At a quarter past eight o'clock in the evening he was at the Tuileries.

VISIONS OF THE REAL.

I. THE HOVEL.

II. PILLAGE.

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IV. THE PANEL WITH THE COAT OF ARMS.

V. THE EASTER DAISY.

I. THE HOVEL.

You want a description of this hovel? I hesitated to inflict it upon you. But you want it. I' faith, here it is! You will only have yourself to blame, it is your fault.

"Pshaw!" you say, "I know what it is. A bleared, bandy ruin. Some old house!"

In the first place it is not an old house, it is very much worse, it is a new house.

Really, now, an old house! You counted upon an old house and turned up your nose at it in advance. Ah! yes, old houses; don't you wish you may get them! A dilapidated, tumble-down cottage! Why, don't you know that a dilapidated, tumble-down cottage is simply charming, a thing of beauty? The wall is of beautiful, warm and strong colour, with moth holes, birds' nests, old nails on which the spider hangs his rose-window web, a thousand amusing things that break its evenness. The window is only a dormer, but from it protrude long poles on which all sorts of clothing, of all sorts of colours, hang and dry in the wind-white tatters, red rags, flags of poverty that give to the hut an air of gaiety and are resplendent in the sunshine. The door is cracked and black, but approach and examine it; you will without doubt find upon it a bit of antique

ironwork of the time of Louis XIII., cut out like a piece of guipure. The roof is full of crevices, but in each crevice there is a convolvulus that will blossom in the spring, or a daisy that will bloom in the autumn. The tiles are patched with thatch. Of course they are, I should say so! It affords the occasion to have on one's roof a colony of pink dragon flowers and wild marsh-mallow. A fine green grass carpets the foot of this decrepit wall, the ivy climbs joyously up it and cloaks its bareness--its wounds and its leprosy mayhap; moss covers with green velvet the stone seat at the door. All nature takes pity upon this degraded and charming thing that you call a hovel, and welcomes it. 0 hovel! honest and peaceful old dwelling, sweet and good to see! rejuvenated every year by April and May! perfumed by the wallflower and inhabited by the swallow!

No, it is not of this that I write, it is not, I repeat, of an old house, it is of a new house,--of a new hovel, if you will.

This thing has not been built longer than two years. The wall has that hideous and glacial whiteness of fresh plaster. The whole is wretched, mean, high, triangular, and has the shape of a piece of Gruyère cheese cut for a miser a dessert. There are new doors that do not shut properly, window frames with white panes that are already spangled here and there with paper stars. These stars are cut coquettishly and pasted on with care. There is a frightful bogus sumptuousness about the place that causes a painful impression--balconies of hollow iron badly fixed to the wall; trumpery locks, already rotten round the fastenings, upon which vacillate, on three nails, horrible ornaments of embossed brass

that are becoming covered with verdigris; shutters painted grey that are getting out of joint, not because they are worm-eaten, but because they were made of green wood by a thieving cabinet maker.

A chilly feeling comes over you as you look at the house. On entering it you shiver. A greenish humidity leaks at the foot of the wall. This building of yesterday is already a ruin; it is more than a ruin, it is a disaster; one feels that the proprietor is bankrupt and that the contractor has fled.

In rear of the house, a wall white and new like the rest, encloses a space in which a drum major could not lie at full length. This is called the garden. Issuing shiveringly from the earth is a little tree, long, spare and sickly, which seems always to be in winter, for it has not a single leaf. This broom is called a poplar. The remainder of the garden is strewn with old potsherds and bottoms of bottles. Among them one notices two or three list slippers. In a corner on top of a heap of oyster shells is an old tin watering can, painted green, dented, rusty and cracked, inhabited by slugs which silver it with their trails of slime.

Let us enter the hovel. In the other you will find perhaps a ladder "rickety," as Regnier says, "from the top to the bottom." Here you will find a staircase.

