BOOK SIXTH.--THE SLEEPLESS NIGHT

CHAPTER I--THE 16TH OF FEBRUARY, 1833

The night of the 16th to the 17th of February, 1833, was a blessed night. Above its shadows heaven stood open. It was the wedding night of Marius and Cosette.

The day had been adorable.

It had not been the grand festival dreamed by the grandfather, a fairy spectacle, with a confusion of cherubim and Cupids over the heads of the bridal pair, a marriage worthy to form the subject of a painting to be placed over a door; but it had been sweet and smiling.

The manner of marriage in 1833 was not the same as it is to-day. France had not yet borrowed from England that supreme delicacy of carrying off one's wife, of fleeing, on coming out of church, of hiding oneself with shame from one's happiness, and of combining the ways of a bankrupt with the delights of the Song of Songs. People had not yet grasped to the full the chastity, exquisiteness, and decency of jolting their paradise in a posting-chaise, of breaking up their mystery with clic-clacs, of taking for a nuptial bed the bed of an inn, and of leaving behind them,

in a commonplace chamber, at such a night, the most sacred of the souvenirs of life mingled pell-mell with the tete-a-tete of the conductor of the diligence and the maid-servant of the inn.

In this second half of the nineteenth century in which we are now living, the mayor and his scarf, the priest and his chasuble, the law and God no longer suffice; they must be eked out by the Postilion de Lonjumeau; a blue waistcoat turned up with red, and with bell buttons, a plaque like a vantbrace, knee-breeches of green leather, oaths to the Norman horses with their tails knotted up, false galloons, varnished hat, long powdered locks, an enormous whip and tall boots. France does not yet carry elegance to the length of doing like the English nobility, and raining down on the post-chaise of the bridal pair a hail storm of slippers trodden down at heel and of worn-out shoes, in memory of Churchill, afterwards Marlborough, or Malbrouck, who was assailed on his wedding-day by the wrath of an aunt which brought him good luck. Old shoes and slippers do not, as yet, form a part of our nuptial celebrations; but patience, as good taste continues to spread, we shall come to that.

In 1833, a hundred years ago, marriage was not conducted at a full trot.

Strange to say, at that epoch, people still imagined that a wedding was a private and social festival, that a patriarchal banquet does not spoil a domestic solemnity, that gayety, even in excess, provided it be honest, and decent, does happiness no harm, and that, in short, it is a

good and a venerable thing that the fusion of these two destinies whence a family is destined to spring, should begin at home, and that the household should thenceforth have its nuptial chamber as its witness.

And people were so immodest as to marry in their own homes.

The marriage took place, therefore, in accordance with this now superannuated fashion, at M. Gillenormand's house.

Natural and commonplace as this matter of marrying is, the banns to publish, the papers to be drawn up, the mayoralty, and the church produce some complication. They could not get ready before the 16th of February.

Now, we note this detail, for the pure satisfaction of being exact, it chanced that the 16th fell on Shrove Tuesday. Hesitations, scruples, particularly on the part of Aunt Gillenormand.

"Shrove Tuesday!" exclaimed the grandfather, "so much the better. There is a proverb:

> "'Mariage un Mardi gras
> N'aura point enfants ingrats.'[66]

Let us proceed. Here goes for the 16th! Do you want to delay, Marius?"

"No, certainly not!" replied the lover.

"Let us marry, then," cried the grandfather.

Accordingly, the marriage took place on the 16th, notwithstanding the public merrymaking. It rained that day, but there is always in the sky a tiny scrap of blue at the service of happiness, which lovers see, even when the rest of creation is under an umbrella.

On the preceding evening, Jean Valjean handed to Marius, in the presence of M. Gillenormand, the five hundred and eighty-four thousand francs.

As the marriage was taking place under the regime of community of property, the papers had been simple.

Henceforth, Toussaint was of no use to Jean Valjean; Cosette inherited her and promoted her to the rank of lady's maid.

As for Jean Valjean, a beautiful chamber in the Gillenormand house had been furnished expressly for him, and Cosette had said to him in such an irresistible manner: "Father, I entreat you," that she had almost persuaded him to promise that he would come and occupy it.

A few days before that fixed on for the marriage, an accident happened to Jean Valjean; he crushed the thumb of his right hand. This was not a

serious matter; and he had not allowed any one to trouble himself about it, nor to dress it, nor even to see his hurt, not even Cosette. Nevertheless, this had forced him to swathe his hand in a linen bandage, and to carry his arm in a sling, and had prevented his signing. M. Gillenormand, in his capacity of Cosette's supervising-guardian, had supplied his place.

We will not conduct the reader either to the mayor's office or to the church. One does not follow a pair of lovers to that extent, and one is accustomed to turn one's back on the drama as soon as it puts a wedding nosegay in its buttonhole. We will confine ourselves to noting an incident which, though unnoticed by the wedding party, marked the transit from the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire to the church of Saint-Paul.

At that epoch, the northern extremity of the Rue Saint-Louis was in process of repaving. It was barred off, beginning with the Rue du Pare-Royal. It was impossible for the wedding carriages to go directly to Saint-Paul. They were obliged to alter their course, and the simplest way was to turn through the boulevard. One of the invited guests observed that it was Shrove Tuesday, and that there would be a jam of vehicles.--"Why?" asked M. Gillenormand--"Because of the maskers."--"Capital," said the grandfather, "let us go that way. These young folks are on the way to be married; they are about to enter the serious part of life. This will prepare them for seeing a bit of the masquerade."

