, of beams and planks, much dilapidated, a rabbit-hutch on the ground floor, a fruit-closet on the first. There was nothing in the hutch, but there were a few apples in the fruit-closet,--the remains of

the winter's provision.

M. Mabeuf had set himself to turning over and reading, with the aid of his glasses, two books of which he was passionately fond and in which, a serious thing at his age, he was interested. His natural timidity rendered him accessible to the acceptance of superstitions in a certain degree. The first of these books was the famous treatise of President Delancre, De l'inconstance des Demons; the other was a quarto by Mutor de la Rubaudiere, Sur les Diables de Vauvert et les Gobelins de la Bievre. This last-mentioned old volume interested him all the more, because his garden had been one of the spots haunted by goblins in former times. The twilight had begun to whiten what was on high and to blacken all below. As he read, over the top of the book which he held in his hand, Father Mabeuf was surveying his plants, and among others a magnificent rhododendron which was one of his consolations; four days of heat, wind, and sun without a drop of rain, had passed; the stalks were bending, the buds drooping, the leaves falling; all this needed water, the rhododendron was particularly sad. Father Mabeuf was one of those persons for whom plants have souls. The old man had toiled all day over his indigo plot, he was worn out with fatigue, but he rose, laid his books on the bench, and walked, all bent over and with tottering footsteps, to the well, but when he had grasped the chain, he could not even draw it sufficiently to unhook it. Then he turned round and cast a glance of anguish toward heaven which was becoming studded with stars.

The evening had that serenity which overwhelms the troubles of man

beneath an indescribably mournful and eternal joy. The night promised to be as arid as the day had been.

"Stars everywhere!" thought the old man; "not the tiniest cloud! Not a drop of water!"

And his head, which had been upraised for a moment, fell back upon his breast.

He raised it again, and once more looked at the sky, murmuring:--

"A tear of dew! A little pity!"

He tried again to unhook the chain of the well, and could not.

At that moment, he heard a voice saying:--

"Father Mabeuf, would you like to have me water your garden for you?"

At the same time, a noise as of a wild animal passing became audible in the hedge, and he beheld emerging from the shrubbery a sort of tall, slender girl, who drew herself up in front of him and stared boldly at him. She had less the air of a human being than of a form which had just blossomed forth from the twilight.

Before Father Mabeuf, who was easily terrified, and who was, as we have

said, quick to take alarm, was able to reply by a single syllable, this being, whose movements had a sort of odd abruptness in the darkness, had unhooked the chain, plunged in and withdrawn the bucket, and filled the watering-pot, and the goodman beheld this apparition, which had bare feet and a tattered petticoat, running about among the flower-beds distributing life around her. The sound of the watering-pot on the leaves filled Father Mabeuf's soul with ecstasy. It seemed to him that the rhododendron was happy now.

The first bucketful emptied, the girl drew a second, then a third. She watered the whole garden.

There was something about her, as she thus ran about among paths, where her outline appeared perfectly black, waving her angular arms, and with her fichu all in rags, that resembled a bat.

When she had finished, Father Mabeuf approached her with tears in his eyes, and laid his hand on her brow.

"God will bless you," said he, "you are an angel since you take care of the flowers."

"No," she replied. "I am the devil, but that's all the same to me."

The old man exclaimed, without either waiting for or hearing her response:--

"What a pity that I am so unhappy and so poor, and that I can do nothing for you!"

"You can do something," said she.

"What?"

"Tell me where M. Marius lives."

The old man did not understand. "What Monsieur Marius?"

He raised his glassy eyes and seemed to be seeking something that had vanished.

"A young man who used to come here."

In the meantime, M. Mabeuf had searched his memory.

"Ah! yes--" he exclaimed. "I know what you mean. Wait! Monsieur Marius--the Baron Marius Pontmercy, parbleu! He lives,--or rather, he no longer lives,--ah well, I don't know."

As he spoke, he had bent over to train a branch of rhododendron, and he continued:--

"Hold, I know now. He very often passes along the boulevard, and goes in the direction of the Glaciere, Rue Croulebarbe. The meadow of the Lark. Go there. It is not hard to meet him."

