The Human Comedy
Scenes From Political Life II

By

Honore de Balzac

THE BROTHERHOOD OF CONSOLATION

FIRST EPISODE. MADAME DE LA CHANTERIE

I. THE MALADY OF THE AGE

On a fine evening in the month of September, 1836, a man about thirty years of age was leaning on the parapet of that quay from which a spectator can look up the Seine from the Jardin des Plantes to Notre-Dame, and down, along the vast perspective of the river, to the Louvre. There is not another point of view to compare with it in the capital of ideas. We feel ourselves on the quarter-deck, as it were, of a gigantic vessel. We dream of Paris from the days of the Romans to those of the Franks, from the Normans to the Burgundians, the Middle-Ages, the Valois, Henri IV., Louis XIV., Napoleon, and Louis-Philippe. Vestiges are before us of all those sovereignties, in monuments that recall their memory. The cupola of Sainte-Genevieve towers above the Latin quarter. Behind us rises the noble apsis of the cathedral. The Hotel de Ville tells of revolutions; the Hotel-Dieu, of the miseries of Paris. After gazing at the splendors of the Louvre we can, by taking two steps, look down upon the rags and tatters of that ignoble nest of houses huddling between the quai de la Tournelle and the Hotel-Dieu,—a foul spot, which a modern municipality is endeavoring at the present moment to remove.

In 1836 this marvellous scene presented still another lesson to the eye: between the Parisian leaning on the parapet and the cathedral lay the “Terrain” (such was the ancient name of this barren spot), still strewn with the ruins of the Archiepiscopal Palace. When we contemplate from that quay so many commemorating scenes, when the soul has grasped the past as it does the present of this city of Paris, then indeed Religion seems to have alighted there as if to spread her hands above the sorrows of both banks and extend her arms from the faubourg Saint-Antoine to the faubourg Saint-Marceau. Let us hope that this sublime unity may be completed by the erection of an episcopal palace of the Gothic order; which shall replace the formless buildings now standing between the “Terrain,” the rue d’Arcole, the cathedral, and the quai de la Cite.

This spot, the heart of ancient Paris, is the loneliest and most melancholy of regions. The waters of the Seine break there noisily, the cathedral casts its shadows at the setting of the sun. We can easily believe that serious thoughts must have filled the mind of a man afflicted with a moral malady as he leaned upon that parapet. Attracted perhaps by the harmony between his thoughts and

those to which these diverse scenes gave birth, he rested his hands upon the coping and gave way to a double contemplation,—of Paris, and of himself! The shadows deepened, the lights shone out afar, but still he did not move, carried along as he was on the current of a meditation, such as comes to many of us, big with the future and rendered solemn by the past.

After a while he heard two persons coming towards him, whose voices had caught his attention on the bridge which joins the Ile de la Cite with the quai de la Tournelle. These persons no doubt thought themselves alone, and therefore spoke louder than they would have done in more frequented places. The voices betrayed a discussion which apparently, from the few words that reached the ear of the involuntary listener, related to a loan of money. Just as the pair approached the quay, one of them, dressed like a working man, left the other with a despairing gesture. The other stopped and called after him, saying:—

“You have not a sou to pay your way across the bridge. Take this,” he added, giving the man a piece of money; “and remember, my friend, that God Himself is speaking to us when a good thought comes into our hearts.”

This last remark made the dreamer at the parapet quiver. The man who made it little knew that, to use a proverbial expression, he was killing two birds with one stone, addressing two miseries,—a working life brought to despair, a suffering soul without a compass, the victim of what Panurge’s sheep call progress, and what, in France, is called equality. The words, simple in themselves, became sublime from the tone of him who said them, in a voice that possesses a spell. Are there not, in fact, some calm and tender voices that produce upon us the same effect as a far horizon outlook?

By his dress the dreamer knew him to be a priest, and he saw by the last gleams of the fading twilight a white, august, worn face. The sight of a priest issuing from the beautiful cathedral of Saint-Etienne in Vienna, bearing the Extreme Unction to a dying person, determined the celebrated tragic author Werner to become a Catholic. Almost the same effect was produced upon the dreamer when he looked upon the man who had, all unknowing, given him comfort; on the threatening horizon of his future he saw a luminous space where shone the blue of ether, and he followed that light as the shepherds of the Gospel followed the voices that cried to them: “Christ, the Lord, is born this day.”

The man who had said the beneficent words passed on by the wall of the cathedral, taking, as a result of chance, which often leads to great results, the direction of the street from which the dreamer came, and to which he was now returning, led by the faults of his life.

This dreamer was named Godefroid. Whoever reads this history will

understand the reasons which lead the writer to use the Christian names only of some who are mentioned in it. The motives which led Godefroid, who lived in the quarter of the Chaussee-d'Antin, to the neighborhood of Notre-Dame at such an hour were as follows:—

The son of a retail shopkeeper, whose economy enabled him to lay by a sort of fortune, he was the sole object of ambition to his father and mother, who dreamed of seeing him a notary in Paris. For this reason, at the age of seven, he was sent to an institution, that of the Abbe Liautard, to be thrown among children of distinguished families who, during the Empire, chose this school for the education of their sons in preference to the lyceums, where religion was too much overlooked. Social inequalities were not noticeable among schoolmates; but in 1821, his studies being ended, Godefroid, who was then with a notary, became aware of the distance that separated him from those with whom he had hitherto lived on familiar terms.

Obliged to go through the law school, he there found himself among a crowd of the sons of the bourgeoisie, who, without fortunes to inherit or hereditary distinctions, could look only to their own personal merits or to persistent toil. The hopes that his father and mother, then retired from business, placed upon him stimulated the youth's vanity without exciting his pride. His parents lived simply, like the thrifty Dutch, spending only one fourth of an income of twelve thousand francs. They intended their savings, together with half their capital, for the purchase of a notary's practice for their son. Subjected to the rule of this domestic economy, Godefroid found his immediate state so disproportioned to the visions of himself and his parents, that he grew discouraged. In some feeble natures discouragement turns to envy; others, in whom necessity, will, reflection, stand in place of talent, march straight and resolutely in the path traced out for bourgeois ambitions. Godefroid, on the contrary, revolted, wished to shine, tried several brilliant ways, and blinded his eyes. He endeavored to succeed; but all his efforts ended in proving the fact of his own impotence. Admitting at last the inequality that existed between his desires and his capacities, he began to hate all social supremacies, became a Liberal, and attempted to reach celebrity by writing a book; but he learned, to his cost, to regard talent as he did nobility. Having tried the law, the notariat, and literature, without distinguishing himself in any way, his mind now turned to the magistracy.

About this time his father died. His mother, who contented herself in her old age with two thousand francs a year, gave the rest of the fortune to Godefroid. Thus possessed, at the age of twenty-five, of ten thousand francs a year, he felt himself rich; and he was so, relatively to the past. Until then his life had been spent on acts without will, on wishes that were impotent; now, to advance with the age, to act, to play a part, he resolved to enter some career or

find some connection that should further his fortunes. He first thought of journalism, which always opens its arms to any capital that may come in its way. To be the owner of a newspaper is to become a personage at once; such a man works intellect, and has all the gratifications of it and none of the labor. Nothing is more tempting to inferior minds than to be able to rise in this way on the talents of others. Paris has seen two or three parvenus of this kind,—men whose success is a disgrace, both to the epoch and to those who have lent them their shoulders.

In this sphere Godefroid was soon outdone by the brutal Machiavellianism of some, or by the lavish prodigality of others; by the fortunes of ambitious capitalists, or by the wit and shrewdness of editors. Meantime he was drawn into all the dissipations that arise from literary or political life, and he yielded to the temptations incurred by journalists behind the scenes. He soon found himself in bad company; but this experience taught him that his appearance was insignificant, that he had one shoulder higher than the other, without the inequality being redeemed by either malignancy or kindness of nature. Such were the truths these artists made him feel.

Small, ill-made, without superiority of mind or settled purpose, what chance was there for a man like that in an age when success in any career demands that the highest qualities of the mind be furthered by luck, or by tenacity of will which commands luck.

The revolution of 1830 stanched Godefroid’s wounds. He had the courage of hope, which is equal to that of despair. He obtained an appointment, like other obscure journalists, to a government situation in the provinces, where his liberal ideas, conflicting with the necessities of the new power, made him a troublesome instrument. Bitten with liberalism, he did not know, as cleverer men did, how to steer a course. Obedience to ministers he regarded as sacrificing his opinions. Besides, the government seemed to him to be disobeying the laws of its own origin. Godefroid declared for progress, where the object of the government was to maintain the statu quo. He returned to Paris almost poor, but faithful still to the doctrines of the Opposition.

Alarmed by the excesses of the press, more alarmed still by the attempted outrages of the republican party, he sought in retirement from the world the only life suitable for a being whose faculties were incomplete, and without sufficient force to bear up against the rough jostling of political life, the struggles and sufferings of which confer no credit,—a being, too, who was wearied with his many miscarriages; without friends, for friendship demands either striking merits or striking defects, and yet possessing a sensibility of soul more dreamy than profound. Surely a retired life was the course left for a young man whom pleasure had more than once misled,—whose heart was already aged by contact with a world as restless as it was disappointing.

His mother, who was dying in the peaceful village of Auteuil, recalled her son to live with her, partly to have him near her, and partly to put him in the way of finding an equable, tranquil happiness which might satisfy a soul like his. She had ended by judging Godefroid, finding him at twenty-eight with two-thirds of his fortune gone, his desires dulled, his pretended capacities extinct, his activity dead, his ambition humbled, and his hatred against all that reached legitimate success increased by his own shortcomings.

She tried to marry him to an excellent young girl, the only daughter of a retired merchant,—a woman well fitted to play the part of guardian to the sickened soul of her son. But the father had the business spirit which never abandons an old merchant, especially in matrimonial negotiations, and after a year of attentions and neighborly intercourse, Godefroid was not accepted. In the first place, his former career seemed to these worthy people profoundly immoral; then, during this very year, he had made still further inroads into his capital, as much to dazzle the parents as to please the daughter. This vanity, excusable as it was, caused his final rejection by the family, who held dissipation of property in holy horror, and who now discovered that in six years Godefroid had spent or lost a hundred and fifty thousand francs of his capital.

This blow struck the young man’s already wounded heart the more deeply because the girl herself had no personal beauty. But, guided by his mother in judging her character, he had ended by recognizing in the woman he sought the great value of an earnest soul, and the vast advantages of a sound mind. He had grown accustomed to the face; he had studied the countenance; he loved the voice, the manners, the glance of that young girl. Having cast on this attachment the last stake of his life, the disappointment he endured was the bitterest of all. His mother died, and he found himself, he who had always desired luxury, with five thousand francs a year for his whole fortune, and with the certainty that never in his future life could he repair any loss whatsoever; for he felt himself incapable of the effort expressed in that terrible injunction, to make his way.

Weak, impatient grief cannot easily be shaken off. During his mourning, Godefroid tried the various chances and distractions of Paris; he dined at table-d’hotes; he made acquaintances heedlessly; he sought society, with no result but that of increasing his expenditures. Walking along the boulevards, he often suffered deeply at the sight of a mother walking with a marriageable daughter,—a sight which caused him as painful an emotion as he formerly felt when a young man passed him riding to the Bois, or driving in an elegant equipage. The sense of his impotence told him that he could never hope for the best of even secondary positions, nor for any easily won career; and he had heart enough to feel constantly wounded, mind enough to make in his own breast

the bitterest of elegies.

Unfitted to struggle against circumstances, having an inward consciousness of superior faculties without the will that could put them in action, feeling himself incomplete, without force to undertake any great thing, without resistance against the tastes derived from his earlier life, his education, and his indolence, he was the victim of three maladies, any one of which would be enough to sicken of life a young man long alienated from religious faith.

Thus it was that Godefroid presented, even to the eye, the face that we meet so often in Paris that it might be called the type of the Parisian; in it we may see ambitions deceived or dead, inward wretchedness, hatred sleeping in the indolence of a life passed in watching the daily and external life of Paris, apathy which seeks stimulation, lament without talent, a mimicry of strength, the venom of past disappointments which excites to cynicism, and spits upon all that enlarges and grows, misconceives all necessary authority, rejoicing in its embarrassments, and will not hold to any social form. This Parisian malady is to the active and permanent impulse towards conspiracy in persons of energy what the sapwood is to the sap of the trees; it preserves it, feeds it, and conceals it.

II. OLD HOUSE, OLD PEOPLE, OLD CUSTOMS

Weary of himself, Godefroid attempted one day to give a meaning to his life, after meeting a former comrade who had been the tortoise in the fable, while he in earlier days had been the hare. In one of those conversations which arise when schoolmates meet again in after years,—a conversation held as they were walking together in the sunshine on the boulevard des Italiens,—he was startled to learn the success of a man endowed apparently with less gifts, less means, less fortune than himself; but who had bent his will each morning to the purpose resolved upon the night before. The sick soul then determined to imitate that simple action.

“Social existence is like the soil,” his comrade had said to him; “it makes us a return in proportion to our efforts.”

Godefroid was in debt. As a first test, a first task, he resolved to live in some retired place, and pay his debts from his income. To a man accustomed to spend six thousand francs when he had but five, it was no small undertaking to bring himself to live on two thousand. Every morning he studied advertisements, hoping to find the offer of some asylum where his expenses could be fixed, where he might have the solitude a man wants when he makes

a return upon himself, examines himself, and endeavors to give himself a vocation. The manners and customs of bourgeois boarding-houses shocked his delicacy, sanitariums seemed to him unhealthy, and he was about to fall back into the fatal irresolution of persons without will, when the following advertisement met his eye:—

“To Let. A small lodging for seventy francs a month; suitable for an ecclesiastic. A quiet tenant desired. Board supplied; the rooms can be furnished at a moderate cost if mutually acceptable.

“Inquire of M. Millet, grocer, rue Chanoinesse, near Notre-Dame, where all further information can be obtained.”

Attracted by a certain kindliness concealed beneath these words, and the middle-class air which exhaled from them, Godefroid had, on the afternoon when we found him on the quay, called at four o’clock on the grocer, who told him that Madame de la Chanterie was then dining, and did not receive any one when at her meals. The lady, he said, was visible in the evening after seven o’clock, or in the morning between ten and twelve. While speaking, Monsieur Millet examined Godefroid, and made him submit to what magistrates call the “first degree of interrogation.”

“Was monsieur unmarried? Madame wished a person of regular habits; the gate was closed at eleven at the latest. Monsieur certainly seemed of an age to suit Madame de la Chanterie.”

“How old do you think me?” asked Godefroid.

“About forty!” replied the grocer.

This ingenuous answer threw the young man into a state of misanthropic gloom. He went off and dined at a restaurant on the quai de la Tournelle, and afterwards went to the parapet to contemplate Notre-Dame at the moment when the fires of the setting sun were rippling and breaking about the manifold buttresses of the apsis.

The young man was floating between the promptings of despair and the moving voice of religious harmonies sounding in the bell of the cathedral when, amid the shadows, the silence, the half-veiled light of the moon, he heard the words of the priest. Though, like most of the sons of our century, he was far from religious, his sensibilities were touched by those words, and he returned to the rue Chanoinesse, although he had almost made up his mind not to do so.

The priest and Godefroid were both surprised when they entered together the rue Massilon, which is opposite to the small north portal of the cathedral, and turned together into the rue Chanoinesse, at the point where, towards the

rue de la Colombe, it becomes the rue des Marmousets. When Godefroid stopped before the arched portal of Madame de la Chanterie's house, the priest turned towards him and examined him by the light of the hanging street-lamp, probably one of the last to disappear from the heart of old Paris.

"Have you come to see Madame de la Chanterie, monsieur?" said the priest.

"Yes," replied Godefroid. "The words I heard you say to that workman show me that, if you live here, this house must be salutary for the soul."

"Then you were a witness of my defeat," said the priest, raising the knocker of the door, "for I did not succeed."

"I thought, on the contrary, it was the workman who did not succeed; he demanded money energetically."

"Alas!" replied the priest, "one of the great evils of revolutions in France is that each offers a fresh premium to the ambitions of the lower classes. To get out of his condition, to make his fortune (which is regarded to-day as the only social standard), the working-man throws himself into some of those monstrous associations which, if they do not succeed, ought to bring the speculators to account before human justice. This is what trusts often lead to."

The porter opened a heavy door. The priest said to Godefroid: "Monsieur has perhaps come about the little suite of rooms?"

"Yes, monsieur."

The priest and Godefroid then crossed a wide courtyard, at the farther end of which loomed darkly a tall house flanked by a square tower which rose above the roof, and appeared to be in a dilapidated condition. Whoever knows the history of Paris, knows that the soil before and around the cathedral has been so raised that there is not a vestige now of the twelve steps which formerly led up to it. To-day the base of the columns of the porch is on a level with the pavement; consequently what was once the ground-floor of the house of which we speak is now its cellar. A portico, reached by a few steps, leads to the entrance of the tower, in which a spiral stairway winds up round a central shaft carved with a grape-vine. This style, which recalls the stairways of Louis XII. at the chateau of Blois, dates from the fourteenth century. Struck by these and other evidences of antiquity, Godefroid could not help saying, with a smile, to the priest: "This tower is not of yesterday."

"It sustained, they say, an assault of the Normans, and probably formed part of the first palace of the kings of Paris; but, according to actual tradition, it was certainly the dwelling of the famous Canon Fulbert, the uncle of Heloise."

As he ended these words, the priest opened the door of the apartment which appeared now to be the ground-floor of the house, but was in reality towards both the front and back courtyard (for there was a small interior court) on the first floor.

In the antechamber a maid-servant, wearing a cambric cap with fluted frills for its sole decoration, was knitting by the light of a little lamp. She stuck her needles into her hair, held her work in her hand, and rose to open the door of a salon which looked out on the inner court. The dress of the woman was somewhat like that of the Sisters of Mercy.

“Madame, I bring you a tenant,” said the priest, ushering Godefroid into the salon, where the latter saw three persons sitting in armchairs near Madame de la Chanterie.

These three persons rose; the mistress of the house rose; then, when the priest had drawn up another armchair for Godefroid, and when the future tenant had seated himself in obedience to a gesture of Madame de la Chanterie, accompanied by the old-fashioned words, “Be seated, monsieur,” the man of the boulevards fancied himself at some enormous distance from Paris,—in lower Brittany or the wilds of Canada.

Silence has perhaps its own degrees. Godefroid, already penetrated with the silence of the rues Massillon and Chanoinesse, where two carriages do not pass in a month, and grasped by the silence of the courtyard and the tower, may have felt that he had reached the very heart of silence in this still salon, guarded by so many old streets, old courts, old walls.

This part of the Ile, which is called “the Cloister,” has preserved the character of all cloisters; it is damp, cold, and monastically silent even at the noisiest hours of the day. It will be remarked, also, that this portion of the Cite, crowded between the flank of Notre-Dame and the river, faces the north, and is always in the shadow of the cathedral. The east winds swirl through it unopposed, and the fogs of the Seine are caught and retained by the black walls of the old metropolitan church. No one will therefore be surprised at the sensations Godefroid felt when he found himself in this old dwelling, in presence of four silent human beings, who seemed as solemn as the things which surrounded them.

He did not look about him, being seized with curiosity as to Madame de la Chanterie, whose name was already a puzzle to him. This lady was evidently a person of another epoch, not to say of another world. Her face was placid, its tones both soft and cold; the nose aquiline; the forehead full of sweetness; the eyes brown; the chin double; and all were framed in silvery white hair. Her gown could only be called by its ancient name of “fourreau,” so tightly was she sheathed within it, after the fashion of the eighteenth century. The material

—a brown silk, with very fine and multiplied green lines—seemed also of that period. The bodice, which was one with the skirt, was partly hidden beneath a mantle of poult-de-soie edged with black lace, and fastened on the bosom by a brooch enclosing a miniature. Her feet, in black velvet boots, rested on a cushion. Madame de la Chanterie, like her maid, was knitting a stocking, and she, too, had a needle stuck through her white curls beneath the lace of her cap.

“Have you seen Monsieur Millet?” she said to Godefroid, in the head voice peculiar to the dowagers of the faubourg Saint-Germain, observing that her visitor seemed confused, and as if to put the words into his mouth.

“Yes, madame.”

“I fear that the apartment will scarcely suit you,” she said, noticing the elegance and newness of his clothes.

Godefroid was wearing polished leather boots, yellow gloves, handsome studs, and a very pretty gold chain passed through the buttonhole of his waistcoat of black silk with blue flowers. Madame de la Chanterie took a little silver whistle from her pocket and blew it. The serving-woman came.

“Manon, my child, show this gentleman the apartment. Would you, my dear vicar, be so kind as to accompany him?” she said, addressing the priest. “If by chance,” she added, rising and again looking at Godefroid, “the apartment suits you, we will talk of the conditions.”

Godefroid bowed and went out. He heard the rattle of keys which Manon took from a drawer, and he saw her light the candle in a large brass candlestick. Manon went first, without uttering a word. When Godefroid found himself again on the staircase, winding up two flights, he doubted the reality of life, he dreamed awake, he saw with his eyes the fantastic world of romances he had read in his idle hours. Any Parisian leaving, as he did, the modern quarter, with its luxury of houses and furniture, the glitter of its restaurants and theatres, the tumult and movement of the heart of Paris, would have shared his feeling.

The candle carried by the woman feebly lighted the winding stair, where spiders swung their draperies gray with dust. Manon wore a petticoat with heavy plaits of a coarse woollen stuff; the bodice was square before and square behind, and all her clothes seemed to hang together. When she reached the second floor, which, it will be remembered, was actually the third, Manon stopped, turned a key in an ancient lock, and opened a door painted in a coarse imitation of mahogany.

“This is it,” she said, entering first.

Was it a miser, was it an artist dying in penury, was it a cynic to whom the world was naught, or some religious soul detached from life, who had occupied this apartment? That triple question might well be asked by one who breathed the odor of that poverty, who saw the greasy spots upon the papers yellow with smoke, the blackened ceilings, the dusty windows with their casement panes, the discolored floor-bricks, the wainscots layered with a sort of sticky glaze. A damp chill came from the chimneys with their mantels of painted stone, surmounted by mirrors in panels of the style of the seventeenth century. The apartment was square, like the house, and looked out upon the inner court, which could not now be seen because of the darkness.

“Who has lived here?” asked Godefroid of the priest.

“A former councillor of the parliament, a great-uncle of madame, Monsieur de Boisfrelon. After the Revolution he fell into dotage; but he did not die until 1832, at the age of ninety-six. Madame could not at first make up her mind to let his rooms to a stranger, but she finds she cannot afford to lose the rent.”

“Madame will have the apartment cleaned and furnished in a manner to satisfy monsieur,” said Manon.

“That will depend on the arrangement you make with her,” said the priest. “You have here a fine parlor, a large sleeping-room and closet, and those little rooms in the angle will make an excellent study. It is the same arrangement as in my apartment below, also in the one overhead.”

“Yes,” said Manon, “Monsieur Alain’s apartment is just like this, only his has a view of the tower.”

“I think I had better see the rooms by daylight,” said Godefroid, timidly.

“Perhaps so,” said Manon.

The priest and Godefroid went downstairs, leaving the woman to lock the doors. When they re-entered the salon, Godefroid, who was getting inured to the surroundings, looked about him while discoursing with Madame de la Chanterie, and examined the persons and things there present.

The salon had curtains at its windows of old red damask, with lambrequins, tied back at the sides with silken cords. The red-tiled floor showed at the edges of an old tapestry carpet too small to cover the whole room. The woodwork was painted gray. The plastered ceiling, divided in two parts by a heavy beam which started from the fireplace, seemed a concession tardily made to luxury. Armchairs, with their woodwork painted white, were covered with tapestry. A paltry clock, between two copper-gilt candlesticks, decorated the mantel-shelf. Beside Madame de la Chanterie was an ancient

table with spindle legs, on which lay her balls of worsted in a wicker basket. A hydrostatic lamp lighted the scene. The four men, who were seated there, silent, immovable, like bronze statues, had evidently stopped their conversation with Madame de la Chanterie when they heard the stranger returning. They all had cold, discreet faces, in keeping with the room, the house, the quarter of the town.

Madame de la Chanterie admitted the justice of Godefroid's observations; but told him that she did not wish to make any change until she knew the intentions of her lodger, or rather her boarder. If he would conform to the customs of the house he could become her boarder; but these customs were widely different from those of Paris. Life in the rue Chanoinesse was like provincial life: the lodger must always be in by ten o'clock at night; they disliked noise; and could have no women or children to break up their customary habits. An ecclesiastic might conform to these ways. Madame de la Chanterie desired, above all, some one of simple life, who would not be exacting; she could afford to put only the strictest necessaries into the apartment. Monsieur Alain (here she designated one of the four men present) was satisfied, and she would do for a new tenant just as she did for the others.

"I do not think," said the priest, "that monsieur is inclined to enter our convent."

"Eh! why not?" said Monsieur Alain; "we are all well off here; we have nothing to complain of."

"Madame," said Godefroid, rising, "I shall have the honor of calling again to-morrow."

Though he was a young man, the four old men and Madame de la Chanterie rose, and the vicar accompanied him to the portico. A whistle sounded. At that signal the porter came with a lantern, guided Godefroid to the street, and closed behind him the enormous yellow door,—ponderous as that of a prison, and decorated with arabesque ironwork of a remote period that was difficult to determine.

Though Godefroid got into a cabriolet, and was soon rolling into the living, lighted, glowing regions of Paris, what he had seen still appeared to him a dream, and his impressions, as he made his way along the boulevard des Italiens, had already the remoteness of a memory. He asked himself, "Shall I to-morrow find those people there?"

III. THE HOUSE OF MONGENOD

The next day, as Godefroid rose amid the appointments of modern luxury and the choice appliances of English “comfort,” he remembered the details of his visit to that cloister of Notre-Dame, and the meaning of the things he had seen there came into his mind. The three unknown and silent men, whose dress, attitude, and stillness acted powerfully upon him, were no doubt boarders like the priest. The solemnity of Madame de la Chanterie now seemed to him a secret dignity with which she bore some great misfortune. But still, in spite of the explanations which Godefroid gave himself, he could not help fancying there was an air of mystery about those sober figures.

He looked around him and selected the pieces of furniture that he would keep, those that were indispensable to him; but when he transported them in thought to the miserable lodging in the rue Chanoinesse, he began to laugh at the contrast they would make there, resolving to sell all and let Madame de la Chanterie furnish the rooms for him. He wanted a new life, and the very sight of these objects would remind him of that which he wished to forget. In his desire for transformation (for he belonged to those characters who spring at a bound into the middle of a situation, instead of advancing, as others do, step by step), he was seized while he breakfasted with an idea,—he would turn his whole property into money, pay his debts, and place the remainder of his capital in the banking-house with which his father had done business.

This house was the firm of Mongenod and Company, established in 1816 or 1817, whose reputation for honesty and uprightness had never been questioned in the midst of the commercial depravity which smirched, more or less, all the banking-houses of Paris. In spite of their immense wealth, the houses of Nucingen, du Tillet, the Keller Brothers, Palma and Company, were each regarded, more or less, with secret disrespect, although it is true this disrespect was only whispered. Evil means had produced such fine results, such political successes, dynastic principles covered so completely base workings, that no one in 1834 thought of the mud in which the roots of these fine trees, the mainstay of the State, were plunged. Nevertheless there was not a single one of those great bankers to whom the confidence expressed in the house of Mongenod was not a wound. Like English houses, the Mongenods made no external display of luxury. They lived in dignified stillness, satisfied to do their business prudently, wisely, and with a stern uprightness which enabled them to carry it from one end of the globe to the other.

The actual head of the house, Frederic Mongenod, is the brother-in-law of the Vicomte de Fontaine; therefore, this numerous family is allied through the Baron de Fontaine to Monsieur Grossetete, the receiver-general, brother of the Grossetete and Company of Limoges, to the Vandenesses, and to Planat de Baudry, another receiver-general. These connections, having procured for the late Mongenod, father of the present head of the house, many favors in the

financial operations under the Restoration, obtained for him also the confidence of the old noblesse, whose property and whose savings, which were immense, were deposited in this bank. Far from coveting a peerage, like the Kellers, Nucingen, and du Tillet, the Mongenods kept away from politics, and only knew as much about them as their banking interests demanded.

The house of Mongenod is established in a fine old mansion in the rue de la Victoire, where Madame Mongenod, the mother, lived with her two sons, all three being partners in the house,—the share of the Vicomtesse de Fontaine having been bought out by them on the death of the elder Mongenod in 1827.

Frederic Mongenod, a handsome young man about thirty-five years of age, cold, silent, and reserved in manner like a Swiss, and neat as an Englishman, had acquired by intercourse with his father all the qualities necessary for his difficult profession. Better educated than the generality of bankers, his studies had the breadth and universality which characterize the polytechnic training; and he had, like most bankers, predilections and tastes outside of his business, —he loved mechanics and chemistry. The second brother, who was ten years younger than Frederic, held the same position in the office of his elder brother that a head clerk holds in that of a notary or lawyer. Frederic trained him, as he had himself been trained by his father, in the variety of knowledge necessary to a true banker, who is to money what a writer is to ideas,—they must both know all of that with which they have to deal.

When Godefroid reached the banking house and gave his name, he saw at once the estimation in which his father had been held; for he was ushered through the offices without delay to the private counting-room of the Mongenods. This counting-room was closed with a glass door, so that Godefroid, without any desire to listen, overheard as he approached it what was being said there.

“Madame, your account is balanced to sixteen hundred thousand francs,” said the younger Mongenod. “I do not know what my brother’s intentions are; he alone can say whether an advance of a hundred thousand francs can be made. You must have been imprudent. Sixteen hundred thousand francs should not be entrusted to any business.”

“Do not speak so loud, Louis!” said a woman’s voice. “Your brother has often told you to speak in a low voice. There may be some one in the next room.”

At this moment Frederic Mongenod himself opened the door of communication between his private house and the counting-room. He saw Godefroid and crossed the room, bowing respectfully to the lady who was conversing with his brother.

“To whom have I the honor of speaking?” he said to Godefroid.

As soon as Godefroid gave his name, Frederic begged him to be seated; and as the banker opened the lid of his desk, Louis Mongenod and the lady, who was no other than Madame de la Chanterie, rose and went up to him. All three then moved into the embrasure of a window and talked in a low voice with Madame Mongenod, the mother, who was sitting there, and to whom all the affairs of the bank were confided. For over thirty years this woman had given, to her husband first and then to her sons, such proofs of business sagacity that she had long been a managing partner in the firm and signed for it.

Godefroid, as he looked about him, noticed on a shelf certain boxes ticketed with the words “De la Chanterie,” and numbered 1 to 7. When the conference was ended by the banker saying to his brother, “Very good; go down to the cashier,” Madame de la Chanterie turned round, saw Godefroid, checked a gesture of surprise, and asked a few questions of the banker in a low voice, to which he replied in a few words spoken equally in a whisper.

Madame de la Chanterie now wore gray silk stockings and small prunella shoes; her gown was the same as before, but she was wrapped in a Venetian “mantua,”—a sort of cloak which was just then returning into fashion. On her head was a drawn bonnet of green silk, lined with white silk, of a style called a la bonne femme. Her face was framed by a cloud of lace. She held herself very erect, in an attitude which bespoke, if not noble birth, certainly the habits of an aristocratic life. Without the extreme affability of her manner, she might have seemed haughty; she was certainly imposing.

“It is the will of Providence rather than mere chance that has brought us here together, monsieur,” she said to Godefroid; “for I had almost decided to refuse a lodger whose ways of life seemed to me quite antipathetic to those of my household; but Monsieur Mongenod has just given me some information about your family which—”

“Ah, madame,—monsieur!” said Godefroid, addressing both Madame de la Chanterie and the banker, “I have no longer a family; and I have come here now to ask some financial advice of my father’s business advisers as to the best method of adapting my means to a new way of life.”

Godefroid then succinctly, and in as few words as possible, related his history, and expressed his desire to change his existence.

“Formerly,” he said, “a man in my position would have made himself a monk; but there are no longer any religious orders.”

“Go and live with madame, if she is willing to take you,” said Frederic Mongenod, after exchanging a glance with Madame de la Chanterie, “and do

not sell out your property; leave it in my hands. Give me the exact amount of your debts; I will agree with your creditors for payment at certain dates, and you can have for yourself about a hundred and fifty francs a month. It will thus take two years to clear you. During those two years, if you take those quiet lodgings, you will have time to think of a career, especially among the persons with whom you will live, who are all good counsellors."

Here Louis Mongenod returned, bringing in his hand a hundred notes of a thousand francs each, which he gave to Madame de la Chanterie. Godefroid offered his arm to his future hostess, and took her down to the hackney-coach which was waiting for her.

"I hope I shall see you soon, monsieur," she said in a cordial tone of voice.

"At what hour shall you be at home, madame?" he asked.

"At two o'clock."

"I shall have time to sell my furniture," he said, as he bowed to her.

During the short time that Madame de la Chanterie's arm rested upon his as they walked to the carriage, Godefroid could not escape the glamour of the words: "Your account is for sixteen hundred thousand francs!"—words said by Louis Mongenod to the woman whose life was spent in the depths of the cloisters of Notre-Dame. The thought, "She must be rich!" entirely changed his way of looking at the matter. "How old is she?" he began to ask himself; and a vision of a romance in the rue Chanoinesse came to him. "She certainly has an air of nobility! Can she be concerned in some bank?" thought he.

In our day nine hundred and ninety-nine young men out of a thousand in Godefroid's position would have had the thought of marrying that woman.

A furniture dealer, who also had apartments to let, paid about three thousand francs for the articles Godefroid was willing to sell, and agreed to let him keep them during the few days that were needed to prepare the shabby apartment in the rue Chanoinesse for this lodger with a sick mind. Godefroid went there at once, and obtained from Madame de la Chanterie the address of a painter who, for a moderate sum, agreed to whiten the ceilings, clean the windows, paint the woodwork, and stain the floors, within a week. Godefroid took the measure of the rooms, intending to put the same carpet in all of them, —a green carpet of the cheapest kind. He wished for the plainest uniformity in this retreat, and Madame de la Chanterie approved of the idea. She calculated, with Manon's assistance, the number of yards of white calico required for the window curtains, and also for those of the modest iron bed; and she undertook to buy and have them made for a price so moderate as to surprise Godefroid. Having brought with him a certain amount of furniture, the whole cost of fitting up the rooms proved to be not over six hundred francs.

“We lead here,” said Madame de la Chanterie, “a Christian life, which does not, as you know, accord with many superfluities; I think you have too many as it is.”

In giving this hint to her future lodger, she looked at a diamond which gleamed in the ring through which Godefroid’s blue cravat was slipped.

“I only speak of this,” she added, “because of the intention you expressed to abandon the frivolous life you complained of to Monsieur Mongenod.”

Godefroid looked at Madame de la Chanterie as he listened to the harmonies of her limpid voice; he examined that face so purely white, resembling those of the cold, grave women of Holland whom the Flemish painters have so wonderfully reproduced with their smooth skins, in which a wrinkle is impossible.

“White and plump!” he said to himself, as he walked away; “but her hair is white, too.”

Godefroid, like all weak natures, took readily to a new life, believing it satisfactory; and he was now quite eager to take up his abode in the rue Chanoinesse. Nevertheless, a prudent thought, or, if you prefer to say so, a distrustful thought, occurred to him. Two days before his installation, he went again to see Monsieur Mongenod to obtain some more definite information about the house he was to enter.

During the few moments he had spent in his future lodgings overlooking the changes that were being made in them, he had noticed the coming and going of several persons whose appearance and behavior, without being exactly mysterious, excited a belief that some secret occupation or profession was being carried on in that house. At that particular period there was much talk of attempts by the elder branch of the Bourbons to recover the throne, and Godefroid suspected some conspiracy. When he found himself in the banker’s counting-room held by the scrutinizing eye of Frederic Mongenod while he made his inquiry, he felt ashamed as he saw a derisive smile on the lips of the listener.

“Madame la Baronne de la Chanterie,” replied the banker, “is one of the most obscure persons in Paris, but she is also one of the most honorable. Have you any object in asking for information?”

Godefroid retreated into generalities: he was going to live among strangers; he naturally wished to know something of those with whom he should be intimately thrown. But the banker’s smile became more and more sarcastic; and Godefroid, more and more embarrassed, was ashamed of the step he had taken, and which bore no fruit, for he dared not continue his questions about Madame de la Chanterie and her inmates.

IV. FAREWELL TO THE LIFE OF THE WORLD

Two days later, of a Monday evening, having dined for the last time at the Cafe Anglais, and seen the two first pieces at the Varietes, he went, at ten o'clock, to sleep for the first time in the rue Chanoinesse, where Manon conducted him to his room.

Solitude has charms comparable only to those of savage life, which no European has ever really abandoned after once tasting them. This may seem strange at an epoch when every one lives so much to be seen of others that all the world concern themselves in their neighbors' affairs, and when private life will soon be a thing of the past, so bold and so intrusive are the eyes of the press,—that modern Argus. Nevertheless, it is a truth which rests on the authority of the first six Christian centuries, during which no recluse ever returned to social life. Few are the moral wounds that solitude will not heal.

So, at first, Godefroid was soothed by the deep peace and absolute stillness of his new abode, as a weary traveller is relaxed by a bath.

The very day after his arrival at Madame de la Chanterie's he was forced to examine himself, under the sense that he was separated from all, even from Paris, though he still lived in the shadow of its cathedral. Stripped of his social vanities, he was about to have no other witnesses of his acts than his own conscience and the inmates of that house. He had quitted the great high-road of the world to enter an unknown path. Where was that path to lead him to? to what occupation should he now be drawn?

He had been for two hours absorbed in such reflections when Manon, the only servant of the house, knocked at his door to tell him that the second breakfast was served and the family were waiting for him. Twelve o'clock was striking. The new lodger went down at once, stirred by a wish to see and judge the five persons among whom his life was in future to be spent.

When he entered the room he found all the inmates of the house standing; they were dressed precisely as they were on the day when he came to make his first inquiries.

"Did you sleep well?" asked Madame de la Chanterie.

"So well that I did not wake up till ten o'clock," replied Godefroid, bowing to the four men, who returned the bow with gravity.

"We thought so," said an old man named Alain, smiling.

"Manon spoke of a second breakfast," said Godefroid; "but I fear that I

have already broken some rule. At what hour do you rise?”

“Not quite so early as the old monks,” said Madame de la Chanterie, courteously, “but as early as the working-men,—six in winter, half-past three in summer. Our bed-time is ruled by that of the sun. We are always asleep by nine in winter and eleven in summer. On rising, we all take a little milk, which comes from our farm, after saying our prayers, except the Abbe de Veze, who says the first mass, at six o’clock in summer and seven o’clock in winter, at Notre-Dame, where these gentlemen are present daily, as well as your humble servant.”

Madame de la Chanterie ended her explanation as the five lodgers took their seats at table.

The dining-room, painted throughout in gray, the design of the woodwork being in the style of Louis XIV., adjoined the sort of antechamber in which Manon was usually stationed, and it seemed to be parallel with Madame de la Chanterie’s bedroom, which also opened into the salon. This room had no other ornament than a tall clock. The furniture consisted of six chairs with oval backs covered with worsted-work, done probably by Madame de la Chanterie’s own hand, two buffets and a table, all of mahogany, on which Manon did not lay a cloth for breakfast. The breakfast, of monastic frugality, was composed of a small turbot with a white sauce, potatoes, a salad, and four dishes of fruit,—peaches, grapes, strawberries, and fresh almonds; also, for relishes, honey in the comb (as in Switzerland), radishes, cucumbers, sardines, and butter,—the whole served in the well-known china with tiny blue flowers and green leaves on a white ground, which was no doubt a luxury in the days of Louis XIV., but had now, under the growing demands of luxury, come to be regarded as common.

“We keep the fasts,” said Monsieur Alain. “As we go to mass every morning, you will not be surprised to find us blindly following all the customs of the Church, even the severest.”

“And you shall begin by imitating us,” said Madame de la Chanterie, with a glance at Godefroid, whom she had placed beside her.

Of the five persons present Godefroid knew the names of three,—Madame de la Chanterie, the Abbe de Veze, and Monsieur Alain. He wished to know those of the other two; but they kept silence and ate their food with the attention which recluses appear to give to every detail of a meal.

“Does this fine fruit come also from your farm, madame?” asked Godefroid.

“Yes, monsieur,” she replied. “We have a little model farm, like the government itself; we call it our country house; it is twelve miles from here,

on the road to Italy, near Villeneuve-Saint-Georges."

"It is a property that belongs to us all, and is to go to the survivor," said the goodman Alain.

"Oh, it is not very considerable!" added Madame de la Chanterie, rather hastily, as if she feared that Godefroid might think these remarks a bait.

"There are thirty acres of tilled land," said one of the two personages still unknown to Godefroid, "six of meadow, and an enclosure containing four acres, in which our house, which adjoins the farmhouse, stands."

"But such a property as that," said Godefroid, "must be worth a hundred thousand francs."

"Oh, we don't get anything out of it but our provisions!" said the same personage.

He was a tall, grave, spare man, with all the appearance of having served in the army. His white hair showed him to be past sixty, and his face betrayed some violent grief controlled by religion.

The second unnamed person, who seemed to be something between a master of rhetoric and a business agent, was of ordinary height, plump, but active withal. His face had the jovial expression which characterizes those of lawyers and notaries in Paris.

The dress of these four personages revealed a neatness due to the most scrupulous personal care. The same hand, and it was that of Manon, could be seen in every detail. Their coats were perhaps ten years old, but they were preserved, like the coats of vicars, by the occult power of the servant-woman, and the constant care with which they were worn. These men seemed to wear on their backs the livery of a system of life; they belonged to one thought, their looks said the same word, their faces breathed a gentle resignation, a provoking quietude.

"Is it an indiscretion, madame," said Godefroid, "to ask the names of these gentlemen? I am ready to explain my life; can I know as much of theirs as custom will allow?"

"That gentleman," said Madame de la Chanterie, motioning to the tall, thin man, "is Monsieur Nicolas; he is a colonel of gendarmerie, retired with the rank of brigadier-general. And this," she added, looking towards the stout little man, "is a former councillor of the royal courts of Paris, who retired from the magistracy in 1830. His name is Monsieur Joseph. Though you have only been with us one day, I will tell you that in the world Monsieur Nicolas once bore the name of the Marquis de Montauran, and Monsieur Joseph that of Lecamus, Baron de Tresnes; but for us, as for the world, those names no longer exist.

These gentlemen are without heirs; they only advance by a little the oblivion which awaits their names; they are simply Monsieur Nicolas and Monsieur Joseph, as you will be Monsieur Godefroid."

As he heard those names,—one so celebrated in the annals of royalism by the catastrophe which put an end to the uprising of the Chouans; the other so revered in the halls of the old parliament of Paris,—Godefroid could not repress a quiver. He looked at these relics of the grandest things of the fallen monarchy,—the noblesse and the law,—and he could see no movement of the features, no change in the countenance, that revealed the presence of a worldly thought. Those men no longer remembered, or did not choose to remember, what they had been. This was Godefroid's first lesson.

"Each of your names, gentlemen, is a whole history in itself," he said respectfully.

"Yes, the history of my time,—ruins," replied Monsieur Joseph.

"You are in good company," said Monsieur Alain.

The latter can be described in a word: he was the small bourgeois of Paris, the worthy middle-class being with a kindly face, relieved by pure white hair, but made insipid by an eternal smile.

As for the priest, the Abbe de Veze, his presence said all. The priest who fulfils his mission is known by the first glance he gives you, and by the glance that others who know him give to him.

That which struck Godefroid most forcibly at first was the profound respect which the four lodgers manifested for Madame de la Chanterie. They all seemed, even the priest, in spite of the sacred character his functions gave him, to regard her as a queen. Godefroid also noticed their sobriety. Each seemed to eat only for nourishment. Madame de la Chanterie took, as did the rest, a single peach and half a bunch of grapes; but she told her new lodger, as she offered him the various dishes, not to imitate such temperance.

Godefroid's curiosity was excited to the highest degree by this first entrance on his new life. When they returned to the salon after breakfast, he was left alone; Madame de la Chanterie retired to the embrasure of a window and held a little private council with her four friends. This conference, entirely devoid of animation, lasted half an hour. They spoke together in a low voice, exchanging words which each of them appeared to have thought over. From time to time Monsieur Alain and Monsieur Joseph consulted a note-book, turning over its leaves.

"See the faubourg," said Madame de la Chanterie to Monsieur Joseph, who left the house.

That was the only word Godefroid distinguished.

“And you the Saint-Marceau quarter,” she continued, addressing Monsieur Nicolas. “Hunt through the faubourg Saint-Germain and see if you can find what we want;” this to the Abbe de Veze, who went away immediately. “And you, my dear Alain,” she added, smiling at the latter, “make an examination. There, those important matters are all settled,” she said, returning to Godefroid.

She seated herself in her armchair, took a little piece of linen from the table before her, and began to sew as if she were employed to do so.

Godefroid, lost in conjecture, and still thinking of a royalist conspiracy, took his landlady’s remark as an opening, and he began to study her as he seated himself beside her. He was struck by the singular dexterity with which she worked. Although everything about her bespoke the great lady, she showed the dexterity of a workwoman; for every one can see at a glance, by certain manipulations, the work of a workman or an amateur.

“You do that,” said Godefroid, “as if you knew the trade.”

“Alas!” she answered, without raising her head, “I did know it once out of necessity.”

Two large tears came into her eyes, and rolled down her cheeks to the linen in her hand.

“Forgive me, madame!” cried Godefroid.

Madame de Chanterie looked at her new lodger, and saw such an expression of genuine regret upon his face, that she made him a friendly sign. After drying her eyes, she immediately recovered the calmness that characterized her face, which was less cold than chastened.

“You are here, Monsieur Godefroid,—for you know already that we shall call you by your baptized name,—you are here in the midst of ruins caused by a great tempest. We have each been struck and wounded in our hearts, our family interests, or our fortunes, by that whirlwind of forty years, which overthrew religion and royalty, and dispersed the elements of all that made old France. Words that seem quite harmless do sometimes wound us all, and that is why we are so silent. We speak rarely of ourselves; we forget ourselves, and we have found a way to substitute another life for our lives. It is because, after hearing your confidence at Monsieur Mongenod’s, I thought there seemed a likeness between your situation and ours, that I induced my four friends to receive you among us; besides, we wanted another monk in our convent. But what are you going to do? No one can face solitude without some moral resources.”

“Madame, I should be very glad, after hearing what you have said, if you yourself would be the guide of my destiny.”

“You speak like a man of the world,” she answered, “and are trying to flatter me,—a woman of sixty! My dear child,” she went on, “let me tell you that you are here among persons who believe strongly in God; who have all felt his hand, and have yielded themselves to him almost as though they were Trappists. Have you ever remarked the profound sense of safety in a true priest when he has given himself to the Lord, when he listens to his voice, and strives to make himself a docile instrument in the hand of Providence? He has no longer vanity or self-love,—nothing of all that which wounds continually the hearts of the world. His quietude is equal to that of the fatalist; his resignation does truly enable him to bear all. The true priest, such a one as the Abbe de Veze, lives like a child with its mother; for the Church, my dear Monsieur Godefroid, is a good mother. Well, a man can be a priest without the tonsure; all priests are not in orders. To vow one’s self to good, that is imitating a true priest; it is obedience to God. I am not preaching to you; I am not trying to convert you; I am explaining our lives to you.”

“Instruct me, madame,” said Godefroid, deeply impressed, “so that I may not fail in any of your rules.”

“That would be hard upon you; you will learn them by degrees. Never speak here of your misfortunes; they are slight compared to the catastrophes by which the lives of those you are now among were blasted.”