They went by way of the boulevard. The first wedding coach held Cosette and Aunt Gillenormand, M. Gillenormand and Jean Valjean. Marius, still separated from his betrothed according to usage, did not come until the second. The nuptial train, on emerging from the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire, became entangled in a long procession of vehicles which formed an endless chain from the Madeleine to the Bastille, and from the Bastille to the Madeleine. Maskers abounded on the boulevard. In spite of the fact that it was raining at intervals, Merry-Andrew, Pantaloon and Clown persisted. In the good humor of that winter of 1833, Paris had disguised itself as Venice. Such Shrove Tuesdays are no longer to be seen now-a-days. Everything which exists being a scattered Carnival, there is no longer any Carnival.

The sidewalks were overflowing with pedestrians and the windows with curious spectators. The terraces which crown the peristyles of the theatres were bordered with spectators. Besides the maskers, they stared at that procession--peculiar to Shrove Tuesday as to Longchamps,--of vehicles of every description, citadines, tapissieres, carioles, cabriolets marching in order, rigorously riveted to each other by the police regulations, and locked into rails, as it were. Any one in these vehicles is at once a spectator and a spectacle. Police-sergeants maintained, on the sides of the boulevard, these two interminable parallel files, moving in contrary directions, and saw to it that nothing interfered with that double current, those two brooks of carriages, flowing, the one down stream, the other up stream, the one towards the Chaussee d'Antin, the other towards the Faubourg

Saint-Antoine. The carriages of the peers of France and of the Ambassadors, emblazoned with coats of arms, held the middle of the way, going and coming freely. Certain joyous and magnificent trains, notably that of the Boeuf Gras, had the same privilege. In this gayety of Paris, England cracked her whip; Lord Seymour's post-chaise, harassed by a nickname from the populace, passed with great noise.

In the double file, along which the municipal guards galloped like sheep-dogs, honest family coaches, loaded down with great-aunts and grandmothers, displayed at their doors fresh groups of children in disguise, Clowns of seven years of age, Columbines of six, ravishing little creatures, who felt that they formed an official part of the public mirth, who were imbued with the dignity of their harlequinade, and who possessed the gravity of functionaries.

From time to time, a hitch arose somewhere in the procession of vehicles; one or other of the two lateral files halted until the knot was disentangled; one carriage delayed sufficed to paralyze the whole line. Then they set out again on the march.

The wedding carriages were in the file proceeding towards the Bastille, and skirting the right side of the Boulevard. At the top of the Pont-aux-Choux, there was a stoppage. Nearly at the same moment, the other file, which was proceeding towards the Madeleine, halted also. At that point of the file there was a carriage-load of maskers.

These carriages, or to speak more correctly, these wagon-loads of maskers are very familiar to Parisians. If they were missing on a Shrove Tuesday, or at the Mid-Lent, it would be taken in bad part, and people would say: "There's something behind that. Probably the ministry is about to undergo a change." A pile of Cassandras, Harlequins and Columbines, jolted along high above the passers-by, all possible grotesquenesses, from the Turk to the savage, Hercules supporting Marquises, fishwives who would have made Rabelais stop up his ears just as the Maenads made Aristophanes drop his eyes, tow wigs, pink tights, dandified hats, spectacles of a grimacer, three-cornered hats of Janot tormented with a butterfly, shouts directed at pedestrians, fists on hips, bold attitudes, bare shoulders, immodesty unchained; a chaos of shamelessness driven by a coachman crowned with flowers; this is what that institution was like.

Greece stood in need of the chariot of Thespis, France stands in need of the hackney-coach of Vade.

Everything can be parodied, even parody. The Saturnalia, that grimace of antique beauty, ends, through exaggeration after exaggeration, in Shrove Tuesday; and the Bacchanal, formerly crowned with sprays of vine leaves and grapes, inundated with sunshine, displaying her marble breast in a divine semi-nudity, having at the present day lost her shape under the soaked rags of the North, has finally come to be called the Jack-pudding.

The tradition of carriage-loads of maskers runs back to the most ancient days of the monarchy. The accounts of Louis XI. allot to the bailiff of the palace "twenty sous, Tournois, for three coaches of mascarades in the cross-roads." In our day, these noisy heaps of creatures are accustomed to have themselves driven in some ancient cuckoo carriage, whose imperial they load down, or they overwhelm a hired landau, with its top thrown back, with their tumultuous groups. Twenty of them ride in a carriage intended for six. They cling to the seats, to the rumble, on the cheeks of the hood, on the shafts. They even bestride the carriage lamps. They stand, sit, lie, with their knees drawn up in a knot, and their legs hanging. The women sit on the men's laps. Far away, above the throng of heads, their wild pyramid is visible. These carriage-loads form mountains of mirth in the midst of the rout. Colle, Panard and Piron flow from it, enriched with slang. This carriage which has become colossal through its freight, has an air of conquest. Uproar reigns in front, tumult behind. People vociferate, shout, howl, there they break forth and writhe with enjoyment; gayety roars; sarcasm flames forth, joviality is flaunted like a red flag; two jades there drag farce blossomed forth into an apotheosis; it is the triumphal car of laughter.

A laughter that is too cynical to be frank. In truth, this laughter is suspicious. This laughter has a mission. It is charged with proving the Carnival to the Parisians.

These fishwife vehicles, in which one feels one knows not what shadows, set the philosopher to thinking. There is government therein. There one

lays one's finger on a mysterious affinity between public men and public women.

It certainly is sad that turpitude heaped up should give a sum total of gayety, that by piling ignominy upon opprobrium the people should be enticed, that the system of spying, and serving as caryatids to prostitution should amuse the rabble when it confronts them, that the crowd loves to behold that monstrous living pile of tinsel rags, half dung, half light, roll by on four wheels howling and laughing, that they should clap their hands at this glory composed of all shames, that there would be no festival for the populace, did not the police promenade in their midst these sorts of twenty-headed hydras of joy. But what can be done about it? These be-ribboned and be-flowered tumbrils of mire are insulted and pardoned by the laughter of the public. The laughter of all is the accomplice of universal degradation. Certain unhealthy festivals disaggregate the people and convert them into the populace. And populaces, like tyrants, require buffoons. The King has Roquelaure, the populace has the Merry-Andrew. Paris is a great, mad city on every occasion that it is a great sublime city. There the Carnival forms part of politics. Paris,--let us confess it--willingly allows infamy to furnish it with comedy. She only demands of her masters--when she has masters--one thing: "Paint me the mud." Rome was of the same mind. She loved Nero. Nero was a titanic lighterman.

