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Содержание

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INTRODUCTION

"THE FAT AND THE THIN," or, to use the French title, "Le Ventre de Paris," is a story of life in and around those vast Central Markets which form a distinctive feature of modern Paris. Even the reader who has never crossed the Channel must have heard of the Parisian *Halles*, for much has been written about them, not only in English books on the French metropolis, but also in English newspapers, magazines, and reviews; so that few, I fancy, will commence the perusal of the present volume without having, at all events, some knowledge of its subject matter.

The Paris markets form such a world of their own, and teem at certain hours of the day and night with such exuberance of life, that it was only natural they should attract the attention of a novelist like M. Zola, who, to use his own words, delights "in any subject in which vast masses of people can be shown in motion." Mr. Sherard tells us[1] that the idea of "Le Ventre de Paris" first occurred to M. Zola in 1872, when he used continually to take his friend Paul Alexis for a ramble through the Halles. I have in

[1] *Emile Zola: a Biographical and Critical Study*, by Robert Harborough Sherard, pp. 103, 104. London, Chatto & Windus, 1893.

my possession, however, an article written by M. Zola some five or six years before that time, and in this one can already detect the germ of the present work; just as the motif of another of M. Zola's novels, "La Joie de Vivre," can be traced to a short story written for a Russian review.

Similar instances are frequently to be found in the writings of English as well as French novelists, and are, of course, easily explained. A young man unknown to fame, and unable to procure the publication of a long novel, often contents himself with embodying some particular idea in a short sketch or story, which finds its way into one or another periodical, where it lies buried and forgotten by everybody – excepting its author. Time goes by, however, the writer achieves some measure of success, and one day it occurs to him to elaborate and perfect that old idea of his, only a faint *apercu* of which, for lack of opportunity, he had been able to give in the past. With a little research, no doubt, an interesting essay might be written on these literary resuscitations; but if one except certain novelists who are so deficient in ideas that they continue writing and rewriting the same story throughout their lives, it will, I think, be generally found that the revivals in question are due to some such reason as that given above.

It should be mentioned that the article of M. Zola's young days to which I have referred is not one on market life in particular, but one on violets. It contains, however, a vigorous, if brief, picture of the Halles in the small hours of the morning, and is instinct

with that realistic descriptive power of which M. Zola has since given so many proofs. We hear the rumbling and clattering of the market carts, we see the piles of red meat, the baskets of silvery fish, the mountains of vegetables, green and white; in a few paragraphs the whole market world passes in kaleidoscopic fashion before our eyes by the pale, dancing light of the gas lamps and the lanterns. Several years after the paper I speak of was published, when M. Zola began to issue "Le Ventre de Paris," M. Tournachon, better known as Nadar, the aeronaut and photographer, rushed into print to proclaim that the realistic novelist had simply pilfered his ideas from an account of the Halles which he (Tournachon) had but lately written. M. Zola, as is so often his wont, scorned to reply to this charge of plagiarism; but, had he chosen, he could have promptly settled the matter by producing his own forgotten article.

At the risk of passing for a literary ghoul, I propose to exhume some portion of the paper in question, as, so far as translation can avail, it will show how M. Zola wrote and what he thought in 1867. After the description of the markets to which I have alluded, there comes the following passage: —

I was gazing at the preparations for the great daily orgy of Paris when I espied a throng of people bustling suspiciously in a corner. A few lanterns threw a yellow light upon this crowd. Children, women, and men with outstretched hands were fumbling in dark piles which extended along the footway. I thought that those piles must be remnants of meat sold for a

trifling price, and that all those wretched people were rushing upon them to feed. I drew near, and discovered my mistake. The heaps were not heaps of meat, but heaps of violets. All the flowery poesy of the streets of Paris lay there, on that muddy pavement, amidst mountains of food. The gardeners of the suburbs had brought their sweet-scented harvests to the markets and were disposing of them to the hawkers. From the rough fingers of their peasant growers the violets were passing to the dirty hands of those who would cry them in the streets. At winter time it is between four and six o'clock in the morning that the flowers of Paris are thus sold at the Halles. Whilst the city sleeps and its butchers are getting all ready for its daily attack of indigestion, a trade in poetry is plied in dark, dank corners. When the sun rises the bright red meat will be displayed in trim, carefully dressed joints, and the violets, mounted on bits of osier, will gleam softly within their elegant collars of green leaves. But when they arrive, in the dark night, the bullocks, already ripped open, discharge black blood, and the trodden flowers lie prone upon the footways… I noticed just in front of me one large bunch which had slipped off a neighbouring mound and was almost bathing in the gutter. I picked it up. Underneath, it was soiled with mud; the greasy, fetid sewer water had left black stains upon the flowers. And then, gazing at these exquisite daughters of our gardens and our woods, astray amidst all the filth of the city, I began to ponder. On what woman's bosom would those wretched flowerets open and bloom? Some hawker would dip them in a

pail of water, and of all the bitter odours of the Paris mud they would retain but a slight pungency, which would remain mingled with their own sweet perfume. The water would remove their stains, they would pale somewhat, and become a joy both for the smell and for the sight. Nevertheless, in the depths of each corolla there would still remain some particle of mud suggestive of impurity. And I asked myself how much love and passion was represented by all those heaps of flowers shivering in the bleak wind. To how many loving ones, and how many indifferent ones, and how many egotistical ones, would all those thousands and thousands of violets go! In a few hours' time they would be scattered to the four corners of Paris, and for a paltry copper the passers-by would purchase a glimpse and a whiff of springtide in the muddy streets.

Imperfect as the rendering may be, I think that the above passage will show that M. Zola was already possessed of a large amount of his acknowledged realistic power at the early date I have mentioned. I should also have liked to quote a rather amusing story of a priggish Philistine who ate violets with oil and vinegar, strongly peppered, but considerations of space forbid; so I will pass to another passage, which is of more interest and importance. Both French and English critics have often contended that although M. Zola is a married man, he knows very little of women, as there has virtually never been any *feminine romance* in his life. There are those who are aware of the contrary, but whose tongues are stayed by considerations

of delicacy and respect. Still, as the passage I am now about to reproduce is signed and acknowledged as fact by M. Zola himself, I see no harm in slightly raising the veil from a long-past episode in the master's life: —

The light was rising, and as I stood there before that footway transformed into a bed of flowers my strange night-fancies gave place to recollections at once sweet and sad. I thought of my last excursion to Fontenay-aux-Roses, with the loved one, the good fairy of my twentieth year. Springtime was budding into birth, the tender foliage gleamed in the pale April sunshine. The little pathway skirting the hill was bordered by large fields of violets. As one passed along, a strong perfume seemed to penetrate one and make one languid. *She* was leaning on my arm, faint with love from the sweet odour of the flowers. A whiteness hovered over the country-side, little insects buzzed in the sunshine, deep silence fell from the heavens, and so low was the sound of our kisses that not a bird in all the hedges showed sign of fear. At a turn of the path we perceived some old bent women, who with dry, withered hands were hurriedly gathering violets and throwing them into large baskets. She who was with me glanced longingly at the flowers, and I called one of the women. "You want some violets?" said she. "How much? A pound?"

God of Heaven! She sold her flowers by the pound! We fled in deep distress. It seemed as though the country-side had been transformed into a huge grocer's shop… Then we ascended to the woods of Verrieres, and there, in the grass, under the soft,

fresh foliage, we found some tiny violets which seemed to be dreadfully afraid, and contrived to hide themselves with all sorts of artful ruses. During two long hours I scoured the grass and peered into every nook, and as soon as ever I found a fresh violet I carried it to her. She bought it of me, and the price that I exacted was a kiss… And I thought of all those things, of all that happiness, amidst the hubbub of the markets of Paris, before those poor dead flowers whose graveyard the footway had become. I remembered my good fairy, who is now dead and gone, and the little bouquet of dry violets which I still preserve in a drawer. When I returned home I counted their withered stems: there were twenty of them, and over my lips there passed the gentle warmth of my loved one's twenty kisses.

And now from violets I must, with a brutality akin to that which M. Zola himself displays in some of his transitions, pass to very different things, for some time back a well-known English poet and essayist wrote of the present work that it was redolent of pork, onions, and cheese. To one of his sensitive temperament, with a muse strictly nourished on sugar and water, such gross edibles as pork and cheese and onions were peculiarly offensive. That humble plant the onion, employed to flavour wellnigh every savoury dish, can assuredly need no defence; in most European countries, too, cheese has long been known as the poor man's friend; whilst as for pork, apart from all other considerations, I can claim for it a distinct place in English literature. A greater essayist by far than the critic to whom I am

referring, a certain Mr. Charles Lamb, of the India House, has left us an immortal page on the origin of roast pig and crackling. And, when everything is considered, I should much like to know why novels should be confined to the aspirations of the soul, and why they should not also treat of the requirements of our physical nature? From the days of antiquity we have all known what befell the members when, guided by the brain, they were foolish enough to revolt against the stomach. The latter plays a considerable part not only in each individual organism, but also in the life of the world. Over and over again – I could adduce a score of historical examples – it has thwarted the mightiest designs of the human mind. We mortals are much addicted to talking of our minds and our souls and treating our bodies as mere dross. But I hold – it is a personal opinion – that in the vast majority of cases the former are largely governed by the last. I conceive, therefore, that a novel which takes our daily sustenance as one of its themes has the best of all *raisons d'etre*. A foreign writer of far more consequence and ability than myself – Signor Edmondo de Amicis – has proclaimed the present book to be "one of the most original and happiest inventions of French genius," and I am strongly inclined to share his opinion.

It should be observed that the work does not merely treat of the provisioning of a great city. That provisioning is its *scenario*; but it also embraces a powerful allegory, the prose song of "the eternal battle between the lean of this world and the fat – a battle in which, as the author shows, the latter always come off

successful. It is, too, in its way an allegory of the triumph of the fat bourgeois, who lives well and beds softly, over the gaunt and Ishmael artist – an allegory which M. Zola has more than once introduced into his pages, another notable instance thereof being found in 'Germinal,' with the fat, well-fed Gregoires on the one hand, and the starving Maheus on the other."

From this quotation from Mr. Sherard's pages it will be gathered that M. Zola had a distinct social aim in writing this book. Wellnigh the whole social question may, indeed, be summed up in the words "food and comfort"; and in a series of novels like "Les Rougon-Macquart," dealing firstly with different conditions and grades of society, and, secondly, with the influence which the Second Empire exercised on France, the present volume necessarily had its place marked out from the very first.

Mr. Sherard has told us of all the labour which M. Zola expended on the preparation of the work, of his multitudinous visits to the Paris markets, his patient investigation of their organism, and his keen artistic interest in their manifold phases of life. And bred as I was in Paris, a partaker as I have been of her exultations and her woes they have always had for me a strong attraction. My memory goes back to the earlier years of their existence, and I can well remember many of the old surroundings which have now disappeared. I can recollect the last vestiges of the antique *piliers*, built by Francis I, facing the Rue de la Tonnellerie. Paul Niquet's, with its "bowel-twisting

brandy" and its crew of drunken ragpickers, was certainly before my time; but I can readily recall Baratte's and Bordier's and all the folly and prodigality which raged there; I knew, too, several of the noted thieves' haunts which took the place of Niquet's, and which one was careful never to enter without due precaution. And then, when the German armies were beleaguering Paris, and two millions of people were shut off from the world, I often strolled to the Halles to view their strangely altered aspect. The fish pavilion, of which M. Zola has so much to say, was bare and deserted. The railway drays, laden with the comestible treasures of the ocean, no longer thundered through the covered ways. At the most one found an auction going on in one or another corner, and a few Seine eels or gudgeons fetching wellnigh their weight in gold. Then, in the butter and cheese pavilions, one could only procure some nauseous melted fat, while in the meat department horse and mule and donkey took the place of beef and veal and mutton. Mule and donkey were very scarce, and commanded high prices, but both were of better flavour than horse; mule, indeed, being quite a delicacy. I also well remember a stall at which dog was sold, and, hunger knowing no law, I once purchased, cooked, and ate a couple of canine cutlets which cost me two francs apiece. The flesh was pinky and very tender, yet I would not willingly make such a repast again. However, peace and plenty at last came round once more, the Halles regained their old-time aspect, and in the years which followed I more than once saw the dawn rise slowly over the mounds of cabbages,

carrots, leeks, and pumpkins, even as M. Zola describes in the following pages. He has, I think, depicted with remarkable accuracy and artistic skill the many varying effects of colour that are produced as the climbing sun casts its early beams on the giant larder and its masses of food – effects of colour which, to quote a famous saying of the first Napoleon, show that "the markets of Paris are the Louvre of the people" in more senses than one.

The reader will bear in mind that the period dealt with by the author in this work is that of 1857-60, when the new Halles Centrales were yet young, and indeed not altogether complete. Still, although many old landmarks have long since been swept away, the picture of life in all essential particulars remained the same. Prior to 1860 the limits of Paris were the so-called *boulevards exterieurs*, from which a girdle of suburbs, such as Montmartre, Belleville, Passy, and Montrouge, extended to the fortifications; and the population of the city was then only 1,400,000 souls. Some of the figures which will be found scattered through M. Zola's work must therefore be taken as applying entirely to the past.

Nowadays the amount of business transacted at the Halles has very largely increased, in spite of the multiplication of district markets. Paris seems to have an insatiable appetite, though, on the other hand, its cuisine is fast becoming all simplicity. To my thinking, few more remarkable changes have come over the Parisians of recent years than this change of diet. One by one

great restaurants, formerly renowned for particular dishes and special wines, have been compelled through lack of custom to close their doors; and this has not been caused so much by inability to defray the cost of high feeding as by inability to indulge in it with impunity in a physical sense. In fact, Paris has become a city of impaired digestions, which nowadays seek the simplicity without the heaviness of the old English cuisine; and, should things continue in their present course, I fancy that Parisians anxious for high feeding will ultimately have to cross over to our side of the Channel.

These remarks, I trust, will not be considered out of place in an introduction to a work which to no small extent treats of the appetite of Paris. The reader will find that the characters portrayed by M. Zola are all types of humble life, but I fail to see that their circumstances should render them any the less interesting. A faithful portrait of a shopkeeper, a workman, or a workgirl is artistically of far more value than all the imaginary sketches of impossible dukes and good and wicked baronets in which so many English novels abound. Several of M. Zola's personages seem to me extremely lifelike – Gavard, indeed, is a *chef-d'oeuvre* of portraiture: I have known many men like him; and no one who lived in Paris under the Empire can deny the accuracy with which the author has delineated his hero Florent, the dreamy and hapless revolutionary caught in the toils of others. In those days, too, there was many such a plot as M. Zola describes, instigated by agents like Logre and

Lebigre, and allowed to mature till the eve of an election or some other important event which rendered its exposure desirable for the purpose of influencing public opinion. In fact, in all that relates to the so-called "conspiracy of the markets," M. Zola, whilst changing time and place to suit the requirements of his story, has simply followed historical lines. As for the Quenus, who play such prominent parts in the narrative, the husband is a weakling with no soul above his stewpans, whilst his wife, the beautiful Lisa, in reality wears the breeches and rules the roast. The manner in which she cures Quenu of his political proclivities, though savouring of persuasiveness rather than violence, is worthy of the immortal Mrs. Caudle: Douglas Jerrold might have signed a certain lecture which she administers to her astounded helpmate. Of Pauline, the Quenus' daughter, we see but little in the story, but she becomes the heroine of another of M. Zola's novels, "La Joie de Vivre," and instead of inheriting the egotism of her parents, develops a passionate love and devotion for others. In a like way Claude Lantier, Florent's artist friend and son of Gervaise of the "Assommoir," figures more particularly in "L'Oeuvre," which tells how his painful struggle for fame resulted in madness and suicide. With reference to the beautiful Norman and the other fishwives and gossips scattered through the present volume, and those genuine types of Parisian *gaminerie*, Muche, Marjolin, and Cadine, I may mention that I have frequently chastened their language in deference to English susceptibilities, so that the story, whilst retaining

every essential feature, contains nothing to which exception can reasonably be taken.

E. A. V.

CHAPTER I

Amidst the deep silence and solitude prevailing in the avenue several market gardeners' carts were climbing the slope which led towards Paris, and the fronts of the houses, asleep behind the dim lines of elms on either side of the road, echoed back the rhythmical jolting of the wheels. At the Neuilly bridge a cart full of cabbages and another full of peas had joined the eight waggons of carrots and turnips coming down from Nanterre; and the horses, left to themselves, had continued plodding along with lowered heads, at a regular though lazy pace, which the ascent of the slope now slackened. The sleeping waggoners, wrapped in woollen cloaks, striped black and grey, and grasping the reins slackly in their closed hands, were stretched at full length on their stomachs atop of the piles of vegetables. Every now and then, a gas lamp, following some patch of gloom, would light up the hobnails of a boot, the blue sleeve of a blouse, or the peak of a cap peering out of the huge florescence of vegetables – red bouquets of carrots, white bouquets of turnips, and the overflowing greenery of peas and cabbages.

And all along the road, and along the neighbouring roads, in front and behind, the distant rumbling of vehicles told of the presence of similar contingents of the great caravan which was travelling onward through the gloom and deep slumber of that matutinal hour, lulling the dark city to continued repose with its

echoes of passing food.

Madame Francois's horse, Balthazar, an animal that was far too fat, led the van. He was plodding on, half asleep and wagging his ears, when suddenly, on reaching the Rue de Longchamp, he quivered with fear and came to a dead stop. The horses behind, thus unexpectedly checked, ran their heads against the backs of the carts in front of them, and the procession halted amidst a clattering of bolts and chains and the oaths of the awakened waggoners. Madame Francois, who sat in front of her vehicle, with her back to a board which kept her vegetables in position, looked down; but, in the dim light thrown to the left by a small square lantern, which illuminated little beyond one of Balthazar's sheeny flanks, she could distinguish nothing.

"Come, old woman, let's get on!" cried one of the men, who had raised himself to a kneeling position amongst his turnips; "it's only some drunken sot."

Madame Francois, however, had bent forward and on her right hand had caught sight of a black mass, lying almost under the horse's hoofs, and blocking the road.

"You wouldn't have us drive over a man, would you?" said she, jumping to the ground.

It was indeed a man lying at full length upon the road, with his arms stretched out and his face in the dust. He seemed to be remarkably tall, but as withered as a dry branch, and the wonder was that Balthazar had not broken him in half with a blow from his hoof. Madame Francois thought that he was dead; but on

stooping and taking hold of one of his hands, she found that it was quite warm.

"Poor fellow!" she murmured softly.

The waggoners, however, were getting impatient.