While speaking thus, Madame de la Chanterie drew her needle and set her stitches with unbroken regularity; but here she paused, raised her head, and looked at Godefroid. She saw him charmed by the penetrating sweetness of her voice, which possessed, let us say it here, an apostolic unction. The sick soul contemplated with admiration the truly extraordinary phenomenon presented by this woman, whose face was now resplendent. Rosy tints were spreading on the waxen cheeks, her eyes shone, the youthfulness of her soul changed the light wrinkles into gracious lines, and all about her solicited affection. Godefroid in that one moment measured the gulf that separated this woman from common sentiments. He saw her inaccessible on a peak to which religion had led her; and he was still too worldly not to be keenly piqued, and to long to plunge through the gulf and up to the summit on which she stood, and stand beside her. Giving himself up to this desire, he related to her all the mistakes of his life, and much that he could not tell at Mongenod’s, where his confidences had been confined to his actual situation.

“Poor child!”

That exclamation, falling now and then from Madame de la Chanterie’s lips as he went on, dropped like balm upon the heart of the sufferer.

“What can I substitute for so many hopes betrayed, so much affection wasted?” he asked, looking at his hostess, who had now grown thoughtful. “I came here,” he resumed, “to reflect and choose a course of action. I have lost my mother; will you replace her?”

“Will you,” she said, “show a son’s obedience?”

“Yes, if you will have the tenderness that commands it.”

“I will try,” she said.

Godefroid put out his hand to take that of his hostess, who gave it to him, guessing his intentions. He carried it respectfully to his lips. Madame de la Chanterie’s hand was exquisitely beautiful,—without a wrinkle; neither fat nor thin; white enough to be the envy of all young women, and shapely enough for the model of a sculptor. Godefroid had already admired those hands, conscious of their harmony with the spell of her voice, and the celestial blue of her glance.

“Wait a moment,” said Madame de la Chanterie, rising and going into her own room.

Godefroid was keenly excited; he did not know to what class of ideas her movement was to be attributed. His perplexity did not last long, for she presently returned with a book in her hand.

“Here, my dear child,” she said, “are the prescriptions of a great physician of souls. When the things of ordinary life have not given us the happiness we expected of them, we must seek for happiness in a higher life. Here is the key of a new world. Read night and morning a chapter of this book; but bring your full attention to bear upon what you read; study the words as you would a foreign language. At the end of a month you will be another man. It is now twenty years that I have read a chapter every day; and my three friends, Messieurs Nicolas, Alain, and Joseph, would no more fail in that practice than they would fail in getting up and going to bed. Do as they do for love of God, for love of me,” she said, with a divine serenity, an august confidence.

Godefroid turned over the book and read upon its back in gilt letters, IMITATION OF JESUS CHRIST. The simplicity of this old woman, her youthful candor, her certainty of doing a good deed, confounded the ex-dandy. Madame de la Chanterie’s face wore a rapturous expression, and her attitude was that of a woman who was offering a hundred thousand francs to a merchant on the verge of bankruptcy.

“I have used that volume,” she said, “for twenty-six years. God grant its touch may be contagious. Go now and buy me another copy; for this is the hour when persons come here who must not be seen.”

Godefroid bowed and went to his room, where he flung the book upon the table, exclaiming,—

“Poor, good woman! Well, so be it!”

V. THE INFLUENCE OF BOOKS

The book, like all books frequently read, opened in a particular place. Godefroid sat down as if to put his ideas in order, for he had gone through more emotion during this one morning than he had often done in the agitated months of his life; but above all, his curiosity was keenly excited. Letting his eyes fall by chance, as people will when their souls are launched in meditation, they rested mechanically on the two open pages of the book; almost unconsciously he read the following heading:—

CHAPTER XII.

THE ROYAL WAY OF THE HOLY CROSS

He took up the book; a sentence of that noble chapter caught his eye like a flash of light:—

“He has walked before thee, bearing his cross; he died for thee, that thou mightest bear thy cross, and be glad to die upon it.

“Go where thou wilt, seek what thou wilt, never canst thou find a nobler, surer path than the royal way of the holy cross.

“Dispose and order all things according to thy desires and thine own judgment and still thou shalt find trials to suffer, whether thou wilt or no; and so the cross is there; be it pain of body or pain of mind.

“Sometimes God will seem to leave thee, sometimes men will harass thee. But, far worse, thou wilt find thyself a burden to thyself, and no remedy will deliver thee, no consolation comfort thee: until it pleases God to end thy trouble thou must bear it; for it is God’s will that we suffer without consolation, that we may go to him without one backward look, humble through tribulation.”

“What a strange book!” thought Godefroid, turning over the leaves. Then his eyes lighted on the following words:—

“When thou hast reached the height of finding all afflictions sweet, since they have made thee love the love of Jesus Christ, then know thyself happy; for thou hast found thy paradise in this world.”

Annoyed by this simplicity (the characteristic of strength), angry at being foiled by a book, he closed the volume; but even then he saw, in letters of gold on the green morocco cover, the words:—

SEEK THAT WHICH IS ETERNAL, AND THAT ONLY.

“Have they found it here?” he asked himself.

He went out to buy the handsomest copy he could find of the “Imitation of Jesus Christ” thinking that Madame de la Chanterie would wish to read her chapter that night. When he reached the street he stood a moment near the door, uncertain which way to take and debating in what direction he was likely to find a bookseller. As he stood there he heard the heavy sound of the massive porte-cochere closing.

Two men were leaving the hotel de la Chanterie. If the reader has fully understood the character of this old house he will know that it was one of the ancient mansions of the olden time. Manon, herself, when she called Godefroid that morning, had asked him, smiling, how he had slept in the hotel de la Chanterie.

Godefroid followed the two men without the slightest intention of watching them; they took him for an accidental passer, and spoke in tones which enabled him to hear distinctly in those lonely streets.

The two men passed along the rue Massillon beside the church and crossed the open space in front of it.

“Well, you see, old man, it is easy enough to catch their sous. Say what they want you to say, that’s all.”

“But we owe money.”

“To whom?”

“To that lady—”

“I’d like to see that old body try to get it; I’d—”

“You’d pay her.”

“Well, you’re right, for if I paid her I’d get more another time.”

“Wouldn’t it be better to do as they advise, and build up a good business?”

“Pooh!”

“But she said she would get some one to lend us the money.”

“Then we should have to give up the life of—”

“Well, I’d rather; I’m sick of it; it isn’t being a man at all to be drunk half

one’s time.”

“Yes, but you know the abbe turned his back on old Marin the other day; he refused him everything.”

“Because old Marin tried to swindle, and nobody can succeed in that but millionnaires.”

Just then the two men, whose dress seemed to show that they were foremen in some workshop, turned abruptly round towards the place Maubert by the bridge of the Hotel-Dieu. Godefroid stepped aside to let them pass. Seeing him so close behind them they looked rather anxiously at each other, and their faces expressed a regret for having spoken.

Godefroid was the more interested by this conversation because it reminded him of the scene between the Abbe de Veze and the workman the day of his first visit.

Thinking over this circumstance, he went as far as a bookseller’s in the rue Saint-Jacques, whence he returned with a very handsome copy of the finest edition published in France of the “Imitation of Jesus Christ.” Walking slowly back, in order that he might arrive exactly at the dinner hour, he recalled his own sensations during this morning and he was conscious of a new impulse in his soul. He was seized by a sudden and deep curiosity, but his curiosity paled before an inexplicable desire. He was drawn to Madame de la Chanterie; he felt the keenest desire to attach himself to her, to devote himself to her, to please her, to deserve her praise: in short, he felt the first emotions of platonic love; he saw glimpses of the untold grandeur of that soul, and he longed to know it in its entirety. He grew impatient to enter the inner lives of these pure Catholics. In that small company of faithful souls, the majesty of practical religion was so thoroughly blended with all that is most majestic in a French woman that Godefroid resolved to leave no stone unturned to make himself accepted as a true member of the little body. These feelings would have been unnaturally sudden in a busy Parisian eagerly occupied with life, but Godefroid was, as we have seen, in the position of a drowning man who catches at every floating branch thinking it a solid stay, and his soul, ploughed and furrowed with trial, was ready to receive all seed.

He found the four friends in the salon, and he presented the book to Madame de la Chanterie, saying:

“I did not like to deprive you of it to-night.”

“God grant,” she said, smiling, as she looked at the magnificent volume, “that this may be your last excess of elegance.”

Looking at the clothes of the four men present and observing how in every

particular they were reduced to mere utility and neatness, and seeing, too, how rigorously the same principle was applied to all the details of the house, Godefroid understood the value of the reproach so courteously made to him.

“Madame,” he said, “the persons whom you obliged this morning are scoundrels; I overheard, without intending it, what they said to each other when they left the house; it was full of the basest ingratitude.”

“They were the two locksmiths of the rue Mouffetard,” said Madame de la Chanterie to Monsieur Nicolas; “that is your affair.”

“The fish gets away more than once before it is caught,” said Monsieur Alain, laughing.

The perfect indifference of Madame de la Chanterie on hearing of the immediate ingratitude of persons to whom she had, no doubt, given money, surprised Godefroid, who became thoughtful.

The dinner was enlivened by Monsieur Alain and Monsieur Joseph; but Monsieur Nicolas remained quiet, sad, and cold; he bore on his features the ineffaceable imprint of some bitter grief, some eternal sorrow. Madame de la Chanterie paid equal attentions to all. Godefroid felt himself observed by these persons, whose prudence equalled their piety; his vanity led him to imitate their reserve, and he measured his words.

This first day was much more interesting than those which succeeded it. Godefroid, who found himself set aside from all the serious conferences, was obliged, during several hours in mornings and evenings when he was left wholly to himself, to have recourse to the “Imitation of Jesus Christ;” and he ended by studying that book as a man studies a book when he has but one, or is a prisoner. A book is then like a woman with whom we live in solitude; we must either hate or adore that woman, and, in like manner, we must either enter into the soul of the author or not read ten lines of his book.

Now, it is impossible not to be impressed by the “Imitation of Jesus Christ,” which is to dogma what action is to thought. Catholicism vibrates in it, pulses, breathes, and lives, body to body, with human life. The book is a sure friend. It speaks to all passions, all difficulties, even worldly ones; it solves all problems; it is more eloquent than any preacher, for its voice is your own, it is the voice within your soul, you hear it with your spirit. It is, in short, the Gospel translated, adapted to all ages, the summit and crest of all human situations. It is extraordinary that the Church has never canonized John Gersen, for the Divine Spirit evidently inspired his pen.

For Godefroid, the hotel de la Chanterie now held a woman and a book; day by day he loved the woman more; he discovered flowers buried beneath the snows of winter in her heart; he had glimpses of the joys of a sacred

friendship which religion permits, on which the angels smile; a friendship which here united these five persons and against which no evil could prevail.

This is a sentiment higher than all others; a love of soul to soul, resembling those rarest flowers born on the highest peaks of earth; a love of which a few examples are offered to humanity from age to age, by which lovers are sometimes bound together in one being, and which explains those faithful attachments which are otherwise inexplicable by the laws of the world. It is a bond without disappointment, without misunderstanding, without vanity, without strife, without even contradictions; so completely are the moral natures blended into one.

This sentiment, vast, infinite, born of Catholic charity, Godefroid foresaw with all its joys. At times he could not believe the spectacle before his eyes, and he sought for reasons to explain the sublime friendship of these five persons, wondering in his heart to find true Catholics, true Christians of the early Church, in the Paris of 1836.

VI. THE BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE OF CHANTERIE AND COMPANY

Within a week after his arrival Godefroid had seen such a concourse of persons, he had overheard fragments of conversation relating to so many serious topics, that he began to perceive an enormous activity in the lives of the five inmates of the house. He noticed that none of them slept more than five hours at the most.

They had all made, in some sort, a first day, before the second breakfast. During that time strangers came and went, bringing or carrying away money, sometimes in considerable sums. A messenger from the Mongenod counting-room often came,—always very early in the morning, so that his errand might not interfere with the business of the bank.

One evening Monsieur Mongenod came himself, and Godefroid noticed that he showed to Monsieur Alain a certain filial familiarity added to the profound respect which he testified to the three other lodgers of Madame de la Chanterie.

On that evening the banker merely put a few matter-of-fact questions to Godefroid: “Was he comfortable? Did he intend to stay?” etc.,—at the same time advising him to persevere in his plan.

“I need only one thing to make me contented,” said Godefroid.

“What is that?” asked the banker.

“An occupation.”

“An occupation!” remarked the Abbe de Veze. “Then you have changed your mind? I thought you came to our cloister for rest.”

“Rest, without the prayers that enlivened monasteries, without the meditation which peopled the Thebaids, becomes a disease,” said Monsieur Joseph, sententiously.

“Learn book-keeping,” said Monsieur Mongenod, with a smile; “you might become in a few months very useful to my friends here.”

“Oh! with pleasure,” cried Godefroid.

The next day was Sunday; Madame de la Chanterie requested him to give her his arm to high mass.

“It is,” she said, “the only coercion I shall put upon you. Several times during the past week I have wished to speak to you of religion, but it did not seem to me that the time had come. You would find plenty of occupation if you shared our beliefs, for then you would share our labors as well.”

During mass Godefroid noticed the fervor of Messieurs Nicolas, Joseph, and Alain; and as during the last few days he had also noticed their superiority and intelligence, and the vast extent of their knowledge; he concluded, when he saw how they humbled themselves, that the Catholic religion had secrets which had hitherto escaped him.

“After all,” he said to himself, “it is the religion of Bossuet, Pascal, Racine, Saint-Louis, Louis XIV., Raffaelle, Michel-Angelo, Ximenes, Bayard, du Guesclin; and how could I, weakling that I am, compare myself to those intellects, those statesmen, those poets, those heroes?”

If there were not some real instruction in these minor details it would be imprudent to dwell upon them in these days; but they are indispensable to the interests of this history, in which the present public will be none too ready to believe, and which presents at the outset a fact that is almost ridiculous,—namely, the empire which a woman of sixty obtained over a young man disappointed with the world.

“You did not pray at all,” said Madame de la Chanterie to Godefroid as they left the portal of Notre-Dame; “not for any one,—not even for the soul of your mother.”

Godefroid colored and said nothing.

“Will you do me the favor,” continued Madame de la Chanterie, “to go to your room and not come into the salon for an hour? You can meditate, if you

love me, on the first chapter in the third book of the ‘Imitation’—the one entitled: ‘Of inward communing.’”

Godefroid bowed stiffly and went to his room.

“The devil take them!” he exclaimed to himself, giving way to downright anger. “What do they want with me here? What is all this traffic they are carrying on? Pooh! all women, even pious ones, are up to the same tricks. If Madame” (giving her the name by which her lodgers spoke of her) “wants me out of the way it is probably because they are plotting something against me.”

With that thought in his mind he tried to look from his window into that of the salon; but the situation of the rooms did not allow it. He went down one flight, and then returned,—reflecting that according to the rigid principles of the house he should be dismissed if discovered spying. To lose the respect of those five persons seemed to him as serious as public dishonor.

He waited three quarters of an hour; then he resolved to surprise Madame de la Chanterie and come upon her suddenly before she expected him. He invented a lie to excuse himself, saying that his watch was wrong; for which purpose he set it on twenty minutes. Then he went downstairs, making no noise, reached the door of the salon, and opened it abruptly.

He saw a man, still young, but already celebrated, a poet, whom he had frequently met in society, Victor de Vernisset, on his knees before Madame de la Chanterie and kissing the hem of her dress. If the sky had fallen, and shivered to atoms like glass, as the ancients thought it was, Godefroid could not have been more astonished. Shocking thoughts came into his mind, and then a reaction more terrible still when, before the sarcasm he was about to utter had left his lips, he saw Monsieur Alain in a corner of the room counting out bank-notes.

In an instant Vernisset was on his feet, and the worthy Alain looked thunderstruck. Madame de la Chanterie, on her part, gave Godefroid a look which petrified him; for the twofold expression on the face of the visitor had not escaped him.

“Monsieur is one of us,” she said to the young poet, with a sign towards Godefroid.

“Then you are a happy man, my dear fellow,” said Vernisset; “you are saved! But, madame,” he added, turning to Madame de la Chanterie, “if all Paris had seen me, I should rejoice in it. Nothing can ever mark my gratitude to you. I am yours forever; I belong to you utterly. Command me as you will and I obey. I owe you my life, and it is yours.”

“Well, well, young man!” said the kind Alain, “then be wise, be virtuous,

—only, work; but do not attack religion in your books. Moreover, remember that you owe a debt."

And he handed him an envelope thick with the bank-notes he had counted out. The tears were in Victor de Vernisset's eyes; he kissed Madame de la Chanterie's hand respectfully, and went away, after shaking hands with Monsieur Alain and Godefroid.

"You have not obeyed madame," said the goodman Alain solemnly, with a sad expression on his face that Godefroid had never before seen there; "and that is a great wrong; if it happens again we must part. This may seem hard to you after we had begun to give you our confidence."

"My dear Alain," said Madame de la Chanterie, "have the kindness for my sake to say no more about this piece of thoughtlessness. We ought not to ask too much a new arrival, who has been spared great misfortunes and knows nothing of religion; and who, moreover, has only an excessive curiosity about our vocation, and does not yet believe in us."

"Forgive me, madame," said Godefroid; "I do desire, from this time forth, to be worthy of you. I will submit to any trial you think necessary before initiating me into the secrets of your work; and if the Abbe de Veze will undertake to instruct me I will listen to him, soul and mind."

These words made Madame de la Chanterie so happy that a faint color stole upon her cheeks. She took Godefroid's hand and pressed it, then she said, with strange emotion, "It is well."

That evening, after dinner, visitors came in: a vicar-general of the diocese of Paris, two canons, two former mayors of Paris, and one of the ladies who distributed the charities of Notre-Dame. No cards were played; but the conversation was gay, without being vapid.

A visit which surprised Godefroid greatly was that of the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, one of the highest personages in aristocratic society, whose salon was inaccessible to the bourgeoisie and to parvenus. The presence of this great lady in Madame de la Chanterie's salon was sufficiently surprising; but the manner in which the two women met and treated each other seemed to Godefroid inexplicable; for it showed the closest intimacy and a constant intercourse which gave Madame de la Chanterie an added value in his eyes. Madame de Cinq-Cygne was gracious and affectionate in manner to the four friends of her friend, and showed the utmost respect to Monsieur Nicolas.

We may see here how social vanities still governed Godefroid; for up to this visit of Madame de Cinq-Cygne he was still undecided; but he now resolved to give himself up, with or without conviction, to whatever Madame de la Chanterie and her friends might exact of him, in order to get affiliated

with their order and initiated into their secrets, assuring himself that in that way he should find a career.

The next day he went to a book-keeper whom Madame de la Chanterie recommended, and arranged with him the hours at which they should work together. His whole time was now employed. The Abbe de Veze instructed him in the mornings; he was two hours a day with the book-keeper; and he spent the rest of his time between breakfast and dinner in doing imaginary commercial accounts which his master required him to write at home.

Some time passed thus, during which Godefroid felt the charm of a life in which each hour has its own employment. The recurrence of a settled work at settled moments, regularity of action, is the secret of many a happy life; and it proves how deeply the founders of religious orders had meditated on the nature of man. Godefroid, who had made up his mind to listen to the Abbe de Veze, began to have serious thoughts of a future life, and to find how little he knew of the real gravity of religious questions.

Moreover, from day to day Madame de la Chanterie, with whom he always remained for an hour after the second breakfast, allowed him to discover the treasures that were in her; he knew then that he never could have imagined a loving-kindness so broad and so complete. A woman of Madame de la Chanterie's apparent age no longer has the pettiness of younger women. She is a friend who offers you all feminine refinements, who displays the graces, the choice attractions which nature inspires in a woman for man; she gives them, and no longer sells them. Such a woman is either detestable or perfect; for her gifts are either not of the flesh or they are worthless. Madame de la Chanterie was perfect. She seemed never to have had a youth; her glance never told of a past. Godefroid's curiosity was far from being appeased by a closer and more intimate knowledge of this sublime nature; the discoveries of each succeeding day only redoubled his desire to learn the anterior life of a woman whom he now thought a saint. Had she ever loved? Had she been a wife,—a mother? Nothing about her was characteristic of an old maid; she displayed all the graces of a well-born woman; and an observer would perceive in her robust health, in the extraordinary phenomena of her physical preservation, a divine life, and a species of ignorance of the earthly existence.

Except the gay and cheery goodman Alain, all these persons had suffered; but Monsieur Nicolas himself seemed to give the palm of martyrdom to Madame de la Chanterie. Nevertheless, the memory of her sorrows was so restrained by religious resignation, by her secret avocations, that she seemed to have been always happy.

"You are the life of your friends," Godefroid said to her one day; "you are the tie that unites them,—the house-mother, as it were, of some great work;

and, as we are all mortal, I ask myself sometimes what your association would become without you."

"That is what frightens the others; but Providence, to whom we owe our new book-keeper," she said, smiling, "will provide. Besides, I am on the look-out."

"Will your new book-keeper soon be allowed to work at your business?" asked Godefroid.

"That depends on himself," she answered, smiling. "He must be sincerely religious, truly pious, without the least self-interest, not concerned about the riches of our house, able to rise above all petty social considerations on the two wings which God has given us."

"What are they?"

"Singleness of mind and purity," replied Madame de la Chanterie. "Your ignorance shows that you have neglected the reading of our book." she added, laughing at the innocent trick she had played to know if Godefroid had read the "Imitation of Jesus Christ." "And, lastly," she went on, "fill your soul with Saint Paul's epistle upon Charity. When that is done," she added, with a sublime look, "it will not be you who belong to us, we shall belong to you, and you will be able to count up greater riches than the sovereigns of this world possess; you will enjoy as we enjoy; yes, let me tell you (if you remember the 'Arabian Nights') that the treasures of Aladdin are nothing to those we possess. And so for the last year we have not sufficed for our affairs, and we needed, as you see, a book-keeper."

While speaking, she studied Godefroid's face; he, on his part, did not know how to take this extraordinary confidence. But as the scene in the counting-room at Mongenod's came often to his mind, he hovered between doubt and belief.

"Ah, you will be very happy!" she said.

Godefroid was so consumed with curiosity that from this moment he determined to break through the reserve of one of the four friends and question him. Now, the one to whom he felt the most drawn, and who seemed naturally to excite the sympathies of all classes, was the kind, gay, simple Monsieur Alain. By what strange path could Providence have led a being so guileless into this monastery without a lock, where recluses of both sexes lived beneath a rule in the midst of Paris, in absolute freedom, as though they were guarded by the sternest of superiors? What drama, what event, had made him leave his own road in life, and take this path among the sorrows of the great city?

Godefroid resolved to ask.

VII. MONSIEUR ALAIN TELLS HIS SECRETS

One evening Godefroid determined to pay a visit to his neighbor on the floor above him, with the intention of satisfying a curiosity more excited by the apparent impossibility of a catastrophe in such an existence than it would have been under the expectation of discovering some terrible episode in the life of a corsair.

At the words “Come in!” given in answer to two raps struck discreetly on the door, Godefroid turned the key which was in the lock and found Monsieur Alain sitting by the fire reading, before he went to bed, his accustomed chapter in the “Imitation of Jesus Christ,” by the light of two wax-candles, each protected by a moveable green shade, such as whist-players use.

The goodman wore trousers a pied and his gray camlet dressing-gown. His feet were at a level with the fire, resting on a cushion done in worsted-work, as were his slippers, by Madame de la Chanterie. The fine head of the old man, without other covering than its crown of white hair, almost like that of a monk, stood out in clear relief against the brown background of an enormous armchair.

Monsieur Alain gently laid his book, which was much worn at the corners, on a little table with twisted legs, and signed to the young man to take another chair, removing as he did so a pair of spectacles which were hanging on the end of his nose.

“Are you ill, that you have left your room at this hour?” he asked.

“Dear Monsieur Alain,” said Godefroid, frankly, “I am tortured with a curiosity which one word from you will make very harmless or very indiscreet; and that explains clearly enough the spirit in which I shall ask my question.”

“Oh! oh! and what is your question?” said the good soul, looking at the young man with an eye that was half mischievous.

“What was it that brought you here to lead the life that you live here? For, surely, to accept the doctrines of such total renunciation of all personal interests, a man must have been disgusted with the world, or else have injured others.”

“Eh! my dear lad,” replied the old man, letting a smile flicker on his large lips, which gave to his rosy mouth the kindliest expression that the genius of a painter ever imagined, “can we not be moved to the deepest pity by the

spectacle of human wretchedness which Paris holds within her walls? Did Saint Vincent de Paul need the spur of remorse or wounded vanity to make him devote himself to outcast children?”

“You close my mouth, for if ever a soul resembled that of the Christian hero, it is yours,” said Godefroid.

In spite of the hardness which age had given to the wrinkled yellow skin of his face, the old man blushed, for he seemed to have provoked that comparison; though any one who knew his modesty would have been certain he never dreamed of it. Godefroid was aware by this time that Madame de la Chanterie’s inmates had no taste for that sort of incense. Nevertheless, the extreme simplicity of the good old soul was more disturbed by this idea than a young girl would have been by an improper thought.

“Though I am very far indeed from Saint Vincent de Paul morally,” said Monsieur Alain, “I think I do resemble him physically.”

Godefroid was about to speak, but was stopped by a gesture of the old man, whose nose, it must be owned, had the tuberous appearance of that of the Saint, and whose face, a good deal like that of an old vine-dresser, was an exact duplicate of the broad, common face of the founder of Foundling hospitals.

“As for me, you are right enough,” he went on; “my vocation for our work was brought about by repentance, as the result of a—folly.”

“A folly,—you!” Godefroid exclaimed softly, the word entirely putting out of his head what he meant to say.

“Ah! dear me, what I am going to tell you will seem, I dare say, a trifle to you,—a mere bit of nonsense; but before the tribunal of conscience it was another thing. If you persist in wishing to share our work after hearing what I shall tell you, you will understand that the power of a sentiment is according to the nature of souls, and that a matter which would not in the least trouble a strong mind may very well torment the conscience of a weak Christian.”

After a preface of this kind, the curiosity of the disciple of course knew no bounds. What could be the crime of the worthy soul whom Madame de la Chanterie called her paschal lamb? The thought crossed Godefroid’s mind that a book might be written on it, called “The Sins of a Sheep.” Sheep are sometimes quite ferocious towards grass and flowers. One of the tenderest republicans of those days was heard to assert that the best of human beings was cruel to something. But the kindly Alain!—he, who like my uncle Toby, wouldn’t crush a gnat till it had stung him twenty times,—that sweet soul to have been tortured by repentance!

This reflection in Godefroid's mind filled the pause made by the old man after saying, "Now listen to me!"—a pause he filled himself by pushing his cushion under Godefroid's feet to share it with him.

"I was then about thirty years of age," he said. "It was the year '98, if I remember right,—a period when young men were forced to have the experience of men of sixty. One morning, a little before my breakfast hour, which was nine o'clock, my old housekeeper ushered in one of the few friends remaining to me after the Revolution. My first word was to ask him to breakfast. My friend—his name was Mongenod, a fellow about twenty-eight years of age—accepted, but he did so in an awkward manner. I had not seen him since 1793!"

"Mongenod!" cried Godefroid; "why, that is—"

"If you want to know the end before the beginning, how am I to tell you my history?" said the old man, smiling.

Godefroid made a sign which promised absolute silence.

"When Mongenod sat down," continued Monsieur Alain, "I noticed that his shoes were worn out. His stockings had been washed so often that it was difficult to say if they were silk or not. His breeches, of apricot-colored cassimere, were so old that the color had disappeared in spots; and the buckles, instead of being of steel, seemed to me to be made of common iron. His white, flowered waistcoat, now yellow from long wearing, also his shirt, the frill of which was frayed, betrayed a horrible yet decent poverty. A mere glance at his coat was enough to convince me that my friend had fallen into dire distress. That coat was nut-brown in color, threadbare at the seams, carefully brushed, though the collar was greasy from pomade or powder, and had the white metal buttons now copper-colored. The whole was so shabby that I tried not to look at it. The hat—an opera hat of a kind we then carried under the arm, and not on the head—had seen many governments. Nevertheless, my poor friend must have spent a few sous at the barber's, for he was neatly shaved; and his hair, gathered behind his head with a comb and powdered carefully, smelt of pomade. I saw two chains hanging down on his breeches,—two rusty steel chains,—but no appearance of a watch in his pocket. I tell you all these details, as they come to me," said Monsieur Alain; "I seldom think of this matter now; but when I do, all the particulars come vividly before me."

He paused a moment and then resumed:—

"It was winter, and Mongenod evidently had no cloak; for I noticed that several lumps of snow, which must have dropped from the roofs as he walked along, were sticking to the collar of his coat. When he took off his rabbit-skin

gloves, and I saw his right hand, I noticed the signs of labor, and toilsome labor, too. Now his father, the advocate of the Grand Council, had left him some property,—about five or six thousand francs a year. I saw at once that he had come to me to borrow money. I had, in a secret hiding-place, two hundred louis d'or,—an enormous hoard at that time; for they were worth I couldn't now tell you how many hundred thousand francs in assignats. Mongenod and I had studied at the same collage,—that of Grassins,—and we had met again in the same law-office,—that of Bordin,—a truly honest man. When you have spent your boyhood and played your youthful pranks with the same comrade, the sympathy between you and him has something sacred about it; his voice, his glance, stir certain chords in your heart which only vibrate under the memories that he brings back. Even if you have had cause of complaint against such a comrade, the rights of the friendship between you can never be effaced. But there had never been the slightest jar between us two. At the death of his father, in 1787, Mongenod was left richer than I. Though I had never borrowed money from him, I owed him pleasures which my father's economy denied me. Without my generous comrade I should never had seen the first representation of the 'Marriage of Figaro.' Mongenod was what was called in those days a charming cavalier; he was very gallant. Sometimes I blamed him for his facile way of making intimacies and his too great amiability. His purse opened freely; he lived in a free-handed way; he would serve a man as second having only seen him twice. Good God! how you send me back to the days and the ways of my youth!" said the worthy man, with his cheery smile.

"Are you sorry?" said Godefroid.

"Oh, no! and you can judge by the minuteness with which I am telling you all this how great a place this event has held in my life.

"Mongenod, endowed with an excellent heart and fine courage, a trifle Voltairean, was inclined to play the nobleman," went on Monsieur Alain. "His education at Grassins, where there were many young nobles, and his various gallantries, had given him the polished manners and ways of people of condition, who were then called aristocrats. You can therefore imagine how great was my surprise to see such symptoms of poverty in the young and elegant Mongenod of 1787 when my eyes left his face and rested on his garments. But as, at that unhappy period of our history, some persons assumed a shabby exterior for safety, and as he might have had some other and sufficient reasons for disguising himself, I awaited an explanation, although I opened the way to it. 'What a plight you are in, my dear Mongenod!' I said, accepting the pinch of snuff he offered me from a copper and zinc snuff-box. 'Sad indeed!' he answered; 'I have but one friend left, and that is you. I have done all I could to avoid appealing to you; but I must ask you for a hundred

louis. The sum is large, I know,' he went on, seeing my surprise; 'but if you gave me fifty I should be unable ever to return them; whereas with one hundred I can seek my fortune in better ways,—despair will inspire me to find them.' 'Then you have nothing?' I exclaimed. 'I have,' he said, brushing away a tear, 'five sous left of my last piece of money. To come here to you I have had my boots blacked and my face shaved. I possess what I have on my back. But,' he added, with a gesture, 'I owe my landlady a thousand francs in assignats, and the man I buy cold victuals from refused me credit yesterday. I am absolutely without resources.' 'What do you think of doing?' 'Enlisting as a soldier if you cannot help me.' 'You! a soldier, Mongenod?' 'I will get myself killed, or I will be General Mongenod.' 'Well,' I said, much moved, 'eat your breakfast in peace; I have a hundred louis.'

"At that point," said the goodman, interrupting himself and looking at Godefroid with a shrewd air, "I thought it best to tell him a bit of a fib."

"'That is all I possess in the world,' I said. 'I have been waiting for a fall in the Funds to invest that money; but I will put it in your hands instead, and you shall consider me your partner; I will leave to your conscience the duty of returning it to me in due time. The conscience of an honest man,' I said, 'is a better security than the Funds.' Mongenod looked at me fixedly as I spoke, and seemed to be inlaying my words upon his heart. He put out his right hand, I laid my left into it, and we held them together,—I deeply moved, and he with two big tears rolling down his cheeks. The sight of those tears wrung my heart. I was more moved still when Mongenod pulled out a ragged foulard handkerchief to wipe them away. 'Wait here,' I said; and I went to my secret hiding-place with a heart as agitated as though I had heard a woman say she loved me. I came back with two rolls of fifty louis each. 'Here, count them.' He would not count them; and he looked about him for a desk on which to write, he said, a proper receipt. I positively refused to take any paper. 'If I should die,' I said, 'my heirs would trouble you. This is to be between ourselves.'

"Well," continued Monsieur Alain, smiling, "when Mongenod found me a good friend he ceased to look as sad and anxious as when he entered; in fact, he became quite gay. My housekeeper gave us some oysters, white wine, and an omelet, with broiled kidneys, and the remains of a pate my old mother had sent me; also some dessert, coffee, and liqueur of the Iles. Mongenod, who had been starving for two days, was fed up. We were so interested in talking about our life before the Revolution that we sat at table till three in the afternoon. Mongenod told me how he had lost his fortune. In the first place, his father having invested the greater part of his capital in city loans, when they fell Mongenod lost two thirds of all he had. Then, having sold his house in the rue de Savoie, he was forced to receive the price in assignats. After that

he took into his head to found a newspaper, ‘La Sentinelle;’ that compelled him to fly at the end of six months. His hopes, he said, were now fixed on the success of a comic opera called ‘Les Peruviens.’ When he said that I began to tremble. Mongenod turned author, wasting his money on a newspaper, living no doubt in the theatres, connected with singers at the Feydeau, with musicians, and all the queer people who lurk behind the scenes,—to tell you the truth, he didn’t seem my Mongenod. I trembled. But how could I take back the hundred louis? I saw each roll in each pocket of his breeches like the barrels of two pistols.

“Then,” continued Monsieur Alain, and this time he sighed, “Mongenod went away. When I was alone, and no longer in presence of hard and cruel poverty, I began, in spite of myself, to reflect. I was sobered. ‘Mongenod,’ thought I, ‘is perhaps thoroughly depraved; he may have been playing a comedy at my expense.’ His gaiety, the moment I had handed over to him readily such a large sum of money, struck me then as being too like the joy of the valets on the stage when they catch a Geronte. I ended, where I ought to have begun, by resolving to make some investigations as to my friend Mongenod, who had given me his address,—written on the back of a playing card! I did not choose, as a matter of delicacy, to go and see him the next day; he might have thought there was distrust in such promptness, as, indeed, there would have been. The second day I had certain matters to attend to which took all my time, and it was only at the end of two weeks that, not seeing or hearing of Mongenod, I went one morning from the Croix-Rouge, where I was then living, to the rue des Moineaux, where he lived. I found he was living in furnished lodgings of the lowest class; but the landlady was a very worthy woman, the widow of a magistrate who had died on the scaffold; she was utterly ruined by the Revolution, and had only a few louis with which to begin the hazardous trade of taking lodgers.”

Here Monsieur Alain interrupted himself to explain. “I knew her later,” he said; “she then had seven houses in Saint-Roch, and was making quite a little fortune.

“‘The citizen Mongenod is not at home,’ the landlady said to me; ‘but there is some one there.’ This remark excited my curiosity. I went up to the fifth story. A charming person opened the door,—oh, such a pretty young woman! who looked at me rather suspiciously and kept the door half closed. ‘I am Alain, a friend of Mongenod’s,’ I said. Instantly the door opened wide, and I entered a miserable garret, which was, nevertheless, kept with the utmost neatness. The pretty young woman offered me a chair before a fireplace where were ashes but no fire, at the corner of which I saw a common earthen foot-warmer. ‘It makes me very happy, monsieur,’ she said, taking my hand and pressing it affectionately, ‘to be able to express to you my gratitude. You have

indeed saved us. Were it not for you I might never have seen Mongenod again. He might,—yes, he would have thrown himself in the river. He was desperate when he left me to go and see you.' On examining this person I was surprised to see her head tied up in a foulard, and along the temples a curious dark line; but I presently saw that her head was shaved. 'Have you been ill?' I asked, as I noticed this singularity. She cast a glance at a broken mirror in a shabby frame and colored; then the tears came into her eyes. 'Yes, monsieur,' she said, 'I had horrible headaches, and I was obliged to have my hair cut off; it came to my feet.' 'Am I speaking to Madame Mongenod?' I asked. 'Yes, monsieur,' she answered, giving me a truly celestial look. I bowed to the poor little woman and went away, intending to make the landlady tell me something about them; but she was out. I was certain that poor young woman had sold her hair to buy bread. I went from there to a wood merchant and ordered half a cord of wood, telling the cartman and the sawyer to take the bill, which I made the dealer receipt to the name of citizen Mongenod, and give it to the little woman.

"There ends the period of what I long called my foolishness," said Monsieur Alain, clasping his hands and lifting them with a look of repentance.

Godefroid could not help smiling. He was, as we shall see, greatly mistaken in that smile.

"Two days later," resumed the worthy man, "I met one of those men who are neither friends nor strangers, with whom we have relations from time to time, and call acquaintances,—a certain Monsieur Barillaud, who remarked accidentally, a propos of the 'Peruviens,' that the author was a friend of his. 'Then you know citizen Mongenod?' I said.

"In those days we were obliged by law to call each other 'citizen,'" said Monsieur Alain to Godefroid, by way of parenthesis. Then he continued his narrative:—

"The citizen looked at me, exclaiming, 'I wish I never had known him; for he has several times borrowed money of me, and shown his friendship by not returning it. He is a queer fellow,—good-hearted and all that, but full of illusions! always an imagination on fire! I will do him this justice,—he does not mean to deceive; but as he deceives himself about everything, he manages to behave like a dishonest man.' 'How much does he owe you?' I asked. 'Oh! a good many hundred francs. He's a basket with a hole in the bottom. Nobody knows where his money goes; perhaps he doesn't know himself.' 'Has he any resources?' 'Well, yes,' said Barillaud, laughing; 'just now he is talking of buying land among the savages in the United States.' I carried away with me the drop of vinegar which casual gossip thus put into my heart, and it soured all my feelings. I went to see my old master, in whose office Mongenod and I had studied law; he was now my counsel. When I told him about my loan to

Mongenod and the manner in which I had acted,—‘What!’ he cried, ‘one of my old clerks to behave in that way! You ought to have put him off till the next day and come to see me. You would then have found out that I have forbidden my clerks to let Mongenod into this office. Within the last year he has borrowed three hundred francs of me in silver,—an enormous sum at present rates. Three days before he breakfasted with you I met him on the street, and he gave such a piteous account of his poverty that I let him have two louis.’ ‘If I have been the dupe of a clever comedian,’ I said to Bordin, ‘so much the worse for him, not for me. But tell me what to do.’ ‘You must try to get from him a written acknowledgment; for a debtor, however, insolvent he may be, may become solvent, and then he will pay.’ Thereupon Bordin took from a tin box a case on which I saw the name of Mongenod; he showed me three receipts of a hundred francs each. ‘The next time he comes I shall have him admitted, and I shall make him add the interest and the two louis, and give me a note for the whole. I shall, at any rate, have things properly done, and be in a position to obtain payment.’ ‘Well,’ said I to Bordin, ‘can you have my matter set right so far, as well as yours? for I know you are a good man, and what you do will be right.’ ‘I have remained master of my ground,’ he said; ‘but when persons behave as you have done they are at the mercy of a man who can snap his fingers at them. As for me, I don’t choose that any man should get the better of me,—get the better of a former attorney to the Chatelet!—ta-ra-ra! Every man to whom a sum of money is lent as heedlessly as you lent yours to Mongenod, ends, after a certain time, by thinking that money his own. It is no longer your money, it is his money; you become his creditor,—an inconvenient, unpleasant person. A debtor will then try to get rid of you by some juggling with his conscience, and out of one hundred men in his position, seventy-five will do their best never to see or hear of you again.’ ‘Then you think only twenty-five men in a hundred are honest?’ ‘Did I say that?’ he replied, smiling maliciously. ‘The estimate is too high?’”

Monsieur Alain paused to put the fire together; that done, he resumed:—

“Two weeks later I received a letter from Bordin asking me to go to his office and get my receipt. I went. ‘I tried to get fifty of your louis for you,’ he said, ‘but the birds had flown. Say good-by to your yellow boys; those pretty canaries are off to other climes. You have had to do with a sharper; that’s what he is. He declared to me that his wife and father-in-law had gone to the United States with sixty of your louis to buy land; that he intended to follow, for the purpose, he said, of making a fortune and paying his debts; the amount of which, carefully drawn up, he confided to me, requesting me to keep an eye on what became of his creditors. Here is a list of the items,’ continued Bordin, showing me a paper from which he read the total,—‘Seventeen thousand francs in coin; a sum with which a house could be bought that would bring in two thousand francs a year.’ After replacing the list in the case, Bordin gave

me a note for a sum equivalent to a hundred louis in gold, with a letter in which Mongenod admitted having received my hundred louis, on which he owed interest. ‘So now I am all right,’ I said to Bordin. ‘He cannot deny the debt,’ replied my old master; ‘but where there are no funds, even the king—I should say the Directory—can’t enforce rights.’ I went home. Believing that I had been robbed in a way intentionally screened from the law, I withdrew my esteem from Mongenod, and resigned myself philosophically.

“If I have dwelt on these details, which are so commonplace and seem so slight,” said the worthy man, looking at Godefroid, “it is not without good reason. I want to explain to you how I was led to act, as most men act, in defiance of the rules which savages observe in the smallest matters. Many persons would justify themselves by the opinion of so excellent a man as Bordin; but to-day I know myself to have been inexcusable. When it comes to condemning one of our fellows, and withdrawing our esteem from him, we should act from our own convictions only. But have we any right to make our heart a tribunal before which we arraign our neighbor? Where is the law? what is our standard of judgment? That which in us is weakness may be strength in our neighbor. So many beings, so many different circumstances for every act; and there are no two beings exactly alike in all humanity. Society alone has the right over its members of repression; as for punishment, I deny it that right. Repression suffices; and that, besides, brings with it punishment enough.

“So,” resumed Monsieur Alain, continuing his history, having drawn from it that noble teaching, “after listening to the gossip of the Parisian, and relying on the wisdom of my old master, I condemned Mongenod. His play, ‘Les Peruviens,’ was announced. I expected to receive a ticket from Mongenod for the first representation; I established in my own mind a sort of claim on him. It seemed to me that by reason of my loan my friend was a sort of vassal of mine, who owed me a number of things besides the interest on my money. We all think that. Mongenod not only did not send me a ticket, but I saw him from a distance coming towards me in that dark passage under the Theatre Feydeau, well dressed, almost elegant; he pretended not to see me; then, after he had passed and I turned to run after him, my debtor hastily escaped through a transverse alley. This circumstance greatly irritated me; and the irritation, instead of subsiding with time, only increased, and for the following reason: Some days after this encounter, I wrote to Mongenod somewhat in these terms: ‘My friend, you ought not to think me indifferent to whatever happens to you of good or evil. Are you satisfied with the success of ‘Les Peruviens’? You forgot me (of course it was your right to do so) for the first representation, at which I should have applauded you. But, nevertheless, I hope you found a Peru in your Peruvians, for I have found a use for my funds, and shall look to you for the payment of them when the note falls due. Your friend, Alain.’ After waiting two weeks for an answer, I went to the rue des Moineaux. The

landlady told me that the little wife really did go away with her father at the time when Mongenod told Bordin of their departure. Mongenod always left the garret very early in the morning and did not return till late at night. Another two weeks, I wrote again, thus: ‘My dear Mongenod, I cannot find you, and you do not reply to my letters. I do not understand your conduct. If I behaved thus to you, what would you think of me?’ I did not subscribe the letter as before, ‘Your friend,’ I merely wrote, ‘Kind regards.’

“Well, it was all of no use,” said Monsieur Alain. “A month went by and I had no news of Mongenod. ‘Les Peruviens’ did not obtain the great success on which he counted. I went to the twentieth representation, thinking to find him and obtain my money. The house was less than half full; but Madame Scio was very beautiful. They told me in the foyer that the play would run a few nights longer. I went seven different times to Mongenod’s lodging and did not find him; each time I left my name with the landlady. At last I wrote again: ‘Monsieur, if you do not wish to lose my respect, as you have my friendship, you will treat me now as a stranger,—that is to say, with politeness; and you will tell me when you will be ready to pay your note, which is now due. I shall act according to your answer. Your obedient servant, Alain.’ No answer. We were then in 1799; one year, all but two months, had expired. At the end of those two months I went to Bordin. Bordin took the note, had it protested, and sued Mongenod for me. Meantime the disasters of the French armies had produced such depreciation of the Funds that investors could buy a five-francs dividend on seven francs capital. Therefore, for my hundred louis in gold, I might have bought myself fifteen hundred francs of income. Every morning, as I took my coffee and read the paper, I said to myself: ‘That cursed Mongenod! if it were not for him I should have three thousand francs a year to live on.’ Mongenod became my bete-noire; I inveighed against him even as I walked the streets. ‘Bordin is there,’ I thought to myself; ‘Bordin will put the screws on, and a good thing, too.’ My feelings turned to hatred, and my hatred to imprecations; I cursed the man, and I believed he had every vice. ‘Ah! Monsieur Barillaud was very right,’ thought I, ‘in all he told me!’”

Monsieur Alain paused reflectively.

“Yes,” he said again, “I thought him very right in all he told me. At last, one morning, in came my debtor, no more embarrassed than if he didn’t owe me a sou. When I saw him I felt all the shame he ought to have felt. I was like a criminal taken in the act; I was all upset. The eighteenth Brumaire had just taken place. Public affairs were doing well, the Funds had gone up. Bonaparte was off to fight the battle of Marengo. ‘It is unfortunate, monsieur,’ I said, receiving Mongenod standing, ‘that I owe your visit to a sheriff’s summons.’ Mongenod took a chair and sat down. ‘I came to tell you,’ he said, ‘that I am totally unable to pay you.’ ‘You made me miss a fine investment before the

election of the First Consul,—an investment which would have given me a little fortune.' 'I know it, Alain,' he said, 'I know it. But what is the good of suing me and crushing me with bills of costs? I have nothing with which to pay anything. Lately I received letters from my wife and father-in-law; they have bought land with the money you lent me, and they send me a list of things they need to improve it. Now, unless some one prevents it, I shall sail on a Dutch vessel from Flushing, whither I have sent the few things I am taking out to them. Bonaparte has won the battle of Marengo, peace will be signed, I may safely rejoin my family; and I have need to, for my dear little wife is about to give birth to a child.' 'And so you have sacrificed me to your own interests?' said I. 'Yes,' he answered, 'for I believed you my friend.' At that moment I felt myself inferior to Mongenod, so sublime did he seem to me as he said those grand words. 'Did I not speak to you frankly,' he said, 'in this very room? I came to you, Alain, as the only person who would really understand me. I told you that fifty louis would be lost, but a hundred I could return to you. I did not bind myself by saying when; for how could I know the time at which my long struggle with disaster would end? You were my last friend. All others, even our old master Bordin, despised me for the very reason that I borrowed money of them. Oh! you do not know, Alain, the dreadful sensation which grips the heart of an honest man when, in the throes of poverty, he goes to a friend and asks him for succor,—and all that follows! I hope you never may know it; it is far worse than the anguish of death. You have written me letters which, if I had written them to you in a like situation, you would have thought very odious. You expected of me that which it was out of my power to do. But you are the only person to whom I shall try to justify myself. In spite of your severity, and though from being a friend you became a creditor on the day when Bordin asked for my note on your behalf (thus abrogating the generous compact you had made with me there, on that spot, when we clasped hands and mingled our tears),—well, in spite of all that, I have remembered that day, and because of it I have come here to say to you, You do not know misery, therefore do not judge it. I have not had one moment when I could answer you. Would you have wished me to come here and cajole you with words? I could not pay you; I did not even have enough for the bare necessities of those whose lives depended on me. My play brought little. A novice in theatrical ways, I became a prey to musicians, actors, journalists, orchestras. To get the means to leave Paris and join my family, and carry to them the few things they need, I have sold "Les Peruviens" outright to the director, with two other pieces which I had in my portfolio. I start for Holland without a sou; I must reach Flushing as best I can; my voyage is paid, that is all. Were it not for the pity of my landlady, who has confidence in me, I should have to travel on foot, with my bag upon my back. But, in spite of your doubts of me, I, remembering that without you I never could have sent my wife and

father-in-law to New York, am forever grateful to you. No, Monsieur Alain, I shall not forget that the hundred louis d'or you lent me would have yielded you to-day fifteen hundred francs a year.' 'I desire to believe you, Mongenod,' I said, shaken by the tone in which he made this explanation. 'Ah, you no longer say monsieur to me!' he said quickly, with a tender glance. 'My God! I shall quit France with less regret if I can leave one man behind me in whose eyes I am not half a swindler, nor a spendthrift, nor a man of illusions! Alain, I have loved an angel in the midst of my misery. A man who truly loves cannot be despicable.' At those words I stretched out my hand to him. He took it and wrung it. 'May heaven protect you!' I said. 'Are we still friends?' he asked. 'Yes,' I replied. 'It shall never be that my childhood's comrade and the friend of my youth left me for America under the feeling that I was angry with him.' Mongenod kissed me, with tears in his eyes, and rushed away."

