THE MEMOIRS OF VICTOR HUGO

By Victor Hugo

CONTENTS

PREFACE.

AT RHEIMS. 1823-1838.

RECOUNTED BY EYE-WITNESSES

I. THE EXECUTION OF LOUIS XVI.

II. ARRIVAL OF NAPOLEON IN PARIS. March 20, 1815.

VISIONS OF THE REAL.

I. THE HOVEL.

II. PILLAGE. THE REVOLT IN SANTO DOMINGO.

III. A DREAM. September 6, 1847.

IV. THE PANEL WITH THE COAT OF ARMS.

V. THE EASTER DAISY. May 29, 1841.

THEATER

JOANNY. March 7, 1830, Midnight.

MADEMOISELLE MARS.

FREDERICK LEMAITRE.

THE COMIQUES September, 1846

MADEMOISELLE GEORGES. October, 23, 1867.

TABLEAUX VIVANTS

AT THE ACADEMY.

Session of November 23, 1843.

October 8, 1844.

1845.

AN ELECTION SESSION.

March 16, 1847.

April 22, 1847.

October 4, 1847.

December 29, 1848. Friday.

March 26, 1850. Tuesday.

AN ELECTION SESSION. March 28, 1850.

LOVE IN PRISON.

I.

II.

III.

IV.

V.

AT THE TUILERIES. 1844-1848.

I. THE KING. * June, 28, 1844.

July, 1844.

August 4, 1844.

August, 1844.

August, 1844.

September 5, 1844.

September 6, 1844.

September 6, 1844.

September 7, 1844.

1847.

II. THE DUCHESS D'ORLEANS.

February 26, 1844.

August, 1844.

1847.

III. THE PRINCES. 1847.

November 5, 1847.

IN THE CHAMBER OF PEERS. 1846.

GENERAL FABVIER

August 22, 1846.

April 23, 1847.

June 22, 1847.

June 28, 1847.

1848.

January 14, 1848.

THE REVOLUTION OF 1848.

I. THE DAYS OF FEBRUARY.

THE TWENTY-THIRD.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH.

II. EXPULSIONS AND ESCAPES.

III. LOUIS PHILIPPE IN EXILE. May 3, 1848.

IV. KING JEROME.

RELATED BY KING JEROME.

V. THE DAYS OF JUNE.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES.

June 25.

VI. CHATEAUBRIAND.

July 5, 1848.

VII. DEBATES IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON THE DAYS OF JUNE.

SESSION OF NOVEMBER 25, 1848.

1849.

I. THE JARDIN D'HIVER. FEBRUARY, 1849.

II. GENERAL BREA'S MURDERERS. March, 1849.

III. THE SUICIDE OF ANTONIN MOYNE. April, 1849.

IV. A VISIT TO THE OLD CHAMBER OF PEERS. June, 1849.

SKETCHES MADE IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

ODILON BARROT.

MONSIEUR THIERS.

DUFAURE.

CHANGARNIER.

LAGRANGE.

PRUDHON.

BLANQUI.

LAMARTINE. February 23, 1850.

BOULAY DE LA MEURTHE.

DUPIN.

LOUIS BONAPARTE.

I. HIS DEBUTS.

September 26.

October 9.

November 1848.

II. HIS ELEVATION TO THE PRESIDENCY. December 1848.

III. THE FIRST OFFICIAL DINNER. December 24, 1848.

IV. THE FIRST MONTH. January. 1849.

V. FEELING HIS WAY. January, 1849.

February, 1849.

THE SIEGE OF PARIS. EXTRACTS FROM NOTE-BOOKS

THE ASSEMBLY AT BORDEAUX. EXTRACTS FROM NOTE-BOOKS

PREFACE.

This volume of memoirs has a double character—historical and intimate. The life of a period, the XIX Century, is bound up in the life of a man, VICTOR HUGO. As we follow the events set forth we get the impression they made upon the mind of the extraordinary man who recounts them; and of all the personages he brings before us he himself is assuredly not the least interesting. In portraits from the brushes of Rembrandts there are always two portraits, that of the model and that of the painter.

This is not a diary of events arranged in chronological order, nor is it a continuous autobiography. It is less and it is more, or rather, it is better than these. It is a sort of haphazard *chronique* in which only striking incidents and occurrences are brought out, and lengthy and wearisome details are avoided. VICTOR HUGO'S long and chequered life was filled with experiences of the most diverse character—literature and politics, the court and the street, parliament and the theatre, labour, struggles, disappointments, exile and triumphs. Hence we get a series of pictures of infinite variety.

Let us pass the gallery rapidly in review.

It opens in 1825, at Rheims, during the coronation of CHARLES X, with an amusing *causerie* on the manners and customs of the Restoration. The splendour of this coronation ceremony was singularly spoiled by the pitiable taste of those who had charge of it. These worthies took upon themselves to mutilate the sculpture work on the marvellous façade and to "embellish" the austere cathedral with Gothic decorations of cardboard. The century, like the author, was young, and in some things both were incredibly ignorant; the masterpieces of literature were then unknown to the most learned *littérateurs*: CHARLES NODIER had never read the "Romancero", and VICTOR HUGO knew little or nothing about Shakespeare.

At the outset the poet dominates in VICTOR HUGO; he belongs wholly to his creative imagination and to his literary work. It is the theatre; it is his "Cid", and "Hernani", with its stormy performances; it is the group of his actors, Mlle. MARS, Mlle. GEORGES, FREDERICK LEMAITRE, the French KEAN, with more genius; it is the Academy, with its different kind of coteries.

About this time VICTOR HUGO questions, anxiously and not in vain, a passer-by who witnessed the execution of LOUIS XVI, and an officer who escorted Napoleon to Paris on his return from the Island of Elba.

Next, under the title, "Visions of the Real", come some sketches in the master's best style, of things seen "in the mind's eye," as Hamlet says. Among them "The Hovel" will attract attention. This sketch resembles a page from EDGAR POE, although it was written long before POE's works were introduced into France.

With "Love in Prison" VICTOR HUGO deals with social questions, in which he was more interested than in political questions. And yet, in entering the Chamber of Peers he enters public life. His sphere is enlarged, he becomes one of the familiars of the Tuileries. LOUIS PHILIPPE, verbose and full of recollections that he is fond of imparting to others, seeks the company and appreciation of this listener of note, and makes all sorts of confidences to him. The King with his very haughty bonhomie and his somewhat infatuated wisdom; the grave and sweet DUCHESS D'ORLEANS, the boisterous and amiable princes—the whole commonplace and home-like court—are depicted with kindliness but sincerity.

The horizon, however, grows dark, and from 1846 the new peer of France notes the gradual tottering of the edifice of royalty. The revolution of 1848 bursts out. Nothing could be more thrilling than the account, hour by hour, of the events of the three days of February. VICTOR HUGO is not merely a spectator of this great drama, he is an actor in it. He is in the streets, he makes speeches to the people, he seeks to restrain them; he believes, with too good reason, that the Republic is premature, and, in the

Place de la Bastille, before the evolutionary Faubourg Saint Antoine, he dares to proclaim the Regency.

Four months later distress provokes the formidable insurrection of June, which is fatal to the Republic.

The year 1848 is the stormy year. The atmosphere is fiery, men are violent, events are tragical. Battles in the streets are followed by fierce debates in the Assembly. VICTOR HUGO takes part in the mêlée. We witness the scenes with him; he points out the chief actors to us. His “Sketches” made in the National Assembly are “sketched from life” in the fullest acceptation of the term. Twenty lines suffice. ODILON BARROT and CHANGARNIER, PRUDHON and BLANQUI, LAMARTINE and “Monsieur THIERS” come, go, speak—veritable living figures.

The most curious of the figures is LOUIS BONAPARTE when he arrived in Paris and when he assumed the Presidency of the Republic. He is gauche, affected, somewhat ridiculous, distrusted by the Republicans, and scoffed at by the Royalists. Nothing could be more suggestive or more piquant than the inauguration dinner at the Elysee, at which VICTOR HUGO was one of the guests, and the first and courteous relations between the author of “Napoleon the Little” and the future Emperor who was to inflict twenty years of exile upon him.

But now we come to the year which VICTOR HUGO has designated “The Terrible Year,” the war, and the siege of Paris. This part of the volume is made up of extracts from note-books, private and personal notes, dotted down from day to day. Which is to say that they do not constitute an account of the oft-related episodes of the siege, but tell something new, the little side of great events, the little incidents of everyday life, the number of shells fired into the city and what they cost, the degrees of cold, the price of provisions, what is being said, sung, and eaten, and at the same time give the psychology of the great city, its illusions, revolts, wrath, anguish, and also its gaiety; for during these long months Paris never gave up hope and preserved an heroic cheerfulness.

On the other hand a painful note runs through the diary kept during the meeting of the Assembly at Bordeaux. France is not only vanquished, she is mutilated. The conqueror demands a ransom of milliards—it is his right, the right of the strongest; but he tears from her two provinces, with their inhabitants devoted to France; it is a return towards barbarism. VICTOR HUGO withdraws indignantly from the Assembly which has agreed to endorse the Treaty of Frankfort. And three days after his resignation he sees CHARLES HUGO, his eldest son, die a victim to the privations of the siege. He is stricken at once in his love of country and in his paternal love, and one can say that in

these painful pages, more than in any of the others, the book is history that has been lived.

PAUL MAURICE.

Paris, Sept. 15, 1899.

AT RHEIMS. 1823-1838.

It was at Rheims that I heard the name of Shakespeare for the first time. It was pronounced by Charles Nodier. That was in 1825, during the coronation of Charles X.

No one at that time spoke of Shakespeare quite seriously. Voltaire's ridicule of him was law. Mme. de Staël had adopted Germany, the great land of Kant, of Schiller, and of Beethoven. Ducis was at the height of his triumph; he and Delille were seated side by side in academic glory, which is not unlike theatrical glory. Ducis had succeeded in doing something with Shakespeare; he had made him possible; he had extracted some "tragedies" from him; Ducis impressed one as being a man who could chisel an Apollo out of Moloch. It was the time when Iago was called Pezare; Horatio, Norceste; and Desdemona, Hedelmone. A charming and very witty woman, the Duchess de Duras, used to say: "Desdemona, what an ugly name! Fie!" Talma, Prince of Denmark, in a tunic of lilac satin trimmed with fur, used to exclaim: "Avaunt! Dread spectre!" The poor spectre, in fact, was only tolerated behind the scenes. If it had ventured to put in the slightest appearance M. Evariste Dumoulin would have given it a severe talking to. Some Génin or other would have hurled at it the first cobble-stone he could lay his hand on—a line from Boileau: *L'esprit n'est point ému de ce qu'il ne croit pas*. It was replaced on the stage by an "urn" that Talma carried under his arm. A spectre is ridiculous; "ashes," that's the style! Are not the "ashes" of Napoleon still spoken of? Is not the translation of the coffin from St. Helena to the Invalides alluded to as "the return of the ashes"? As to the witches of Macbeth, they were rigorously barred. The hall-porter of the Théâtre-Français had his orders. They would have been received with their own brooms.

