# BOOK NINTH.--WHITHER ARE THEY GOING?

## CHAPTER I--JEAN VALJEAN

That same day, towards four o'clock in the afternoon, Jean Valjean was sitting alone on the back side of one of the most solitary slopes in the Champ-de-Mars. Either from prudence, or from a desire to meditate, or simply in consequence of one of those insensible changes of habit which gradually introduce themselves into the existence of every one, he now rarely went out with Cosette. He had on his workman's waistcoat, and trousers of gray linen; and his long-visored cap concealed his countenance.

He was calm and happy now beside Cosette; that which had, for a time, alarmed and troubled him had been dissipated; but for the last week or two, anxieties of another nature had come up. One day, while walking on the boulevard, he had caught sight of Thenardier; thanks to his disguise, Thenardier had not recognized him; but since that day, Jean Valjean had seen him repeatedly, and he was now certain that Thenardier was prowling about in their neighborhood.

This had been sufficient to make him come to a decision.

Moreover, Paris was not tranquil: political troubles presented this inconvenient feature, for any one who had anything to conceal in his life, that the police had grown very uneasy and very suspicious, and that while seeking to ferret out a man like Pepin or Morey, they might very readily discover a man like Jean Valjean.

Jean Valjean had made up his mind to quit Paris, and even France, and go over to England.

He had warned Cosette. He wished to set out before the end of the week.

He had seated himself on the slope in the Champ-de-Mars, turning over all sorts of thoughts in his mind,--Thenardier, the police, the journey, and the difficulty of procuring a passport.

He was troubled from all these points of view.

Last of all, an inexplicable circumstance which had just attracted his attention, and from which he had not yet recovered, had added to his state of alarm.

On the morning of that very day, when he alone of the household was stirring, while strolling in the garden before Cosette's shutters were open, he had suddenly perceived on the wall, the following line, engraved, probably with a nail:--

16 Rue de la Verrerie.

This was perfectly fresh, the grooves in the ancient black mortar were white, a tuft of nettles at the foot of the wall was powdered with the fine, fresh plaster.

This had probably been written on the preceding night.

What was this? A signal for others? A warning for himself?

In any case, it was evident that the garden had been violated, and that strangers had made their way into it.

He recalled the odd incidents which had already alarmed the household.

His mind was now filling in this canvas.

He took good care not to speak to Cosette of the line written on the wall, for fear of alarming her.

In the midst of his preoccupations, he perceived, from a shadow cast by the sun, that some one had halted on the crest of the slope immediately behind him.

He was on the point of turning round, when a paper folded in four fell upon his knees as though a hand had dropped it over his head.

He took the paper, unfolded it, and read these words written in large characters, with a pencil:--

"MOVE AWAY FROM YOUR HOUSE."

Jean Valjean sprang hastily to his feet; there was no one on the slope; he gazed all around him and perceived a creature larger than a child, not so large as a man, clad in a gray blouse and trousers of dust-colored cotton velvet, who was jumping over the parapet and who slipped into the moat of the Champde-Mars.

Jean Valjean returned home at once, in a very thoughtful mood.

## CHAPTER II--MARIUS

Marius had left M. Gillenormand in despair. He had entered the house with very little hope, and quitted it with immense despair.

However, and those who have observed the depths of the human heart will understand this, the officer, the lancer, the ninny, Cousin Theodule, had left no trace in his mind. Not the slightest. The dramatic poet might, apparently, expect some complications from this revelation made point-blank by the grandfather to the grandson. But what the drama would gain thereby, truth would lose. Marius was at an age when one believes nothing in the line of evil; later on comes the age when one believes everything. Suspicions are nothing else than wrinkles. Early youth has none of them. That which overwhelmed Othello glides innocuous over Candide. Suspect Cosette! There are hosts of crimes which Marius could sooner have committed.

He began to wander about the streets, the resource of those who suffer. He thought of nothing, so far as he could afterwards remember. At two o'clock in the morning he returned to Courfeyrac's quarters and flung himself, without undressing, on his mattress. The sun was shining brightly when he sank into that frightful leaden slumber which permits ideas to go and come in the brain. When he awoke, he saw Courfeyrac, Enjolras, Feuilly, and Combeferre standing in the room with their hats on and all ready to go out.

Courfeyrac said to him:--

"Are you coming to General Lamarque's funeral?"

It seemed to him that Courfeyrac was speaking Chinese.

He went out some time after them. He put in his pocket the pistols which Javert had given him at the time of the adventure on the 3d of February, and which had remained in his hands. These pistols were still loaded. It would be difficult to say what vague thought he had in his mind when he took them with him.