Monsieur Alain stopped in his narrative for an instant and looked at Godefroid. "I remember that day with some satisfaction," he said. Then he resumed:

"A week or so later I met Bordin and told him of that interview. He smiled and said: 'I hope it was not a pretty bit of comedy. Didn't he ask for anything?' 'No,' I answered. 'Well, he came to see me the same day. I was almost as touched as you; and he asked me for means to get food on his journey. Well, well, time will show!' These remarks of Bordin made me fear I had foolishly yielded to mistaken sensibility. 'Nevertheless,' I said to myself, 'he, the old lawyer, did as I did.' I do not think it necessary to explain to you how I lost all, or nearly all, my property. I had placed a little in the Funds, which gave me five hundred francs a year; all else was gone. I was then thirty-four years old. I obtained, through the influence of Monsieur Bordin, a place as clerk, with a salary of eight hundred francs, in a branch office of the Mont-de-piete, rue des Augustins. From that time I lived very modestly. I found a small lodging in the rue des Marais, on the third floor (two rooms and a closet), for two hundred and fifty francs a year. I dined at a common boarding-house for forty francs a month. I copied writings at night. Ugly as I was and poor, I had to renounce marriage."

As Godefroid heard this judgment which the poor man passed upon himself with beautiful simplicity and resignation, he made a movement which proved, far more than any confidence in words could have done, the resemblance of their destinies; and the goodman, in answer to that eloquent gesture, seemed to expect the words that followed it.

"Have you never been loved?" asked Godefroid.

"Never!" he said; "except by Madame, who returns to us all the love we have for her,—a love which I may call divine. You must be aware of it. We

live through her life as she lives through ours; we have but one soul among us; and such pleasures, though they are not physical, are none the less intense; we exist through our hearts. Ah, my child!" he continued, "when women come to appreciate moral qualities, they are indifferent to others; and they are then old —Oh! I have suffered deeply,—yes, deeply!"

"And I, in the same way," said Godefroid.

"Under the Empire," said the worthy man, resuming his narrative, "the Funds did not always pay their dividends regularly; it was necessary to be prepared for suspensions of payment. From 1802 to 1814 there was scarcely a week that I did not attribute my misfortune to Mongenod. 'If it were not for Mongenod,' I used to say to myself, 'I might have married. If I had never known him I should not be obliged to live in such privation.' But then, again, there were other times when I said, 'Perhaps the unfortunate fellow has met with ill luck over there.' In 1806, at a time when I found my life particularly hard to bear, I wrote him a long letter, which I sent by way of Holland. I received no answer. I waited three years, placing all my hopes on that answer. At last I resigned myself to my life. To the five hundred francs I received from the Funds I now added twelve hundred from the Mont-de-piete (for they raised my salary), and five hundred which I obtained from Monsieur Cesar Birotteau, perfumer, for keeping his books in the evening. Thus, not only did I manage to get along comfortably, but I laid by eight hundred francs a year. At the beginning of 1814 I invested nine thousand francs of my savings at forty francs in the Funds, and thus I was sure of sixteen hundred francs a year for my old age. By that time I had fifteen hundred a year from the Mont-de-piete, six hundred for my book-keeping, sixteen hundred from the Funds; in all, three thousand seven hundred francs a year. I took a lodging in the rue de Seine, and lived a little better. My place had brought me into relations with many unfortunates. For the last twelve years I had known better than any man whatsoever the misery of the poor. Once or twice I had been able to do a real service. I felt a vivid pleasure when I found that out of ten persons relieved, one or two households had been put on their feet. It came into my mind that benevolence ought not to consist in throwing money to those who suffered. 'Doing charity,' to use that common expression, seemed to me too often a premium offered to crime. I began to study the question. I was then fifty years of age, and my life was nearly over. 'Of what good am I?' thought I. 'To whom can I leave my savings? When I have furnished my rooms handsomely, and found a good cook, and made my life suitable in all respects, what then?—how shall I employ my time?' Eleven years of revolution, and fifteen years of poverty, had, as I may say, eaten up the most precious parts of my life,—used it up in sterile toil for my own individual preservation. No man at the age of fifty could spring from that obscure, repressed condition to a brilliant future; but every man could be of use. I understood by this time that watchful care

and wise counsels have tenfold greater value than money given; for the poor, above all things, need a guide, if only in the labor they do for others, for speculators are never lacking to take advantage of them. Here I saw before me both an end and an occupation, not to speak of the exquisite enjoyments obtained by playing in a miniature way the role of Providence."

"And to-day you play it in a grand way, do you not?" asked Godefroid, eagerly.

"Ah! you want to know everything," said the old man. "No, no! Would you believe it," he continued after this interruption, "the smallness of my means to do the work I now desired to do brought back the thought of Mongenod. 'If it were not for Mongenod,' I kept saying to myself, 'I could do so much more. If a dishonest man had not deprived me of fifteen hundred francs a year I could save this or that poor family.' Excusing my own impotence by accusing another, I felt that the miseries of those to whom I could offer nothing but words of consolation were a curse upon Mongenod. That thought soothed my heart. One morning, in January, 1816, my housekeeper announced,—whom do you suppose?—Mongenod! Monsieur Mongenod! And whom do you think I saw enter my room? The beautiful young woman I had once seen,—only now she was thirty-six years old,—followed by her three children and Mongenod. He looked younger than when he went away; for prosperity and happiness do shed a halo round their favorites. Thin, pale, yellow, shrivelled, when I last saw him, he was now plump, sleek, rosy as a prebendary, and well dressed. He flung himself into my arms. Feeling, perhaps, that I received him coldly, his first words were: 'Friend, I could not come sooner. The ocean was not free to passenger ships till 1815; then it took me a year to close up my business and realize my property. I have succeeded, my friend. When I received your letter in 1806, I started in a Dutch vessel to bring you myself a little fortune; but the union of Holland with the French Empire caused the vessel to be taken by the English and sent to Jamaica, from which island I escaped by mere chance. When I reached New York I found I was a victim to the bankruptcy of others. In my absence my poor Charlotte had not been able to protect herself against schemers. I was therefore forced to build up once more the edifice of my fortunes. However, it is all done now, and here we are. By the way those children are looking at you, you must be aware that we have often talked to them of their father's benefactor.' 'Oh, yes, yes, monsieur!' said the beautiful Mongenod, 'we have never passed a single day without remembering you. Your share has been set aside in all our affairs. We have looked forward eagerly to the happiness we now have in returning to you your fortune, not thinking for a moment that the payment of these just dues can ever wipe out our debt of gratitude.' With those words Madame Mongenod held out to me that magnificent box you see over there, in which were one hundred and fifty notes of a thousand francs each."

The old man paused an instant as if to dwell on that moment; then he went on:—

“Mongenod looked at me fixedly and said: ‘My poor Alain, you have suffered, I know; but we did divine your sufferings; we did try every means to send the money to you, and failed in every attempt. You told me you could not marry,—that I had prevented it. But here is our eldest daughter; she has been brought up in the thought of becoming your wife, and she will have a dowry of five hundred thousand francs.’ ‘God forbid that I should make her miserable!’ I cried hastily, looking at the girl, who was as beautiful as her mother when I first saw her. I drew her to me to kiss her brow. ‘Don’t be afraid, my beautiful child!’ I said. ‘A man of fifty to a girl of seventeen?—never! and a man as plain and ugly as I am?—never!’ I cried. ‘Monsieur,’ she said, ‘my father’s benefactor could not be ugly for me.’ Those words, said spontaneously, with simple candor, made me understand how true was all that Mongenod had said. I then gave him my hand, and we embraced each other again. ‘My friend,’ I said, ‘I have done you wrong. I have often accused you, cursed you.’ ‘You had the right to do so, Alain,’ he replied, blushing; ‘you suffered, and through me.’ I took Mongenod’s note from my desk and returned it to him. ‘You will all stay and breakfast with me, I hope?’ I said to the family. ‘On condition that you dine with us,’ said Mongenod. ‘We arrived yesterday. We are going to buy a house; and I mean to open a banking business between Paris and North America, so as to leave it to this fellow here,’ he added, showing me his eldest son, who was fifteen years old. We spent the rest of the day together and went to the play; for Mongenod and his family were actually hungry for the theatre. The next morning I placed the whole sum in the Funds, and I now had in all about fifteen thousand francs a year. This fortune enabled me to give up book-keeping at night, and also to resign my place at the Mont-de-piete, to the great satisfaction of the underling who stepped into my shoes. My friend died in 1827, at the age of sixty-three, after founding the great banking-house of Mongenod and Company, which made enormous profits from the first loans under the Restoration. His daughter, to whom he subsequently gave a million in dowry, married the Vicomte de Fontaine. The eldest son, whom you know, is not yet married; he lives with his mother and brother. We obtain from them all the sums we need. Frederic (his father gave him my name in America),—Frederic Mongenod is, at thirty-seven years of age, one of the ablest, and most upright, bankers in Paris. Not very long ago Madame Mongenod admitted to me that she had sold her hair, as I suspected, for twelve francs to buy bread. She gives me now twenty-four cords of wood a year for my poor people, in exchange for the half cord which I once sent her.”

“This explains to me your relations with the house of Mongenod,” said Godefroid,—“and your fortune.”

Again the goodman looked at Godefroid with a smile, and the same expression of kindly mischief.

“Oh, go on!” said Godefroid, seeing from his manner that he had more to tell.

“This conclusion, my dear Godefroid, made the deepest impression on me. If the man who had suffered so much, if my friend forgave my injustice, I could not forgive myself.”

“Oh!” ejaculated Godefroid.

“I resolved to devote all my superfluous means—about ten thousand francs a year—to acts of intelligent benevolence,” continued Monsieur Alain, tranquilly. “About this time it was that I made the acquaintance of a judge of the Lower Civil Court of the Seine named Popinot, whom we had the great grief of losing three years ago, and who practised for fifteen years an active and most intelligent charity in the quartier Saint-Marcel. It was he, with the venerable vicar of Notre-Dame and Madame, who first thought of founding the work in which we are now co-operating, and which, since 1825, has quietly done much good. This work has found its soul in Madame de la Chanterie, for she is truly the inspiration of this enterprise. The vicar has known how to make us more religious than we were at first, by showing us the necessity of being virtuous ourselves in order to inspire virtue; in short, to preach by example. The farther we have advanced in our work, the happier we have mutually found ourselves. And so, you see, it really was the repentance I felt for misconceiving the heart of my friend which gave me the idea of devoting to the poor, through my own hands, the fortune he returned to me, and which I accepted without objecting to the immensity of the sum returned in proportion to the sum lent. Its destination justified my taking it.”

This narration, made quietly, without assumption, but with a gentle kindliness in accent, look, and gesture, would have inspired Godefroid to enter this noble and sacred association if his resolution had not already been taken.

“You know the world very little,” he said, “if you have such scruples about a matter that would not weigh on any other man’s conscience.”

“I know only the unfortunate,” said Monsieur Alain. “I do not desire to know a world in which men are so little afraid of judging one another. But see! it is almost midnight, and I still have my chapter of the ‘Imitation of Jesus Christ’ to meditate upon! Good-night!”

Godefroid took the old man’s hand and pressed it, with an expression of admiration.

“Can you tell me Madame de la Chanterie’s history?”

“Impossible, without her consent,” replied Monsieur Alain; “for it is connected with one of the most terrible events of Imperial policy. It was through my friend Bordin that I first knew Madame. He had in his possession all the secrets of that noble life; it was he who, if I may say so, led me to this house.”

“I thank you,” said Godefroid, “for having told me your life; there are many lessons in it for me.”

“Do you know what is the moral of it?”

“Tell me,” said Godefroid, “for perhaps I may see something different in it from what you see.”

“Well, it is this: that pleasure is an accident in a Christian’s life; it is not the aim of it; and this we learn too late.”

“What happens when we turn to Christianity?” asked Godefroid.

“See!” said the goodman.

He pointed with his finger to some letters of gold on a black ground which the new lodger had not observed, for this was the first time he had ever been in Monsieur Alain’s room. Godefroid turned and read the words: TRANSIRE BENEFACIENDO.

“That is our motto. If you become one of us, that will be your only commission. We read that commission, which we have given to ourselves, at all times, in the morning when we rise, in the evening when we lie down, and when we are dressing. Ah! if you did but know what immense pleasures there are in accomplishing that motto!”

“Such as—?” said Godefroid, hoping for further revelations.

“I must tell you that we are as rich as Baron de Nucingen himself. But the ‘Imitation of Jesus Christ’ forbids us to regard our wealth as our own. We are only the spenders of it; and if we had any pride in being that, we should not be worthy of dispensing it. It would not be transire benefaciendo; it would be inward enjoyment. For if you say to yourself with a swelling of the nostrils, ‘I play the part of Providence!’ (as you might have thought if you had been in my place this morning and saved the future lives of a whole family), you would become a Sardanapalus,—an evil one! None of these gentlemen living here thinks of himself when he does good. All vanity, all pride, all self-love, must be stripped off, and that is hard to do,—yes, very hard.”

Godefroid bade him good-night, and returned to his own room, deeply affected by this narrative. But his curiosity was more whetted than satisfied, for the central figure of the picture was Madame de la Chanterie. The history of the life of that woman became of the utmost importance to him, so that he

made the obtaining of it the object of his stay in that house. He already perceived in this association of five persons a vast enterprise of Charity; but he thought far less of that than he did of its heroine.

VIII. WHO SHE WAS—WIFE AND MOTHER

The would-be disciple passed many days in observing more carefully than he had hitherto done the rare persons among whom fate had brought him; and he became the subject of a moral phenomenon which modern philosophers have despised,—possibly out of ignorance.

The sphere in which he lived had a positive action upon Godefroid. The laws which regulate the physical nature under relation to the atmospheric environment in which it is developed, rule also in the moral nature. Hence it follows that the assembling together of condemned prisoners is one of the greatest of social crimes; and also that their isolation is an experiment of doubtful success. Condemned criminals ought to be in religious institutions, surrounded by prodigies of Good, instead of being cast as they are into sight and knowledge of Evil only. The Church can be expected to show an absolute devotion in this matter. If it sends missionaries to heathen or savage nations, with how much greater joy would it welcome the mission of redeeming the heathen of civilization? for all criminals are atheists, and often without knowing they are so.

Godefroid found these five associated persons endowed with the qualities they required in him. They were all without pride, without vanity, truly humble and pious; also without any of the pretension which constitutes devotion, using that word in its worst sense. These virtues were contagious; he was filled with a desire to imitate these hidden heroes, and he ended by passionately studying the book he had begun by despising. Within two weeks he reduced his views of life to its simplest lines,—to what it really is when we consider it from the higher point of view to which the Divine spirit leads us. His curiosity—worldly at first, and excited by many vulgar and material motives—purified itself; if he did not renounce it altogether, the fault was not his; any one would have found it difficult to resign an interest in Madame de la Chanterie; but Godefroid showed, without intending it, a discretion which was appreciated by these persons, in whom the divine Spirit had developed a marvellous power of the faculties,—as, indeed, it often does among recluses. The concentration of the moral forces, no matter under what system it may be effected, increases the compass of them tenfold.

“Our friend is not yet converted,” said the good Abbe de Veze, “but he is

seeking to be."

An unforeseen circumstance brought about the revelation of Madame de la Chanterie's history to Godefroid; and so fully was this made to him that the overpowering interest she excited in his soul was completely satisfied.

The public mind was at that time much occupied by one of those horrible criminal trials which mark the annals of our police-courts. This trial had gathered its chief interest from the character of the criminals themselves, whose audacity, superior intelligence in evil, and cynical replies, had horrified the community. It is a matter worthy of remark that no newspaper ever found its way into the hotel de la Chanterie, and Godefroid only heard of the rejection of the criminals' appeal from his master in book-keeping; for the trial itself had taken place some time before he came to live in his new abode.

"Do you ever encounter," he said to his new friends, "such atrocious villains as those men? and if you do encounter them, how do you manage them?"

"In the first place," said Monsieur Nicolas, "there are no atrocious villains. There are diseased natures, to be cared for in asylums; but outside of those rare medical cases, we find only persons who are without religion, or who reason ill; and the mission of charity is to teach them the right use of reason, to encourage the weak, and guide aright those who go astray."

"And," said the Abbe de Veze, "all is possible to such teachers, for God is with them."

"If they were to send you those criminals, you could do nothing with them, could you?" asked Godefroid.

"The time would be too short," remarked Monsieur Alain.

"In general," said Monsieur Nicolas, "persons turn over to religion souls which have reached the last stages of evil, and leave it no time to do its work. The criminals of whom you speak were men of remarkable vigor; could they have been within our hands in time they might have become distinguished men; but as soon as they committed a murder, it was no longer possible to interfere; they then belonged to human justice."

"That must mean," said Godefroid, "that you are against the penalty of death?"

Monsieur Nicolas rose hastily and left the room.

"Do not ever mention the penalty of death again before Monsieur Nicolas," said Monsieur Alain. "He recognized in a criminal at whose execution he was officially present his natural son."

“And the son was innocent!” added Monsieur Joseph.

Madame de la Chanterie, who had been absent for a while, returned to the salon at this moment.

“But you must admit,” said Godefroid, addressing Monsieur Joseph, “that society cannot exist without the death penalty, and that those persons who to-morrow morning will have their heads cut—”

Godefroid felt his mouth suddenly closed by a vigorous hand, and he saw the abbe leading away Madame de la Chanterie in an almost fainting condition.

“What have you done?” Monsieur Joseph said to him. “Take him away, Alain!” he added, removing the hand with which he had gagged Godefroid. Then he followed the Abbe de Veze into Madame de la Chanterie’s room.

“Come!” said Monsieur Alain to Godefroid; “you have made it essential that I should tell you the secrets of Madame’s life.”

They were presently sitting in the old man’s room.

“Well?” said Godefroid, whose face showed plainly his regret for having been the cause of something which, in that peaceful home, might be called a catastrophe.

“I am waiting till Manon comes to reassure us,” replied the goodman, listening to the steps of the maid upon the staircase.

“Madame is better,” said Manon. “Monsieur l’abbe has deceived her as to what was said.” And she looked at Godefroid angrily.

“Good God!” cried the poor fellow, in distress, the tears coming into his eyes.

“Come, sit down,” said Monsieur Alain, sitting down himself. Then he made a pause as if to gather up his ideas. “I don’t know,” he went on, “if I have the talent to worthily relate a life so cruelly tried. You must excuse me if the words of so poor a speaker as I are beneath the level of its actions and catastrophes. Remember that it is long since I left school, and that I am the child of a century in which men cared more for thought than for effect,—a prosaic century which knew only how to call things by their right names.”

Godefroid made an acquiescing gesture, with an expression of sincere admiration, and said simply, “I am listening.”

“You have just had a proof, my young friend,” resumed the old man, “that it is impossible you should remain among us without knowing at least some of the terrible facts in the life of that saintly woman. There are ideas and illusions and fatal words which are completely interdicted in this house, lest they

reopen wounds in Madame's heart, and cause a suffering which, if again renewed, might kill her."

"Good God!" cried Godefroid, "what have I done?"

"If Monsieur Joseph had not stopped the words on your lips, you were about to speak of that fatal instrument of death, and that would have stricken down Madame de la Chanterie like a thunderbolt. It is time you should know all, for you will really belong to us before long,—we all think so. Here, then, is the history of her life:—

"Madame de la Chanterie," he went on, after a pause, "comes from one of the first families of Lower Normandy. Her maiden name was Mademoiselle Barbe-Philiberte de Champignelles, of the younger branch of that house. She was destined to take the veil unless she could make a marriage which renounced on the husband's side the dowry her family could not give her. This was frequently the case in the families of poor nobles.

"A Sieur de la Chanterie, whose family had fallen into obscurity, though it dates from the Crusade of Philip Augustus, was anxious to recover the rank and position which this ancient lineage properly gave him in the province of Normandy. This gentleman had doubly derogated from his rightful station; for he had amassed a fortune of nearly a million of francs as purveyor to the armies of the king at the time of the war in Hanover. The old man had a son; and this son, presuming on his father's wealth (greatly exaggerated by rumor), was leading a life in Paris that greatly disquieted his father.

"The word of Mademoiselle de Champignelle's character was well known in the Bessin,—that beautiful region of Lower Normandy near Bayeux, where the family lived. The old man, whose little estate of la Chanterie was between Caen and Saint-Lo, often heard regrets expressed before him that so perfect a young girl, and one so capable of rendering a husband happy, should be condemned to pass her life in a convent. When, on reflection, he expressed a desire to know more of the young lady, the hope was held out to him of obtaining the hand of Mademoiselle Philiberte for his son, provided he would take her without dowry. He went to Bayeux, had several interviews with the Champignelles's family, and was completely won by the noble qualities of the young girl.

"At sixteen years of age, Mademoiselle de Champignelles gave promise of what she would ultimately become. It was easy to see in her a living piety, an unalterable good sense, an inflexible uprightness, and one of those souls which never detach themselves from an affection under any compulsion. The old father, enriched by his extortions in the army, recognized in this charming girl a woman who could restrain his son by the power of virtue, and by the ascendancy of a nature that was firm without rigidity.

“You have seen her,” said Monsieur Alain, pausing in his narrative, “and you know that no one can be gentler than Madame de la Chanterie; and also, I may tell you, that no one is more confiding. She has kept, even to her declining years, the candor and simplicity of innocence; she has never been willing to believe in evil, and the little mistrust you may have noticed in her is due only to her terrible misfortunes.

“The old man,” said Monsieur Alain, continuing, “agreed with the Champignelles family to give a receipt for the legal dower of Mademoiselle Philiberte (this was necessary in those days); but in return, the Champignelles, who were allied to many of the great families, promised to obtain the erection of the little fief of la Chanterie into a barony; and they kept their word. The aunt of the future husband, Madame de Boisfrelon, the widow of a parliamentary councillor, promised to bequeath her whole fortune to her nephew.

“When these arrangements had been completed by the two families, the father sent for the son. At this time the latter was Master of petitions to the Grand Council. He was twenty-five years of age, and had already lived a life of folly with all the young seigneurs of the period; in fact, the old purveyor had been forced more than once to pay his debts. The poor father, foreseeing further follies, was only too glad to make a settlement on his daughter-in-law of a certain sum; and he entailed the estate of la Chanterie on the heirs male of the marriage.

“But the Revolution,” said Monsieur Alain in a parenthesis, “made that last precaution useless.

“Gifted with the beauty of an angel,” he continued, “and with wonderful grace and agility in all exercises of the body, the young Master of petitions possessed the gift of charm. Mademoiselle de Champignelles became, as you can readily believe, very much in love with her husband. The old man, delighted with the outset of the marriage, and believing in the reform of his son, sent the young couple to Paris. All this happened about the beginning of the year 1788.

“Nearly a whole year of happiness followed. Madame de la Chanterie enjoyed during that time the tenderest care and the most delicate attentions that a man deeply in love can bestow upon a loving woman. However short it may have been, the honeymoon did shine into the heart of that noble and most unfortunate woman. You know that in those days women nursed their children. Madame de la Chanterie had a daughter. That period during which a woman ought to be the object of redoubled care and tenderness proved, in this case, the beginning of untold miseries. The Master of petitions was obliged to sell all the property he could lay his hands on to pay former debts (which he had

not acknowledged to his father) and fresh losses at play. Then the National Assembly decreed the dissolution of the Grand Council, the parliament, and all the law offices so dearly bought.

“The young household, increased by a daughter, was soon without other means than those settled upon Madame de la Chanterie by her father-in-law. In twenty months that charming woman, now only seventeen and a half years old, was obliged to live—she and the child she was nursing—in an obscure quarter, and by the labor of her hands. She was then entirely abandoned by her husband, who fell by degrees lower and lower, into the society of women of the worst kind. Never did she reproach her husband, never has she allowed herself to blame him. She has sometimes told us how, during those wretched days, she would pray for her ‘dear Henri.’

“That scamp was named Henri,” said the worthy man interrupting himself. “We never mention that name here, nor that of Henriette. I resume:

“Never leaving her little room in the rue de la Corderie du Temple, except to buy provisions or to fetch her work, Madame de la Chanterie contrived to get along, thanks to a hundred francs which her father-in-law, touched by her goodness, sent to her once a month. Nevertheless, foreseeing that that resource might fail her, the poor young woman had taken up the hard and toilsome work of corset-making in the service of a celebrated dressmaker. This precaution proved a wise one. The father died, and his property was obtained by the son (the old monarchical laws of entail being then overthrown) and speedily dissipated by him. The former Master of petitions was now one of the most ferocious presidents of the Revolutionary tribunals of that period; he became the terror of Normandy, and was able to satisfy all his passions. Imprisoned in his turn after the fall of Robespierre, the hatred of his department doomed him to certain death.

“Madame de la Chanterie heard of this through a letter of farewell which her husband wrote to her. Instantly, giving her little girl to the care of a neighbor, she went to the town where that wretch was imprisoned, taking with her the few louis which were all that she owned. These louis enabled her to make her way into the prison. She succeeded in saving her husband by dressing him in her own clothes, under circumstances almost identical with those which, sometime later, were so serviceable to Madame de la Valette. She was condemned to death, but the government was ashamed to carry out the sentence; and the Revolutionary tribunal (the one over which her husband had formerly presided) connived at her escape. She returned to Paris on foot, without means, sleeping in farm buildings and fed by charity.”

“Good God!” cried Godefroid.

“Ah! wait,” said Monsieur Alain; “that is nothing. In eight years the poor

woman saw her husband three times. The first time he stayed twenty-four hours in the humble lodging of his wife, and carried away with him all her money; having showered her with marks of tenderness and made her believe in his complete conversion. ‘I could not,’ she said, ‘refuse a husband for whom I prayed daily and of whom I thought exclusively.’ On the second occasion, Monsieur de la Chanterie arrived almost dying, and with what an illness! She nursed him and saved his life. Then she tried to bring him to better sentiments and a decent life. After promising all that angel asked, the jacobin plunged back into frightful profligacy, and finally escaped the hands of justice only by again taking refuge with his wife, in whose care he died in safety.

“Oh! but that is nothing!” cried the goodman, seeing the pain on Godefroid’s face. “No one, in the world in which he lived, had known he was a married man. Two years after his death Madame de la Chanterie discovered that a second Madame de la Chanterie existed, widowed like herself, and, like her, ruined. That bigamist had found two angels incapable of discarding him.

“Towards 1803,” resumed Alain after a pause, “Monsieur de Boisfrelon, uncle of Madame de la Chanterie, came to Paris, his name having been erased from the list of emigres, and brought Madame the sum of two hundred thousand francs which her father-in-law, the old purveyor, had formerly entrusted to him for the benefit of his son’s children. He persuaded the widow to return to Normandy; where she completed the education of her daughter and purchased on excellent terms and still by the advice of her uncle, a patrimonial estate.”

“Ah!” cried Godefroid.

“All that is still nothing,” said Monsieur Alain; “we have not yet reached the period of storms and darkness. I resume:

“In 1807, after four years of rest and peace, Madame de la Chanterie married her daughter to a gentleman of rank, whose piety, antecedents, and fortune offered every guarantee that could be given,—a man who, to use a popular saying, ‘was after every one’s own heart,’ in the best society of the provincial city where Madame and her daughter passed their winters. I should tell you that this society was composed of seven or eight families belonging to the highest nobility in France: d’Esgrignon, Troisville, Casteran, Nouatre, etc. At the end of eighteen months the baron deserted his wife, and disappeared in Paris, where he changed his name.

“Madame de la Chanterie never knew the causes of this desertion until the lightning of a dreadful storm revealed them. Her daughter, brought up with anxious care and trained in the purest religious sentiments, kept total silence as to her troubles. This lack of confidence in her mother was a painful blow to Madame de la Chanterie. Already she had several times noticed in her

daughter indications of the reckless disposition of the father, increased in the daughter by an almost virile strength of will.

“The husband, however, abandoned his home of his own free will, leaving his affairs in a pitiable condition. Madame de la Chanterie is, even to this day, amazed at the catastrophe, which no human foresight could have prevented. The persons she prudently consulted before the marriage had assured her that the suitor’s fortune was clear and sound, and that no mortgages were on his estate. Nevertheless it appeared, after the husband’s departure, that for ten years his debts had exceeded the entire value of his property. Everything was therefore sold, and the poor young wife, now reduced to her own means, came back to her mother. Madame de la Chanterie knew later that the most honorable persons of the province had vouched for her son-in-law in their own interests; for he owed them all large sums of money, and they looked upon his marriage with Mademoiselle de la Chanterie as a means to recover them.

“There were, however, other reasons for this catastrophe, which you will find later in a confidential paper written for the eyes of the Emperor. Moreover, this man had long courted the good-will of the royalist families by his devotion to the royal cause during the Revolution. He was one of Louis XVIII.‘s most active emissaries, and had taken part after 1793 in all conspiracies,—escaping their penalties, however, with such singular adroitness that he came, in the end, to be distrusted. Thanked for his services by Louis XVIII., but completely set aside in the royalist affairs, he had returned to live on his property, now much encumbered with debt.

“These antecedents were then obscure (the persons initiated into the secrets of the royal closet kept silence about so dangerous a coadjutor), and he was therefore received with a species of reverence in a city devoted to the Bourbons, where the cruellest deeds of the Chouannerie were accepted as legitimate warfare. The d’Esgrignons, Casterans, the Chevalier de Valois, in short, the whole aristocracy and the Church opened their arms to this royalist diplomat and drew him into their circle. Their protection was encouraged by the desire of his creditors for the payment of his debts. For three years this man, who was a villain at heart, a pendant to the late Baron de la Chanterie, contrived to restrain his vices and assume the appearance of morality and religion.

“During the first months of his marriage he exerted a sort of spell over his wife; he tried to corrupt her mind by his doctrines (if it can be said that atheism is a doctrine) and by the jesting tone in which he spoke of sacred principles. From the time of his return to the provinces this political manoeuvrer had an intimacy with a young man, overwhelmed with debt like himself, but whose natural character was as frank and courageous as the baron’s was hypocritical and base. This frequent guest, whose

accomplishments, strong character, and adventurous life were calculated to influence a young girl's mind, was an instrument in the hands of the husband to bring the wife to adopt his theories. Never did she let her mother know the abyss into which her fate had cast her.

"We may well distrust all human prudence when we think of the infinite precautions taken by Madame de la Chanterie in marrying her only daughter. The blow, when it came to a life so devoted, so pure, so truly religious as that of a woman already tested by many trials, gave Madame de la Chanterie a distrust of herself which served to isolate her from her daughter; and all the more because her daughter, in compensation for her misfortunes, exacted complete liberty, ruled her mother, and was even, at times, unkind to her.

"Wounded thus in all her affections, mistaken in her devotion and love for her husband, to whom she had sacrificed without a word her happiness, her fortune, and her life; mistaken in the education exclusively religious which she had given to her daughter; mistaken in the confidence she had placed in others in the affair of her daughter's marriage; and obtaining no justice from the heart in which she had sown none but noble sentiments, she united herself still more closely to God as the hand of trouble lay heavy upon her. She was indeed almost a nun; going daily to church, performing cloistral penances, and practising economy that she might have means to help the poor.

"Could there be, up to this point, a saintlier life or one more tried than that of this noble woman, so gentle under misfortune, so brave in danger, and always Christian?" said Monsieur Alain, appealing to Godefroid. "You know Madame now,—you know if she is wanting in sense, judgment, reflection; in fact, she has those qualities to the highest degree. Well! the misfortunes I have now told you, which might be said to make her life surpass all others in adversity, are as nothing to those that were still in store for this poor woman. But now let us concern ourselves exclusively with Madame de la Chanterie's daughter," said the old man, resuming his narrative.

"At eighteen years of age, the period of her marriage, Mademoiselle de la Chanterie was a young girl of delicate complexion, brown in tone with a brilliant color, graceful in shape, and very pretty. Above a forehead of great beauty was a mass of dark hair which harmonized with the brown eyes and the general gaiety of her expression. A certain daintiness of feature was misleading as to her true character and her almost virile decision. She had small hands and small feet; in fact, there was something fragile about her whole person which excluded the idea of vigor and determination. Having always lived beside her mother, she had a most perfect innocence of thought and behavior and a really remarkable piety. This young girl, like her mother, was fanatically attached to the Bourbons; she was therefore a bitter enemy to the Revolution, and regarded the dominion of Napoleon as a curse inflicted by

Providence upon France in punishment of the crimes of 1793.

“The conformity of opinion on this subject between Madame de la Chanterie and her daughter, and the daughter’s suitor, was one of the determining reasons of the marriage.

“The friend of the husband had commanded a body of Chouans at the time that hostilities were renewed in 1799; and it seems that the baron’s object (Madame de la Chanterie’s son-in-law was a baron) in fostering the intimacy between his wife and his friend was to obtain, through her influence, certain succor from that friend.

“This requires a few words of explanation,” said Monsieur Alain, interrupting his narrative, “about an association which in those days made a great deal of noise. I mean the ‘Chauffeurs.‘ Every province in the west of France was at that time more or less overrun with these ‘brigands,’ whose object was far less pillage than a resurrection of the royalist warfare. They profited, so it was said, by the great number of ‘refractories,’—the name applied to those who evaded the conscription, which was at that time, as you probably know, enforced to actual abuse.

“Between Mortagne and Rennes, and even beyond, as far as the banks of the Loire, nocturnal expeditions were organized, which attacked, especially in Normandy, the holders of property bought from the National domain. These armed bands sent terror throughout those regions. I am not misleading you when I ask you to observe that in certain departments the action of the laws was for a long time paralyzed.

“These last echoes of the civil war made much less noise than you would imagine, accustomed as we are now to the frightful publicity given by the press to every trial, even the least important, whether political or individual. The system of the Imperial government was that of all absolute governments. The censor allowed nothing to be published in the matter of politics except accomplished facts, and those were travestied. If you will take the trouble to look through files of the ‘Moniteur’ and the other newspapers of that time, even those of the West, you will not find a word about the four or five criminal trials which cost the lives of sixty or eighty ‘brigands.’ The term brigands, applied during the revolutionary period to the Vendeans, Chouans, and all those who took up arms for the house of Bourbon, was afterwards continued judicially under the Empire against all royalists accused of plots. To some ardent and loyal natures the emperor and his government were the enemy; any form of warfare against them was legitimate. I am only explaining to you these opinions, not justifying them.

“Now,” he said, after one of those pauses which are necessary in such long narratives, “if you realize how these royalists, ruined by the civil war of 1793,

were dominated by violent passions, and how some exceptional natures (like that of Madame de la Chanterie's son-in-law and his friend) were eaten up with desires of all kinds, you may be able to understand how it was that the acts of brigandage which their political views justified when employed against the government in the service of the good cause, might in some cases be committed for personal ends.

"The younger of the two men had been for some time employed in collecting the scattered fragments of Chouannerie, and was holding them ready to act at an opportune moment. There came a terrible crisis in the Emperor's career when, shut up in the island of Lobau, he seemed about to give way under the combined and simultaneous attack of England and Austria. This was the moment for the Chouan uprising; but just as it was about to take place, the victory of Wagram rendered the conspiracy in the provinces powerless.

"This expectation of exciting civil war in Brittany, La Vendee, and part of Normandy, coincided in time with the final wreck of the baron's fortune; and this wreck, coming at this time, led him to undertake an expedition to capture funds of the government which he might apply to the liquidation of the claims upon his property. But his wife and friend refused to take part in applying to private interests the money taken by armed force from the Receiver's offices and the couriers and post-carriages of the government,—money taken, as they thought, justifiably by the rules of war to pay the regiments of 'refractories' and Chouans, and purchase the arms and ammunition with which to equip them. At last, after an angry discussion in which the young leader, supported by the wife, positively refused to hand over to the husband a portion of the large sum of money which the young leader had seized for the benefit of the royal armies from the treasury of the West, the baron suddenly and mysteriously disappeared, to avoid arrest for debt, having no means left by which to ward it off. Poor Madame de la Chanterie was wholly ignorant of these facts; but even they are nothing to the plot still hidden behind these preliminary facts.

"It is too late to-night," said Monsieur Alain, looking at his little clock, "to go on with my narrative, which would take me, in any case, a long time to finish in my own words. Old Bordin, my friend, whose management of the famous Simeuse case had won him much credit in the royalist party, and who pleaded in the well-known criminal affair called that of the Chauffeurs de Mortagne, gave me, after I was installed in this house, two legal papers relating to the terrible history of Madame de la Chanterie and her daughter. I kept them because Bordin died soon after, before I had a chance to return them. You shall read them. You will find the facts much more succinctly stated than I could state them. Those facts are so numerous that I should only lose

myself in the details and confuse them, whereas in those papers you have them in a legal summary. To-morrow, if you come to me, I will finish telling you all that relates to Madame de la Chanterie; for you will then know the general facts so thoroughly that I can end the whole story in a few words."

IX. THE LEGAL STATEMENT

Monsieur Alain placed the papers, yellowed by time, in Godefroid's hand; the latter, bidding the old man good-night, carried them off to his room, where he read, before he slept, the following document:—

THE INDICTMENT

Court of Criminal and Special Justice for the Department of the Orne

The attorney-general to the Imperial Court of Caen, appointed to fulfil his functions before the Special Criminal Court established by imperial decree under date September, 1809, and sitting at Alencon, states to the Imperial Court the following facts which have appeared under the above procedure.

The plot of a company of brigands, evidently long planned with consummate care, and connected with a scheme for inciting the Western departments to revolt, has shown itself in certain attempts against the private property of citizens, but more especially in an armed attack and robbery committed on the mail-coach which transported, May —, 18—, the money in the treasury at Caen to the Treasury of France. This attack, which recalls the deplorable incidents of a civil war now happily extinguished, manifests a spirit of wickedness which the political passions of the present day do not justify.

Let us pass to the facts. The plot is complicated, the details are numerous. The investigation has lasted one year; but the evidence, which has followed the crime step by step, has thrown the clearest light on its preparation, execution, and results.

The conception of the plot was formed by one Charles-Amedee-Louis-Joseph Rifoel, calling himself Chevalier du Vissard, born at the Vissard, district of Saint-Mexme, near Ernee, and a former leader of the rebels.

This criminal, whom H.M. the Emperor and King pardoned at the time of the general pacification, and who has profited by the sovereign's magnanimity to commit other crimes, has already paid on the scaffold the penalty of his many misdeeds; but it is necessary to recall some of his actions, because his influence was great on the guilty persons now before the court, and he is closely connected with the facts of his case.

This dangerous agitator, concealed, according to the usual custom of the rebels, under the name of Pierrot, went from place to place throughout the departments of the West gathering together the elements of rebellion; but his chief resort was the chateau of Saint-Savin, the residence of a Madame Lechantre and her daughter, a Madame Bryond, situated in the district of Saint-Savin, arrondissement of Mortagne. Several of the most horrible events of the rebellion of 1799 are connected with this strategic point.

Here a bearer of despatches was murdered, his carriage pillaged by the brigands under command of a woman, assisted by the notorious Marche-a-Terre. Brigandage appeared to be endemic in that locality.

An intimacy, which we shall not attempt to characterize, existed for more than a year between the woman Bryond and the said Rifoel.

It was in this district that an interview took place, in April, 1808, between Rifoel and a certain Boislaurier, a leader known by the name of August in the baneful rebellions of the West, who instigated the affair now before the court.

The somewhat obscure point of the relations between these two leaders is cleared up by the testimony of numerous witnesses, and also by the judgment of the court which condemned Rifoel.

From that time Boislaurier had an understanding with Rifoel, and they acted in concert.

They communicated to each other, at first secretly, their infamous plans, encouraged by the absence of His Imperial and Royal Majesty with the armies in Spain. Their scheme was to obtain possession of the money of the Treasury as the fundamental basis of future operations.

Some time after this, one named Dubut, of Caen, sent an emissary to the chateau of Saint-Savin named Hiley—commonly called “The Laborer,” long known as a highwayman, a robber of diligences—to give information as to the men who could safely be relied upon.

It was thus by means of Hiley that the plotters obtained, from the beginning, the co-operation of one Herbomez, otherwise called General Hardi, a former rebel of the same stamp as Rifoel, and like him faithless to his pledges under the amnesty.

Herbomez and Hiley recruited from the surrounding districts seven brigands whose names are:—

1. Jean Cibot, called Pille-Miche, one of the boldest brigands of the corps formed by Montauran in the year VII., and a participator in the attack upon the courier of Mortagne and his murder.

2. Francois Lisieux, called Grand-Fils, refractory of the department of the

Mayenne.

3. Charles Grenier, called Fleur-de-Genet, deserter from the 69th brigade.

4. Gabriel Bruce, called Gros-Jean, one of the most ferocious Chouans of Fontaine’s division.

5. Jacques Horeau, called Stuart, ex-lieutenant in the same brigade, one of the confederates of Tinteniac, well-known for his participation in the expedition to Quiberon.

6. Marie-Anne Cabot, called Lajeunesse, former huntsman to the Sieur Carol of Alencon.

7. Louis Minard, refractory.

These confederates were lodged in three different districts, in the houses of the following named persons: Binet, Melin, and Laraviniere, innkeepers or publicans, and all devoted to Rifoel.

The necessary arms were supplied by one Jean-Francois Leveille, notary; an incorrigible assistant of the brigands, and their go-between with certain hidden leaders; also by one Felix Courceuil, commonly called Confesseur, former surgeon of the rebel armies of La Vendee; both these men are from Alencon.

Eleven muskets were hidden in a house belonging to the Sieur Bryond in the faubourg of Alencon, where they were placed without his knowledge.

When the Sieur Bryond left his wife to pursue the fatal course she had chosen, these muskets, mysteriously taken from the said house, were transported by the woman Bryond in her own carriage to the chateau of Saint-Savin.

It was then that the acts of brigandage in the department of the Orne and the adjacent departments took place,—acts that amazed both the authorities and the inhabitants of those regions, which had long been entirely pacificated; acts, moreover, which proved that these odious enemies of the government and the French Empire were in the secret of the coalition of 1809 through communication with the royalist party in foreign countries.

The notary Leveille, the woman Bryond, Dubut of Caen, Herbomez of Mayenne, Boislaurier of Mans, and Rifoel, were therefore the heads of the association, which was composed of certain guilty persons already condemned to death and executed with Rifoel, certain others who are the accused persons at present under trial, and a number more who have escaped just punishment by flight or by the silence of their accomplices.

It was Dubut who, living near Caen, notified the notary Leveille when the

government money contained in the local tax-office would be despatched to the Treasury.

We must remark here that after the time of the removal of the muskets, Leveille, who went to see Bruce, Grenier, and Cibot in the house of Melin, found them hiding the muskets in a shed on the premises, and himself assisted in the operation.

A general rendezvous was arranged to take place at Mortagne, in the hotel de l'Ecu de France. All the accused persons were present under various disguises. It was then that Leveille, the woman Bryond, Dubut, Herbomez, Boislaurier and Hiley (the ablest of the secondary accomplices, as Cibot was the boldest) obtained the co-operation of one Vauthier, called Vieux-Chene, a former servant of the famous Longuy, and now hostler of the hotel. Vauthier agreed to notify the woman Bryond of the arrival and departure of the diligence bearing the government money, which always stopped for a time at the hotel.

The woman Bryond collected the scattered brigands at the chateau de Saint-Savin, a few miles from Mortagne, where she had lived with her mother since the separation from her husband. The brigands, with Hiley at their head, stayed at the chateau for several days. The woman Bryond, assisted by her maid Godard, prepared with her own hands the food of these men. She had already filled a loft with hay, and there the provisions were taken to them. While awaiting the arrival of the government money these brigands made nightly sorties from Saint-Savin, and the whole region was alarmed by their depredations. There is no doubt that the outrages committed at la Sartiniere, at Vonay, and at the chateau of Saint-Seny, were committed by this band, whose boldness equals their criminality, though they were able to so terrify their victims that the latter have kept silence, and the authorities have been unable to obtain any testimony from them.

While thus putting under contribution those persons in the neighborhood who had purchased lands of the National domain, these brigands carefully explored the forest of Chesnay which they selected as the theatre of their crime.

Not far from this forest is the village of Louvigney. An inn is kept there by the brothers Chaussard, formerly game-keepers on the Troisville estate, which inn was made the final rendezvous of the brigands. These brothers knew beforehand the part they were to play in the affair. Courceuil and Boislaurier had long made overtures to them to revive their hatred against the government of our august Emperor, telling them that among the guests who would be sent to them would be certain men of their acquaintance, the dreaded Hiley and the not less dreaded Cibot.

Accordingly, on the 6th, the seven bandits, under Hiley, arrived at the inn of the brothers Chaussard, and there they spent two days. On the 8th Hiley led off his men, saying they were going to a palace about nine miles distant, and asking the brothers to send provisions for them to a certain fork in the road not far distant from the village. Hiley himself returned and slept at the inn.

Two persons on horseback, who were undoubtedly Rifoel and the woman Bryond (for it is stated that this woman accompanied Rifoel on these expeditions on horseback and dressed as a man), arrived during the evening and conversed with Hiley.

The next day Hiley wrote a letter to the notary Leveille, which one of the Chaussard brothers took to the latter, bringing back his answer.

Two hours later Rifoel and the woman Bryond returned and had an interview with Hiley.

It was then found necessary to obtain an axe to open, as we shall see, the cases containing the money. The notary went with the woman Bryond to Saint-Savin, where they searched in vain for an axe. The notary returned alone; half way back he met Hiley, to whom he stated that they could not obtain an axe.

Hiley returned to the inn, where he ordered supper for ten persons; seven of them being the brigands, who had now returned, fully armed. Hiley made them stack their arms in the military manner. They then sat down to table and supped in haste. Hiley ordered provisions prepared to take away with him. Then he took the elder Chaussard aside and asked him for an axe. The innkeeper who, if we believe him, was surprised, refused to give one.