"Hurry up, there!" said the man kneeling amongst the turnips, in a hoarse voice. "He's drunk till he can hold no more, the hog! Shove him into the gutter."

Meantime, the man on the road had opened his eyes. He looked at Madame Francois with a startled air, but did not move. She herself now thought that he must indeed be drunk.

"You mustn't stop here," she said to him, "or you'll get run over and killed. Where were you going?"

"I don't know," replied the man in a faint voice.

Then, with an effort and an anxious expression, he added: "I was going to Paris; I fell down, and don't remember any more."

Madame Francois could now see him more distinctly, and he was truly a pitiable object, with his ragged black coat and trousers, through the rents in which you could espy his scraggy limbs. Underneath a black cloth cap, which was drawn low over his brows, as though he were afraid of being recognised, could be seen two large brown eyes, gleaming with peculiar softness in his otherwise stern and harassed countenance. It seemed to Madame Francois that he was in far too famished a condition to have got drunk.

"And what part of Paris were you going to?" she continued.

The man did not reply immediately. This questioning seemed

to distress him. He appeared to be thinking the matter over, but at last said hesitatingly, "Over yonder, towards the markets."

He had now, with great difficulty, got to his feet again, and seemed anxious to resume his journey. But Madame Francois noticed that he tottered, and clung for support to one of the shafts of her waggon.

"Are you tired?" she asked him.

"Yes, very tired," he replied.

Then she suddenly assumed a grumpy tone, as though displeased, and, giving him a push, exclaimed: "Look sharp, then, and climb into my cart. You've made us lose a lot of time. I'm going to the markets, and I'll turn you out there with my vegetables."

Then, as the man seemed inclined to refuse her offer, she pushed him up with her stout arms, and bundled him down upon the turnips and carrots.

"Come, now, don't give us any more trouble," she cried angrily. "You are quite enough to provoke one, my good fellow. Don't I tell you that I'm going to the markets? Sleep away up there. I'll wake you when we arrive."

She herself then clambered into the cart again, and settled herself with her back against the board, grasping the reins of Balthazar, who started off drowsily, swaying his ears once more. The other waggons followed, and the procession resumed its lazy march through the darkness, whilst the rhythmical jolting of the wheels again awoke the echoes of the sleepy house fronts, and the

waggoners, wrapped in their cloaks, dozed off afresh. The one who had called to Madame Francois growled out as he lay down: "As if we'd nothing better to do than pick up every drunken sot we come across! You're a scorcher, old woman!"

The waggons rumbled on, and the horses picked their own way, with drooping heads. The stranger whom Madame Francois had befriended was lying on his stomach, with his long legs lost amongst the turnips which filled the back part of the cart, whilst his face was buried amidst the spreading piles of carrot bunches. With weary, extended arms he clutched hold of his vegetable couch in fear of being thrown to the ground by one of the waggon's jolts, and his eyes were fixed on the two long lines of gas lamps which stretched away in front of him till they mingled with a swarm of other lights in the distance atop of the slope. Far away on the horizon floated a spreading, whitish vapour, showing where Paris slept amidst the luminous haze of all those flamelets.

"I come from Nanterre, and my name's Madame Francois," said the market gardener presently. "Since my poor man died I go to the markets every morning myself. It's a hard life, as you may guess. And who are you?"

"My name's Florent, I come from a distance," replied the stranger, with embarrassment. "Please excuse me, but I'm really so tired that it is painful to me to talk."

He was evidently unwilling to say anything more, and so Madame Francois relapsed into silence, and allowed the reins to

fall loosely on the back of Balthazar, who went his way like an animal acquainted with every stone of the road.

Meantime, with his eyes still fixed upon the far-spreading glare of Paris, Florent was pondering over the story which he had refused to communicate to Madame Francois. After making his escape from Cayenne, whither he had been transported for his participation in the resistance to Louis Napoleon's Coup d'Etat, he had wandered about Dutch Guiana for a couple of years, burning to return to France, yet dreading the Imperial police. At last, however, he once more saw before him the beloved and mighty city which he had so keenly regretted and so ardently longed for. He would hide himself there, he told himself, and again lead the quiet, peaceable life that he had lived years ago. The police would never be any the wiser; and everyone would imagine, indeed, that he had died over yonder, across the sea. Then he thought of his arrival at Havre, where he had landed with only some fifteen francs tied up in a corner of his handkerchief. He had been able to pay for a seat in the coach as far as Rouen, but from that point he had been forced to continue his journey on foot, as he had scarcely thirty sous left of his little store. At Vernon his last copper had gone in bread. After that he had no clear recollection of anything. He fancied that he could remember having slept for several hours in a ditch, and having shown the papers with which he had provided himself to a gendarme; however, he had only a very confused idea of what had happened. He had left Vernon without any breakfast,

seized every now and then with hopeless despair and raging pangs which had driven him to munch the leaves of the hedges as he tramped along. A prey to cramp and fright, his body bent, his sight dimmed, and his feet sore, he had continued his weary march, ever drawn onwards in a semi-unconscious state by a vision of Paris, which, far, far away, beyond the horizon, seemed to be summoning him and waiting for him.

When he at length reached Courbevoie, the night was very dark. Paris, looking like a patch of star-sprent sky that had fallen upon the black earth, seemed to him to wear a forbidding aspect, as though angry at his return. Then he felt very faint, and his legs almost gave way beneath him as he descended the hill. As he crossed the Neuilly bridge he sustained himself by clinging to the parapet, and bent over and looked at the Seine rolling inky waves between its dense, massy banks. A red lamp on the water seemed to be watching him with a sanguineous eye. And then he had to climb the hill if he would reach Paris on its summit yonder. The hundreds of leagues which he had already travelled were as nothing to it. That bit of a road filled him with despair. He would never be able, he thought, to reach yonder light crowned summit. The spacious avenue lay before him with its silence and its darkness, its lines of tall trees and low houses, its broad grey footwalks, speckled with the shadows of overhanging branches, and parted occasionally by the gloomy gaps of side streets. The squat yellow flames of the gas lamps, standing erect at regular intervals, alone imparted a little life to the lonely wilderness. And

Florent seemed to make no progress; the avenue appeared to grow ever longer and longer, to be carrying Paris away into the far depths of the night. At last he fancied that the gas lamps, with their single eyes, were running off on either hand, whisking the road away with them; and then, overcome by vertigo, he stumbled and fell on the roadway like a log.

Now he was lying at ease on his couch of greenery, which seemed to him soft as a feather bed. He had slightly raised his head so as to keep his eyes on the luminous haze which was spreading above the dark roofs which he could divine on the horizon. He was nearing his goal, carried along towards it, with nothing to do but to yield to the leisurely jolts of the waggon; and, free from all further fatigue, he now only suffered from hunger. Hunger, indeed, had once more awoke within him with frightful and wellnigh intolerable pangs. His limbs seemed to have fallen asleep; he was only conscious of the existence of his stomach, horribly cramped and twisted as by a red-hot iron. The fresh odour of the vegetables, amongst which he was lying, affected him so keenly that he almost fainted away. He strained himself against that piled-up mass of food with all his remaining strength, in order to compress his stomach and silence its groans. And the nine other waggons behind him, with their mountains of cabbages and peas, their piles of artichokes, lettuces, celery, and leeks, seemed to him to be slowly overtaking him, as though to bury him whilst he was thus tortured by hunger beneath an avalanche of food. Presently the procession halted, and there

was a sound of deep voices. They had reached the barriers, and the municipal customs officers were examining the waggons. A moment later Florent entered Paris, in a swoon, lying atop of the carrots, with clenched teeth.

"Hallow! You up there!" Madame Francois called out sharply.

And as the stranger made no attempt to move, she clambered up and shook him. Florent rose to a sitting posture. He had slept and no longer felt the pangs of hunger, but was dizzy and confused.

"You'll help me to unload, won't you?" Madame Francois said to him, as she made him get down.

He helped her. A stout man with a felt hat on his head and a badge in the top buttonhole of his coat was striking the ground with a stick and grumbling loudly:

"Come, come, now, make haste! You must get on faster than that! Bring the waggon a little more forward. How many yards' standing have you? Four, isn't it?"

Then he gave a ticket to Madame Francois, who took some coppers out of a little canvas bag and handed them to him; whereupon he went off to vent his impatience and tap the ground with his stick a little further away. Madame Francois took hold of Balthazar's bridle and backed him so as to bring the wheels of the waggon close to the footway. Then, having marked out her four yards with some wisps of straw, after removing the back of the cart, she asked Florent to hand her the vegetables bunch by bunch. She arranged them sort by sort on

her standing, setting them out artistically, the "tops" forming a band of greenery around each pile; and it was with remarkable rapidity that she completed her show, which, in the gloom of early morning, looked like some piece of symmetrically coloured tapestry. When Florent had handed her a huge bunch of parsley, which he had found at the bottom of the cart, she asked him for still another service.

"It would be very kind of you," said she, "if you would look after my goods while I put the horse and cart up. I'm only going a couple of yards, to the Golden Compasses, in the Rue Montorgueil."

Florent told her that she might make herself easy. He preferred to remain still, for his hunger had revived since he had begun to move about. He sat down and leaned against a heap of cabbages beside Madame Francois's stock. He was all right there, he told himself, and would not go further afield, but wait. His head felt empty, and he had no very clear notion as to where he was. At the beginning of September it is quite dark in the early morning. Around him lighted lanterns were flitting or standing stationary in the depths of the gloom. He was sitting on one side of a broad street which he did not recognise; it stretched far away into the blackness of the night. He could make out nothing plainly, excepting the stock of which he had been left in charge. All around him along the market footways rose similar piles of goods. The middle of the roadway was blocked by huge grey tumbrels, and from one end of the street to the other a sound of

heavy breathing passed, betokening the presence of horses which the eye could not distinguish.

Shouts and calls, the noise of falling wood, or of iron chains slipping to the ground, the heavy thud of loads of vegetables discharged from the waggons, and the grating of wheels as the carts were backed against the footways, filled the yet sonorous awakening, whose near approach could be felt and heard in the throbbing gloom. Glancing over the pile of cabbages behind him. Florent caught sight of a man wrapped like a parcel in his cloak, and snoring away with his head upon some baskets of plums. Nearer to him, on his left, he could distinguish a lad, some ten years old, slumbering between two heaps of endive, with an angelic smile on his face. And as yet there seemed to be nothing on that pavement that was really awake except the lanterns waving from invisible arms, and flitting and skipping over the sleep of the vegetables and human beings spread out there in heaps pending the dawn. However, what surprised Florent was the sight of some huge pavilions on either side of the street, pavilions with lofty roofs that seemed to expand and soar out of sight amidst a swarm of gleams. In his weakened state of mind he fancied he beheld a series of enormous, symmetrically built palaces, light and airy as crystal, whose fronts sparkled with countless streaks of light filtering through endless Venetian shutters. Gleaming between the slender pillar shafts these narrow golden bars seemed like ladders of light mounting to the gloomy line of the lower roofs, and then soaring aloft till they reached

the jumble of higher ones, thus describing the open framework of immense square halls, where in the yellow flare of the gas lights a multitude of vague, grey, slumbering things was gathered together.

At last Florent turned his head to look about him, distressed at not knowing where he was, and filled with vague uneasiness by the sight of that huge and seemingly fragile vision. And now, as he raised his eyes, he caught sight of the luminous dial and the grey massive pile of Saint Eustache's Church. At this he was much astonished. He was close to Saint Eustache, yet all was novel to him.

However, Madame Francois had come back again, and was engaged in a heated discussion with a man who carried a sack over his shoulder and offered to buy her carrots for a sou a bunch.

"Really, now, you are unreasonable, Lacaille!" said she. "You know quite well that you will sell them again to the Parisians at four and five sous the bunch. Don't tell me that you won't! You may have them for two sous the bunch, if you like."

Then, as the man went off, she continued: "Upon my word, I believe some people think that things grow of their own accord! Let him go and find carrots at a sou the bunch elsewhere, tipsy scoundrel that he is! He'll come back again presently, you'll see."

These last remarks were addressed to Florent. And, seating herself by his side, Madame Francois resumed: "If you've been a long time away from Paris, you perhaps don't know the new markets. They haven't been built for more than five years at the

most. That pavilion you see there beside us is the flower and fruit market. The fish and poultry markets are farther away, and over there behind us come the vegetables and the butter and cheese. There are six pavilions on this side, and on the other side, across the road, there are four more, with the meat and the tripe stalls. It's an enormous place, but it's horribly cold in the winter. They talk about pulling down the houses near the corn market to make room for two more pavilions. But perhaps you know all this?"

"No, indeed," replied Florent; "I've been abroad. And what's the name of that big street in front of us?"

"Oh, that's a new street. It's called the Rue du Pont Neuf. It leads from the Seine through here to the Rue Montmartre and the Rue Montorgueil. You would soon have recognized where you were if it had been daylight."

Madame Francois paused and rose, for she saw a woman heading down to examine her turnips. "Ah, is that you, Mother Chantemesse?" she said in a friendly way.

Florent meanwhile glanced towards the Rue Montorgueil. It was there that a body of police officers had arrested him on the night of December 4.[2] He had been walking along the Boulevard Montmartre at about two o'clock, quietly making his way through the crowd, and smiling at the number of soldiers that the Elysee had sent into the streets to awe the people, when the military suddenly began making a clean sweep of the thoroughfare, shooting folks down at close range during a quarter of an hour.

[2] 1851. Two days after the Coup d'Etat. – Translator.

Jostled and knocked to the ground, Florent fell at the corner of the Rue Vivienne and knew nothing further of what happened, for the panic-stricken crowd, in their wild terror of being shot, trampled over his body. Presently, hearing everything quiet, he made an attempt to rise; but across him there lay a young woman in a pink bonnet, whose shawl had slipped aside, allowing her chemisette, pleated in little tucks, to be seen. Two bullets had pierced the upper part of her bosom; and when Florent gently removed the poor creature to free his legs, two streamlets of blood oozed from her wounds on to his hands. Then he sprang up with a sudden bound, and rushed madly away, hatless and with his hands still wet with blood. Until evening he wandered about the streets, with his head swimming, ever seeing the young woman lying across his legs with her pale face, her blue staring eyes, her distorted lips, and her expression of astonishment at thus meeting death so suddenly. He was a shy, timid fellow. Albeit thirty years old he had never dared to stare women in the face; and now, for the rest of his life, he was to have that one fixed in his heart and memory. He felt as though he had lost some loved one of his own.

In the evening, without knowing how he had got there, still dazed and horrified as he was by the terrible scenes of the afternoon, he had found himself at a wine shop in the Rue Montorgueil, where several men were drinking and talking of throwing up barricades. He went away with them, helped them to tear up a few paving-stones, and seated himself on the barricade,

weary with his long wandering through the streets, and reflecting that he would fight when the soldiers came up. However, he had not even a knife with him, and was still bareheaded. Towards eleven o'clock he dozed off, and in his sleep could see the two holes in the dead woman's white chemisette glaring at him like eyes reddened by tears and blood. When he awoke he found himself in the grasp of four police officers, who were pummelling him with their fists. The men who had built the barricade had fled. The police officers treated him with still greater violence, and indeed almost strangled him when they noticed that his hands were stained with blood. It was the blood of the young woman.

Florent raised his eyes to the luminous dial of Saint Eustache with his mind so full of these recollections that he did not notice the position of the pointers. It was, however, nearly four o'clock. The markets were as yet wrapped in sleep. Madame Francois was still talking to old Madame Chantemesse, both standing and arguing about the price of turnips, and Florent now called to mind how narrowly he had escaped being shot over yonder by the wall of Saint Eustache. A detachment of gendarmes had just blown out the brains of five unhappy fellows caught at a barricade in the Rue Greneta. The five corpses were lying on the footway, at a spot where he thought he could now distinguish a heap of rosy radishes. He himself had escaped being shot merely because the policemen only carried swords. They took him to a neighbouring police station and gave the officer in charge a scrap

of paper, on which were these words written in pencil: “Taken with blood-stained hands. Very dangerous.” Then he had been dragged from station to station till the morning came. The scrap of paper accompanied him wherever he went. He was manacled and guarded as though he were a raving madman. At the station in the Rue de la Lingerie some tipsy soldiers wanted to shoot him; and they had already lighted a lantern with that object when the order arrived for the prisoners to be taken to the depot of the Prefecture of Police. Two days afterwards he found himself in a casemate of the fort of Bicetre. Ever since then he had been suffering from hunger. He had felt hungry in the casemate, and the pangs of hunger had never since left him. A hundred men were pent in the depths of that cellar-like dungeon, where, scarce able to breathe, they devoured the few mouthfuls of bread that were thrown to them, like so many captive wild beasts.

When Florent was brought before an investigating magistrate, without anyone to defend him, and without any evidence being adduced, he was accused of belonging to a secret society; and when he swore that this was untrue, the magistrate produced the scrap of paper from amongst the documents before him: “Taken with blood-stained hands. Very dangerous.” That was quite sufficient. He was condemned to transportation. Six weeks afterwards, one January night, a gaoler awoke him and locked him up in a courtyard with more than four hundred other prisoners. An hour later this first detachment started for the pontoons and exile, handcuffed and guarded by a double file

of gendarmes with loaded muskets. They crossed the Austerlitz bridge, followed the line of the boulevards, and so reached the terminus of the Western Railway line. It was a joyous carnival night. The windows of the restaurants on the boulevards glittered with lights. At the top of the Rue Vivienne, just at the spot where he ever saw the young woman lying dead – that unknown young woman whose image he always bore with him – he now beheld a large carriage in which a party of masked women, with bare shoulders and laughing voices, were venting their impatience at being detained, and expressing their horror of that endless procession of convicts. The whole of the way from Paris to Havre the prisoners never received a mouthful of bread or a drink of water. The officials had forgotten to give them their rations before starting, and it was not till thirty-six hours afterwards, when they had been stowed away in the hold of the frigate *Canada*, that they at last broke their fast.

No, Florent had never again been free from hunger. He recalled all the past to mind, but could not recollect a single hour of satiety. He had become dry and withered; his stomach seemed to have shrunk; his skin clung to his bones. And now that he was back in Paris once more, he found it fat and sleek and flourishing, teeming with food in the midst of the darkness. He had returned to it on a couch of vegetables; he lingered in its midst encompassed by unknown masses of food which still and ever increased and disquieted him. Had that happy carnival night continued throughout those seven years, then? Once again

he saw the glittering windows on the boulevards, the laughing women, the luxurious, greedy city which he had quitted on that far-away January night; and it seemed to him that everything had expanded and increased in harmony with those huge markets, whose gigantic breathing, still heavy from the indigestion of the previous day, he now began to hear.