Chance ordained, as we have just said, that one of these shapeless clusters of masked men and women, dragged about on a vast calash, should

halt on the left of the boulevard, while the wedding train halted on the right. The carriage-load of masks caught sight of the wedding carriage containing the bridal party opposite them on the other side of the boulevard.

"Hullo!" said a masker, "here's a wedding."

"A sham wedding," retorted another. "We are the genuine article."

And, being too far off to accost the wedding party, and fearing also, the rebuke of the police, the two maskers turned their eyes elsewhere.

At the end of another minute, the carriage-load of maskers had their hands full, the multitude set to yelling, which is the crowd's caress to masquerades; and the two maskers who had just spoken had to face the throng with their comrades, and did not find the entire repertory of projectiles of the fishmarkets too extensive to retort to the enormous verbal attacks of the populace. A frightful exchange of metaphors took place between the maskers and the crowd.

In the meanwhile, two other maskers in the same carriage, a Spaniard with an enormous nose, an elderly air, and huge black moustache, and a gaunt fishwife, who was quite a young girl, masked with a loup,[67] had also noticed the wedding, and while their companions and the passers-by were exchanging insults, they had held a dialogue in a low voice.

Their aside was covered by the tumult and was lost in it. The gusts of rain had drenched the front of the vehicle, which was wide open; the breezes of February are not warm; as the fishwife, clad in a low-necked gown, replied to the Spaniard, she shivered, laughed and coughed.

Here is their dialogue:

"Say, now."

"What, daddy?"

"Do you see that old cove?"

"What old cove?"

"Yonder, in the first wedding-cart, on our side."

"The one with his arm hung up in a black cravat?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"I'm sure that I know him."

"Ah!"

"I'm willing that they should cut my throat, and I'm ready to swear that I never said either you, thou, or I, in my life, if I don't know that Parisian." [pantinois.]

"Paris in Pantin to-day."

"Can you see the bride if you stoop down?"

"No."

"And the bridegroom?"

"There's no bridegroom in that trap."

"Bah!"

"Unless it's the old fellow."

"Try to get a sight of the bride by stooping very low."

"I can't."

"Never mind, that old cove who has something the matter with his paw I know, and that I'm positive."

"And what good does it do to know him?"

"No one can tell. Sometimes it does!"

"I don't care a hang for old fellows, that I don't!"

"I know him."

"Know him, if you want to."

"How the devil does he come to be one of the wedding party?"

"We are in it, too."

"Where does that wedding come from?"

"How should I know?"

"Listen."

"Well, what?"

"There's one thing you ought to do."

"What's that?"

"Get off of our trap and spin that wedding."

"What for?"

"To find out where it goes, and what it is. Hurry up and jump down, trot, my girl, your legs are young."

"I can't quit the vehicle."

"Why not?"

"I'm hired."

"Ah, the devil!"

"I owe my fishwife day to the prefecture."

"That's true."

"If I leave the cart, the first inspector who gets his eye on me will arrest me. You know that well enough."

"Yes, I do."

"I'm bought by the government for to-day."

"All the same, that old fellow bothers me."

"Do the old fellows bother you? But you're not a young girl."

"He's in the first carriage."

"Well?"

"In the bride's trap."

"What then?"

"So he is the father."

"What concern is that of mine?"

"I tell you that he's the father."

"As if he were the only father."

"Listen."

"What?"

"I can't go out otherwise than masked. Here I'm concealed, no one knows that I'm here. But to-morrow, there will be no more maskers. It's Ash

Wednesday. I run the risk of being nabbed. I must sneak back into my hole. But you are free."

"Not particularly."

"More than I am, at any rate."

"Well, what of that?"

"You must try to find out where that wedding-party went to."

"Where it went?"

"Yes."

"I know."

"Where is it going then?"

"To the Cadran-Bleu."

"In the first place, it's not in that direction."

"Well! to la Rapee."

"Or elsewhere."

"It's free. Wedding-parties are at liberty."

"That's not the point at all. I tell you that you must try to learn for me what that wedding is, who that old cove belongs to, and where that wedding pair lives."

"I like that! that would be queer. It's so easy to find out a wedding-party that passed through the street on a Shrove Tuesday, a week afterwards. A pin in a hay-mow! It ain't possible!"

"That don't matter. You must try. You understand me, Azelma."

The two files resumed their movement on both sides of the boulevard, in opposite directions, and the carriage of the maskers lost sight of the "trap" of the bride.

CHAPTER II--JEAN VALJEAN STILL WEARS HIS ARM IN A SLING

To realize one's dream. To whom is this accorded? There must be elections for this in heaven; we are all candidates, unknown to ourselves; the angels vote. Cosette and Marius had been elected.

Cosette, both at the mayor's office and at church, was dazzling and touching. Toussaint, assisted by Nicolette, had dressed her.

Cosette wore over a petticoat of white taffeta, her robe of Binche guipure, a veil of English point, a necklace of fine pearls, a wreath of orange flowers; all this was white, and, from the midst of that whiteness she beamed forth. It was an exquisite candor expanding and becoming transfigured in the light. One would have pronounced her a virgin on the point of turning into a goddess.

Marius' handsome hair was lustrous and perfumed; here and there, beneath the thick curls, pale lines--the scars of the barricade--were visible.

The grandfather, haughty, with head held high, amalgamating more than ever in his toilet and his manners all the elegances of the epoch of Barras, escorted Cosette. He took the place of Jean Valjean, who, on account of his arm being still in a sling, could not give his hand to the bride.