I am mistaken, however, in saying that I did not know Shakespeare. I knew him as everybody else did, not having read him, and having treated him with ridicule. My childhood began, as everybody's childhood begins, with prejudices. Man finds

prejudices beside his cradle, puts them from him a little in the course of his career, and often, alas! takes to them again in his old age.

During this journey in 1825 Charles Nodier and I passed our time recounting to each other the Gothic tales and romances that have taken root in Rheims. Our memories and sometimes our imaginations, clubbed together. Each of us furnished his legend. Rheims is one of the most impossible towns in the geography of story. Pagan lords have lived there, one of whom gave as a dower to his daughter the strips of land in Borysthenes called the "race-courses of Achilles." The Duke de Guyenne, in the fabliaux, passes through Rheims on his way to besiege Babylon; Babylon, moreover, which is very worthy of Rheims, is the capital of the Admiral Gaudissius. It is at Rheims that the deputation sent by the Locri Ozolae to Apollonius of Tyana, "high priest of Bellona," "disembarks." While discussing this disembarkation we argued concerning the Locri Ozolae. These people, according to Nodier, were called the Fetidae because they were half monkeys; according to myself, because they inhabited the marshes of Phocis. We reconstructed on the spot the tradition of St. Remigius and his adventures with the fairy Mazelane. The Champagne country is rich in tales. Nearly all the old Gaulish fables had their origin in this province. Rheims is the land of chimeras. It is perhaps for this reason that kings were crowned there.

Legends are so natural to this place, are in such good soil, that they immediately began to germinate upon the coronation of Charles X. itself. The Duke of Northumberland, the representative of England at the coronation ceremonies, was reputed fabulously wealthy. Wealthy and English, how could he be otherwise than *a la mode*? The English, at that period, were very popular in French society, although not among the people. They were liked in certain salons because of Waterloo, which was still fairly recent, and to Anglicize the French language was a recommendation in ultra-fashionable society. Lord Northumberland, therefore, long before his arrival, was popular and legendary in Rheims. A coronation was a godsend to Rheims. A flood of opulent people inundated the city. It was the Nile that was passing. Landlords rubbed their hands with glee.

There was in Rheims in those days, and there probably is to-day, at the corner of a street giving on to the square, a rather large house with a carriage-entrance and a balcony, built of stone in the royal style of Louis XIV., and facing the cathedral. About this house and Lord Northumberland the following was related:

In January, 1825, the balcony of the house bore the notice: "House for Sale." All at once the "Moniteur" announced that the coronation of Charles X. would take place at Rheims in the spring. There was great rejoicing in the city. Notices of rooms to let were

immediately hung out everywhere. The meanest room was to bring in at least sixty francs a day. One morning a man of irreproachable appearance, dressed in black, with a white cravat, an Englishman who spoke broken French, presented himself at the house in the square. He saw the proprietor, who eyed him attentively.

"You wish to sell your house?" queried the Englishman.

"How much?"

"Ten thousand francs."

"But I don't want to buy it."

"What do you want, then?"

"Only to hire it."

"That's different. For a year?"

"For six months?"

"No. I want to hire it for three days."

"How much will you charge?"

"Thirty thousand francs."

The gentleman was Lord Northumberland's steward, who was looking for a lodging for his master for the coronation ceremonies. The proprietor had smelled the Englishman and guessed the steward. The house was satisfactory, and the proprietor held out for his price; the Englishman, being only a Norman, gave way to the Champenois; the duke paid the 30,000 francs, and spent three days in the house, at the rate of 400 francs an hour.

Nodier and I were two explorers. When we travelled together, as we occasionally did, we went on voyages of discovery, he in search of rare books, I in search of ruins. He would go into ecstasies over a *Cymbalum Mound* with margins, and I over a defaced portal. We had given each other a devil. He said to me: "You are possessed of the demon Ogive." "And you," I answered, "of the demon Elzevir."

At Soissons, while I was exploring Saint Jean-des-Vignes, he had discovered, in a suburb, a ragpicker. The ragpicker's basket is the hyphen between rags and paper, and the ragpicker is the hyphen between the beggar and the philosopher. Nodier who gave to the poor, and sometimes to philosophers, had entered the ragpicker's abode. The ragpicker turned out to be a book dealer. Among the books Nodier noticed a rather

thick volume of six or eight hundred pages, printed in Spanish, two columns to a page, badly damaged by worms, and the binding missing from the back. The ragpicker, asked what he wanted for it, replied, trembling lest the price should be refused: “Five francs,” which Nodier paid, also trembling, but with joy. This book was the *Romancero* complete. There are only three complete copies of this edition now in existence. One of these a few years ago sold for 7,500 francs. Moreover, worms are vying with each other in eating up these three remaining copies. The peoples, feeders of princes, have something else to do than spend their money to preserve for new editions the legacies of human intellect, and the *Romancero*, being merely an Iliad, has not been reprinted.

During the three days of the coronation there were great crowds in the streets of Rheims, at the Archbishop’s palace, and on the promenades along the Vesdre, eager to catch a glimpse of Charles X. I said to Charles Nodier: “Let us go and see his majesty the cathedral.”

Rheims is a proverb in Gothic Christian art. One speaks of the “nave of Amiens, the bell towers of Chartres, the façade of Rheims.” A month before the coronation of Charles X a swarm of masons, perched on ladders and clinging to knotted ropes, spent a week smashing with hammers every bit of jutting sculpture on the façade, for fear a stone might become detached from one of these reliefs and fall on the King’s head. The debris littered the pavement and was swept away. For a long time I had in my possession a head of Christ that fell in this way. It was stolen from me in 1851. This head was unfortunate; broken by a king, it was lost by an exile.

Nodier was an admirable antiquary, and we explored the cathedral from top to bottom, encumbered though it was with scaffolding, painted scenery, and stage side lights. The nave being only of stone, they had hidden it by an edifice of cardboard, doubtless because the latter bore a greater resemblance to the monarchy of that period. For the coronation of the King of France they had transformed a church into a theatres and it has since been related, with perfect accuracy, that on arriving at the entrance I asked of the bodyguard on duty: “Where is my box?”

This cathedral of Rheims is beautiful above all cathedrals. On the façade are kings; on the absis, people being put to the torture by executioners. Coronation of kings with an accompaniment of victims. The façade is one of the most magnificent symphonies ever sung by that music, architecture. One dreams for a long time before this oratorio. Looking up from the square you see at a giddy height, at the base of the two towers, a row of gigantic statues representing kings of France. In their hands they hold the sceptre, the sword, the hand of justice, and the globe, and on their heads are antique

open crowns with bulging gems. It is superb and grim. You push open the bell-ringer's door, climb the winding staircase, "the screw of St. Giles," to the towers, to the high regions of prayer; you look down and the statues are below you. The row of kings is plunging into the abysm. You hear the whispering of the enormous bells, which vibrate at the kiss of vague zephyrs from the sky.

One day I gazed down from the top of the tower through an embrasure. The entire façade sheered straight below me. I perceived in the depth, on top of a long stone support that extended down the wall directly beneath me to the escarpment, so that its form was lost, a sort of round basin. Rain-water had collected there and formed a narrow mirror at the bottom; there were also a tuft of grass with flowers in it, and a swallow's nest. Thus in a space only two feet in diameter were a lake, a garden and a habitation—a birds' paradise. As I gazed the swallow was giving water to her brood. Round the upper edge of the basin were what looked like crenelles, and between these the swallow had built her nest. I examined these crenelles. They had the form of fleurs-de-lys. The support was a statue. This happy little world was the stone crown of an old king. And if God were asked: "Of what use was this Lothario, this Philip, this Charles, this Louis, this emperor, this king?" God peradventure would reply: "He had this statue made and lodged a swallow."

The coronation occurred. This is not the place to describe it. Besides my recollections of the ceremony of May 27, 1825, have been recounted elsewhere by another, more ably than I could set them forth.

Suffice it to say that it was a radiant day. God seemed to have given his assent to the fête. The long clear windows—for there are no more stained-glass windows at Rheims—let in bright daylight; all the light of May was in the church. The Archbishop was covered with gilding and the altar with rays. Marshal de Lauriston, Minister of the King's Household, rejoiced at the sunshine. He came and went, as busy as could be, and conversed in low tones with Lecointe and Hittorf, the architects. The fine morning afforded the occasion to say, "the sun of the coronation," as one used to say "the sun of Austerlitz." And in the resplendent light a profusion of lamps and tapers found means to beam.

At one moment Charles X., attired in a cherry-coloured simar striped with gold, lay at full length at the Archbishop's feet. The peers of France on the right, embroidered with gold, beplumed in the Henri IV. style, and wearing long mantles of velvet and ermine, and the Deputies on the left, in dress-coats of blue cloth with silver fleurs-de-lys on the collars, looked on.

About all the forms of chance were represented there: the Papal benediction by the cardinals, some of whom had witnessed the coronation of Napoleon; victory by the marshals; heredity by the Duke d'Angoulême, dauphin; happiness by M. de Talleyrand, lame but able to get about; the rising and falling of stocks by M. de Villèle; joy by the birds that were released and flew away, and the knaves in a pack of playing-cards by the four heralds.

A vast carpet embroidered with fleurs-de-lys, made expressly for the occasion, and called the "coronation carpet," covered the old flagstones from one end of the cathedral to the other and concealed the tombstones in the pavement. Thick, luminous smoke of incense filled the nave. The birds that had been set at liberty flew wildly about in this cloud.

The King changed his costume six or seven times. The first prince of the blood, Louis Philippe, Duke d'Orleans, aided him. The Duke de Bordeaux, who was five years old, was in a gallery.

The pew in which Nodier and I were seated adjoined those of the Deputies. In the middle of the ceremony, just before the King prostrated himself at the feet of the Archbishop, a Deputy for the Doubs department, named M. Hémonin, turned towards Nodier, who was close to him, and with his finger on his lips, as a sign that he did not wish to disturb the Archbishop's orisons by speaking, slipped something into my friend's hand. This something was a book. Nodier took it and glanced over it.

