

VICTOR HUGO

LES

MISÉRABLES,

V. 3

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Les Misérables, v. 3

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Victor Hugo

Les Misérables, v. 3/5: Marius

BOOK I

PARIS STUDIED IN ITS GAMIN

CHAPTER I

PARVULUS

Paris has a child and the forest has a bird; the bird is called a sparrow, the child is called a gamin. Couple these two ideas, the one which is all furnace, the other all dawn; bring the two sparks, Paris and childhood, into collision, and a little being is produced, – a *homuncio*, as Plautus would say.

This little being is joyous; he does not eat every day, and he goes to the theatre every night if he thinks proper. He has no shirt on his body, no shoes on his feet, and no covering on his head; he is like the flies, which have none of those things. He is from seven to thirteen years of age, lives in gangs, rambles about the streets, lodges in the open air, wears an old pair of his father's trousers, which descend lower than his heels, an old hat belonging to some other father, which comes below his ears, and one yellow list brace. He runs, watches, begs, kills time, colors pipes, swears like a fiend, haunts the wine-shop, knows thieves, is familiar with women of the town, talks slang, sings filthy songs, and has nothing bad in his heart; for he has in his soul a pearl, Innocence; and pearls are not dissolved by mud. So long as the man is a child, God desires that he should be innocent. If we were to ask the enormous city, "What is this creature?" it would reply, "It is my little one."

CHAPTER II

THE GAMIN'S CHARACTERISTICS

The gamin of Paris is the dwarf of the giantess. Let us not exaggerate: this cherub of the gutter has sometimes a shirt, but in that case has only one; he has shoes at times, but then they have no soles; he has at times a home, and likes it, for he finds his mother there; but he prefers the street, because he finds liberty there. He has games of his own, and his own tricks, of which hatred of the respectable class constitutes the basis, and he has metaphors of his own, – thus, to be dead, he calls eating dandelions by the root. He has trades of his own, – fetching hackney coaches, letting down steps, imposing tolls from one side of the street to the other in heavy showers, which he calls making *ponts des arts*, and shouting out speeches made by the authorities in favor of the French people. He has also a currency of his own, composed of all the little pieces of copper that can be picked up in the streets. This curious money, which takes the name of *loques*, has an unvarying and well-established value in this childish Bohemia.

Lastly, he has a fauna of his own, which he studiously observes in every hole and corner, – the Lady-bird, the death's-head moth, the daddy long-legs, and the "devil," a black insect which threatens by writhing its tail, and which is armed with two horns. He has his fabulous monster, which has scales on its belly and is not a lizard, and spots on its back but is not a frog; it lives in holes in old lime-kilns and dried-up wells; it is black, hairy, slimy, and crawls about, at one moment slowly, at another quickly; it utters no sound, but looks so terrible that no one has ever seen it. This monster he calls *le sourde*, and looking for it under stones is a pleasure of a formidable nature. Another pleasure is suddenly to raise a paving-stone and look at the woodlice. Every region of Paris is interesting for the celebrated "finds" which may be made in them; thus, there are earwigs in the timber-yards of the Ursulines, centipedes at the Panthéon, and tadpoles in the ditches of the Champs de Mars.

As for witticisms, this child is as full of them as Talleyrand; but though no less cynical, he is more honest. He is gifted with an unforeseen joviality, and startles the shop-keeper by his mad laugh. His range extends from genteel comedy to farce. A funeral passes, and among the persons following is a physician. "Hilloh!" shouts a gamin, "when did the doctors begin to carry home their own work?"

Another is in a crowd. A serious man, adorned with spectacles and watch-seals, turns indignantly: "You scoundrel, what do you mean by taking my wife's waist?" "I, sir? Search me!"