All day long he prowled about, without knowing where he was going; it rained at times, he did not perceive it; for his dinner, he purchased a penny roll at a baker's, put it in his pocket and forgot it. It appears that he took a bath in the Seine without being aware of it. There are moments when a man has a furnace within his skull. Marius was passing through one of those moments. He no longer hoped for anything; this step he had taken since the preceding evening. He waited for night with feverish impatience, he had but one idea clearly before his mind;--this was, that at nine o'clock he should see Cosette. This last happiness now constituted his whole future; after that, gloom. At intervals, as he roamed through the most deserted boulevards, it seemed to him that he heard strange noises in Paris. He thrust his head out of his revery and said: "Is there fighting on hand?"

At nightfall, at nine o'clock precisely, as he had promised Cosette, he was in the Rue Plumet. When he approached the grating he forgot everything. It was forty-eight hours since he had seen Cosette; he was about to behold her once more; every other thought was effaced, and he felt only a profound and unheard-of joy. Those minutes in which one lives centuries always have this sovereign and wonderful property, that at the moment when they are passing they fill the heart completely.

Marius displaced the bar, and rushed headlong into the garden. Cosette was not at the spot where she ordinarily waited for him. He traversed the thicket, and approached the recess near the flight of steps: "She is waiting for me there," said he. Cosette was not there. He raised his eyes, and saw that the shutters of the house were closed. He made the tour of the garden, the garden was deserted. Then he returned to the house, and, rendered senseless by love, intoxicated, terrified, exasperated with grief and uneasiness, like a master who returns home at an evil hour, he tapped on the shutters. He knocked and knocked again, at the risk of seeing the window open, and her father's gloomy face make its appearance, and demand: "What do you want?" This was nothing in comparison with what he dimly caught a glimpse of. When he had rapped, he lifted up his voice and called Cosette.--"Cosette!" he cried; "Cosette!" he repeated imperiously. There was no reply. All was over. No one in the garden; no one in the house.

Marius fixed his despairing eyes on that dismal house, which was as black and as silent as a tomb and far more empty. He gazed at the stone

seat on which he had passed so many adorable hours with Cosette. Then he seated himself on the flight of steps, his heart filled with sweetness and resolution, he blessed his love in the depths of his thought, and he said to himself that, since Cosette was gone, all that there was left for him was to die.

All at once he heard a voice which seemed to proceed from the street, and which was calling to him through the trees:--

"Mr. Marius!"

He started to his feet.

"Hey?" said he.

"Mr. Marius, are you there?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Marius," went on the voice, "your friends are waiting for you at the barricade of the Rue de la Chanvrerie."

This voice was not wholly unfamiliar to him. It resembled the hoarse, rough voice of Eponine. Marius hastened to the gate, thrust aside the movable bar, passed his head through the aperture, and saw some one who appeared to him to be a young man, disappearing at a run into the gloom.

## CHAPTER III--M. MABEUF

Jean Valjean's purse was of no use to M. Mabeuf. M. Mabeuf, in his venerable, infantile austerity, had not accepted the gift of the stars; he had not admitted that a star could coin itself into louis d'or. He had not divined that what had fallen from heaven had come from Gavroche. He had taken the purse to the police commissioner of the quarter, as a lost article placed by the finder at the disposal of claimants. The purse was actually lost. It is unnecessary to say that no one claimed it, and that it did not succor M. Mabeuf.

Moreover, M. Mabeuf had continued his downward course.

His experiments on indigo had been no more successful in the Jardin des Plantes than in his garden at Austerlitz. The year before he had owed his housekeeper's wages; now, as we have seen, he owed three quarters of his rent. The pawnshop had sold the plates of his Flora after the expiration of thirteen months. Some coppersmith had made stewpans of them. His copper plates gone, and being unable to complete even the incomplete copies of his Flora which were in his possession, he had disposed of the text, at a miserable price, as waste paper, to a second-hand bookseller. Nothing now remained to him of his life's work. He set to work to eat up the money for these copies. When he saw that this wretched resource was becoming exhausted, he gave up his garden and allowed it to run to waste. Before this, a long time before, he had given up his two eggs and the morsel of beef which he ate from time

to time. He dined on bread and potatoes. He had sold the last of his furniture, then all duplicates of his bedding, his clothing and his blankets, then his herbariums and prints; but he still retained his most precious books, many of which were of the greatest rarity, among others, Les Quadrins Historiques de la Bible, edition of 1560; La Concordance des Bibles, by Pierre de Besse; Les Marguerites de la Marguerite, of Jean de La Haye, with a dedication to the Queen of Navarre; the book de la Charge et Dignite de l'Ambassadeur, by the Sieur de Villiers Hotman; a Florilegium Rabbinicum of 1644; a Tibullus of 1567, with this magnificent inscription: Venetiis, in aedibus Manutianis; and lastly, a Diogenes Laertius, printed at Lyons in 1644, which contained the famous variant of the manuscript 411, thirteenth century, of the Vatican, and those of the two manuscripts of Venice, 393 and 394, consulted with such fruitful results by Henri Estienne, and all the passages in Doric dialect which are only found in the celebrated manuscript of the twelfth century belonging to the Naples Library. M. Mabeuf never had any fire in his chamber, and went to bed at sundown, in order not to consume any candles. It seemed as though he had no longer any neighbors: people avoided him when he went out; he perceived the fact. The wretchedness of a child interests a mother, the wretchedness of a young man interests a young girl, the wretchedness of an old man interests no one. It is, of all distresses, the coldest. Still, Father Mabeuf had not entirely lost his childlike serenity. His eyes acquired some vivacity when they rested on his books, and he smiled when he gazed at the Diogenes Laertius, which was a unique copy. His bookcase with glass doors was the only piece of furniture which he had kept beyond what was strictly