Old Mother Chantemesse had by this time made up her mind to buy a dozen bunches of turnips. She put them in her apron, which she held closely pressed to her person, thus making herself look yet more corpulent than she was; and for some time longer she lingered there, still gossiping in a drawling voice. When at last she went away, Madame Francois again sat down by the side of Florent.

"Poor old Mother Chantemesse!" she said; "she must be at least seventy-two. I can remember her buying turnips of my father when I was a mere chit. And she hasn't a relation in the world; no one but a young hussy whom she picked up I don't know where and who does nothing but bring her trouble. Still, she manages to live, selling things by the ha'p'orth and clearing her couple of francs profit a day. For my own part, I'm sure that I could never spend my days on the foot-pavement in this horrid Paris! And she hasn't even any relations here!"

"You have some relations in Paris, I suppose?" she asked presently, seeing that Florent seemed disinclined to talk.

Florent did not appear to hear her. A feeling of distrust came back to him. His head was teeming with old stories of the police,

stories of spies prowling about at every street corner, and of women selling the secrets which they managed to worm out of the unhappy fellows they deluded. Madame Francois was sitting close beside him and certainly looked perfectly straightforward and honest, with her big calm face, above which was bound a black and yellow handkerchief. She seemed about five and thirty years of age, and was somewhat stoutly built, with a certain hardy beauty due to her life in the fresh air. A pair of black eyes, which beamed with kindly tenderness, softened the more masculine characteristics of her person. She certainly was inquisitive, but her curiosity was probably well meant.

"I've a nephew in Paris," she continued, without seeming at all offended by Florent's silence. "He's turned out badly though, and has enlisted. It's a pleasant thing to have somewhere to go to and stay at, isn't it? I dare say there's a big surprise in store for your relations when they see you. But it's always a pleasure to welcome one of one's own people back again, isn't it?"

She kept her eyes fixed upon him while she spoke, doubtless compassionating his extreme scragginess; fancying, too, that there was a "gentleman" inside those old black rags, and so not daring to slip a piece of silver into his hand. At last, however, she timidly murmured: "All the same, if you should happen just at present to be in want of anything – "

But Florent checked her with uneasy pride. He told her that he had everything he required, and had a place to go to. She seemed quite pleased to hear this, and, as though to tranquillise herself

concerning him, repeated several times: “Well, well, in that case you’ve only got to wait till daylight.”

A large bell at the corner of the fruit market, just over Florent’s head, now began to ring. The slow regular peals seemed to gradually dissipate the slumber that yet lingered all around. Carts were still arriving, and the shouts of the waggoners, the cracking of their whips, and the grinding of the paving-stones beneath the iron-bound wheels and the horses’ shoes sounded with an increasing din. The carts could now only advance by a series of spasmodic jolts, and stretched in a long line, one behind the other, till they were lost to sight in the distant darkness, whence a confused roar ascended.

Unloading was in progress all along the Rue du Pont Neuf, the vehicles being drawn up close to the edge of the footways, while their teams stood motionless in close order as at a horse fair. Florent felt interested in one enormous tumbrel which was piled up with magnificent cabbages, and had only been backed to the kerb with the greatest difficulty. Its load towered above the lofty gas lamp whose bright light fell full upon the broad leaves which looked like pieces of dark green velvet, scalloped and goffered. A young peasant girl, some sixteen years old, in a blue linen jacket and cap, had climbed on to the tumbrel, where, buried in the cabbages to her shoulders, she took them one by one and threw them to somebody concealed in the shade below. Every now and then the girl would slip and vanish, overwhelmed by an avalanche of the vegetables, but her rosy nose soon reappeared amidst the

teeming greenery, and she broke into a laugh while the cabbages again flew down between Florent and the gas lamp. He counted them mechanically as they fell. When the cart was emptied he felt worried.

The piles of vegetables on the pavement now extended to the verge of the roadway. Between the heaps, the market gardeners left narrow paths to enable people to pass along. The whole of the wide footway was covered from end to end with dark mounds. As yet, in the sudden dancing gleams of light from the lanterns, you only just espied the luxuriant fulness of the bundles of artichokes, the delicate green of the lettuces, the rosy coral of the carrots, and dull ivory of the turnips. And these gleams of rich colour flitted along the heaps, according as the lanterns came and went. The footway was now becoming populated: a crowd of people had awakened, and was moving hither and thither amidst the vegetables, stopping at times, and chattering and shouting. In the distance a loud voice could be heard crying, "Endive! who's got endive?" The gates of the pavilion devoted to the sale of ordinary vegetables had just been opened; and the retail dealers who had stalls there, with white caps on their heads, fichus knotted over their black jackets, and skirts pinned up to keep them from getting soiled, now began to secure their stock for the day, depositing their purchases in some huge porters' baskets placed upon the ground. Between the roadway and the pavilion these baskets were to be seen coming and going on all sides, knocking against the crowded heads of the bystanders, who

resented the pushing with coarse expressions, whilst all around was a clamour of voices growing hoarse by prolonged wrangling over a sou or two. Florent was astonished by the calmness of the female market gardeners, with bandanas and bronzed faces, displayed amidst all this garrulous bargaining of the markets.

Behind him, on the footway of the Rue Rambuteau, fruit was being sold. Hampers and low baskets covered with canvas or straw stood there in long lines, a strong odour of over-ripe mirabelle plums was wafted hither and thither. At last a subdued and gentle voice, which he had heard for some time past, induced him to turn his head, and he saw a charming darksome little woman sitting on the ground and bargaining.

"Come now, Marcel," said she, "you'll take a hundred sous, won't you?"

The man to whom she was speaking was closely wrapped in his cloak and made no reply; however, after a silence of five minutes or more, the young woman returned to the charge.

"Come now, Marcel; a hundred sous for that basket there, and four francs for the other one; that'll make nine francs altogether."

Then came another interval.

"Well, tell me what you will take."

"Ten francs. You know that well enough already; I told you so before. But what have you done with your Jules this morning, La Sarriette?"

The young woman began to laugh as she took a handful of small change out of her pocket.

"Oh," she replied, "Jules is still in bed. He says that men were not intended to work."

She paid for the two baskets, and carried them into the fruit pavilion, which had just been opened. The market buildings still retained their gloom-wrapped aspect of airy fragility, streaked with the thousand lines of light that gleamed from the venetian shutters. People were beginning to pass along the broad covered streets intersecting the pavilions, but the more distant buildings still remained deserted amidst the increasing buzz of life on the footways. By Saint Eustache the bakers and wine sellers were taking down their shutters, and the ruddy shops, with their gas lights flaring, showed like gaps of fire in the gloom in which the grey house-fronts were yet steeped. Florent noticed a baker's shop on the left-hand side of the Rue Montorgueil, replete and golden with its last baking, and fancied he could scent the pleasant smell of the hot bread. It was now half past four.

Madame Francois by this time had disposed of nearly all her stock. She had only a few bunches of carrots left when Lacaille once more made his appearance with his sack.

"Well," said he, "will you take a sou now?"

"I knew I should see you again," the good woman quietly answered. "You'd better take all I have left. There are seventeen bunches."

"That makes seventeen sous."

"No; thirty-four."

At last they agreed to fix the price at twenty-five sous.

Madame Francois was anxious to be off.

"He'd been keeping his eye upon me all the time," she said to Florent, when Lacaille had gone off with the carrots in his sack. "That old rogue runs things down all over the markets, and he often waits till the last peal of the bell before spending four sous in purchase. Oh, these Paris folk! They'll wrangle and argue for an hour to save half a sou, and then go off and empty their purses at the wine shop."

Whenever Madame Francois talked of Paris she always spoke in a tone of disdain, and referred to the city as though it were some ridiculous, contemptible, far-away place, in which she only condescended to set foot at nighttime.

"There!" she continued, sitting down again, beside Florent, on some vegetables belonging to a neighbour, "I can get away now."

Florent bent his head. He had just committed a theft. When Lacaille went off he had caught sight of a carrot lying on the ground, and having picked it up he was holding it tightly in his right hand. Behind him were some bundles of celery and bunches of parsley were diffusing pungent odours which painfully affected him.

"Well, I'm off now!" said Madame Francois.

However, she felt interested in this stranger, and could divine that he was suffering there on that foot-pavement, from which he had never stirred. She made him fresh offers of assistance, but he again refused them, with a still more bitter show of pride. He even got up and remained standing to prove that he was

quite strong again. Then, as Madame Francois turned her head away, he put the carrot to his mouth. But he had to remove it for a moment, in spite of the terrible longing which he felt to dig his teeth into it; for Madame Francois turned round again and looking him full in the face, began to question him with her good-natured womanly curiosity. Florent, to avoid speaking, merely answered by nods and shakes of the head. Then, slowly and gently, he began to eat the carrot.

The worthy woman was at last on the point of going off, when a powerful voice exclaimed close beside her, "Good morning, Madame Francois."

The speaker was a slim young man, with big bones and a big head. His face was bearded, and he had a very delicate nose and narrow sparkling eyes. He wore on his head a rusty, battered, black felt hat, and was buttoned up in an immense overcoat, which had once been of a soft chestnut hue, but which rain had discoloured and streaked with long greenish stains. Somewhat bent, and quivering with a nervous restlessness which was doubtless habitual with him, he stood there in a pair of heavy laced shoes, and the shortness of his trousers allowed a glimpse of his coarse blue hose.

"Good morning, Monsieur Claude," the market gardener replied cheerfully. "I expected you, you know, last Monday, and, as you didn't come, I've taken care of your canvas for you. I've hung it up on a nail in my room."

"You are really very kind, Madame Francois. I'll go to finish

that study of mine one of these days. I wasn't able to go on Monday. Has your big plum tree still got all its leaves?"

"Yes, indeed."

"I wanted to know, because I mean to put it in a corner of the picture. It will come in nicely by the side of the fowl house. I have been thinking about it all the week. What lovely vegetables are in the market this morning! I came down very early, expecting a fine sunrise effect upon all these heaps of cabbages."

With a wave of the arm he indicated the footway.

"Well, well, I must be off now," said Madame Francois. "Good-bye for the present. We shall meet again soon, I hope, Monsieur Claude."

However, as she turned to go, she introduced Florent to the young artist.

"This gentleman, it seems, has just come from a distance," said she. "He feels quite lost in your scampish Paris. I dare say you might be of service to him."

Then she at last took her departure, feeling pleased at having left the two men together. Claude looked at Florent with a feeling of interest. That tall, slight, wavy figure seemed to him original. Madame Francois's hasty presentation was in his eyes quite sufficient, and he addressed Florent with the easy familiarity of a lounger accustomed to all sorts of chance encounters.

"I'll accompany you," he said; "which way are you going?"

Florent felt ill at ease; he was not wont to unbosom himself so readily. However, ever since his arrival in Paris, a question had

been trembling on his lips, and now he ventured to ask it, with the evident fear of receiving an unfavourable reply.

"Is the Rue Pirouette still in existence?"

"Oh, yes," answered the artist. "A very curious corner of old Paris is the Rue Pirouette. It twists and turns like a dancing girl, and the houses bulge out like pot-bellied gluttons. I've made an etching of it that isn't half bad. I'll show it to you when you come to see me. Is it to the Rue Pirouette that you want to go?"

Florent, who felt easier and more cheerful now that he knew the street still existed, declared that he did not want to go there; in fact, he did not want to go anywhere in particular. All his distrust awoke into fresh life at Claude's insistence.

"Oh! never mind," said the artist, "let's go to the Rue Pirouette all the same. It has such a fine colour at night time. Come along; it's only a couple of yards away."

Florent felt constrained to follow him, and the two men walked off, side by side, stepping over the hampers and vegetables like a couple of old friends. On the footway of the Rue Rambuteau there were some immense heaps of cauliflowers, symmetrically piled up like so many cannonballs. The soft-white flowers spread out like huge roses in the midst of their thick green leaves, and the piles had something of the appearance of bridal bouquets ranged in a row in colossal flower stands. Claude stopped in front of them, venting cries of admiration.

Then, on turning into the Rue Pirouette, which was just opposite, he pointed out each house to his companion, and

explained his views concerning it. There was only a single gas lamp, burning in a corner. The buildings, which had settled down and swollen, threw their pent-houses forward in such wise as to justify Claude's allusion to pot-bellied gluttons, whilst their gables receded, and on either side they clung to their neighbours for support. Three or four, however, standing in gloomy recesses, appeared to be on the point of toppling forward. The solitary gas lamp illumined one which was snowy with a fresh coat of whitewash, suggesting some flabby broken-down old dowager, powdered and bedaubed in the hope of appearing young. Then the others stretched away into the darkness, bruised, dented, and cracked, greeny with the fall of water from their roofs, and displaying such an extraordinary variety of attitudes and tints that Claude could not refrain from laughing as he contemplated them.

Florent, however, came to stand at the corner of the rue de Mondetour, in front of the last house but one on the left. Here the three floors, each with two shutterless windows, having little white curtains closely drawn, seemed wrapped in sleep; but, up above, a light could be seen flitting behind the curtains of a tiny gable casement. However, the sight of the shop beneath the pent-house seemed to fill Florent with the deepest emotion. It was kept by a dealer in cooked vegetables, and was just being opened. At its far end some metal pans were glittering, while on several earthen ones in the window there was a display of cooked spinach and endive, reduced to a paste and arranged in conical mounds from which customers were served with shovel-

like carvers of white metal, only the handles of which were visible. This sight seemed to rivet Florent to the ground with surprise. He evidently could not recognize the place. He read the name of the shopkeeper, Godeboeuf, which was painted on a red sign board up above, and remained quite overcome by consternation. His arms dangling beside him, he began to examine the cooked spinach, with the despairing air of one on whom some supreme misfortune falls.

However, the gable casement was now opened, and a little old woman leaned out of it, and looked first at the sky and then at the markets in the distance.

"Ah, Mademoiselle Saget is an early riser," exclaimed Claude, who had just raised his head. And, turning to his companion, he added: "I once had an aunt living in that house. It's a regular hive of tittle-tattle! Ah, the Mehudins are stirring now, I see. There's a light on the second floor."

Florent would have liked to question his companion, but the latter's long discoloured overcoat give him a disquieting appearance. So without a word Florent followed him, whilst he went on talking about the Mehudins. These Mehudins were fish-girls, it seemed; the older one was a magnificent creature, while the younger one, who sold fresh-water fish, reminded Claude of one of Murillo's virgins, whenever he saw her standing with her fair face amidst her carps and eels.

From this Claude went on to remark with asperity that Murillo painted like an ignoramus. But all at once he stopped short in the

middle of the street.

"Come!" he exclaimed, "tell me where it is that you want to go."

"I don't want to go anywhere just at present," replied Florent in confusion. "Let's go wherever you like."

Just as they were leaving the Rue Pirouette, some one called to Claude from a wine shop at the corner of the street. The young man went in, dragging Florent with him. The shutters had been taken down on one side only, and the gas was still burning in the sleepy atmosphere of the shop. A forgotten napkin and some cards that had been used in the previous evening's play were still lying on the tables; and the fresh breeze that streamed in through the open doorway freshened the close, warm vinous air. The landlord, Monsieur Lebigre, was serving his customers. He wore a sleeved waistcoat, and his fat regular features, fringed by an untidy beard, were still pale with sleep. Standing in front of the counter, groups of men, with heavy, tired eyes, were drinking, coughing, and spitting, whilst trying to rouse themselves by the aid of white wine and brandy. Amongst them Florent recognised Lacaille, whose sack now overflowed with various sorts of vegetables. He was taking his third dram with a friend, who was telling him a long story about the purchase of a hamper of potatoes.[3] When he had emptied his glass, he went to chat with Monsieur Lebigre in a little glazed compartment at the

[3] At the Paris central markets potatoes are sold by the hamper, not by the sack as in England. – Translator.

end of the room, where the gas had not yet been lighted.

"What will you take?" Claude asked of Florent.

He had on entering grasped the hand of the person who had called out to him. This was a market porter,[4] a well-built young man of two and twenty at the most. His cheeks and chin were clean-shaven, but he wore a small moustache, and looked a sprightly, strapping fellow with his broad-brimmed hat covered with chalk, and his wool-worked neck-piece, the straps falling from which tightened his short blue blouse. Claude, who called him Alexandre, patted his arms, and asked him when they were going to Charentonneau again. Then they talked about a grand excursion they had made together in a boat on the Marne, when they had eaten a rabbit for supper in the evening.

"Well, what will you take?" Claude again asked Florent.

The latter looked at the counter in great embarrassment. At one end of it some stoneware pots, encircled with brass bands and containing punch and hot wine, were standing over the short blue flames of a gas stove. Florent at last confessed that a glass of something warm would be welcome. Monsieur Lebigre thereupon served them with three glasses of punch. In a basket near the pots were some smoking hot rolls which had only just arrived. However, as neither of the others took one, Florent likewise refrained, and drank his punch. He felt it slipping down into his empty stomach, like a steam of molten lead. It was

[4] *Fort* is the French term, literally "a strong man," as every market porter needs to be. – Translator.

Alexandre who paid for the "shout."

"He's a fine fellow, that Alexandre!" said Claude, when he and Florent found themselves alone again on the footway of the Rue Rambuteau. "He's a very amusing companion to take into the country. He's fond of showing his strength. And then he's so magnificently built! I have seen him stripped. Ah, if I could only get him to pose for me in the nude out in the open air! Well, we'll go and take a turn through the markets now, if you like."

Florent followed, yielding entirely to his new friend's guidance. A bright glow at the far end of the Rue Rambuteau announced the break of day. The far-spreading voice of the markets was become more sonorous, and every now and then the peals of a bell ringing in some distant pavilion mingled with the swelling, rising clamour. Claude and Florent entered one of the covered streets between the fish and poultry pavilions. Florent raised his eyes and looked at the lofty vault overhead, the inner timbers of which glistened amidst a black lacework of iron supports. As he turned into the great central thoroughfare he pictured himself in some strange town, with its various districts and suburbs, promenades and streets, squares and cross-roads, all suddenly placed under shelter on a rainy day by the whim of some gigantic power. The deep gloom brooding in the hollows of the roofs multiplied, as it were, the forest of pillars, and infinitely increased the number of the delicate ribs, railed galleries, and transparent shutters. And over the phantom city and far away into the depths of the shade, a teeming, flowering vegetation

of luxuriant metal-work, with spindle-shaped stems and twining knotted branches, covered the vast expanse as with the foliage of some ancient forest. Several departments of the markets still slumbered behind their closed iron gates. The butter and poultry pavilions displayed rows of little trellised stalls and long alleys, which lines of gas lights showed to be deserted. The fish market, however, had just been opened, and women were flitting to and fro amongst the white slabs littered with shadowy hampers and cloths. Among the vegetables and fruit and flowers the noise and bustle were gradually increasing. The whole place was by degree waking up, from the popular quarter where the cabbages are piled at four o'clock in the morning, to the lazy and wealthy district which only hangs up its pullets and pheasants when the hands of the clock point to eight.