CHAPTER III HE IS AGREEABLE

At night, thanks to a few half-pence which he always contrives to procure, the *homuncio* enters a theatre. On crossing this magical threshold he becomes transfigured; he was a gamin, and he becomes the *titi*. Theatres are like overturned vessels, which have their hold in the air, and the *titis* congregate in the hold. The *titi* is to the gamin as the butterfly to the chrysalis, – the same being, but now flying and hovering. It is sufficient for him to be present, with his radiant happiness, his power of enthusiasm and delight, and the clapping of his hands, which resembles the flapping of wings; and the narrow, fetid, obscure, dirty, unhealthy, hideous, abominable hold is at once called Paradise.

Give a being what is useless, and deprive him of what is necessary, and you will have the gamin. He possesses some literary intuition, and his tastes, – we confess it with all proper regret, – are not classical. He is by nature but little of an academician.

This being bawls, shouts, ridicules, and fights; wears patches like a babe, and rags like a philosopher; fishes in the gutter, sports in the sewers, extracts gayety from filth, grins and bites, whistles and sings, applauds and hisses, tempers the Hallelujah Chorus with Matanturlurette, hums every known tune, finds without looking, knows what he is ignorant of, is a Spartan in filching, is foolish even to wisdom, is lyrical even to dirt, would squat upon Olympus, wallows on the dungheap and emerges covered with stars. The gamin of Paris is the boy Rabelais.

He is not satisfied with his trousers if they have no watch-pockets.

He is surprised at little, and frightened by less; he sings down superstitions, reduces exaggerations, puts out his tongue at ghosts, depoetizes stilts, and introduces caricature into the most serious affairs. It is not that he is prosaic, far from it; but he substitutes a farcical phantasmagoria for solemn vision. If Adamastor were to appear to him, the gamin would say, "Hilloh, old Bogy!"

CHAPTER IV HE MAY BE USEFUL

Paris begins with the badaud and ends with the gamin: two beings of which no other city is capable; the passive acceptance which is satisfied with looking, and the inexhaustible initiative; Prudhomme and Fouillou. Paris alone has that in its natural history: all the monarchy is in the badaud, all the anarchy is in the gamin. This pale child of the faubourgs of Paris lives, and is developed, and grows up in suffering, a thoughtful witness in the presence of social realities and human things. He believes himself reckless, but is not so: he looks on, ready to laugh, but also ready for something else. Whoever you may be who call yourself prejudice, abuses, ignominy, oppression, iniquity, despotism, injustice, fanaticism, or tyranny, take care of the yawning gamin.

This little fellow will grow. Of what clay is he made? Of anything. Take a handful of mud, a breath, and you have Adam. It is sufficient for a God to pass, and God has ever passed over the gamin. Fortune toils for this little being, though by the word fortune we mean to some extent chance. Will this pygmy, moulded in the coarse common clay, ignorant, uneducated, brutal, violent, and of the populace, be an Ionian or a Bœotian? Wait a while, *dum currit rota*, and the genius of Paris, that demon which creates children of accident and men of destiny, will behave exactly contrary to the Latin potter, and make an amphora out of the earthenware jar.

CHAPTER V HIS CONFINES

The gamin loves the town, but he loves solitude as well, for there is something of the sage in him: he is *urbis amator* like Fuscus, and *ruris amator* like Flaccus. To wander about dreamily, that is, to lounge, is an excellent employment of time for the philosopher, particularly in that slightly bastard sort of country, ugly enough, but strange and composed of two natures, that surrounds certain large cities, and notably Paris. Observing the suburbs is looking at an amphibious scene; it is the end of the trees and the beginning of the roofs, the end of the grass and the beginning of the pavement, the end of the furrows and the beginning of the shops, the end of the beaten paths and the beginning of passions, the end of the divine murmur and the beginning of human reason, and all this produces an extraordinary interest; and such is the motive of the apparently objectless walks of the dreamer in those unattractive parts which the passer-by at once brands with the title of "dull."