This staircase, "ornamented" with brass-knobbed banisters, has fifteen or twenty wooden steps, high, narrow, with sharp angles, which rise

perpendicularly to the first floor and turn upon themselves in a spiral of about eighteen inches in diameter. Would you not be inclined to ask for a ladder?

At the top of these stairs, if you get there, is the room.

To give an idea of this room is difficult. It is the "new hovel" in all its abominable reality. Wretchedness is everywhere; a new wretchedness, which has no past, no future, and which cannot take root anywhere. One divines that the lodger moved in yesterday and will move out tomorrow. That he arrived without saying whence he came, and that he will put the key under the door when he goes away.

The wall is "ornamented" with dark blue paper with yellow flowers, the window is "ornamented" with a curtain of red calico in which holes take the place of flowers. There is in front of the window a rush-bottom chair with the bottom worn out; near the chair a stove; on the stove a stewpot; near the stewpot a flowerpot turned upside down with a tallow candle stuck in the hole; near the flowerpot a basketful of coal which evokes thoughts of suicide and asphyxiation; above the basket a shelf encumbered with nameless objects, distinguishable among which are a worn broom and an old toy representing a green rider on a crimson horse. The mantelpiece, mean and narrow, is of blackish marble with a thousand little white blotches. It is covered with broken glasses and unwashed cups. Into one of these cups a pair of tin rimmed spectacles is plunging. A nail lies on the floor. In the fireplace a dishcloth is hanging on one of the fire-iron holders. No fire either in the fireplace

or in the stove. A heap of frightful sweepings replaces the heaps of cinders. No looking glass on the mantelpiece, but a picture of varnished canvas representing a nude negro at the knees of a white woman in a decolletée ball dress in an arbour. Opposite the mantelpiece, a man's cap and a woman's bonnet hang from nails on either side of a cracked mirror.

At the end of the room is a bed. That is to say, a mattress laid on two planks that rest upon a couple of trestles. Over the bed, other boards, with openings between them, support an undesirable heap of linen, clothes and rags. An imitation cashmere, called "French cashmere," protrudes between the boards and hangs over the pallet.

Mingled with the hideous litter of all these things are dirtiness, a disgusting odour, spots of oil and tallow, and dust everywhere. In the corner near the bed stands an enormous sack of shavings, and on a chair beside the sack lies an old newspaper. I am moved by curiosity to look at the title and the date. It is the "Constitutionnel" of April 25, 1843.

And now what can I add? I have not told the most horrible thing about the place. The house is odious, the room is abominable, the pallet is hideous; but all that is nothing.

When I entered a woman was sleeping on the bed--a woman old, short, thickset, red, bloated, oily, tumefied, fat, dreadful, enormous. Her frightful bonnet, which was awry, disclosed the side of her head, which

was grizzled, pink and bald.

She was fully dressed. She wore a yellowish fichu, a brown skirt, a jacket, all this on her monstrous abdomen; and a vast soiled apron like the linen trousers of a convict.

At the noise I made in entering she moved, sat up, showed her fat legs, that were covered with unqualifiable blue stockings, and with a yawn stretched her brawny arms, which terminated with fists that resembled those of a butcher.

I perceived that the old woman was robust and formidable.

She turned towards me and opened her eyes. I could not see them.

"Monsieur," she said, in a very gentle voice, "what do you want?"

When about to speak to this being I experienced the sensation one would feel in presence of a sow to which it behoved one to say: "Madam."

I did not quite know what to reply, and thought for a moment. Just then my gaze, wandering towards the window, fell upon a sort of picture that hung outside like a sign. It was a sign, as a matter of fact, a picture of a young and pretty woman, decolletée, wearing an enormous beplumed hat and carrying an infant in her arms; the whole in the style of the chimney boards of the time of Louis XVIII. Above the picture stood out this inscription in big letters:

Mme. BECOEUR

Midwife

BLEEDS AND VACCINATES

"Madam," said I, "I want to see Mme. Bécoeur."