Courceuil and Boislaurier arrived; the night wore on; the three men walked the floor of their room discussing the plot. Courceuil, called “Confesseur,” the most wily of the party, obtained an axe; and about two in the morning they all went away by different paths.

Every moment was of value; the execution of the crime was fixed for that night. Hiley, Courceuil, and Boislaurier led and placed their men. Hiley hid in ambush with Minard, Cabot, and Bruce at the right of the Chesnay forest; Boislaurier, Grenier, and Horeau took the centre; Courceuil, Herbomez, and Lisieux occupied the ravine to the left of the wood. All these positions are indicated on the ground-plan drawn by the engineer of the government survey-office, which is here subjoined.

The diligence, which had left Mortagne about one in the morning, was driven by one Rousseau, whose conduct proved so suspicious that his arrest was judged necessary. The vehicle, driven slowly, would arrive about three o’clock in the forest of Chesnay.

A single gendarme accompanied the diligence, which would stop for breakfast at Donnery. Three passengers only were making the trip, and were now walking up the hill with the gendarme.

The driver, who had driven very slowly to the bridge of Chesnay at the entrance of the wood, now hastened his horses with a vigor and eagerness remarked by the passengers, and turned into a cross-road, called the road of Senzey. The carriage was thus out of sight; and the gendarme with the three young men were hurrying to overtake it when they heard a shout: “Halt!” and four shots were fired at them.

The gendarme, who was not hit, drew his sabre and rushed in the direction of the vehicle. He was stopped by four armed men, who fired at him; his eagerness saved him, for he ran toward one of the three passengers to tell him to make for Chesnay and ring the tocsin. But two brigands followed him, and one of them, taking aim, sent a ball through his left shoulder, which broke his arm, and he fell helpless.

The shouts and firing were heard in Donnery. A corporal stationed there and one gendarme ran toward the sounds. The firing of a squad of men took them to the opposite side of the wood to that where the pillage was taking place. The noise of the firing prevented the corporal from hearing the cries of the wounded gendarme; but he did distinguish a sound which proved to be that of an axe breaking and chopping into cases. He ran toward the sound. Meeting four armed bandits, he called out to them, “Surrender, villains!”

They replied: “Stay where you are, or you are a dead man!” The corporal sprang forward; two shots were fired and one struck him; a ball went through his left leg and into the flank of his horse. The brave man, bathed in blood, was forced to give up the unequal fight; he shouted “Help! the brigands are at Chesnay!” but all in vain.

The robbers, masters of the ground thanks to their numbers, ransacked the coach. They had gagged and bound the driver by way of deception. The cases were opened, the bags of money were thrown out; the horses were unharnessed and the silver and gold loaded on their backs. Three thousand francs in copper were rejected; but a sum in other coin of one hundred and three thousand francs was safely carried off on the four horses.

The brigands took the road to the hamlet of Menneville, which is close to Saint-Savin. They stopped with their plunder at an isolated house belonging to the Chaussard brothers, where the Chaussards’ uncle, one Bourget, lived, who was knowing to the whole plot from its inception. This old man, aided by his wife, welcomed the brigands, charged them to make no noise, unloaded the bags of money, and gave the men something to drink. The wife performed the part of sentinel. The old man then took the horses through the wood, returned

them to the driver, unbound the latter, and also the young men, who had been garotted. After resting for a time, Courceuil, Hiley, and Boislaurier paid their men a paltry sum for their trouble, and the whole band departed, leaving the plunder in charge of Bourget.

When they reached a lonely place called Champ-Landry, these criminals, obeying the impulse which leads all malefactors into the blunders and miscalculations of crime, threw their guns into a wheat-field. This action, done by all of them, is a proof of their mutual understanding. Struck with terror at the boldness of their act, and even by its success, they dispersed.

The robbery now having been committed, with the additional features of assault and assassination, other facts and other actors appear, all connected with the robbery itself and with the disposition of the plunder.

Rifoel, concealed in Paris, whence he pulled every wire of the plot, transmits to Leveille an order to send him instantly fifty thousand francs.

Courceuil, knowing to all the facts, sends Hiley to tell Leveille of the success of the attempt, and say that he will meet him at Mortagne. Leveille goes there.

Vauthier, on whose fidelity they think they can rely, agrees to go to Bourget, the uncle of the Chaussards, in whose care the money was left, and ask for the booty. The old man tells Vauthier that he must go to his nephews, who have taken large sums to the woman Bryond. But he orders him to wait outside in the road, and brings him a bag containing the small sum of twelve hundred francs, which Vauthier delivers to the woman Lechantre for her daughter.

At Leveille’s request, Vauthier returns to Bourget, who this time sends for his nephews. The elder Chaussard takes Vauthier to the wood, shows him a tree, and there they find a bag of one thousand francs buried in the earth. Leveille, Hiley, and Vauthier make other trips, obtaining only trifling sums compared with the large sum known to have been captured.

The woman Lechantre receives these sums at Mortagne; and, on receipt of a letter from her daughter, removes them to Saint-Savin, where the woman Bryond now returns.

This is not the moment to examine as to whether the woman Lechantre had any anterior knowledge of the plot.

It suffices here to note that this woman left Mortagne to go to Saint-Savin the evening before the crime; that after the crime she met her daughter on the high-road, and they both returned to Mortagne; that on the following day Leveille, informed by Hiley of the success of the plot, goes from Alencon to

Mortagne, and there visits the two women; later he persuades them to deposit the sums obtained with such difficulty from the Chaussards and Bourget in a house in Alencon, of which we shall speak presently,—that of the Sieur Pannier, merchant.

The woman Lechantre writes to the bailiff at Saint-Savin to come and drive her and her daughter by the cross-roads towards Alencon.

The funds now in their possession amount to twenty thousand francs; these the girl Godard puts into the carriage at night.

The notary Leveille had given exact instructions. The two women reach Alencon and stop at the house of a confederate, one Louis Chargegrain, in the Littray district. Despite all the precautions of the notary, who came there to meet the women, witnesses were at hand who saw the portmanteaux and bags containing the money taken from the carriole.

At the moment when Courceuil and Hiley, disguised as women, were consulting in the square at Alencon with the Sieur Pannier (treasurer of the rebels since 1794, and devoted to Rifoel) as to the best means of conveying to Rifoel the sum he asked for, the woman Lechantre became alarmed on hearing at the inn where she stopped of the suspicions and arrests already made. She fled during the night, taking her daughter with her through the byways and cross-roads to Saint-Savin, in order to take refuge, if necessary, in certain hiding-places prepared at the chateau de Saint-Savin. Courceuil, Boislaurier, and his relation Dubut, clandestinely changed two thousand francs in silver money for gold, and fled to Brittany and England.

On arriving at Saint-Savin, the women Lechantre and Bryond heard of the arrest of Bourget, that of the driver of the diligence, and that of the two refractories.

The magistrates and the gendarmerie struck such sure blows that it was thought advisable to place the woman Bryond beyond the reach of human justice; for she appears to have been an object of great devotion on the part of these criminals, who were captivated by her. She left Saint-Savin, and was hidden at first in Alencon, where her followers deliberated, and finally placed her in the cellar of Pannier’s house.

Here new incidents develop themselves.

After the arrest of Bourget and his wife, the Chaussards refuse to give up any more of the money, declaring themselves betrayed. This unexpected refusal was given at a moment when an urgent want of money was felt among the accomplices, if only for the purposes of escape. Rifoel was always clamorous for money. Hiley, Cibot, and Leveille began to suspect the Chaussards.

Here comes in a new incident, which calls for the rigor of the law.

Two gendarmes, detailed to discover the woman Bryond, succeeded in tracking her to Pannier's. There a discussion is held; and these men, unworthy of the trust reposed in them, instead of arresting the woman Bryond, succumb to her seductions. These unworthy soldiers, named Ratel and Mallet, showed this woman the utmost interest and offered to take her to the Chaussards and force them to make restitution.

The woman Bryond starts on horseback, disguised as a man, accompanied by Ratel, Mallet, and the girl Godard. She makes the journey by night. She has a conference alone with one of the brothers Chaussard, an excited conference. She is armed with a pistol, and threatens to blow out the brains of her accomplice if he refuses the money. Then he goes with her into the forest, and they return with a heavy bag of coin. In the bag are copper coins and twelve-sous silver pieces to the amount of fifteen hundred francs.

When the woman Bryond returns to Alencon the accomplices propose to go in a body to the Chaussards' house and torture them until they deliver up the whole sum.

When Pannier hears of this failure he is furious. He threatens. The woman Bryond, though threatening him in return with Rifoel's wrath, is forced to fly.

These facts rest on the confession of Ratel.

Mallet, pitying the woman Bryond's position, offers her an asylum. Then Mallet and Ratel, accompanied by Hiley and Cibot, go at night to the brothers Chaussard; this time they find these brothers have left the place and have taken the rest of the money with them.

This was the last effort of the accomplices to recover the proceeds of the robbery.

It now becomes necessary to show the exact part taken by each of the actors in this crime.

Dubut, Boislaurier, Herbomez, Courceuil, and Hiley were the ringleaders. Some deliberated and planned, others acted.

Boislaurier, Dubut, and Courceuil, all three fugitives from justice and outlawed, are addicted to rebellion, fomenters of trouble, implacable enemies of Napoleon the Great, his victories, his dynasty, and his government, haters of our new laws and of the constitution of the Empire.

Herbomez and Hiley audaciously executed that which the three former planned.

The guilt of the seven instruments of the crime, namely, Cibot, Lisieux,

Grenier, Bruce, Horeau, Cabot, and Minard, is evident; it appears from the confessions of those of them who are now in the hands of justice; Lisieux died during the investigation, and Bruce has fled the country.

The conduct of Rousseau, who drove the coach, marks him as an accomplice. His slow method of driving, his haste at the entrance of the wood, his persistent declaration that his head was covered, whereas the passengers testify that the leader of the brigands told him to take the handkerchief off his head and recognize them; all these facts are strong presumptive evidence of collusion.

As for the woman Bryond and the notary Leveille, could any co-operation be more connected, more continuous than theirs? They repeatedly furnished means for the crime; they were privy to it, and they abetted it. Leveille travelled constantly. The woman Bryond invented scheme after scheme; she risked all, even her life, to recover the plunder. She lent her house, her carriage; her hand is seen in the plot from the beginning; she did not dissuade the chief leader of all, Rifoel, since executed, although through her guilty influence upon him she might have done so. She made her waiting-woman, the girl Godard, an accomplice. As for Leveille, he took an active part in the actual perpetration of the crime by seeking the axe the brigands asked for.

The woman Bourget, Vauthier, the Chaussards, Pannier, the woman Lechantre, Mallet and Ratel, all participated in the crime in their several degrees, as did the innkeepers Melin, Binet, Laraviniere, and Chargegrain.

Bourget has died during the investigation, after making a confession which removes all doubt as to the part played by Vauthier and the woman Bryond; if he attempted to extenuate that of his wife and his nephews Chaussard, his motives are easy to understand.

The Chaussards knowingly fed and lodged the brigands, they saw them armed, they witnessed all their arrangements and knew the object of them; and lastly, they received the plunder, which they hid, and as it appears, stole from their accomplices.

Pannier, the former treasurer of the rebels, concealed the woman Bryond in his house; he is one of the most dangerous accomplices of this crime, which he knew from its inception. In him certain mysterious relations which are still obscure took their rise; the authorities now have these matters under investigation. Pannier was the right hand of Rifoel, the depositary of the secrets of the counter-revolutionary party of the West; he regretted that Rifoel introduced women into the plot and confided in them; it was he who received the stolen money from the woman Bryond and conveyed it to Rifoel.

As for the conduct of the two gendarmes Ratel and Mallet, it deserves the

severest penalty of the law. They betrayed their duty. One of them, foreseeing his fate, committed suicide, but not until he had made important revelations. The other, Mallet, denies nothing, his tacit admissions preclude all doubt, especially as to the guilt of the woman Bryond.

The woman Lechantre, in spite of her constant denials, was privy to all. The hypocrisy of this woman, who attempts to shelter her assumed innocence under the mask of a false piety, has certain antecedents which prove her decision of character and her intrepidity in extreme cases. She alleges that she was misled by her daughter, and believed that the plundered money belonged to the Sieur Bryond,—a common excuse! If the Sieur Bryond had possessed any property, he would not have left the department on account of his debts. The woman Lechantre claims that she did not suspect a shameful theft, because she saw the proceedings approved by her ally, Boislaurier. But how does she explain the presence of Rifoel (already executed) at Saint-Savin; the journeys to and fro; the relations of that young man with her daughter; the stay of the brigands at Saint-Savin, where they were served by her daughter and the girl Godard? She alleges sleep; declares it to be her practice to go to bed at seven in the evening; and has no answer to make when the magistrate points out to her that if she rises, as she says she does, at dawn, she must have seen some signs of the plot, of the sojourn of so many persons, and of the nocturnal goings and comings of her daughter. To this she replies that she was occupied in prayer. This woman is a mass of hypocrisy. Lastly, her journey on the day of the crime, the care she takes to carry her daughter to Mortagne, her conduct about the money, her precipitate flight when all is discovered, the pains she is at to conceal herself, even the circumstances of her arrest, all go to prove a long-existing complicity. She has not acted like a mother who desires to save her daughter and withdraw her from danger, but like a trembling accomplice. And her complicity is not that of a misguided tenderness; it is the fruit of party spirit, the inspiration of a well-known hatred against the government of His Imperial and Royal Majesty. Misguided maternal tenderness, if that could be fairly alleged in her defence, would not, however, excuse it; and we must not forget that consentment, long-standing and premeditated, is the surest sign of guilt.

Thus all the elements of the crime and the persons committing it are fully brought to light.

We see the madness of faction combining with pillage and greed; we see assassination advised by party spirit, under whose aegis these criminals attempt to justify themselves for the basest crimes. The leaders give the signal for the pillage of the public money, which money is to be used for their ulterior crimes; vile stipendiaries do this work for a paltry price, not recoiling from murder; then the fomenters of rebellion, not less guilty because their own

hands have neither robbed nor murdered, divide the booty and dispose of it. What community can tolerate such outrages? The law itself is scarcely rigorous enough to duly punish them.

It is upon the above facts that this Court of Criminal and Special Justice is called upon to decide whether the prisoners Herbomez, Hiley, Cibot, Grenier, Horeau, Cabot, Minard, Melin, Binet, Laraviniere, Rousseau, the woman Bryond, Leveille, the woman Bourget, Vauthier, Chaussard the elder, Pannier, the widow Lechantre, Mallet, all herein named and described, and arraigned before this court; also Boislaurier, Dubut, Courceuil, Bruce, the younger Chaussard, Chargegrain, and the girl Godard,—these latter being absent and fugitives from justice,—are or are not guilty of the crimes charged in this indictment.

Done at Caen, this 1st of December, 180-.

(Signed) Baron Bourlac, Attorney-General.

X. PRAY FOR THOSE WHO DESPITEFULLY USE YOU AND PERSECUTE YOU

This legal paper, much shorter and more imperative than such indictments are these days, when they are far more detailed and more precise, especially as to the antecedent life of accused persons, affected Godefroid deeply. The dryness of the statement in which the official pen narrated in red ink the principal details of the affair stirred his imagination. Concise, abbreviated narratives are to some minds texts into the hidden meaning of which they love to burrow.

In the middle of the night, aided by the silence, by the darkness, by the terrible relation intimated by the worthy Alain between the facts of that document and Madame de la Chanterie, Godefroid applied all the forces of his intellect to decipher the dreadful theme.

Evidently the name Lechantre stood for la Chanterie; in all probably the aristocracy of the name was intentionally thus concealed during the Revolution and under the Empire.

Godefroid saw, in imagination, the landscape and the scenes where this drama had taken place. The forms and faces of the accomplices passed before his eyes. He pictured to himself not “one Rifoel” but a Chevalier du Vissard, a young man something like the Fergus of Walter Scott, a French Jacobite. He developed the romance of an ardent young girl grossly deceived by an infamous husband (a style of romance then much the fashion); loving the

young and gallant leader of a rebellion against the Empire; giving herself, body and soul, like another Diana Vernon, to the conspiracy, and then, once launched on that fatal incline, unable to stop herself. Had she rolled to the scaffold?

The young man saw in his own mind a whole world, and he peopled it. He wandered in the shade of those Norman groves; he saw the Breton hero and Madame Bryond among the gorse and shrubbery; he inhabited the old chateau of Saint-Savin; he shared in the diverse acts of all those many personages, picturing to himself the notary, the merchant, and those bold Chouans. His mind conceived the state of that wild country where lingered still the memory of the Comtes de Bauvan, de Longuy, the exploits of Marche-a-Terre, the massacre at La Vivetiere, the death of the Marquis de Montauran—of whose prowess Madame de la Chanterie had told him.

This sort of vision of things, of men, of places was rapid. When he remembered that this drama must relate to the dignified, noble, deeply religious old woman whose virtue was acting upon him so powerfully as to be upon the point of metamorphosing him, Godefroid was seized with a sort of terror, and turned hastily to the second document which Monsieur Alain had given him. This was entitled:—

Summary on behalf of Madame Henriette Bryond des Tours-Minieres, nee Lechantre de la Chanterie.

“No longer any doubt!” murmured Godefroid.

We are condemned and guilty; but if ever the Sovereign had reason to exercise his right of clemency it is surely in a case like this.

Here is a young woman, about to become a mother, and condemned to death.

From a prison cell, with the scaffold before her, this woman will tell the truth.

The trial before the Criminal Court of Alencon had, as in all cases where there are many accused persons in a conspiracy inspired by party-spirit, certain portions which were seriously obscure.

The Chancellor of His Imperial and Royal Majesty knows now the truth about the mysterious personage named Le Marchand, whose presence in the department of the Orne was not denied by the government during the trial, but whom the prosecution did not think proper to call as witness, and whom the defence had neither the power nor the opportunity to find.

That personage is, as the prosecuting officer, the police of Paris, and the Chancellor of His Imperial and Royal Majesty well know, the Sieur Bernard-

Polydor Bryond des Tours-Minieres, the correspondent, since 1794, of the Comte de Lille,—known elsewhere as the Baron des Tours-Minieres, and on records of the Parisian police under the name of Contenson.

He is notorious. His youth and name were degraded by vices so imperative, an immorality so profound, conduct so criminal, that his infamous life must have ended on the scaffold if he had not possessed the ability to play a double part, as indicated by his names. Hereafter, as his passions rule him more and more, he will end by falling to the depths of infamy in spite of his incontestable ability and a remarkable mind.

When the Comte de Lille became aware of this man's character he no longer permitted him to take part in the royalist councils or to handle the money sent to France; he thus lost the resources derived from these masters, whose service had been profitable to him.

It was then that he returned to his country home, crippled with debt.

His traitorous connection with the intrigues of England and the Comte de Lille, won him the confidence of the old families attached to the cause now vanquished by the genius of our immortal Emperor. He there met one of the former leaders of the rebellion, with whom at the time of the expedition to Quberon, and later, at the time of the last uprising of the Chouans, he had held certain relations as an envoy from England. He encouraged the schemes of this young agitator, Rifoel, who has since paid with his life on the scaffold for his plots against the State. Through him Bryond was able to penetrate once more into the secrets of that party which has misunderstood both the glory of H.M. the Emperor Napoleon I. and the true interests of the nation united in his august person.

At the age of thirty-five, this man, then known under his true name of des Tours-Minieres, affecting a sincere piety, professing the utmost devotion to the interests of the Comte de Lille and a reverence for the memory of the insurgents who lost their lives at the West, disguising with great ability the secrets of his exhausted youth, and powerfully protected by the silence of creditors, and by the spirit of caste which exists among all country ci-devants, —this man, truly a whited sepulchre, was introduced, as possessing every claim for consideration, to Madame Lechantre, who was supposed to be the possessor of a large fortune.

All parties conspired to promote a marriage between the young Henriette, only daughter of Madame Lechantre, and this protege of the ci-devants. Priests, nobles, creditors, each with a different interest, loyal in some, selfish in others, blind for the most part, all united in furthering the union of Bernard Bryond des Tours-Minieres with Henriette Lechantre.

The good sense of the notary who had charge of Madame Lechantre's affairs, and perhaps his distrust, were the actual cause of the disaster of this young girl. The Sieur Chesnel, notary at Alencon, put the estate of Saint-Savin, the sole property of the bride, under the dower system, reserving the right of habitation and a modest income to the mother.

The creditors, who supposed, from Madame Lechantre's orderly and frugal way of living, that she had capital laid by, were deceived in their expectations, and they then began suits which revealed the precarious financial condition of Bryond.

Serious differences now arose between the newly married pair, and the young wife had occasion to know the depraved habits, the political and religious atheism and—shall I say the word?—the infamy of the man to whom her life had been so fatally united. Bryond, forced to let his wife into the secret of the royalist plots, gave a home in his house to their chief agent, Rifoel du Vissard.

The character of Rifoel, adventurous, brave, generous, exercised a charm on all who came in contact with him, as was abundantly proved during his trials before three successive criminal courts.

The irresistible influence, the absolute empire he acquired over the mind of a young woman who saw herself suddenly cast into the abyss of a fatal marriage, is but too visible in this catastrophe which now brings her a suppliant to the foot of the Throne. But that which the Chancellor of His Imperial and Royal Majesty can easily verify is the infamous encouragement given by Bryond to this intimacy. Far from fulfilling his duty as guide and counsellor to a child whose poor deceived mother had trusted her to him, he took pleasure in drawing closer still the bonds that united the young Henriette to the rebel leader.

The plan of this odious being, who takes pride in despising all things and considers nothing but the satisfaction of his passions, admitting none of the restraints imposed by civil or religious morality, was as follows:—

We must first remark, however, that such plotting was familiar to a man who, ever since 1794 has played a double part, who for eight years deceived the Comte de Lille and his adherents, and probably deceived at the same time the police of the Republic and the Empire: such men belong only to those who pay them most.

Bryond pushed Rifoel to crime; he instigated the attacks of armed men upon the mail-coaches bearing the moneys of the government, and the levying of a heavy tribute from the purchasers of the National domain; a tax he enforced by means of tortures invented by him which carried terror through

five departments. He then demanded that a sum of three hundred thousand francs derived from these plunderings be paid to him for the liquidation of his debts.

When he met with resistance on the part of his wife and Rifoel, and saw the contempt his proposal inspired in upright minds who were acting only from party spirit, he determined to bring them both under the rigor of the law in the next occasion of their committing a crime.

He disappeared, and returned to Paris, taking with him all information as to the then condition of the departments of the West.

The brothers Chaussard and Vauthier were, as the chancellor knows, Bryond's correspondents.

As soon as the attack was made on the diligence from Caen, Bryond returned secretly and in disguise, under the name of Le Marchand. He put himself into secret communication with the prefect and the magistrates. What was the result? Never was any conspiracy, in which a great number of persons took part, so rapidly discovered and dealt with. Within six days after the committal of the crime all the guilty persons were followed and watched with an intelligence which showed the most accurate knowledge of the plans, and of the individuals concerned in them. The immediate arrest, trial, and execution of Rifoel and his accomplices are the proof of this. We repeat, the chancellor knows even more than we do on this subject.

If ever a condemned person had a right to appeal to the Sovereign's mercy it is Henriette Lechantre.

Though led astray by love, by ideas of rebellion which she sucked in with the milk that fed her, she is, most certainly, inexcusable in the eyes of the law; but in the eyes of the most magnanimous of emperors, will not her misfortunes, the infamous betrayal of her husband, and a rash enthusiasm plead for her?

The greatest of all captains, the immortal genius which pardoned the Prince of Hatzfeldt and is able to divine the reasons of the heart, will he not admit the fatal power of love, invincible in youth, which extenuates this crime, great as it was?

Twenty-two heads have fallen under the blade of the law; only one of the guilty persons is now left, and she is a young woman, a minor, not twenty years of age. Will not the Emperor Napoleon the Great grant her life, and give her time in which to repent? Is not that to share the part of God?

For Henriette Lechantre, wife of Bryond des Tour-Minieres,—

Her defender, Bordin, Barrister of the Lower Court of the Department of

the Seine.

This dreadful drama disturbed the little sleep that Godefroid took. He dreamed of that penalty of death such as the physician Guillotin has made it with a philanthropic object. Through the hot vapors of a nightmare he saw a young woman, beautiful, enthusiastic, enduring the last preparations, drawn in that fatal tumbril, mounting the scaffold, and crying out, “Vive le roi!”

Eager to know the whole, Godefroid rose at dawn, dressed, and paced his room; then stood mechanically at his window gazing at the sky, while his thoughts reconstructed this drama in many volumes. Ever, on that darksome background of Chouans, peasants, country gentlemen, rebel leaders, spies, and officers of justice, he saw the vivid figures of the mother and the daughter detach themselves; the daughter misleading the mother; the daughter victim of a monster; victim, too, of her passion for one of those bold men whom, later, we have glorified as heroes, and to whom even Godefroid’s imagination lent a likeness to the Charettes and the Georges Cadoudals,—those giants of the struggle between the Republic and the Monarchy.

As soon as Godefroid heard the goodman Alain stirring in the room above him, he went there; but he had no sooner opened the door than he closed it and went back to his own apartment. The old man, kneeling by his chair, was saying his morning prayer. The sight of that whitened head, bowed in an attitude of humble reverence, reminded Godefroid of his own forgotten duties, and he prayed fervently.

“I expected you,” said the kind old man, when Godefroid entered his room some fifteen minutes later. “I got up earlier than usual, for I felt sure you would be impatient.”

“Madame Henriette?” asked Godefroid, with visible anxiety.

“Was Madame’s daughter!” replied Monsieur Alain. “Madame’s name is Lechantre de la Chanterie. Under the Empire none of the nobiliary titles were allowed, nor any of the names added to the patronymic or original names. Therefore, the Baronne des Tours-Minieres was called Madame Bryond. The Marquis d’Esgrignon took his name of Carol (citizen Carol); later he was called the Sieur Carol. The Troisvilles became the Sieurs Guibelin.”

“But what happened? Did the Emperor pardon her?”

“Alas, no!” replied Alain. “The unfortunate little woman, not twenty-one years old, perished on the scaffold. After reading Bordin’s appeal, the Emperor answered very much in these terms: ‘Why be so bitter against the spy? A spy is no longer a man; he ought not to have feelings; he is a wheel of the machinery; Bryond did his duty. If instruments of that kind were not what they are,—steel bars,—and intelligent only in the service of the power employing

them, government would not be possible. The sentences of criminal courts must be carried out, or the judges would cease to have confidence in themselves or in me. Besides, the women of the West must be taught not to meddle in plots. It is precisely in the case of a woman that justice should not be interfered with. There is no excuse possible for an attack on power?' This was the substance of what the Emperor said, as Bordin repeated it to me. Learning a little later that France and Russia were about to measure swords against each other, and that the Emperor was to go two thousand miles from Paris to attack a vast and desert country, Bordin understood the secret reason of the Emperor's harshness. To insure tranquillity at the West, now full of refractories, Napoleon believed it necessary to inspire terror. Bordin could do no more."

"But Madame de la Chanterie?" said Godefroid.

"Madame de la Chanterie was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment," replied Alain. "As she was already transferred to Bicetre, near Rouen, to undergo her punishment, nothing was attempted on her behalf until every effort had been made to save Henriette, who had grown dearer than ever to her mother during this time of anxiety. Indeed, if it had not been for Bordin's assurance that he could obtain Henriette's pardon, it is doubtful if Madame could have survived the shock of the sentence. When the appeal failed, they deceived the poor mother. She saw her daughter once after the execution of the other prisoners, not knowing that Madame Bryond's respite was due to a false declaration of pregnancy, made to gain time for the appeal."

"Ah! I understand it all now," exclaimed Godefroid.

"No, my dear child, there are things that no one can imagine. Madame thought her daughter living for a long time."

"How was that?"

"When Madame des Tours-Minieres learned from Bordin that her appeal was rejected and that nothing could save her, that sublime little woman had the courage to write twenty letters, dating them month by month after the time of her execution, so as to make her poor mother in her prison believe she was alive. In those letters she told of a gradual illness which would end in death. They covered a period of two years. Madame de la Chanterie was therefore prepared for the news of her daughter's death, but she thought it a natural one. She did not know until 1814 that Henriette had died on the scaffold. For two years Madame was herded among the most depraved of her sex, but thanks to the urgency of the Champignelles and the Beauseants she was, after the second year, placed in a cell by herself, where she lived like a cloistered nun."

"And the others?" asked Godefroid.

“The notary Leveille, Herbomez, Hiley, Cibot, Grenier, Horeau, Cabot, Minard, and Mallet were condemned to death, and executed the same day. Pannier, condemned to hard labor for twenty years, was branded and sent to the galleys. The Chaussards and Vauthier received the same sentence, but were pardoned by the Emperor. Melin, Laraviniere and Binet, were condemned to five years’ imprisonment. The woman Bourget to twenty years’ imprisonment. Chargegrain and Rousseau were acquitted. Those who escaped were all condemned to death, except the girl Godard, who was no other, as you have probably guessed, than our poor Manon—”

“Manon!” exclaimed Godefroid.

“Oh! you don’t know Manon yet,” replied the kind old Alain. “That devoted creature, condemned to twelve years’ imprisonment, gave herself up that she might take care of Madame de la Chanterie, and wait upon her. Our dear vicar was the priest at Mortagne who gave the last sacraments to the Baronne des Tours-Minieres; he had the courage to go with her to the scaffold, and to him she gave her farewell kiss. That courageous, noble priest had also accompanied the Chevalier du Vissard. Our dear Abbe de Veze has therefore known all the secrets of those days.”

“I see why his hair is so white,” said Godefroid.

“Alas! yes,” said Alain. “He received from Amedee du Vissard a miniature of Madame des Tours-Minieres, the only portrait of her that exists; therefore, the abbe became almost sacred in Madame de la Chanterie’s eyes when she re-entered social existence.”

“When did that happen?” asked Godefroid.

“Why, at the restoration of Louis XVIII., in 1814. The Marquis du Vissard, eldest brother of the Chevalier, was created peer of France and loaded with honors by the king. The brother of Monsieur d’Herbomez was made a count and receiver-general. The poor banker Pannier died of grief at the galleys. Boislaurier died without children, a lieutenant-general and governor of a royal chateau. Messieurs de Champignelles, de Beauseant, the Duc de Verneuil, and the Keeper of the Seals presented Madame de la Chanterie to the king. ‘You have suffered greatly for me, madame la baronne; you have every right to my favor and gratitude,’ he said to her. ‘Sire,’ she replied, ‘your Majesty has so many sorrows to console that I do not wish that mine, which is inconsolable, should be a burden upon you. To live forgotten, to mourn my daughter, and do some good, that is my life. If anything could soften my grief, it is the kindness of my king, it is the pleasure of seeing that Providence has not allowed our long devotion to be useless.’”

“And what did Louis XVIII. do?” asked Godefroid.

“He restored two hundred thousand francs in money to Madame de la Chanterie, for the estate of Saint-Savin had been sold to pay the costs of the trial. In the decree of pardon issued for Madame la baronne and her servant the king expressed regret for the suffering borne in his cause, adding that ‘the zeal of his servants had gone too far in its methods of execution.’ But—and this is a horrible thing; it will serve to show you a curious trait in the character of that monarch—he employed Bryond in his detective police throughout his reign.”

“Oh, kings! kings!” cried Godefroid; “and is the wretch still living?”

“No; the wretch, as you justly call him, who concealed his real name under that of Contenson, died about the close of the year 1829 or the beginning of 1830. In trying to arrest a criminal who escaped over a roof, he fell into the street. Louis XVIII. shared Napoleon’s ideas as to spies and police. Madame de la Chanterie is a saint; she prays constantly for the soul of that man and has two masses said yearly for him. As I have already told you, Madame de la Chanterie knew nothing of the dangers her daughter was incurring until the day when the money was carried to Alencon; nevertheless she was unable to establish her innocence, although defended by one of the greatest lawyers of that time. The president, du Ronceret, and the vice-president, Blondet, of the court of Alencon did their best to save our poor lady. But the influence of the councillor of the Imperial Court who presided at her trial before the Criminal and Special Court, the famous Mergi, and that of Bourlac the attorney-general was such over the other judges that they obtained her condemnation. Both Bourlac and Mergi showed extraordinary bitterness against mother and daughter; they called the Baronne des Tours-Minieres ‘the woman Bryond,’ and Madame ‘the woman Lechantre.’ The names of accused persons in those days were all brought to one republican level, and were sometimes unrecognizable. The trial had several very extraordinary features, which I cannot now recall; one piece of audacity remains in my memory which will serve to show you what sort of men those Chouans were. The crowd which assembled to hear the trial was immense; it even filled the corridors and the square before the court-house. One morning, after the opening of the court-room and before the arrival of the judges, Pille-Miche, a famous Chouan, sprang over the balustrade into the middle of the crowd, elbowing right and left, ‘charging like a wild boar,’ as Bordin told me, through the frightened people. The guards and the gendarmes dashed after him and caught him just as he reached the square; after that the guards were doubled. A picket of gendarmerie was stationed in the square, for they feared there were Chouans on the ground ready to rescue the prisoners. As it was, three persons were crushed to death on this occasion. It was afterwards discovered that Contenson (neither my friend Bordin nor I could ever bring ourselves to call him the Baron des Tours-Minieres, nor Bryond which is the name of an old family),—it was, I say, discovered that this wretch Contenson had obtained sixty

thousand francs of the stolen money from the Chaussards; he gave ten thousand to the younger Chaussard, whom he took with him into the detective police and innoculated with his vices; his other accomplices got nothing from him. Madame de la Chanterie invested the money restored to her by the king in the public Funds, and bought this house to please her uncle, Monsieur de Boisfrelon, who gave her the money for the purpose, and died in the rooms you now occupy. This tranquil neighborhood is near the archbishop's palace, where our dear abbe has duties with the cardinal. That was one of the chief reasons why Madame agreed to her uncle's wish. Here, in this cloistral life, the fearful misfortunes which overwhelmed her for twenty-six years have been brought to a close. Now you can understand the majesty, the grandeur of this victim—august, I venture to call her."

"Yes," said Godefroid, "the imprint of all the blows she has received remains and gives her something, I can scarcely describe it, that is grand and majestic."

"Every wound, every fresh blow, has increased her patience, her resignation," continued Alain; "but if you knew her as we know her you would see how keen is her sensibility, how active the inexhaustible tenderness of her heart, and you would almost stand in awe of the tears she had shed, and the fervent prayers she had made to God. Ah! it was necessary to have known, as she did, a brief period of happiness to bear up as she has done under such misfortunes. Here is a tender heart, a gentle soul in a steel body hardened by privations, by toil, by austerities."

"Her life explains why hermits live so long," said Godefroid.

"There are days when I ask myself what is the meaning of a life like hers? Can it be that God reserves such trials, such cruel tests, for those of his creatures who are to sit on the morrow of their death at his right hand?" said the good Alain, quite unconscious that he was artlessly expressing the whole doctrine of Swedenborg on the angels.

"And you tell me," said Godefroid, "that in prison Madame de la Chanterie was put with—"

"Madame was sublime in her prison," said Alain. "For three whole years she realized the story of the Vicar of Wakefield, and was able to convert many of the worst women about her. During her imprisonment she observed the habits and customs of these women, and was seized with that great pity for the sorrows of the people which has since filled her soul and made her the angel of Parisian charity. In that dreadful Bicetre of Rouen, she conceived the plan to the realization of which we are now devoted. It was, she has often told us, a delightful dream, an angelic inspiration in the midst of hell; though she never thought she should realize it. When, in 1819, peace and quietude seemed

really to return to Paris, her dream came back to her. Madame la Duchesse d'Angouleme, afterwards the dauphine, the Duchesse de Berry, the archbishop, later the chancellor, and several pious persons contributed liberally the first necessary sums. These funds have been increased by the addition of our own available property, from which we take only enough for our actual needs."

Tears came into Godefroid's eyes.

"We are the ministers of a Christian idea; we belong body and soul to its work, the spirit of which, the founder of which, is the Baronne de la Chanterie, whom you hear us so respectfully call 'Madame.'"

"Ah! let me belong to you!" cried Godefroid, stretching out his hands to the kind old man.

"Now you understand why there are some subjects of conversation which are never mentioned here, nor even alluded to. You can now see the obligations of delicacy that all who live in this house contract towards one who seems to us a saint. You comprehend—do you not?—the influence of a woman made sacred by such sorrows, who knows so many things, to whom anguish has said its utmost word; who from each adversity has drawn instruction, in whom all virtues have the double strength of cruel trial and of constant practice; whose soul is spotless and without reproach, whose motherhood knew only grief, whose married love knew only bitterness; on whom life smiled for a brief time only, but for whom heaven reserves a palm, the reward of resignation and of loving-kindness under sorrow. Ah! does she not even triumph over Job in never murmuring? Can you wonder that her words are so powerful, her old age so young, her soul so communicative, her glance so convincing? She has obtained extraordinary powers in dealing with sufferers, for she has suffered all things."

"She is the living image of Charity!" cried Godefroid, fervently. "Can I ever be one of you?"

"You must first endure the tests, and above all BELIEVE!" said the old man, gently. "So long as you have no faith, so long as you have not absorbed into your heart and mind the divine meaning of Saint Paul's epistle upon Charity, you cannot share our work."

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SECOND EPISODE. THE INITIATE

XI. THE POLICE OF THE GOOD GOD

Like evil, good is contagious. Therefore when Madame de la Chanterie's lodger had lived in that old and silent house for some months after the worthy Alain's last confidence, which gave him the deepest respect for the religious lives of those among whom his was cast, he experienced that well-being of the soul which comes of a regulated existence, gentle customs, and harmony of nature in those who surround us. At the end of four months, during which time Godefroid heard neither a loud voice nor an argument, he could not remember that he had ever been, if not as happy, at least as tranquil and contented. He now judged soundly of the world, seeing it from afar. At last, the desire he had felt for months to be a sharer in the work of these mysterious persons became a passion. Without being great philosophers we can all understand the force which passions acquire in solitude.

Thus it happened that one day—a day made solemn by the power of the spirit within him—Godefroid again went up to see the good old Alain, him whom Madame de la Chanterie called her "lamb," the member of the community who seemed to Godefroid the least imposing, the most approachable member of the fraternity, intending to obtain from him some definite light on the conditions of the sacred work to which these brothers of God were dedicated. The allusions made to a period of trial seemed to imply an initiation, which he was now desirous of receiving. His curiosity had not been satisfied by what the venerable old man had already told him as to the causes which led to the work of Madame de la Chanterie; he wanted to know more.

For the third time Godefroid entered Monsieur Alain's room, just as the old man was beginning his evening reading of the "Imitation of Jesus Christ." This time the kindly soul did not restrain a smile when he saw the young man, and he said at once, without allowing Godefroid to speak:—

"Why do you come to me, my dear boy; why not go to Madame? I am the most ignorant, the most imperfect, the least spiritual of our number. For the last three days," he added, with a shrewd little glance, "Madame and my other friends have read your heart."

"What have they read there?" asked Godefroid.

"Ah!" replied the goodman, without evasion, "they see in you a rather artless desire to belong to our little flock. But this sentiment is not yet an ardent vocation. Yes," he continued, replying to a gesture of Godefroid's, "you have more curiosity than fervor. You are not yet so detached from your old ideas that you do not look forward to something adventurous, romantic, as they say, in the incidents of our life."

Godefroid could not keep himself from blushing.

“You see a likeness between our occupations and those of the caliphs of the ‘Arabian Nights;’ and you are thinking about the satisfaction you will have in playing the part of the good genii in the tales of benevolence you are inventing. Ah, my dear boy! that shame-faced laugh of yours proves to me that we were quite right in that conjecture. How do you expect to conceal any feeling from persons whose business it is to divine the most hidden motion of souls, the tricks of poverty, the calculations of indigence,—honest spies, the police of the good God; old judges, whose code contains nothing but absolutions; doctors of suffering, whose only remedy is oftentimes the wise application of money? But, you see, my child, we don’t wish to quarrel with the motives which bring us a neophyte, provided he will really stay and become a brother of the order. We shall judge you by your work. There are two kinds of curiosity,—that of good and that of evil; just at this moment you have that of good. If you should work in our vineyard, the juice of our grapes will make you perpetually thirsty for the divine fruit. The initiation is, as in that of all natural knowledge, easy in appearance, difficult in reality. Benevolence is like poesy; nothing is easier than to catch the appearance of it. But here, as in Parnassus, nothing contents us but perfection. To become one to us, you must acquire a great knowledge of life. And what a life,—good God! Parisian life, which defies the sagacity of the minister of police and all his agents! We have to circumvent the perpetual conspiracy of Evil, master it in all its forms, while it changes so often as to seem infinite. Charity in Paris must know as much as vice, just as a policeman must know all the tricks of thieves. We must each be frank and each distrustful; we must have quick perception and a sure and rapid judgment. And then, my child, we are old and getting older; but we are so content with the results we have now obtained, that we do not want to die without leaving successors in the work. If you persist in your desire, you will be our first pupil, and all the dearer to us on that account. There is no risk for us, because God brought you to us. Yours is a good nature soured; since you have been here the evil leaven has weakened. The divine nature of Madame has acted upon yours. Yesterday we took counsel together; and inasmuch as I have your confidence, my good brothers resolved to give me to you as guardian and teacher. Does that please you?”

“Ah! my kind Monsieur Alain, your eloquence awakens—”

“No, my child, it is not I who speak well; it is things that are eloquent. We can be sure of being great, even sublime, in obeying God, in imitating Jesus Christ,—imitating him, I mean, as much as men are able to do so, aided by faith.”

“This moment, then, decides my life!” cried Godefroid. “I feel within me the fervor of a neophyte; I wish to spend my life in doing good.”

“That is the secret of remaining in God,” replied Alain. “Have you studied our motto,—Transire benefaciendo? Transire means to go beyond this world, leaving benefits on our way.”

“Yes, I have understood it; I have put the motto of the order before my bed.”

“That is well; it is a trifling action, but it counts for much in my eyes. And now I have your first affair, your first duel with misery, prepared for you; I’ll put your foot in the stirrup. We are about to part. Yes, I myself am detached from the convent, to live for a time in the crater of a volcano. I am to be a clerk in a great manufactory, where the workmen are infected with communistic doctrines, and dream of social destruction, the abolishment of masters,—not knowing that that would be the death of industry, of commerce, of manufactures. I shall stay there goodness knows how long,—perhaps a year,—keeping the books and paying the wages. This will give me an entrance into a hundred or a hundred and twenty homes of working-men, misled, no doubt, by poverty, even before the pamphlets of the day misled them. But you and I can see each other on Sundays and fete-days. We shall be in the same quarter; and if you come to the church of Saint-Jacques du Haut-Pas, you will find me there any day at half-past seven, when I hear mass. If you meet me elsewhere don’t recognize me, unless you see me rub my hands like a man who is pleased at something. That is one of our signs. We have a language of signs, like the deaf and dumb; you’ll soon find out the absolute necessity of it.”

Godefroid made a gesture which the goodman Alain interpreted; for he laughed, and immediately went on to say:—

“Now for your affair. We do not practise either the benevolence or the philanthropy that you know about, which are really divided into several branches, all taken advantage of by sharpers in charity as a business. We practise charity as our great and sublime Saint Paul defines it; for, my dear lad, we think that charity, and charity alone, which is Love, can heal the wounds of Paris. In our eyes, misery, of whatever kind, poverty, suffering, misfortune, grief, evil, no matter how produced, or in what social class they show themselves, have equal rights. Whatever his opinions or beliefs, an unhappy man is, before all else, an unhappy man; and we ought not to attempt to turn his face to our holy mother Church until we have saved him from despair or hunger. Moreover, we ought to convert him to goodness more by example and by gentleness than by any other means; and we believe that God will specially help us in this. All constraint is bad. Of the manifold Parisian miseries, the most difficult to discover, and the bitterest, is that of worthy persons of the middle classes who have fallen into poverty; for they make concealment a point of honor. Those sorrows, my dear Godefroid, are to us the object of

special solicitude. Such persons usually have intelligence and good hearts. They return to us, sometimes with usury, the sums that we lend them. Such restitutions recoup us in the long run for the losses we occasionally incur through impostors, shiftless creatures, or those whom misfortunes have rendered stupid. Through such persons we often obtain invaluable help in our investigations. Our work has now become so vast, its details are so multifarious, that we no longer suffice of ourselves to carry it on. So, for the last year we have a physician of our own in every arrondissement in Paris. Each of us takes general charge of four arrondissements. We pay each physician three thousand francs a year to take care of our poor. His time belongs to us in the first instance, but we do not prevent him from attending other sick persons if he can. Would you believe that for many months we were unable to find twelve really trustworthy, valuable men, in spite of all our own efforts and those of our friends? We could not employ any but men of absolute discreetness, pure lives, sound knowledge, experience, active men, and lovers of doing good. Now, although there are in Paris some ten thousand individuals, more or less, who would gladly do the work, we could not find twelve to meet our needs in a whole year."

"Our Saviour had difficulty in gathering his apostles, and even then a traitor and an unbeliever got among them," said Godefroid.

"However, within the last month all our arrondissements are provided with a Visitor—that is the name we give to our physicians. At the same time the business is increasing, and we have all redoubled our activity. If I confide to you these secrets of our system, it is that you must know the physician, that is, the Visitor of the arrondissement to which we are about to send you; from him, all original information about our cases comes. This Visitor is named Berton, Doctor Berton; he lives in the rue d'Enfer. And now here are the facts: Doctor Berton is attending a lady whose disease puzzles and defies science. That, of course, is not our concern, but that of the Faculty. Our business is to discover the condition of the family of this patient; Doctor Berton suspects that their poverty is frightful, and concealed with a pride and determination which demand our utmost care. Until now, my son, I should have found time for this case, but the work I am undertaking obliges me to find a helper in my four arrondissements, and you shall be that helper. This family lives in the rue Notre-Dame des Champs, in a house at the corner of the boulevard du Mont-Parnasse. You will find a room to let in the same house, where you can live for a time so as to discover the truth about these persons. Be sordid for yourself, but as for the money you may think needed for this case have no uneasiness. I will remit you such sums as we may judge necessary after ourselves considering all the circumstances. But remember that you must study the moral qualities of these unfortunates: their hearts, the honorableness of their feelings; those are our guarantees. Miserly we may be for ourselves, and

generous to those who suffer, but we must be prudent and even calculating, for we are dealing with the money of the poor. So then, to-morrow morning you can start; think over the power we put in your hands: the brothers are with you in heart."

"Ah!" cried Godefroid, "you have given me such a pleasure in the opportunity of doing good and making myself worthy to belong to you some day, that I shall not sleep to-night."

"One more word, my child. I told you not to recognize me without the signal; the same rule applies to the other gentlemen and to Madame, and even to the people you see about this house. We are forced to keep up an absolute incognito in all we do; this is so necessary to our enterprises that we have made a rule about it. We seek to be ignored, lost in this great Paris. Remember also, my dear Godefroid, the spirit of our order; which is, never to appear as benefactors, to play an obscure part, that of intermediaries. We always present ourselves as the agent of a pious, saintly person (in fact, we are working for God), so that none of those we deal with may feel the obligation of gratitude towards any of us, or think we are wealthy persons. True, sincere humility, not the false humility of those who seek thereby to be set in the light, must inspire you and rule all your thoughts. You may indeed be glad when you succeed; but so long as you feel within you a sentiment of vanity or of pride, you are not worthy to do the work of the order. We have known two perfect men: one, who was one of our founders, Judge Popinot; the other is revealed by his works; he is a country doctor whose name is written on the annals of his canton. That man, my dear Godefroid, is one of the greatest men of our time; he brought a whole region out of wretchedness into prosperity, out of irreligion into Christianity, out of barbarism into civilization. The names of those two men are graven on our hearts and we have taken them as our models. We should be happy indeed if we ourselves could some day acquire in Paris the influence that country doctor had in his canton. But here, the sore is vast, beyond our strength at present. May God preserve to us Madame, may he send us some young helpers like you, and perhaps we may yet leave behind us an institution worthy of his divine religion. And now good-bye; your initiation begins—Ah! I chatter like a professor and forget the essential thing! Here is the address of that family," he added, giving Godefroid a piece of paper; "I have added the number of Dr. Berton's house in the rue d'Enfer; and now, go and pray to God to help you."