The author of these lines was for a long time a prowler about the suburbs of Paris, and it is a source of profound recollection for him. The worn grass, the stony path, the chalk, the marl, the plaster, the rough monotony of ploughed and fallow land, the young market-garden plants suddenly noticed in a hollow, the mixture of the wild and the tame, the vast deserted nooks in which the garrison drummers hold their noisy school, these Thebaïds by day and cut-throat dens by night, the tottering mill turning in the wind, the drawing-wheels of the quarries, the wine-shops at the corners of the cemeteries, the mysterious charm of the tall dark walls cutting at right angles immense open fields bathed in sunshine and full of butterflies, – all this attracted him.

Hardly any one knows those singular spots, – la Glacière, la Cimette, the hideous wall of Grenelle pock-marked with bullets, the Mont Parnasse, the Fosse aux Loups, the Tombe Isoire, or the Pierre Plate de Chatillon, where there is an old exhausted quarry, which is now only employed to grow mushrooms, and is closed by a heap of rotten boards flush with the ground. The Campagna of Rome is an idea, and the banlieue of Paris is another: to see in what an horizon offers us nought but fields, houses, or trees, is to remain on the surface; for all the aspects of things are the thoughts of God. The spot where a plain forms its junction with a town is always imprinted with a species of penetrating melancholy; for nature and humanity address you simultaneously, and local peculiarities make their appearance there.

Any one who has wandered as we have in those solitudes contiguous to our suburbs which might be called the Limbos of Paris has seen here and there, at the most deserted spot, and at the most unexpected moment, behind a scrubby hedge, or in the corner of some melancholy wall, children grouped tumultuously, fetid, muddy, dusty, unkempt, and ragged, playing together, wreathed with corn-flowers. They are the little runagates of poor families: this external boulevard is their breathing medium, and the banlieue belongs to them, and they eternally play truant in it. They ingenuously sing there their repertory of unclean songs. They are there, or, to speak more correctly, they dwell there, far from any eye, in the gentle warmth of May or June. Circling round a hole in the ground and snapping marbles, like irresponsible, freed, and happy beings, so soon as they perceive you they remember that they have a trade and must gain their livelihood, and they offer to sell you an old wool stocking full of may-bugs, or a spray of lilac. Such a meeting with chance children is one of the charming and yet poignant graces of the environs of Paris.

Sometimes there are girls among the heap of boys, – are they their sisters? – almost grown up, thin, feverish, sunburnt and freckled, crowned with wheat-ears and poppies, gay, haggard, and barefooted. You may see them eating cherries among the wheat, and at night hear them laugh. These groups, warmly illumined by the bright light of mid-day, or seen in the twilight, for a long time occupy the dreamer, and these visions are mingled with his dreams.

Paris is the centre, the banlieue is the circumference, – that is, the whole earth, for these children. They never venture beyond it, and can no more leave the Parisian atmosphere than fish can live out of water. With them there is nothing beyond two leagues from the barrière; Ivry, Gentilly, Arcueil, Belleville, Aubervilliers, Ménilmontant, Choisy le Roi, Bellancourt, Meudon, Issy, Vauvres, Sèvres, Puteaux, Neuilly, Gennevilliers, Colombes, Romainville, Chalon, Asnières, Bougival, Nanterre, Enghien, Noisy-le-sec, Nogent, Gournay, Drancy, and Gonesse, – at these places their universe ends.

CHAPTER VI A BIT OF HISTORY

At the epoch almost contemporary with the action of this book there was not, as at the present day, a policeman at every street corner (a blessing which we have no time to discuss), and wandering children abounded in Paris. Statistics give us an average of two hundred and sixty shelterless children picked up annually by the police of that day in unenclosed fields, in houses building, and under the arches of bridges. One of these nests, which became famous, produced "the swallows of the Rue d'Arcole." This, by the way, is the most disastrous of social symptoms, for all the crimes of the man begin with the vagabondage of the lad.