The sow metamorphosed into a woman replied with an amiable smile:

"I am Mme. Bécoeur, Monsieur."

II. PILLAGE. THE REVOLT IN SANTO DOMINGO.

I thought that I must be dreaming. None who did not witness the sight could form any idea of it. I will, however, endeavour to depict something of it. I will simply recount what I saw with my own eyes. This small portion of a great scene minutely reproduced will enable you to form some notion as to the general aspect of the town during the three days of pillage. Multiply these details ad libitum and you will get the ensemble.

I had taken refuge by the gate of the town, a puny barrier made of long laths painted yellow, nailed to cross laths and sharpened at the top. Near by was a kind of shed in which some hapless colonists, who had been driven from their homes, had sought shelter. They were silent and seemed to be petrified in all the attitudes of despair. Just outside of the shed an old man, weeping, was seated on the trunk of a mahogany tree which was lying on the ground and looked like the shaft of a column. Another vainly sought to restrain a white woman who, wild with fright, was trying to flee, without knowing where she was going, through the crowd of furious, ragged, howling negroes.

The negroes, however, free, victorious, drunk, mad, paid not the slightest attention to this miserable, forlorn group of whites. A short distance from us two of them, with their knives between their teeth,

were slaughtering an ox, upon which they were kneeling with their feet in its blood. A little further on two hideous negresses, dressed as marchionesses, covered with ribbons and pompons, their breasts bare, and their heads encumbered with feathers and laces, were quarrelling over a magnificent dress of Chinese satin, which one of them had grasped with her nails while the other hung on to it with her teeth. At their feet a number of little blacks were ransacking a broken trunk from which the dress had been taken.

The rest was incredible to see and impossible to describe. It was a crowd, a mob, a masquerade, a revel, a hell, a terrible buffoonery. Negroes, negresses and mulattoes, in every posture, in all manner of disguises, displayed all sorts of costumes, and what was worse, their nudity.

Here was a pot-bellied, ugly mulatto, of furious mien, attired like the planters, in a waistcoat and trousers of white material, but with a bishop's mitre on his head and a crosier in his hand. Elsewhere three or four negroes with three-cornered hats stuck on their heads and wearing red or blue military coats with the shoulder belts crossed upon their black skin, were harassing an unfortunate militiaman they had captured, and who, with his hands tied behind his back, was being dragged through the town. With loud bursts of laughter they slapped his powdered hair and pulled his long pigtail. Now and then they would stop and force the prisoner to kneel and by signs give him to understand that they were going to shoot him there. Then prodding him with the butts of their rifles they would make him get up again, and go through the same

performance further on.

A number of old mulattresses had formed a ring and were skipping round in the midst of the mob. They were dressed in the nattiest costumes of our youngest and prettiest white women, and in dancing raised their skirts so as to show their lean, shrivelled legs and yellow thighs. Nothing queerer could be imagined than all these charming fashions and finery of the frivolous century of Louis XV., these Watteau shepherdess costumes, furbelows, plumes and laces, upon these black, ugly-faced, flat-nosed, woolly-headed, frightful people. Thus decked out they were no longer even negroes and negresses; they were apes and monkeys.

Add to all this a deafening uproar. Every mouth that was not making a contortion was emitting yells.

I have not finished; you must accept the picture complete to its minutest detail.

Twenty paces from me was an inn, a frightful hovel, whose sign was a wreath of dried herbs hung upon a pickaxe. Nothing but a roof window and three-legged tables. A low ale-house, rickety tables. Negroes and mulattoes were drinking there, intoxicating and besotting themselves, and fraternising. One has to have seen these things to depict them. In front of the tables of the drunkards a fairly young negress was displaying herself. She was dressed in a man's waistcoat, unbuttoned, and a woman's skirt loosely attached. She wore no chemise and her abdomen was bare. On her head was a magistrate's wig. On one shoulder

she carried a parasol, and on the other a rifle with bayonet fixed.