"What is it?" I whispered.

"Nothing very precious," he replied. "An odd volume of Shakespeare, Glasgow edition."

One of the tapestries from the treasure of the church hanging exactly opposite to us represented a not very historical interview between John Lackland and Philip Augustus. Nodier turned over the leaves of the book for a few minutes, then pointed to the tapestry.

"You see that tapestry?"

"Yes."

"Do you know what it represents?"

"No."

"John Lackland."

“Well, what of it?”

“John Lackland is also in this book.”

The volume, which was in sheep binding and worn at the corners, was indeed a copy of *King John*.

M. Hémonin turned to Nodier and said: “I paid six sous for it.”

In the evening the Duke of Northumberland gave a ball. It was a magnificent, fairylike spectacle. This Arabian Nights ambassador brought one of these nights to Rheims. Every woman found a diamond in her bouquet.

I could not dance. Nodier had not danced since he was sixteen years of age, when a great aunt went into ecstasies over his terpsichorean efforts and congratulated him in the following terms: “*Tu est charmant, tu danses comme rim chou*!” We did not go to Lord Northumberland’s ball.

“What shall we do tonight?” said I to Nodier. He held up his odd volume and answered:

“Let us read this.”

We read.

That is to say, Nodier read. He knew English (without being able to speak it, I believe) enough to make it out. He read aloud, and translated as he read. At intervals, while he rested, I took the book bought from the ragpicker of Soissons, and read passages from the *Romancero*. Like Nodier, I translated as I read. We compared the English with the Castilian book; we confronted the dramatic with the epic. Nodier stood up for Shakespeare, whom he could read in English, and I for the *Romancero*, which I could read in Spanish. We brought face to face, he the bastard Faulconbridge, I the bastard Mudarra. And little by little in contradicting we convinced each other, and Nodier became filled with enthusiasm for the *Romancero*, and I with admiration for Shakespeare.

Listeners arrived. One passes the evening as best one can in a provincial town on a coronation day when one doesn’t go to the ball. We formed quite a little club. There was an academician, M. Roger; a man of letters, M. d’Eckstein; M. de Marcellus, friend and country neighbour of my father, who poked fun at his royalism and mine; good old Marquis d’Herbouville, and M. Hémonin, donor of the book that cost six sous.

“It isn’t worth the money!” exclaimed M. Roger.

The conversation developed into a debate. Judgment was passed upon *King John*. M. de Marcellus declared that the assassination of Arthur was an improbable incident. It was pointed out to him that it was a matter of history. It was with difficulty that he became reconciled to it. For kings to kill each other was impossible. To M. de Marcellus's mind the murdering of kings began on January 21. Regicide was synonymous with '93. To kill a king was an unheard-of thing that the "populace" alone were capable of doing. No king except Louis XVI. had ever been violently put to death. He, however, reluctantly admitted the case of Charles I. In his death also he saw the hand of the populace. All the rest was demagogic lying and calumny.

Although as good a royalist as he, I ventured to insinuate that the sixteenth century had existed, and that it was the period when the Jesuits had clearly propounded the question of "bleeding the basilic vein," that is to say of cases in which the king ought to be slain; a question which, once brought forward, met with such success that it resulted in two kings, Henry III. and Henry IV., being stabbed, and a Jesuit, Father Guignard, being hanged.

Then we passed to the details of the drama, situations, scenes, and personages. Nodier pointed out that Faulconbridge is the same person spoken of by Mathieu Paris as Falcasius de Trente, bastard of Richard Coeur de Lion. Baron d'Eckstein, in support of this, reminded his hearers that, according to Hollinshed, Faulconbridge, or Falcasius, slew the Viscount de Limoges to avenge his father Richard, who had been wounded unto death at the siege of Chaluz; and that this castle of Chaluz, being the property of the Viscount de Limoges, it was only right that the Viscount, although absent, should be made to answer with his head for the falling of an arrow or a stone from the castle upon the King. M. Roger laughed at the cry of "Austria Limoges" in the play and at Shakespeare's confounding the Viscount de Limoges with the Duke of Austria. M. Roger scored the success of the evening and his laughter settled the matter.

The discussion having taken this turn I said nothing further. This revelation of Shakespeare had moved me. His grandeur impressed me. *King John* is not a masterpiece, but certain scenes are lofty and powerful, and in the motherhood of Constance there are bursts of genius.

The two books, open and reversed, remained lying upon the table. The company had ceased to read in order to laugh. Nodier at length became silent like myself. We were beaten. The gathering broke up with a laugh, and our visitors went away. Nodier and I remained alone and pensive, thinking of the great works that are unappreciated, and

amazed that the intellectual education of the civilized peoples, and even our own, his and mine, had advanced no further than this.

At last Nodier broke the silence. I can see his smile now as he said:

“They know nothing about the Romancero!”

I replied:

“And they deride Shakespeare!”

Thirteen years later chance took me to Rheims again.

It was on August 28, 1838. It will be seen further on why this date impressed itself on my memory.

I was returning from Vouziers, and seeing the two towers of Rheims in the distance, was seized with a desire to visit the cathedral again. I therefore went to Rheims.

On arriving in the cathedral square I saw a gun drawn up near the portal and beside it gunners with lighted fuses in their hands. As I had seen artillery there on May 27, 1825, I supposed it was customary to keep a cannon in the square, and paid little attention to it. I passed on and entered the church.

A beadle in violet sleeves, a sort of priest, took me in charge and conducted me all over the church. The stones were dark, the statues dismal, the altar mysterious. No lamps competed with the sun. The latter threw upon the sepulchral stones in the pavement the long white silhouettes of the windows, which through the melancholy obscurity of the rest of the church looked like phantoms lying upon these tombs. No one was in the church. Not a whisper, not a footfall could be heard.

This solitude saddened the heart and enraptured the soul. There were in it abandonment, neglect, oblivion, exile, and sublimity. Gone the whirl of 1825. The church had resumed its dignity and its calmness. Not a piece of finery, not a vestment, not anything. It was bare and beautiful. The lofty vault no longer supported a canopy. Ceremonies of the palace arc not suited to these severe places; a coronation ceremony is merely tolerated; these noble ruins are not made to be courtiers. To rid it of the throne and withdraw the king from the presence of God increases the majesty of a temple. Louis XIV. hides Jehovah from sight.

Withdraw the priest as well. All that eclipsed it having been taken away, you will see the light of day direct. Orisons, rites, bibles, formulas, refract and decompose the sacred light. A dogma is a dark chamber. Through a religion you see the solar spectre of God, but not God. Desuetude and crumbling enhance the grandeur of a temple. As

human religion retires from this mysterious and jealous edifice, divine religion enters it. Let solitude reign in it and you will feel heaven there. A sanctuary deserted and in ruins, like Jumièges, like St. Bertin, like Villers, like Holyrood, like Montrose Abbey, like the temple of Paestum, like the hypogeum of Thebes, becomes almost an element, and possesses the virginal and religious grandeur of a savannah or of a forest. There something of the real Presence is to be found.

Such places are truly holy; man has meditated and communed with himself therein. What they contained of truth has remained and become greater. The *à-peu-prês* has no longer any voice. Extinct dogmas have not left their ashes; the prayer of the past has left its perfume. There is something of the absolute in prayer, and because of this, that which was a synagogue, that which was a mosque, that which was a pagoda, is venerable. A stone on which that great anxiety that is called prayer has left its impress is never treated with ridicule by the thinker. The trace left by those who have bowed down before the infinite is always imposing.

In strolling about the cathedral I had climbed to the triforium, then under the arched buttresses, then to the top of the edifice. The timber-work under the pointed roof is admirable; but less remarkable than the “forest” of Amiens. It is of chestnut-wood.

These cathedral attics are of grim appearance. One could almost lose one’s self in the labyrinths of rafters, squares, traverse beams, superposed joists, traves, architraves, girders, madriers, and tangled lines and curves. One might imagine one’s self to be in the skeleton of Babel. The place is as bare as a garret and as wild as a cavern. The wind whistles mournfully through it. Rats are at home there. The spiders, driven from the timber by the odour of chestnut, make their home in the stone of the basement where the church ends and the roof begins, and low down in the obscurity spin their webs in which you catch your face. One respires a mysterious dust, and the centuries seem to mingle with one’s breath. The dust of churches is not like the dust of houses; it reminds one of the tomb, it is composed of ashes.

The flooring of these colossal garrets has crevices in it through which one can look down into the abysm, the church, below. In the corners that one cannot explore are pools of shadow, as it were. Birds of prey enter through one window and go out through the other. Lightning is also familiar with these high, mysterious regions. Sometimes it ventures too near, and then it causes the conflagration of Rouen, of Chartres, or of St. Paul’s, London.

My guide the beadle preceded me. He looked at the dung on the floor, and tossed his head. He knew the bird by its manure, and growled between his teeth:

“This is a rook; this is a hawk; this is an owl.”

“You ought to study the human heart,” said I.

A frightened bat flew before us.

While walking almost at hazard, following this bat, looking at this manure of the birds, respiring this dust, in this obscurity among the cobwebs and scampering rats, we came to a dark corner in which, on a big wheelbarrow, I could just distinguish a long package tied with string and that looked like a piece of rolled up cloth.

“What is that?” I asked the beadle.

“That,” said he, “is Charles X.‘s coronation carpet.”

I stood gazing at the thing, and as I did so—I am telling truthfully what occurred—there was a deafening report that sounded like a thunder-clap, only it came from below. It shook the timber-work and echoed and re-echoed through the church. It was succeeded by a second roar, then a third, at regular intervals. I recognised the thunder of the cannon, and remembered the gun I had seen in the square.

I turned to my guide:

“What is that noise?”

“The telegraph has been at work and the cannon has been fired.”

“What does it mean?” I continued.

“It means,” said the beadle, “that a grandson has just been born to Louis Philippe.”

The cannon announced the birth of the Count de Paris.

These are my recollections of Rheims.

RECOUNTED BY EYE-WITNESSES

I. THE EXECUTION OF LOUIS XVI.

II. THE ARRIVAL OF NAPOLEON I IN PARIS IN 1815.

I. THE EXECUTION OF LOUIS XVI.

There were certain characteristic details connected with the execution of Louis XVI. that are not recorded in history. They were recounted to me by an eye-witness* and are here published for the first time.