We must except Paris, however, and in a relative degree, and in spite of the statistics we have just quoted, the exception is fair. While in any other great city a vagabond child is a ruined man, while nearly everywhere the boy left to himself is to some extent devoted and left to a species of fatal immersion in public vice, which destroys honor and conscience within him, the gamin of Paris, though externally so injured, is internally almost intact. It is a magnificent thing to be able to say, and one revealed in the splendid probity of our popular revolutions, that a certain incorruptibility emanates from the idea which is in the atmosphere of Paris, as from the salt which is in the ocean water. Breathing Paris preserves the soul.

But what we have just stated does not in any way decrease the heart-contraction which we feel every time we meet one of these lads, around whom we fancy that we can see the threads of the broken family fluttering. In our present civilization, which is still so incomplete, it is not a very abnormal fact that families thus broken up should not know what becomes of their children, and allow their own flesh and blood to fall upon the highway. Hence come these obscure destinies; and this sad thing has become proverbial, and is known as "being cast on the pavement of Paris."

Let us remark parenthetically that such desertion of children was not discouraged by the old monarchy. A little of the Bohemian and Egyptian element in the lower classes suited the higher spheres, and the powerful ones profited by it. Hatred of national education was a dogma; of what good were half-lights? Such was the sentence, and the vagabond boy is the corollary of the ignorant boy. Besides, the monarchy sometimes wanted lads, and then it skimmed the streets. In the reign of Louis XIV., to go no farther back, the King wished, rightly enough, to create a fleet. The idea was good; but let us look at the means. No fleet is possible unless you have by the side of the sailing-vessels, which are the plaything of the winds, vessels which can be sent wherever may be necessary, or be used as tugs, impelled by oars or steam; and in those days galleys were to the navy what steam-vessels now are. Hence galleys were needed; but galleys are only moved through the galley-slave, and hence the latter must be procured. Colbert ordered the Provincial intendants and parliaments to produce as many convicts as they could, and the magistrates displayed great complaisance in the matter. A man kept on his hat when a procession passed; that was a Huguenot attitude, and he was sent to the galleys. A boy was met in the street; provided that he was fifteen years of age and had no place to sleep in, he was sent to the galleys. It was a great reign, a great age.

In the reign of Louis XV. children disappeared in Paris; the police carried them off and no one knew for what mysterious employment. Monstrous conjectures were whispered as to the King's purple baths. It sometimes happened that when boys ran short, the exempts seized such as had parents, and the parents, in their despair, attacked the exempts. In such a case Parliament interfered and hanged – whom, the exempts? No, the fathers.

CHAPTER VII

THE GAMIN WOULD HAVE HIS PLACE IN INDIAN CASTES

The Parisian gamin almost forms a caste, and we might say that a boy does not become so by wishing. The word *gamin* was printed for the first time, and passed from the populace into literature, in 1834. It made its first appearance in a work called "Claude Gueux." The scandal was great, but the word has remained. The elements that constitute the consideration of gamins among one another are very varied. We knew and petted one, who was greatly respected and admired because he had seen a man fall off the towers of Notre Dame; another, because he had managed to enter the back-yard in which the statues of the dome of the Invalides were temporarily deposited, and steal lead off them; another, because he had seen a diligence upset; another, because he knew a soldier who had all but put out the eye of a civilian. This explains the exclamation of the Parisian gamin, at which the vulgar laughed without understanding its depth: "Dieu de Dieu! how unlucky I am! Just think that I never saw anybody fall from a fifth floor!" Assuredly it was a neat remark of the peasant's: "Father So-and-so, your wife has died of her illness: why did you not send for a doctor?" —

"What would you have, sir? We poor people die of ourselves." But if all the passiveness of the peasant is contained in this remark, all the free-thinking anarchy of the faubourien will be found in the following: A man condemned to death is listening to the confessor in the cart, and the child of Paris protests, — "He is talking to the skull-cap. Oh, the capon!"