When M. Mabeuf straightened himself up, there was no longer any one there; the girl had disappeared.

He was decidedly terrified.

"Really," he thought, "if my garden had not been watered, I should think that she was a spirit."

An hour later, when he was in bed, it came back to him, and as he fell asleep, at that confused moment when thought, like that fabulous bird which changes itself into a fish in order to cross the sea, little by little assumes the form of a dream in order to traverse slumber, he said to himself in a bewildered way:--

"In sooth, that greatly resembles what Rubaudiere narrates of the goblins. Could it have been a goblin?"

CHAPTER IV--AN APPARITION TO MARIUS

Some days after this visit of a "spirit" to Farmer Mabeuf, one morning,--it was on a Monday, the day when Marius borrowed the hundred-sou piece from Courfeyrac for Thenardier--Marius had put this coin in his pocket, and before carrying it to the clerk's office, he had gone "to take a little stroll," in the hope that this would make him work on his return. It was always thus, however. As soon as he rose, he seated himself before a book and a sheet of paper in order to scribble some translation; his task at that epoch consisted in turning into French a celebrated quarrel between Germans, the Gans and Savigny controversy; he took Savigny, he took Gans, read four lines, tried to write one, could not, saw a star between him and his paper, and rose from his chair, saying: "I shall go out. That will put me in spirits."

And off he went to the Lark's meadow.

There he beheld more than ever the star, and less than ever Savigny and Gans.

He returned home, tried to take up his work again, and did not succeed; there was no means of re-knotting a single one of the threads which were broken in his brain; then he said to himself: "I will not go out to-morrow. It prevents my working." And he went out every day.

He lived in the Lark's meadow more than in Courfeyrac's lodgings. That

was his real address: Boulevard de la Sante, at the seventh tree from the Rue Croulebarbe.

That morning he had quitted the seventh tree and had seated himself on the parapet of the River des Gobelins. A cheerful sunlight penetrated the freshly unfolded and luminous leaves.

He was dreaming of "Her." And his meditation turning to a reproach, fell back upon himself; he reflected dolefully on his idleness, his paralysis of soul, which was gaining on him, and of that night which was growing more dense every moment before him, to such a point that he no longer even saw the sun.

Nevertheless, athwart this painful extrication of indistinct ideas which was not even a monologue, so feeble had action become in him, and he had no longer the force to care to despair, athwart this melancholy absorption, sensations from without did reach him. He heard behind him, beneath him, on both banks of the river, the laundresses of the Gobelins beating their linen, and above his head, the birds chattering and singing in the elm-trees. On the one hand, the sound of liberty, the careless happiness of the leisure which has wings; on the other, the sound of toil. What caused him to meditate deeply, and almost reflect, were two cheerful sounds.

All at once, in the midst of his dejected ecstasy, he heard a familiar voice saying:--

"Come! Here he is!"

He raised his eyes, and recognized that wretched child who had come to him one morning, the elder of the Thenardier daughters, Eponine; he knew her name now. Strange to say, she had grown poorer and prettier, two steps which it had not seemed within her power to take. She had accomplished a double progress, towards the light and towards distress. She was barefooted and in rags, as on the day when she had so resolutely entered his chamber, only her rags were two months older now, the holes were larger, the tatters more sordid. It was the same harsh voice, the same brow dimmed and wrinkled with tan, the same free, wild, and vacillating glance. She had besides, more than formerly, in her face that indescribably terrified and lamentable something which sojourn in a prison adds to wretchedness.

She had bits of straw and hay in her hair, not like Ophelia through having gone mad from the contagion of Hamlet's madness, but because she had slept in the loft of some stable.

And in spite of it all, she was beautiful. What a star art thou, O youth!

In the meantime, she had halted in front of Marius with a trace of joy in her livid countenance, and something which resembled a smile.

She stood for several moments as though incapable of speech.

"So I have met you at last!" she said at length. "Father Mabeuf was right, it was on this boulevard! How I have hunted for you! If you only knew! Do you know? I have been in the jug. A fortnight! They let me out! seeing that there was nothing against me, and that, moreover, I had not reached years of discretion. I lack two months of it. Oh! how I have hunted for you! These six weeks! So you don't live down there any more?"