The great covered alleys were now teeming with life. All along the footways on both sides of the road there were still many market gardeners, with other small growers from the environs of Paris, who displayed baskets containing their "gatherings" of the previous evening – bundles of vegetables and clusters of fruit. Whilst the crowd incessantly paced hither and thither, vehicles barred the road; and Florent, in order to pass them, had to press against some dingy sacks, like coal-sacks in appearance, and so numerous and heavy that the axle-trees of the vans bent beneath them. They were quite damp, and exhaled a fresh odour of seaweed. From a rent low down in the side of one of them a black stream of big mussels was trickling.

Florent and Claude had now to pause at every step. The fish was arriving and one after another the drays of the railway companies drove up laden with wooden cages full of the hampers and baskets that had come by train from the sea coast. And to get out of the way of the fish drays, which became more and more numerous and disquieting, the artist and Florent rushed amongst the wheels of the drays laden with butter and eggs and cheese, huge yellow vehicles bearing coloured lanterns, and drawn by four horses. The market porters carried the cases of eggs, and baskets of cheese and butter, into the auction pavilion, where clerks were making entries in note books by the light of the gas.

Claude was quite charmed with all this uproar, and forgot everything to gaze at some effect of light, some group of blouses, or the picturesque unloading of a cart. At last they extricated themselves from the crowd, and as they continued on their way along the main artery they presently found themselves amidst an exquisite perfume which seemed to be following them. They were in the cut-flower market. All over the footways, to the right and left, women were seated in front of large rectangular baskets full of bunches of roses, violets, dahlias, and marguerites. At times the clumps darkened and looked like splotches of blood, at others they brightened into silvery greys of the softest tones. A lighted candle, standing near one basket, set amidst the general blackness quite a melody of colour – the bright variegations of marguerites, the blood-red crimson of dahlias, the bluey purple of violets, and the warm flesh tints of roses. And nothing could

have been sweeter or more suggestive of springtide than this soft breath of perfume encountered on the footway, on emerging from the sharp odours of the fish market and the pestilential smell of the butter and the cheese.

Claude and Florent turned round and strolled about, loitering among the flowers. They halted with some curiosity before several women who were selling bunches of fern and bundles of vine-leaves, neatly tied up in packets of five and twenty. Then they turned down another covered alley, which was almost deserted, and where their footsteps echoed as though they had been walking through a church. Here they found a little cart, scarcely larger than a wheelbarrow, to which was harnessed a diminutive donkey, who, no doubt, felt bored, for at sight of them he began braying with such prolonged and sonorous force that the vast roofing of the markets fairly trembled. Then the horses began to neigh in reply, there was a sound of pawing and tramping, a distant uproar, which swelled, rolled along, then died away.

Meantime, in the Rue Berger in front of them, Claude and Florent perceived a number of bare, frontless, salesmen's shops, where, by the light of flaring gas jets, they could distinguish piles of hampers and fruit, enclosed by three dirty walls which were covered with addition sums in pencil. And the two wanderers were still standing there, contemplating this scene, when they noticed a well-dressed woman huddled up in a cab which looked quite lost and forlorn in the block of carts as it stealthily made

its way onwards.

"There's Cinderella coming back without her slippers," remarked Claude with a smile.

They began chatting together as they went back towards the markets. Claude whistled as he strolled along with his hands in his pockets, and expatiated on his love for this mountain of food which rises every morning in the very centre of Paris. He prowled about the footways night after night, dreaming of colossal still-life subjects, paintings of an extraordinary character. He had even started on one, having his friend Marjolin and that jade Cadine to pose for him; but it was hard work to paint those confounded vegetables and fruit and fish and meat – they were all so beautiful! Florent listened to the artist's enthusiastic talk with a void and hunger-aching stomach. It did not seem to occur to Claude that all those things were intended to be eaten. Their charm for him lay in their colour. Suddenly, however, he ceased speaking and, with a gesture that was habitual to him, tightened the long red sash which he wore under his green-stained coat.

And then with a sly expression he resumed:

"Besides, I breakfast here, through my eyes, at any rate, and that's better than getting nothing at all. Sometimes, when I've forgotten to dine on the previous day, I treat myself to a perfect fit of indigestion in the morning by watching the carts arrive here laden with all sorts of good things. On such mornings as those I love my vegetables more than ever. Ah! the exasperating part, the rank injustice of it all, is that those rascally Philistines really

eat these things!"

Then he went on to tell Florent of a supper to which a friend had treated him at Baratte's on a day of affluence. They had partaken of oysters, fish, and game. But Baratte's had sadly fallen, and all the carnival life of the old Marche des Innocents was now buried. In place thereof they had those huge central markets, that colossus of ironwork, that new and wonderful town. Fools might say what they liked; it was the embodiment of the spirit of the times. Florent, however, could not at first make out whether he was condemning the picturesqueness of Baratte's or its good cheer.

But Claude next began to inveigh against romanticism. He preferred his piles of vegetables, he said, to the rags of the middle ages; and he ended by reproaching himself with guilty weakness in making an etching of the Rue Pirouette. All those grimy old places ought to be levelled to the ground, he declared, and modern houses ought to be built in their stead.

"There!" he exclaimed, coming to a halt, "look at the corner of the footway yonder! Isn't that a picture readymade, ever so much more human and natural than all their confounded consumptive daubs?"

Along the covered way women were now selling hot soup and coffee. At one corner of the foot-pavement a large circle of customers clustered round a vendor of cabbage soup. The bright tin caldron, full of broth, was steaming over a little low stove, through the holes of which came the pale glow of the embers.

From a napkin-lined basket the woman took some thin slices of bread and dropped them into yellow cups; then with a ladle she filled the cups with liquor. Around her were saleswomen neatly dressed, market gardeners in blouses, porters with coats soiled by the loads they had carried, poor ragged vagabonds – in fact, all the early hungry ones of the markets, eating, and scalding their mouths, and drawing back their chins to avoid soiling them with the drippings from their spoons. The delighted artist blinked, and sought a point of view so as to get a good ensemble of the picture. That cabbage soup, however, exhaled a very strong odour. Florent, for his part, turned his head away, distressed by the sight of the full cups which the customers emptied in silence, glancing around them the while like suspicious animals. As the woman began serving a fresh customer, Claude himself was affected by the odorous steam of the soup, which was wafted full in his face.

He again tightened his sash, half amused and half annoyed. Then resuming his walk, and alluding to the punch paid for by Alexandre, he said to Florent in a low voice:

"It's very odd, but have you ever noticed that although a man can always find somebody to treat him to something to drink, he can never find a soul who will stand him anything to eat?"

The dawn was now rising. The houses on the Boulevard de Sebastopol at the end of the Rue de la Cossonnerie were still black; but above the sharp line of their slate roofs a patch of pale blue sky, circumscribed by the arch-pieces of the covered

way, showed like a gleaming half-moon. Claude, who had been bending over some grated openings on a level with the ground, through which a glimpse could be obtained of deep cellars where gas lights glimmered, now glanced up into the air between the lofty pillars, as though scanning the dark roofs which fringed the clear sky. Then he halted again, with his eyes fixed on one of the light iron ladders which connect the superposed market roofs and give access from one to the other. Florent asked him what he was seeking there.

"I'm looking for that scamp of a Marjolin," replied the artist. "He's sure to be in some guttering up there, unless, indeed, he's been spending the night in the poultry cellars. I want him to give me a sitting."

Then he went on to relate how a market saleswoman had found his friend Marjolin one morning in a pile of cabbages, and how Marjolin had grown up in all liberty on the surrounding footways. When an attempt had been made to send him to school he had fallen ill, and it had been necessary to bring him back to the markets. He knew every nook and corner of them, and loved them with a filial affection, leading the agile life of a squirrel in that forest of ironwork. He and Cadine, the hussy whom Mother Chantemesse had picked up one night in the old Market of the Innocents, made a pretty couple – he, a splendid foolish fellow, as glowing as a Rubens, with a ruddy down on his skin which attracted the sunlight; and she, slight and sly, with a comical phiz under her tangle of black curly hair.

Whilst talking Claude quickened his steps, and soon brought his companion back to Saint Eustache again. Florent, whose legs were once more giving way, dropped upon a bench near the omnibus office. The morning air was freshening. At the far end of the Rue Rambuteau rosy gleams were streaking the milky sky, which higher up was slashed by broad grey rifts. Such was the sweet balsamic scent of this dawn, that Florent for a moment fancied himself in the open country, on the brow of a hill. But behind the bench Claude pointed out to him the many aromatic herbs and bulbs on sale. All along the footway skirting the tripe market there were, so to say, fields of thyme and lavender, garlic and shallots; and round the young plane-trees on the pavement the vendors had twined long branches of laurel, forming trophies of greenery. The strong scent of the laurel leaves prevailed over every other odour.

At present the luminous dial of Saint Eustache was paling as a night-light does when surprised by the dawn. The gas jets in the wine shops in the neighbouring streets went out one by one, like stars extinguished by the brightness. And Florent gazed at the vast markets now gradually emerging from the gloom, from the dreamland in which he had beheld them, stretching out their ranges of open palaces. Greenish-grey in hue, they looked more solid now, and even more colossal with their prodigious masting of columns upholding an endless expanse of roofs. They rose up in geometrically shaped masses; and when all the inner lights had been extinguished and the square uniform buildings were steeped

in the rising dawn, they seemed typical of some gigantic modern machine, some engine, some caldron for the supply of a whole people, some colossal belly, bolted and riveted, built up of wood and glass and iron, and endowed with all the elegance and power of some mechanical motive appliance working there with flaring furnaces, and wild, bewildering revolutions of wheels.

Claude, however, had enthusiastically sprung on to the bench, and stood upon it. He compelled his companion to admire the effect of the dawn rising over the vegetables. There was a perfect sea of these extending between the two clusters of pavilions from Saint Eustache to the Rue des Halles. And in the two open spaces at either end the flood of greenery rose to even greater height, and quite submerged the pavements. The dawn appeared slowly, softly grey in hue, and spreading a light water-colour tint over everything. These surging piles akin to hurrying waves, this river of verdure rushing along the roadway like an autumn torrent, assumed delicate shadowy tints – tender violet, blush-rose, and greeny yellow, all the soft, light hues which at sunrise make the sky look like a canopy of shot silk. And by degrees, as the fires of dawn rose higher and higher at the far end of the Rue Rambuteau, the mass of vegetation grew brighter and brighter, emerging more and more distinctly from the bluey gloom that clung to the ground. Salad herbs, cabbage-lettuce, endive, and succory, with rich soil still clinging to their roots, exposed their swelling hearts; bundles of spinach, bundles of sorrel, clusters of artichokes, piles of peas and beans, mounds of cos-lettuce, tied round with straws,

sounded every note in the whole gamut of greenery, from the sheeny lacquer-like green of the pods to the deep-toned green of the foliage; a continuous gamut with ascending and descending scales which died away in the variegated tones of the heads of celery and bundles of leeks. But the highest and most sonorous notes still came from the patches of bright carrots and snowy turnips, strewn in prodigious quantities all along the markets and lighting them up with the medley of their two colours.

At the crossway in the Rue des Halles cabbages were piled up in mountains; there were white ones, hard and compact as metal balls, curly savoys, whose great leaves made them look like basins of green bronze, and red cabbages, which the dawn seemed to transform into superb masses of bloom with the hue of wine-lees, splotched with dark purple and carmine. At the other side of the markets, at the crossway near Saint Eustache, the end of the Rue Rambuteau was blocked by a barricade of orange-hued pumpkins, sprawling with swelling bellies in two superposed rows. And here and there gleamed the glistening ruddy brown of a hamper of onions, the blood-red crimson of a heap of tomatoes, the quiet yellow of a display of marrows, and the sombre violet of the fruit of the eggplant; while numerous fat black radishes still left patches of gloom amidst the quivering brilliance of the general awakening.

Claude clapped his hands at the sight. He declared that those "blackguard vegetables" were wild, mad, sublime! He stoutly maintained that they were not yet dead, but, gathered in the

previous evening, waited for the morning sun to bid him good-bye from the flag-stones of the market. He could observe their vitality, he declared, see their leaves stir and open as though their roots were yet firmly and warmly embedded in well-manured soil. And here, in the markets, he added, he heard the death-rattle of all the kitchen gardens of the environs of Paris.

A crowd of white caps, loose black jackets, and blue blouses was swarming in the narrow paths between the various piles. The big baskets of the market porters passed along slowly, above the heads of the throng. Retail dealers, costermongers, and greengrocers were making their purchases in haste. Corporals and nuns clustered round the mountains of cabbages, and college cooks prowled about inquisitively, on the look-out for good bargains. The unloading was still going on; heavy tumbrels, discharging their contents as though these were so many paving-stones, added more and more waves to the sea of greenery which was now beating against the opposite footways. And from the far end of the Rue du Pont Neuf fresh rows of carts were still and ever arriving.

"What a fine sight it is!" exclaimed Claude in an ecstasy of enthusiasm.

Florent was suffering keenly. He fancied that all this was some supernatural temptation, and, unwilling to look at the markets any longer, turned towards Saint Eustache, a side view of which he obtained from the spot where he now stood. With its roses, and broad arched windows, its bell-turret, and roofs of slate, it looked

as though painted in sepia against the blue of the sky. He fixed his eyes at last on the sombre depths of the Rue Montorgueil, where fragments of gaudy sign boards showed conspicuously, and on the corner of the Rue Montmartre, where there were balconies gleaming with letters of gold. And when he again glanced at the cross-roads, his gaze was solicited by other sign boards, on which such inscriptions as "Druggist and Chemist," "Flour and Grain" appeared in big red and black capital letters upon faded backgrounds. Near these corners, houses with narrow windows were now awakening, setting amidst the newness and airiness of the Rue du Pont Neuf a few of the yellow ancient facades of olden Paris. Standing at the empty windows of the great drapery shop at the corner of the Rue Rambuteau a number of spruce-looking counter-jumpers in their shirt sleeves, with snowy-white wristbands and tight-fitting pantaloons, were "dressing" their goods. Farther away, in the windows of the severe looking, barrack-like Guillot establishment, biscuits in gilt wrappers and fancy cakes on glass stands were tastefully set out. All the shops were now open; and workmen in white blouses, with tools under their arms, were hurrying along the road.

Claude had not yet got down from the bench. He was standing on tiptoe in order to see the farther down the streets. Suddenly, in the midst of the crowd which he overlooked, he caught sight of a fair head with long wavy locks, followed by a little black one covered with curly tumbled hair.

"Hallo, Marjolin! Hallo, Cadine!" he shouted; and then, as

his voice was drowned by the general uproar, he jumped to the ground and started off. But all at once, recollecting that he had left Florent behind him, he hastily came back. “I live at the end of the Impasse des Bourdonnais,” he said rapidly. “My name’s written in chalk on the door, Claude Lantier. Come and see the etching of the Rue Pirouette.”

Then he vanished. He was quite ignorant of Florent’s name, and, after favouring him with his views on art, parted from him as he had met him, at the roadside.

Florent was now alone, and at first this pleased him. Ever since Madame Francoise had picked him up in the Avenue de Neuilly he had been coming and going in a state of pain fraught somnolence which had quite prevented him from forming any definite ideas of his surroundings. Now at last he was at liberty to do what he liked, and he tried to shake himself free from that intolerable vision of teeming food by which he was pursued. But his head still felt empty and dizzy, and all that he could find within him was a kind of vague fear. The day was now growing quite bright, and he could be distinctly seen. He looked down at his wretched shabby coat and trousers. He buttoned the first, dusted the latter, and strove to make a bit of a toilet, fearing lest those black rags of his should proclaim aloud whence he had come. He was seated in the middle of the bench, by the side of some wandering vagabonds who had settled themselves there while waiting for the sunrise. The neighbourhood of the markets is a favourite spot with vagrants in the small hours of the

morning. However, two constables, still in night uniform, with cloaks and *kepis*, paced up and down the footway side by side, their hands resting behind their backs; and every time they passed the bench they glanced at the game which they scented there. Florent felt sure that they recognised him, and were consulting together about arresting him. At this thought his anguish of mind became extreme. He felt a wild desire to get up and run away; but he did not dare to do so, and was quite at a loss as to how he might take himself off. The repeated glances of the constables, their cold, deliberate scrutiny caused him the keenest torture. At length he rose from the bench, making a great effort to restrain himself from rushing off as quickly as his long legs could carry him; and succeeded in walking quietly away, though his shoulders quivered in the fear he felt of suddenly feeling the rough hands of the constables clutching at his collar from behind.

He had now only one thought, one desire, which was to get away from the markets as quickly as possible. He would wait and make his investigations later on, when the footways should be clear. The three streets which met here – the Rue Montmartre, Rue Montorgueil, and Rue Turbigo – filled him with uneasiness. They were blocked by vehicles of all kinds, and their footways were crowded with vegetables. Florent went straight along as far as the Rue Pierre Lescot, but there the cress and the potato markets seemed to him insuperable obstacles. So he resolved to take the Rue Rambuteau. On reaching the Boulevard de Sebastopol, however, he came across such a block

of vans and carts and waggonettes that he turned back and proceeded along the Rue Saint Denis. Then he got amongst the vegetables once more. Retail dealers had just set up their stalls, formed of planks resting on tall hampers; and the deluge of cabbages and carrots and turnips began all over again. The markets were overflowing. Florent tried to make his escape from this pursuing flood which ever overtook him in his flight. He tried the Rue de la Cossonnerie, the Rue Berger, the Square des Innocents, the Rue de la Ferronnerie, and the Rue des Halles. And at last he came to a standstill, quite discouraged and scared at finding himself unable to escape from the infernal circle of vegetables, which now seemed to dance around him, twining clinging verdure about his legs.

The everlasting stream of carts and horses stretched away as far as the Rue de Rivoli and the Place de l'Hotel de Ville. Huge vans were carrying away supplies for all the greengrocers and fruiterers of an entire district; *chars-a-bancs* were starting for the suburbs with straining, groaning sides. In the Rue de Pont Neuf Florent got completely bewildered. He stumbled upon a crowd of hand-carts, in which numerous costermongers were arranging their purchases. Amongst them he recognised Lacaille, who went off along the Rue Saint Honore, pushing a barrow of carrots and cauliflowers before him. Florent followed him, in the hope that he would guide him out of the mob. The pavement was now quite slippery, although the weather was dry, and the litter of artichoke stalks, turnip tops, and leaves of all kinds

made walking somewhat dangerous. Florent stumbled at almost every step. He lost sight of Lacaille in the Rue Vauvilliers, and on approaching the corn market he again found the streets barricaded with vehicles. Then he made no further attempt to struggle; he was once more in the clutch of the markets, and their stream of life bore him back. Slowly retracing his steps, he presently found himself by Saint Eustache again.