indispensable.

One day, Mother Plutarque said to him:--

"I have no money to buy any dinner."

What she called dinner was a loaf of bread and four or five potatoes.

"On credit?" suggested M. Mabeuf.

"You know well that people refuse me."

M. Mabeuf opened his bookcase, took a long look at all his books, one after another, as a father obliged to decimate his children would gaze upon them before making a choice, then seized one hastily, put it in under his arm and went out. He returned two hours later, without anything under his arm, laid thirty sous on the table, and said:--

"You will get something for dinner."

From that moment forth, Mother Plutarque saw a sombre veil, which was never more lifted, descend over the old man's candid face.

On the following day, on the day after, and on the day after that, it had to be done again.

M. Mabeuf went out with a book and returned with a coin. As the second-hand dealers perceived that he was forced to sell, they purchased of him for twenty sous that for which he had paid twenty francs, sometimes at those very shops. Volume by volume, the whole library went the same road. He said at times: "But I am eighty;" as though he cherished some secret hope that he should arrive at the end of his days before reaching the end of his books. His melancholy increased. Once, however, he had a pleasure. He had gone out with a Robert Estienne, which he had sold for thirty-five sous under the Quai Malaquais, and he returned with an Aldus which he had bought for forty sous in the Rue des Gres.--"I owe five sous," he said, beaming on Mother Plutarque. That day he had no dinner.

He belonged to the Horticultural Society. His destitution became known there. The president of the society came to see him, promised to speak to the Minister of Agriculture and Commerce about him, and did so.--"Why, what!" exclaimed the Minister, "I should think so! An old savant! a botanist! an inoffensive man! Something must be done for him!" On the following day, M. Mabeuf received an invitation to dine with the Minister. Trembling with joy, he showed the letter to Mother Plutarque. "We are saved!" said he. On the day appointed, he went to the Minister's house. He perceived that his ragged cravat, his long, square coat, and his waxed shoes astonished the ushers. No one spoke to him, not even the Minister. About ten o'clock in the evening, while he was still waiting for a word, he heard the Minister's wife, a beautiful woman in a low-necked gown whom he had not ventured to approach, inquire: "Who is

that old gentleman?" He returned home on foot at midnight, in a driving rain-storm. He had sold an Elzevir to pay for a carriage in which to go thither.

He had acquired the habit of reading a few pages in his Diogenes Laertius every night, before he went to bed. He knew enough Greek to enjoy the peculiarities of the text which he owned. He had now no other enjoyment. Several weeks passed. All at once, Mother Plutarque fell ill. There is one thing sadder than having no money with which to buy bread at the baker's and that is having no money to purchase drugs at the apothecary's. One evening, the doctor had ordered a very expensive potion. And the malady was growing worse; a nurse was required. M. Mabeuf opened his bookcase; there was nothing there. The last volume had taken its departure. All that was left to him was Diogenes Laertius.
He put this unique copy under his arm, and went out. It was the 4th of June, 1832; he went to the Porte Saint-Jacques, to Royal's successor, and returned with one hundred francs. He laid the pile of five-franc pieces on the old serving-woman's nightstand, and returned to his chamber without saying a word.

On the following morning, at dawn, he seated himself on the overturned post in his garden, and he could be seen over the top of the hedge, sitting the whole morning motionless, with drooping head, his eyes vaguely fixed on the withered flower-beds. It rained at intervals; the old man did not seem to perceive the fact.

In the afternoon, extraordinary noises broke out in Paris. They resembled shots and the clamors of a multitude.

Father Mabeuf raised his head. He saw a gardener passing, and inquired:--

"What is it?"

The gardener, spade on back, replied in the most unconcerned tone:--

"It is the riots."

"What riots?"

"Yes, they are fighting."

"Why are they fighting?"

"Ah, good Heavens!" ejaculated the gardener.

"In what direction?" went on M. Mabeuf.

"In the neighborhood of the Arsenal."

Father Mabeuf went to his room, took his hat, mechanically sought for a book to place under his arm, found none, said: "Ah! truly!" and went off

with a bewildered air.