Jean Valjean, dressed in black, followed them with a smile.

"Monsieur Fauchelevent," said the grandfather to him, "this is a fine day. I vote for the end of afflictions and sorrows. Henceforth, there must be no sadness anywhere. Pardieu, I decree joy! Evil has no right to exist. That there should be any unhappy men is, in sooth, a disgrace to the azure of the sky. Evil does not come from man, who is good at bottom. All human miseries have for their capital and central government hell, otherwise, known as the Devil's Tuileries. Good, here I am uttering demagogical words! As far as I am concerned, I have no longer any political opinions; let all me be rich, that is to say, mirthful, and I confine myself to that."

When, at the conclusion of all the ceremonies, after having pronounced before the mayor and before the priest all possible "yesses," after having signed the registers at the municipality and at the sacristy, after having exchanged their rings, after having knelt side by side under the pall of white moire in the smoke of the censer, they arrived, hand in hand, admired and envied by all, Marius in black, she in white, preceded by the suisse, with the epaulets of a colonel, tapping the pavement with his halberd, between two rows of astonished spectators, at the portals of the church, both leaves of which were thrown wide open, ready to enter their carriage again, and all being finished, Cosette still could not believe that it was real. She looked at Marius, she looked at the crowd, she looked at the sky: it seemed as though she feared that she should wake up from her dream. Her amazed and uneasy air added something indescribably enchanting to her beauty. They entered the

same carriage to return home, Marius beside Cosette; M. Gillenormand and Jean Valjean sat opposite them; Aunt Gillenormand had withdrawn one degree, and was in the second vehicle.

"My children," said the grandfather, "here you are, Monsieur le Baron and Madame la Baronne, with an income of thirty thousand livres."

And Cosette, nestling close to Marius, caressed his ear with an angelic whisper: "So it is true. My name is Marius. I am Madame Thou."

These two creatures were resplendent. They had reached that irrevocable and irrecoverable moment, at the dazzling intersection of all youth and all joy. They realized the verses of Jean Prouvaire; they were forty years old taken together. It was marriage sublimated; these two children were two lilies. They did not see each other, they did not contemplate each other. Cosette perceived Marius in the midst of a glory; Marius perceived Cosette on an altar. And on that altar, and in that glory, the two apotheoses mingling, in the background, one knows not how, behind a cloud for Cosette, in a flash for Marius, there was the ideal thing, the real thing, the meeting of the kiss and the dream, the nuptial pillow. All the torments through which they had passed came back to them in intoxication. It seemed to them that their sorrows, their sleepless nights, their tears, their anguish, their terrors, their despair, converted into caresses and rays of light, rendered still more charming the charming hour which was approaching; and that their griefs were but so many handmaidens who were preparing the toilet of joy. How good it is

to have suffered! Their unhappiness formed a halo round their happiness. The long agony of their love was terminating in an ascension.

It was the same enchantment in two souls, tinged with voluptuousness in Marius, and with modesty in Cosette. They said to each other in low tones: "We will go back to take a look at our little garden in the Rue Plumet." The folds of Cosette's gown lay across Marius.

Such a day is an ineffable mixture of dream and of reality. One possesses and one supposes. One still has time before one to divine. The emotion on that day, of being at mid-day and of dreaming of midnight is indescribable. The delights of these two hearts overflowed upon the crowd, and inspired the passers-by with cheerfulness.

People halted in the Rue Saint-Antoine, in front of Saint-Paul, to gaze through the windows of the carriage at the orange-flowers quivering on Cosette's head.

Then they returned home to the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire. Marius, triumphant and radiant, mounted side by side with Cosette the staircase up which he had been borne in a dying condition. The poor, who had trooped to the door, and who shared their purses, blessed them. There were flowers everywhere. The house was no less fragrant than the church; after the incense, roses. They thought they heard voices carolling in the infinite; they had God in their hearts; destiny appeared to them like a ceiling of stars; above their heads they beheld the light of a

rising sun. All at once, the clock struck. Marius glanced at Cosette's charming bare arm, and at the rosy things which were vaguely visible through the lace of her bodice, and Cosette, intercepting Marius' glance, blushed to her very hair.

Quite a number of old family friends of the Gillenormand family had been invited; they pressed about Cosette. Each one vied with the rest in saluting her as Madame la Baronne.

The officer, Theodule Gillenormand, now a captain, had come from Chartres, where he was stationed in garrison, to be present at the wedding of his cousin Pontmercy. Cosette did not recognize him.

He, on his side, habituated as he was to have women consider him handsome, retained no more recollection of Cosette than of any other woman.

"How right I was not to believe in that story about the lancer!" said Father Gillenormand, to himself.

Cosette had never been more tender with Jean Valjean. She was in unison with Father Gillenormand; while he erected joy into aphorisms and maxims, she exhaled goodness like a perfume. Happiness desires that all the world should be happy.

She regained, for the purpose of addressing Jean Valjean, inflections of

voice belonging to the time when she was a little girl. She caressed him with her smile.

A banquet had been spread in the dining-room.

Illumination as brilliant as the daylight is the necessary seasoning of a great joy. Mist and obscurity are not accepted by the happy. They do not consent to be black. The night, yes; the shadows, no. If there is no sun, one must be made.

The dining-room was full of gay things. In the centre, above the white and glittering table, was a Venetian lustre with flat plates, with all sorts of colored birds, blue, violet, red, and green, perched amid the candles; around the chandelier, girandoles, on the walls, sconces with triple and quintuple branches; mirrors, silverware, glassware, plate, porcelain, faience, pottery, gold and silversmith's work, all was sparkling and gay. The empty spaces between the candelabra were filled in with bouquets, so that where there was not a light, there was a flower.