A certain boldness in religious matters elevates the gamin, and it is important for him to be strong-minded. Being present at executions is a duty with him. He points at the guillotine and laughs at it, and calls it by all sorts of pet names, — end of the soup; the grumbler; the sky-blue mother; the last mouthful, etc. In order to lose none of the sight, he climbs up walls, escalades balconies, mounts trees, hangs to gratings, and clings to chimney-pots. A gamin is born to be a slater, as another is to be a sailor, and he is no more frightened at a roof than at a mast. No holiday is equal to the Grève, and Samson and the Abbé Montes are the real popular fêtes. The sufferer is hooted to encourage him, and is sometimes admired. Lacenaire, when a gamin, seeing the frightful Dautrem die bravely, uttered a remark which contained his future, — "I was jealous of him." In gamindom Voltaire is unknown, but Papavoine is famous. Politicians and murderers are mingled in the same legend, and traditions exist as to the last garments of all. They know that Tolleron had a nightcap on, Avril a fur cap, Louvel a round hat; that old Delaporte was bald and bareheaded, Castaing rosy-cheeked and good-looking, and that Boriès had a romantic beard; Jean Martin kept his braces on, and Lecouffé and his mother abused each other. "Don't quarrel about your basket," a gamin shouted to them. Another little fellow climbed up a lamp-post on the quay, in order to watch Debacker pass, and a gendarme posted there frowned at him. "Let me climb up, M'sieu le Gendarme;" and to soften the man in authority, he added, — "I shall not fall." "What do I care whether you fall or not?" the gendarme replied.

Among the gamins a memorable accident is highly esteemed, and a lad attains the summit of consideration if he give himself a deep cut "to the bone." The fist is no small element of success, and one of the things which a gamin is very fond of saying is, "I am precious strong." To be left-handed renders you enviable, while squinting is held in great esteem.

CHAPTER VIII

A CHARMING ANECDOTE OF THE LAST KING

In summer he is metamorphosed into a frog, and from afternoon to nightfall, before the Austerlitz and Jena bridges, from the top of coal-rafts and washer-women's boats, dives into the Seine, with all possible infractions of the laws of decency and of the police. Still, the police are on the watch, and hence results a highly dramatic situation, which once gave rise to a paternal and memorable cry. This cry, which became celebrated about 1830, is a strategic warning from gamin to gamin; it can be scanned like a verse of Homer, with a notation almost as indescribable as the Eleusiac song of the Panathenæa, in which the ancient Evohé may be traced. – "Ohe, Titi, ohéée, here's the sergeant, pack up your traps, and be off through the sewer!"

Sometimes this gad-fly – that is the name he gives himself – can read, sometimes he can write, and draw after a fashion. He does not hesitate to acquire, by some mysterious mutual instruction, all the talents which may be useful to the public cause. From 1815 to 1830 he imitated the cry of a turkey; from 1830 to 1848 he drew a pear upon the walls. One summer evening, Louis Philippe, returning home on foot, saw a very little scamp struggling to raise himself high enough to draw with charcoal a gigantic pear on the pillar of the Neuilly gates, and the King, with that kindness which he inherited from Henri IV., helped the gamin to finish the pear and gave him a louis, saying, "The pear is on that too." The gamin likes a commotion, and any violent condition pleases him. He execrates the curés. One day in the Rue de l'Université, one of these young scamps put his finger to his nose in front of the driveway of No. 69. "Why are you doing that at that gate?" a passer-by asked him. The lad answered, "A curé lives there." The Papal Nuncio in fact resided there. Still, however great the gamin's Voltairianism may be, if the opportunity is offered him of being a chorister, he may possibly accept, and in that case assists civilly at mass. There are two things of which he is the Tantalus, and which he constantly desires without ever being able to attain them, – to overthrow the government and have his trousers reseated. The gamin in a perfect state is acquainted with all the police of Paris, and when he meets one, can always give a name to his face. He numbers them on his fingers, studies their names, and has his special notes about each. He reads the minds of the police like an open book, and will say curiously and without hesitating, – "So-and-so is a *traitor*, So-and-so is *very wicked*, So-and-so is *great*, So-and-so is *ridiculous*" (the italicized words have all a peculiar meaning in his mouth). This one believes that the Pont Neuf belongs to him, and prevents *the world* from walking on the cornice outside the parapet; another has a mania for pulling the ears of *persons*, etc. etc.