Godefroid took the old man's hands and pressed them tenderly, wishing him good-night, and assuring him he would not neglect a single point of his advice.

"All that you have said to me," he added, "is graven in my memory forever."

The old man smiled, expressing no doubts; then he rose, to kneel in his accustomed place. Godefroid retired, joyful in at last sharing the mysteries of that house and in having an occupation, which, feeling as he did then, was to him an untold pleasure.

The next day at breakfast, Monsieur Alain's place was vacant, but no one remarked upon it; Godefroid made no allusion to the cause of his absence, neither did any one question him as to the mission the old man had entrusted to him; he thus took his first lesson in discreetness. Nevertheless, after breakfast, he did take Madame de la Chanterie apart and told her that he should be absent for some days.

"That is good, my child," replied Madame de la Chanterie; "try to do honor to your godfather, who has answered for you to his brothers."

Godefroid bade adieu to the three remaining brethren, who made him an affectionate bow, by which they seemed to bless his entrance upon a painful career.

ASSOCIATION, one of the greatest social forces, and that which made the Europe of the middle-ages, rests on principles which, since 1792, no longer exist in France, where the Individual has now triumphed over the State. Association requires, in the first place, a self-devotion that is not understood in our day; also a guileless faith which is contrary to the spirit of the nation, and lastly, a discipline against which men in these days revolt and which the Catholic religion alone can enforce. The moment an association is formed among us, each member, returning to his own home from an assembly where noble sentiments have been proclaimed, thinks of making his own bed out of that collective devotion, that union of forces, and of milking to his own profit the common cow, which, not being able to supply so many individual demands, dies exhausted.

Who knows how many generous sentiments were blasted, how many fruitful germs may have perished, lost to the nation through the infamous deceptions of the French Carbonari, the patriotic subscriptions to the Champ d'Asile, and other political deceptions which ought to have been grand and noble dramas, and proved to be the farces and the melodramas of police courts. It is the same with industrial association as it is with political association. Love of self is substituted for the love of collective bodies. The corporations and the Hanse leagues of the middle-ages, to which we shall some day return, are still impossible. Consequently, the only societies which actually exist are those of religious bodies, against whom a heavy war is being made at this moment; for the natural tendency of sick persons is to quarrel with remedies and often with physicians. France ignores self-abnegation. Therefore, no association can live except through religious sentiment; the only

sentiment that quells the rebellions of mind, the calculations of ambition, and greeds of all kinds. The seekers of better worlds ignore the fact that ASSOCIATION has such worlds to offer.

As he walked through the streets Godefroid felt himself another man. Whoever could have looked into his being would have admired the curious phenomenon of the communication of collective power. He was no longer a mere man, he was a tenfold force, knowing himself the representative of persons whose united forces upheld his actions and walked beside him. Bearing that power in his heart, he felt within him a plenitude of life, a noble might, which uplifted him. It was, as he afterwards said, one of the finest moments of his whole existence; he was conscious of a new sense, an omnipotence more sure than that of despots. Moral power is, like thought, limitless.

“To live for others,” he thought, “to act with others, all as one, and act alone as all together, to have for leader Charity, the noblest, the most living of those ideal figures Christianity has made for us, this is indeed to live!—Come, come, repress that petty joy, which father Alain laughed at. And yet, how singular it is that in seeking to set myself aside from life I have found the power I have sought so long! Yes, the world of misery will belong to me!”

XII. A CASE TO INVESTIGATE

Godefroid walked from the cloister of Notre-Dame to the avenue de l’Observatoire in such a state of exaltation that he never noticed the length of the way.

When he reached the rue Notre-Dame des Champs at the point where it joins the rue de l’Ouest he was amazed to find (neither of these streets being paved at the time of which we write) great mud-holes in that fine open quarter. Persons walked on planks laid down beside the houses and along the marshy gardens, or on narrow paths flanked on each side by stagnant water which sometimes turned them into rivulets.

By dint of searching he found the house he wanted, but he did not reach it without difficulty. It was evidently an abandoned factory. The building was narrow and the side of it was a long wall with many windows and no architectural decoration whatever. None of these windows, which were square, were on the lower floor, where there was no opening but a very miserable entrance-door.

Godefroid supposed that the proprietor had turned the building into a

number of small tenements to make it profitable, for a written placard above the door stated that there were “Several rooms to let.” Godefroid rang, but no one came. While he was waiting, a person who went by pointed out to him that the house had another entrance on the boulevard where he might get admittance.

Godefroid followed this advice and saw at the farther end of a little garden which extended along the boulevard a second door to the house. The garden, rather ill-kept, sloped downward, for there was enough difference in level between the boulevard and the rue Notre-Dame des Champs to make it a sort of ditch. Godefroid therefore walked along one of the paths, at the end of which he saw an old woman whose dilapidated garments were in keeping with the house.

“Was it you who rang at the other door?” she asked.

“Yes, madame. Do you show the lodgings?”

On the woman’s replying that she did, Godefroid inquired if the other lodgers were quiet persons; his occupations, he said, were such that he needed silence and peace; he was a bachelor and would be glad to arrange with the portress to do his housekeeping.

On this suggestion the portress assumed a gracious manner.

“Monsieur has fallen on his feet in coming here, then,” she said; “except on the Chaumiere days the boulevard is as lonely as the Pontine marshes.”

“Ah! you know the Pontine marshes?” said Godefroid.

“No, monsieur, I don’t; but I’ve got an old gentleman upstairs whose daughter seems to get her living by being ill, and he says that; I only repeat it. The poor old man will be glad to know that monsieur likes quiet, for a noisy neighbor, he thinks, would kill his daughter. On the second floor we have two writers; they don’t come in till midnight, and are off before eight in the morning. They say they are authors, but I don’t know where or when they write.”

While speaking, the portress was showing Godefroid up one of those horrible stairways of brick and wood so ill put together that it is hard to tell whether the wood is trying to get rid of the bricks or the bricks are trying to get away from the wood; the gaps between them were partly filled up by what was dust in summer and mud in winter. The walls, of cracked and broken plaster, presented to the eye more inscriptions than the Academy of Belles-lettres has yet composed. The portress stopped on the first landing.

“Here, monsieur, are two rooms adjoining each other and very clean, which open opposite to those of Monsieur Bernard; that’s the old gentleman I

told you of,—quite a proper person. He is decorated; but it seems he has had misfortunes, for he never wears his ribbon. They formerly had a servant from the provinces, but they sent him away about three years ago; and now the young son of the lady does everything, housework and all."

Godefroid made a gesture.

"Oh!" cried the Portress, "don't you be afraid; they won't say anything to you; they never speak to any one. They came here after the Revolution of July, in 1830. I think they're provincial folk ruined by the change of government; they are proud, I tell you! and dumb as fishes. For three years, monsieur, I declare they have not let me do the smallest thing for them for fear they should have to pay for it. A hundred sous on New Year's day, that's all I get out of them. Talk to me of authors, indeed!"

This gossip made Godefroid hope he should get some assistance out of the woman, who presently said, while praising the healthfulness of the two rooms she offered him, that she was not a portress, but the confidential agent of the proprietor, for whom she managed many of the affairs of the house.

"You may have confidence in me, monsieur, that you may! Madame Vauthier, it is well known, would rather have nothing than a single penny that ought to go to others."

Madame Vauthier soon came to terms with Godefroid who would not take the rooms unless he could have them by the single month and furnished. These miserable rooms of students and unlucky authors were rented furnished or unfurnished as the case might be. The vast garret which extended over the whole building was filled with such furniture. But Monsieur Bernard, she said, had furnished his own rooms.

In making Madame Vauthier talk, Godefroid discovered she had intended to keep boarders in the building, but for the last five years had not obtained a single lodger of that description. She lived herself on the ground-floor facing towards the boulevard; and looked after the whole house, by the help of a huge mastiff, a stout servant-girl, and a lad who blacked the boots, took care of the rooms, and did the errands.

These two servants were, like herself, in keeping with the poverty of the house, that of the tenants, and the wild and tangled look of the garden. Both were children abandoned by their parents to whom the widow gave food for wages,—and what food! The lad, whom Godefroid caught a glimpse of, wore a ragged blouse and list slippers instead of shoes, and sabots when he went out. With his tousled head, looking like a sparrow when it takes a bath, and his black hands, he went to measure wood at a wood-yard on the boulevard as soon as he had finished the morning work of the house; and after his day's

labor (which ends in wood-yards at half-past four in the afternoon) he returned to his domestic avocations. He went to the fountain of the Observatoire for the water used in the house, which the widow supplied to the tenants, together with bundles of kindling, sawed and tied up by him.

Nepomucene, such was the name of the widow Vauthier's slave, brought the daily journal to his mistress. In summer the poor forsaken lad was a waiter in the wine-shops at the barrier; and then his mistress dressed him properly.

As for the stout girl, she cooked under direction of the widow, and helped her in another department of industry during the rest of the day; for Madame Vauthier had a business,—she made list shoes, which were bought and sold by pedlers.

Godefroid learned all these details in about an hour's time; for the widow took him everywhere, and showed him the whole building, explaining its transformation into a dwelling. Until 1828 it had been a nursery for silk-worms, less for the silk than to obtain what they call the eggs. Eleven acres planted with mulberries on the plain of Montrouge, and three acres on the rue de l'Ouest, afterwards built over, had supplied this singular establishment.

Just as the widow was explaining to Godefroid how Monsieur Barbet, having lent money to an Italian named Fresconi, the manager of the business, could recover his money only by foreclosing a mortgage on the building and seizing the three acres on the rue Notre-Dame des Champs, a tall, spare old man with snow-white hair appeared at the end of the street which leads into the square of the rue de l'Ouest.

"Ah! here he comes, just in time!" cried the Vauthier; "that's your neighbor Monsieur Bernard. Monsieur Bernard!" she called out as soon as the old man was within hearing; "you won't be alone any longer; here is a gentleman who has hired the rooms opposite to yours."

Monsieur Bernard turned his eyes on Godefroid with an apprehension it was easy to fathom; the look seemed to say: "The misfortune I feared has come to pass."

"Monsieur," he said aloud, "do you intend to live here?"

"Yes, monsieur," said Godefroid, honestly. "It is not a resort for the fortunate of this earth and it is the least expensive place I can find in the quarter. Madame Vauthier does not pretend to lodge millionnaires. Adieu, for the present, my good Madame Vauthier, and have everything ready for me at six o'clock this evening; I shall return punctually."

Godefroid turned toward the square of the rue de l'Ouest, walking slowly, for the anxiety depicted on the face of the tall old man made him think that he

would follow him and come to an explanation. And, in fact, after an instant's hesitation Monsieur Bernard turned round and retraced his steps so as to overtake Godefroid.

"The old villain! he'll prevent him from returning," thought Madame Vauthier; "that's the second time he has played me the same trick. Patience! patience! five days hence he owes his rent, and if he doesn't pay sharp up I'll turn him out. Monsieur Barbet is a kind of a tiger one mustn't offend, and—But I would like to know what he's telling him. Felicite! Felicite, you great gawk! where are you?" cried the widow in her rasping, brutal voice,—she had been using her dulcet tones to Godefroid.

The servant-girl, stout, squint-eyed, and red-haired, ran out.

"Keep your eye on things, do you hear me? I shall be back in five minutes."

And Madame Vauthier, formerly cook to the publisher Barbet, one of the hardest lenders of money by the week, slipped along behind her two tenants so as to be able to overtake Godefroid as soon as his conversation with Monsieur Bernard came to an end.

Monsieur Bernard walked slowly, like a man who is undecided, or like a debtor seeking for excuses to placate a creditor who has just left him with threats. Godefroid, though some distance in front, saw him while pretending to look about and examine the locality. It was not, therefore, till they reached the middle of the great alley of the garden of the Luxembourg that Monsieur Bernard came up to the young man.

"Pardon me, monsieur," said Monsieur Bernard, bowing to Godefroid, who returned his bow. "A thousand pardons for stopping you without having the honor of your acquaintance; but is it really your intention to take lodgings in that horrible house you have just left?"

"But, monsieur—"

"Yes, yes," said the old man, interrupting Godefroid, with a gesture of authority. "I know that you may well ask me by what right I meddle in your affairs and presume to question you. Hear me, monsieur; you are young and I am old; I am older than my years, and they are sixty-seven; people take me for eighty. Age and misfortunes justify many things; but I will not make a plea of my whitened head; I wish to speak of yourself. Do you know that this quarter in which you propose to live is deserted by eight o'clock at night, and the roads are full of dangers, the least of which is robbery? Have you noticed those wide spaces not yet built upon, these fields, these gardens? You may tell me that I live here; but, monsieur, I never go out after six o'clock. You may also remind me of the two young men on the second floor, above the

apartment you are going to take. But, monsieur, those two poor men of letters are pursued by creditors. They are in hiding; they are away in the daytime and only return at night; they have no reason to fear robbers or assassins; besides, they always go together and are armed. I myself obtained permission from the prefecture of police that they should carry arms."

"Monsieur," said Godefroid, "I am not afraid of robbers, for the same reasons that make those gentlemen invulnerable; and I despise life so heartily that if I were murdered by mistake I should bless the murderer!"

"You do not look to me very unhappy," said the old man, examining Godefroid.

"I have, at the most, enough to get me bread to live on; and I have come to this place, monsieur, because of its silent neighborhood. May I ask you what interest you have in driving me away?"

The old man hesitated; he saw Madame Vauthier close behind them. Godefroid, who examined him attentively, was astonished at the degree of thinness to which grief, perhaps hunger, perhaps toil, had reduced him. There were signs of all those causes upon that face, where the parched skin clung to the bones as if it had been burned by the sun of Africa. The dome of the forehead, high and threatening, overshadowed a pair of steel-blue eyes,—two cold, hard, sagacious, penetrating eyes, like those of savages, surrounded by a black and wrinkled circle. The large nose, long and very thin, and the prominent chin, gave the old man a strong resemblance to the well-known mask popularly ascribed to Don Quixote; but a wicked Don Quixote, without illusions,—a terrible Don Quixote.

And yet the old man, in spite of this general aspect of severity, betrayed the weakness and timidity which indigence imparts to all unfortunates. These two emotions seemed to have made crevices in that solidly constructed face which the pickaxe of poverty was daily enlarging. The mouth was eloquent and grave; in that feature Don Quixote was complicated with Montesquieu's president.

His clothing was entirely of black cloth, but cloth that was white at the seams. The coat, of an old-fashioned cut, and the trousers, showed various clumsy darns. The buttons had evidently just been renewed. The coat, buttoned to the chin, showed no linen; and the cravat, of a rusty black, hid the greater part of a false collar. These clothes, worn for many years, smelt of poverty. And yet the lofty air of this mysterious old man, his gait, the thought that dwelt on his brow and was manifest in his eyes, excluded the idea of pauperism. An observer would have hesitated how to class him.

Monsieur Bernard seemed so absorbed that he might have been taken for a

teacher employed in that quarter of the city, or for some learned man plunged in exacting and tyrannical meditation. Godefroid, in any case, would have felt a curiosity which his present mission of benevolence sharpened into powerful interest.

“Monsieur,” continued the old man, “if I were sure that you are really seeking silence and seclusion, I should say take those rooms near mine.” He raised his voice so that Madame Vauthier, who was now passing them, could hear him. “Take those rooms. I am a father, monsieur. I have only a daughter and a grandson to enable me to bear the miseries of life. Now, my daughter needs silence and absolute tranquillity. All those persons who, so far, have looked at the rooms you are now considering, have listened to the reasons and the entreaties of a despairing father. It was indifferent to them whether they lived in one house or another of a quarter so deserted that plenty of lodgings can be had for a low price. But I see in you a fixed determination, and I beg you, monsieur, not to deceive me. Do you really desire a quiet life? If not, I shall be forced to move and go beyond the barrier, and the removal may cost me my daughter’s life.”

If the man could have wept, the tears would have covered his cheeks while he spoke; as it was, they were, to use an expression now become vulgar, “in his voice.” He covered his forehead with his hand, which was nothing but bones and muscle.

“What is your daughter’s illness?” asked Godefroid, in a persuasive and sympathetic voice.

“A terrible disease to which physicians give various names, but it has, in truth, no name. My fortune is lost,” he added, with one of those despairing gestures made only by the wretched. “The little money that I had,—for in 1830 I was cast from a high position,—in fact, all that I possessed, was soon used by on my daughter’s illness; her mother, too, was ruined by it, and finally her husband. To-day the pension I receive from the government barely suffices for the actual necessities of my poor, dear, saintly child. The faculty of tears has left me; I have suffered tortures. Monsieur, I must be granite not to have died. But no, God had kept alive the father that the child might have a nurse, a providence. Her poor mother died of the strain. Ah! you have come, young man, at a moment when the old tree that never yet has bent feels the axe—the axe of poverty, sharpened by sorrow—at his roots. Yes, here am I, who never complain, talking to you of this illness so as to prevent you from coming to the house; or, if you still persist, to implore you not to trouble our peace. Monsieur, at this moment my daughter barks like a dog, day and night.”

“Is she insane?” asked Godefroid.

“Her mind is sound; she is a saint,” replied the old man. “You will

presently think I am mad when I tell you all. Monsieur, my only child, my daughter was born of a mother in excellent health. I never in my life loved but one woman, the one I married. I married the daughter of one of the bravest colonels of the Imperial guard, Tarlowski, a Pole, formerly on the staff of the Emperor. The functions that I exercised in my high position demanded the utmost purity of life and morals; but I have never had room in my heart for many feelings, and I faithfully loved my wife, who deserved such love. I am a father in like manner as I was a husband, and that is telling you all in one word. My daughter never left her mother; no child has ever lived more chastely, more truly a Christian life than my dear daughter. She was born more than pretty, she was born most beautiful; and her husband, a young man of whose morals I was absolutely sure,—he was the son of a friend of mine, the judge of one of the Royal courts,—did not in any way contribute to my daughter's illness."

Godefroid and Monsieur Bernard made an involuntary pause, and looked at each other.

"Marriage, as you know, sometimes changes a young woman greatly," resumed the old man. "The first pregnancy passed well and produced a son, my grandson, who now lives with us, the last scion of two families. The second pregnancy was accompanied by such extraordinary symptoms that the physicians, much astonished, attributed them to the caprice of phenomena which sometimes manifest themselves in this state, and are recorded by physicians in the annals of science. My daughter gave birth to a dead child; in fact, it was twisted and smothered by internal movements. The disease had begun, the pregnancy counted for nothing. Perhaps you are a student of medicine?"

Godefroid made a sign which answered as well for affirmation as for negation.

"After this terrible confinement," resumed Monsieur Bernard,—"so terrible and laborious that it made a violent impression on my son-in-law and began the mortal melancholy of which he died,—my daughter, two or three months later, complained of a general weakness affecting, particularly, her feet, which she declared felt like cottonwood. This debility changed to paralysis,—and what a paralysis! My daughter's feet and legs can be bent or twisted in any way and she does not feel it. The limbs are there, apparently without blood or muscles or bones. This affection, which is not connected with anything known to science, spread to the arms and hands, and we then supposed it to be a disease of the spinal cord. Doctors and remedies only made matters worse until at last my poor daughter could not be moved without dislocating either the shoulders, the arms, or the knees. I kept an admirable surgeon almost constantly in the house, who, with the doctor, or doctors (for

many came out of interest in the case), replaced the dislocated limbs,—sometimes, would you believe it monsieur? three and four times a day! Ah!—This disease has so many forms that I forgot to tell you that during the first period of weakness, before the paralysis began, the strangest signs of catalepsy appeared—you know what catalepsy is. She remained for days with her eyes wide open, motionless, in whatever position she was when the attack seized her. The worst symptoms of that strange affection were shown, even those of lockjaw. This phase of her illness suggested to me the idea of employing magnetism, and I was about to do so when the paralysis began. My daughter, monsieur, has a miraculous clear-sightedness; her soul has been the theatre of all the wonders of somnambulism, just as her body has been that of all diseases."

Godefroid began to ask himself if the old man were really sane.

"So that I," continued Monsieur Bernard paying no attention to the expression in Godefroid's eyes, "even I, a child of the eighteenth century, fed on Voltaire, Diderot, Helvetius,—I, a son of the Revolution, who scoff at all that antiquity and the middle-ages tell us of demoniacal possession,—well, monsieur, I affirm that nothing but such possession can explain the condition of my child. As a somnambulist she has never been able to tell us the cause of her sufferings; she has never perceived it, and all the remedies she has proposed when in that state, though carefully carried out, have done her no good. For instance, she wished to be wrapped in the carcass of a freshly killed pig; then she ordered us to run the sharp points of ret-hot magnets into her legs; and to put hot sealing-wax on her spine—"

Godefroid looked at him in amazement.

"And then! what endless other troubles, monsieur! her teeth fell out; she became deaf, then dumb; and then, after six months of absolute dumbness, utter deafness, speech and hearing have returned to her! She recovered, just as capriciously as she had lost, the use of her hands. But her feet have continued in the same hapless condition for the last seven years. She has shown marked and well-characterized symptoms of hydrophobia. Not only does the sight of water, the sound of water, the presence of a glass or a cup fling her at times into a state of fury, but she barks like a dog, that melancholy bark, or rather howl, a dog utters when he hears an organ. Several times we have thought her dying, and the priests had administered the last sacraments; but she has always returned to life to suffer with her full reason and the most absolute clearness of mind; for her faculties of heart and soul are still untouched. Though she has lived, monsieur, she has caused the deaths of her mother and her husband, who have not been able to endure the suffering of such scenes. Alas! monsieur, those distressing scenes are becoming worse. All the natural functions are perverted; the Faculty alone can explain the strange aberration of the organs.

She was in this state when I brought her from the provinces to Paris in 1829, because the two or three distinguished doctors to whom I wrote, Desplein, Bianchon, and Haudry, thought from my letters that I was telling them fables. Magnetism was then energetically denied by all the schools of medicine, and without saying that they doubted either my word or that of the provincial doctors, they said we could not have observed thoroughly, or else we had been misled by the exaggeration which patients are apt to indulge in. But they were forced to change their minds when they saw my daughter; and it is to the phenomena they then observed that the great researches made in these latter days are owing; for I must tell you that they class my daughter's singular state as a form of neurosis. At the last consultation of these gentlemen they decided to stop all medicines, to let nature alone and study it. Since then I have had but one doctor, and he is the doctor who attends the poor of this quarter. We do nothing for her now but alleviate pain, for we know not the cause of it."

Here the old man stopped as if overcome with his harrowing confidence.

"For the last five years," he continued, "my daughter alternates between revivals and relapses, but no new phenomena have appeared. She suffers more or less from the varied nervous attacks I have briefly described to you, but the paralysis of the legs and the derangement of the natural functions are constant. The poverty into which we fell, and which alas! is only increasing, obliged me to leave the rooms that I took, in 1829, in the faubourg du Roule. My daughter cannot endure the fatigue of moving; I came near losing her when I brought her to Paris, and again when I removed her to this house. Here my worst financial misfortunes have come upon me. After thirty years in the public service I was made to wait four years before my pension was granted. I have only received it during the last six months and even then the new government has sternly cut it down to the minimum."

Godefroid made a gesture of surprise which seemed to ask for a more complete confidence. The old man so understood it, for he answered immediately, casting a reproachful glance to heaven:—

"I am one of the thousand victims of political reaction. I conceal my name because it is the mark for many a revenge. If the lessons of experience were not always wasted from one generation to another I should warn you, young man, never to adopt the sternness of any policy. Not that I regret having done my duty; my conscience is perfectly clear on that score; but the powers of to-day have not that solidarity which formerly bound all governments together as governments, no matter how different they might be; if to-day they reward zealous agents it is because they are afraid of them. The instrument they have used, no matter how faithful it has been, is, sooner or later, cast aside. You see in me one of the firmest supporters of the government of the elder branch of the Bourbons, as I was later of the Imperial power; yet here I am in penury!

Since I am too proud to beg, they have never dreamed that I suffer untold misery. Five days ago, monsieur, the doctor who takes care of my daughter, or rather I should say, observes her, told me that he was unable to cure a disease the forms of which varied perpetually. He says that neurotic patients are the despair of science, for the causes of their conditions are only to be found in some as yet unexplored system. He advised me to have recourse to a physician who has been called a quack; but he carefully pointed out that this man was a stranger, a Polish Jew, a refugee, and that the Parisian doctors were extremely jealous of certain wonderful cures he had made, and also of the opinion expressed by many that he is very learned and extremely able. Only, Dr. Berton says, he is very exacting and overbearing. He selects his patients, and will not allow an instant of his time to be wasted; and he is—a communist! His name is Halpersohn. My grandson has been twice to find him, but he is always too busy to attend to him; he has not been to see us; I fully understand why."

"Why?" asked Godefroid.

"Because my grandson, who is sixteen years old, is even more shabbily dressed than I am. Would you believe it, monsieur? I dare not go to that doctor; my clothes are so out of keeping with a man of my age and dignity. If he saw the father as shabby as I am, and the boy even worse, he might not give my daughter the needful attention; he would treat us as doctors treat the poor. And think, my dear monsieur, that I love my daughter for all the suffering she has caused me, just as I used to love her for the joys I had in her. She has become angelic. Alas! she is nothing now but a soul, a soul which beams upon her son and me; the body no longer exists; she has conquered suffering. Think what a spectacle for a father! The whole world, to my daughter, is within the walls of her room. I keep it filled with flowers, for she loves them. She reads a great deal; and when she has the use of her hands she works like a fairy. She has no conception of the horrible poverty to which we are reduced. This makes our household way of life so strange, so eccentric, that we cannot admit visitors. Do you now understand me, monsieur? Can you not see how impossible a neighbor is? I should have to ask for so much forbearance from him that the obligation would be too heavy. Besides, I have no time for friends; I educate my grandson, and I have so much other work to do that I only sleep three, or at most four hours at night."

"Monsieur," said Godefroid, who had listened patiently, observing the old man with sorrowful attention, "I will be your neighbor, and I will help you."

A scornful gesture, even an impatient one, escaped the old man, for he was one who believed in nothing good in human nature.

"I will help you," pursued Godefroid, taking his hand, "but in my own

way. Listen to me. What do you mean to make of your grandson?”

“He is soon to enter the Law school. I am bringing him up to the bar.”

“Then he will cost you six hundred francs a year.”

The old man made no reply.

“I myself,” continued Godefroid after a pause, “have nothing, but I may be able to do much. I will obtain the Polish doctor for you. And if your daughter is curable she shall be cured. We will find some way of paying Halpersohn.”

“Oh! if my daughter be cured I will make a sacrifice I can make but once,” cried the old man. “I will sell the pear I have kept for a thirsty day.”

“You shall keep the pear—”

“Oh, youth! youth!” exclaimed Monsieur Bernard, shaking his head. “Adieu, monsieur; or rather, au revoir. This is the hour for the Library, and as my books are all sold I am obliged to go there every day to do my work. I shall bear in mind the kindness you express, but I must wait and see whether you will grant us the consideration I must ask from my neighbor. That is all I expect of you.”

“Yes, monsieur, let me be your neighbor; for, I assure you, Barbet is not a man to allow the rooms to be long unrented, and you might have far worse neighbors than I. I do not ask you to believe in me, only to let me be useful to you.”

“What object have you?” said the old man, preparing to go down the steps from the cloister of the Chartreux which leads from the great alley of the Luxembourg to the rue d’Enfer.

“Did you never, in your public functions, oblige any one?”

The old man looked at Godefroid with frowning brows; his eyes were full of memories, like a man who turns the leaves of his book of life, seeking for the action to which he owed this gratitude; then he turned away coldly, with a bow, full of doubt.

“Well, for a first investigation I did not frighten him too much,” thought Godefroid.

XIII. FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS

Godefroid now went to the rue d’Enfer, the address given him by Monsieur Alain, and there found Dr. Berton, a cold, grave man, who astonished him

much by confirming all the details given by Monsieur Bernard about his daughter's illness. From him Godefroid obtained the address of Halpersohn.

This Polish doctor, since so celebrated, then lived in Chaillot, rue Marbeuf, in an isolated house where he occupied the first floor. General Romanus Zarnowski lived on the second floor, and the servants of the two refugees inhabited the garret of this little house, which had but two stories. Godefroid did not find Halpersohn, and was told that he had gone into the provinces, sent for by a rich patient; he was almost glad not to meet him, for in his hurry he had forgotten to supply himself with money; and he now went back to the hotel de la Chanterie to get some.

These various trips and the time consumed in dining at a restaurant in the rue de l'Odeon brought Godefroid to the hour when he said he would return and take possession of his lodging on the boulevard du Mont-Parnasse. Nothing could be more forlorn than the manner in which Madame Vauthier had furnished the two rooms. It seemed as though the woman let rooms with the express purpose that no one should stay in them. Evidently the bed, chairs, tables, bureau, secretary, curtains, came from forced sales at auction, articles massed together in lots as having no separate intrinsic value.

Madame Vauthier, with her hands on her hips, stood waiting for thanks; she took Godefroid's smile for one of surprise.

"There! I picked out for you the very best we have, my dear Monsieur Godefroid," she said with a triumphant air. "See those pretty silk curtains, and the mahogany bedstead which hasn't got a worm-hole in it! It formerly belonged to the Prince of Wissembourg. When he left his house, rue Louis-le-Grand, in 1809, I was the kitchen-girl. From there, I went to live as cook with the present owner of this house."

Godefroid stopped the flux of confidences by paying a month's rent in advance; and he also gave, in advance, the six francs he was to pay Madame Vauthier for the care of his rooms. At that moment he heard barking, and if he had not been duly warned by Monsieur Bernard, he would certainly have supposed that his neighbor kept a dog.

"Does that dog bark at night?" he asked.

"Oh! don't be uneasy, monsieur; you'll only have one week to stand those persons. Monsieur Bernard can't pay his rent and we are going to put him out. They are queer people, I tell you! I have never seen their dog. That animal is sometimes months, yes, six months at a time without making a sound; you might think they hadn't a dog. The beast never leaves the lady's room. There's a sick lady in there, and very sick, too; she's never been out of her room since she came. Old Monsieur Bernard works hard, and the son, too; the lad is a

day-scholar at the school of Louis-le-Grand, where he is nearly through his philosophy course, and only sixteen, too; that's something to boast of! but the little scamp has to work like one possessed. Presently you'll hear them bring out the plants they keep in the lady's room and carry in fresh ones. They themselves, the grandfather and the boy, only eat bread, though they buy flowers and all sorts of dainties for the lady. She must be very ill, not to leave her room once since entering it; and if one's to believe Monsieur Berton, the doctor, she'll never come out except feet foremost."

"What does this Monsieur Bernard do?"

"It seems he's a learned man; he writes and goes about to libraries. Monsieur lends him money on his compositions."

"Monsieur? who is he?"

"The proprietor of the house, Monsieur Barbet, the old bookseller. He is a Norman who used to sell green stuff in the streets, and afterwards set up a bookstall, in 1818, on the quay. Then he got a little shop, and now he is very rich. He is a kind of a Jew, with a score of trades; he was even a partner with the Italian who built this barrack to lodge silk-worms."

"So this house is a refuge for unfortunate authors?" said Godefroid.

"Is monsieur unluckily one himself?" asked the widow Vauthier.

"I am only just starting," replied Godefroid.

"Oh! my dear monsieur, take my advice and don't go on; journalist? well, —I won't say anything against that."

Godefroid could not help laughing as he bade good-night to the portress, who thus, all unconsciously, represented the bourgeoisie. As he went to bed in the horrible room, floored with bricks that were not even colored, and hung with a paper at seven sous a roll, Godefroid not only regretted his little rooms in the rue Chanoinesse, but also the society of Madame de la Chanterie. He felt a void in his soul. He had already acquired habits of mind; and could not remember to have so keenly regretted anything in all his former life as this break in his new existence. These thoughts, as they pressed upon him, had a great effect upon his soul; he felt that no life could compare in value with the one he sought to embrace, and his resolution to emulate the good old Alain became unshakable. Without having any vocation for the work, he had the will to do it.

The next day Godefroid, already habituated by his new life to rising early, saw from his window a young man about seventeen years of age, dressed in a blouse, who was coming back, no doubt from the public fountain, bringing a crock full of water in each hand. The face of this lad, who was not aware that

he was seen, revealed his feelings, and never had Godefroid observed one so artless and so melancholy. The graces of youth were all repressed by poverty, by study, by great physical fatigue. Monsieur Bernard's grandson was remarkable for a complexion of extreme whiteness, which the contrast with his dark hair seemed to make still whiter. He made three trips; when he returned from the last he saw some men unloading a cord of wood which Godefroid had ordered the night before, for the long-delayed winter of 1838 was beginning to be felt; snow had fallen slightly during the night.

Nepomucene, who had begun his day by going for the wood (on which Madame Vauthier levied a handsome tribute), spoke to the young lad while waiting until the woodman had sawed enough for him to carry upstairs. It was easy to see that the sudden cold was causing anxiety to Monsieur Bernard's grandson, and that the sight of the wood, as well as that of the threatening sky, warned him that they ought to be making their own provision for wintry weather. Suddenly, however, as if reproaching himself for lost time, he seized his crocks and hastily entered the house. It was, in fact, half-past seven o'clock, the hour was just ringing from the belfry of the convent of the Visitation, and he was due at the college of Louis-le-Grand by half-past eight.

As the young lad entered the house, Godefroid went to his door to admit Madame Vauthier who brought her new lodger the wherewithal to make a fire, and he thus became the witness of a scene which took place on the landing.

A neighboring gardener, who had rung several times at Monsieur Bernard's door without making any one hear (for the bell was wrapped in paper), had a rather rough dispute with the young lad who now came up with the water, demanding to be paid for the flowers he had supplied. As the man raised his voice angrily Monsieur Bernard appeared. "Auguste," he said to his grandson, "dress yourself, it is time for school."

He himself took the two crocks of water, carried them into the first of his rooms, in which were many pots of flowers, and returned to speak to the gardener, carefully closing the door behind him. Godefroid's door was open, for Nepomucene had begun his trips, and was stacking the wood in the front room. The gardener was silent in presence of Monsieur Bernard, whose tall figure, robed in a violet silk dressing-gown, buttoned to the throat, gave him an imposing air.

"You might ask for what is owing to you without such noise," said Monsieur Bernard.

"Be fair, my dear monsieur," said the gardener. "You agreed to pay me every week, and it now three months, ten weeks, since I have had a penny; you owe me a hundred and twenty francs. We let out our plants to rich people who pay us when we ask for the money; but this is the fifth time I have come to

you for it. I have my rent to pay and the wages of my men; I am not a bit richer than you. My wife, who supplied you with eggs and milk, will not come here any more; you owe her thirty francs. She does not like to dun you, for she is kind-hearted, that she is! If I listened to her, I couldn't do business at all. And so I, who am not so soft—you understand?"

Just then Auguste came out dressed in a shabby little green coat with cloth trousers of the same color, a black cravat, and worn-out boots. These clothes, though carefully brushed, showed the lowest degree of poverty; they were all too short and too narrow, so that the lad seemed likely to crack them at every motion. The seams were white, the edges curled, the buttonholes torn in spite of many mendings; the whole presenting to the most unobservant eyes the heart-breaking stigmas of honest penury. This livery contrasted sadly with the youth of the lad, who now disappeared munching a crust of stale bread with his strong and handsome teeth. He breakfasted thus on his way to the rue Saint-Jacques, carrying his books and papers under his arm, and wearing a little cap much too small for his head, from which stuck out a mass of magnificent black hair.

In passing before his grandfather the lad had given him rapidly a look of deep distress; for he knew him to be in an almost hopeless difficulty, the consequences of which might be terrible. To leave room for the boy to pass, the gardener had stepped back to the sill of Godefroid's door, and as at that moment Nepomucene arrived with a quantity of wood, the creditor was forced to retreat into the room.

"Monsieur Bernard!" cried the widow Vauthier, "do you think Monsieur Godefroid hired his rooms to have you hold your meetings in them?"

"Excuse me, madame," said the gardener, "but there was no room on the landing."

"I didn't say that for you, Monsieur Cartier," said the widow.

"Remain where you are!" cried Godefroid, addressing the gardener; "and you, my dear neighbor," he added, looking at Monsieur Bernard, who seemed insensible to the cruel insult, "if it is convenient to you to have an explanation with your gardener in my room, come in."

The old man, half stupefied with his troubles, cast a look of gratitude on Godefroid.

"As for you, my dear Madame Vauthier," continued Godefroid, "don't be so rough with monsieur, who is in the first place an old man, and one to whom you owe the obligation of my lodging here."

"Oh, pooh!" said the widow.

“Besides, if poor people do not help each other, who will help them? Leave us, Madame Vauthier; I’ll blow the fire myself. Have the rest of my wood put in your cellar; I am sure you will take good care of it.”

Madame Vauthier disappeared, for Godefroid in telling her to take care of his wood had given an opportunity to her greed.

“Come in this way,” said Godefroid, offering chairs to both debtor and creditor.

The old man conversed standing, but the gardener sat down.

“My good Monsieur Cartier,” went on Godefroid, “rich people do not pay as regularly as you say they do, and you ought not to dun a worthy man for a few louis. Monsieur draws his pension every six months, and he could not make you an assignment of it for such a paltry sum. I am willing to advance the money, if you absolutely insist on having it.”

“Monsieur Bernard drew his pension two weeks ago, and has not paid me. I am sorry to trouble him, of course.”

“Have you furnished him with plants all along?”

“Yes, monsieur, for six years, and he has always paid me.”

Monsieur Bernard, who was listening to some sound in his own rooms and paying no attention to what was being said, now heard a cry through the partitions and hurried away without a word.

“Come, come, my good man,” said Godefroid, taking advantage of the old man’s absence, “bring some nice flowers, your best flowers, this very morning, and tell your wife to send the eggs and milk as usual; I will pay you this evening.”

Cartier looked oddly at Godefroid.

“Then you must know more than Madame Vauthier does; she sent me word to hurry if I hoped to be paid,” he said. “Neither she nor I can make out why folks who eat nothing but bread and the odds and ends of vegetables, bits of carrots, turnips, and such things, which they get at the back-doors of restaurants,—yes, monsieur, I assure you I came one day on the little fellow filling an old handbag,—well, I want to know why such persons spend nearly forty francs a month on flowers. They say the old man’s pension is only three thousand francs.”

“At any rate,” said Godefroid, “it is not your business to complain if they ruin themselves in flowers.”

“That’s true, monsieur,—provided they pay me.”

“Bring your bill to me.”

“Very good, monsieur,” said the gardener, with a tinge of respect. “Monsieur no doubt wants to see the mysterious lady.”

“My good friend,” said Godefroid, stiffly, “you forget yourself. Go home now and bring fresh plants for those you are to take away. If you can also supply me with good cream and fresh eggs I will take them, and I will go this morning and take a look at your establishment.”

“It is one of the finest in Paris, monsieur. I exhibit at the Luxembourg. My garden, which covers three acres, is on the boulevard, behind the garden of La Grande-Chaumiere.”

“Very good, Monsieur Cartier. You are, I see, much richer than I. Have some consideration for us, therefore. Who knows how soon we may have mutual need of each other?”

The gardener went away, much puzzled as to who and what Godefroid might be.

“And yet I was once just like that,” thought Godefroid, blowing his fire. “What a fine specimen of the bourgeois of to-day!—gossiping, inquisitive, crazy for equality, jealous of his customers, furious at not knowing why a poor sick woman stays in her room without being seen; concealing his wealth, and yet vain enough to betray it when he thinks it will put him above his neighbor. That man ought to be the lieutenant of his company. I dare say he is. With what ease he plays the scene of Monsieur Dimanche! A little more and I should have made a friend of Monsieur Cartier.”

The old man broke into this soliloquy, which proves how Godefroid’s ideas had changed in four months.

“Excuse me, neighbor,” said Monsieur Bernard, in a troubled voice; “I see you have sent that gardener away satisfied, for he bowed civilly to me on the landing. It seems, young man, as if Providence had sent you to me at the very moment when I was about to succumb. Alas! the hard talk of that man must have shown you many things! It is true that I received the half-yearly payment of my pension two weeks ago; but I had more pressing debts than his, and I was forced to put aside my rent for fear of being turned out of the house. I have told you the state my daughter is in, and you have probably heard her.”

He looked uneasily at Godefroid, who made him an affirmative sign.

“Well, then, you know it would be her death warrant, for I should then be compelled to put her in a hospital. My grandson and I were fearing that end this morning; but we do not dread Cartier so much as we do the cold.”

“My dear Monsieur Bernard,” said Godefroid, “I have plenty of wood; take

all you want.”

“Ah!” said the old man, “but how can I ever return such services?”

“By accepting them without difficulty,” said Godefroid, quickly, “and by giving me your confidence.”

“But what are my claims to so much generosity?” asked Monsieur Bernard, becoming once more distrustful. “Ah! my pride and that of my grandson are lowered indeed!” he cried bitterly. “We are compelled to offer explanations to the few creditors—only two or three—whom we cannot pay. The utterly unfortunate have no creditors; to have them one must needs present an exterior of some show, and that we have now lost. But I have not yet abdicated my common-sense,—my reason,” he added, as if he were talking to himself.

“Monsieur,” replied Godefroid, gravely, “the history you gave me yesterday would touch even a usurer.”

“No, no! for Barbet, that publisher, the proprietor of this house, is speculating on my poverty, and has sent the Vauthier woman, his former cook, to spy upon it.”

“How can he speculate upon you?” asked Godefroid.

“I will tell you later,” replied the old man. “My daughter is cold, and since you offer it, I am reduced to accept alms, were it even from my worst enemy.”

“I will carry in some wood,” said Godefroid, gathering up ten or a dozen sticks, and taking them into Monsieur Bernard’s first room. The old man took as many himself; and when he saw the little provision safely deposited, he could not restrain the silly, and even idiotic smile with which those who are saved from a mortal danger, which has seemed to them inevitable, express their joy; for terror still lingers in their joy.

“Accept things from me, my dear Monsieur Bernard, without reluctance; and when your daughter is safe, and you are once more at ease, we will settle all. Meantime, let me act for you. I have been to see that Polish doctor; unfortunately he is absent; he will not be back for two days.”

At this moment a voice which seemed to Godefroid to have, and really had, a fresh, melodious ring, cried out, “Papa, papa!” on two expressive notes.

While speaking to the old man, Godefroid had noticed that the jambs of a door leading to another room were painted in a delicate manner, altogether different from that of the rest of the lodging. His curiosity, already so keenly excited, was now roused to the highest pitch. He was conscious that his mission of benevolence was becoming nothing more than a pretext; what he really wanted was to see that sick woman. He refused to believe for an instant

that a creature endowed with such a voice could be an object of repulsion.

“You do, indeed, take too much trouble, papa!” said the voice. “Why not have more servants?—and at your age, too! Good God!”

“But you know, my dear Vanda, that the boy and I cannot bear that any one should wait upon you but ourselves!”

Those sentences, which Godefroid heard through the door, or rather divined, for a heavy portiere on the inside smothered the sounds, gave him an inkling of the truth. The sick woman, surrounded by luxury, was evidently kept in ignorance of the real situation of her father and son. The violet silk dressing-gown of Monsieur Bernard, the flowers, his remarks to Cartier, had already roused some suspicion of this in Godefroid’s mind. The young man stood still where he was, bewildered by this prodigy of paternal love. The contrast, such as he imagined it, between the invalid’s room and the rest of that squalid place,—yes, it was bewildering!

XIV. HOW THE POOR AND HELPLESS ARE PREYED UPON

Through the door of a third chamber, which the old man had left open, Godefroid beheld two cots of painted wood, like those of the cheapest boarding-schools, each with a straw bed and a thin mattress, on which there was but one blanket. A small iron stove like those that porters cook by, near which lay a few squares of peat, would alone have shown the poverty of the household without the help of other details.

Advancing a step or two, Godefroid saw utensils such as the poorest persons use,—earthenware jugs, and pans in which potatoes floated in dirty water. Two tables of blackened wood, covered with books and papers, stood before the windows that looked out upon the rue Notre-Dame des Champs, and indicated the nocturnal occupations of father and son. On each of the tables was a flat iron candlestick, such as are used by the very poor, and in them Godefroid noticed tallow-candles of the kind that are sold at eight to the pound.

On a third table glittered two forks and spoons and another little spoon of silver-gilt, together with plates, bowls, and cups of Sevres china, and a silver-gilt knife and fork in an open case, all evidently for the service of the sick woman.

The stove was lighted; the water in the copper was steaming slightly. A painted wooden closet or wardrobe contained, no doubt, the linen and clothing of Monsieur Bernard’s daughter. On the old man’s bed Godefroid noticed that

the habiliments he had worn the night before lay spread as a covering. The floor, evidently seldom swept, looked like that of a boy's class-room. A six-pound loaf of bread, from which some slices had been cut, was on a shelf above the table. Here was poverty in its last stages, poverty resolutely accepted with stern endurance, making shift with the lowest and poorest means. A strong and sickening odor came from this room, which was rarely cleaned.

The antechamber, in which Godefroid stood, was at any rate decent, and he suspected that it served to conceal the horrors of the room in which the grandfather and the grandson lived. This antechamber, hung with a checked paper of Scotch pattern, held four walnut chairs, a small table, a colored engraving of the Emperor after Horace Vernet, also portraits of Louis XVIII., Charles X., and Prince Poniatowski, no doubt the friend of Monsieur Bernard's father-in-law. The window was draped with white calico curtains edged with red bands and fringe.

Godefroid watched for Nepomucene, and when the latter made his next trip with wood signed to him to stack it very gently in Monsieur Bernard's antechamber; then (a perception which proved some progress in our initiate) he closed the door of the inner lair that Madame Vauthier's slave might not see the old man's squalor.

The antechamber was just then encumbered with three plant-stands filled with plants; two were oblong, one round, all three were of a species of ebony and of great elegance; even Nepomucene took notice of them and said as he deposited the wood:—

"Hey! ain't they pretty? They must have cost a good bit!"

"Jean! don't make so much noise!" called Monsieur Bernard from his daughter's room.

"Did you hear that?" whispered Nepomucene to Godefroid. "He's cracked, for sure, that old fellow."

"You don't know what you may be at his age."

"Yes, I do know," responded Nepomucene, "I shall be in the sugar-bowl."

"The sugar-bowl?"

"Yes, they'll have made my bones into charcoal by that time; I often see the carts of the refineries coming to Montsouris for charcoal; they tell me they make sugar of it." And he departed after another load of wood, satisfied with this philosophical reflection.

Godefroid discreetly withdrew to his own rooms, closing Monsieur Bernard's door behind him. Madame Vauthier, who during this time had been

preparing her new lodger's breakfast, now came up to serve it, attended by Felicite. Godefroid, lost in reflection, stared into his fire. He was absorbed in meditation on this great misery which contained so many different miseries, and yet within which he could see the ineffable joys of the many triumphs of paternal and filial love; they were gems shining in the blackness of the pit.

"What romances, even those that are most famous, can equal such realities?" he thought. "What a life it will be to relieve the burden of such existences, to seek out causes and effects and remedy them, calming sorrows, helping good; to incarnate one's own being in misery; to familiarize one's self with homes like that; to act out constantly in life those dramas which move us so in fiction! I never imagined that good could be more interesting, more piquant than vice."