He now heard the loud continuous rumbling of the waggons that were setting out from the markets. Paris was doling out the daily food of its two million inhabitants. These markets were like some huge central organ beating with giant force, and sending the blood of life through every vein of the city. The uproar was akin to that of colossal jaws – a mighty sound to which each phase of the provisioning contributed, from the whip-cracking of the larger retail dealers as they started off for the district markets to the dragging pit-a-pat of the old shoes worn by the poor women who hawked their lettuces in baskets from door to door.

Florent turned into a covered way on the left, intersecting the group of four pavilions whose deep silent gloom he had remarked during the night. He hoped that he might there find a refuge, discover some corner in which he could hide himself. But these pavilions were now as busy, as lively as the others. Florent walked on to the end of the street. Drays were driving up at a quick trot, crowding the market with cages full of live poultry, and square hampers in which dead birds were stowed in deep layers. On the other side of the way were other drays from which porters were

removing freshly killed calves, wrapped in canvas, and laid at full length in baskets, whence only the four bleeding stumps of their legs protruded. There were also whole sheep, and sides and quarters of beef. Butchers in long white aprons marked the meat with a stamp, carried it off, weighted it, and hung it up on hooks in the auction room. Florent, with his face close to the grating, stood gazing at the rows of hanging carcasses, at the ruddy sheep and oxen and paler calves, all streaked with yellow fat and sinews, and with bellies yawning open. Then he passed along the sidewalk where the tripe market was held, amidst the pallid calves' feet and heads, the rolled tripe neatly packed in boxes, the brains delicately set out in flat baskets, the sanguineous livers, and purplish kidneys. He checked his steps in front of some long two-wheeled carts, covered with round awnings, and containing sides of pork hung on each side of the vehicle over a bed of straw. Seen from the back end, the interiors of the carts looked like recesses of some tabernacle, like some taper-lighted chapel, such was the glow of all the bare flesh they contained. And on the beds of straw were lines of tin cans, full of the blood that had trickled from the pigs. Thereupon Florent was attacked by a sort of rage. The insipid odour of the meat, the pungent smell of the tripe exasperated him. He made his way out of the covered road, preferring to return once more to the footwalk of the Rue de Pont Neuf.

He was enduring perfect agony. The shiver of early morning came upon him; his teeth chattered, and he was afraid of falling

to the ground and finding himself unable to rise again. He looked about, but could see no vacant place on any bench. Had he found one he would have dropped asleep there, even at the risk of being awakened by the police. Then, as giddiness nearly blinded him, he leaned for support against a tree, with his eyes closed and his ears ringing. The raw carrot, which he had swallowed almost without chewing, was torturing his stomach, and the glass of punch which he had drunk seemed to have intoxicated him. He was indeed intoxicated with misery, weariness, and hunger. Again he felt a burning fire in the pit of the stomach, to which he every now and then carried his hands, as though he were trying to stop up a hole through which all his life was oozing away. As he stood there he fancied that the foot-pavement rocked beneath him; and thinking that he might perhaps lessen his sufferings by walking, he went straight on through the vegetables again. He lost himself among them. He went along a narrow footway, turned down another, was forced to retrace his steps, bungled in doing so, and once more found himself amidst piles of greenery. Some heaps were so high that people seemed to be walking between walls of bundles and bunches. Only their heads slightly overtopped these ramparts, and passed along showing whitely or blackly according to the colour of their hats or caps; whilst the huge swinging baskets, carried aloft on a level with the greenery, looked like osier boats floating on a stagnant, mossy lake.

Florent stumbled against a thousand obstacles – against porters taking up their burdens, and saleswomen disputing in

rough tones. He slipped over the thick bed of waste leaves and stumps which covered the footway, and was almost suffocated by the powerful odour of crushed verdure. At last he halted in a sort of confused stupor, and surrendered to the pushing of some and the insults of others; and then he became a mere waif, a piece of wreckage tossed about on the surface of that surging sea.

He was fast losing all self-respect, and would willingly have begged. The recollection of his foolish pride during the night exasperated him. If he had accepted Madame Francois's charity, if he had not felt such idiotic fear of Claude, he would not now have been stranded there groaning in the midst of these cabbages. And he was especially angry with himself for not having questioned the artist when they were in the Rue Pirouette. Now, alas! he was alone and deserted, liable to die in the streets like a homeless dog.

For the last time he raised his eyes and looked at the markets. At present they were glittering in the sun. A broad ray was pouring through the covered road from the far end, cleaving the massy pavilions with an arcade of light, whilst fiery beams rained down upon the far expanse of roofs. The huge iron framework grew less distinct, assumed a bluey hue, became nothing but a shadowy silhouette outlined against the flaming flare of the sunrise. But up above a pane of glass took fire, drops of light trickled down the broad sloping zinc plates to the gutterings; and then, below, a tumultuous city appeared amidst a haze of dancing golden dust. The general awakening had spread, from the first

start of the market gardeners snoring in their cloaks, to the brisk rolling of the food-laden railway drays. And the whole city was opening its iron gates, the footways were humming, the pavilions roaring with life. Shouts and cries of all kinds rent the air; it was as though the strain, which Florent had heard gathering force in the gloom ever since four in the morning, had now attained its fullest volume. To the right and left, on all sides indeed, the sharp cries accompanying the auction sales sounded shrilly like flutes amidst the sonorous bass roar of the crowd. It was the fish, the butter, the poultry, and the meat being sold.

The pealing of bells passed through the air, imparting a quiver to the buzzing of the opening markets. Around Florent the sun was setting the vegetables aflame. He no longer perceived any of those soft water-colour tints which had predominated in the pale light of early morning. The swelling hearts of the lettuces were now gleaming brightly, the scales of greenery showed forth with wondrous vigour, the carrots glowed blood-red, the turnips shone as if incandescent in the triumphant radiance of the sun.

On Florent's left some waggons were discharging fresh loads of cabbages. He turned his eyes, and away in the distance saw carts yet streaming out of the Rue Turbigo. The tide was still and ever rising. He had felt it about his ankles, then on a level with his stomach, and now it was threatening to drown him altogether. Blinded and submerged, his ears buzzing, his stomach overpowered by all that he had seen, he asked for mercy; and wild grief took possession of him at the thought of dying there of

starvation in the very heart of glutted Paris, amidst the effulgent awakening of her markets. Big hot tears started from his eyes.

Walking on, he had now reached one of the larger alleys. Two women, one short and old, the other tall and withered, passed him, talking together as they made their way towards the pavilions.

"So you've come to do your marketing, Mademoiselle Saget?" said the tall withered woman.

"Well, yes, Madame Lecoeur, if you can give it such a name as marketing. I'm a lone woman, you know, and live on next to nothing. I should have liked a small cauliflower, but everything is so dear. How is butter selling to-day?"

"At thirty-four sous. I have some which is first rate. Will you come and look at it?"

"Well, I don't know if I shall want any to-day; I've still a little lard left."

Making a supreme effort, Florent followed these two women. He recollected having heard Claude name the old one – Mademoiselle Saget – when they were in the Rue Pirouette; and he made up his mind to question her when she should have parted from her tall withered acquaintance.

"And how's your niece?" Mademoiselle Saget now asked.

"Oh, La Sarriette does as she likes," Madame Lecoeur replied in a bitter tone. "She's chosen to set up for herself and her affairs no longer concern me. When her lovers have beggared her, she needn't come to me for any bread."

"And you were so good to her, too! She ought to do well this year; fruit is yielding big profits. And your brother-in-law, how is he?"

"Oh, he – "

Madame Lecoeur bit her lips, and seemed disinclined to say anything more.

"Still the same as ever, I suppose?" continued Mademoiselle Saget. "He's a very worthy man. Still, I once heard it said that he spent his money in such a way that – "

"But does anyone know how he spends his money?" interrupted Madame Lecoeur, with much asperity. "He's a miserly niggard, a scurvy fellow, that's what I say! Do you know, mademoiselle, he'd see me die of starvation rather than lend me five francs! He knows quite well that there's nothing to be made out of butter this season, any more than out of cheese and eggs; whereas he can sell as much poultry as ever he chooses. But not once, I assure you, not once has he offered to help me. I am too proud, as you know, to accept any assistance from him; still it would have pleased me to have had it offered."

"Ah, by the way, there he is, your brother-in-law!" suddenly exclaimed Mademoiselle Saget, lowering her voice.

The two women turned and gazed at a man who was crossing the road to enter the covered way close by.

"I'm in a hurry," murmured Madame Lecoeur. "I left my stall without anyone to look after it; and, besides, I don't want to speak to him."

However, Florent also had mechanically turned round and glanced at the individual referred to. This was a short, squarely-built man, with a cheery look and grey, close-cut brush-like hair. Under each arm he was carrying a fat goose, whose head hung down and flapped against his legs. And then all at once Florent made a gesture of delight. Forgetting his fatigue, he ran after the man, and, overtaking him, tapped him on the shoulder.

"Gavard!" he exclaimed.

The other raised his head and stared with surprise at Florent's tall black figure, which he did not at first recognise. Then all at once: "What! is it you?" he cried, as if overcome with amazement. "Is it really you?"

He all but let his geese fall, and seemed unable to master his surprise. On catching sight, however, of his sister-in-law and Mademoiselle Saget, who were watching the meeting at a distance, he began to walk on again.

"Come along; don't let us stop here," he said. "There are too many eyes and tongues about."

When they were in the covered way they began to chat. Florent related how he had gone to the Rue Pirouette, at which Gavard seemed much amused and laughed heartily. Then he told Florent that his brother Quenu had moved from that street and had reopened his pork shop close by, in the Rue Rambuteau, just in front of the markets. And afterwards he was again highly amused to hear that Florent had been wandering about all that morning with Claude Lantier, an odd kind of fish, who, strangely enough,

said he, was Madame Quenu's nephew. Thus chatting, Gavard was on the point of taking Florent straight to the pork shop, but, on hearing that he had returned to France with false papers, he suddenly assumed all sorts of solemn and mysterious airs, and insisted upon walking some fifteen paces in front of him, to avoid attracting attention. After passing through the poultry pavilion, where he hung his geese up in his stall, he began to cross the Rue Rambuteau, still followed by Florent; and then, halting in the middle of the road, he glanced significantly towards a large and well-appointed pork shop.

The sun was obliquely enfilading the Rue Rambuteau, lighting up the fronts of the houses, in the midst of which the Rue Pirouette formed a dark gap. At the other end the great pile of Saint Eustache glittered brightly in the sunlight like some huge reliquary. And right through the crowd, from the distant crossway, an army of street-sweepers was advancing in file down the road, the brooms swishing rhythmically, while scavengers provided with forks pitched the collected refuse into tumbrels, which at intervals of a score of paces halted with a noise like the chattering of broken pots. However, all Florent's attention was concentrated on the pork shop, open and radiant in the rising sun.

It stood very near the corner of the Rue Pirouette and provided quite a feast for the eyes. Its aspect was bright and smiling, touches of brilliant colour showing conspicuously amidst all the snowy marble. The sign board, on which the name of QUENU-GRADELLE glittered in fat gilt letters encircled by

leaves and branches painted on a soft-hued background, was protected by a sheet of glass. On two panels, one on each side of the shop-front, and both, like the board above, covered with glass, were paintings representing various chubby little cupids playing amidst boars' heads, pork chops and strings of sausages; and these latter still-life subjects, embellished with scrolls and bows, had been painted in such soft tones that the uncooked pork which they represented had the pinkiness of raspberry jam. Within this pleasing framework arose the window display, arranged upon a bed of fine blue-paper shavings. Here and there fern-leaves, tastefully disposed, changed the plates which they encircled into bouquets fringed with foliage. There was a wealth of rich, luscious, melting things. Down below, quite close to the window, jars of preserved sausage-meat were interspersed with pots of mustard. Above these were some small, plump, boned hams. Golden with their dressings of toasted bread-crumbs, and adorned at the knuckles with green rosettes. Next came the larger dishes, some containing preserved Strasburg tongues, enclosed in bladders coloured a bright red and varnished, so that they looked quite sanguineous beside the pale sausages and trotters; then there were black-puddings coiled like harmless snakes, healthy looking chitterlings piled up two by two; Lyons sausages in little silver copes that made them look like choristers; hot pies, with little banner-like tickets stuck in them; big hams, and great glazed joints of veal and pork, whose jelly was as limpid as sugar-candy. In the rear were other dishes and earthen pans

in which meat, minced and sliced, slumbered beneath lakes of melted fat. And betwixt the various plates and dishes, jars and bottle of sauce, cullis, stock and preserved truffles, pans of *foie gras* and boxes of sardines and tunny-fish were strewn over the bed of paper shavings. A box of creamy cheeses, and one of edible snails, the apertures of whose shells were dressed with butter and parsley, had been placed carelessly at either corner. Finally, from a bar overhead strings of sausages and saveloys of various sizes hung down symmetrically like cords and tassels; while in the rear fragments of intestinal membranes showed like lacework, like some *guipure* of white flesh. And on the highest tier in this sanctuary of gluttony, amidst the membranes and between two bouquets of purple gladioli, the window stand was crowned by a small square aquarium, ornamented with rock-work, and containing a couple of gold-fish, which were continually swimming round it.

Florent's whole body thrilled at the sight. Then he perceived a woman standing in the sunlight at the door of the shop. With her prosperous, happy look in the midst of all those inviting things she added to the cherry aspect of the place. She was a fine woman and quite blocked the doorway. Still, she was not over stout, but simply buxom, with the full ripeness of her thirty years. She had only just risen, yet her glossy hair was already brushed smooth and arranged in little flat bands over her temples, giving her an appearance of extreme neatness. She had the fine skin, the pinky-white complexion common to those whose life is

spent in an atmosphere of raw meat and fat. There was a touch of gravity about her demeanour, her movements were calm and slow; what mirth or pleasure she felt she expressed by her eyes, her lips retaining all their seriousness. A collar of starched linen encircled her neck, white sleevelets reached to her elbows, and a white apron fell even over the tips of her shoes, so that you saw but little of her black cashmere dress, which clung tightly to her well-rounded shoulders and swelling bosom. The sun rays poured hotly upon all the whiteness she displayed. However, although her bluish-black hair, her rosy face, and bright sleeves and apron were steeped in the glow of light, she never once blinked, but enjoyed her morning bath of sunshine with blissful tranquillity, her soft eyes smiling the while at the flow and riot of the markets. She had the appearance of a very worthy woman.

"That is your brother's wife, your sister-in-law, Lisa," Gavard said to Florent.

He had saluted her with a slight inclination of the head. Then he darted along the house passage, continuing to take the most minute precautions, and unwilling to let Florent enter the premises through the shop, though there was no one there. It was evident that he felt great pleasure in dabbling in what he considered to be a compromising business.

"Wait here," he said, "while I go to see whether your brother is alone. You can come in when I clap my hands."

Thereupon he opened a door at the end of the passage. But as soon as Florent heard his brother's voice behind it, he sprang

inside at a bound. Quenu, who was much attached to him, threw his arms round his neck, and they kissed each other like children.

"Ah! dash it all! Is it really you, my dear fellow?" stammered the pork butcher. "I never expected to see you again. I felt sure you were dead! Why, only yesterday I was saying to Lisa, 'That poor fellow, Florent!'"

However, he stopped short, and popping his head into the shop, called out, "Lisa! Lisa!" Then turning towards a little girl who had crept into a corner, he added, "Pauline, go and find your mother."

The little one did not stir, however. She was an extremely fine child, five years of age, with a plump chubby face, bearing a strong resemblance to that of the pork butcher's wife. In her arms she was holding a huge yellow cat, which had cheerfully surrendered itself to her embrace, with its legs dangling downwards; and she now squeezed it tightly with her little arms, as if she were afraid that yonder shabby-looking gentleman might rob her of it.

Lisa, however, leisurely made her appearance.

"Here is my brother Florent!" exclaimed Quenu.

Lisa addressed him as "Monsieur," and gave him a kindly welcome. She scanned him quietly from head to foot, without evincing any disagreeable surprise. Merely a faint pout appeared for a moment on her lips. Then, standing by, she began to smile at her husband's demonstrations of affection. Quenu, however, at last recovered his calmness, and noticing Florent's fleshless,

poverty-stricken appearance, exclaimed: “Ah, my poor fellow, you haven’t improved in your looks since you were over yonder. For my part, I’ve grown fat; but what would you have!”

He had indeed grown fat, too fat for his thirty years. He seemed to be bursting through his shirt and apron, through all the snowy-white linen in which he was swathed like a huge doll. With advancing years his clean-shaven face had become elongated, assuming a faint resemblance to the snout of one of those pigs amidst whose flesh his hands worked and lived the whole day through. Florent scarcely recognised him. He had now seated himself, and his glance turned from his brother to handsome Lisa and little Pauline. They were all brimful of health, squarely built, sleek, in prime condition; and in their turn they looked at Florent with the uneasy astonishment which corpulent people feel at the sight of a scraggy person. The very cat, whose skin was distended by fat, dilated its yellow eyes and scrutinised him with an air of distrust.

“You’ll wait till we have breakfast, won’t you?” asked Quenu. “We have it early, at ten o’clock.”

A penetrating odour of cookery pervaded the place; and Florent looked back upon the terrible night which he had just spent, his arrival amongst the vegetables, his agony in the midst of the markets, the endless avalanches of food from which he had just escaped. And then in a low tone and with a gentle smile he responded:

“No; I’m really very hungry, you see.”

CHAPTER II

Florent had just begun to study law in Paris when his mother died. She lived at Le Vigan, in the department of the Gard, and had taken for her second husband one Quenu, a native of Yvetot in Normandy, whom some sub-prefect had transplanted to the south and then forgotten there. He had remained in employment at the sub-prefecture, finding the country charming, the wine good, and the women very amiable. Three years after his marriage he had been carried off by a bad attack of indigestion, leaving as sole legacy to his wife a sturdy boy who resembled him. It was only with very great difficulty that the widow could pay the college fees of Florent, her elder son, the issue of her first marriage. He was a very gentle youth, devoted to his studies, and constantly won the chief prizes at school. It was upon him that his mother lavished all her affection and based all her hopes. Perhaps, in bestowing so much love on this slim pale youth, she was giving evidence of her preference for her first husband, a tender-hearted, caressing Provencal, who had loved her devotedly. Quenu, whose good humour and amiability had at first attracted her, had perhaps displayed too much self-satisfaction, and shown too plainly that he looked upon himself as the main source of happiness. At all events she formed the opinion that her younger son – and in southern families younger sons are still often sacrificed – would never do any good; so

she contented herself with sending him to a school kept by a neighbouring old maid, where the lad learned nothing but how to idle his time away. The two brothers grew up far apart from each other, as though they were strangers.