* *This eye witness was one Leboucher, who arrived in Paris from Bourges in December, 1792, and was present at the execution of Louis XVI. In 1840 he recounted to Victor Hugo most of these details which, as can easily be imagined, had impressed themselves deeply upon his mind.*

The scaffold was not, as is generally believed, erected in the very centre of the Place, on the spot where the obelisk now stands, but on a spot which the decree of the Provisional Executive Council designates in these precise terms: "between the pied d'estal and the Champs-Elysées."

What was this pedestal? Present generations who have seen so many things happen, so many statues crumble and so many pedestals overthrown do not quite know what meaning to give to this very vague designation, and would be embarrassed to tell for what monument the mysterious stone which the Executive Council of the Revolution laconically calls the "pied d'estal" served as a base. This stone had borne the statue of Louis XV.

Let it be noted *en passant* that this strange Place which had been called successively the Place Louis XV., Place de la Revolution, Place de la Concorde, Place Louis XVI., Place du Garde-Meuble and Place des Champs-Elysées, and which could not retain any name, could not keep any monument either. It has had the statue of Louis XV., which disappeared; an expiatory fountain which was to have laved the bloody centre of the Place was projected, but not even the first stone was laid; a rough model of a monument to the Charter was made: we have never seen anything but the socle of this monument. Just when a bronze figure representing the Charter of 1814 was about to be erected, the Revolution of July arrived with the Charter of 1830. The pedestal of Louis XVIII. vanished, as fell the pedestal of Louis XV. Now on this same spot we have placed the obelisk of Sesostris. It required thirty centuries for the great Desert to

engulf half of it; how many years will the Place de la Revolution require to swallow it up altogether?

In the Year II of the Republic, what the Executive Council called the “pied d’estal” was nought but a shapeless and hideous block. It was a sort of sinister symbol of the royalty itself. Its ornaments of marble and bronze had been wrenched off, the bare stone was everywhere split and cracked. On the four sides were large square gaps showing the places where the destroyed bas reliefs had been. Scarcely could a remnant of the entablature still be distinguished at the summit of the pedestal, and beneath the cornice a string of ovolos, defaced and worn, was surmounted by what architects call a “chaplet of paternosters.” On the table of the pedestal one could perceive a heap of debris of all kinds, in which tufts of grass were growing here and there. This pile of nameless things had replaced the royal statue.

The scaffold was raised a few steps distant from this ruin, a little in rear of it. It was covered with long planks, laid transversely, that masked the framework. A ladder without banisters or balustrade was at the back, and what they venture to call the head of this horrible construction was turned towards the Garde-Meuble. A basket of cylindrical shape, covered with leather, was placed at the spot where the head of the King was to fall, to receive it; and at one of the angles of the entablature, to the right of the ladder, could be discerned a long wicker basket prepared for the body, and on which one of the executioners, while waiting for the King, had laid his hat.

Imagine, now, in the middle of the Place, these two lugubrious things, a few paces from each other: the pedestal of Louis XV. and the scaffold of Louis XVI.; that is to say, the ruins of royalty dead and the martyrdom of royalty living; around these two things four formidable lines of armed men, preserving a great empty square in the midst of an immense crowd; to the left of the scaffold, the Champs-Elysees, to the right the Tuileries, which, neglected and left at the mercy of the public had become an unsightly waste of dirt heaps and trenches; and over these melancholy edifices, over these black, leafless trees, over this gloomy multitude, the bleak, sombre sky of a winter morning, and one will have an idea of the aspect which the Place de la Revolution presented at the moment when Louis XVI., in the carriage of the Mayor of Paris, dressed in white, the Book of Psalms clasped in his hands, arrived there to die at a few minutes after ten o’clock on January 21, 1793.

Strange excess of abasement and misery: the son of so many kings, bound and sacred like the kings of Egypt, was to be consumed between two layers of quicklime, and to this French royalty, which at Versailles had had a throne of gold and at St. Denis sixty sarcophagi of granite, there remained but a platform of pine and a wicker coffin.

Here are some unknown details. The executioners numbered four; two only performed the execution; the third stayed at the foot of the ladder, and the fourth was on the waggon which was to convey the King's body to the Madeleine Cemetery and which was waiting a few feet from the scaffold.

The executioners wore breeches, coats in the French style as the Revolution had modified it, and three-cornered hats with enormous tri-colour cockades.

They executed the King with their hats on, and it was without taking his hat off that Samson, seizing by the hair the severed head of Louis XVI., showed it to the people, and for a few moments let the blood from it trickle upon the scaffold.

At the same time his valet or assistant undid what were called "les sangles" (straps); and, while the crowd gazed alternately upon the King's body, dressed entirely in white, as I have said, and still attached, with the hands bound behind the back, to the swing board, and upon that head whose kind and gentle profile stood out against the misty, sombre trees of the Tuileries, two priests, commissaries of the Commune, instructed to be present, as Municipal officials, at the execution of the King, sat in the Mayor's carriage, laughing and conversing in loud tones. One of them, Jacques Roux, derisively drew the other's attention to Capet's fat calves and abdomen.

The armed men who surrounded the scaffold had only swords and pikes; there were very few muskets. Most of them wore large round hats or red caps. A few platoons of mounted dragoons in uniform were mingled with these troops at intervals. A whole squadron of dragoons was ranged in battle array beneath the terraces of the Tuileries. What was called the Battalion of Marseilles formed one of the sides of the square.

The guillotine—it is always with repugnance that one writes this hideous word—would appear to the craftsmen of to-day to be very badly constructed. The knife was simply suspended to a pulley fixed in the centre of the upper beam. This pulley and a rope the thickness of a man's thumb constituted the whole apparatus. The knife, which was not very heavily weighted, was of small dimensions and had a curved edge, which gave it the form of a reversed Phrygian cap. No hood was placed to shelter the King's head and at the same time to hide and circumscribe its fall. All that crowd could see the head of Louis XVI. drop, and it was thanks to chance, thanks perhaps to the smallness of the knife which diminished the violence of the shock, that it did not bound beyond the basket to the pavement. Terrible incident, which often occurred at executions during the Terror. Nowadays assassins and poisoners are decapitated more decently. Many improvements in the guillotine have been made.

At the spot where the King's head fell, a long rivulet of blood streamed down the planks of the scaffold to the pavement. When the execution was over, Samson threw to the people the King's coat, which was of white molleton, and in an instant it disappeared, torn by a thousand hands.

At the moment when the head of Louis XVI. fell, the Abbé Edgeworth was still near the King. The blood spirted upon him. He hastily donned a brown overcoat, descended from the scaffold and was lost in the crowd. The first row of spectators opened before him with a sort of wonder mingled with respect; but after he had gone a few steps, the attention of everybody was still so concentrated upon the centre of the Place where the event had just been accomplished, that nobody took any further notice of Abbé Edgeworth.

The poor priest, enveloped in his thick coat which concealed the blood with which he was covered, fled in bewilderment, walking as one in a dream and scarcely knowing where he was going. However, with that sort of instinct which preserves somnambulists he crossed the river, took the Rue du Bac, then the Rue du Regard and thus managed to reach the house of Mme. de Lézardière, near the Barrière du Maine.

Arrived there he divested himself of his soiled clothing and remained for several hours, in a state of collapse, without being able to collect a thought or utter a word.

Some Royalists who rejoined him, and who had witnessed the execution, surrounded the Abbé Edgeworth and reminded him of the adieu he had addressed to the King: "Son of St. Louis, ascend to heaven!" These words, however, memorable though they were, had left no trace on the mind of him who had uttered them. "We heard them," said the witnesses of the catastrophe, still moved and thrilled. "It is possible," he replied, "but I do not remember having said such a thing."

Abbé Edgeworth lived a long life without ever being able to remember whether he really did pronounce these words.

Mme. de Lézardière, who had been seriously ill for more than a month, was unable to support the shock of the death of Louis XVI. She died on the very night of January 21.

II. ARRIVAL OF NAPOLEON IN PARIS. March 20, 1815.

History and contemporaneous memoirs have truncated, or badly related, or even omitted altogether, certain details of the arrival of the Emperor in Paris on March 20,

1815. But living witnesses are to be met with who saw them and who rectify or complete them.

During the night of the 19th, the Emperor left Sens. He arrived at three o'clock in the morning at Fontainebleau. Towards five o'clock, as day was breaking, he reviewed the few troops he had taken with him and those who had rallied to him at Fontainebleau itself. They were of every corps, of every regiment, of all arms, a little of the Grand Army, a little of the Guard. At six o'clock, the review being over, one hundred and twenty lancers mounted their horses and went on ahead to wait for him at Essonnes. These lancers were commanded by Colonel Galbois, now lieutenant general, and who has recently distinguished himself at Constantine.

They had been at Essonnes scarcely three-quarters of an hour, resting their horses, when the carriage of the Emperor arrived. The escort of lancers were in their saddles in the twinkling of an eye and surrounded the carriage, which immediately started off again without having changed horses. The Emperor stopped on the way at the large villages to receive petitions from the inhabitants and the submission of the authorities, and sometimes to listen to harangues. He was on the rear seat of the carriage, with General Bertrand in full uniform seated on his left. Colonel Galbois galloped beside the door on the Emperor's side; the door on Bertrand's side was guarded by a quartermaster of lancers named Ferrès, to-day a wineshop keeper at Puteaux, a former and very brave hussar whom the Emperor knew personally and addressed by name. No one on the road approached the Emperor. Everything that was intended for him passed through General Bertrand's hands.

Three or four leagues beyond Essonnes the imperial cortege found the road suddenly barred by General Colbert, at the head of two squadrons and three regiments echelonned towards Paris.

General Colbert had been the colonel of the regiment of lancers from which the detachment that escorted the Emperor had been drawn. He recognised his lancers and his lancers recognised him. They cried: "General, come over to us!" The General answered: "My children, do your duty, I am doing mine." Then he turned rein and went off to the right across country with a few mounted men who followed him. He could not have resisted; the regiments behind him were shouting: "Long live the Emperor!"

This meeting only delayed Napoleon a few minutes. He continued on his way. The Emperor, surrounded only by his one hundred and twenty lancers, thus reached Paris. He entered by the Barrière de Fontainebleau, took the large avenue of trees which is on the left, the Boulevard dim Mont-Parnasse, the other boulevards to the Invalides, then the Pont do la Concorde, the quay along the river and the gate of the Louvre.

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

VISIONS OF THE REAL.

I. THE HOVEL.

II. PILLAGE.

III. A DREAM.

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.

THEATER

I. JOANNY.

II. MADEMOISELLE MARS.

III. FREDERICK LEMAITRE.

IV. THE COMIQUES.

V. MADEMOISELLE GEORGES.

VI. TABLEAUX VIVANTS.

JOANNY. March 7, 1830, Midnight.