"Is monsieur satisfied with his breakfast?" asked Madame Vauthier, who now, with Felicite's assistance, brought the table close to Godefroid.

Godefroid then saw a cup of excellent cafe au lait with a smoking omelet, fresh butter, and little red radishes.

"Where the devil did you get those radishes?" he asked.

"They were given me by Monsieur Cartier," answered Madame Vauthier; "and I make a present of them to monsieur."

"And what are you going to ask me for such a breakfast daily?"

"Well now, monsieur, be fair,—I couldn't do it for less than thirty sous."

"Very good, thirty sous then;" said Godefroid; "but how is it that they ask me only forty-five francs a month for dinner, close by here at Machillot's? That is the same price you ask me for breakfast."

"But what a difference, monsieur, between preparing a dinner for fifteen or twenty persons and going out to get you just what you want for breakfast! See here! there's a roll, eggs, butter, the cost of lighting a fire, sugar, milk, coffee! —just think! they ask you sixteen sous for a cup of coffee alone on the place de l'Odeon, and then you have to give a sou or two to the waiter. Here you have no trouble; you can breakfast in slippers."

"Very well, very well," said Godefroid.

"Without Madame Cartier who supplies me with milk and eggs and herbs I couldn't manage it. You ought to go and see their establishment, monsieur. Ha! it's fine! They employ five journeymen gardeners, and Nepomucene goes there in summer to draw water for them; they hire him of me as a waterer. They make lots of money out of melons and strawberries. It seems monsieur takes quite an interest in Monsieur Bernard," continued the widow in dulcet tones; "or he wouldn't be responsible for his debts. Perhaps he doesn't know

all that family owes. There's the lady who keeps the circulating library on the place Saint-Michel; she is always coming here after thirty francs they owe her,—and she needs it, God knows! That sick woman in there, she reads, reads, reads! Two sous a volume makes thirty francs in three months."

"That means a hundred volumes a month," said Godefroid.

"Ah! there's the old man going now to fetch a roll and cream for his daughter's tea,—yes, tea! she lives on tea, that lady. She drinks it twice a day. And twice a week she has to have sweet things. Oh! she's dainty! The old man buys cakes and pates from the pastry cook in the rue de Buci. He don't care what he spends, if it's for her. He calls her his daughter! It ain't often that men of his age do for a daughter what he does for her! He just kills himself, he and Auguste too, for that woman. Monsieur is just like me; I'd give anything to see her. Monsieur Berton says she's a monster,—something like those they show for money. That's the reason they've come to live here, in this lonely quarter. Well, so monsieur thinks of dining at Madame Machillot's, does he?"

"Yes, I think of making an arrangement there."

"Monsieur, it isn't that I want to interfere, but I must say, comparing food with food, you'd do much better to dine in the rue de Tournon; you needn't engage by the month, and you'll find a better table."

"Whereabouts in the rue de Tournon?"

"At the successors to Madame Giraud. That's where the gentlemen upstairs go; they are satisfied, and more than satisfied."

"Well, I'll take your advice and dine there to-day."

"My dear monsieur," said the woman, emboldened by the good-nature which Godefroid intentionally assumed, "tell me seriously, you are not going to be such a muff as to pay Monsieur Bernard's debts? It would really trouble me if you did; for just reflect, my kind monsieur Godefroid, he's nearly seventy, and after him, what then? not a penny of pension! How'll you get paid? Young men are so imprudent! Do you know that he owes three thousand francs?"

"To whom?" inquired Godefroid.

"Oh! to whom? that's not my affair," said the widow, mysteriously; "it is enough that he does owe them. Between ourselves I'll tell you this: somebody will soon be down on him for that money, and he can't get a penny of credit now in the quarter just on that account."

"Three thousand francs!" repeated Godefroid; "oh, you needn't be afraid I'll lend him that. If I had three thousand francs to dispose of I shouldn't be your lodger. But I can't bear to see others suffer, and just for a hundred or so

of francs I sha’n’t let my neighbor, a man with white hair too, lack for bread or wood; why, one often loses as much as that at cards. But three thousand francs! good heavens! what are you thinking of?”

Madame Vauthier, deceived by Godefroid’s apparent frankness, let a smile of satisfaction appear on her specious face, which confirmed all her lodger’s suspicions. Godefroid was convinced that the old woman was an accomplice in some plot that was brewing against the unfortunate old man.

“It is strange, monsieur,” she went on, “what fancies one takes into one’s head! You’ll think me very curious, but yesterday, when I saw you talking with Monsieur Bernard I said to myself that you were the clerk of some publisher; for this, you know, is a publisher’s quarter. I once lodged the foreman of a printing-house in the rue de Vaugirard, and his name was the same as yours—”

“What does my business signify to you?” interrupted Godefroid.

“Oh, pooh! you can tell me, or you needn’t tell me; I shall know it all the same,” retorted Vauthier. “There’s Monsieur Bernard, for instance, for eighteen months he concealed everything from me, but on the nineteenth I discovered that he had been a magistrate, a judge somewhere or other, I forget where, and was writing a book on law matters. What did he gain by concealing it, I ask you. If he had told me I’d have said nothing about it—so there!”

“I am not yet a publisher’s clerk, but I expect to be,” said Godefroid.

“I thought so!” exclaimed Madame Vauthier, turning round from the bed she had been making as a pretext for staying in the room. “You have come here to cut the ground from under the feet of—Good! a man warned is a man armed.”

“Stop!” cried Godefroid, placing himself between the Vauthier and the door. “Look here, what interest have you in the matter?”

“Gracious!” said the old woman, eyeing Godefroid cautiously, “you’re a bold one, anyhow.”

She went to the door of the outer room and bolted it; then she came back and sat down on a chair beside the fire.

“On my word of honor, and as sure as my name is Vauthier, I took you for a student until I saw you giving your wood to that old Bernard. Ha! you’re a sly one; and what a play-actor! I was so certain you were a ninny! Look here, will you guarantee me a thousand francs? As sure as the sun shines, my old Barbet and Monsieur Metivier have promised me five hundred to keep my eyes open for them.”

“They! five hundred francs! nonsense!” cried Godefroid. “I know their

ways; two hundred is the very most, my good woman, and even that is only promised; you can't assign it. But I will say this: if you will put me in the way to do the business they want to do with Monsieur Bernard I will pay you four hundred francs. Now, then, how does the matter stand?"

"They have advanced fifteen hundred francs upon the work," said Madame Vauthier, making no further effort at deception, "and the old man has signed an acknowledgment for three thousand. They wouldn't do it under a hundred per cent. He thought he could easily pay them out of his book, but they have arranged to get the better of him there. It was they who sent Cartier here, and the other creditors."

Here Godefroid gave the old woman a glance of ironical intelligence, which showed her that he saw through the role she was playing in the interest of her proprietor. Her words were, in fact, a double illumination to Godefroid; the curious scene between himself and the gardener was now explained.

"Well," she resumed, "they have got him now. Where is he to find three thousand francs? They intend to offer him five hundred the day he puts the first volume of his book into their hands, and five hundred for each succeeding volume. The affair isn't in their names; they have put it into the hands of a publisher whom Barbet set up on the quai des Augustins."

"What, that little fellow?"

"Yes, that little Morand, who was formerly Barbet's clerk. It seems they expect a good bit of money out of the affair."

"There's a good bit to spend," said Godefroid, with a significant grimace.

Just then a gentle rap was heard at the door of the outer room. Godefroid, glad of the interruption, having got all he wanted to know out of Madame Vauthier, went to open it.

"What is said, is said, Madame Vauthier," he remarked as he did so. The visitor was Monsieur Bernard.

"Ah! Monsieur Bernard," cried the widow when she saw him, "I've got a letter downstairs for you."

The old man followed her down a few steps. When they were out of hearing from Godefroid's room she stopped.

"No," she said, "I haven't any letter; I only wanted to tell you to beware of that young man; he belongs to a publishing house."

"That explains everything," thought the old man.

He went back to his neighbor with a very different expression of countenance.

The look of calm coldness with which Monsieur Bernard now entered the room contrasted so strongly with the frank and cordial air he had worn not an instant earlier that Godefroid was forcibly struck by it.

“Pardon me, monsieur,” said the old man, stiffly, “but you have shown me many favors, and a benefactor creates certain rights in those he benefits.”

Godefroid bowed.

“I, who for the last five years have endured a passion like that of our Lord, I, who for thirty-six years represented social welfare, government, public vengeance, have, as you may well believe, no illusions—no, I have nothing left but anguish. Well, monsieur, I was about to say that your little act in closing the door of my wretched lair, that simple little thing, was to me the glass of water Bossuet tells of. Yes, I did find in my heart, that exhausted heart which cannot weep, just as my withered body cannot sweat, I did find a last drop of the elixir which makes us fancy in our youth that all human beings are noble, and I came to offer you my hand; I came to bring you that celestial flower of belief in good—”

“Monsieur Bernard,” said Godefroid, remembering the kind old Alain’s lessons. “I have done nothing to obtain your gratitude. You are quite mistaken.”

“Ah, that is frankness indeed!” said the former magistrate. “Well, it pleases me. I was about to reproach you; pardon me, I now esteem you. So you are a publisher, and you have come here to get my work away from Barbet, Metivier, and Morand? All is now explained. You are making me advances in money as they did, only you do it with some grace.”

“Did Madame Vauthier just tell you that I was employed by a publisher?” asked Godefroid.

“Yes.”

“Well, then, Monsieur Bernard, before I can say how much I can give over what those other gentlemen offer, I must know the terms on which you stand with them.”

“That is fair,” said Monsieur Bernard, who seemed rather pleased to find himself the object of a competition by which he might profit. “Do you know what my work is?”

“No; I only know it is a good enterprise from a business point of view.”

“It is only half-past nine, my daughter has breakfasted, and Cartier will not bring the flowers for an hour or more; we have time to talk, Monsieur—Monsieur who?”

“Godefroid.”

“Monsieur Godefroid, the work in question was projected by me in 1825, at the time when the ministry, being alarmed by the persistent destruction of landed estates, proposed that law of primogeniture which was, you will remember, defeated. I had remarked certain imperfections in our codes and in the fundamental institutions of France. Our codes have often been the subject of important works, but those works were all from the point of view of jurisprudence. No one had even ventured to consider the work of the Revolution, or (if you prefer it) of Napoleon, as a whole; no one had studied the spirit of those laws, and judged them in their application. That is the main purpose of my work; it is entitled, provisionally, ‘The Spirit of the New Laws;’ it includes organic laws as well as codes, all codes; for we have many more than five codes. Consequently, my work is in several volumes; six in all, the last being a volume of citations, notes, and references. It will take me now about three months to finish it. The proprietor of this house, a former publisher, of whom I made a few inquiries, perceived, scented I may say, the chance of a speculation. I, in the first instance, thought only of doing a service to my country, and not of my own profit. Well, this Barbet has circumvented me. You will ask me how it was possible for a publisher to get the better of a magistrate, a man who knows the laws. Well, it was in this way: You know my history; Barbet is an usurer; he has the keen glance and the shrewd action of that breed of men. His money was always at my heels to help me over my worst needs. Strange to say, on the days I was most defenceless against despair he happened to appear.”

“No, no, my dear Monsieur Bernard,” said Godefroid, “he had a spy in Madame Vauthier; she told him when you needed money. But the terms, the conditions? Tell them to me briefly.”

“He has lent me from time to time fifteen hundred francs, for which I have signed three notes of a thousand francs each, and those notes are secured by a sort of mortgage on the copyright of my book, so that I cannot sell my book unless I pay off those notes, and the notes are now protested,—he has taken the matter into court and obtained a judgment against me. Such are the complications of poverty! At the lowest valuation, the first edition of my great work, a work representing ten years’ toil and thirty-six years’ experience, is fully worth ten thousand francs. Well, ten days ago Morand proposed to give me three thousand francs and my notes cancelled for the entire rights in perpetuity. Now as it is not possible for me to refund the amount of my notes and interest, namely, three thousand two hundred and forty francs, I must,—unless you intend to step between those usurers and me,—I must yield to them. They are not content with my word of honor; they first obtained the notes, then they had them protested, and now I am threatened with arrest for

debt. If I could manage to pay them back, those scoundrels would have doubled their money. If I accept their terms they will make a fortune out of my book and I shall get almost nothing; one of them is a paper-maker, and God knows how they may keep down the costs of publication. They will have my name, and that alone will sell ten thousand copies for them."

"But, monsieur, how could you, a former magistrate!—"

"How could I help it? Not a friend, not a claim that I could make! And yet I saved many heads, if I made some fall! And, then, my daughter, my daughter! whose nurse I am, whose companion I must be; so that I can work but a few hours snatched from sleep. Ah, young man! none but the wretched can judge the wretched! Sometimes I think I used to be too stern to misery."

"Monsieur, I do not ask your name. I cannot provide three thousand francs, especially if I pay Halpersohn and your lesser debts; but I will save you if you will promise me not to part with your book without letting me know. It is impossible for me to arrange a matter as important as this without consulting others. My backers are powerful, and I can promise you success if you, in return, will promise me absolute secrecy, even to your children, and keep your promise."

"The only success I care for is the recovery of my poor Vanda; for such sufferings as hers extinguish every other feeling in a father's heart. As for fame, what is that to one who sees an open grave before him?"

"I will come and see you this evening; they expect Halpersohn at any time, and I shall go there day after day until I find him."

"Ah, monsieur! if you should be the cause of my daughter's recovery, I would like,—yes, I would like to give you my work!"

"Monsieur," said Godefroid, "I am not a publisher."

The old man started with surprise.

"I let that old Vauthier think so in order to discover the traps they were laying for you."

"Then who are you?"

"Godefroid," replied the initiate; "and since you allow me to offer you enough to make the pot boil, you can call me, if you like, Godefroid de Bouillon."

The old man was far too moved to laugh at a joke. He held out his hand to Godefroid, and pressed that which the young man gave him in return.

"You wish to keep your incognito?" he said, looking at Godefroid sadly, with some uneasiness.

“If you will allow it.”

“Well, as you will. Come to-night, and you shall see my daughter if her condition permits.”

This was evidently a great concession in the eyes of the poor father, and he had the satisfaction of seeing, by the look on Godefroid’s face, that it was understood.

An hour later, Cartier returned with a number of beautiful flowering plants, which he placed himself in the jardinieres, covering them with fresh moss. Godefroid paid his bill; also that of the circulating library, which was brought soon after. Books and flowers!—these were the daily bread of this poor invalid, this tortured creature, who was satisfied with so little.

As he thought of this family, coiled by misfortunes like that of the Laocoon (sublime image of so many lives), Godefroid, who was now on his way on foot to the rue Marbeuf, was conscious in his heart of more curiosity than benevolence. This sick woman, surrounded by luxury in the midst of such direful poverty, made him forget the horrible details of the strangest of all nervous disorders, which is happily rare, though recorded by a few historians. One of our most gossiping chroniclers, Tallemant des Reaux, cites an instance of it. The mind instinctively pictures a woman as being elegant in the midst of her worst sufferings; and Godefroid let himself dwell on the pleasure of entering that chamber where none but the father, son, and doctor had been admitted for six years. Nevertheless, he ended by blaming himself for his curiosity. He even felt that the sentiment, natural as it was, would cease as he went on exercising his beneficent ministry, from the mere fact of seeing more distressed homes and many sorrows.

Such agents do reach in time a divine serenity which nothing surprises or confounds; just as in love we come to the divine quietude of that emotion, sure of its strength, sure of its lastingness, through our constant experience of its pains and sweetnesses.

Godefroid was told that Halpersohn had returned during the night, but had been obliged to go out at once to visit patients who were awaiting him. The porter told Godefroid to come the next day before nine o’clock in the morning.

Remembering Monsieur Alain’s injunction to parsimony in his personal expenses, Godefroid dined for twenty-five sous in the rue de Tournon, and was rewarded for his abnegation by finding himself in the midst of compositors and pressmen. He heard a discussion on costs of manufacturing, and learned that an edition of one thousand copies of an octavo volume of forty sheets did not cost more than thirty sous a copy, in the best style of printing. He resolved to ascertain the price at which publishers of law books sold their volumes, so

as to be prepared for a discussion with the men who held Monsieur Bernard in their clutches if he should have to meet them.

Towards seven in the evening he returned to the boulevard du Mont-Parnasse, by way of the rue de Vaugiraud and the rue de l'Ouest, and he saw then how deserted the quarter was, for he met no one. It is true that the cold was rigorous, and the snow fell in great flakes, the wheels of the carriages making no noise upon the pavements.

"Ah, here you are, monsieur!" said Madame Vauthier. "If I had known you were coming home so early I would have made your fire."

"I don't want one," said Godefroid, seeing that the widow followed him. "I shall spend the evening in Monsieur Bernard's apartment."

"Well, well! you must be his cousin, if you are hand and glove like that! Perhaps monsieur will finish now the little conversation we began."

"Ah, yes!—about that four hundred francs. Look here, my good Madame Vauthier, you are trying to see which way the cat jumps, and you'll tumble yourself between two stools. As for me, you have betrayed me, and made me miss the whole affair."

"Now, don't think that, my dear monsieur. To-morrow, while you breakfast __"

"To-morrow I shall not breakfast here. I am going out, like your authors, at cock-crow."

Godefroid's antecedents, his life as a man of the world and a journalist, served him in this, that he felt quite sure, unless he took this tone, that Barbet's spy would warn the old publisher of danger, and probably lead to active measures under which Monsieur Bernard would before long be arrested; whereas, if he left the trio of harpies to suppose that their scheme ran no risk of defeat, they would keep quiet.

But Godefroid did not yet know Parisian human nature when embodied in a Vauthier. That woman resolved to have Godefroid's money and Barbet's too. She instantly ran off to her proprietor, while Godefroid changed his clothes in order to present himself properly before the daughter of Monsieur Bernard.

XV. AN EVENING WITH VANDA

Eight o'clock was striking from the convent of the Visitation, the clock of the quarter, when the inquisitive Godefroid tapped gently at his neighbor's

door. Auguste opened it. As it happened to be a Saturday, the young lad had his evening to himself. Godefroid beheld him in a little sack-coat of black velvet, a blue silk cravat, and black trousers. But his surprise at the youth's appearance, so different from that of this outside life, ceased as soon as he had entered the invalid's chamber. He then understood the reason why both father and son were well dressed.

For a moment the contrast between the squalor of the other rooms, as he had seen them that morning, and the luxury of this chamber, was so great that Godefroid was dazzled, though habituated for years to the luxury and elegance procured by wealth.

The walls of the room were hung with yellow silk, relieved by twisted fringes of a bright green, giving a gay and cheerful aspect to the chamber, the cold tiled floor of which was hidden by a moquette carpet with a white ground strewn with flowers. The windows, draped by handsome curtains lined with white silk, were like conservatories, so full were they of plants in flower. The blinds were lowered, which prevented this luxury, so rare in that quarter of the town, from being seen from the street. The woodwork was painted in white enamel, touched up, here and there, by a few gold lines.

At the door was a heavy portiere, embroidered by hand with fantastic foliage on a yellow ground, so thick that all sounds from without were stifled. This magnificent curtain was made by the sick woman herself, who could work, when she had the use of her hands, like a fairy.

At the farther end of the room, and opposite to the door, was the fireplace, with a green velvet mantel-shelf, on which a few extremely elegant ornaments, the last relics of the opulence of two families, were arranged. These consisted of a curious clock, in the shape of an elephant supporting on its back a porcelain tower which was filled with the choicest flowers; two candelabra in the same style, and several precious Chinese treasures. The fender, andirons, tongs, and shovel were all of the handsomest description.

The largest of the flower-stands was placed in the middle of the room, and above it hung a porcelain chandelier designed with wreaths of flowers.

The bed on which the old man's daughter lay was one of those beautiful white and gold carved bedsteads such as were made in the Louis XV. period. By the sick woman's pillow was a very pretty marquetry table, on which were the various articles necessary to this bedridden life. Against the wall was a bracket lamp with two branches, either of which could be moved forward or back by a mere touch of the hand. A small table, adapted to the use of the invalid, extended in front of her. The bed, covered with a beautiful counterpane, and draped with curtains held back by cords, was heaped with books, a work-basket, and articles of embroidery, beneath which Godefroid

would scarcely have distinguished the sick woman herself had it not been for the light of the bracket lamps.

There was nothing of her to be seen but a face of extreme whiteness, browned around the eyes by suffering, in which shone eyes of fire, its principal adornment being a magnificent mass of black hair, the numerous heavy curls of which, carefully arranged, showed that the dressing of those beautiful locks occupied a good part of the invalid's morning. This supposition was further strengthened by the portable mirror which lay on the bed.

No modern arrangement for comfort was lacking. Even a few knick-knacks, which amused poor Vanda, proved that the father's love was almost fanatical.

The old man rose from an elegant Louis XV. sofa in white and cold, covered with tapestry, and advanced to Godefroid, who would certainly not have recognized him elsewhere; for that cold, stern face now wore the gay expression peculiar to old men of the world, who retain the manners and apparent frivolity of the nobility about a court. His wadded violet gown was in keeping with this luxury, and he took snuff from a gold box studded with diamonds.

"Here, my dear daughter," said Monsieur Bernard, taking Godefroid by the hand, "is the neighbor of whom I told you."

He signed to his grandson to draw up one of two armchairs, similar in style to the sofa, which stood beside the fireplace.

"Monsieur's name is Godefroid, and he is full of friendly kindness for us."

Vanda made a motion with her head in answer to Godefroid's low bow; by the very way in which her neck bent and then recovered itself, Godefroid saw that the whole physical life of the invalid was in her head. The thin arms and flaccid hands lay on the fine, white linen of the sheets, like things not connected with the body, which, indeed, seemed to fill no place at all in the bed. The articles necessary for a sick person were on shelves standing behind the bedstead, and were concealed by a drawn curtain.

"You are the first person, monsieur,—except my doctors, who are not men to me,—whom I have seen for six years; therefore you cannot doubt the interest you have excited in my mind, since my father told me this morning that you were to pay me a visit—interest! no, it was an unconquerable curiosity, like that of our mother Eve. My father, who is so good to me, and my son, whom I love so much, do certainly suffice to fill the desert of a soul which is almost without a body; but after all, that soul is still a woman's; I feel it in the childish joy the thought of your visit has brought me. You will do me the pleasure to take a cup of tea with us, I hope?"

“Monsieur has promised to pass the evening here,” said the old man, with the air of a millionnaire receiving a guest.

Auguste, sitting on a tapestried chair at a marquetry table with brass trimmings, was reading a book by the light of the candelabra on the chimney piece.

“Auguste, my dear,” said his mother, “tell Jean to serve tea in an hour. Would you believe it monsieur,” she added, “that for six years I have been waited upon wholly by my father and son, and now, I really think, I could bear no other attendance. If they were to fail me I should die. My father will not even allow Jean, a poor Norman who has served us for thirty years, to come into my room.”

“I should think not!” said the old man, quickly; “monsieur knows him; he chops wood and brings it in, and cooks; he wears dirty aprons, and would soon spoil all this elegance in which you take such pleasure—this room is really the whole of life to my poor daughter, monsieur.”

“Ah! madame, your father is quite right.”

“But why?” she said; “if Jean did any damage to my room my father would restore it.”

“Yes, my child; but remember you could not leave it; you don’t know what Parisian tradesmen are; they would take three months to renovate your room. Let Jean take care of it? no, indeed! how can you think of it? Auguste and I take such precautions that we allow no dust, and so avoid all sweeping.”

“It is a matter of health, not economy,” said Godefroid; “your father is right.”

“I am not complaining,” said Vanda, in a caressing voice.

That voice was a concert of delightful sounds. Soul, motion, life itself were concentrated in the glance and in the voice of this woman; for Vanda had succeeded by study, for which time was certainly not lacking to her, in conquering the difficulty produced by the loss of her teeth.

“I have much to make me happy in the midst of my sufferings, monsieur,” she said; “and certainly ample means are a great help in bearing trouble. If we had been poor I should have died eighteen years ago, but I still live. Oh, yes, I have many enjoyments, and they are all the greater because they are perpetually won from death. I am afraid you will think me quite garrulous,” she added, smiling.

“Madame, I should like to listen to you forever,” replied Godefroid; “I have never heard a voice that was comparable to yours; it is music; Rubini is not more enchanting.”

“Don’t speak of Rubini or the opera,” said the old man, sadly. “That is a pleasure that, rich as I am, I cannot give to my daughter. She was once a great musician, and the opera was her greatest pleasure.”

“Forgive me,” said Godefroid.

“You will soon get accustomed to us,” said the old man.

“Yes, and this is the process,” said the sick woman, laughing; “when they’ve cried ‘puss, puss, puss,’ often enough you’ll learn the puss-in-the-corner of our conversations.”

Godefroid gave a rapid glance at Monsieur Bernard, who, seeing the tears in the eyes of his new neighbor, seemed to be making him a sign not to undo the results of the self-command he and his grandson had practised for so many years.

This sublime and perpetual imposture, proved by the complete illusion of the sick woman, produced on Godefroid’s mind the impression of an Alpine precipice down which two chamois hunters picked their way. The magnificent gold snuff-box enriched with diamonds with which the old man carelessly toyed as he sat by his daughter’s bedside was like the stroke of genius which in the work of a great man elicits a cry of admiration. Godefroid looked at that snuff-box, wondering it had not been sold or found its way to the mont-de-piete.

“This evening, Monsieur Godefroid, my daughter received the announcement of your visit with such excitement that all the curious symptoms of her malady which have troubled us very much for the last twelve days have entirely disappeared. You can fancy how grateful I am to you.”

“And I, too,” said the invalid in her caressing tones, drooping her head with a motion full of coquetry. “Monsieur is to me a deputy from the world. Since I was twenty years old, monsieur, I have not seen a salon, or a party, or a ball. And I must tell you that I love dancing, and adore the theatre, especially the opera. I imagine everything by thought! I read a great deal; and then my father, who goes into society, tells me about social events.”

Godefroid made an involuntary movement as if to kneel at the old man’s feet.

“Yes, when he goes to the opera, and he often goes, he describes to me the singing and tells me about the dresses of the ladies. Oh! I would I were cured for the sake of my father, who lives solely for me as I live by him and for him, and then for my son, to whom I would fain be a real mother. Ah! monsieur, what blessed beings my old father and my good son are! I should also like to recover so as to hear Lablache, Rubini, Tamburini, Grisi, and ‘I Puritani.’ But

—”

“Come, come, my child, be calm! If we talk music we are lost!” said the old man, smiling.

That smile, which rejuvenated his face, was evidently a perpetual deception to the sick woman.

“Yes, yes, I’ll be good,” said Vanda, with a petulant little air; “but when will you give me an accordion?”

The portable instrument then called by that name had just been invented. It could, if desired, be placed at the edge of a bedstead, and only needed the pressure of a foot to give out the sounds of an organ. This instrument, in its highest development, was equal to a piano; but the cost of it was three hundred francs. Vanda, who read the newspapers and reviews, knew of the existence of the instrument, and had wished for one for the last two months.

“Yes, madame, you shall have one,” said Godefroid, after exchanging a look with the old man. “A friend of mine who is just starting for Algiers has a fine instrument and I will borrow it of him. Before buying, you had better try one. It is possible that the powerful, vibrating tones may be too much for you.”

“Can I have it to-morrow?” she said, with the wilfulness of a creole.

“To-morrow?” said Monsieur Bernard, “that is soon; besides, to-morrow is Sunday.”

“Ah—” she exclaimed, looking at Godefroid, who fancied he could see a soul hovering in the air as he admired the ubiquity of Vanda’s glances.

Until then, Godefroid had never known the power of voice and eyes when the whole of life is put into them. The glance was no longer a glance, a look, it was a flame, or rather, a divine incandescence, a radiance, communicating life and mind,—it was thought made visible. The voice, with its thousand intonations, took the place of motions, gestures, attitudes. The variations of the complexion, changing color like the famous chameleon, made the illusion, perhaps we should say the mirage, complete. That suffering head lying on the white pillow edged with laces was a whole person in itself.

Never in his life had Godefroid seen so wonderful a sight; he could scarcely control his emotions. Another wonder, for all was wondrous in this scene, so full of horror and yet of poesy, was that in those who saw it soul alone existed. This atmosphere, filled with mental emotions only, had a celestial influence. Those present felt their bodies as little as the sick woman felt hers. They were all mind. As Godefroid contemplated that frail fragment of woman he forgot the surrounding elegancies of the room, and fancied himself beneath the open heavens. It was not until half an hour had passed that

he came back to his sense of things about him; he then noticed a fine picture, which the invalid asked him to examine, saying it was by Gericault.

“Gericault,” she told him, “came from Rouen; his family were under certain obligations to my father, who was president of the court, and he showed his gratitude by painting that portrait of me when I was a girl of sixteen.”

“It is a beautiful picture,” said Godefroid; “and quite unknown to those who are in search of the rare works of that master.”

“To me it is merely an object of affection,” replied Vanda; “I live in my heart only,—and it is a beautiful life,” she added, casting a look at her father in which she seemed to put her very soul. “Ah! monsieur, if you only knew what my father really is! Who would believe that the stern and lofty magistrate to whom the Emperor was under such obligations that he gave him that snuff-box, and on whom Charles X. bestowed as a reward that Sevres tea-set which you see behind you, who would suppose that that rigid supporter of power and law, that learned jurist, should have within his heart of rock the heart of a mother, too? Oh! papa, papa! kiss me, kiss me! come!”

The old man rose, leaned over the bed and kissed the broad poetic forehead of his daughter, whose passionate excitements did not always take the turn of this tempest of affection. Then he walked about the room; his slippers, embroidered by his daughter, making no noise.

“What are your occupations?” said Vanda to Godefroid, after a pause.

“Madame, I am employed by pious persons to help the unfortunate.”

“Ah! what a noble mission, monsieur!” she said. “Do you know the thought of devoting myself to that very work has often come to me? but ah! what ideas do not come to me?” she added, with a motion of her head. “Suffering is like a torch which lights up life. If I were ever to recover health —”

“You should amuse yourself, my child,” said her father.

“Oh yes!” she said; “I have the desire, but should I then have the faculty? My son will be, I hope a magistrate, worthy of his two grandfathers, and he will leave me. What should I do then? If God restores me to life I will dedicate that life to Him—oh! after giving you all you need of it,” she cried, looking tenderly at her father and son. “There are moments, my dear father, when the ideas of Monsieur de Maistre work within me powerfully, and I fancy that I am expiating something.”

“See what it is to read too much!” said the old man, evidently troubled.

“That brave Polish general, my great grandfather, took part, though very

innocently, in the partition of Poland."

"Well, well! now it is Poland!" said Monsieur Bernard.

"How can I help it, papa? my sufferings are infernal; they give me a horror of life, they disgust me with myself. Well, I ask you, have I done anything to deserve them? Such diseases are not a mere derangement of health, they are caused by a perverted organization and—"

"Sing that national air your poor mother used to sing; Monsieur Godefroid wants to hear it; I have told him about your voice," said the old man, endeavoring to distract her mind from the current of such thoughts.

Vanda began, in a low and tender voice, to sing a Polish song which held Godefroid dumb with admiration and also with sadness. This melody, which greatly resembles the long drawn out melancholy airs of Brittany, is one of those poems which vibrate in the heart long after the ear has heard them. As he listened, Godefroid looked at Vanda, but he could not endure the ecstatic glance of that fragment of a woman, partially insane, and his eyes wandered to two cords which hung one on each side of the canopy of the bed.

"Ah ha!" laughed Vanda, noticing his look, "do you want to know what those cords are for?"

"Vanda!" said her father, hastily, "calm yourself, my daughter. See! here comes tea. That, monsieur," he continued, turning to Godefroid, "is rather a costly affair. My daughter cannot rise, and therefore it is difficult to change her sheets. Those cords are fastened to pulleys; by slipping a square of leather beneath her and drawing it up by the four corners with these pulleys, we are able to make her bed without fatigue to her or to ourselves."

"They swing me!" cried Vanda, gaily.

Happily, Auguste now came in with a teapot, which he placed on a table, together with the Sevres tea-set; then he brought cakes and sandwiches and cream. This sight diverted his mother's mind from the nervous crisis which seemed to threaten her.

"See, Vanda, here is Nathan's new novel. If you wake in the night you will have something to read."

"Oh! delightful! 'La Perle de Dol;' it must be a love-story,—Auguste, I have something to tell you! I'm to have an accordion!"

Auguste looked up suddenly with a strange glance at his grandfather.

"See how he loves his mother!" cried Vanda. "Come and kiss me, my kitten. No, it is not your grandfather you are to thank, but monsieur, who is good enough to lend me one. I am to have it to-morrow. How are they made,

monsieur?”

Godefroid, at a sign from the old man, explained an accordion at length, while sipping the tea which Auguste brought him and which was in truth, exquisite.

About half-past ten o’clock he retired, weary of beholding the desperate struggle of the son and father, admiring their heroism, and the daily, hourly patience with which they played their double parts, each equally exhausting.

“Well,” said Monsieur Bernard, who followed him home, “you now see, monsieur, the life I live. I am like a thief, on the watch all the time. A word, a gesture might kill my daughter; a mere gewgaw less than she is accustomed to seeing about her would reveal all to that mind that can penetrate everything.”

“Monsieur,” replied Godefroid, “on Monday next Halpersohn shall pronounce upon your daughter. He has returned. I myself doubt the possibility of any science being able to revive that body.”

“Oh! I don’t expect that,” cried the father; “all I ask is that her life be made supportable. I felt sure, monsieur, of your sympathy, and I see that you have indeed comprehended everything—Ah! there’s the attack coming on!” he exclaimed, as the sound of a cry came through the partition; “she went beyond her strength.”

Pressing Godefroid’s hand, the old man hurriedly returned to his own rooms.

At eight o’clock the next morning Godefroid knocked at the door of the celebrated Polish doctor. He was shown by a footman to the first floor of a little house Godefroid had been examining while the porter was seeking and informing the footman.

Happily, Godefroid’s early arrival saved him the annoyance of being kept waiting. He was, he supposed, the first comer. From a very plain and simple antechamber he passed into a large study, where he saw an old man in a dressing-gown smoking a long pipe. The dressing-gown, of black bombazine, shiny with use, dated from the period of the Polish emigration.

“What can I do for you?” said the Jewish doctor, “for I see you are not ill.” And he fixed on his visitor a look which had the inquisitive, piercing expression of the eyes of a Polish Jew, eyes which seem to have ears of their own.

Halpersohn was, to Godefroid’s great astonishment, a man of fifty-six years of age, with small bow-legs, and a broad, powerful chest and shoulders. There was something oriental about the man, and his face in its youth must have been very handsome. The nose was Hebraic, long and curved like a

Damascus blade. The forehead, truly Polish, broad and noble, but creased like a bit of crumpled paper, resembled that given by the old Italian masters to Saint Joseph. The eyes, of a sea-green, and circled, like those of parrots, with a gray and wrinkled membrane, expressed slyness and avarice in an eminent degree. The mouth, gashed into the face like a wound, added to the already sinister expression of the countenance all the sarcasm of distrust.

That pale, thin face, for Halpersohn's whole person was remarkably thin, surmounted by ill-kept gray hair, ended in a long and very thick, black beard, slightly touched with white, which hid fully half the face, so that nothing was really seen of it but the forehead, nose, eyes, cheek-bones, and mouth.

This friend of the revolutionist Lelewel wore a black velvet cap which came to a point on the brow, and took a high light worthy of the touch of Rembrandt.

The question of the physician (who has since become so celebrated, as much for his genius as for his avarice) caused some surprise in Godefroid's mind, and he said to himself:—

"I wonder if he takes me for a thief."

The answer to this mental question was on the doctor's table and fireplace. Godefroid thought he was the first to arrive; he was really the last. Preceding clients had left large offerings behind them; among them Godefroid noticed piles of twenty and forty-franc gold pieces and two notes of a thousand francs each. Could that be the product of one morning? He doubted it, and suspected the Pole of intentional trickery. Perhaps the grasping but infallible doctor took this method of showing his clients, mostly rich persons, that gold must be dropped into his pouch, and not buttons.

Moses Halpersohn was, undoubtedly, largely paid, for he cured, and he cured precisely those desperate diseases which science declares incurable. It is not known in Europe that the Slav races possess many secrets. They have a collection of sovereign remedies, the fruits of their connection with the Chinese, Persians, Cossacks, Turks, and Tartars. Certain peasant women in Poland, who pass for witches, cure insanity radically with the juice of herbs. A vast body of observation, not codified, exists in Poland on the effects of certain plants, and certain barks of trees reduced to powder, which are transmitted from father to son, and family to family, producing cures that are almost miraculous.

Halpersohn, who for five or six years was called a quack on account of his powders and herb medicines, had the innate science of a great physician. Not only had he studied much and observed much, but he had travelled in every part of Germany, Russia, Persia, and Turkey, whence he had gathered many a

traditionary secret; and as he knew chemistry he became a living volume of those wonderful recipes scattered among the wise women, or, as the French call them, the bonnes femmes, of every land to which his feet had gone, following his father, a perambulating trader.

It must not be thought that the scene in “The Talisman” where Saladin cures the King of England is a fiction. Halpersohn possesses a silk purse which he steeps in water till the liquid is slightly colored; certain fevers yield immediately when the patient has drunk the prescribed dose of it. The virtue of plants, according to his man, is infinite, and the cure of the worst diseases possible. Nevertheless, he, like the rest of his professional brethren, stops short at certain incomprehensibilities. Halpersohn approved of the invention of homoeopathy, more on account of its therapeutics than for its medical system; he was corresponding at this time with Hedenius of Dresden, Chelius of Heidelburg, and the celebrated German doctors, all the while holding his hand closed, though it was full of discoveries. He wished for no pupils.

The frame was in keeping with this embodiment of a Rembrandt picture. The study, hung with a paper imitating green velvet, was shabbily furnished with a green divan, the cover of which was threadbare. A worn-out green carpet was on the floor. A large armchair of black leather, intended for clients, stood before the window, which was draped with green curtains. A desk chair of Roman shape, made in mahogany and covered with green morocco, was the doctor’s own seat.

Between the fireplace and the long table at which he wrote, a common iron safe stood against the wall, and on it was a clock of Viennese granite, surmounted by a group in bronze representing Cupid playing with Death, the present of a great German sculptor whom Halpersohn had doubtless cured. On the mantel-shelf was a vase between two candlesticks, and no other ornament. On either side of the divan were corner-buffets of ebony, holding plates and dishes, and Godefroid also noticed upon them two silver bowls, glass decanters, and napkins.

This simplicity, which amounted almost to bareness struck Godefroid, whose quick eye took it all in as he recovered his self-possession.

“Monsieur, I am, as you say, perfectly well myself; I have come on behalf of a woman to whom you were asked to pay a visit some time ago. She lives on the boulevard du Mont-Parnasse.”

“Ah! yes; the lady who has sent her son here several times. Well, monsieur, let her come here to me.”

“Come here!” repeated Godefroid, indignantly. “Monsieur, she cannot even be moved from her bed to a chair; they lift her with pulleys.”

“You are not a physician, I suppose?” said the Jewish doctor, with a singular grimace which made his face appear more wicked than it really was.

“If the Baron de Nucingen sent word that he was ill and wanted you to visit him, would you reply, ‘Let him come here to me’?”

“I should go to him,” said the Jew, coldly, spitting into a Dutch pot made of mahogany and full of sand.

“You would go,” said Godefroid, gently, “because the Baron de Nucingen has two millions a year, and—”

“The rest has nothing to do with the matter; I should go.”

“Well, monsieur, you must go to the lady on the boulevard du Mont-Parnasse for the same reason. Without possessing the fortune of the Baron du Nucingen, I am here to tell you that you may yourself put a price upon this lady’s cure, or upon your attendance if you fail; I am ready to pay it in advance. But perhaps, monsieur, as you are a Polish refugee and, I believe, a communist, the lady’s parentage may induce you to make a sacrifice to Poland. She is the granddaughter of Colonel Tarlowski, the friend of Poniatowski.”

“Monsieur, you came here to ask me to cure that lady, and not to give me advice. In Poland I am a Pole; in Paris I am Parisian. Every man does good in his own way; the greed with which I am credited is not without its motive. The wealth I am amassing has its destination; it is a sacred one. I sell health; the rich can afford to purchase it, and I make them pay. The poor have their doctors. If I had not a purpose in view I would not practise medicine. I live soberly and I spend my time in rushing hither and thither; my natural inclination is to be lazy, and I used to be a gambler. Draw your conclusions, young man. You are too young still to judge old men.”

Godefroid was silent.

“From what you say,” went on the doctor, “the lady in question is the granddaughter of that imbecile who had no courage but that of fighting, and who took part in delivering over his country to Catherine II?”

“Yes, monsieur.”

“Well, be at her house Monday next at three o’clock,” said Halpersohn, taking out a note-book in which he wrote a few words. “You will give me then two hundred francs; and if I promise to cure the patient you will give me three thousand. I am told,” he added, “that the lady has shrunk to almost nothing.”

“Monsieur, if the most celebrated doctors in Paris are to be believed, it is a neurotic case of so extraordinary a nature that they denied the possibility of its symptoms until they saw them.”

“Ah! yes, I remember now what the young lad told me. To-morrow, monsieur.”

Godefroid withdrew, after bowing to the man who seemed to him as odd as he was extraordinary. Nothing about him indicated a physician, not even the study, in which the most notable object was the iron safe, made by Huret or Fichet.

Godefroid had just time to get to the passage Vivienne before the shops closed for the day, and there he bought a superb accordion, which he ordered sent at once to Monsieur Bernard, giving the address.

XVI. A LESSON IN CHARITY

From the doctor’s house Godefroid made his way to the rue Chanoinesse, passing along the quai des Augustins, where he hoped to find one of the shops of the commission-publishers open. He was fortunate enough to do so, and had a long talk with a young clerk on books of jurisprudence.

When he reached the rue Chanoinesse, he found Madame de la Chanterie and her friends just returning from high mass; in reply to the look she gave him Godefroid made her a significant sign with his head.

“Isn’t our dear father Alain here to-day?” he said.

“No,” she replied, “not this Sunday; you will not see him till a week from to-day—unless you go where he gave you rendezvous.”

“Madame,” said Godefroid in a low voice, “you know he doesn’t intimidate me as these gentlemen do; I wanted to make my report to him—”

“And I?”

“Oh you! I can tell you all; and I have a great deal to tell. For my first essay I have found a most extraordinary misfortune; a cruel mingling of pauperism and the need for luxuries; also scenes of a sublimity which surpasses all the inventions of our great novelists.”

“Nature, especially moral nature, is always greater than art, just as God is greater than his creatures. But come,” said madame de la Chanterie, “tell me the particulars of your first trip into worlds unknown to you.”

Monsieur Nicolas and Monsieur Joseph (for the Abbe de Veze had remained a few moments in Notre-Dame) left Madame de la Chanterie alone with Godefroid, who, being still under the influence of the emotions he had gone through the night before, related even the smallest details of his story

with the force and ardor and action of a first experience of such a spectacle and its attendant persons and things. His narrative had a great success; for the calm and gentle Madame de la Chanterie wept, accustomed as she was to sound the depths of sorrows.

“You did quite right to send the accordion,” she said.

“I would like to do a great deal more,” said Godefroid; “inasmuch as this family is the first that has shown me the pleasures of charity, I should like to obtain for that splendid old man a full return for his great book. I don’t know if you have confidence enough in my capacity to give me the means of undertaking such an affair. From information I have obtained, it will cost nine thousand francs to manufacture an edition of fifteen hundred copies, and their selling value will be twenty-four thousand francs. But as we should have to pay off the three thousand and some hundred francs due to Barbet, it would be an outlay of twelve thousand francs to risk. Oh! madame, if you only knew what bitter regrets I feel for having dissipated my little fortune! The spirit of charity has appeared to me; it fills me with the ardor of an initiate. I wish to renounce the world, I long to embrace the life of these gentlemen and be worthy of you. Many a time during the last two days I have blessed the chance that brought me to this house. I will obey you in all things until you judge me fit to be one of yours.”

“Then,” said Madame de la Chanterie, after reflecting for a time, “listen to me, for I have important things to tell. You have been allured, my child, by the poesy of misfortune. Yes, misfortunes are often poetical; for, as I think, poesy is a certain effect on the sensibilities, and sorrows affect the sensibilities,—life is so intense in grief!”

“Yes, madame, I know that I have been gripped by the demon of curiosity. But how could I help it? I have not yet acquired the habit of penetrating to the heart of these great misfortunes; I cannot go among them with the calmness of your three soldiers of the Lord. But, let me tell you, it is since I have recovered from that first excitement that I have chiefly longed to devote myself to your work.”

“Listen to me, my dear angel!” said Madame de la Chanterie, who uttered the last three words with a gentle solemnity that touched the young man strangely. “We have forbidden ourselves absolutely,—and we do not trifle with words here; what is forbidden no longer occupies our minds,—we have forbidden ourselves to enter into any speculations. To print a book for sale on the chance of profit is a matter of business, and any operation of that kind would throw us into all the entanglements of commerce. Certainly your scheme seems to me feasible,—even necessary. But do you think it is the first that has offered itself? A score of times, a hundred times, we have come upon

just such ways of saving families, or firms. What would have become of us if we had taken part in such affairs? We should be merchants. No, our true partnership with misfortune is not to take the work into our own hands, but to help the unfortunate to work themselves. Before long you will meet with misfortunes more bitter still than these. Would you then do the same thing,—that is, take the burdens of those unfortunates wholly on yourself? You would soon be overwhelmed. Reflect, too, my dear child, that for the last year even the Messieurs Mongenod find our accounts too heavy for them. Half your time would be taken up in merely keeping our books. We have to-day over two thousand debtors in Paris, and we must keep the record of their debts. Not that we ask for payment; we simply wait. We calculate that if half the money we expect is lost, the other half comes back to us, sometimes doubled. Now, suppose your Monsieur Bernard dies, the twelve thousand francs are probably lost. But if you cure his daughter, if his grandson is put in the way of succeeding, if he comes, some day, a magistrate, then, when the family is prosperous, they will remember the debt, and return the money of the poor with usury. Do you know that more than one family whom we have rescued from poverty, and put upon their feet on the road to prosperity by loans of money without interest, have laid aside a portion for the poor, and have returned to us the money loaned doubled, and sometimes tripled? Those are our only speculations. Moreover, reflect that what is now interesting you so deeply (and you ought to be interested in it), namely, the sale of this lawyer's book, depends on the value of the work. Have you read it? Besides, though the book may be an excellent one, how many excellent books remain one, two, three years without obtaining the success they deserve. Alas! how many crowns of fame are laid upon a grave! I know that publishers have ways of negotiating and realizing profits which make their business the most hazardous to do with, and the most difficult to unravel, of all the trades of Paris. Monsieur Joseph can tell you of these difficulties, inherent in the making of books. Thus, you see, we are sensible; we have experience of all miseries, also of all trades, for we have studied Paris for many years. The Mongenods have helped us in this; they have been like torches to us. It is through them that we know how the Bank of France holds the publishing business under constant suspicion; although it is one of the most profitable trades, it is unsound. As for the four thousand francs necessary to save this noble family from the horrors of penury,—for that poor boy and his grandfather must be fed and clothed properly,—I will give them to you at once. There are sufferings, miseries, wants, which we immediately relieve, without hesitation, without even asking whom we help; religion, honor, character, are all indifferent to us; but when it comes to lending money to the poor to assist them in any active form of industry or commerce, then we require guarantees, with all the sternness of usurers. So you must, my dear child, limit your enthusiasm for this unhappy

family to finding for the father an honest publisher. This concerns Monsieur Joseph. He knows lawyers, professors, authors of works on jurisprudence; I will speak to him, and next Sunday he will be sure to have some good advice to give you. Don't feel uneasy; some way will certainly be found to solve the difficulty. Perhaps it would be well, however, if Monsieur Joseph were to read the lawyer's book. If you think it can be done, you had better obtain the manuscript."