When Florent arrived at Le Vigan his mother was already buried. She had insisted upon having her illness concealed from him till the very last moment, for fear of disturbing his studies. Thus he found little Quenu, who was then twelve years old, sitting and sobbing alone on a table in the middle of the kitchen. A furniture dealer, a neighbour, gave him particulars of his mother's last hours. She had reached the end of her resources, had killed herself by the hard work which she had undertaken to earn sufficient money that her elder son might continue his legal studies. To her modest trade in ribbons, the profits of which were but small, she had been obliged to add other occupations, which kept her up very late at night. Her one idea of seeing Florent established as an advocate, holding a good position in the town, had gradually caused her to become hard and miserly, without pity for either herself or others. Little Quenu was allowed to wander about in ragged breeches, and in blouses from which the sleeves were falling away. He never dared to serve himself at table, but waited till he received his allowance of bread from his mother's hands. She gave herself equally thin slices, and it was to the effects of this regimen that she had succumbed, in deep despair at having failed to accomplish her self-allotted task.

This story made a most painful impression upon Florent's

tender nature, and his sobs wellnigh choked him. He took his little half brother in his arms, held him to his breast, and kissed him as though to restore to him the love of which he had unwittingly deprived him. Then he looked at the lad's gaping shoes, torn sleeves, and dirty hands, at all the manifest signs of wretchedness and neglect. And he told him that he would take him away, and that they would both live happily together. The next day, when he began to inquire into affairs, he felt afraid that he would not be able to keep sufficient money to pay for the journey back to Paris. However, he was determined to leave Le Vigan at any cost. He was fortunately able to sell the little ribbon business, and this enabled him to discharge his mother's debts, for despite her strictness in money matters she had gradually run up bills. Then, as there was nothing left, his mother's neighbour, the furniture dealer, offered him five hundred francs for her chattels and stock of linen. It was a very good bargain for the dealer, but the young man thanked him with tears in his eyes. He bought his brother some new clothes, and took him away that same evening.

On his return to Paris he gave up all thought of continuing to attend the Law School, and postponed every ambitious project. He obtained a few pupils, and established himself with little Quenu in the Rue Royer Collard, at the corner of the Rue Saint Jacques, in a big room which he furnished with two iron bedsteads, a wardrobe, a table, and four chairs. He now had a child to look after, and this assumed paternity was very pleasing

to him. During the earlier days he attempted to give the lad some lessons when he returned home in the evening, but Quenu was an unwilling pupil. He was dull of understanding, and refused to learn, bursting into tears and regretfully recalling the time when his mother had allowed him to run wild in the streets. Florent thereupon stopped his lessons in despair, and to console the lad promised him a holiday of indefinite length. As an excuse for his own weakness he repeated that he had not brought his brother to Paris to distress him. To see him grow up in happiness became his chief desire. He quite worshipped the boy, was charmed with his merry laughter, and felt infinite joy in seeing him about him, healthy and vigorous, and without a care. Florent for his part remained very slim and lean in his threadbare coat, and his face began to turn yellow amidst all the drudgery and worry of teaching; but Quenu grew up plump and merry, a little dense, indeed, and scarce able to read or write, but endowed with high spirits which nothing could ruffle, and which filled the big gloomy room in the Rue Royer Collard with gaiety.

Years, meantime, passed by. Florent, who had inherited all his mother's spirit of devotion, kept Quenu at home as though he were a big, idle girl. He did not even suffer him to perform any petty domestic duties, but always went to buy the provisions himself, and attended to the cooking and other necessary matters. This kept him, he said, from indulging in his own bad thoughts. He was given to gloominess, and fancied that he was disposed to evil. When he returned home in the evening,

splashed with mud, and his head bowed by the annoyances to which other people's children had subjected him, his heart melted beneath the embrace of the sturdy lad whom he found spinning his top on the tiled flooring of the big room. Quenu laughed at his brother's clumsiness in making omelettes, and at the serious fashion in which he prepared the soup-beef and vegetables. When the lamp was extinguished, and Florent lay in bed, he sometimes gave way to feelings of sadness. He longed to resume his legal studies, and strove to map out his duties in such wise as to secure time to follow the programme of the faculty. He succeeded in doing this, and was then perfectly happy. But a slight attack of fever, which confined him to his room for a week, made such a hole in his purse, and caused him so much alarm, that he abandoned all idea of completing his studies. The boy was now getting a big fellow, and Florent took a post as teacher in a school in the Rue de l'Estrapade, at a salary of eighteen hundred francs per annum. This seemed like a fortune to him. By dint of economy he hoped to be able to amass a sum of money which would set Quenu going in the world. When the lad reached his eighteenth year Florent still treated him as though he were a daughter for whom a dowry must be provided.

However, during his brother's brief illness Quenu himself had made certain reflections. One morning he proclaimed his desire to work, saying that he was now old enough to earn his own living. Florent was deeply touched at this. Just opposite, on the other side of the street, lived a working watchmaker whom

Quenu, through the curtainless window, could see leaning over a little table, manipulating all sorts of delicate things, and patiently gazing at them through a magnifying glass all day long. The lad was much attracted by the sight, and declared that he had a taste for watchmaking. At the end of a fortnight, however, he became restless, and began to cry like a child of ten, complaining that the work was too complicated, and that he would never be able to understand all the silly little things that enter into the construction of a watch.

His next whim was to be a locksmith; but this calling he found too fatiguing. In a couple of years he tried more than ten different trades. Florent opined that he acted rightly, that it was wrong to take up a calling one did not like. However, Quenu's fine eagerness to work for his living strained the resources of the little establishment very seriously. Since he had begun flitting from one workshop to another there had been a constant succession of fresh expenses; money had gone in new clothes, in meals taken away from home, and in the payment of footings among fellow workmen. Florent's salary of eighteen hundred francs was no longer sufficient, and he was obliged to take a couple of pupils in the evenings. For eight years he had continued to wear the same old coat.

However, the two brothers had made a friend. One side of the house in which they lived overlooked the Rue Saint Jacques, where there was a large poultry-roasting establishment[5] kept

[5] These rotisseries, now all but extinct, were at one time a particular feature of the

by a worthy man called Gavard, whose wife was dying from consumption amidst an atmosphere redolent of plump fowls. When Florent returned home too late to cook a scrap of meat, he was in the habit of laying out a dozen sous or so on a small portion of turkey or goose at this shop. Such days were feast days. Gavard in time grew interested in this tall, scraggy customer, learned his history, and invited Quenu into his shop. Before long the young fellow was constantly to be found there. As soon as his brother left the house he came downstairs and installed himself at the rear of the roasting shop, quite enraptured with the four huge spits which turned with a gentle sound in front of the tall bright flames.

The broad copper bands of the fireplace glistened brightly, the poultry steamed, the fat bubbled melodiously in the dripping-pan, and the spits seemed to talk amongst themselves and to address kindly words to Quenu, who, with a long ladle, devoutly basted the golden breasts of the fat geese and turkeys. He

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Parisian provision trade. I can myself recollect several akin to the one described by M. Zola. I suspect that they largely owed their origin to the form and dimensions of the ordinary Parisian kitchen stove, which did not enable people to roast poultry at home in a convenient way. In the old French cuisine, moreover, roast joints of meat were virtually unknown; roasting was almost entirely confined to chickens, geese, turkeys, pheasants, etc.; and among the middle classes people largely bought their poultry already cooked of the *rotisseur*, or else confided it to him for the purpose of roasting, in the same way as our poorer classes still send their joints to the baker's. Roasting was also long looked upon in France as a very delicate art. Brillat-Savarin, in his famous *Physiologie du Gout*, lays down the dictum that "A man may become a cook, but is born a *rotisseur*." – Translator.

would stay there for hours, quite crimson in the dancing glow of the flames, and laughing vaguely, with a somewhat stupid expression, at the birds roasting in front of him. Indeed, he did not awake from this kind of trance until the geese and turkeys were unspitted. They were placed on dishes, the spits emerged from their carcasses smoking hot, and a rich gravy flowed from either end and filled the shop with a penetrating odour. Then the lad, who, standing up, had eagerly followed every phase of the dishing, would clap his hands and begin to talk to the birds, telling them that they were very nice, and would be eaten up, and that the cats would have nothing but their bones. And he would give a start of delight whenever Gavard handed him a slice of bread, which he forthwith put into the dripping-pan that it might soak and toast there for half an hour.

It was in this shop, no doubt, that Quenu's love of cookery took its birth. Later on, when he had tried all sorts of crafts, he returned, as though driven by fate, to the spits and the poultry and the savoury gravy which induces one to lick one's fingers. At first he was afraid of vexing his brother, who was a small eater and spoke of good fare with the disdain of a man who is ignorant of it; but afterwards, on seeing that Florent listened to him when he explained the preparation of some very elaborate dish, he confessed his desires and presently found a situation at a large restaurant. From that time forward the life of the two brothers was settled. They continued to live in the room in the Rue Royer Collard, whither they returned every evening; the one glowing

and radiant from his hot fire, the other with the depressed countenance of a shabby, impecunious teacher. Florent still wore his old black coat, as he sat absorbed in correcting his pupils' exercises; while Quenu, to put himself more at ease, donned his white apron, cap, and jacket, and, flitting about in front of the stove, amused himself by baking some dainty in the oven. Sometimes they smiled at seeing themselves thus attired, the one all in black, the other all in white. These different garbs, one bright and the other sombre, seemed to make the big room half gay and half mournful. Never, however, was there so much harmony in a household marked by such dissimilarity. Though the elder brother grew thinner and thinner, consumed by the ardent temperament which he had inherited from his Provencal father, and the younger one waxed fatter and fatter like a true son of Normandy, they loved each other in the brotherhood they derived from their mother – a mother who had been all devotion.

They had a relation in Paris, a brother of their mother's, one Gradelle, who was in business as a pork butcher in the Rue Pirouette, near the central markets. He was a fat, hard-hearted, miserly fellow, and received his nephews as though they were starving paupers the first time they paid him a visit. They seldom went to see him afterwards. On his nameday Quenu would take him a bunch of flowers, and receive a half-franc piece in return for it. Florent's proud and sensitive nature suffered keenly when Gradelle scrutinised his shabby clothes with the anxious, suspicious glance of a miser apprehending a request for a dinner,

or the loan of a five-franc piece. One day, however, it occurred to Florent in all artlessness to ask his uncle to change a hundred-franc note for him, and after this the pork butcher showed less alarm at sight of the lads, as he called them. Still, their friendship got no further than these infrequent visits.

These years were like a long, sweet, sad dream to Florent. As they passed he tasted to the full all the bitter joys of self-sacrifice. At home, in the big room, life was all love and tenderness; but out in the world, amidst the humiliations inflicted on him by his pupils, and the rough jostling of the streets, he felt himself yielding to wicked thoughts. His slain ambitions embittered him. It was long before he could bring himself to bow to his fate, and accept with equanimity the painful lot of a poor, plain, commonplace man. At last, to guard against the temptations of wickedness, he plunged into ideal goodness, and sought refuge in a self-created sphere of absolute truth and justice. It was then that he became a republican, entering into the republican idea even as heart-broken girls enter a convent. And not finding a republic where sufficient peace and kindliness prevailed to lull his troubles to sleep, he created one for himself. He took no pleasure in books. All the blackened paper amidst which he lived spoke of evil-smelling class-rooms, of pellets of paper chewed by unruly schoolboys, of long, profitless hours of torture. Besides, books only suggested to him a spirit of mutiny and pride, whereas it was of peace and oblivion that he felt most need. To lull and soothe himself with the ideal imaginings, to dream that he was

perfectly happy, and that all the world would likewise become so, to erect in his brain the republican city in which he would fain have lived, such now became his recreation, the task, again and again renewed, of all his leisure hours. He no longer read any books beyond those which his duties compelled him to peruse; he preferred to tramp along the Rue Saint Jacques as far as the outer boulevards, occasionally going yet a greater distance and returning by the Barriere d'Italie; and all along the road, with his eyes on the Quartier Mouffetard spread out at his feet, he would devise reforms of great moral and humanitarian scope, such as he thought would change that city of suffering into an abode of bliss. During the turmoil of February 1848, when Paris was stained with blood he became quite heartbroken, and rushed from one to another of the public clubs demanding that the blood which had been shed should find atonement in "the fraternal embrace of all republicans throughout the world." He became one of those enthusiastic orators who preached revolution as a new religion, full of gentleness and salvation. The terrible days of December 1851, the days of the Coup d'Etat, were required to wean him from his doctrines of universal love. He was then without arms; allowed himself to be captured like a sheep, and was treated as though he were a wolf. He awoke from his sermon on universal brotherhood to find himself starving on the cold stones of a casemate at Bicetre.

Quenu, when two and twenty, was distressed with anguish when his brother did not return home. On the following day he

went to seek his corpse at the cemetery of Montmartre, where the bodies of those shot down on the boulevards had been laid out in a line and covered with straw, from beneath which only their ghastly heads projected. However, Quenu's courage failed him, he was blinded by his tears, and had to pass twice along the line of corpses before acquiring the certainty that Florent's was not among them. At last, at the end of a long and wretched week, he learned at the Prefecture of Police that his brother was a prisoner. He was not allowed to see him, and when he pressed the matter the police threatened to arrest him also. Then he hastened off to his uncle Gradelle, whom he looked upon as a person of importance, hoping that he might be able to enlist his influence in Florent's behalf. But Gradelle waxed wrathful, declared that Florent deserved his fate, that he ought to have known better than to have mixed himself up with those rascally republicans. And he even added that Florent was destined to turn out badly, that it was written on his face.

Quenu wept copiously and remained there, almost choked by his sobs. His uncle, a little ashamed of his harshness, and feeling that he ought to do something for him, offered to receive him into his house. He wanted an assistant, and knew that his nephew was a good cook. Quenu was so much alarmed by the mere thought of going back to live alone in the big room in the Rue Royer Collard, that then and there he accepted Gradelle's offer. That same night he slept in his uncle's house, in a dark hole of a garret just under the room, where there was scarcely space for him to

lie at full length. However, he was less wretched there than he would have been opposite his brother's empty couch.

He succeeded at length in obtaining permission to see Florent; but on his return from Bicetre he was obliged to take to his bed. For nearly three weeks he lay fever-stricken, in a stupefied, comatose state. Gradelle meantime called down all sorts of maledictions on his republican nephew; and one morning, when he heard of Florent's departure for Cayenne, he went upstairs, tapped Quenu on the hands, awoke him, and bluntly told him the news, thereby bringing about such a reaction that on the following day the young man was up and about again. His grief wore itself out, and his soft flabby flesh seemed to absorb his tears. A month later he laughed again, and then grew vexed and unhappy with himself for having been merry; but his natural light-heartedness soon gained the mastery, and he laughed afresh in unconscious happiness.

He now learned his uncle's business, from which he derived even more enjoyment than from cookery. Gradelle told him, however, that he must not neglect his pots and pans, that it was rare to find a pork butcher who was also a good cook, and that he had been lucky in serving in a restaurant before coming to the shop. Gradelle, moreover, made full use of his nephew's acquirements, employed him to cook the dinners sent out to certain customers, and placed all the broiling, and the preparation of pork chops garnished with gherkins in his special charge. As the young man was of real service to him, he grew fond of him

after his own fashion, and would nip his plump arms when he was in a good humour. Gradelle had sold the scanty furniture of the room in the Rue Royer Collard and retained possession of the proceeds – some forty francs or so – in order, said he, to prevent the foolish lad, Quenu, from making ducks and drakes of the cash. After a time, however, he allowed his nephew six francs a month a pocket-money.

Quenu now became quite happy, in spite of the emptiness of his purse and the harshness with which he was occasionally treated. He liked to have life doled out to him; Florent had treated him too much like an indolent girl. Moreover, he had made a friend at his uncle's. Gradelle, when his wife died, had been obliged to engage a girl to attend to the shop, and had taken care to choose a healthy and attractive one, knowing that a good-looking girl would set off his viands and help to tempt custom. Amongst his acquaintances was a widow, living in the Rue Cuvier, near the Jardin des Plantes, whose deceased husband had been postmaster at Plassans, the seat of a sub-prefecture in the south of France. This lady, who lived in a very modest fashion on a small annuity, had brought with her from Plassans a plump, pretty child, whom she treated as her own daughter. Lisa, as the young one was called, attended upon her with much placidity and serenity of disposition. Somewhat seriously inclined, she looked quite beautiful when she smiled. Indeed, her great charm came from the exquisite manner in which she allowed this infrequent smile of hers to escape her. Her eyes then became most caressing,

and her habitual gravity imparted inestimable value to these sudden, seductive flashes. The old lady had often said that one of Lisa's smiles would suffice to lure her to perdition.

When the widow died she left all her savings, amounting to some ten thousand francs, to her adopted daughter. For a week Lisa lived alone in the Rue Cuvier; it was there that Gradelle came in search of her. He had become acquainted with her by often seeing her with her mistress when the latter called on him in the Rue Pirouette; and at the funeral she had struck him as having grown so handsome and sturdy that he had followed the hearse all the way to the cemetery, though he had not intended to do so. As the coffin was being lowered into the grave, he reflected what a splendid girl she would be for the counter of a pork butcher's shop. He thought the matter over, and finally resolved to offer her thirty francs a month, with board and lodging. When he made this proposal, Lisa asked for twenty-four hours to consider it. Then she arrived one morning with a little bundle of clothes, and her ten thousand francs concealed in the bosom of her dress. A month later the whole place belonged to her; she enslaved Gradelle, Quenu, and even the smallest kitchen-boy. For his part, Quenu would have cut off his fingers to please her. When she happened to smile, he remained rooted to the floor, laughing with delight as he gazed at her.