CHAPTER IX THE OLD SOUL OF GAUL

This lad may be traced in Poquelin, a son of the Halles, and again in Beaumarchais; for gaminerie is a tinge of the Gallic temper. When blended with common sense, it at times adds strength, in the same way as alcohol when mixed with wine; at other times it is a fault. Homer, it is true, repeats himself, and we might say that Voltaire plays the gamin. Camille Desmoulins was a faubourien. Championnet, who abused miracles, issued from the pavement of Paris; when quite a lad, he "inundated the porticos" of St. Jean de Beauvais and St. Étienne du Mont, and was on such familiar terms with the shrine of Saint Geneviève as eventually to give his orders to the vial of Saint Januarius.

The Parisian gamin is respectful, ironical, and insolent. He has bad teeth because he is badly fed and his stomach suffers, and fine eyes because he has talent. He would hop up the steps of Paradise in the very presence of Jehovah. He is clever at the savate, and all creeds are possible to him. He plays in the gutter, and draws himself up at the sound of an émeute; his effrontery cannot be subdued by grape-shot; he was a vagabond and becomes a hero, and, like the little Theban, he shakes the lion's skin. Barra the drummer was a Parisian gamin; he shouted, "Forward!" and in an instant became a giant. This child of the mud is also the child of the ideal; to see this we need only measure the distance between Molière and Barra.

In a word, the gamin is a being who amuses himself because he is unhappy.

CHAPTER X

ECCE PARIS, ECCE HOMO

The gamin of Paris at the present day, like the Græculus of Rome in former time, is the youthful people with the wrinkle of the old world on its forehead. The gamin is a grace for a nation, and at the same time a malady, – a malady which must be cured. In what way? By light; for light is sanitary and illumining.

All the generous social irradiations issue from science, letters, the arts, and instruction. Make men, make men. Enlighten them in order that they may warm you. Sooner or later the splendid question of universal instruction will be asked with the irresistible authority of absolute truth; and then those who govern under the surveillance of French ideas will have to make a choice between children of France and gamins of Paris, between flames in light and will-o'-the-wisps in the darkness.

The gamin expresses Paris, and Paris expresses the world. For Paris is a total; it is the ceiling of the human race, and the whole of this prodigious city is an epitome of dead manners and living manners. The man who sees Paris imagines that he sees universal history, with sky and constellations in the intervals. Paris has a Capitol, the Town Hall; a Parthenon, Notre Dame; a Mons Aventinus, the Faubourg St. Antoine; an Asinarium, the Sorbonne; a Pantheon, the Panthéon; a Via Sacra, the Boulevard des Italians; a Tower of the Winds, public opinion; and ridicule has been substituted for the Gemoniæ. Its majo is called the "faraud," its Transteverine is called the faubourien, its hammal the "fort de la Halle," its lazzarone the "pegre," and its cockney the "Gandin." All that is elsewhere is in Paris. Dumarsais' fish-fag can give a reply to the herb-seller of Euripides; Vejanus the discobolus lives again in the rope-dancer Forioso; Therapontigonus Miles could walk arm-in-arm with Grenadier Vadeboncœur; Damasippus the broker would be happy among the dealers in *bric-à-brac*; Vincennes would hold Socrates under lock, just as the Agora would pounce on Diderot; Grimod de la Reynière discovered roast-beef with tallow, in the same way as Curtillus invented roast hedgehog. We have seen the trapeze of which we read in Plautus reappear under the balloon of the Arc de l'Étoile; the sword-swallower of Pœcile met by Apuleius is a swallower of sabres on the Pont Neuf; Rameau's nephew and Curculion the parasite form a pair; Ergasites would have himself introduced to Cambaceres by d'Aigre feuille; the four fops of Rome, Alcesimarchus, Phœdromus, Dicabolus, and Argiryppus descend the Courtille in Labatut's post-chaise; Aulus Gellius stopped before Congrio no longer than Charles Nodier did before Punchinello; Marton is not a tigress, but Pardalisca was not a dragon. Pantolabus humbugs Nomentamus the gourmet at the Café Anglais; Hermogenes is the Tenor in the Champs Élysées, and Thrasius the beggar, dressed as Bobèche, carries round the hat for him; the troublesome fellow who catches hold of your coat-button in the Tuileries makes you repeat after two thousand years the apostrophe of Thesperon, —*Quis properantem meprehendit pallio?* The wine of Suresne is a parody of the wine of Alba; Père Lachaise exhales in the night showers the same gleams as the Esquilæ; and the poor man's grave bought for five years is quite equal to the hired coffin of the slave.