A few whites, stark naked, ran about miserably in the midst of this pandemonium. On a litter was being borne the nude body of a stout man, in whose breast a dagger was sticking as a cross is stuck in the ground.

On every hand were gnomes bronze-coloured, red, black, kneeling, sitting, squatting, heaped together, opening trunks, forcing locks, trying on bracelets, clasping necklaces about their necks, donning coats or dresses, breaking, ripping, tearing. Two blacks were trying to get into the same coat; each had got an arm on, and they were belabouring each other with their disengaged fists. It was the second stage of a sacked town. Robbery and joy had succeeded rage. In a few corners some were still engaged in killing, but the great majority were pillaging. All were carrying off their booty, some in their arms, some in baskets on their backs, some in wheelbarrows.

The strangest thing about it all was that in the midst of the incredible, tumultuous mob, an interminable file of pillagers who were rich and fortunate enough to possess horses and vehicles, marched and deployed, in order and with the solemn gravity of a procession. This was quite a different kind of a medley!

Imagine carts of all kinds with loads of every description: a four-horse carriage full of broken crockery and kitchen utensils, with two or three dressed-up and beplumed negroes on each horse; a big wagon drawn by oxen and loaded with bales carefully corded and packed, damask armchairs,

frying pans and pitchforks, and on top of this pyramid a negress wearing a necklace and with a feather stuck in her hair; an old country coach drawn by a single mule and with a load of ten trunks and, ten negroes, three of whom were upon the animal's back. Mingle with all this bath chairs, litters and sedan chairs piled high with loot of all kinds, precious articles of furniture with the most sordid objects. It was the hut and the drawing-room pitched together pell-mell into a cart, an immense removal by madmen defiling through the town.

What was incomprehensible was the equanimity with which the petty robbers regarded the wholesale robbers. The pillagers afoot stepped aside to let the pillagers in carriages pass.

There were, it is true, a few patrols, if a squad of five or six monkeys disguised as soldiers and each beating at his own sweet will on a drum can be called a patrol.

Near the gate of the town, through which this immense stream of vehicles was issuing, pranced a mulatto, a tall, lean, yellow rascal, rigged out in a judge's gown and white tie, with his sleeves rolled up, a sword in his hand, and his legs bare. He was digging his heels into a fat-bellied horse that pawed about in the crowd. He was the magistrate charged with the duty of preserving order at the gate.

A little further on galloped another group. A negro in a red coat with a blue sash, a general's epaulettes and an immense hat surcharged with tri-colour feathers, was forcing his way through the rabble. He was

preceded by a horrible, helmetted negro boy beating upon a drum, and followed by two mulattoes, one in a colonel's coat, the other dressed as a Turk with a hideous Mardi Gras turban on his ugly Chinese-like head.

Out on the plain I could see battalions of ragged soldiers drawn up round a big house, on which was a crowded balcony draped with a tri-colour flag. It had all the appearance of a balcony from which a speech was being delivered.

Beyond these battalions, this balcony, this flag and this speech was a calm, magnificent prospect-trees green and charming, mountains of superb shape, a cloudless sky, the ocean without a ripple.

Strange and sad it is to see the grimace of man made with such effrontery in presence of the face of God!

III. A DREAM. September 6, 1847.

Last night I dreamed this--we had been talking all the evening about riots, a propos of the troubles in the Rue Saint Honoré:

I entered an obscure passage way. Men passed and elbowed me in the shadow. I issued from the passage. I was in a large square, which was longer than it was wide, and surrounded by a sort of vast wall, or high edifice that resembled a wall, which enclosed it on all four sides. There were neither doors nor windows in this wall; just a few holes here and there. At certain spots it appeared to have been riddled with shot; at others it was cracked and hanging over as though it had been shaken by an earthquake. It had the bare, crumbling and desolate aspect of places in Oriental cities.