"No," said Marius.

"Ah! I understand. Because of that affair. Those take-downs are disagreeable. You cleared out. Come now! Why do you wear old hats like this! A young man like you ought to have fine clothes. Do you know, Monsieur Marius, Father Mabeuf calls you Baron Marius, I don't know what. It isn't true that you are a baron? Barons are old fellows, they go to the Luxembourg, in front of the chateau, where there is the most sun, and they read the Quotidienne for a sou. I once carried a letter to a baron of that sort. He was over a hundred years old. Say, where do you live now?"

Marius made no reply.

"Ah!" she went on, "you have a hole in your shirt. I must sew it up for you."

She resumed with an expression which gradually clouded over:--

"You don't seem glad to see me."

Marius held his peace; she remained silent for a moment, then exclaimed:--

"But if I choose, nevertheless, I could force you to look glad!"

"What?" demanded Marius. "What do you mean?"

"Ah! you used to call me thou," she retorted.

"Well, then, what dost thou mean?"

She bit her lips; she seemed to hesitate, as though a prey to some sort of inward conflict. At last she appeared to come to a decision.

"So much the worse, I don't care. You have a melancholy air, I want you to be pleased. Only promise me that you will smile. I want to see you smile and hear you say: 'Ah, well, that's good.' Poor Mr. Marius! you know? You promised me that you would give me anything I like--"

"Yes! Only speak!"

She looked Marius full in the eye, and said:--

"I have the address."

Marius turned pale. All the blood flowed back to his heart.

"What address?"

"The address that you asked me to get!"

She added, as though with an effort:--

"The address--you know very well!"

"Yes!" stammered Marius.

"Of that young lady."

This word uttered, she sighed deeply.

Marius sprang from the parapet on which he had been sitting and seized her hand distractedly.

"Oh! Well! lead me thither! Tell me! Ask of me anything you wish! Where is it?"

"Come with me," she responded. "I don't know the street or number very

well; it is in quite the other direction from here, but I know the house well, I will take you to it."

She withdrew her hand and went on, in a tone which could have rent the heart of an observer, but which did not even graze Marius in his intoxicated and ecstatic state:--

"Oh! how glad you are!"

A cloud swept across Marius' brow. He seized Eponine by the arm:--

"Swear one thing to me!"

"Swear!" said she, "what does that mean? Come! You want me to swear?"

And she laughed.

"Your father! promise me, Eponine! Swear to me that you will not give this address to your father!"

She turned to him with a stupefied air.

"Eponine! How do you know that my name is Eponine?"

"Promise what I tell you!"

But she did not seem to hear him.

"That's nice! You have called me Eponine!"

Marius grasped both her arms at once.

"But answer me, in the name of Heaven! pay attention to what I am saying to you, swear to me that you will not tell your father this address that you know!"

"My father!" said she. "Ah yes, my father! Be at ease. He's in close confinement. Besides, what do I care for my father!"

"But you do not promise me!" exclaimed Marius.

"Let go of me!" she said, bursting into a laugh, "how you do shake me! Yes! Yes! I promise that! I swear that to you! What is that to me? I will not tell my father the address. There! Is that right? Is that it?"

"Nor to any one?" said Marius.

"Nor to any one."

"Now," resumed Marius, "take me there."

"Immediately?"

"Immediately."

"Come along. Ah! how pleased he is!" said she.

After a few steps she halted.

"You are following me too closely, Monsieur Marius. Let me go on ahead, and follow me so, without seeming to do it. A nice young man like you must not be seen with a woman like me."

No tongue can express all that lay in that word, woman, thus pronounced by that child.

She proceeded a dozen paces and then halted once more; Marius joined her. She addressed him sideways, and without turning towards him:--

"By the way, you know that you promised me something?"

Marius fumbled in his pocket. All that he owned in the world was the five francs intended for Thenardier the father. He took them and laid them in Eponine's hand.

She opened her fingers and let the coin fall to the ground, and gazed at him with a gloomy air.

"I don't want your money," said she.