In the antechamber, three violins and a flute softly played quartettes by Haydn.

Jean Valjean had seated himself on a chair in the drawing-room, behind the door, the leaf of which folded back upon him in such a manner as to nearly conceal him. A few moments before they sat down to table, Cosette

came, as though inspired by a sudden whim, and made him a deep courtesy, spreading out her bridal toilet with both hands, and with a tenderly roguish glance, she asked him:

"Father, are you satisfied?"

"Yes," said Jean Valjean, "I am content!"

"Well, then, laugh."

Jean Valjean began to laugh.

A few moments later, Basque announced that dinner was served.

The guests, preceded by M. Gillenormand with Cosette on his arm, entered the dining-room, and arranged themselves in the proper order around the table.

Two large arm-chairs figured on the right and left of the bride, the first for M. Gillenormand, the other for Jean Valjean. M. Gillenormand took his seat. The other arm-chair remained empty.

They looked about for M. Fauchelevent.

He was no longer there.

M. Gillenormand questioned Basque.

"Do you know where M. Fauchelevent is?"

"Sir," replied Basque, "I do, precisely. M. Fauchelevent told me to say to you, sir, that he was suffering, his injured hand was paining him somewhat, and that he could not dine with Monsieur le Baron and Madame la Baronne. That he begged to be excused, that he would come to-morrow. He has just taken his departure."

That empty arm-chair chilled the effusion of the wedding feast for a moment. But, if M. Fauchelevent was absent, M. Gillenormand was present, and the grandfather beamed for two. He affirmed that M. Fauchelevent had done well to retire early, if he were suffering, but that it was only a slight ailment. This declaration sufficed. Moreover, what is an obscure corner in such a submersion of joy? Cosette and Marius were passing through one of those egotistical and blessed moments when no other faculty is left to a person than that of receiving happiness. And then, an idea occurred to M. Gillenormand.--"Pardieu, this armchair is empty. Come hither, Marius. Your aunt will permit it, although she has a right to you. This armchair is for you. That is legal and delightful. Fortunatus beside Fortunata."--Applause from the whole table. Marius took Jean Valjean's place beside Cosette, and things fell out so that Cosette, who had, at first, been saddened by Jean Valjean's absence, ended by being satisfied with it. From the moment when Marius took his place, and was the substitute, Cosette would not have regretted God

himself. She set her sweet little foot, shod in white satin, on Marius' foot.

The arm-chair being occupied, M. Fauchelevent was obliterated; and nothing was lacking.

And, five minutes afterward, the whole table from one end to the other, was laughing with all the animation of forgetfulness.

At dessert, M. Gillenormand, rising to his feet, with a glass of champagne in his hand--only half full so that the palsy of his eighty years might not cause an overflow,--proposed the health of the married pair.

"You shall not escape two sermons," he exclaimed. "This morning you had one from the cure, this evening you shall have one from your grandfather. Listen to me; I will give you a bit of advice: Adore each other. I do not make a pack of gyrations, I go straight to the mark, be happy. In all creation, only the turtle-doves are wise. Philosophers say: 'Moderate your joys.' I say: 'Give rein to your joys.' Be as much smitten with each other as fiends. Be in a rage about it. The philosophers talk stuff and nonsense. I should like to stuff their philosophy down their gullets again. Can there be too many perfumes, too many open rose-buds, too many nightingales singing, too many green leaves, too much aurora in life? can people love each other too much? can people please each other too much? Take care, Estelle, thou art too

pretty! Have a care, Nemorin, thou art too handsome! Fine stupidity, in sooth! Can people enchant each other too much, cajole each other too much, charm each other too much? Can one be too much alive, too happy? Moderate your joys. Ah, indeed! Down with the philosophers! Wisdom consists in jubilation. Make merry, let us make merry. Are we happy because we are good, or are we good because we are happy? Is the Sancy diamond called the Sancy because it belonged to Harley de Sancy, or because it weighs six hundred carats? I know nothing about it, life is full of such problems; the important point is to possess the Sancy and happiness. Let us be happy without quibbling and quirking. Let us obey the sun blindly. What is the sun? It is love. He who says love, says woman. Ah! ah! behold omnipotence--women. Ask that demagogue of a Marius if he is not the slave of that little tyrant of a Cosette. And of his own free will, too, the coward! Woman! There is no Robespierre who keeps his place but woman reigns. I am no longer Royalist except towards that royalty. What is Adam? The kingdom of Eve. No '89 for Eve. There has been the royal sceptre surmounted by a fleur-de-lys, there has been the imperial sceptre surmounted by a globe, there has been the sceptre of Charlemagne, which was of iron, there has been the sceptre of Louis the Great, which was of gold,--the revolution twisted them between its thumb and forefinger, ha'penny straws; it is done with, it is broken, it lies on the earth, there is no longer any sceptre, but make me a revolution against that little embroidered handkerchief, which smells of patchouli! I should like to see you do it. Try. Why is it so solid? Because it is a gewgaw. Ah! you are the nineteenth century? Well, what then? And we have been as foolish as you. Do not imagine that you have effected

much change in the universe, because your trip-gallant is called the cholera-morbus, and because your pourree is called the cachuca. In fact, the women must always be loved. I defy you to escape from that. These friends are our angels. Yes, love, woman, the kiss forms a circle from which I defy you to escape; and, for my own part, I should be only too happy to re-enter it. Which of you has seen the planet Venus, the coquette of the abyss, the Celimene of the ocean, rise in the infinite, calming all here below? The ocean is a rough Alcestis. Well, grumble as he will, when Venus appears he is forced to smile. That brute beast submits. We are all made so. Wrath, tempest, claps of thunder, foam to the very ceiling. A woman enters on the scene, a planet rises; flat on your face! Marius was fighting six months ago; to-day he is married. That is well. Yes, Marius, yes, Cosette, you are in the right. Exist boldly for each other, make us burst with rage that we cannot do the same, idealize each other, catch in your beaks all the tiny blades of felicity that exist on earth, and arrange yourselves a nest for life. Pardi, to love, to be loved, what a fine miracle when one is young! Don't imagine that you have invented that. I, too, have had my dream, I, too, have meditated, I, too, have sighed; I, too, have had a moonlight soul. Love is a child six thousand years old. Love has the right to a long white beard. Methusalem is a street arab beside Cupid. For sixty centuries men and women have got out of their scrape by loving. The devil, who is cunning, took to hating man; man, who is still more cunning, took to loving woman. In this way he does more good than the devil does him harm. This craft was discovered in the days of the terrestrial paradise. The invention is old, my friends, but it is