Lisa was the eldest daughter of the Macquarts of Plassans, and her father was still alive.[6] But she said that he was abroad,

[6] See M. Zola's novel, *The Fortune of the Rougons*. – Translator

and never wrote to him. Sometimes she just dropped a hint that her mother, now deceased, had been a hard worker, and that she took after her. She worked, indeed, very assiduously. However, she sometimes added that the worthy woman had slaved herself to death in striving to support her family. Then she would speak of the respective duties of husband and wife in such a practical though modest fashion as to enchant Quenu. He assured her that he fully shared her ideas. These were that everyone, man or woman, ought to work for his or her living, that everyone was charged with the duty of achieving personal happiness, that great harm was done by encouraging habits of idleness, and that the presence of so much misery in the world was greatly due to sloth. This theory of hers was a sweeping condemnation of drunkenness, of all the legendary loafing ways of her father Macquart. But, though she did not know it, there was much of Macquart's nature in herself. She was merely a steady, sensible Macquart with a logical desire for comfort, having grasped the truth of the proverb that as you make your bed so you lie on it. To sleep in blissful warmth there is no better plan than to prepare oneself a soft and downy couch; and to the preparation of such a couch she gave all her time and all her thoughts. When no more than six years old she had consented to remain quietly on her chair the whole day through on condition that she should be rewarded with a cake in the evening.

At Gradelle's establishment Lisa went on leading the calm, methodical life which her exquisite smiles illumined. She had not

accepted the pork butcher's offer at random. She reckoned upon finding a guardian in him; with the keen scent of those who are born lucky she perhaps foresaw that the gloomy shop in the Rue Pirouette would bring her the comfortable future she dreamed of – a life of healthy enjoyment, and work without fatigue, each hour of which would bring its own reward. She attended to her counter with the quiet earnestness with which she had waited upon the postmaster's widow; and the cleanliness of her aprons soon became proverbial in the neighbourhood. Uncle Gradelle was so charmed with this pretty girl that sometimes, as he was stringing his sausages, he would say to Quenu: "Upon my word, if I weren't turned sixty, I think I should be foolish enough to marry her. A wife like she'd make is worth her weight in gold to a shopkeeper, my lad."

Quenu himself was growing still fonder of her, though he laughed merrily one day when a neighbour accused him of being in love with Lisa. He was not worried with love-sickness. The two were very good friends, however. In the evening they went up to their bedrooms together. Lisa slept in a little chamber adjoining the dark hole which the young man occupied. She had made this room of hers quite bright by hanging it with muslin curtains. The pair would stand together for a moment on the landing, holding their candles in their hands, and chatting as they unlocked their doors. Then, as they closed them, they said in friendly tones:

"Good night, Mademoiselle Lisa."

"Good night, Monsieur Quenu."

As Quenu undressed himself he listened to Lisa making her own preparations. The partition between the two rooms was very thin. “There, she is drawing her curtains now,” he would say to himself; “what can she be doing, I wonder, in front of her chest of drawers? Ah! she’s sitting down now and taking off her shoes. Now she’s blown her candle out. Well, good night. I must get to sleep”; and at times, when he heard her bed creak as she got into it, he would say to himself with a smile, “Dash it all! Mademoiselle Lisa is no feather.” This idea seemed to amuse him, and presently he would fall asleep thinking about the hams and salt pork that he had to prepare the next morning.

This state of affairs went on for a year without causing Lisa a single blush or Quenu a moment’s embarrassment. When the girl came into the kitchen in the morning at the busiest moment of the day’s work, they grasped hands over the dishes of sausage-meat. Sometimes she helped him, holding the skins with her plump fingers while he filled them with meat and fat. Sometimes, too, with the tips of their tongues they just tasted the raw sausage-meat, to see if it was properly seasoned. She was able to give Quenu some useful hints, for she knew of many favourite southern recipes, with which he experimented with much success. He was often aware that she was standing behind his shoulder, prying into the pans. If he wanted a spoon or a dish, she would hand it to him. The heat of the fire would bring their blood to their skins; still, nothing in the world would have induced the young man to cease stirring the fatty *bouillis*

which were thickening over the fire while the girl stood gravely by him, discussing the amount of boiling that was necessary. In the afternoon, when the shop lacked customers, they quietly chatted together for hours at a time. Lisa sat behind the counter, leaning back, and knitting in an easy, regular fashion; while Quenu installed himself on a big oak block, dangling his legs and tapping his heels against the wood. They got on wonderfully well together, discussing all sorts of subjects, generally cookery, and then Uncle Gradelle and the neighbours. Lisa also amused the young man with stories, just as though he were a child. She knew some very pretty ones – some miraculous legends, full of lambs and little angels, which she narrated in a piping voice, with all her wonted seriousness. If a customer happened to come in, she saved herself the trouble of moving by asking Quenu to get the required pot of lard or box of snails. And at eleven o'clock they went slowly up to bed as on the previous night. As they closed their doors, they calmly repeated the words:

"Good night, Mademoiselle Lisa."

"Good night, Monsieur Quenu."

One morning Uncle Gradelle was struck dead by apoplexy while preparing a galantine. He fell forward, with his face against the chopping-block. Lisa did not lose her self-possession. She remarked that the dead man could not be left lying in the middle of the kitchen, and had the body removed into a little back room where Gradelle had slept. Then she arranged with the assistants what should be said. It must be given out that the master had

died in his bed; otherwise the whole district would be disgusted, and the shop would lose its customers. Quenu helped to carry the dead man away, feeling quite confused, and astonished at being unable to shed any tears. Presently, however, he and Lisa cried together. Quenu and his brother Florent were the sole heirs. The gossips of the neighbourhood credited old Gradelle with the possession of a considerable fortune. However, not a single crown could be discovered. Lisa seemed very restless and uneasy. Quenu noticed how pensive she became, how she kept on looking around her from morning till night, as though she had lost something. At last she decided to have a thorough cleaning of the premises, declaring that people were beginning to talk, that the story of the old man's death had got about, and that it was necessary they should make a great show of cleanliness. One afternoon, after remaining in the cellar for a couple of hours, whither she herself had gone to wash the salting-tubs, she came up again, carrying something in her apron. Quenu was just then cutting up a pig's fry. She waited till he had finished, talking awhile in an easy, indifferent fashion. But there was an unusual glitter in her eyes, and she smiled her most charming smile as she told him that she wanted to speak to him. She led the way upstairs with seeming difficulty, impeded by what she had in her apron, which was strained almost to bursting.

By the time she reached the third floor she found herself short of breath, and for a moment was obliged to lean against the balustrade. Quenu, much astonished, followed her into her

bedroom without saying a word. It was the first time she had ever invited him to enter it. She closed the door, and letting go the corners of her apron, which her stiffened fingers could no longer hold up, she allowed a stream of gold and silver coins to flow gently upon her bed. She had discovered Uncle Gradelle's treasure at the bottom of a salting-tub. The heap of money made a deep impression in the softy downy bed.

Lisa and Quenu evinced a quiet delight. They sat down on the edge of the bed, Lisa at the head and Quenu at the foot, on either side of the heap of coins, and they counted the money out upon the counterpane, so as to avoid making any noise. There were forty thousand francs in gold, and three thousand francs in silver, whilst in a tin box they found bank notes to the value of forty-two thousand francs. It took them two hours to count up the treasure. Quenu's hands trembled slightly, and it was Lisa who did most of the work.

They arranged the gold on the pillow in little heaps, leaving the silver in the hollow depression of the counterpane. When they had ascertained the total amount – eighty-five thousand francs, to them an enormous sum – they began to chat. And their conversation naturally turned upon their future, and they spoke of their marriage, although there had never been any previous mention of love between them. But this heap of money seemed to loosen their tongues. They had gradually seated themselves further back on the bed, leaning against the wall, beneath the white muslin curtains; and as they talked together, their hands,

playing with the heap of silver between them, met, and remained linked amidst the pile of five-franc pieces. Twilight surprised them still sitting together. Then, for the first time, Lisa blushed at finding the young man by her side. For a few moments, indeed, although not a thought of evil had come to them, they felt much embarrassed. Then Lisa went to get her own ten thousand francs. Quenu wanted her to put them with his uncle's savings. He mixed the two sums together, saying with a laugh that the money must be married also. Then it was agreed that Lisa should keep the hoard in her chest of drawers. When she had locked it up they both quietly went downstairs. They were now practically husband and wife.

The wedding took place during the following month. The neighbours considered the match a very natural one, and in every way suitable. They had vaguely heard the story of the treasure, and Lisa's honesty was the subject of endless eulogy. After all, said the gossips, she might well have kept the money herself, and not have spoken a word to Quenu about it; if she had spoken, it was out of pure honesty, for no one had seen her find the hoard. She well deserved, they added, that Quenu should make her his wife. That Quenu, by the way, was a lucky fellow; he wasn't a beauty himself, yet he had secured a beautiful wife, who had disinterred a fortune for him. Some even went so far as to whisper that Lisa was a simpleton for having acted as she had done; but the young woman only smiled when people speaking to her vaguely alluded to all these things. She and her husband lived

on as previously, in happy placidity and quiet affection. She still assisted him as before, their hands still met amidst the sausage-meat, she still glanced over his shoulder into the pots and pans, and still nothing but the great fire in the kitchen brought the blood to their cheeks.

However, Lisa was a woman of practical common sense, and speedily saw the folly of allowing eighty-five thousand francs to lie idle in a chest of drawers. Quenu would have willingly stowed them away again at the bottom of the salting-tub until he had gained as much more, when they could have retired from business and have gone to live at Suresnes, a suburb to which both were partial. Lisa, however, had other ambitions. The Rue Pirouette did not accord with her ideas of cleanliness, her craving for fresh air, light, and healthy life. The shop where Uncle Gradelle had accumulated his fortune, sou by sou, was a long, dark place, one of those suspicious looking pork butchers' shops of the old quarters of the city, where the well-worn flagstones retain a strong odour of meat in spite of constant washings. Now the young woman longed for one of those bright modern shops, ornamented like a drawing-room, and fringing the footway of some broad street with windows of crystalline transparence. She was not actuated by any petty ambition to play the fine lady behind a stylish counter, but clearly realised that commerce in its latest development needed elegant surroundings. Quenu showed much alarm the first time his wife suggested that they ought to move and spend some of their money in decorating a new shop.

However, Lisa only shrugged her shoulders and smiled at finding him so timorous.

One evening, when night was falling and the shop had grown dark, Quenu and Lisa overheard a woman of the neighbourhood talking to a friend outside their door.

"No, indeed! I've given up dealing with them," said she. "I wouldn't buy a bit of black-pudding from them now on any account. They had a dead man in their kitchen, you know."

Quenu wept with vexation. The story of Gradelle's death in the kitchen was clearly getting about; and his nephew began to blush before his customers when he saw them sniffing his wares too closely. So, of his own accord, he spoke to his wife of her proposal to take a new shop. Lisa, without saying anything, had already been looking out for other premises, and had found some, admirably situated, only a few yards away, in the Rue Rambuteau. The immediate neighbourhood of the central markets, which were being opened just opposite, would triple their business, and make their shop known all over Paris.

Quenu allowed himself to be drawn into a lavish expenditure of money; he laid out over thirty thousand francs in marble, glass, and gilding. Lisa spent hours with the workmen, giving her views about the slightest details. When she was at last installed behind the counter, customers arrived in a perfect procession, merely for the sake of examining the shop. The inside walls were lined from top to bottom with white marble. The ceiling was covered with a huge square mirror, framed by a broad gilded

cornice, richly ornamented, whilst from the centre hung a crystal chandelier with four branches. And behind the counter, and on the left, and at the far end of the shop were other mirrors, fitted between the marble panels and looking like doors opening into an infinite series of brightly lighted halls, where all sorts of appetising edibles were displayed. The huge counter on the right hand was considered a very fine piece of work. At intervals along the front were lozenge-shaped panels of pinky marble. The flooring was of tiles, alternately white and pink, with a deep red fretting as border. The whole neighbourhood was proud of the shop, and no one again thought of referring to the kitchen in the Rue Pirouette, where a man had died. For quite a month women stopped short on the footway to look at Lisa between the saveloys and bladders in the window. Her white and pink flesh excited as much admiration as the marbles. She seemed to be the soul, the living light, the healthy, sturdy idol of the pork trade; and thenceforth one and all baptised her "Lisa the beauty."

To the right of the shop was the dining-room, a neat looking apartment containing a sideboard, a table, and several cane-seated chairs of light oak. The matting on the floor, the wallpaper of a soft yellow tint, the oil-cloth table-cover, coloured to imitate oak, gave the room a somewhat cold appearance, which was relieved only by the glitter of a brass hanging lamp, suspended from the ceiling, and spreading its big shade of transparent porcelain over the table. One of the dining-room doors opened into the huge square kitchen, at the end of which was a small

paved courtyard, serving for the storage of lumber – tubs, barrels and pans, and all kinds of utensils not in use. To the left of the water-tap, alongside the gutter which carried off the greasy water, stood pots of faded flowers, removed from the shop window, and slowly dying.

Business was excellent. Quenu, who had been much alarmed by the initial outlay, now regarded his wife with something like respect, and told his friends that she had "a wonderful head." At the end of five years they had nearly eighty thousand francs invested in the State funds. Lisa would say that they were not ambitious, that they had no desire to pile up money too quickly, or else she would have enabled her husband to gain hundreds and thousands of francs by prompting him to embark in the wholesale pig trade. But they were still young, and had plenty of time before them; besides, they didn't care about a rough, scrambling business, but preferred to work at their ease, and enjoy life, instead of wearing themselves out with endless anxieties.

"For instance," Lisa would add in her expansive moments, "I have, you know, a cousin in Paris. I never see him, as the two families have fallen out. He has taken the name of Saccard,[7] on account of certain matters which he wants to be forgotten. Well, this cousin of mine, I'm told, makes millions and millions of francs; but he gets no enjoyment out of life. He's always in a state of feverish excitement, always rushing hither and thither, up to his neck in all sorts of worrying business. Well, it's impossible,

[7] See M. Zola's novel, *Money*.

isn't it, for such a man to eat his dinner peaceably in the evening? We, at any rate, can take our meals comfortably, and make sure of what we eat, and we are not harassed by worries as he is. The only reason why people should care for money is that money's wanted for one to live. People like comfort; that's natural. But as for making money simply for the sake of making it, and giving yourself far more trouble and anxiety to gain it than you can ever get pleasure from it when it's gained, why, as for me, I'd rather sit still and cross my arms. And besides, I should like to see all those millions of my cousin's. I can't say that I altogether believe in them. I caught sight of him the other day in his carriage. He was quite yellow, and looked ever so sly. A man who's making money doesn't have that kind of expression. But it's his business, and not mine. For our part, we prefer to make merely a hundred sous at a time, and to get a hundred sous' worth of enjoyment out of them."

The household was undoubtedly thriving. A daughter had been born to the young couple during their first year of wedlock, and all three of them looked blooming. The business went on prosperously, without any laborious fatigue, just as Lisa desired. She had carefully kept free of any possible source of trouble or anxiety, and the days went by in an atmosphere of peaceful, unctuous prosperity. Their home was a nook of sensible happiness – a comfortable manger, so to speak, where father, mother, and daughter could grow sleek and fat. It was only Quenu who occasionally felt sad, through thinking of his

brother Florent. Up to the year 1856 he had received letters from him at long intervals. Then no more came, and he had learned from a newspaper that three convicts having attempted to escape from the Ile du Diable, had been drowned before they were able to reach the mainland. He had made inquiries at the Prefecture of Police, but had not learnt anything definite; it seemed probable that his brother was dead. However, he did not lose all hope, though months passed without any tidings. Florent, in the meantime, was wandering about Dutch Guiana, and refrained from writing home as he was ever in hope of being able to return to France. Quenu at last began to mourn for him as one mourns for those whom one has been unable to bid farewell. Lisa had never known Florent, but she spoke very kindly whenever she saw her husband give way to his sorrow; and she evinced no impatience when for the hundredth time or so he began to relate stories of his early days, of his life in the big room in the Rue Royer Collard, the thirty-six trades which he had taken up one after another, and the dainties which he had cooked at the stove, dressed all in white, while Florent was dressed all in black. To such talk as this, indeed, she listened placidly, with a complacency which never wearied.

It was into the midst of all this happiness, ripening after careful culture, that Florent dropped one September morning just as Lisa was taking her matutinal bath of sunshine, and Quenu, with his eyes still heavy with sleep, was lazily applying his fingers to the congealed fat left in the pans from the

previous evening. Florent's arrival caused a great commotion. Gavard advised them to conceal the "outlaw," as he somewhat pompously called Florent. Lisa, who looked pale, and more serious than was her wont, at last took him to the fifth floor, where she gave him the room belonging to the girl who assisted her in the shop. Quenu had cut some slices of bread and ham, but Florent was scarcely able to eat. He was overcome by dizziness and nausea, and went to bed, where he remained for five days in a state of delirium, the outcome of an attack of brain-fever, which fortunately received energetic treatment. When he recovered consciousness he perceived Lisa sitting by his bedside, silently stirring some cooling drink in a cup. As he tried to thank her, she told him that he must keep perfectly quiet, and that they could talk together later on. At the end of another three days Florent was on his feet again. Then one morning Quenu went up to tell him that Lisa awaited them in her room on the first floor.

Quenu and his wife there occupied a suite of three rooms and a dressing-room. You first passed through an antechamber, containing nothing but chairs, and then a small sitting-room, whose furniture, shrouded in white covers, slumbered in the gloom cast by the Venetian shutters, which were always kept closed so as to prevent the light blue of the upholstery from fading. Then came the bedroom, the only one of the three which was really used. It was very comfortably furnished in mahogany. The bed, bulky and drowsy of aspect in the depths of the damp alcove, was really wonderful, with its four mattresses, its four

pillows, its layers of blankets, and its corpulent *edredon*. It was evidently a bed intended for slumber. A mirrored wardrobe, a washstand with drawers, a small central table with a worked cover, and several chairs whose seats were protected by squares of lace, gave the room an aspect of plain but substantial middle-class luxury. On the left-hand wall, on either side of the mantelpiece, which was ornamented with some landscape-painted vases mounted on bronze stands, and a gilt timepiece on which a figure of Gutenberg, also gilt, stood in an attitude of deep thought, hung portraits in oils of Quenu and Lisa, in ornate oval frames. Quenu had a smiling face, while Lisa wore an air of grave propriety; and both were dressed in black and depicted in flattering fashion, their features idealised, their skins wondrously smooth, their complexions soft and pinky. A carpet, in the Wilton style, with a complicated pattern of roses mingling with stars, concealed the flooring; while in front of the bed was a fluffy mat, made out of long pieces of curly wool, a work of patience at which Lisa herself had toiled while seated behind her counter. But the most striking object of all in the midst of this array of new furniture was a great square, thick-set secretaire, which had been re-polished in vain, for the cracks and notches in the marble top and the scratches on the old mahogany front, quite black with age, still showed plainly. Lisa had desired to retain this piece of furniture, however, as Uncle Gradelle had used it for more than forty years. It would bring them good luck, she said. It's metal fastenings were truly something terrible, it's lock

was like that of a prison gate, and it was so heavy that it could scarcely be moved.