They have been playing “Hernani” at the Théâtre-Français since February 25. The receipts for each performance have been five thousand francs. The public every night hisses all the verses. It is a rare uproar. The parterre hoots, the boxes burst with laughter. The actors are abashed and hostile; most of them ridicule what they have to say. The press has been practically unanimous every morning in making fun of the piece and the author. If I enter a reading room I cannot pick up a paper without seeing: “Absurd as ‘Hernani’; silly, false, bombastic, pretentious, extravagant and nonsensical as ‘Hernani’.” If I venture into the corridors of the theatre while the performance is in progress I see spectators issue from their boxes and slam the doors indignantly. Mlle. Mars plays her part honestly and faithfully, but laughs at it, even in my presence. Michelot plays his resignedly and laughs at it behind my back. There is not a scene shifter, not a super, not a lamp lighter but points his finger at me.

To-day I dined with Joanny, who had invited me. Joanny plays Ruy Gomez. He lives at No. 1 Rue du Jardinet, with a young seminarist, his nephew. The dinner party was sober and cordial. There were some journalists there, among others M. Merle, the husband of Mme. Dorval. After dinner, Joanny, who has the most beautiful white hair in the world, rose, filled his glass, turned towards me. I was on his right hand. Here literally is what he said to me; I have just returned home and I write his words:

“Monsieur Victor Hugo, the old man, now unknown, who two hundred years ago filled the role of Don Diègue in ‘Le Cid’ was not more penetrated with respect and admiration in presence of the great Corneille than the old man who plays Don Buy Gomez is to-day in your presence.”

MADEMOISELLE MARS.

In her last illness Mlle. Mars was often delirious. One evening the doctor arrived. She was in the throes of a high fever, and her mind was wandering. She prattled about the theatre, her mother, her daughter, her niece Georgina, about all that she held dear; she laughed, wept, screamed, sighed deeply.

The doctor approached her bed and said to her: “Dear lady, calm yourself, it is I.” She did not recognise him and her mind continued to wander. He went on: “Come, show me your tongue, open your mouth.” Mlle. Mars gazed at him, opened her mouth and said: “Here, look. Oh! all my teeth are my very own!”

Célimène still lived.

FREDERICK LEMAITRE.

Frédérick Lemaitre is cross, morose and kind. He lives in retirement with his children and his mistress, who at present is Mlle. Clarisse Miroy.

Frédérick likes the table. He never invites anybody to dinner except Porcher, the chief of the claque.* Fredérick and Porcher “thee-thou” each other. Porcher has common sense, good manners, and plenty of money, which he lends gallantly to authors whose rent is due. Porcher is the man of whom Harel said: “He likes, protects and disdains Literary men.”

* A band of men and boys who are paid to applaud a piece or a certain actor or actress at a given signal. The applause contractor, or *chef de claque*, is an important factor in French theatrical affairs.

Frédérick has never less than fifteen dishes at his table. When the servant brings them in he looks at them and judges them without tasting them. Often he says:

“That is bad.”

“Have you eaten of it?”

“No, God forbid!”

“But taste it.”

“It is detestable.”

“I will taste it,” says Clarisse.

“It is execrable. I forbid you to do so.”

“But let me try it.”

“Take that dish away! It is filthy!” And he sends for his cook and rates her soundly.

He is greatly feared by all his household. His domestics live in a state of terror. At table, if he does not speak, no one utters a word. Who would dare to break the silence when he is mute? One would think it was a dinner of dumb people, or a supper of Trappists, except for the good cheer. He likes to wind up the repast with fish. If there is turbot he has it served after the creams. He drinks, when dining, a bottle and a half of Bordeaux wine. Then, after dinner, he lights his cigar, and while smoking drinks two other bottles of wine.

For all that he is a comedian of genius and a very good fellow. He is easily moved to tears, which start to his eyes at a word said to him angrily or reproachfully.

This dates back to 1840. Mlle. Atala Beaudouin (the actress who under the name of Louise Beaudouin created the role of the Queen in Ruy Bias) had left Frédérick Lemaître, the great and marvellous comedian. Frédérick adored her and was inconsolable.

Mlle. Atala's mother had strongly advised her daughter on this occasion. Frédérick was occasionally violent, notwithstanding that he was very amorous; and, besides, a Russian prince had presented himself. In short, Mlle. Atala persisted in her determination and positively refused to see Frederick.

Frederick made frightful threats, especially against the mother. One morning there was a violent ringing at Mlle. Atala's bell. Her mother opened the door and recoiled in terror. It was Frédérick. He entered, dropped into the chair that was handiest to him, and said to the old woman:

"Don't be afraid, I haven't come to kick your—, I have come to weep."

THE COMIQUES September, 1846

Potier, having grown old, played at the Porte Saint Martin towards the close of his life. He was the same in the street as he was on the stage. Little boys would follow him, saying: "There is Potier!" He had a small cottage near Paris and used to come to rehearsals mounted on a small horse, his long thin legs dangling nearly to the ground.

Tiercelin was a Hellenist. Odry is a connoisseur of chinaware. The elephantine Lepeintre junior runs into debt and lives the life of a *coquin de neuveu*.

Alcide Tousez, Sainville and Ravel carry on in the green room just as they do on the stage, inventing cock-and-bull yarns and cracking jokes.

Arnal composes classic verse, admires Samson, waxes wrath because the cross has not been conferred upon him. And, in the green room, with rouge on his nose and cheeks and a wig on his head, talks, between two slaps in the face given or received, about Guizot's last speech, free trade and Sir Robert Peel; he interrupts himself, makes his entry upon the stage, plays his part, returns and gravely resumes: "I was saying that Robert Peel——"

Poor Arnal recently was driven almost insane. He had a mistress whom he adored. This woman fleeced him. Having become rich enough she said to him: "Our position is an immoral one and an end must be put to it. An honest man has offered me his name and I am going to get married." Arnal was disconsolate. "I give you the preference," said the belle, "marry me." Arnal is married. The woman left him and has become a bourgeoise. Arnal nearly lost his reason through grief. This does not prevent him from playing his pasquinades every night at the Vaudeville. He makes fun of his ugliness, of his age, of the fact that he is pitted with small-pox—laughs at all those things that prevented him from pleasing the woman he loved, and makes the public laugh—and his heart is broken. Poor red queue! What eternal and incurable sorrows there be in the gaiety of a buffoon! What a lugubrious business is that of laughter!

MADEMOISELLE GEORGES. October, 23, 1867.

Mlle. George came to see me to-day. She was sad, and elegantly dressed in a blue dress with white stripes. She said: "I am weary and disgusted. I asked for Mars' reversion. They granted me a pension of two thousand francs which they do not pay. Just a mouthful of bread, and even that I do not get a chance to eat! They wanted to engage me at the Historique (at the Théâtre Historique). I refused. What could I do there among those transparencies! A stout woman like me! Besides, where are the authors? Where are the pieces? Where are the roles? As to the provinces, I tried touring last year, but it is impossible without Harel.* I don't know how to manage actors. How do you think I can get on with these evil doers? I was to have finished the 24th. I paid them on the 20th, and fled. I returned to Paris to visit poor Harel's tomb. It is frightful, a tomb! It is horrible to see his name there on the stone! Yet I did not weep. I was dry-eyed and cold. What a strange thing is life! To think that this man who was so clever, so witty, should die an idiot! He passed his days doing like this with his fingers.

Not a spark of reason remained. It is all over. I shall have Rachel at my benefit; I shall play with her that chestnut “Iphigênie”. We shall make money, but I don’t care. Besides, I’m sure she wouldn’t play Rodogune! I will also play, if you will permit me, an act of “Lucrèce Borgia”. You see, I am for Rachel; she is an artful one, if you like. See how she checkmates those rascally French actors! She renews her engagements, assures for herself pyrotechnics, vacations, heaps of gold. When the contract is signed she says: “By the bye, I forgot to tell you that I have been enceinte for four months; it will be five months before I am able to play.” She does well. If I had done the same thing I shouldn’t have to die like a dog on a litter of straw. Tragedians, you see, are comedians after all. That poor Dorval, what has become of her, do you know? There is one to be pitied, if you like! She is playing I know not where, at Toulouse, at Carpentras, in barns, to earn her living! She is reduced like me to showing her bald head and dragging her poor old carcass on badly planed boards behind footlights of four tallow candles, among strolling actors who have been to the galleys, or who ought to be there! Ah! Monsieur Hugo, all this is nothing to you who are in good health and well off, but we are poor miserable creatures!”

* *M. Harel was manager of the Porte St. Martin Theatre.*

Mlle. Georges lived with him.

TABLEAUX VIVANTS

In the year 1846 there was a spectacle that caused a furore in Paris. It was that afforded by women attired only in pink tights and a gauze skirt executing poses that were called *tableaux vivants*, with a few men to complete the groups. This show was given at the Porte Saint Martin and at the Cirque. I had the curiosity one night to go and see the women behind the scenes. I went to the Porte Saint Martin, where, I may add in parentheses, they were going to revive “Lucrêce Borgia”. Villemot, the stage manager, who was of poor appearance but intelligent, said: “I will take you into the gynecium.”

A score of men were there—authors, actors, firemen, lamp lighters, scene shifters—who came, went, worked or looked on, and in the midst of them seven or eight women, practically nude, walked about with an air of the most naïve tranquillity. The pink tights that covered them from the feet to the neck were so thin and transparent that one could see not only the toes, the navel, and the breasts, but also the veins and

the colour of the least mark on the skin on all parts of their bodies. Towards the abdomen, however, the tights became thicker and only the form was distinguishable. The men who assisted them were similarly arranged. All these people were English.

At intervals of five minutes the curtain parted and they executed a *tableau*. For this they were posed in immobile attitudes upon a large wooden disc which revolved upon a pivot. It was worked by a child of fourteen who reclined on a mattress beneath it. Men and women were dressed up in chiffons of gauze or merino that were very ugly at a distance and very ignoble *de prês*. They were pink statues. When the disc had revolved once and shown the statues on every side to the public crowded in the darkened theatre, the curtain closed again, another tableau was arranged, and the performance recommenced a moment later.

Two of these women were very pretty. One resembled Mme. Rey, who played the Queen in “Ruy Blas” in 1840; it was this one who represented Venus. She was admirably shaped. Another was more than pretty: she was handsome and superb. Nothing more magnificent could be seen than her black, sad eyes, her disdainful mouth, her smile at once bewitching and haughty. She was called Maria, I believe. In a tableau which represented “A Slave Market,” she displayed the imperial despair and the stoical dejection of a nude queen offered for sale to the first bidder. Her tights, which were torn at the hip, disclosed her firm white flesh. They were, however only poor girls of London. All had dirty finger nails.