perfectly new. Profit by it. Be Daphnis and Chloe, while waiting to become Philemon and Baucis. Manage so that, when you are with each other, nothing shall be lacking to you, and that Cosette may be the sun for Marius, and that Marius may be the universe to Cosette. Cosette, let your fine weather be the smile of your husband; Marius, let your rain be your wife's tears. And let it never rain in your household. You have filched the winning number in the lottery; you have gained the great prize, guard it well, keep it under lock and key, do not squander it, adore each other and snap your fingers at all the rest. Believe what I say to you. It is good sense. And good sense cannot lie. Be a religion to each other. Each man has his own fashion of adoring God. Saperlotte! the best way to adore God is to love one's wife. I love thee! that's my catechism. He who loves is orthodox. The oath of Henri IV. places sanctity somewhere between feasting and drunkenness. Ventre-saint-gris! I don't belong to the religion of that oath. Woman is forgotten in it. This astonishes me on the part of Henri IV. My friends, long live women! I am old, they say; it's astonishing how much I feel in the mood to be young. I should like to go and listen to the bagpipes in the woods. Children who contrive to be beautiful and contented,--that intoxicates me. I would like greatly to get married, if any one would have me. It is impossible to imagine that God could have made us for anything but this: to idolize, to coo, to preen ourselves, to be dove-like, to be dainty, to bill and coo our loves from morn to night, to gaze at one's image in one's little wife, to be proud, to be triumphant, to plume oneself; that is the aim of life. There, let not that displease you which we used to think in our day, when we were young folks. Ah! vertu-bamboche! what

charming women there were in those days, and what pretty little faces and what lovely lasses! I committed my ravages among them. Then love each other. If people did not love each other, I really do not see what use there would be in having any springtime; and for my own part, I should pray the good God to shut up all the beautiful things that he shows us, and to take away from us and put back in his box, the flowers, the birds, and the pretty maidens. My children, receive an old man's blessing."

The evening was gay, lively and agreeable. The grandfather's sovereign good humor gave the key-note to the whole feast, and each person regulated his conduct on that almost centenarian cordiality. They danced a little, they laughed a great deal; it was an amiable wedding. Goodman Days of Yore might have been invited to it. However, he was present in the person of Father Gillenormand.

There was a tumult, then silence.

The married pair disappeared.

A little after midnight, the Gillenormand house became a temple.

Here we pause. On the threshold of wedding nights stands a smiling angel with his finger on his lips.

The soul enters into contemplation before that sanctuary where the

celebration of love takes place.

There should be flashes of light athwart such houses. The joy which they contain ought to make its escape through the stones of the walls in brilliancy, and vaguely illuminate the gloom. It is impossible that this sacred and fatal festival should not give off a celestial radiance to the infinite. Love is the sublime crucible wherein the fusion of the man and the woman takes place; the being one, the being triple, the being final, the human trinity proceeds from it. This birth of two souls into one, ought to be an emotion for the gloom. The lover is the priest; the ravished virgin is terrified. Something of that joy ascends to God. Where true marriage is, that is to say, where there is love, the ideal enters in. A nuptial bed makes a nook of dawn amid the shadows. If it were given to the eye of the flesh to scan the formidable and charming visions of the upper life, it is probable that we should behold the forms of night, the winged unknowns, the blue passers of the invisible, bend down, a throng of sombre heads, around the luminous house, satisfied, showering benedictions, pointing out to each other the virgin wife gently alarmed, sweetly terrified, and bearing the reflection of human bliss upon their divine countenances. If at that supreme hour, the wedded pair, dazzled with voluptuousness and believing themselves alone, were to listen, they would hear in their chamber a confused rustling of wings. Perfect happiness implies a mutual understanding with the angels. That dark little chamber has all heaven for its ceiling. When two mouths, rendered sacred by love, approach to create, it is impossible that there should not be, above that ineffable kiss, a quivering

throughout the immense mystery of stars.

These felicities are the true ones. There is no joy outside of these joys. Love is the only ecstasy. All the rest weeps.

To love, or to have loved,--this suffices. Demand nothing more. There is no other pearl to be found in the shadowy folds of life. To love is a fulfilment.

CHAPTER III--THE INSEPARABLE

What had become of Jean Valjean?

Immediately after having laughed, at Cosette's graceful command, when no one was paying any heed to him, Jean Valjean had risen and had gained the antechamber unperceived. This was the very room which, eight months before, he had entered black with mud, with blood and powder, bringing back the grandson to the grandfather. The old wainscoting was garlanded with foliage and flowers; the musicians were seated on the sofa on which they had laid Marius down. Basque, in a black coat, knee-breeches, white stockings and white gloves, was arranging roses round all of the dishes that were to be served. Jean Valjean pointed to his arm in its sling, charged Basque to explain his absence, and went away.

The long windows of the dining-room opened on the street. Jean Valjean stood for several minutes, erect and motionless in the darkness, beneath those radiant windows. He listened. The confused sounds of the banquet reached his ear. He heard the loud, commanding tones of the grandfather, the violins, the clatter of the plates, the bursts of laughter, and through all that merry uproar, he distinguished Cosette's sweet and joyous voice.