When Florent and Quenu entered the room they found Lisa seated at the lowered desk of the secretaire, writing and putting down figures in a big, round, and very legible hand. She signed to them not to disturb her, and the two men sat down. Florent looked round the room, and notably at the two portraits, the bed and the timepiece, with an air of surprise.

"There!" at last exclaimed Lisa, after having carefully verified a whole page of calculations. "Listen to me now; we have an account to render to you, my dear Florent."

It was the first time that she had so addressed him. However, taking up the page of figures, she continued: "Your Uncle Gradelle died without leaving a will. Consequently you and your brother are his sole heirs. We now have to hand your share over to you."

"But I do not ask you for anything!" exclaimed Florent, "I don't wish for anything!"

Quenu had apparently been in ignorance of his wife's intentions. He turned rather pale and looked at her with an expression of displeasure. Of course, he certainly loved his brother dearly; but there was no occasion to hurl his uncle's money at him in this way. There would have been plenty of time to go into the matter later on.

"I know very well, my dear Florent," continued Lisa, "that you did not come back with the intention of claiming from us what

belongs to you; but business is business, you know, and we had better get things settled at once. Your uncle's savings amounted to eighty-five thousand francs. I have therefore put down forty-two thousand five hundred to your credit. See!"

She showed him the figures on the sheet of paper.

"It is unfortunately not so easy to value the shop, plant, stock-in-trade, and goodwill. I have only been able to put down approximate amounts, but I don't think I have underestimated anything. Well, the total valuation which I have made comes to fifteen thousand three hundred and ten francs; your half of which is seven thousand six hundred and fifty-five francs, so that your share amounts, in all, to fifty thousand one hundred and fifty-five francs. Please verify it for yourself, will you?"

She had called out the figures in a clear, distinct voice, and she now handed the paper to Florent, who was obliged to take it.

"But the old man's business was certainly never worth fifteen thousand francs!" cried Quenu. "Why, I wouldn't have given ten thousand for it!"

He had ended by getting quite angry with his wife. Really, it was absurd to carry honesty to such a point as that! Had Florent said one word about the business? No, indeed, he had declared that he didn't wish for anything.

"The business was worth fifteen thousand three hundred and ten francs," Lisa re-asserted, calmly. "You will agree with me, my dear Florent, that it is quite unnecessary to bring a lawyer into our affairs. It is for us to arrange the division between ourselves,

since you have now turned up again. I naturally thought of this as soon as you arrived; and, while you were in bed with the fever, I did my best to draw up this little inventory. It contains, as you see, a fairly complete statement of everything. I have been through our old books, and have called up my memory to help me. Read it aloud, and I will give you any additional information you may want."

Florent ended by smiling. He was touched by this easy and, as it were, natural display of probity. Placing the sheet of figures on the young woman's knee, he took hold of her hand and said, "I am very glad, my dear Lisa, to hear that you are prosperous, but I will not take your money. The heritage belongs to you and my brother, who took care of my uncle up to the last. I don't require anything, and I don't intend to hamper you in carrying on your business."

Lisa insisted, and even showed some vexation, while Quenu gnawed his thumbs in silence to restrain himself.

"Ah!" resumed Florent with a laugh, "if Uncle Gradelle could hear you, I think he'd come back and take the money away again. I was never a favourite of his, you know."

"Well, no," muttered Quenu, no longer able to keep still, "he certainly wasn't over fond of you."

Lisa, however, still pressed the matter. She did not like to have money in her secretaire that did not belong to her; it would worry her, said she; the thought of it would disturb her peace. Thereupon Florent, still in a joking way, proposed to invest

his share in the business. Moreover, said he, he did not intend to refuse their help; he would, no doubt, be unable to find employment all at once; and then, too, he would need a complete outfit, for he was scarcely presentable.

"Of course," cried Quenu, "you will board and lodge with us, and we will buy you all that you want. That's understood. You know very well that we are not likely to leave you in the streets, I hope!"

He was quite moved now, and even felt a trifle ashamed of the alarm he had experienced at the thought of having to hand over a large amount of money all at once. He began to joke, and told his brother that he would undertake to fatten him. Florent gently shook his hand; while Lisa folded up the sheet of figures and put it away in a drawer of the secretaire.

"You are wrong," she said by way of conclusion. "I have done what I was bound to do. Now it shall be as you wish. But, for my part, I should never have had a moment's peace if I had not put things before you. Bad thoughts would quite upset me."

They then began to speak of another matter. It would be necessary to give some reason for Florent's presence, and at the same time avoid exciting the suspicion of the police. He told them that in order to return to France he had availed himself of the papers of a poor fellow who had died in his arms at Surinam from yellow fever. By a singular coincidence this young fellow's Christian name was Florent.

Florent Laquerriere, to give him his name in full, had left but

one relation in Paris, a female cousin, and had been informed of her death while in America. Nothing could therefore be easier than for Quenu's half brother to pass himself off as the man who had died at Surinam. Lisa offered to take upon herself the part of the female cousin. They then agreed to relate that their cousin Florent had returned from abroad, where he had failed in his attempts to make a fortune, and that they, the Quenu-Gradelles, as they were called in the neighbourhood, had received him into their house until he could find suitable employment. When this was all settled, Quenu insisted upon his brother making a thorough inspection of the rooms, and would not spare him the examination of a single stool. Whilst they were in the bare looking chamber containing nothing but chairs, Lisa pushed open a door, and showing Florent a small dressing room, told him that the shop girl should sleep in it, so that he could retain the bedroom on the fifth floor.

In the evening Florent was arrayed in new clothes from head to foot. He had insisted upon again having a black coat and black trousers, much against the advice of Quenu, upon whom black had a depressing effect. No further attempts were made to conceal his presence in the house, and Lisa told the story which had been planned to everyone who cared to hear it. Henceforth Florent spent almost all his time on the premises, lingering on a chair in the kitchen or leaning against the marble-work in the shop. At meal times Quenu plied him with food, and evinced considerable vexation when he proved such a small eater and

left half the contents of his liberally filled plate untouched. Lisa had resumed her old life, evincing a kindly tolerance of her brother-in-law's presence, even in the morning, when he somewhat interfered with the work. Then she would momentarily forget him, and on suddenly perceiving his black form in front of her give a slight start of surprise, followed, however, by one of her sweet smiles, lest he might feel at all hurt. This skinny man's disinterestedness had impressed her, and she regarded him with a feeling akin to respect, mingled with vague fear. Florent had for his part only felt that there was great affection around him.

When bedtime came he went upstairs, a little wearied by his lazy day, with the two young men whom Quenu employed as assistants, and who slept in attics adjoining his own. Leon, the apprentice, was barely fifteen years of age. He was a slight, gentle looking lad, addicted to stealing stray slices of ham and bits of sausages. These he would conceal under his pillow, eating them during the night without any bread. Several times at about one o'clock in the morning Florent almost fancied that Leon was giving a supper-party; for he heard low whispering followed by a sound of munching jaws and rustling paper. And then a rippling girlish laugh would break faintly on the deep silence of the sleeping house like the soft trilling of a flageolet.

The other assistant, Auguste Landois, came from Troyes. Bloated with unhealthy fat, he had too large a head, and was already bald, although only twenty-eight years of age. As he went upstairs with Florent on the first evening, he told him his story in

a confused, garrulous way. He had at first come to Paris merely for the purpose of perfecting himself in the business, intending to return to Troyes, where his cousin, Augustine Landois, was waiting for him, and there setting up for himself as a pork butcher. He and she had had the game godfather and bore virtually the same Christian name. However, he had grown ambitious; and now hoped to establish himself in business in Paris by the aid of the money left him by his mother, which he had deposited with a notary before leaving Champagne.

Auguste had got so far in his narrative when the fifth floor was reached; however, he still detained Florent, in order to sound the praises of Madame Quenu, who had consented to send for Augustine Landois to replace an assistant who had turned out badly. He himself was now thoroughly acquainted with his part of the business, and his cousin was perfecting herself in shop management. In a year or eighteen months they would be married, and then they would set up on their own account in some populous corner of Paris, at Plaisance most likely. They were in no great hurry, he added, for the bacon trade was very bad that year. Then he proceeded to tell Florent that he and his cousin had been photographed together at the fair of St. Ouen, and he entered the attic to have another look at the photograph, which Augustine had left on the mantelpiece, in her desire that Madame Quenu's cousin should have a pretty room. Auguste lingered there for a moment, looking quite livid in the dim yellow light of his candle, and casting his eyes around the little chamber which

was still full of memorials of the young girl. Next, stepping up to the bed, he asked Florent if it was comfortable. His cousin slept below now, said he, and would be better there in the winter, for the attics were very cold. Then at last he went off, leaving Florent alone with the bed, and standing in front of the photograph. As shown on the latter Auguste looked like a sort of pale Quenu, and Augustine like an immature Lisa.

Florent, although on friendly terms with the assistants, petted by his brother, and cordially treated by Lisa, presently began to feel very bored. He had tried, but without success, to obtain some pupils; moreover, he purposely avoided the students' quarter for fear of being recognised. Lisa gently suggested to him that he had better try to obtain a situation in some commercial house, where he could take charge of the correspondence and keep the books. She returned to this subject again and again, and at last offered to find a berth for him herself. She was gradually becoming impatient at finding him so often in her way, idle, and not knowing what to do with himself. At first this impatience was merely due to the dislike she felt of people who do nothing but cross their arms and eat, and she had no thought of reproaching him for consuming her substance.

"For my own part," she would say to him, "I could never spend the whole day in dreamy lounging. You can't have any appetite for your meals. You ought to tire yourself."

Gavard, also, was seeking a situation for Florent, but in a very extraordinary and most mysterious fashion. He would have

liked to find some employment of a dramatic character, or in which there should be a touch of bitter irony, as was suitable for an outlaw. Gavard was a man who was always in opposition. He had just completed his fiftieth year, and he boasted that he had already passed judgment on four Governments. He still contemptuously shrugged his shoulders at the thought of Charles X, the priests and nobles and other attendant rabble, whom he had helped to sweep away. Louis Philippe, with his bourgeois following, had been an imbecile, and he could tell how the citizen-king had hoarded his coppers in a woollen stocking. As for the Republic of '48, that had been a mere farce, the working classes had deceived him; however, he no longer acknowledged that he had applauded the Coup d'Etat, for he now looked upon Napoleon III as his personal enemy, a scoundrel who shut himself up with Morny and others to indulge in gluttonous orgies. He was never weary of holding forth upon this subject. Lowering his voice a little, he would declare that women were brought to the Tuileries in closed carriages every evening, and that he, who was speaking, had one night heard the echoes of the orgies while crossing the Place du Carrousel. It was Gavard's religion to make himself as disagreeable as possible to any existing Government. He would seek to spite it in all sorts of ways, and laugh in secret for several months at the pranks he played. To begin with, he voted for candidates who would worry the Ministers at the Corps Legislatif. Then, if he could rob the revenue, or baffle the police, and bring about a row of some kind or other, he strove to give

the affair as much of an insurrectionary character as possible. He told a great many lies, too; set himself up as being a very dangerous man; talked as though "the satellites of the Tuileries" were well acquainted with him and trembled at the sight of him; and asserted that one half of them must be guillotined, and the other half transported, the next time there was "a flare-up." His violent political creed found food in boastful, bragging talk of this sort; he displayed all the partiality for a lark and a rumpus which prompts a Parisian shopkeeper to take down his shutters on a day of barricade-fighting to get a good view of the corpses of the slain. When Florent returned from Cayenne, Gavard opined that he had got hold of a splendid chance for some abominable trick, and bestowed much thought upon the question of how he might best vent his spleen on the Emperor and Ministers and everyone in office, down to the very lowest police constable.

Gavard's manners with Florent were altogether those of a man tasting some forbidden pleasure. He contemplated him with blinking eyes, lowered his voice even when making the most trifling remark, and grasped his hand with all sorts of masonic flummery. He had at last lighted upon something in the way of an adventure; he had a friend who was really compromised, and could, without falsehood speak of the dangers he incurred. He undoubtedly experienced a secret alarm at the sight of this man who had returned from transportation, and whose fleshlessness testified to the long sufferings he had endured; however, this touch of alarm was delightful, for it increased his notion of his

own importance, and convinced him that he was really doing something wonderful in treating a dangerous character as a friend. Florent became a sort of sacred being in his eyes: he swore by him alone, and had recourse to his name whenever arguments failed him and he wanted to crush the Government once and for all.

Gavard had lost his wife in the Rue Saint Jacques some months after the Coup d'Etat; however, he had kept on his roasting shop till 1856. At that time it was reported that he had made large sums of money by going into partnership with a neighbouring grocer who had obtained a contract for supplying dried vegetables to the Crimean expeditionary corps. The truth was, however, that, having sold his shop, he lived on his income for a year without doing anything. He himself did not care to talk about the real origin of his fortune, for to have revealed it would have prevented him from plainly expressing his opinion of the Crimean War, which he referred to as a mere adventurous expedition, "undertaken simply to consolidate the throne and to fill certain persons' pockets." At the end of a year he had grown utterly weary of life in his bachelor quarters. As he was in the habit of visiting the Quenu-Gradelles almost daily, he determined to take up his residence nearer to them, and came to live in the Rue de la Cossonnerie. The neighbouring markets, with their noisy uproar and endless chatter, quite fascinated him; and he decided to hire a stall in the poultry pavilion, just for the purpose of amusing himself and occupying his idle hours with

all the gossip. Thenceforth he lived amidst ceaseless tittle-tattle, acquainted with every little scandal in the neighbourhood, his head buzzing with the incessant yelping around him. He blissfully tasted a thousand titillating delights, having at last found his true element, and bathing in it, with the voluptuous pleasure of a carp swimming in the sunshine. Florent would sometimes go to see him at his stall. The afternoons were still very warm. All along the narrow alleys sat women plucking poultry. Rays of light streamed in between the awnings, and in the warm atmosphere, in the golden dust of the sunbeams, feathers fluttered hither and thither like dancing snowflakes. A trail of coaxing calls and offers followed Florent as he passed along. "Can I sell you a fine duck, monsieur?" "I've some very fine fat chickens here, monsieur; come and see!" "Monsieur! monsieur, do just buy this pair of pigeons!" Deafened and embarrassed he freed himself from the women, who still went on plucking as they fought for possession of him; and the fine down flew about and wellnigh choked him, like hot smoke reeking with the strong odour of the poultry. At last, in the middle of the alley, near the water-taps, he found Gavard ranting away in his shirt-sleeves, in front of his stall, with his arms crossed over the bib of his blue apron. He reigned there, in a gracious, condescending way, over a group of ten or twelve women. He was the only male dealer in that part of the market. He was so fond of wagging his tongue that he had quarrelled with five or six girls whom he had successively engaged to attend to his stall, and had now made up his mind to sell his goods himself,

naively explaining that the silly women spent the whole blessed day in gossiping, and that it was beyond his power to manage them. As someone, however, was still necessary to supply his place whenever he absented himself he took in Marjolin, who was prowling about, after attempting in turn all the petty market callings.

Florent sometimes remained for an hour with Gavard, amazed by his ceaseless flow of chatter, and his calm serenity and assurance amid the crowd of petticoats. He would interrupt one woman, pick a quarrel with another ten stalls away, snatch a customer from a third, and make as much noise himself as his hundred and odd garrulous neighbours, whose incessant clamour kept the iron plates of the pavilion vibrating sonorously like so many gongs.

The poultry dealer's only relations were a sister-in-law and a niece. When his wife died, her eldest sister, Madame Lecoeur, who had become a widow about a year previously, had mourned for her in an exaggerated fashion, and gone almost every evening to tender consolation to the bereaved husband. She had doubtless cherished the hope that she might win his affection and fill the yet warm place of the deceased. Gavard, however, abominated lean women; and would, indeed, only stroke such cats and dogs as were very fat; so that Madame Lecoeur, who was long and withered, failed in her designs.

With her feelings greatly hurt, furious at the ex-roaster's five-franc pieces eluding her grasp, she nurtured great spite against

him. He became the enemy to whom she devoted all her time. When she saw him set up in the markets only a few yards away from the pavilion where she herself sold butter and eggs and cheese, she accused him of doing so simply for the sake of annoying her and bringing her bad luck. From that moment she began to lament, and turned so yellow and melancholy that she indeed ended by losing her customers and getting into difficulties. She had for a long time kept with her the daughter of one of her sisters, a peasant woman who had sent her the child and then taken no further trouble about it.

This child grew up in the markets. Her surname was Sarriet, and so she soon became generally known as La Sarriette. At sixteen years of age she had developed into such a charming sly-looking puss that gentlemen came to buy cheeses at her aunt's stall simply for the purpose of ogling her. She did not care for the gentlemen, however; with her dark hair, pale face, and eyes glistening like live embers, her sympathies were with the lower ranks of the people. At last she chose as her lover a young man from Menilmontant who was employed by her aunt as a porter. At twenty she set up in business as a fruit dealer with the help of some funds procured no one knew how; and thenceforth Monsieur Jules, as her lover was called, displayed spotless hands, a clean blouse, and a velvet cap; and only came down to the market in the afternoon, in his slippers. They lived together on the third storey of a large house in the Rue Vauvilliers, on the ground floor of which was a disreputable cafe.

Madame Lecoeur's acerbity of temper was brought to a pitch by what she called La Sarriette's ingratitude, and she spoke of the girl in the most violent and abusive language. They broke off all intercourse, the aunt fairly exasperated, and the niece and Monsieur Jules concocting stories about the aunt, which the young man would repeat to the other dealers in the butter pavilion. Gavard found La Sarriette very entertaining, and treated her with great indulgence. Whenever they met he would good-naturedly pat her cheeks.

One afternoon, whilst Florent was sitting in his brother's shop, tired out with the fruitless pilgrimages he had made during the morning in search of work, Marjolin made his appearance there. This big lad, who had the massiveness and gentleness of a Fleming, was a protege of Lisa's. She would say that there was no evil in him; that he was indeed a little bit stupid, but as strong as a horse, and particularly interesting from the fact that nobody knew anything of his parentage. It was she who had got Gavard to employ him.

Lisa was sitting behind the counter, feeling annoyed by the sight of Florent's muddy boots which were soiling the pink and white tiles of the flooring. Twice already had she risen to scatter sawdust about the shop. However, she smiled at Marjolin as he entered.

"Monsieur Gavard," began the young man, "has sent me to ask – "

But all at once he stopped and glanced round; then in a lower

voice he resumed: “He told me to wait till there was no one with you, and then to repeat these words, which he made me learn by heart: ‘Ask them if there is no danger, and if I can come and talk to them of the matter they know about.’”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.