Godefroid was amazed at the good sense of this woman, whom he had thought controlled by the spirit of charity only. He took her beautiful hand and kissed it, saying:—

"You are good sense and judgment too!"

"We must be all that in our business," she replied, with the soft gaiety of a real saint.

There was a moment's silence, and then Godefroid exclaimed:—

"Two thousand debtors! did you say that, madame? two thousand accounts to keep! why, it is immense!"

"Oh! I meant two thousand accounts which rely for liquidation, as I told you, on the delicacy and good feeling of our debtors; but there are fully three thousand other families whom we help who make us no other return than thanks to God. This is why we feel, as I told you, the necessity of keeping books ourselves. If you prove to us your discretion and capacity you shall be, if you like, our accountant. We keep a day-book, a ledger, a book of current accounts, and a bank-book. We have many notes, but we lose a great deal of time in looking them up. Ah! here are the gentlemen," she added.

Godefroid, grave and thoughtful, took little part in the general conversation which now followed. He was stunned by the communication Madame de la Chanterie had just made to him, in a tone which implied that she wished to reward his ardor.

"Five thousand families assisted!" he kept repeating to himself. "If they were to cost what I am to spend on Monsieur Bernard, we must have millions scattered through Paris."

This thought was the last expiring movement of the spirit of the world, which had slowly and insensibly become extinguished in Godefroid. On reflection he saw that the united fortunes of Madame de la Chanterie, Messieurs Alain, Nicolas, Joseph, and that of Judge Popinot, the gifts obtained through the Abbe de Veze, and the assistance lent by the firm of Mongenod must produce a large capital; and that this capital, increased during the last dozen years by grateful returns from those assisted, must have grown like a

snowball, inasmuch as the charitable stewards of it spent so little on themselves. Little by little he began to see clearly into this vast work, and his desire to co-operate in it increased.

He was preparing at nine o'clock to return on foot to the boulevard du Mont-Parnasse; but Madame de la Chanterie, fearing the solitude of that neighborhood at a late hour, made him take a cab. When he reached the house Godefroid heard the sound of an instrument, though the shutters were so carefully closed that not a ray of light issued through them. As soon as he reached the landing, Auguste, who was probably on the watch for him, opened the door of Monsieur Bernard's apartment and said:—

"Mamma would like to see you, and my grandfather offers you a cup of tea."

When Godefroid entered, the patient seemed to him transfigured by the pleasure she felt in making music; her face was radiant, her eyes were sparkling like diamonds.

"I ought to have waited to let you hear the first sounds," she said to Godefroid, "but I flung myself upon the little organ as a starving man flings himself on food. You have a soul that comprehends me, and I know you will forgive."

Vanda made a sign to her son, who placed himself in such a way as to press with his foot the pedal which filled the bellows; and then the invalid, whose fingers had for the time recovered all their strength and agility, raising her eyes to heaven like Saint Cecilia, played the "Prayer of Moses in Egypt," which her son had bought for her and which she had learned by heart in a few hours. Godefroid recognized in her playing the same quality as in Chopin's. The soul was satisfied by divine sounds of which the dominant note was that of tender melancholy. Monsieur Bernard had received Godefroid with a look that was long a stranger to his eyes. If tears were not forever dried at their source, withered by such scorching sorrows, that look would have been tearful.

The old man sat playing with his snuff-box and looking at his daughter in silent ecstasy.

"To-morrow, madame," said Godefroid, when the music ceased; "to-morrow your fate will be decided. I bring you good news. The celebrated Halpersohn is coming to see you at three o'clock in the afternoon. He has promised," added Godefroid in a low voice to Monsieur Bernard, "to tell me the exact truth."

The old man rose, and grasping Godefroid's hand, drew him to a corner of the room beside the fireplace.

“Ah! what a night I shall pass! a definitive decision! My daughter cured or doomed!”

“Courage!” said Godefroid; “after tea come out with me.”

“My child, my child, don’t play any more,” said the old man; “you will bring on an attack; such a strain upon your strength must end in reaction.”

He made Auguste take away the instrument and offered a cup of tea to his daughter with the coaxing manner of a nurse quieting the petulance of a child.

“What is the doctor like?” she asked, her mind already distracted by the prospect of seeing a new person.

Vanda, like all prisoners, was full of eager curiosity. When the physical phenomena of her malady ceased, they seemed to betake themselves to the moral nature; she conceived the strangest fancies, the most violent caprices; she insisted on seeing Rossini, and wept when her father, whom she believed to be all powerful, refused to fetch him.

Godefroid now gave her a minute account of the Jewish doctor and his study; of which she knew nothing, for Monsieur Bernard had cautioned Auguste not to tell his mother of his visits to Halpersohn, so much had he feared to rouse hopes in her mind which might not be realized.

Vanda hung upon Godefroid’s words like one fascinated; and she fell into a sort of ecstasy in her passionate desire to see this strange Polish doctor.

“Poland has produced many singular, mysterious beings,” said Monsieur Bernard. “To-day, for instance, besides this extraordinary doctor, we have Hoene Wronski, the enlightened mathematician, the poet Mickievicz, Towianksi the mystic, and Chopin, whose talent is supernatural. Great national convulsions always produce various species of dwarfed giants.”

“Oh! dear papa; what a man you are! If you would only write down what we hear you say merely to amuse me you would make your reputation. Fancy, monsieur, my dear old father invents wonderful stories when I have no novels to read; he often puts me to sleep in that way. His voice lulls me, and he quiets my mind with his wit. Who can ever reward him? Auguste, my child, you ought for my sake, to kiss the print of your grandfather’s footsteps.”

The young man raised his beautiful moist eyes to his mother, and the look he gave her, full of a long-repressed compassion, was a poem. Godefroid rose, took the lad’s hand, and pressed it.

“God has placed two angels beside you, madame,” he said.

“Yes, I know that. And for that reason I often reproach myself for harassing them. Come, my dear Auguste, and kiss your mother. He is a child,

monsieur, of whom all mothers might be proud; pure as gold, frank and honest, a soul without sin—but too passionate a soul, alas! like that of his poor mother. Perhaps God has fastened me in this bed to keep me from the follies of women—who have too much heart," she added, smiling.

Godefroid replied with a smile and a bow.

"Adieu, monsieur; and thank your friend for the instrument; tell him it makes the happiness of a poor cripple."

"Monsieur," said Godefroid, when they were alone in the latter's room. "I think I may assure you that you shall not be robbed by that trio of bloodsuckers. I have the necessary sum to free your book, but you must first show me your written agreement with them. And after that, in order to do still more for you, you must let me have your work to read,—not I myself, of course, I have not knowledge enough to judge of it, but a former magistrate, a lawyer of eminence and of perfect integrity, who will undertake, according to what he thinks of the book, to find you an honorable publisher with whom you can make an equitable agreement. This, however, I will not insist upon. Meantime here are five hundred francs," he added, giving a bank-note to the stupefied old man, "to meet your present needs. I do not ask for any receipt; you will be under obligations to your own conscience only, and that conscience is not to move you until you have recovered a sufficient competence,—I undertake to pay Halpersohn."

"Who are you, then?" asked the old man, dropping into a chair.

"I myself," replied Godefroid, "am nothing; but I serve powerful persons to whom your distress is known, and who feel an interest in you. Ask me nothing more about them."

"But what induces them to do this?" said the old man.

"Religion."

"Religion! is it possible?"

"Yes, the catholic, apostolic, and Roman religion."

"Ah! do you belong to the order of Jesus?"

"No, monsieur," replied Godefroid. "Do not feel uneasy; these persons have no designs upon you, except that of helping you to restore your family to prosperity."

"Can philanthropy be anything but vanity?"

"Ah! monsieur," said Godefroid, hastily; "do not insult the virtue defined by Saint Paul, sacred, catholic Love!"

Monsieur Bernard, hearing this answer, began to stride up and down with long steps.

“I accept,” he said suddenly, “and I have but one way of thanking you, and that is to offer you my work. The notes and citations are unnecessary to the magistrate you speak of; and I have still two months’ work to do in arranging them for the press. To-morrow I will give you the five volumes,” he added, offering Godefroid his hand.

“Can I have made a conversion?” thought Godefroid, struck by the new expression which he saw on the old man’s face.

XVII. HALPERSOHN

The next afternoon at three o’clock a cabriolet stopped before the house, and Godefroid saw Halpersohn getting out of it, wrapped in a monstrous bear-skin pelisse. The cold had strengthened during the night, the thermometer marking ten degrees of it.

The Jewish doctor examined with curious eyes, though furtively, the room in which his client of the day before received him, and Godefroid detected the suspicious thought which darted from his eyes like the sharp point of a dagger. This rapid conception of distrust gave Godefroid a cold chill, for he thought within himself that such a man would be pitiless in all relations; it is so natural to suppose that genius is connected with goodness that a strong sensation of disgust took possession of him.

“Monsieur,” he said, “I see that the simplicity of my room makes you uneasy; therefore you need not be surprised at my method of proceeding. Here are your two hundred francs, and here, too, are three notes of a thousand francs each,” he added, drawing from his pocket-book the money Madame de la Chanterie had given him to release Monsieur Bernard’s book; but in case you still feel doubtful of my solvency I offer you as reference Messrs. Mongenod, bankers, rue de la Victoire.”

“I know them,” said Halpersohn, putting the ten gold pieces into his pocket.

“He’ll inquire of them,” thought Godefroid.

“Where is the patient?” asked the doctor, rising like a man who knows the value of time.

“This way, monsieur,” said Godefroid, preceding him to show the way.

The Jew examined with a shrewd and suspicious eye the places he passed through, giving them the keen, rapid glance of a spy; he saw all the horrors of poverty through the door of the room in which the grandfather and the grandson lived; for, unfortunately, Monsieur Bernard had gone in to change his clothes before entering his daughter’s room, and in his haste to open the outer door to the doctor, he had forgotten to close that of his lair.

He bowed in a stately manner to Halpersohn, and opened the door of his daughter’s room cautiously.

“Vanda, my child, here is the doctor,” he said.

Then he stood aside to allow Halpersohn, who kept on his bear-skin pelisse, to pass him. The Jew was evidently surprised at the luxury of the room, which in this quarter, and more especially in this house, was an anomaly; but his surprise only lasted for an instant, for he had seen among German and Russian Jews many instances of the same contrast between apparent misery and hoarded wealth. As he walked from the door to the bed he kept his eye on the patient, and the moment he reached her he said in Polish:—

“You are a Pole?”

“No, I am not; my mother was.”

“Whom did your grandfather, Colonel Tarlowski, marry?”

“A Pole.”

“From what province?”

“A Soboleska, of Pinsk.”

“Very good; monsieur is your father?”

“Yes.”

“Monsieur,” he said, turning to the old man; “your wife—”

“Is dead;” said Monsieur Bernard.

“Was she very fair?” said Halpersohn, showing a slight impatience at being interrupted.

“Here is her portrait,” said Monsieur Bernard, unhooking from the wall a handsome frame which enclosed several fine miniatures.

Halpersohn felt the head and handled the hair of the patient while he looked at the portrait of Vanda Tarlowska, born Countess Sobolewska.

“Relate to me the symptoms of your illness,” he said, placing himself on the sofa and looking fixedly at Vanda during the twenty minutes the history, given alternately by the father and daughter, lasted.

“How old are you?”

“Thirty-eight.”

“Ah! good!” he cried, rising; “I will answer for the cure. Mind, I do not say that I can restore the use of her legs; but cured of the disease, that she shall be. Only, I must have her in a private hospital under my own eye.”

“But, monsieur, my daughter cannot be moved!”

“I will answer for her,” said Halpersohn, curtly; “but I will answer for her only on those conditions. She will have to exchange her present malady for another still more terrible, which may last a year, six months at the very least. You may come and see her at the hospital, since you are her father.”

“Are you certain of curing her?” said Monsieur Bernard.

“Certain,” repeated the Jew. “Madame has in her body an element, a vitiated fluid, the national disease, and it must be eliminated. You must bring her to me at Challot, rue Basse-Saint-Pierre, private hospital of Doctor Halpersohn.”

“How can I?”

“On a stretcher, just as all sick persons are carried to hospitals.”

“But the removal will kill her!”

“No.”

As he said the word in a curt tone he was already at the door; Godefroid rejoined him on the staircase. The Jew, who was stifling with heat, said in his ear:

“Besides the three thousand francs, the cost will be fifteen francs a day, payable three months in advance.”

“Very good, monsieur. And,” continued Godefroid, putting one foot on the step of the cabriolet, into which the doctor had sprung, “you say you will answer for the cure?”

“I will answer for it,” said the Jewish doctor. “Are you in love with the lady?”

“No,” replied Godefroid.

“You must not repeat what I am about to say to you; I only say it to prove to you that I am certain of a cure. If you are guilty of the slightest indiscretion you will kill her.”

Godefroid replied with a gesture only.

“For the last seventeen years she has been a victim to the element in her system called plica polonica, which has produced all these ravages. I have seen more terrible cases than this. Now, I alone in the present day know how to bring this disease to a crisis, and force it outward so as to obtain a chance to cure it—for it cannot always be cured. You see, monsieur, that I am disinterested. If this lady were of great importance, a Baronne de Nucingen, or any other wife or daughter of a modern Croesus, this cure would bring me one hundred—two hundred thousand francs; in short, anything I chose to ask for it. However, it is only a trifling loss to me.”

“About conveying her?”

“Bah! she’ll seem to be dying, but she won’t die. There’s life enough in her to last a hundred years, when the disease is out of her system. Come, Jacques, drive on! quick,—rue de Monsieur! quick!” he said to his man.

Godefroid was left on the boulevard gazing stupidly after the cabriolet.

“Who is that queer man in a bearskin?” asked Madame Vauthier, whom nothing escaped; “is it true, what the man in the cabriolet told me, that he is one of the greatest doctors in Paris?”

“What is that to you?”

“Oh! nothing at all,” she replied, making a face.

“You made a great mistake in not putting yourself on my side,” said Godefroid, returning slowly to the house; “you would have made more out of me than you will ever get from Barbet and Metivier; from whom, mark my words, you’ll get nothing.”

“I am not for them particularly,” said Madame Vauthier, shrugging her shoulders; “Monsieur Barbet is my proprietor, that’s all!”

It required two days’ persuasion to induce Monsieur Bernard to separate from his daughter and take her to Chaillot. Godefroid and the old man made the trip walking on each side of the litter, canopied with blue and white striped linen, in which was the dear patient, partly bound to a mattress, so much did her father dread the possible convulsions of a nervous attack. They started at three o’clock and reached their destination at five just as evening was coming on. Godefroid paid the sum demanded for three months’ board in advance, being careful to obtain a receipt for the money. When he went back to pay the bearers of the litter, he was followed by Monsieur Bernard, who took from beneath the mattress a bulky package carefully sealed up, and gave it to Godefroid.

“One of these men will fetch you a cab,” said the old man; “for you cannot carry these four volumes under your arm. That is my book; give it to your

reader; he may keep it the whole of the coming week. I shall stay at least that time in this quarter; for I cannot leave my daughter in such total abandonment. I trust my grandson; he can take care of our rooms; especially if you keep an eye on him. If I were what I once was I would ask you the name of my critic, the former magistrate you spoke of; there were but few of them whom I did not know."

"Oh, there's no mystery about it!" said Godefroid, interrupting Monsieur Bernard. "Now that you have shown this entire confidence in trusting me with your book, I will tell you that your censor is the former president, Lecamus de Tresnes."

"Oh, yes!—of the Royal Court of Paris. Take him the book; he is one of the noblest characters of the present day. He and the late Popinot, a judge of the Lower Court, were both worthy of the days of the old Parliaments. All my fears, if I had any, are dissipated. Where does he live? I should like to go and thank him for the trouble he is taking."

"You will find him in the rue Chanoinesse, under the name of Monsieur Joseph. I am going there now. Where is that agreement you made with your swindlers?"

"Auguste will give it to you," said the old man, re-entering the courtyard of the hospital.

A cab was now brought up by the porter, and Godefroid jumped into it,—promising the coachman a good pourboire if he would get him to the rue Chanoinesse in good time, for he wanted to dine there.

Half an hour after Vanda's departure, three men dressed in black, whom Madame Vauthier let into the house by the door on the rue Notre-Dame des Champs, filed up the staircase, accompanied by their female Judas, and knocked gently at the door of Monsieur Bernard's lodging. As it happened to be a Thursday, Auguste was at home. He opened the door, and the three men glided in like shadows.

"What do you want, messieurs?" asked the lad.

"These are the rooms of Monsieur Bernard,—that is, Monsieur le baron,—are they not?"

"Yes; but what do you want?"

"You know very well, young man, what we want! We are informed that your grandfather has left this house with a covered litter. That's not surprising; he had the right to do so. But I am the sheriff, and I have come to seize everything he has left. On Monday he received a summons to pay three thousand francs, with interest and costs, to Monsieur Metivier, under pain of

arrest for debt duly notified to him, and like an old stager who is up to the tricks of his own trade, he has walked off just in time. However, if we can't catch him, his furniture hasn't taken wings. You see we know all about it, young man."

"Here are the stamped papers your grandpapa didn't choose to take," said Madame Vauthier, thrusting three writs into Auguste's hand.

"Remain here, madame," said the sheriff; "we shall make you legal guardian of the property. The law gives you forty sous a day, and that's not to be sneezed at."

"Ha! now I shall see the inside of that fine bedroom!" cried the Vauthier.

"You shall not go into my mother's room!" said the young lad, in a threatening voice, springing between the door and the three men in black.

At a sign from the sheriff, two of the men seized Auguste.

"No resistance, young man; you are not master here," said the sheriff. "We shall draw up the proces-verbal, and you will sleep in jail."

Hearing that dreadful word, Auguste burst into tears.

"Ah, how fortunate," he cried, "that mamma has gone! It would have killed her."

A conference now took place between the sheriff, the other men, and Vauthier, by which Auguste discovered, although they spoke in a low voice, that his grandfather's manuscripts were what they chiefly wanted. On that, he opened the door of his mother's bedroom.

"Go in," he said, "but take care to do no injury. You will be paid to-morrow morning."

Then he went off weeping into the lair, seized his grandfather's notes and stuck them into the stove, in which, as he knew very well, there was not a spark of fire.

The thing was done so rapidly that the sheriff—a sly, keen fellow, worthy of his clients Barbet and Metivier—found the lad weeping in his chair when he entered the wretched room, after assuring himself that the manuscripts were not in the antechamber.

Though it is not permissible to seize books or manuscripts for debt, the bill of sale which Monsieur Bernard had made of his work justified this proceeding. It was, however, easy to oppose various delays to this seizure, and Monsieur Bernard, had he been there, would not have failed to do so. For that reason the whole affair had been conducted slyly. Madame Vauthier had not attempted to give the writs to Monsieur Bernard; she meant to have flung them

into the room on entering behind the sheriff’s men, so to give the appearance of their being in the old man’s possession.

The proces-verbal of the seizure took an hour to write down; the sheriff omitted nothing, and declared that the value of the property seized was sufficient to pay the debt. As soon as he and his men had departed, Auguste took the writs and rushed to the hospital to find his grandfather. The sheriff having told him that Madame Vauthier was now responsible, under heavy penalties, for the safety of the property, he could leave the house without fear of robbery.

The idea of his grandfather being dragged to prison for debt drove the poor lad, if not exactly crazy, at any rate as crazy as youth becomes under one of those dangerous and fatal excitements in which all powers ferment at once, and lead as often to evil actions as to heroic deeds. When he reached the rue Basse-Saint-Pierre, the porter told him that he did not know what had become of the father of the lady who had arrived that afternoon; the orders of Monsieur Halpersohn were to admit no one to see her for the next eight days, under pain of putting her life in danger.

This answer brought Auguste’s exasperation to a crisis. He returned to the boulevard du Mont-Parnasse, turning over in his mind the wildest and most extravagant plans of action. He reached home at half-past eight o’clock, half famished, and so exhausted with hunger and distress that he listened to Madame Vauthier when she asked him to share her supper, which happened to be a mutton stew with potatoes. The poor lad fell half dead upon a chair in that atrocious woman’s room.

Persuaded by the wheedling and honeyed words of the old vulture, he replied to a few questions about Godefroid which she adroitly put to him, letting her discover that it was really her other lodger who was to pay his grandfather’s debts the next day, and also that it was to him they owed the improvement in their condition during the past week. The widow listened to these confidences with a dubious air, plying Auguste with several glasses of wine meantime.

About ten o’clock a cab stopped before the house, and Madame Vauthier looking out exclaimed:—

“Oh! it is Monsieur Godefroid.”

Auguste at once took the key of his apartment and went up to meet the protector of his family; but he found Godefroid’s face and manner so changed that he hesitated to address him until, generous lad that he was, the thought of his grandfather’s danger came over him and gave him courage.

XVIII. WHO MONSIEUR BERNARD WAS

The cause of this change and of the sternness in Godefroid's face was an event which had just taken place in the rue Chanoinesse. When the initiate arrived there he found Madame de la Chanterie and her friends assembled in the salon awaiting dinner; and he instantly took Monsieur Joseph apart to give him the four volumes on "The Spirit of Modern Laws." Monsieur Joseph took the voluminous manuscript to his room and returned for dinner; then, after sharing in the conversation for part of the evening, he went back to his room, intending to begin the reading of the book that night.

Godefroid was much astonished when Manon came to him soon after Monsieur Joseph's retirement and asked if he would at once go up and speak to that gentleman. He went up, conducted by Manon, and was unable to pay any heed to the apartment (which he had never before entered) so amazed was he by the agitated look and manner of a man who was usually calm and placid.

"Do you know," asked Monsieur Joseph, once more a judge, "who the author of this work is?"

"He is Monsieur Bernard," said Godefroid; "I know him only under that name. I did not open the package."

"True," said Monsieur Joseph, as if to himself, "I broke the seals myself. You have not tried to find out anything about his antecedents?"

"No, I only know that he made a love-match with the daughter of General Tarlowski; that the daughter is named after the mother, Vanda; the grandson is called Auguste; and I have seen a portrait of Monsieur Bernard in the red robes of a president of the Royal Courts."

"Here, read that," said Monsieur Joseph, pointing to the titlepage of the manuscript, written probably in Auguste's handwriting:—

ON THESPIRIT OF MODERN LAWS

By M. Bernard-Jean-Baptiste Macloud, Baron Bourlac.

Formerly attorney-general to the Royal Court of Rouen. Grand officer of the Legion of honor.

"Ha! the slayer of Madame's daughter! of the Chevalier du Vissard! the man who condemned her to twenty years' imprisonment!" said Godefroid, in a feeble voice. His legs gave way under him, and he dropped into a chair. "What a beginning!" he muttered.

"This matter, my dear Godefroid," resumed Monsieur Joseph, "concerns us

all. You have done your part; leave the rest to us. I beg you to have no more to do with it; go and fetch the things you have left behind you. Don’t say a word of all this. Practise absolute discretion. Tell the Baron de Bourlac to address himself to me. By that time we shall have decided how to act under the circumstances.”

Godefroid left him, took a cab, and went back as fast as he could to the boulevard du Mont-Parnasse, filled with horror as he remembered that indictment signed with Bourlac’s name, the bloody drama ending on the scaffold, and Madame de la Chanterie’s imprisonment at Bicetre. He understood now the abandonment in which this former attorney-general, another Fourquier-Tinville in the public mind, was ending his days, and the true reasons for the concealment of his name.

“May Monsieur Joseph avenge her terribly!” he thought. As he uttered the wish in his own mind, he saw Auguste.

“What do you want of me?” he asked.

“My good friend, such a dreadful misfortune has overtaken us that I am almost mad. Wretches have come here and seized all my mother’s property, and they are going to put my grandfather in prison. But it is not on account of those misfortunes that I come to implore you,” said the lad, with Roman pride; “it is to ask you to do me a service such as people do to those who are condemned to die.”

“Go on, what is it?” said Godefroid.

“They came here to seize my grandfather’s manuscript; and as I think he gave you the book itself I want you to take the notes, for Madame Vauthier will not let me carry anything out of the house. Put them with the volumes and __”

“Yes, yes,” said Godefroid, “go and get them at once.”

While the lad went back to his own rooms, returning immediately, Godefroid reflected that the poor child was guilty of no crime, and that he ought not to put despair into that young heart by speaking of his grandfather and of the punishment for his savage political actions that had overtaken his old age. He therefore took the little package with a good grace.

“What is your mother’s name?” he asked.

“My mother is the Baronne de Mergi; my father was the son of the president of the Royal Court at Rouen.”

“Ah!” said Godefroid; “then your grandfather married his daughter to the son of the famous president Mergi.”

“Yes, monsieur.”

“Now, my little friend, leave me,” said Godefroid. He went with young Mergi to the landing, and called to Madame Vauthier.

“Mere Vauthier,” he said, “you can let my rooms. I shall not come back any more.”

He gathered his things together, went downstairs, and got into the cab.

“Have you given anything to that gentleman?” said the Vauthier to Auguste.

“Yes,” said the young man.

“You’re a pretty fellow! that’s the agent of your grandfather’s enemies. He managed this whole business, and the proof is that, now that the trick is played, he goes off and isn’t coming back any more. He has just told me I can let his lodgings.”

Auguste flew to the boulevard and ran after the cab shouting so loudly that he finally stopped it.

“What do you want?” asked Godefroid.

“My grandfather’s manuscripts.”

“Tell them he can get them from Monsieur Joseph.”

The youth thought the words were intended as a cruel joke. He sat down in the snow as he saw the cab disappearing rapidly. Presently he sprang up with momentary vigor, returned to his room and went to bed worn out with fatigue and distress.

The next morning, when the poor boy woke alone in that apartment so lately occupied by his mother and grandfather, the painful emotions of his cruel position filled his mind. The solitude of his home, where up to this time every moment had had its duty and its occupation, seemed so hard to bear that he went down to Madame Vauthier to ask if she had received any news of his grandfather. The woman answered sneeringly that he knew very well, or he might know, where to find his grandfather; the reason why he had not come in, she said, was because he had gone to live at the chateau de Clichy. This malicious speech, from the woman who had coaxed and wheedled him the evening before, put the lad into another frenzy, and he rushed to the hospital once more, desperate with the idea that his grandfather was in prison.

Baron Bourlac had wandered all night round the hospital, where he was refused entrance, and round the private residence of Dr. Halpersohn from whom he wished, naturally, to obtain an explanation of such treatment. The doctor did not get home till two in the morning. At half-past one the old man

was at his door; on being told he was absent, he turned and walked about the grand alley of the Champs Elysees until half-past two. When he again went to the house, the porter told him that Monsieur Halpersohn had returned, gone to bed, was asleep, and could not be disturbed.

The poor father, in despair, wandered along the quay and under the frost-laden trees of the Cours-la-reine, waiting for daylight. At nine o'clock in the morning he again presented himself at the doctor's house, demanding to know the reason why his daughter was thus virtually imprisoned.

"Monsieur," replied the doctor, to whose presence he was admitted, "yesterday I told you I would answer for your daughter's recovery; but to-day I am responsible for her life and you will readily understand that I must be the sovereign master in such a case. Yesterday your daughter took a medicine intended to bring out her disease, the plica polonica; until that horrible disease shows itself on the surface you cannot see her. I will not allow excitement or any mistake of management to carry off my patient and your daughter. If you positively insist on seeing her, I shall call a consultation of three physicians, so as to relieve myself of responsibility, for the patient may die of it."

The old man, worn out with fatigue, dropped on a chair; but he rose immediately, saying:—

"Forgive me, monsieur. I have spent the night waiting for you in dreadful distress of mind. You cannot know to what degree I love my daughter; I have nursed her for fifteen years hovering between life and death, and this week of waiting is torture to me."

The baron left the room staggering like a drunken man. The doctor followed and supported him by the arm until he saw him safely down the staircase.

An hour later Auguste de Mergi entered the doctor's room. On questioning the porter at the hospital the unhappy lad heard that his grandfather had been refused an entrance and had gone away to find Monsieur Halpersohn, who could probably give information about him. As Auguste entered the doctor's study Halpersohn was breakfasting on a cup of chocolate and a glass of water. He did not disturb himself at the young man's entrance, but went on sopping his bread in the chocolate; for he never ate anything for breakfast but a small roll cut into four strips with careful precision.

"Well, young man," he said, glancing at Vanda's son, "so you have come, too, to find out about your mother?"

"Yes, monsieur;" replied Auguste de Mergi.

Auguste was standing near the table on which lay several bank-notes

among a pile of gold louis. Under the circumstances in which the unhappy boy was placed the temptation was stronger than his principles, solid as they were. He saw a means of saving his grandfather and the fruits of almost a lifetime of toil. He yielded. The fascination was rapid as thought; and it was justified to the child's mind by the idea of self-devotion. "I destroy myself, but I save my mother and my grandfather," he thought. Under the strain put upon his reason by this criminal temptation he acquired, like madmen, a singular and momentary dexterity.

Halpersohn, an experienced observer, had divined, retrospectively, the life of the old man and that of the lad and of the mother. He felt or perceived the truth; the Baronne de Mergi's remarks had helped to unveil it to him; and the result was a feeling of benevolent pity for his new clients. As for respect or admiration, he was incapable of those emotions.

"Well, my dear boy," he replied familiarly, "I am taking care of your mother, and I shall return her to you young and handsome and perfectly well in health. Here is one of those rare cases in which physicians take an interest. Besides, through her mother, she is a compatriot of mine. You and your grandfather must for two weeks have the courage to keep away from Madame —?"

"The Baronne de Mergi."

"Ah! if she is a baroness, you must be a baron," remarked Halpersohn.

At that instant the theft was accomplished. While the doctor was looking at his sopped bread heavy with chocolate, Auguste snatched four notes and put them into his pocket, as if he were merely putting his hand there by accident.

"Yes, monsieur," he replied, "I am a baron, and so is my grandfather; he was attorney-general under the Restoration."

"You blush, young man; there's no need to blush for being a poor baron; that's common enough."

"Who told you, monsieur, that we are poor?"

"Your grandfather told me he had spent the night in the Champs Elysees; and though I know no palace with half so fine a ceiling as that of the skies at two o'clock this morning, I assure you it was pretty cold in the palace where your grandfather passed the night. We don't select the 'Star' inn from choice."

"Has my grandfather been here this morning?" said Auguste, seizing the opportunity to get away. "I thank you, monsieur, and I will call again, if you will permit me, to ask for news of my mother."

As soon as he was in the street the young baron took a cab to go as rapidly as he could to the sheriff's office, where he paid his grandfather's debt. The

sheriff gave him the papers and a receipted bill of costs, and told one of his clerks to accompany the young man home and relieve the legal guardian of her functions.

“As Messieurs Barbet and Metivier live in your quarter,” he said, “I will tell my young man to carry the money there and obtain the bill of sale of the books and return it to you.”

Auguste who did not understand either the terms or the formalities of the law, did exactly as he was told. He received seven hundred francs change from the four thousand francs he had stolen, and went away with the clerk. He got back into the cab in a condition of semi-stupor; for, the result being now obtained, remorse began; he saw himself dishonored, cursed by his grandfather, whose inflexible nature was well-known to him, and he felt that his mother would surely die if she knew him guilty. All nature changed for him. He was hot; he did not see the snow; the houses looked like spectres flitting past him.

By the time he reached home the young baron had decided on his course which was certainly that of an honest man. He went to his mother’s room, took the gold snuff-box set with diamonds given to his grandfather by the Emperor, and wrapped it in a parcel with the seven hundred francs and the following letter, which required several rough copies before it was satisfactory. Then he directed the whole to Doctor Halpersohn:—

Monsieur,—The fruits of twenty years of my grandfather’s toil were about to be seized by usurers, who even threatened to put him in prison. Three thousand three hundred francs were enough to save him. Seeing all that money on your table, I could not resist the happiness of freeing my grandfather from his danger. I borrowed, without your consent, four thousand francs of you; but as three thousand three hundred were all that was necessary, I send the other seven hundred in money, together with a gold snuff-box set with diamonds, given to my grandfather by the Emperor, the value of which will probably cover the whole sum.

In case you do not believe in the honor of him who will forever regard you as a benefactor, I pray you to keep silence about an act which would be quite unjustifiable under other circumstances; for by so doing you will save my grandfather’s life, just as you are saving my mother’s life; and I shall be forever

Your devoted servant, Auguste de Mergi.

About half-past two o’clock in the afternoon, Auguste, who went himself as far as the Champs Elysees, sent the package from there by a street messenger to Doctor Halpersohn’s house; then he walked slowly homeward by

the pont de Jena, the Invalides, and the boulevards, relying on Halpersohn's generosity.

The Polish doctor had meanwhile discovered the theft, and he instantly changed his opinion of his clients. He now thought the old man had come to rob him, and being unable to succeed, had sent the boy. He doubted the rank they had claimed, and went straight to the police-office where he lodged a complaint, requesting that the lad might be arrested at once.

The prudence with which the law proceeds seldom allows it to move as rapidly as complainants desire; but about three o'clock of that day a commissary of police, accompanied by agents who kept watch outside the house, was questioning Madame Vauthier as to her lodgers, and the widow was increasing, without being aware of it, the suspicions of the policeman.

When Nepomucene saw the police agents stationed outside the house, he thought they had come to arrest the old man, and as he was fond of Monsieur Auguste, he rushed to meet Monsieur Bernard, whom he now saw on his way home in the avenue de l'Observatoire.

"Hide yourself, monsieur!" he cried, "the police have come to arrest you. The sheriff was here yesterday and seized everything. Madame Vauthier didn't give you the stamped papers, and she says you'll be in Clichy to-night or to-morrow. There, don't you see those policemen?"

Baron Bourlac immediately resolved to go straight to Barbet. The former publisher lived in the rue Saint-Catherine d'Enfer, and it took him a quarter of an hour to reach the house.

"Ah! I suppose you have come to get that bill of sale," said Barbet, replying to the salutation of his victim. "Here it is."

And, to Baron Bourlac's great astonishment, he held out the document, which the baron took, saying,—

"I do not understand."

"Didn't you pay me?" said the usurer.

"Are you paid?"

"Yes, your grandson took the money to the sheriff this morning."

"Then it is true you made a seizure at my house yesterday?"

"Haven't you been home for two days?" asked Barbet. "But an old magistrate ought to know what a notification of arrest means."

Hearing that remark, the baron bowed coldly to Barbet and returned home, thinking that the policemen whom Nepomucene had pointed out must have

come for the two impecunious authors on the upper floor. He walked slowly, lost in vague apprehensions; for, in spite of the explanation he gave himself, Nepomucene's words came back, and seemed to him more and more obscure and inexplicable. Was it possible that Godefroid had betrayed him?

XIX. VENGEANCE

The old man walked mechanically along the rue Notre-Dame des Champs, and entered the house by the little door, which he noticed was open. There he came suddenly upon Nepomucene.

"Oh, monsieur, come quick! they are taking Monsieur Auguste to prison! They arrested him on the boulevard; it was he they were looking for; they have examined him."

The old man bounded like a tiger, rushed through the house with the speed of an arrow, and reached the door on the boulevard in time to see his grandson getting into a hackney-coach with three men.

"Auguste," he said, "what does all this mean?"

The poor boy burst into tears and fainted away.

"Monsieur, I am the Baron Bourlac, formerly attorney-general," he said to the commissary of police, whose scarf now attracted his eye. "I entreat you to explain all this."

"Monsieur, if you are Baron Bourlac, two words will be enough. I have just examined this young man, and he admits—"

"What?"

"The robbery of four thousand francs from Doctor Halpersohn!"

"Is that true, Auguste?"

"Grandpapa, I sent him as security your diamond snuff-box. I did it to save you from going to prison."

"Unhappy boy! what have you done? The diamonds are false!" cried the baron; "I sold the real ones three years ago!"

The commissary of police and his agents looked at each other. That look, full of many things, was intercepted by Baron Bourlac, and seemed to blast him.

"Monsieur," he said to the commissary, "you need not feel uneasy; I shall

go myself to the prefect; but you are witness to the fact that I kept my grandson ignorant of the loss of the diamonds. Do your duty; but I implore you, in the name of humanity, put that lad in a cell by himself; I will go to the prison. To which one are you taking him?”

“Are you really Baron Bourlac?” asked the commissary.

“Oh, monsieur!”

“The fact is that the municipal judge and I doubted if it were possible that you and your grandson could be guilty. We thought, and the doctor, too, that some scoundrels had taken your name.”

He took the baron aside, and added:—

“Did you go to see Doctor Halpersohn this morning?”

“Yes, monsieur.”

“Your grandson went there half an hour after you.”

“Did he? I knew nothing of that. I have just returned home, and have not seen my grandson for two days.”

“The writs he has shown me and the examination explain everything,” said the commissary of police. “I see the cause of the crime. Monsieur, I ought by rights to arrest you as accomplice to your grandson; for your answers confirm the allegations in Doctor Halpersohn’s complaint. But these papers, which I here return to you,” holding out to the old man a bundle of papers, “do prove you to be Baron Bourlac. Nevertheless, you must hold yourself ready to appear before Monsieur Marest, the judge of the Municipal Court who has cognizance of the case. As for your grandson, I will speak to the procureur du roi, and we will take all the care of him that is due to the grandson of a former judge,—the victim, no doubt, of youthful error. But the complaint has been made, the delinquent admits his guilt, I have drawn up the proces-verbal, and served the warrant of arrest; I cannot go back on that. As for the incarceration, I will put him in the Conciergerie.”

“Thank you, monsieur,” said the unhappy Bourlac.

With the words he fell rigid on the snow, and rolled into one of the hollows round the trees of the boulevard.

The commissary of police called for help, and Nepomucene ran up, together with Madame Vauthier. The old man was carried to his room, and Madame Vauthier begged the commissary to call on his way in the rue d’Enfer, and send Doctor Berton as soon as possible.

“What is the matter with my grandfather?” asked poor Auguste.

“He is out of his head. You see what it is to steal,” said the Vauthier.

Auguste made a movement as though he would dash out his brains. The two agents caught him.

“Come, young man, be calm,” said the commissary of police; “you have done wrong, but it may not be irreparable—”

“Monsieur, will you tell that woman my grandfather hasn’t had anything to ear for twenty-four hours?”

“Oh! the poor things!” exclaimed the commissary under his breath.

He stopped the coach, which had started, and said a word in the ear of one of his agents, who got out and ran to Madame Vauthier, and then returned.

When Dr. Berton arrived he declared that Monsieur Bernard (he knew him only under that name) had a high fever of great intensity. After hearing from Madame Vauthier all the events which had brought on this crisis (related after the manner of such women) he informed Monsieur Alain the next morning, at Saint-Jacques du Haut-Pas, of the present state of affairs; on which Monsieur Alain despatched a note in pencil by a street messenger to Monsieur Joseph.

Godefroid had given Monsieur Joseph, on his return from the boulevard du Mont-Parnasse the night before, the notes confided to him by Auguste, and Monsieur Joseph had spent part of the night in reading the first volume of Baron Bourlac’s work.

The next morning after breakfast Madame de la Chanterie told her neophyte that he should, if his resolution still held good, be put to work at once. Godefroid, initiated by her into the financial secrets of the society, worked steadily seven or eight hours a day for several months, under the inspection of Frederic Mongenod, who came every Sunday to examine the work, and from whom he received much praise and encouragement.

“You are,” he said, when the books were all in order and the accounts audited, “a precious acquisition to the saints among whom you live. Two or three hours a day will now suffice to keep the current accounts in order, and you will have plenty of surplus time to help the work in other ways, if you still have the vocation you showed for it six months ago.”

It was now July, 1838. During the time that had elapsed since his opening attempt on the boulevard du Mont-Parnasse, Godefroid, eager to prove himself worthy of his friends, had refrained from asking any question relating to Baron Bourlac. Not hearing a single word on the subject, and finding no record of any transaction concerning it in the accounts, he regarded the silence maintained about the enemy of Madame de la Chanterie and his family either as a test to which he himself was subjected, or as a proof that the friends of the

noble woman had in some way avenged her.

Some two months after he had left Madame Vauthier's lodgings he turned his steps when out for a walk towards the boulevard du Mont-Parnasse, where he came upon the widow herself, and asked for news of the Bernard family.

"Just as if I knew what has become of them!" she replied. "Two days after your departure—for it was you, slyboots, who got the affair away from my proprietor—some men came here and rid me of that arrogant old fool and all his belongings. Bless me! if they didn't move everything out within twenty-four hours; and as close as wax they were too; not a word would they say to me. I think he went off to Algiers with his rogue of a grandson; for Nepomucene, who had a fancy for that young thief, being no better himself, couldn't find him at the Conciergerie. I dare say Nepomucene knows where he is, though, for he, too, has run away. That's what it is to bring up foundlings! that's how they reward you for all your trouble, leaving you in the lurch! I haven't yet been able to get a man in his place, and as the quarter is looking up the house is full, and I am worked to death."

Godefroid would never have known more about Baron Bourlac and his family if it had not been for one of those chance encounters such as often happens in Paris.

In the month of September he was walking down the great avenue of the Champs Elysees, thinking, as he passed the end of the rue Marbeuf, of Dr. Halpersohn.

"I might," thought he, "go and see him and ask if he ever cured Bourlac's daughter. What a voice, what immense talents she had!—and she wanted to consecrate herself to God!"

When he reached the Rond-point Godefroid crossed it quickly, on account of the many carriages that were passing rapidly. As he reached the other side in haste he knocked against a young man with a lady on his arm.

"Take care!" said the young man; "are you blind?"

"Hey! is it you?" cried Godefroid, recognizing Auguste de Mergi.

Auguste was so well-dressed, and looked so dandified and handsome and so proud of giving his arm to a pretty woman, that if it had not been for the youth's voice and the memories that were just then in his own mind he might not have recognized him.

"Oh! it is our dear Monsieur Godefroid!" said the lady.

Hearing those words in the celestial notes of Vanda's enchanting voice, Godefroid stopped short on the spot where he stood.

“Cured!” he exclaimed.

“For the last ten days he has allowed me to walk out,” she replied.

“Who? Halpersohn?”

“Yes,” she said. “Why have you not been to see us? Perhaps it was well you didn’t;” she added; “my hair came off; this that you see is a wig; but the doctor assures me it will grow again. Oh! how many things we have to tell each other! Come and dine with us. Oh! your accordion! oh! monsieur,”—she put her handkerchief to her eyes.

“I shall keep it all my life,” she went on, “and my son will preserve it as a relic after me. My father has searched all Paris for you. And he is also in search of his unknown benefactors; he will grieve himself to death if you do not help him to discover them. Poor father! he is gnawed by a melancholy I cannot always get the better of.”

As much attracted by that exquisite voice, now rescued from the silence of the grave, as by a burning curiosity, Godefroid offered his arm to the hand held out to him by the Baronne de Mergi, who signed to her son to precede them, charging him with a commission which he seemed to understand.

“I shall not take you far,” she said; “we live in the Allee d’Antin, in a pretty little house built in the English fashion. We occupy it alone; each of us has a floor. Oh! we are so comfortable. My father thinks that you had a great deal to do with our good fortune.”

“I?”

“Yes; did you know that on a recommendation made by the minister of public instruction a chair of international law has been created for papa at the Sorbonne? He begins his first course next November. The great work on which he has been engaged for so long will be published this month by the firm of Cavalier and Co., who agree to share the profits with my father; they have already paid him on account thirty thousand francs. My father bought our house with that money. The minister of justice has awarded me a pension of twelve hundred francs as the daughter of a former judge; my father has his retiring pension of three thousand, and his professorship will give him five thousand more. We are so economical that we are almost rich. My dear Auguste will begin his law studies in two months; but he is already employed in the office of the attorney-general, and is earning twelve hundred francs a year. Ah! Monsieur Godefroid, promise me you will never speak of that unhappy affair of my poor Auguste. As for me, I bless him every day for his action, though his grandfather has not yet forgiven him. Yes, his mother blesses him, Halpersohn adores him, but my father is implacable!”

“What affair?” asked Godefroid.

“Ah! I recognize your generosity,” cried Vanda. “What a heart you have! Your mother must be proud of you.”

She stopped as if a pain had struck her heart.

“I swear to you that I know nothing of the affair of which you speak,” said Godefroid.

“It is possible that you really did not know it?” said Vanda. And she related naively, in terms of admiration for her son, the story of the loan that he had secured from the doctor.

“We may not speak of it before Baron Bourlac,” said Godefroid, “tell me now how your son got out of his trouble.”

“Well,” said Vanda, “I told you, I think, that he is now employed by the attorney-general, who shows him the greatest kindness. Auguste was only forty-eight hours in the Conciergerie, where he was put into the governor’s house. The good doctor, who did not receive a noble letter the boy wrote him till late at night, withdrew his complaint; and, through the influence of a former judge of the Royal Courts, whom my father has never been able to meet, the attorney-general was induced to annul the proceedings in the court. There is no trace left of the affair except in my heart and my son’s conscience, and alas! in his grandfather’s mind. From that day he has treated Auguste as almost a stranger. Only yesterday Halpersohn begged him to forgive the boy; but my father, who never before refused me anything—me, whom he loves so well!—replied: ‘You are the person robbed; you can, and you ought to forgive; but I am responsible for the thief. When I was attorney-general I never pardoned.’ ‘You’ll kill your daughter,’ said Halpersohn. My father made no reply and turned away.”

“But who helped you in all this?”

“A gentleman, whom we think is employed to do the queen’s benefits.”

“What is he like?”

“Well, he is of medium height; rather stout, but active; with a kindly, genial face. It was he who found my father ill of fever in the house where you knew us and had him brought to that in which we now live. And just fancy, as soon as my father recovered I was installed there too, in my very own room, just as if I had never left it. Halpersohn, whom the gentleman captivated, I am sure I don’t know how, then told me all the sufferings my father had endured. Ah, when I think of it! my father and my son often without bread to eat, and when with me pretending to be rich! even the diamonds in the snuff box sold! Oh, Monsieur Godefroid! those two beings are martyrs. And so, what can I say to

my father? Between him and my son I can take no part; I can only make return to them in kind by suffering with them, as they once suffered with me."

"And you say you think that gentleman came from the queen?"

"Oh! I am sure you know him, I see it in your face," cried Vanda, now at the door of the house.

She seized Godefroid by the hand with the vigor of a nervous woman and dragged him into a salon, the door of which stood open.

"Papa!" she cried, "here is Monsieur Godefroid! and I am certain he knows our benefactors."

Baron Bourlac, whom Godefroid now saw dressed in a manner suitable for a man of his rank and position, rose and came forward, holding out his hand to Godefroid, saying as he did so:—

"I was sure of it."

Godefroid made a gesture denying that he shared in this noble vengeance, but the former attorney-general gave him no chance to speak.

"Ah! monsieur," he said, continuing, "Providence could not be more powerful, love more ingenious, motherhood more clear-sighted than your friends have been for us. I bless the chance that has brought you here to-day; for Monsieur Joseph has disappeared forever; he has evaded all the traps I set to discover his true name and residence. Here, read his last letter. But perhaps you already know it."

Godefroid read as follows:—

Monsieur le Baron Bourlac,—The sums which we have spent for you, under the orders of a charitable lady, amount to fifteen thousand francs. Take note of this, so that you may return that sum either yourself, or through your descendants, whenever the prosperity of your family will admit of it,—for that money is the money of the poor. When you or your family are able to make this restitution, pay the sum you owe into the hands of Messrs. Mongenod and Company, bankers.