No one was in sight. Day was breaking. The stone was grey, the sky also. At the extremity of the place I perceived four obscure objects that looked liked cannon levelled ready for firing.

A great crowd of ragged men and children rushed by me with gestures of terror.

"Save us!" cried one of them. "The grape shot is coming!"

"Where are we?" I asked. "What is this place?"'

"What! do you not belong to Paris?" responded the man. "This is the Palais-Royal."

I gazed about me and, in effect, recognised in this frightful, devastated square in ruins a sort of spectre of the Palais-Royal.

The fleeing men had vanished, I knew not whither.

I also would have fled. I could not. In the twilight I saw a light moving about the cannon.

The square was deserted. I could hear cries of: "Run! they are going to shoot!" but I could not see those who uttered them.

A woman passed by. She was in tatters and carried a child on her back. She did not run. She walked slowly. She was young, cold, pale, terrible.

As she passed me she said: "It is hard lines! Bread is at thirty-four sous, and even at that the cheating bakers do not give full weight."

I saw the light at the end of the square flare up and heard the roar of the cannon. I awoke.

Somebody had just slammed the front door.

IV. THE PANEL WITH THE COAT OF ARMS.

The panel which was opposite the bed had been so blackened by time and effaced by dust that at first he could distinguish only confused lines and undecipherable contours; but the while he was thinking of other things his eyes continually wandered back to it with that mysterious and mechanical persistence which the gaze sometimes has. Singular details began to detach themselves from the confused and obscure whole. His curiosity was roused. When the attention becomes fixed it is like a light; and the tapestry growing gradually less cloudy finally appeared to him in its entirety, and stood out distinctly against the sombre wall, as though vaguely illumined.

It was only a panel with a coat of arms upon it, the blazon, no doubt, of former owners of the château; but this blazon was a strange one.

The escutcheon was at the foot of the panel, and it was not this that first attracted attention. It was of the bizarre shape of German escutcheons of the fifteenth century. It was perpendicular and rested, although rounded at the base, upon a worn, moss covered stone. Of the two upper angles, one bent to the left and curled back upon itself like the turned down corner of a page of an old book; the other, which curled

upward, bore at its extremity an immense and magnificent morion in profile, the chinpiece of which protruded further than the visor, making the helm look like a horrible head of a fish. The crest was formed of two great spreading wings of an eagle, one black, the other red, and amid the feathers of these wings were the membranous, twisted and almost living branches of a huge seaweed which bore more resemblance to a polypus than to a plume. From the middle of the plume rose a buckled strap, which reached to the angle of a rough wooden pitchfork, the handle of which was stuck in the ground, and from there descended to a hand, which held it.

To the left of the escutcheon was the figure of a woman, standing. It was an enchanting vision. She was tall and slim, and wore a robe of brocade which fell in ample folds about her feet, a ruff of many pleats and a necklace of large gems. On her head was an enormous and superb turban of blond hair on which rested a crown of filigree that was not round, and that followed all the undulations of the hair. The face, although somewhat too round and large, was exquisite. The eyes were those of an angel, the mouth was that of a virgin; but in those heavenly eyes there was a terrestrial look and on that virginal mouth was the smile of a woman. In that place, at that hour, on that tapestry, this mingling of divine ecstasy and human voluptuousness had something at once charming and awful about it.

Behind the woman, bending towards her as though whispering in her ear, appeared a man.

Was he a man? All that could be seen of his body--legs, arms and chest--was as hairy as the skin of an ape; his hands and feet were crooked, like the claws of a tiger. As to his visage, nothing more fantastic and frightful could be imagined. Amid a thick, bristling beard, a nose like an owl's beak and a mouth whose corners were drawn by a wild-beast-like rictus were just discernible. The eyes were half hidden by his thick, bushy, curly hair. Each curl ended in a spiral, pointed and twisted like a gimlet, and on peering at them closely it could be seen that each of these gimlets was a little viper.