When they returned to the green room they laughed as freely with the scene shifters as with the authors, and talked broken French while they adjusted all kinds of frightful rags upon their charming visages. Their smile was the calm smile of perfect innocence or of complete corruption.

AT THE ACADEMY.

Session of November 23, 1843.

CHARLES NODIER.—The Academy, yielding to custom, has suppressed universally the double consonant in verbs where this consonant supplanted euphoniously the *d* of the radical *ad*.

MYSELF.—I avow my profound ignorance. I had no idea that custom had effected this suppression and that the Academy had sanctioned it. Thus one should no longer write *atteindre, approuver, appeler, apprehender*, etc., but *ateindre, aprouver, apeler, apréhender*?

M. VICTOR COUSIN.—I desire to point out to M. Hugo that the alterations of which he complains come from the movement of the language, which is nothing else than decadence.

MYSELF.—M. Cousin having addressed a personal observation to me, I beg to point out to him in turn that his opinion is, in my estimation, merely an opinion and nothing more. I may add that, as I view it, “movement of the language” and decadence have nothing in common. Nothing could be more distinct than these two things. Movement in no way proves decadence. The language has been moving since the first day of its formation; can it be said to be deteriorating? Movement is life; decadence is death.

M. COUSIN.—The decadence of the French language began in 1789.

MYSELF.—At what hour, if you please?

October 8, 1844.

This is what was told to me at to-day’s session:

Salvandy recently dined with Villemain. The repast over, they adjourned to the drawing-room, and conversed. As the clock struck eight Villemain’s three little daughters entered to kiss their father good night. The youngest is named Lucette; her birth cost her mother her reason; she is a sweet and charming child of five years.

“Well, Lucette, dear child,” said her father, “won’t you recite one of Lafontaine’s fables before you go to bed?”

“Here,” observed M. de Salvandy, “is a little person who to-day recites fables and who one of these days will inspire romances.”

Lucette did not understand. She merely gazed with her big wondering eyes at Salvandy who was lolling in his chair with an air of benevolent condescension.

“Well, Lucette.” he went on, “will you not recite a fable for us?”

The child required no urging, and began in her naïve little voice, her fine, frank, sweet eyes still fixed upon Salvandy:

One easily believes one’s self to be somebody in France.

1845.

During the run of M. Ponsard’s “Lucrece”, I had the following dialogue with M. Viennet at a meeting of the Academy:

M. VIENNET.—Have you seen the “Lucrece” that is being played at the Odéon?

MYSELF.—NO.

M. VIENNET.—It is very good.

MYSELF.—Really, is it good?

M. VIENNET.—It is more than good, it is fine.

MYSELF.—Really, is it fine?

M. VIENNET.—It is more than fine, it is magnificent.

MYSELF.—Really, now, magnificent?

M. VIENNET.—Oh! magnificent!

MYSELF.—Come, now, is it as good as “Zaire”?

M. VIENNET.—Oh! no! Oh! you are going too far, you know. Gracious! “Zaire”! No, it is not as good as “Zaire”.

MYSELF.—Well, you see, “Zaire” is a very poor piece indeed!

AN ELECTION SESSION.

February 11, 1847.

Thirty-one Academicians present. Sixteen votes are necessary.

First ballot.

Emile Deschamps	*2*	*votes.*
Victor Leclerc	*14*	*"*
Empis	*15*	*"*

Lamartine and M. Ballanche arrive at the end of the first ballot. M. Thiers arrives at the commencement of the second; which makes 34.

The director asks M. Thiers whether he has promised his vote. He laughingly replies: "No," and adds: "I have offered it." (Laughter.)

M. Cousin, to M. Lebrun, director: "You did not employ the sacramental expression. One does not ask an Academician whether he has *promised* his vote, but whether he has *pledged* it."

Second ballot.

Emile Deschamps	*2*	*votes.*
Empis	*18*	*"*
Victor Leclerc	*14*	*"*

M. Empis is elected. The election was decided by Lamartine and M. Ballanche.

On my way out I meet Leon Gozlan, who says to me: "Well?"

I reply: "There has been an election. It is Empis."

"How do you look at it?" he asks.

"In both ways."

"Empis?—-"

"And *tant pis*!"

March 16, 1847.

At the Academy to-day, while listening to the poems, bad to the point of grotesqueness, that have been sent for the competition of 1847, M. de Barante remarked: "Really, in these times, we no longer know how to make mediocre verses."

Great praise of the poetical and literary excellence of these times, although M. de Barante was not conscious of it.

April 22, 1847.

Election of M. Ampere. This is an improvement upon the last. A slow improvement. But Academies, like old people, go slowly.

During the session and after the election Lamartine sent to me by an usher the following lines:

C'est un état peu prospere

D'aller d'Empis en Ampere.

I replied to him by the same usher:

Toutefois ce serait pis

D'aller d'Ampere en Empis.

October 4, 1847.

I have just heard M. Viennet say: "I think in bronze."

December 29, 1848. Friday.

Yesterday, Thursday, I had two duties to attend to at one and the same time, the Assembly and the Academy; the salt question on the one hand, on the other the much smaller question of two vacant seats. Yet I gave the preference to the latter. This is why: At the Palais Bourbon the Cavaignac party had to be prevented from killing the new Cabinet; at the Palais Mazarin the Academy had to be prevented from offending the memory of Chateaubriand. There are cases in which the dead count for more than the living; I went to the Academy.

The Academy last Thursday had suddenly decided, at the opening of the session, at a time when nobody had yet put in an appearance, when there were only four or five round the green table, that on January 11 (that is to say, in three weeks) it would fill the two seats left vacant by MM. de Chateaubriand and Vatout. This strange alliance, I do not say of names, but of words,—“replace MM. de Chateaubriand and Vatout,”—did not stop it for one minute. The Academy is thus made; its wit and that wisdom which produces so many follies, are composed of extreme lightness combined with extreme heaviness. Hence a good deal of foolishness and a good many foolish acts.

Beneath this lightness, however, there was an intention. This giddiness was fraught with deep meaning. The brave party that leads the Academy, for there are parties everywhere, even at the Academy, hoped, public attention being directed elsewhere, politics absorbing everything, to juggle the seat of Chateaubriand pell-mell with the seat of M. Vatout; two peas in the same goblet. In this way the astonished public would turn round one fine morning and simply see M. de Noailles in Chateaubriand’s seat: a small matter, a great lord in the place of a great writer!

Then, after a roar of laughter, everybody would go about his business again, distractions would speedily come, thanks to the veering of politics, and, as to the Academy, oh! a duke and peer the more in it, a little more ridicule upon it, what would that matter? It would go on just the same!

Besides, M. de Noailles is a considerable personage. Bearing a great name, being lofty of manner, enjoying an immense fortune, of certain political weight under Louis Philippe, accepted by the Conservatives although, or because, a Legitimist, reading speeches that were listened to, he occupied an important place in the Chamber of

Peers; which proves that the Chamber of Peers occupied an unimportant place in the country.

Chateaubriand, who hated all that could replace him and smiled at all that could make him regretted, had had the kindness to tell him sometimes, by Mme. Récamier's fireside, "that he hoped he would be his successor;" which prompted M. de Noailles to dash off a big book in two volumes about Mme. de Maintenon, at the commencement of which, on the first page of the preface, I was stopped by a lordly breach of grammar.

This was the state of things when I concluded to go to the Academy.

The session which was announced to begin at two o'clock, as usual, opened, as usual, at a quarter past three. And at half past three—

At half past three the candidacy of Monsieur the Duke do Noailles, *replacing* Chateaubriand, was irresistibly acclaimed.

Decidedly, I ought to have gone to the Assembly.

March 26, 1850. Tuesday.

I had arrived early, at noon.

I was warming myself, for it is very cold, and the ground is covered with snow, which is not good for the apricot trees. M. Guizot, leaning against the mantelpiece, was saying to me:

"As a member of the dramatic prize committee, I read yesterday, in a single day, mind you, no fewer than six plays!"

"That," I responded, "was to punish you for not having seen one acted in eighteen years."

At this moment M. Thiers came up and the two men exchanged greetings. This is how they did it:

M. THIERS: Good afternoon, Guizot.

M. GUIZOT: Good afternoon, Monsieur.

AN ELECTION SESSION. March 28, 1850.

M. Guizot presided. At the roll call, when M. Pasquier's name was reached he said: "Monsieur the Chancellor—" When he got to that of M. Dupin, President of the National Assembly, he called: "Monsieur Dupin."

First ballot.

Alfred de Musset 5 votes.

M. Nisard 23 "

M. Nisard is elected.

To-day, September 12, the Academy worked at the dictionary. A propos of the word "increase," this example, taken from the works of Mme. de Staël, was proposed:

"Poverty increases ignorance, and ignorance poverty."

Three objections were immediately raised:

1. Antithesis.

2. Contemporary writer.

3. Dangerous thing to say.

The Academy rejected the example.

LOVE IN PRISON.

I.

BESIDES misdeeds, robberies, the division of spoils after an ambuscade, and the twilight exploitation of the barriers of Paris, footpads, burglars, and gaol-birds generally have another industry: they have ideal loves.

This requires explanation.

The trade in negro slaves moves us, and with good reason; we examine this social sore, and we do well. But let us also learn to lay bare another ulcer, which is more painful, perhaps: the traffic in white women.

Here is one of the singular things connected with and characteristic of this poignant disorder of our civilization:

Every gaol contains a prisoner who is known as the “artist.”

All kinds of trades and professions peculiar to prisons develop behind the bars. There is the vendor of liquorice-water, the vendor of scarfs, the writer, the advocate, the usurer, the hut-maker, and the barker. The artist takes rank among these local and peculiar professions between the writer and the advocate.

To be an artist is it necessary to know how to draw? By no means. A bit of a bench to sit upon, a wall to lean against, a lead pencil, a bit of pasteboard, a needle stuck in a handle made out of a piece of wood, a little Indian ink or sepia, a little Prussian blue, and a little vermilion in three cracked beechwood spoons,—this is all that is requisite; a knowledge of drawing is superfluous. Thieves are as fond of colouring as children are, and as fond of tattooing as are savages. The artist by means of his three spoons satisfies the first of these needs, and by means of his needle the second. His remuneration is a “nip” of wine.