May God forgive you.

Five crosses formed the mysterious signature of this letter, which Godefroid returned to the baron.

"The five crosses are there," he said as if to himself.

"Ah! monsieur," said the old man; "you do know all; you were sent to me by that mysterious lady—tell me her name!"

"Her name!" exclaimed Godefroid; "her name! Unhappy man! you must

not ask it; never seek to find it out. Ah! madame," he cried, taking Madame de Mergi's hand; "tell your father, if he values his peace of mind, to remain in his ignorance and make no effort to discover the truth."

"No, tell it!" said Vanda.

"Well, then, she who saved your daughter," said Godefroid, looking at the old man, "who returns her to you young and beautiful and fresh and happy, who rescued her from her coffin, she who saved your grandson from disgrace, and has given you an old age of peace and honor—" He stopped short—"is a woman whom you sent innocent to prison for twenty years; to whom, as a magistrate, you did the foulest wrong; whose sanctity you insulted; whose beautiful daughter you tore from her arms and condemned to the cruellest of all deaths, for she died on the guillotine."

Godefroid, seeing that Vanda had fallen back half fainting on her chair, rushed into the corridor and from there into the street, running at full speed.

"If you want your pardon," said Baron Bourlac to his grandson, "follow that man and find out where he lives."

Auguste was off like an arrow.

The next morning at eight o'clock, Baron Bourlac knocked at the old yellow door in the rue Chanoinesse, and asked for Madame de la Chanterie. The portress showed him the portico. Happily it was the breakfast hour. Godefroid saw the baron, through one of the casements on the stairs, crossing the court-yard; he had just time to get down into the salon where the friends were all assembled and to cry out:—

"Baron Bourlac is here!"

Madame de la Chanterie, hearing the name, rose; supported by the Abbe de Veze she went to her room.

"You shall not come in, tool of Satan!" cried Manon, recognizing their former prosecutor and preventing his entrance through the door of the salon. "Have you come to kill Madame?"

"Manon, let the gentleman come in," said Monsieur Alain.

Manon sat down on a chair as if both her legs had given way at once.

"Monsieur," said the baron in an agitated voice, recognizing Monsieur Joseph and Godefroid, and bowing to Monsieur Nicolas, "mercy gives rights to those it benefits."

"You owe us nothing, monsieur;" said the good old Alain; "you owe everything to God."

“You are saints, and you have the calmness of saints;” said the former magistrate; “you will therefore listen to me. I know that the vast benefits I have received during the last eighteen months have come from the hand of a person whom I grievously injured in doing my duty. It was fifteen years before I was convinced of her innocence; and that case is the only one, gentlemen, for which I feel any remorse as to the exercise of my functions. Listen to me! I have but a short time to live, but I shall lose even that poor remnant of a life, still so important to my children whom Madame de la Chanterie has saved, unless she will also grant me her pardon. Yes, I will stay there on my knees on the pavement of Notre-Dame until she says to me that word. I, who cannot weep, whom the tortures of my child have dried like stubble, I shall find tears within me to move her—”

The door of Madame de la Chanterie’s room opened; the Abbe de Veze glided in like a shadow and said to Monsieur Joseph:—

“That voice is torturing Madame.”

“Ah! she is there!” exclaimed the baron.

He fell on his knees and burst into tears, crying out in a heart-rending voice: “In the name of Jesus dying on the cross, forgive, forgive me, for my daughter has suffered a thousand deaths!”

The old man fell forward on the floor so prone that the agitated spectators thought him dead. At that instant Madame de la Chanterie appeared like a spectre at the door of her room, against the frame of which she supported herself.

“In the name of Louis XVI. and Marie-Antoinette whom I see on their scaffold, in the name of Madame Elisabeth, in the name of my daughter and of yours, and for Jesus’ sake, I forgive you.”

Hearing those words the old man raised his head. “It is the vengeance of angels!” he said.

Monsieur Joseph and Monsieur Nicolas raised him and led him to the courtyard; Godefroid went to fetch a carriage, and when they put the old man into it Monsieur Nicolas said to him gravely:—

“Do not return here, monsieur; the power of God is infinite, but human nature has its limits.”

On that day Godefroid was admitted to the order of the Brotherhood of Consolation.

THE END

Z. MARCAS

I never saw anybody, not even among the most remarkable men of the day, whose appearance was so striking as this man’s; the study of his countenance at first gave me a feeling of great melancholy, and at last produced an almost painful impression.

There was a certain harmony between the man and his name. The Z. preceding Marcas, which was seen on the addresses of his letters, and which he never omitted from his signature, as the last letter of the alphabet, suggested some mysterious fatality.

MARCAS! say this two-syllabled name again and again; do you not feel as if it had some sinister meaning? Does it not seem to you that its owner must be doomed to martyrdom? Though foreign, savage, the name has a right to be handed down to posterity; it is well constructed, easily pronounced, and has the brevity that beseems a famous name. Is it not pleasant as well as odd? But does it not sound unfinished?

I will not take it upon myself to assert that names have no influence on the destiny of men. There is a certain secret and inexplicable concord or a visible discord between the events of a man’s life and his name which is truly surprising; often some remote but very real correlation is revealed. Our globe is round; everything is linked to everything else. Some day perhaps we shall revert to the occult sciences.

Do you not discern in that letter Z an adverse influence? Does it not prefigure the wayward and fantastic progress of a storm-tossed life? What wind blew on that letter, which, whatever language we find it in, begins scarcely fifty words? Marcas’ name was Zephirin; Saint Zephirin is highly venerated in Brittany, and Marcas was a Breton.

Study the name once more: Z Marcas! The man’s whole life lies in this fantastic juxtaposition of seven letters; seven! the most significant of all the cabalistic numbers. And he died at five-and-thirty, so his life extended over seven lustres.

Marcas! Does it not hint of some precious object that is broken with a fall, with or without a crash?

I had finished studying the law in Paris in 1836. I lived at that time in the Rue Corneille in a house where none but students came to lodge, one of those

large houses where there is a winding staircase quite at the back lighted below from the street, higher up by borrowed lights, and at the top by a skylight. There were forty furnished rooms—furnished as students' rooms are! What does youth demand more than was here supplied? A bed, a few chairs, a chest of drawers, a looking-glass, and a table. As soon as the sky is blue the student opens his window.

But in this street there are no fair neighbors to flirt with. In front is the Odeon, long since closed, presenting a wall that is beginning to go black, its tiny gallery windows and its vast expanse of slate roof. I was not rich enough to have a good room; I was not even rich enough to have a room to myself. Juste and I shared a double-bedded room on the fifth floor.

On our side of the landing there were but two rooms—ours and a smaller one, occupied by Z. Marcas, our neighbor. For six months Juste and I remained in perfect ignorance of the fact. The old woman who managed the house had indeed told us that the room was inhabited, but she had added that we should not be disturbed, that the occupant was exceedingly quiet. In fact, for those six months, we never met our fellow-lodger, and we never heard a sound in his room, in spite of the thinness of the partition that divided us—one of those walls of lath and plaster which are common in Paris houses.

Our room, a little over seven feet high, was hung with a vile cheap paper sprigged with blue. The floor was painted, and knew nothing of the polish given by the frotteur's brush. By our beds there was only a scrap of thin carpet. The chimney opened immediately to the roof, and smoked so abominably that we were obliged to provide a stove at our own expense. Our beds were mere painted wooden cribs like those in schools; on the chimney shelf there were but two brass candlesticks, with or without tallow candles in them, and our two pipes with some tobacco in a pouch or strewn abroad, also the little piles of cigar-ash left there by our visitors or ourselves.

A pair of calico curtains hung from the brass window rods, and on each side of the window was a small bookcase in cherry-wood, such as every one knows who has stared into the shop windows of the Quartier Latin, and in which we kept the few books necessary for our studies.

The ink in the inkstand was always in the state of lava congealed in the crater of a volcano. May not any inkstand nowadays become a Vesuvius? The pens, all twisted, served to clean the stems of our pipes; and, in opposition to all the laws of credit, paper was even scarcer than coin.

How can young men be expected to stay at home in such furnished lodgings? The students studied in the cafes, the theatre, the Luxembourg gardens, in grisettes'' rooms, even in the law schools—anywhere rather than in their horrible rooms—horrible for purposes of study, delightful as soon as they

were used for gossiping and smoking in. Put a cloth on the table, and the impromptu dinner sent in from the best eating-house in the neighborhood—places for four—two of them in petticoats—show a lithograph of this "Interior" to the veriest bigot, and she will be bound to smile.

We thought only of amusing ourselves. The reason for our dissipation lay in the most serious facts of the politics of the time. Juste and I could not see any room for us in the two professions our parents wished us to take up. There are a hundred doctors, a hundred lawyers, for one that is wanted. The crowd is choking these two paths which are supposed to lead to fortune, but which are merely two arenas; men kill each other there, fighting, not indeed with swords or fire-arms, but with intrigue and calumny, with tremendous toil, campaigns in the sphere of the intellect as murderous as those in Italy were to the soldiers of the Republic. In these days, when everything is an intellectual competition, a man must be able to sit forty-eight hours on end in his chair before a table, as a General could remain for two days on horseback and in his saddle.

The throng of aspirants has necessitated a division of the Faculty of Medicine into categories. There is the physician who writes and the physician who practises, the political physician, and the physician militant—four different ways of being a physician, four classes already filled up. As to the fifth class, that of physicians who sell remedies, there is such a competition that they fight each other with disgusting advertisements on the walls of Paris.

In all the law courts there are almost as many lawyers as there are cases. The pleader is thrown back on journalism, on politics, on literature. In fact, the State, besieged for the smallest appointments under the law, has ended by requiring that the applicants should have some little fortune. The pear-shaped head of the grocer's son is selected in preference to the square skull of a man of talent who has not a sou. Work as he will, with all his energy, a young man, starting from zero, may at the end of ten years find himself below the point he set out from. In these days, talent must have the good luck which secures success to the most incapable; nay, more, if it scorns the base compromises which insure advancement to crawling mediocrity, it will never get on.

If we thoroughly knew our time, we also knew ourselves, and we preferred the indolence of dreamers to aimless stir, easy-going pleasure to the useless toil which would have exhausted our courage and worn out the edge of our intelligence. We had analyzed social life while smoking, laughing, and loafing. But, though elaborated by such means as these, our reflections were none the less judicious and profound.

While we were fully conscious of the slavery to which youth is condemned, we were amazed at the brutal indifference of the authorities to everything connected with intellect, thought, and poetry. How often have Juste

and I exchanged glances when reading the papers as we studied political events, or the debates in the Chamber, and discussed the proceedings of a Court whose wilful ignorance could find no parallel but in the platitude of the courtiers, the mediocrity of the men forming the hedge round the newly-restored throne, all alike devoid of talent or breadth of view, of distinction or learning, of influence or dignity!

Could there be a higher tribute to the Court of Charles X. than the present Court, if Court it may be called? What a hatred of the country may be seen in the naturalization of vulgar foreigners, devoid of talent, who are enthroned in the Chamber of Peers! What a perversion of justice! What an insult to the distinguished youth, the ambitions native to the soil of France! We looked upon these things as upon a spectacle, and groaned over them, without taking upon ourselves to act.

Juste, whom no one ever sought, and who never sought any one, was, at five-and-twenty, a great politician, a man with a wonderful aptitude for apprehending the correlation between remote history and the facts of the present and of the future. In 1831, he told me exactly what would and did happen—the murders, the conspiracies, the ascendency of the Jews, the difficulty of doing anything in France, the scarcity of talent in the higher circles, and the abundance of intellect in the lowest ranks, where the finest courage is smothered under cigar ashes.

What was to become of him? His parents wished him to be a doctor. But if he were a doctor, must he not wait twenty years for a practice? You know what he did? No? Well, he is a doctor; but he left France, he is in Asia. At this moment he is perhaps sinking under fatigue in a desert, or dying of the lashes of a barbarous horde—or perhaps he is some Indian prince’s prime minister.

Action is my vocation. Leaving a civil college at the age of twenty, the only way for me to enter the army was by enlisting as a common soldier; so, weary of the dismal outlook that lay before a lawyer, I acquired the knowledge needed for a sailor. I imitate Juste, and keep out of France, where men waste, in the struggle to make way, the energy needed for the noblest works. Follow my example, friends; I am going where a man steers his destiny as he pleases.

These great resolutions were formed in the little room in the lodging-house in the Rue Corneille, in spite of our haunting the Bal Musard, flirting with girls of the town, and leading a careless and apparently reckless life. Our plans and arguments long floated in the air.

Marcas, our neighbor, was in some degree the guide who led us to the margin of the precipice or the torrent, who made us sound it, and showed us beforehand what our fate would be if we let ourselves fall into it. It was he who put us on our guard against the time-bargains a man makes with poverty

under the sanction of hope, by accepting precarious situations whence he fights the battle, carried along by the devious tide of Paris—that great harlot who takes you up or leaves you stranded, smiles or turns her back on you with equal readiness, wears out the strongest will in vexatious waiting, and makes misfortune wait on chance.

At our first meeting, Marcas, as it were, dazzled us. On our return from the schools, a little before the dinner-hour, we were accustomed to go up to our room and remain there a while, either waiting for the other, to learn whether there were any change in our plans for the evening. One day, at four o'clock, Juste met Marcas on the stairs, and I saw him in the street. It was in the month of November, and Marcas had no cloak; he wore shoes with heavy soles, corduroy trousers, and a blue double-breasted coat buttoned to the throat, which gave a military air to his broad chest, all the more so because he wore a black stock. The costume was not in itself extraordinary, but it agreed well with the man's mien and countenance.

My first impression on seeing him was neither surprise, nor distress, nor interest, nor pity, but curiosity mingled with all these feelings. He walked slowly, with a step that betrayed deep melancholy, his head forward with a stoop, but not bent like that of a conscience-stricken man. That head, large and powerful, which might contain the treasures necessary for a man of the highest ambition, looked as if it were loaded with thought; it was weighted with grief of mind, but there was no touch of remorse in his expression. As to his face, it may be summed up in a word. A common superstition has it that every human countenance resembles some animal. The animal for Marcas was the lion. His hair was like a mane, his nose was sort and flat; broad and dented at the tip like a lion's; his brow, like a lion's, was strongly marked with a deep median furrow, dividing two powerful bosses. His high, hairy cheek-bones, all the more prominent because his cheeks were so thin, his enormous mouth and hollow jaws, were accentuated by lines of tawny shadows. This almost terrible countenance seemed illuminated by two lamps—two eyes, black indeed, but infinitely sweet, calm and deep, full of thought. If I may say so, those eyes had a humiliated expression.

Marcas was afraid of looking directly at others, not for himself, but for those on whom his fascinating gaze might rest; he had a power, and he shunned using it; he would spare those he met, and he feared notice. This was not from modesty, but from resignation founded on reason, which had demonstrated the immediate inutility of his gifts, the impossibility of entering and living in the sphere for which he was fitted. Those eyes could at times flash lightnings. From those lips a voice of thunder must surely proceed; it was a mouth like Mirabeau's.

"I have seen such a grand fellow in the street," said I to Juste on coming in.

“It must be our neighbor,” replied Juste, who described, in fact, the man I had just met. “A man who lives like a wood-louse would be sure to look like that,” he added.

“What dejection and what dignity!”

“One is the consequence of the other.”

“What ruined hopes! What schemes and failures!”

“Seven leagues of ruins! Obelisks—palaces—towers!—The ruins of Palmyra in the desert!” said Juste, laughing.

So we called him the Ruins of Palmyra.

As we went out to dine at the wretched eating-house in the Rue de la Harpe to which we subscribed, we asked the name of Number 37, and then heard the weird name Z. Marcas. Like boys, as we were, we repeated it more than a hundred times with all sorts of comments, absurd or melancholy, and the name lent itself to a jest. Juste would fire off the Z like a rocket rising, z-z-z-z-zed; and after pronouncing the first syllable of the name with great importance, depicted a fall by the dull brevity of the second.

“Now, how and where does the man live?”

From this query, to the innocent espionage of curiosity there was no pause but that required for carrying out our plan. Instead of loitering about the streets, we both came in, each armed with a novel. We read with our ears open. And in the perfect silence of our attic rooms, we heard the even, dull sound of a sleeping man breathing.

“He is asleep,” said I to Juste, noticing this fact.

“At seven o’clock!” replied the Doctor.

This was the name by which I called Juste, and he called me the Keeper of the Seals.

“A man must be wretched indeed to sleep as much as our neighbor!” cried I, jumping on to the chest of drawers with a knife in my hand, to which a corkscrew was attached.

I made a round hole at the top of the partition, about as big as a five-sou piece. I had forgotten that there would be no light in the room, and on putting my eye to the hole, I saw only darkness. At about one in the morning, when we had finished our books and were about to undress, we heard a noise in our neighbor’s room. He got up, struck a match, and lighted his dip. I got on to the drawers again, and I then saw Marcas seated at his table and copying law-papers.

His room was about half the size of ours; the bed stood in a recess by the door, for the passage ended there, and its breadth was added to his garret; but the ground on which the house was built was evidently irregular, for the party-wall formed an obtuse angle, and the room was not square. There was no fireplace, only a small earthenware stove, white blotched with green, of which the pipe went up through the roof. The window, in the skew side of the room, had shabby red curtains. The furniture consisted of an armchair, a table, a chair, and a wretched bed-table. A cupboard in the wall held his clothes. The wall-paper was horrible; evidently only a servant had ever been lodged there before Marcas.

“What is to be seen?” asked the Doctor as I got down.

“Look for yourself,” said I.

At nine next morning, Marcas was in bed. He had breakfasted off a saveloy; we saw on a plate, with some crumbs of bread, the remains of that too familiar delicacy. He was asleep; he did not wake till eleven. He then set to work again on the copy he had begun the night before, which was lying on the table.

On going downstairs we asked the price of that room, and were told fifteen francs a month.

In the course of a few days, we were fully informed as to the mode of life of Z. Marcas. He did copying, at so much a sheet no doubt, for a law-writer who lived in the courtyard of the Sainte-Chapelle. He worked half the night; after sleeping from six till ten, he began again and wrote till three. Then he went out to take the copy home before dinner, which he ate at Mizerai’s in the Rue Michel-le-Comte, at a cost of nine sous, and came in to bed at six o’clock. It became known to us that Marcas did not utter fifteen sentences in a month; he never talked to anybody, nor said a word to himself in his dreadful garret.

“The Ruins of Palmyra are terribly silent!” said Juste.

This taciturnity in a man whose appearance was so imposing was strangely significant. Sometimes when we met him, we exchanged glances full of meaning on both sides, but they never led to any advances. Insensibly this man became the object of our secret admiration, though we knew no reason for it. Did it lie in his secretly simple habits, his monastic regularity, his hermit-like frugality, his idiotically mechanical labor, allowing his mind to remain neuter or to work on his own lines, seeming to us to hint at an expectation of some stroke of good luck, or at some foregone conclusion as to his life?

After wandering for a long time among the Ruins of Palmyra, we forgot them—we were young! Then came the Carnival, the Paris Carnival, which, henceforth, will eclipse the old Carnival of Venice, unless some ill-advised

Prefect of Police is antagonistic.

Gambling ought to be allowed during the Carnival; but the stupid moralists who have had gambling suppressed are inert financiers, and this indispensable evil will be re-established among us when it is proved that France leaves millions at the German tables.

This splendid Carnival brought us to utter penury, as it does every student. We got rid of every object of luxury; we sold our second coats, our second boots, our second waistcoats—everything of which we had a duplicate, except our friend. We ate bread and cold sausages; we looked where we walked; we had set to work in earnest. We owed two months' rent, and were sure of having a bill from the porter for sixty or eighty items each, and amounting to forty or fifty francs. We made no noise, and did not laugh as we crossed the little hall at the bottom of the stairs; we commonly took it at a flying leap from the lowest step into the street. On the day when we first found ourselves bereft of tobacco for our pipes, it struck us that for some days we had been eating bread without any kind of butter.

Great was our distress.

"No tobacco!" said the Doctor.

"No cloak!" said the Keeper of the Seals.

"Ah, you rascals, you would dress as the postillion de Longjumeau, you would appear as Debardeurs, sup in the morning, and breakfast at night at Very's—sometimes even at the Rocher de Cancale.—Dry bread for you, my boys! Why," said I, in a big bass voice, "you deserve to sleep under the bed, you are not worthy to lie in it—"

"Yes, yes; but, Keeper of the Seals, there is no more tobacco!" said Juste.

"It is high time to write home, to our aunts, our mothers, and our sisters, to tell them we have no underlinen left, that the wear and tear of Paris would ruin garments of wire. Then we will solve an elegant chemical problem by transmuting linen into silver."

"But we must live till we get the answer."

"Well, I will go and bring out a loan among such of our friends as may still have some capital to invest."

"And how much will you find?"

"Say ten francs!" replied I with pride.

It was midnight. Marcas had heard everything. He knocked at our door.

"Messieurs," said he, "here is some tobacco; you can repay me on the first

opportunity.”

We were struck, not by the offer, which we accepted, but by the rich, deep, full voice in which it was made; a tone only comparable to the lowest string of Paganini’s violin. Marcas vanished without waiting for our thanks.

Juste and I looked at each other without a word. To be rescued by a man evidently poorer than ourselves! Juste sat down to write to every member of his family, and I went off to effect a loan. I brought in twenty francs lent me by a fellow-provincial. In that evil but happy day gambling was still tolerated, and in its lodes, as hard as the rocky ore of Brazil, young men, by risking a small sum, had a chance of winning a few gold pieces. My friend, too, had some Turkish tobacco brought home from Constantinople by a sailor, and he gave me quite as much as we had taken from Z. Marcas. I conveyed the splendid cargo into port, and we went in triumph to repay our neighbor with a tawny wig of Turkish tobacco for his dark Caporal.

“You are determined not to be my debtors,” said he. “You are giving me gold for copper.—You are boys—good boys——”

The sentences, spoken in varying tones, were variously emphasized. The words were nothing, but the expression!—That made us friends of ten years’ standing at once.

Marcas, on hearing us coming, had covered up his papers; we understood that it would be taking a liberty to allude to his means of subsistence, and felt ashamed of having watched him. His cupboard stood open; in it there were two shirts, a white necktie and a razor. The razor made me shudder. A looking-glass, worth five francs perhaps, hung near the window.

The man’s few and simple movements had a sort of savage grandeur. The Doctor and I looked at each other, wondering what we could say in reply. Juste, seeing that I was speechless, asked Marcas jestingly:

“You cultivate literature, monsieur?”

“Far from it!” replied Marcas. “I should not be so wealthy.”

“I fancied,” said I, “that poetry alone, in these days, was amply sufficient to provide a man with lodgings as bad as ours.”

My remark made Marcas smile, and the smile gave a charm to his yellow face.

“Ambition is not a less severe taskmaster to those who fail,” said he. “You, who are beginning life, walk in the beaten paths. Never dream of rising superior, you will be ruined!”

“You advise us to stay just as we are?” said the Doctor, smiling.

There is something so infectious and childlike in the pleasantries of youth, that Marcas smiled again in reply.

“What incidents can have given you this detestable philosophy?” asked I.

“I forgot once more that chance is the result of an immense equation of which we know not all the factors. When we start from zero to work up to the unit, the chances are incalculable. To ambitious men Paris is an immense roulette table, and every young man fancies he can hit on a successful progression of numbers.”

He offered us the tobacco I had brought that we might smoke with him; the Doctor went to fetch our pipes; Marcas filled his, and then he came to sit in our room, bringing the tobacco with him, since there were but two chairs in his. Juste, as brisk as a squirrel, ran out, and returned with a boy carrying three bottles of Bordeaux, some Brie cheese, and a loaf.

“Hah!” said I to myself, “fifteen francs,” and I was right to a sou.

Juste gravely laid five francs on the chimney-shelf.

There are immeasurable differences between the gregarious man and the man who lives closest to nature. Toussaint Louverture, after he was caught, died without speaking a word. Napoleon, transplanted to a rock, talked like a magpie—he wanted to account for himself. Z. Marcas erred in the same way, but for our benefit only. Silence in all its majesty is to be found only in the savage. There is never a criminal who, though he might let his secrets fall with his head into the basket of sawdust does not feel the purely social impulse to tell them to somebody.

Nay, I am wrong. We have seen one Iroquois of the Faubourg Saint-Marceau who raised the Parisian to the level of the natural savage—a republican, a conspirator, a Frenchman, an old man, who outdid all we have heard of Negro determination, and all that Cooper tells us of the tenacity and coolness of the Redskins under defeat. Morey, the Guatimozin of the “Mountain,” preserved an attitude unparalleled in the annals of European justice.

This is what Marcas told us during the small hours, sandwiching his discourse with slices of bread spread with cheese and washed down with wine. All the tobacco was burned out. Now and then the hackney coaches clattering across the Place de l’Odeon, or the omnibuses toiling past, sent up their dull rumbling, as if to remind us that Paris was still close to us.

His family lived at Vitre; his father and mother had fifteen hundred francs a year in the funds. He had received an education gratis in a Seminary, but had refused to enter the priesthood. He felt in himself the fires of immense

ambition, and had come to Paris on foot at the age of twenty, the possessor of two hundred francs. He had studied the law, working in an attorney's office, where he had risen to be superior clerk. He had taken his doctor's degree in law, had mastered the old and modern codes, and could hold his own with the most famous pleaders. He had studied the law of nations, and was familiar with European treaties and international practice. He had studied men and things in five capitals—London, Berlin, Vienna, Petersburg, and Constantinople.

No man was better informed than he as to the rules of the Chamber. For five years he had been reporter of the debates for a daily paper. He spoke extempore and admirably, and could go on for a long time in that deep, appealing voice which had struck us to the soul. Indeed, he proved by the narrative of his life that he was a great orator, a concise orator, serious and yet full of piercing eloquence; he resembled Berryer in his fervor and in the impetus which commands the sympathy of the masses, and was like Thiers in refinement and skill; but he would have been less diffuse, less in difficulties for a conclusion. He had intended to rise rapidly to power without burdening himself first with the doctrines necessary to begin with, for a man in opposition, but an incubus later to the statesman.

Marcas had learned everything that a real statesman should know; indeed, his amazement was considerable when he had occasion to discern the utter ignorance of men who have risen to the administration of public affairs in France. Though in him it was vocation that had led to study, nature had been generous and bestowed all that cannot be acquired—keen perceptions, self-command, a nimble wit, rapid judgment, decisiveness, and, what is the genius of these men, fertility in resource.

By the time when Marcas thought himself duly equipped, France was torn by intestine divisions arising from the triumph of the House of Orleans over the elder branch of the Bourbons.

The field of political warfare is evidently changed. Civil war henceforth cannot last for long, and will not be fought out in the provinces. In France such struggles will be of brief duration and at the seat of government; and the battle will be the close of the moral contest which will have been brought to an issue by superior minds. This state of things will continue so long as France has her present singular form of government, which has no analogy with that of any other country; for there is no more resemblance between the English and the French constitutions than between the two lands.

Thus Marcas' place was in the political press. Being poor and unable to secure his election, he hoped to make a sudden appearance. He resolved on making the greatest possible sacrifice for a man of superior intellect, to work

as a subordinate to some rich and ambitious deputy. Like a second Bonaparte, he sought his Barras; the new Colbert hoped to find a Mazarin. He did immense services, and he did them then and there; he assumed no importance, he made no boast, he did not complain of ingratitude. He did them in the hope that his patron would put him in a position to be elected deputy; Marcas wished for nothing but a loan that might enable him to purchase a house in Paris, the qualification required by law. Richard III. asked for nothing but his horse.

In three years Marcas had made his man—one of the fifty supposed great statesmen who are the battledores with which two cunning players toss the ministerial portfolios exactly as the man behind the puppet-show hits Punch against the constable in his street theatre, and counts on always getting paid. This man existed only by Marcas, but he had just brains enough to appreciate the value of his “ghost” and to know that Marcas, if he ever came to the front, would remain there, would be indispensable, while he himself would be translated to the polar zone of Luxembourg. So he determined to put insurmountable obstacles in the way of his Mentor’s advancement, and hid his purpose under the semblance of the utmost sincerity. Like all mean men, he could dissimulate to perfection, and he soon made progress in the ways of ingratitude, for he felt that he must kill Marcas, not to be killed by him. These two men, apparently so united, hated each other as soon as one had deceived the other.

The politician was made one of a ministry; Marcas remained in the opposition to hinder his man from being attacked; nay, by skilful tactics he won him the applause of the opposition. To excuse himself for not rewarding his subaltern, the chief pointed out the impossibility of finding a place suddenly for a man on the other side, without a great deal of manoeuvring. Marcas had hoped confidently for a place to enable him to marry, and thus acquire the qualification he so ardently desired. He was two-and-thirty, and the Chamber ere long must be dissolved. Having detected his man in this flagrant act of bad faith, he overthrew him, or at any rate contributed largely to his overthrow, and covered him with mud.

A fallen minister, if he is to rise again to power, must show that he is to be feared; this man, intoxicated by Royal glibness, had fancied that his position would be permanent; he acknowledged his delinquencies; besides confessing them, he did Marcas a small money service, for Marcas had got into debt. He subsidized the newspaper on which Marcas worked, and made him the manager of it.

Though he despised the man, Marcas, who, practically, was being subsidized too, consented to take the part of the fallen minister. Without unmasking at once all the batteries of his superior intellect, Marcas came a

little further than before; he showed half his shrewdness. The Ministry lasted only a hundred and eighty days; it was swallowed up. Marcas had put himself into communication with certain deputies, had moulded them like dough, leaving each impressed with a high opinion of his talent; his puppet again became a member of the Ministry, and then the paper was ministerial. The Ministry united the paper with another, solely to squeeze out Marcas, who in this fusion had to make way for a rich and insolent rival, whose name was well known, and who already had his foot in the stirrup.

Marcas relapsed into utter destitution; his haughty patron well knew the depths into which he had cast him.

Where was he to go? The ministerial papers, privily warned, would have nothing to say to him. The opposition papers did not care to admit him to their offices. Marcas could side neither with the Republicans nor with the Legitimists, two parties whose triumph would mean the overthrow of everything that now is.

“Ambitious men like a fast hold on things,” said he with a smile.

He lived by writing a few articles on commercial affairs, and contributed to one of those encyclopedias brought out by speculation and not by learning. Finally a paper was founded, which was destined to live but two years, but which secured his services. From that moment he renewed his connection with the minister’s enemies; he joined the party who were working for the fall of the Government; and as soon as his pickaxe had free play, it fell.

This paper had now for six months ceased to exist; he had failed to find employment of any kind; he was spoken of as a dangerous man, calumny attacked him; he had unmasked a huge financial and mercantile job by a few articles and a pamphlet. He was known to be a mouthpiece of a banker who was said to have paid him largely, and from whom he was supposed to expect some patronage in return for his championship. Marcas, disgusted by men and things, worn out by five years of fighting, regarded as a free lance rather than as a great leader, crushed by the necessity of earning his daily bread, which hindered him from gaining ground, in despair at the influence exerted by money over mind, and given over to dire poverty, buried himself in a garret, to make thirty sous a day, the sum strictly answering to his needs. Meditation had leveled a desert all round him. He read the papers to be informed of what was going on. Pozzo di Borgo had once lived like this for some time.

Marcas, no doubt, was planning a serious attack, accustoming himself to dissimulation, and punishing himself for his blunders by Pythagorean muteness. But he did not tell us the reasons for his conduct.

It is impossible to give you an idea of the scenes of the highest comedy

that lay behind this algebraic statement of his career; his useless patience dogging the footsteps of fortune, which presently took wings, his long tramps over the thorny brakes of Paris, his breathless chases as a petitioner, his attempts to win over fools; the schemes laid only to fail through the influence of some frivolous woman; the meetings with men of business who expected their capital to bring them places and a peerage, as well as large interest. Then the hopes rising in a towering wave only to break in foam on the shoal; the wonders wrought in reconciling adverse interests which, after working together for a week, fell asunder; the annoyance, a thousand times repeated, of seeing a dunce decorated with the Legion of Honor, and preferred, though as ignorant as a shop-boy, to a man of talent. Then, what Marcas called the stratagems of stupidity—you strike a man, and he seems convinced, he nods his head—everything is settled; next day, this india-rubber ball, flattened for a moment, has recovered itself in the course of the night; it is as full of wind as ever; you must begin all over again; and you go on till you understand that you are not dealing with a man, but with a lump of gum that loses shape in the sunshine.

These thousand annoyances, this vast waste of human energy on barren spots, the difficulty of achieving any good, the incredible facility of doing mischief; two strong games played out, twice won, and then twice lost; the hatred of a statesman—a blockhead with a painted face and a wig, but in whom the world believed—all these things, great and small, had not crushed, but for the moment had dashed Marcas. In the days when money had come into his hands, his fingers had not clutched it; he had allowed himself the exquisite pleasure of sending it all to his family—to his sisters, his brothers, his old father. Like Napoleon in his fall, he asked for no more than thirty sous a day, and any man of energy can earn thirty sous for a day’s work in Paris.

When Marcas had finished the story of his life, intermingled with reflections, maxims, and observations, revealing him as a great politician, a few questions and answers on both sides as to the progress of affairs in France and in Europe were enough to prove to us that he was a real statesman; for a man may be quickly and easily judged when he can be brought on to the ground of immediate difficulties: there is a certain Shibboleth for men of superior talents, and we were of the tribe of modern Levites without belonging as yet to the Temple. As I have said, our frivolity covered certain purposes which Juste has carried out, and which I am about to execute.

When we had done talking, we all three went out, cold as it was, to walk in the Luxembourg gardens till the dinner hour. In the course of that walk our conversation, grave throughout, turned on the painful aspects of the political situation. Each of us contributed his remarks, his comment, or his jest, a pleasantry or a proverb. This was no longer exclusively a discussion of life on

the colossal scale just described by Marcas, the soldier of political warfare. Nor was it the distressful monologue of the wrecked navigator, stranded in a garret in the Hotel Corneille; it was a dialogue in which two well-informed young men, having gauged the times they lived in, were endeavoring, under the guidance of a man of talent, to gain some light on their own future prospects.

“Why,” asked Juste, “did you not wait patiently for an opportunity, and imitate the only man who has been able to keep the lead since the Revolution of July by holding his head above water?”

“Have I not said that we never know where the roots of chance lie? Carrell was in identically the same position as the orator you speak of. That gloomy young man, of a bitter spirit, had a whole government in his head; the man of whom you speak had no idea beyond mounting on the crupper of every event. Of the two, Carrel was the better man. Well, one becomes a minister, Carrel remained a journalist; the incomplete but craftier man is living; Carrel is dead.

“I may point out that your man has for fifteen years been making his way, and is but making it still. He may yet be caught and crushed between two cars full of intrigues on the highroad to power. He has no house; he has not the favor of the palace like Metternich; nor, like Villele, the protection of a compact majority.

“I do not believe that the present state of things will last ten years longer. Hence, supposing I should have such poor good luck, I am already too late to avoid being swept away by the commotion I foresee. I should need to be established in a superior position.”

“What commotion?” asked Juste.

“AUGUST, 1830,” said Marcas in solemn tones, holding out his hand towards Paris; “AUGUST, the offspring of Youth which bound the sheaves, and of Intellect which had ripened the harvest, forgot to provide for Youth and Intellect.

“Youth will explode like the boiler of a steam-engine. Youth has no outlet in France; it is gathering an avalanche of underrated capabilities, of legitimate and restless ambitions; young men are not marrying now; families cannot tell what to do with their children. What will the thunderclap be that will shake down these masses? I know not, but they will crash down into the midst of things, and overthrow everything. These are laws of hydrostatics which act on the human race; the Roman Empire had failed to understand them, and the Barbaric hordes came down.

“The Barbaric hordes now are the intelligent class. The laws of overpressure are at this moment acting slowly and silently in our midst. The

Government is the great criminal; it does not appreciate the two powers to which it owes everything; it has allowed its hands to be tied by the absurdities of the Contract; it is bound, ready to be the victim.

“Louis XIV., Napoleon, England, all were or are eager for intelligent youth. In France the young are condemned by the new legislation, by the blundering principles of elective rights, by the unsoundness of the ministerial constitution.

“Look at the elective Chamber; you will find no deputies of thirty; the youth of Richelieu and of Mazarin, of Turenne and of Colbert, of Pitt and of Saint-Just, of Napoleon and of Prince Metternich, would find no admission there; Burke, Sheridan, or Fox could not win seats. Even if political majority had been fixed at one-and-twenty, and eligibility had been relieved of every disabling qualification, the Departments would have returned the very same members, men devoid of political talent, unable to speak without murdering French grammar, and among whom, in ten years, scarcely one statesman has been found.

“The causes of an impending event may be seen, but the event itself cannot be foretold. At this moment the youth of France is being driven into Republicanism, because it believes that the Republic would bring it emancipation. It will always remember the young representatives of the people and the young army leaders! The imprudence of the Government is only comparable to its avarice.”

That day left its echoes in our lives. Marcas confirmed us in our resolution to leave France, where young men of talent and energy are crushed under the weight of successful commonplace, envious, and insatiable middle age.

We dined together in the Rue de la Harpe. We thenceforth felt for Marcas the most respectful affection; he gave us the most practical aid in the sphere of the mind. That man knew everything; he had studied everything. For us he cast his eye over the whole civilized world, seeking the country where openings would be at once the most abundant and the most favorable to the success of our plans. He indicated what should be the goal of our studies; he bid us make haste, explaining to us that time was precious, that emigration would presently begin, and that its effect would be to deprive France of the cream of its powers and of its youthful talent; that their intelligence, necessarily sharpened, would select the best places, and that the great thing was to be first in the field.

Thenceforward, we often sat late at work under the lamp. Our generous instructor wrote some notes for our guidance—two pages for Juste and three for me—full of invaluable advice—the sort of information which experience alone can supply, such landmarks as only genius can place. In those papers,

smelling of tobacco, and covered with writing so vile as to be almost hieroglyphic, there are suggestions for a fortune, and forecasts of unerring acumen. There are hints as to certain parts of America and Asia which have been fully justified, both before and since Juste and I could set out.

Marcas, like us, was in the most abject poverty. He earned, indeed, his daily bread, but he had neither linen, clothes, nor shoes. He did not make himself out any better than he was; his dreams had been of luxury as well as of power. He did not admit that this was the real Marcas; he abandoned this person, indeed, to the caprices of life. What he lived by was the breath of ambition; he dreamed of revenge while blaming himself for yielding to so shallow a feeling. The true statesman ought, above all things, to be superior to vulgar passions; like the man of science. It was in these days of dire necessity that Marcas seemed to us so great—nay, so terrible; there was something awful in the gaze which saw another world than that which strikes the eye of ordinary men. To us he was a subject of contemplation and astonishment; for the young—which of us has not known it?—the young have a keen craving to admire; they love to attach themselves, and are naturally inclined to submit to the men they feel to be superior, as they are to devote themselves to a great cause.

Our surprise was chiefly roused by his indifference in matters of sentiment; women had no place in his life. When we spoke of this matter, a perennial theme of conversation among Frenchmen, he simply remarked:

“Gowns cost too much.”

He saw the look that passed between Juste and me, and went on:

“Yes, far too much. The woman you buy—and she is the least expensive—takes a great deal of money. The woman who gives herself takes all your time! Woman extinguishes every energy, every ambition. Napoleon reduced her to what she should be. From that point of view, he really was great. He did not indulge such ruinous fancies of Louis XIV. and Louis XV.; at the same time he could love in secret.”

We discovered that, like Pitt, who made England is wife, Marcas bore France in his heart; he idolized his country; he had not a thought that was not for his native land. His fury at feeling that he had in his hands the remedy for the evils which so deeply saddened him, and could not apply it, ate into his soul, and this rage was increased by the inferiority of France at that time, as compared with Russia and England. France a third-rate power! This cry came up again and again in his conversation. The intestinal disorders of his country had entered into his soul. All the contests between the Court and the Chamber, showing, as they did, incessant change and constant vacillation, which must injure the prosperity of the country, he scoffed at as backstairs squabbles.

“This is peace at the cost of the future,” said he.

One evening Juste and I were at work, sitting in perfect silence. Marcas had just risen to toil at his copying, for he had refused our assistance in spite of our most earnest entreaties. We had offered to take it in turns to copy a batch of manuscript, so that he should do but a third of his distasteful task; he had been quite angry, and we had ceased to insist.

We heard the sound of gentlemanly boots in the passage, and raised our heads, looking at each other. There was a tap at Marcas’ door—he never took the key out of the lock—and we heard the hero answer:

“Come in.” Then—“What, you here, monsieur?”

“I, myself,” replied the retired minister.

It was the Diocletian of this unknown martyr.

For some time he and our neighbor conversed in an undertone. Suddenly Marcas, whose voice had been heard but rarely, as is natural in a dialogue in which the applicant begins by setting forth the situation, broke out loudly in reply to some offer we had not overheard.

“You would laugh at me for a fool,” cried he, “if I took you at your word. Jesuits are a thing of the past, but Jesuitism is eternal. Your Machiavelism and your generosity are equally hollow and untrustworthy. You can make your own calculations, but who can calculate on you? Your Court is made up of owls who fear the light, of old men who quake in the presence of the young, or who simply disregard them. The Government is formed on the same pattern as the Court. You have hunted up the remains of the Empire, as the Restoration enlisted the Voltigeurs of Louis XIV.

“Hitherto the evasions of cowardice have been taken for the manoeuvring of ability; but dangers will come, and the younger generation will rise as they did in 1790. They did grand things then.—Just now you change ministries as a sick man turns in his bed; these oscillations betray the weakness of the Government. You work on an underhand system of policy which will be turned against you, for France will be tired of your shuffling. France will not tell you that she is tired of you; a man never knows whence his ruin comes; it is the historian’s task to find out; but you will undoubtedly perish as the reward of not having the youth of France to lend you its strength and energy; for having hated really capable men; for not having lovingly chosen them from this noble generation; for having in all cases preferred mediocrity.

“You have come to ask my support, but you are an atom in that decrepit heap which is made hideous by self-interest, which trembles and squirms, and, because it is so mean, tries to make France mean too. My strong nature, my

ideas, would work like poison in you; twice you have tricked me, twice have I overthrown you. If we unite a third time, it must be a very serious matter. I should kill myself if I allowed myself to be duped; for I should be to blame, not you."

Then we heard the humblest entreaties, the most fervent adjuration, not to deprive the country of such superior talents. The man spoke of patriotism, and Marcas uttered a significant "Ouh! ouh!" He laughed at his would-be patron. Then the statesman was more explicit; he bowed to the superiority of his erewhile counselor; he pledged himself to enable Marcas to remain in office, to be elected deputy; then he offered him a high appointment, promising him that he, the speaker, would thenceforth be the subordinate of a man whose subaltern he was only worthy to be. He was in the newly-formed ministry, and he would not return to power unless Marcas had a post in proportion to his merit; he had already made it a condition, Marcas had been regarded as indispensable.

Marcas refused.

"I have never before been in a position to keep my promises; here is an opportunity of proving myself faithful to my word, and you fail me."

To this Marcas made no reply. The boots were again audible in the passage on the way to the stairs.

"Marcas! Marcas!" we both cried, rushing into his room. "Why refuse? He really meant it. His offers are very handsome; at any rate, go to see the ministers."

In a twinkling, we had given Marcas a hundred reasons. The minister's voice was sincere; without seeing him, we had felt sure that he was honest.

"I have no clothes," replied Marcas.

"Rely on us," said Juste, with a glance at me.

Marcas had the courage to trust us; a light flashed in his eye, he pushed his fingers through his hair, lifting it from his forehead with a gesture that showed some confidence in his luck and when he had thus unveiled his face, so to speak, we saw in him a man absolutely unknown to us—Marcas sublime, Marcas in his power! His mind was in its element—the bird restored to the free air, the fish to the water, the horse galloping across the plain.

It was transient. His brow clouded again, he had, it would seem, a vision of his fate. Halting doubt had followed close on the heels of white-winged hope.

We left him to himself.

"Now, then," said I to the Doctor, "we have given our word; how are we to

keep it?”

“We will sleep upon it,” said Juste, “and to-morrow morning we will talk it over.”

Next morning we went for a walk in the Luxembourg.

We had had time to think over the incident of the past night, and were both equally surprised at the lack of address shown by Marcas in the minor difficulties of life—he, a man who never saw any difficulties in the solution of the hardest problems of abstract or practical politics. But these elevated characters can all be tripped up on a grain of sand, and will, like the grandest enterprise, miss fire for want of a thousand francs. It is the old story of Napoleon, who, for lack of a pair of boots, did not set out for India.

“Well, what have you hit upon?” asked Juste.

“I have thought of a way to get him a complete outfit.”

“Where?”

“From Humann.”

“How?”

“Humann, my boy, never goes to his customers—his customers go to him; so that he does not know whether I am rich or poor. He only knows that I dress well and look decent in the clothes he makes for me. I shall tell him that an uncle of mine has dropped in from the country, and that his indifference in matters of dress is quite a discredit to me in the upper circles where I am trying to find a wife.—It will not be Humann if he sends in his bill before three months.”

The Doctor thought this a capital idea for a vaudeville, but poor enough in real life, and doubted my success. But I give you my word of honor, Humann dressed Marcas, and, being an artist, turned him out as a political personage ought to be dressed.

Juste lent Marcas two hundred francs in gold, the product of two watches bought on credit, and pawned at the Mont-de-Piete. For my part, I had said nothing of the six shirts and all necessary linen, which cost me no more than the pleasure of asking for them from a forewoman in a shop whom I had treated to Musard’s during the carnival.

Marcas accepted everything, thanking us no more than he ought. He only inquired as to the means by which we had got possession of such riches, and we made him laugh for the last time. We looked on our Marcas as shipowners, when they have exhausted their credit and every resource at their command it fit out a vessel, must look on it as it puts out to sea.

Here Charles was silent; he seemed crushed by his memories.

“Well,” cried the audience, “and what happened?”

“I will tell you in a few words—for this is not romance—it is history.”

We saw no more of Marcas. The administration lasted for three months; it fell at the end of the session. Then Marcas came back to us, worked to death. He had sounded the crater of power; he came away from it with the beginnings of brain fever. The disease made rapid progress; we nursed him. Juste at once called in the chief physician of the hospital where he was working as house-surgeon. I was then living alone in our room, and I was the most attentive attendant; but care and science alike were in vain. By the month of January, 1838, Marcas himself felt that he had but a few days to live.

The man whose soul and brain he had been for six months never even sent to inquire after him. Marcas expressed the greatest contempt for the Government; he seemed to doubt what the fate of France might be, and it was this doubt that had made him ill. He had, he thought, detected treason in the heart of power, not tangible, seizable treason, the result of facts, but the treason of a system, the subordination of national interests to selfish ends. His belief in the degradation of the country was enough to aggravate his complaint.

I myself was witness to the proposals made to him by one of the leaders of the antagonistic party which he had fought against. His hatred of the men he had tried to serve was so virulent, that he would gladly have joined the coalition that was about to be formed among certain ambitious spirits who, at least, had one idea in common—that of shaking off the yoke of the Court. But Marcas could only reply to the envoy in the words of the Hotel de Ville:

“It is too late!”

Marcas did not leave money enough to pay for his funeral. Juste and I had great difficulty in saving him from the ignominy of a pauper’s bier, and we alone followed the coffin of Z. Marcas, which was dropped into the common grave of the cemetery of Mont-Parnasse.

We looked sadly at each other as we listened to this tale, the last we heard from the lips of Charles Rabourdin the day before he embarked at le Havre on a brig that was to convey him to the islands of Malay. We all knew more than one Marcas, more than one victim of his devotion to a party, repaid by betrayal or neglect.

LES JARDIES, May 1840.