He quitted the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire, and returned to the Rue de l'Homme Arme.

In order to return thither, he took the Rue Saint-Louis, the Rue Culture-Sainte-Catherine, and the Blancs-Manteaux; it was a little longer, but it was the road through which, for the last three months, he had become accustomed to pass every day on his way from the Rue de l'Homme Arme to the Rue des Filles-du-Calvaire, in order to avoid the obstructions and the mud in the Rue Vielle-du-Temple.

This road, through which Cosette had passed, excluded for him all possibility of any other itinerary.

Jean Valjean entered his lodgings. He lighted his candle and mounted the stairs. The apartment was empty. Even Toussaint was no longer there. Jean Valjean's step made more noise than usual in the chambers. All the cupboards stood open. He penetrated to Cosette's bedroom. There were no sheets on the bed. The pillow, covered with ticking, and without a case or lace, was laid on the blankets folded up on the foot of the mattress, whose covering was visible, and on which no one was ever to sleep again. All the little feminine objects which Cosette was attached to had been carried away; nothing remained except the heavy furniture and the four walls. Toussaint's bed was despoiled in like manner. One bed only was made up, and seemed to be waiting some one, and this was Jean Valjean's bed.

Jean Valjean looked at the walls, closed some of the cupboard doors, and went and came from one room to another.

Then he sought his own chamber once more, and set his candle on a table.

He had disengaged his arm from the sling, and he used his right hand as though it did not hurt him.

He approached his bed, and his eyes rested, was it by chance? was it intentionally? on the inseparable of which Cosette had been jealous, on the little portmanteau which never left him. On his arrival in the Rue de l'Homme Arme, on the 4th of June, he had deposited it on a round table near the head of his bed. He went to this table with a sort of vivacity, took a key from his pocket, and opened the valise.

From it he slowly drew forth the garments in which, ten years before, Cosette had quitted Montfermeil; first the little gown, then the black fichu, then the stout, coarse child's shoes which Cosette might almost have worn still, so tiny were her feet, then the fustian bodice, which was very thick, then the knitted petticoat, next the apron with pockets, then the woollen stockings. These stockings, which still preserved the graceful form of a tiny leg, were no longer than Jean Valjean's hand.
All this was black of hue. It was he who had brought those garments to Montfermeil for her. As he removed them from the valise, he laid them on the bed. He fell to thinking. He called up memories. It was in winter, in a very cold month of December, she was shivering, half-naked, in rags, her poor little feet were all red in their wooden shoes. He, Jean Valjean, had made her abandon those rags to clothe herself in these mourning habiliments. The mother must have felt pleased in her grave, to

see her daughter wearing mourning for her, and, above all, to see that she was properly clothed, and that she was warm. He thought of that forest of Montfermeil; they had traversed it together, Cosette and he; he thought of what the weather had been, of the leafless trees, of the wood destitute of birds, of the sunless sky; it mattered not, it was charming. He arranged the tiny garments on the bed, the fichu next to the petticoat, the stockings beside the shoes, and he looked at them, one after the other. She was no taller than that, she had her big doll in her arms, she had put her louis d'or in the pocket of that apron, she had laughed, they walked hand in hand, she had no one in the world but him.

Then his venerable, white head fell forward on the bed, that stoical old heart broke, his face was engulfed, so to speak, in Cosette's garments, and if any one had passed up the stairs at that moment, he would have heard frightful sobs.

CHAPTER IV--THE IMMORTAL LIVER [68]

The old and formidable struggle, of which we have already witnessed so many phases, began once more.

Jacob struggled with the angel but one night. Alas! how many times have we beheld Jean Valjean seized bodily by his conscience, in the darkness, and struggling desperately against it!

Unheard-of conflict! At certain moments the foot slips; at other moments the ground crumbles away underfoot. How many times had that conscience, mad for the good, clasped and overthrown him! How many times had the truth set her knee inexorably upon his breast! How many times, hurled to earth by the light, had he begged for mercy! How many times had that implacable spark, lighted within him, and upon him by the Bishop, dazzled him by force when he had wished to be blind! How many times had he risen to his feet in the combat, held fast to the rock, leaning against sophism, dragged in the dust, now getting the upper hand of his conscience, again overthrown by it! How many times, after an equivoque, after the specious and treacherous reasoning of egotism, had he heard his irritated conscience cry in his ear: "A trip! you wretch!" How many times had his refractory thoughts rattled convulsively in his throat, under the evidence of duty! Resistance to God. Funereal sweats. What secret wounds which he alone felt bleed! What excoriations in his lamentable existence! How many times he had risen bleeding, bruised, broken, enlightened, despair in his heart, serenity in his soul!

and, vanquished, he had felt himself the conqueror. And, after having dislocated, broken, and rent his conscience with red-hot pincers, it had said to him, as it stood over him, formidable, luminous, and tranquil: "Now, go in peace!"

But on emerging from so melancholy a conflict, what a lugubrious peace, alas!

Nevertheless, that night Jean Valjean felt that he was passing through his final combat.

A heart-rending question presented itself.

Predestinations are not all direct; they do not open out in a straight avenue before the predestined man; they have blind courts, impassable alleys, obscure turns, disturbing crossroads offering the choice of many ways. Jean Valjean had halted at that moment at the most perilous of these crossroads.

He had come to the supreme crossing of good and evil. He had that gloomy intersection beneath his eyes. On this occasion once more, as had happened to him already in other sad vicissitudes, two roads opened out before him, the one tempting, the other alarming.

Which was he to take?

He was counselled to the one which alarmed him by that mysterious index finger which we all perceive whenever we fix our eyes on the darkness.

Once more, Jean Valjean had the choice between the terrible port and the smiling ambush.

Is it then true? the soul may recover; but not fate. Frightful thing! an incurable destiny!