The result is this:

Some prisoners, say, lack everything, or are simply desirous of living more comfortably. They combine, wait upon the artist, offer him their glasses of wine or their bowls of soup, hand him a sheet of paper and order of him a bouquet. In the bouquet there must be as many flowers as there are prisoners in the group. If there be three prisoners, there must be three flowers. Each flower bears a figure, or, if preferred, a number, which number is that of the prisoner.

The bouquet when painted is sent, through the mysterious means of communication between the various prisons that the police are powerless to prevent, to Saint Lazare. Saint Lazare is the women’s prison, and where there are women there also is pity. The bouquet circulates from hand to hand among the unfortunate creatures that the police detain administratively at Saint Lazare; and in a few days the infallible secret

post apprises those who sent the bouquet that Palmyre has chosen the tuberose, that Fanny prefers the azalea, and that Seraphine has adopted the geranium. Never is this lugubrious handkerchief thrown into the seraglio without being picked up.

Thenceforward the three bandits have three servants whose names are Palmyre, Fanny, and Seraphine. Administrative detentions are relatively of short duration. These women are released from prison before the men. And what do they do? They support them. In elegant phraseology they are providences; in plain language they are milch-cows.

Pity has been transformed into love. The heart of woman is susceptible of such sombre graftings. These women say:

"I am married." They are married indeed. By whom? By the flower. With whom? With the abyss. They are fiancées of the unknown. Enraptured and enthusiastic fiancées. Pale Sulamites of fancy and fog. When the known is so odious, how can they help loving the unknown?

In these nocturnal regions and with the winds of dispersion that blow, meetings are almost impossible. The lovers see each other in dreams. In all probability the woman will never set eyes on the man. Is he young? Is he old? Is he handsome? Is he ugly? She does not know; she knows nothing about him. She adores him. And it is because she does not know him that she loves him. Idolatry is born of mystery.

This woman, drifting aimlessly on life's tide, yearns for something to cling to, a tie to bind her, a duty to perform. The pit from amid its scum throws it to her; she accepts it and devotes herself to it. This mysterious bandit, transformed into heliotrope or iris, becomes a religion to her. She espouses him in the presence of night. She has a thousand little wifely attentions for him; poor for herself, she is rich for him; she whelms this manure with her delicate solicitude. She is faithful to him with all the fidelity of which she is still capable; the incorruptible emanates from the corruptible. Never does this woman betray her love. It is an immaterial, pure, ethereal love, subtile as the breath of spring, solid as brass.

A flower has done all this. What a well is the human heart, and how giddy it makes one to peer into it! Lo! the cloaca. Of what is it thinking? Of perfume. A prostitute loves a thief through a lily. What plunger into human thought could reach the bottom of this? Who shall fathom this immense yearning for flowers that springs from mud? In the secret self of these hapless women is a strange equilibrium that consoles and reassures them. A rose counterbalances an act of shame.

Hence these amours based on and sustained by illusion. This thief is idolized by this girl. She has not seen his face, she does not know his name; she sees him in visions induced by the perfume of jessamine or of pinks. Henceforward flower-gardens, the May sunshine, the birds in their nests, exquisite tints, radiant blossoms, boxes of orange trees and daphne odora, velvet petals upon which golden bees alight, the sacred odours of spring-tide, balms, incense, purling brooks, and soft green grass are associated with this bandit. The divine smile of nature penetrates and illumines him.

This desperate aspiring to paradise lost, this deformed dream of the beautiful, is not less tenacious on the part of the man. He turns towards the woman; and this preoccupation, become insensate, persists even when the dreadful shadow of the two red posts of the guillotine is thrown upon the window of his cell. The day before his execution Delaporte, chief of the Trappes band, who was wearing the strait-jacket, asked of the convict Cogniard, whom, through the grating in the door of the condemned cell, he saw passing by: "Are there any pretty women in the visitors' parlor this morning?" Another condemned man, Avril (what a name!), in this same cell, bequeathed all that he possessed—five francs—to a female prisoner whom he had seen at a distance in the women's yard, "in order that she may buy herself a fichu a la mode."

Between the male and female wretch dreams build a Bridge of Sighs, as it were. The mire of the gutter dallies with the door of a prison cell. The Aspasia of the street-corner aspires and respires with the heart of the Alcibiades who waylays the passer-by at the corner of a wood.

You laugh? You should not. It is a terrible thing.

II.

The murderer is a flower for the courtesan. The prostitute is the Clytia of the assassin sun. The eye of the woman damned languourously seeks Satan among the myrtles.

What is this phenomenon? It is the need of the ideal. A sublime and awful need.

A terrible thing, I say.

Is it a disease? Is it a remedy? Both. This noble yearning is at the same time and for the same beings a chastisement and a reward; a voluptuousness full of expiation; a chastisement for faults committed, a recompense for sorrows borne! None may

escape it. It is a hunger of angels felt by demons. Saint Theresa experiences it, Messalina also. This need of the immaterial is the most deeply rooted of all needs. One must have bread; but before bread, one must have the ideal. One is a thief, one is a street-walker—all the more reason. The more one drinks of the darkness of night the more is one thirsty for the light of dawn. Schinderhannes becomes a cornflower, Poulailler a violet. Hence these sinisterly ideal weddings.

And then, what happens?

What I have just said.

Cloaca, but abyss. Here the human heart opens partly, disclosing unimaginable depths. Astarte becomes platonic. The miracle of the transformation of monsters by love is being accomplished. Hell is being gilded. The vulture is being metamorphosed into a bluebird. Horror ends in the pastoral. You think you are at Vouglans's and Parent-Duchâtelet's; you are at Longus's. Another step and you will stumble into Berquin's. Strange indeed is it to encounter Daphnis and Chloe in the Forest of Bondy!

The dark Saint Martin Canal, into which the footpad pushes the passer-by with his elbow as he snatches his victim's watch, traverses the Tender and empties itself into the Lignon. Poulmann begs a ribbon bow; one is tempted to present a shepherdess's crook to Papavoine. Through the straw of the sabot one sees gossamer wings appearing on horrible heels. The miracle of the roses is performed for Goton. All fatalities combined have for result a flower. A vague Rambouillet Palace is superposed upon the forbidding silhouette of the Salpêtrière. The leprous wall of evil, suddenly covered with blossoms, affords a pendant to the wreath of Juliet. The sonnets of Petrarch, that flight of the ideal which soars in the shadow of souls, venture through the twilight towards this abjection and suffering, attracted by one knows not what obscure affinity, even as a swarm of bees is sometimes seen humming over a dungheap from which arises, perceptible to the bees alone and mingling with the miasms, the perfume of a hidden flower. The gemoniae are Elysian. The chimerical thread of celestial unions floats 'neath the darkest vault of the human Erebus and binds despairing hearts to hearts that are monstrous. Manon through the infinite sends to Cartouche a smile ineffable as that with which Everallin entranced Fingal. From one pole of misery to the other, from one gehenna to another, from the galleys to the brothel, tenebrous mouths wildly exchange the kiss of azure.

It is night. The monstrous ditch of Clamart opens. From it arises a miasm, a phosphorescent glow. It shines and flickers in two separate tarts; it takes shape, the head rejoins the body, it is a phantom; the phantom gazes into the darkness with wild, baleful eyes, rises, grows bigger and blue, hovers for an instant and then speeds away

to the zenith to open the door of the palace of the sun where butterflies flit from flower to flower and angels flit from star to star.

In all these strange, concordant phenomena appears the inadmissibility of the principle that is all of man. The mysterious marriage which we have just related, marriage of servitude with captivity, exaggerates the ideal from the very fact that it is weighed down by all the most hideous burdens of destiny. A frightful combination! It is the From it rises a miasm, a phosphorescent glow. It shines meeting of these two redoubtable words in which human existence is summed up: enjoy and suffer.

Alas! And how can we prevent this cry from escaping us? For these hapless ones, enjoy, laugh, sing, please, and love exist, persist; but there is a death-rattle in sing, a grating sound in laugh, putrefaction in enjoy, there are ashes in please, there is night in love. All these joys are attached to their destiny by coffin-nails.

What does that matter? They thirst for these lugubrious, chimerical glimpses of light that are full of dreams.

What is tobacco, that is so precious and so dear to the prisoner? It is a dream. "Put me in the dungeon," said a convict, "but give me some tobacco." In other words: "Throw me into a pit, but give me a palace." Press the prostitute and the bandit, mix Tartarus and Avernus, stir the fatal vat of social mire, pile all the deformities of matter together, and what issues therefrom? The immaterial.

The ideal is the Greek fire of the gutter. It burns there. Its brightness in the impure water dazzles the thinker and touches his heart. Nini Lassive stirs and brightens with Fiesehi's bilets-doux that sombre lamp of Vesta which is in the heart of every woman, and which is as inextinguishable in that of the courtesan as in that of the Carmelite. This is what explains the word "virgin," accorded by the Bible equally to the foolish virgin and to the wise virgin.

That was so yesterday, it is so to-day. Here again the surface has changed, the bottom remains the same. The frank harshness of the Middle Ages has been somewhat softened in our times. Ribald is pronounced light o' love; Toinon answers to the name of Olympia or Imperia; Thomasse-la-Maraude is called Mme. de Saint Alphonse. The caterpillar was real, the butterfly is false; that is the only change. Clout has become chiffon.

Regnier used to say "sows "; we say "fillies."

Other fashions; same manners.

The foolish virgin is lugubriously immutable.

III.

Whosoever witnesses this kind of anguish witnesses the extreme of human misfortune.

Dark zones are these. Baleful night bursts and spreads o'er them. Evil accumulated dissolves in misfortune upon them, they are swept with blasts of despair by the tempest of fatalities, there a downpour of trials and sorrows streams upon dishevelled heads in the darkness; squalls, hail, a hurricane of distress, swirl and whirl back and forth athwart them; it rains, rains without cease: it rains horror, it rains vice, it rains crime, it rains the blackness of night; yet we must explore this obscurity, and in the sombre storm the mind essays a difficult flight, the flight of a wet bird, as it were.

There is always a vague, spectral dread in these low regions where hell penetrates; they are so little in the human order and so disproportionate that they create phantoms. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that a legend should be connected with this sinister bouquet offered by Bicêtre to La Salpêtrière or by La Force to Saint Lazare; it is related at night in the cells and wards after the keepers have gone their rounds.

It was shortly after the murder of the money-changer Joseph. A bouquet was sent from La Force to a woman's prison, Saint Lazare or the Madelonnettes. In this bouquet was a sprig of white lilac which one of the women prisoners selected.