The man was smiling at the woman. It was disquieting and sinister, the contact of these two equally chimerical beings, the one almost an angel, the other almost a monster; a revolting clash of the two extremes of the ideal. The man held the pitchfork, the woman grasped the strap with her delicate pink fingers.

As to the escutcheon itself, it was sable, that is to say, black, and in the middle of it appeared, with the vague whiteness of silver, a fleshless, deformed thing, which, like the rest, at length became distinct. It was a death's head. The nose was lacking, the orbits of the eyes were hollow and deep, the cavity of the ear could be seen on the right side, all the seams of the cranium could be traced, and there only remained two teeth in the jaws.

But this black escutcheon, this livid death's head, designed with such minuteness of detail that it seemed to stand out from the tapestry, was less lugubrious than the two personages who held up the hideous blazon

and who seemed to be whispering to each other in the shadow.

At the bottom of the panel in a corner was the date: 1503.

V. THE EASTER DAISY. May 29, 1841.

A few days ago I was passing along the Rue de Chartres.* A palisade of boards, which linked two islands of high six-story houses, attracted my attention. It threw upon the pavement a shadow which the sunshine, penetrating between the badly joined boards, striped with beautiful parallel streaks of gold, such as one sees on the fine black satins of the Renaissance. I strolled over to it and peered through the cracks.

* The little Rue de Chartres was situated on the site now occupied by the Pavilion de Rohan. It extended from the open ground of the Carrousel to the Place du Palais-Royal. The old Vaudeville Theatre was situated in it.

This palisade encloses the site on which was built the Vaudeville Theatre, that was destroyed by fire two years ago, in June, 1839.

It was two o'clock in the afternoon, the sun shone hotly, the street was deserted.

A sort of house door, painted grey, still ornamented with rococo carving and which a hundred years ago probably was the entrance to the boudoir of some little mistress, had been adjusted to the palisade. There was only a latch to raise, and I entered the enclosure.

Nothing could be sadder or more desolate. A chalky soil. Here and there blocks of stone that the masons had begun to work upon, but had abandoned, and which were at once white as the stones of sepulchres and mouldy as the stones of ruins. No one in the enclosure. On the walls of the neighbouring houses traces of flame and smoke still visible.

However, since the catastrophe two successive springtides had softened the ground, and in a corner of the trapezium, behind an enormous stone that was becoming tinted with the green of moss, and beneath which were haunts of woodlice, millepeds, and other insects, a little patch of grass had grown in the shadow.

I sat on the stone and bent over the grass.

Oh! my goodness! there was the prettiest little Easter daisy in the world, and flitting about it was a charming microscopical gnat.

This flower of the fields was growing peaceably and in accordance with the sweet law of nature, in the open, in the centre of Paris, between a couple of streets, two paces from the Palais-Royal, four paces from the Carrousel, amid passers-by, omnibuses and the King's carriages.

This wild flower, neighbour of the pavement, opened up a wide field of thought. Who could have foreseen, two years ago, that a daisy would be growing on this spot! If, as on the ground adjoining, there had never been anything but houses, that is to say, proprietors, tenants, and hail

porters, careful residents extinguishing candle and fire at night before going to sleep, never would there have been a wild flower here.

How many things, how many plays that failed or were applauded, how many ruined families, how many incidents, how many adventures, how many catastrophes were summed up in this flower! To all those who lived upon the crowd that was nightly summoned here, what a spectre this flower would have been had it appeared to them two years ago! What a labyrinth is destiny and what mysterious combinations there were that led up to the advent of this enchanting little yellow sun with its white rays.
It required a theatre and a conflagration, which are the gaiety and the terror of a city, one of the most joyous inventions of man and one of the most terrible visitations of God, bursts of laughter for thirty years and whirlwinds of flame for thirty horn's to produce this Easter daisy, the delight of a gnat.