This is the problem which presented itself to him:

In what manner was Jean Valjean to behave in relation to the happiness of Cosette and Marius? It was he who had willed that happiness, it was he who had brought it about; he had, himself, buried it in his entrails, and at that moment, when he reflected on it, he was able to enjoy the sort of satisfaction which an armorer would experience on recognizing his factory mark on a knife, on withdrawing it, all smoking, from his own breast.

Cosette had Marius, Marius possessed Cosette. They had everything, even riches. And this was his doing.

But what was he, Jean Valjean, to do with this happiness, now that it existed, now that it was there? Should he force himself on this happiness? Should he treat it as belonging to him? No doubt, Cosette did belong to another; but should he, Jean Valjean, retain of Cosette all

that he could retain? Should he remain the sort of father, half seen but respected, which he had hitherto been? Should he, without saying a word, bring his past to that future? Should he present himself there, as though he had a right, and should he seat himself, veiled, at that luminous fireside? Should he take those innocent hands into his tragic hands, with a smile? Should he place upon the peaceful fender of the Gillenormand drawing-room those feet of his, which dragged behind them the disgraceful shadow of the law? Should he enter into participation in the fair fortunes of Cosette and Marius? Should he render the obscurity on his brow and the cloud upon theirs still more dense? Should he place his catastrophe as a third associate in their felicity? Should he continue to hold his peace? In a word, should he be the sinister mute of destiny beside these two happy beings?

We must have become habituated to fatality and to encounters with it, in order to have the daring to raise our eyes when certain questions appear to us in all their horrible nakedness. Good or evil stands behind this severe interrogation point. What are you going to do? demands the sphinx.

This habit of trial Jean Valjean possessed. He gazed intently at the sphinx.

He examined the pitiless problem under all its aspects.

Cosette, that charming existence, was the raft of this shipwreck. What

was he to do? To cling fast to it, or to let go his hold?

If he clung to it, he should emerge from disaster, he should ascend again into the sunlight, he should let the bitter water drip from his garments and his hair, he was saved, he should live.

And if he let go his hold?

Then the abyss.

Thus he took sad council with his thoughts. Or, to speak more correctly, he fought; he kicked furiously internally, now against his will, now against his conviction.

Happily for Jean Valjean that he had been able to weep. That relieved him, possibly. But the beginning was savage. A tempest, more furious than the one which had formerly driven him to Arras, broke loose within him. The past surged up before him facing the present; he compared them and sobbed. The silence of tears once opened, the despairing man writhed.

He felt that he had been stopped short.

Alas! in this fight to the death between our egotism and our duty, when we thus retreat step by step before our immutable ideal, bewildered, furious, exasperated at having to yield, disputing the ground, hoping

for a possible flight, seeking an escape, what an abrupt and sinister resistance does the foot of the wall offer in our rear!

To feel the sacred shadow which forms an obstacle!

The invisible inexorable, what an obsession!

Then, one is never done with conscience. Make your choice, Brutus; make your choice, Cato. It is fathomless, since it is God. One flings into that well the labor of one's whole life, one flings in one's fortune, one flings in one's riches, one flings in one's success, one flings in one's liberty or fatherland, one flings in one's well-being, one flings in one's repose, one flings in one's joy! More! more! more! Empty the vase! tip the urn! One must finish by flinging in one's heart.

Somewhere in the fog of the ancient hells, there is a tun like that.

Is not one pardonable, if one at last refuses! Can the inexhaustible have any right? Are not chains which are endless above human strength? Who would blame Sisyphus and Jean Valjean for saying: "It is enough!"

The obedience of matter is limited by friction; is there no limit to the obedience of the soul? If perpetual motion is impossible, can perpetual self-sacrifice be exacted?

The first step is nothing, it is the last which is difficult. What was

the Champmathieu affair in comparison with Cosette's marriage and of that which it entailed? What is a re-entrance into the galleys, compared to entrance into the void?

Oh, first step that must be descended, how sombre art thou! Oh, second step, how black art thou!

How could he refrain from turning aside his head this time?

Martyrdom is sublimation, corrosive sublimation. It is a torture which consecrates. One can consent to it for the first hour; one seats oneself on the throne of glowing iron, one places on one's head the crown of hot iron, one accepts the globe of red hot iron, one takes the sceptre of red hot iron, but the mantle of flame still remains to be donned, and comes there not a moment when the miserable flesh revolts and when one abdicates from suffering?

At length, Jean Valjean entered into the peace of exhaustion.

He weighed, he reflected, he considered the alternatives, the mysterious balance of light and darkness.

Should he impose his galleys on those two dazzling children, or should he consummate his irremediable engulfment by himself? On one side lay the sacrifice of Cosette, on the other that of himself.

At what solution should he arrive? What decision did he come to?

What resolution did he take? What was his own inward definitive response to the unbribable interrogatory of fatality? What door did he decide to open? Which side of his life did he resolve upon closing and condemning? Among all the unfathomable precipices which surrounded him, which was his choice? What extremity did he accept? To which of the gulfs did he nod his head?

His dizzy revery lasted all night long.

He remained there until daylight, in the same attitude, bent double over that bed, prostrate beneath the enormity of fate, crushed, perchance, alas! with clenched fists, with arms outspread at right angles, like a man crucified who has been un-nailed, and flung face down on the earth. There he remained for twelve hours, the twelve long hours of a long winter's night, ice-cold, without once raising his head, and without uttering a word. He was as motionless as a corpse, while his thoughts wallowed on the earth and soared, now like the hydra, now like the eagle. Any one to behold him thus motionless would have pronounced him dead; all at once he shuddered convulsively, and his mouth, glued to Cosette's garments, kissed them; then it could be seen that he was alive.

Who could see? Since Jean Valjean was alone, and there was no one there.

The One who is in the shadows.