A month or two elapsed; the woman was released from prison. She was extremely enamoured, through the white lilac, of the unknown master she had given to herself. She began to perform for him her strange function of sister, mother, and mystic spouse, ignorant of his name, knowing only his prison number. All her miserable savings, religiously deposited with the clerk of the prison, went to this man. In order the better to affiance herself to him, she took advantage of the advent of spring to cull a sprig of real lilac in the fields. This sprig of lilac, attached by a piece of sky-blue ribbon to the head of his bed, formed a pendant to a sprig of consecrated box, an ornament which these poor desolate alcoves never lack. The lilac withered thus.

This woman, like all Paris, had heard of the affair of the Palais-Royal and of the two Italians, Malagutti and Ratta, arrested for the murder of the money-changer.

She thought little about the tragedy, which did not concern her, and lived only in her white lilac. This lilac was all in all to her; she thought only of doing her "duty" to it.

One bright, sunny day she was seated in her room, sewing some garment or other for her sorry evening toilet. Now and then she looked up from her work at the lilac that hung at the head of the bed. At one of these moments while her gaze was fixed upon the sprig of faded flower the clock struck four.

Then she fancied she saw an extraordinary thing.

A sort of crimson pearl oozed from the extremity of the stalk of the flower, grew larger, and dripped on to the white sheet of the bed.

It was a spot of blood.

That day, at that very hour, Ratta and Malagutti were executed.

It was evident that the white lilac was one of these two. But which one?

The hapless girl became insane and had to be confined in La Salpêtrière. She died there. From morn to night, and from night to morn, she would gibber: "I am Mme. Ratta-Malagutti."

Thus are these sombre hearts.

IV.

Prostitution is an Isis whose final veil none has raised. There is a sphinx in this gloomy odalisk of the frightful Sultan Everybody. None has solved its enigma. It is Nakedness masked. A terrible spectacle!

Alas! in all that we have just recounted man is abominable, woman is touching.

How many hapless ones have been driven to their fall!

The abyss is the friend of dreams. Fallen, as we have said, their lamentable hearts have no other resource than to dream.

What caused their ruin was another dream, the dreadful dream of riches; nightmare of glory, of azure, and ecstasy which weighs upon the chest of the poor; flourish of trumpets heard in the gehenna, with the triumph of the fortunate appearing

resplendent in the immense night; prodigious overture full of dawn! Carriages roll, gold falls in showers, laces rustle.

Why should I not have this, too? Formidable thought!

This gleam from the sinister vent-hole dazzled them; this puff of the sombre vapour inebriated them, and they were lost, and they were rich.

Wealth is a fatal distant light; woman flies frantically towards it. This mirror catches this lark.

Wherefore they have been rich. They, too, have had their day of enchantment, their minute of fête, their sparkle.

They have had that fever which is fatal to modesty. They have drained the sonorous cup that is full of nothingness. They have drunk of the madness of forgetfulness. What a flattering hope! What temptation! To do nothing and have everything; alas! and also to have nothing, not even one's own self. To be slave-flesh, to be beauty for sale, a woman fallen to a thing! They have dreamed and they have had—which is the same thing, complete possession being but a dream—mansions, carriages, servants in livery, suppers joyous with laughter, the house of gold, silk, velvet, diamonds, pearls, life giddy with voluptuousness—every pleasure.

Oh! how much better is the innocence of those poor little barefooted ones on the shore of the sea, who hear at nightfall the tinkling of the cracked bells of the goats on the cliffs!

There was a disastrous morrow to these brief, perfidious joys that they had savoured. The word love signified hatred. The invisible doubles the visible, and it is lugubrious. Those who shared their raptures, those to whom they gave all, received all and accepted nothing. They—the fallen ones—sowed their seed in ashes. They were deserted even as they were being embraced. Abandonment sniggered behind the mask of the kiss.

And now, what are they to do? They must perforce continue to love.

V.

Oh! if they could, the unhappy creatures, if they could put from them their hearts, their dreams, harden themselves with a hardness that could not be softened, be forever

cold and passionless, tear out their entrails, and, since they are filth, become monsters! If they could no longer think! If they could ignore the flower, efface the star, stop up the mouth of the pit, close heaven! They would at least no longer suffer. But no. They have a right to marriage, they have a right to the heart, they have a right to torture, they have a right to the ideal. No chilling of their hearts can put out the internal fire. However cold they may be they burn. This, we have said, is at once their misery and their crown. This sublimeness combines with their abjection to overwhelm them and raise them up. Whether they will or not, the inextinguishable does not become extinguished. Illusion is untamable. Nothing is more invincible than dreams, and man is almost made up of dreams. Nature will not agree to be insolvable. One must contemplate, aspire, love. If need be marble will set the example. The statue becomes a woman rather than the woman a statue.

The sewer is a sanctuary in spite of itself. It is unhealthy, there is vitiated air in it, but the irresistible phenomenon is none the less accomplished; all the holy generosities bloom livid in this cave. Cynicism and the secret despair of pity are driven back by ecstasy, the magnificences of kindness shine through infamy; this orphan creature feels herself to be wife, sister, mother; and this fraternity which has no family, and this maternity which has no children, and this adoration which has no altar, she casts into the outer darkness. Some one marries her. Who? The man in the gloom. She sees on her finger the ring made of the mysterious gold of dreams. And she sobs. Torrents of tears well from her eyes. Sombre delights!

And at the same time, let us repeat it, she suffers unheard-of tortures. She does not belong to him to whom she has given herself. Everybody takes her away again. The brutal public hand holds the wretched creature and will not let her go. She fain would flee. Flee whither? From whom? From you, herself, above all from him whom she loves, the funereal ideal man. She cannot.

Thus, and these are extreme afflictions, this hapless wight expiates, and her expiation is brought upon her by her grandeur. Whatever she may do, she has to love. She is condemned to the light. She has to condole, she has to succour, she has to devote herself, she has to be kind. A woman who has lost her modesty, fain would know love no more; impossible. The refluxes of the heart are as inevitable as those of the sea; the lights of the heart are as fixed as those of the night.

There is within us that which we can never lose. Abnegation, sacrifice, tenderness, enthusiasm, all these rays turn against the woman within her inmost self and attack and burn her. All these virtues remain to avenge themselves upon her. When she would have been a wife, she is a slave. Hers is the hopeless, thankless task of lulling a

brigand in the blue nebulousness of her illusions and of decking Mandrin with a starry rag. She is the sister of charity of crime. She loves, alas! She endures her inadmissible divinity; she is magnanimous and thrills at so being. She is happy with a horrible happiness. She enters backwards into indignant Eden.

We do not sufficiently reflect upon this that is within us and cannot be lost.

Prostitution, vice, crime, what matters!

Night may become as black as it likes, the spark is still there. However low you go there is light. Light in the vagabond, light in the mendicant, light in the thief, light in the street-walker. The deeper you go the more the miraculous light persists in showing itself.

Every heart has its pearl, which is the same for the heart gutter and the heart ocean—love.

No mire can dissolve this particle of God.

Wherefore, there, at the extreme of gloom, of despondency, of chill-heartedness and abandonment; in this obscurity, in this putrefaction, in these gaols, in these dark paths, in this shipwreck; beneath the lowest layer of the heap of miseries, under the bog of public disdain which is ice and night; behind the eddying of those frightful snowflakes the judges, the gendarmes, the warders and the executioners for the bandit, the passers-by for the prostitute, which cross each other, innumerable, in the dull grey mist that for these wretches replace the sun; beneath these pitiless fatalities; beneath this bewildering maze of vaults, some of granite, the others of hatred; at the deepest depths of horror; in the midst of asphyxiation; at the bottom of the chaos of all possible blacknesses; under the frightful thickness of a deluge composed of expectorations, there where all is extinct, where all is dead, something moves and shines. What is it? A flame.

And what flame?

The soul.

O adorable prodigy!

Love, the ideal, is found even in the Pit.

AT THE TUILERIES. 1844-1848.

I. THE KING.

II. THE DUCHESS D'ORLEANS.

III. THE PRINCES.

I. THE KING. * June, 28, 1844.

** Louis Philippe.*

The King told me that Talleyrand said to him one day:

"You will never be able to do anything with Thiers, although he would make an excellent tool. He is one of those men one cannot make use of unless one is able to satisfy them. Now, he never will be satisfied. It is unfortunate for him, as for you, that in our times, he cannot be made a cardinal."

A propos of the fortifications of Paris, the King told me how the Emperor Napoleon learned the news of the taking of Paris by the allies.

The Emperor was marching upon Paris at the head of his guard. Near Juvisy, at a place in the Forest of Fontainebleau where there is an obelisk ("that I never see without feeling heavy at heart," remarked the King), a courier on his way to meet Napoleon brought him the news of the capitulation of Paris. Paris had been taken. The enemy had entered it. The Emperor turned pale. He hid his face in his hands and remained thus, motionless, for a quarter of an hour. Then, without saying a word, he turned about and took the road back to Fontainebleau.

General Athalin witnessed this scene and recounted it to the King.

July, 1844.

A few days ago the King said to Marshal Soult (in presence of others):

"Marshal, do you remember the siege of Cadiz?"

“Rather, sire, I should think so. I swore enough before that cursed Cadiz. I invested the place and was forced to go away as I had come.”

“Marshal, while you were before it, I was inside it.”

“I know, sire.”

“The Cortes and the English Cabinet offered me the command of the Spanish army.”

“I remember it.”

“The offer was a grave one. I hesitated long. Bear arms against France! For my family, it is possible; but against my country! I was greatly perplexed. At this juncture you asked me, through a trusty person, for a secret interview in a little house situated on the Cortadura, between the city and your camp. Do you remember the fact, Monsieur the Marshal?”

“Perfectly, sire; the day was fixed and the interview arranged.”

“And I did not turn up.”

“That is so.”

“Do you know why?”

“I never knew.”

“I will tell you. As I was preparing to go to meet you, the commander of the English squadron, apprised of the matter, I know not how, dropped upon me brusquely and warned me that I was about to fall into a trap; that Cadiz being impregnable, they despaired of seizing me, but that at the Cortadura I should be arrested by you; that the Emperor wished to make of the Duke d’Orleans a second volume of the Duke d’Enghien, and that you would have me shot immediately. There, really,” added the King with a smile, “your hand on your conscience, were you going to shoot me?”

The Marshal remained silent for a moment, then replied, with a smile not less inexpressible than that of the King:

“No, sire; I wanted to compromise you.”

The subject of conversation was changed. A few minutes later the Marshal took leave of the King, and the King, as he watched him go, said with a smile to the person who heard this conversation:

“Compromise! compromise! To-day it is called compromise. In reality, he would have shot me!”