Seek for anything which Paris has not. The tub of Trophonius contains nothing which is not in Mesmer's trough; Ergaphilas is resuscitated in Cagliostro; the Brahmin Vasaphanta is incarcerated in the Count de St. Germain; and the cemetery of Saint Médard performs quite as good miracles as the Oumoumie Mosque at Damascus. Paris has an Æsop in Mayeux, and a Canidia in Mademoiselle Lenormand; it is startled as Delphi was by the flaming realities of the vision; it makes tables turn as Dodona did tripods; it places a grisette upon a throne as Rome placed a courtesan; and, after all, if Louis XV. is worse than Claudius, Madame Dubarry is better than Messalina. Paris combines in an extraordinary type what has lived and what we have elbowed, – Greek nudity, the Hebrew ulcer, and Gascon puns. It mixes up Diogenes, Job, and Paillasse, dresses a ghost in old numbers of the *Constitutionnel*, and makes Chodrucnito a Duclos. Although Plutarch says that "the tyrant never goes

to sleep," Rome, under Sylla as under Domitian, was resigned, and liked to mix water with its wine. The Tiber was a Lethe, if we may believe the somewhat doctrinaire eulogium which Varus Vibiscus made of it: *Contra Gracchos Tiberim habemus. Bibere Tiberim, id est seditionem oblivisci*. Paris drinks a million quarts of water a day; but that does not prevent it from beating the tattoo and ringing the alarm-bell when the opportunity offers.

With this exception, Paris is good-natured. It accepts everything royally; it is not difficult in the matter of its Venus; its Callipyge is a Hottentot; provided that it laughs, it forgives; ugliness amuses it, deformity does it good, and vice distracts it; if you are droll you may be a scoundrel; even hypocrisy, that supreme cynicism, does not revolt it; it is so literary that it does not hold its nose on passing Basile, and is no more scandalized by Tartuffe's prayer than Horace was terrified by the "hiccough" of Priapus. No feature of the human face is wanting in the profile of Paris; the Mabilie ball is not the Polyhymnian dance of the Janiculum, but the wardrobe-dealer has her eyes fixed on the Lorette there, exactly as the procuress Staphyla watched the Virgin Planesium. The Barrière des Combats is not a Coliseum, but people are as ferocious there as if Cæsar were looking on. The Syrian hostess has more grace than Mother Saguet; but if Virgil frequented the Roman wine-shop, David of Angers, Balzac, and Charlet have seated themselves in Parisian pot-houses. Paris reigns, geniuses flash in it, and red-tails prosper. Adonaïs passes through it in his twelve-wheeled car of thunder and lightning, and Silenus makes his entrance on his barrel. For Silenus read Ramponneau.

Paris is the synonym of Cosmos; Paris is Athens, Rome, Sybaris, Jerusalem, and Pantin. All civilizations are found there abridged, but so are all barbarisms. Paris would be very sorry not to have a guillotine; a little of the Place de Grève is useful, for what would this eternal festival be without that seasoning? The laws have wisely provided for that, and, thanks to them, the knife drains drops of blood upon this Mardi-Gras.

CHAPTER XI

THE REIGN OF RIDICULE

There are no limits to Paris; and no other city has held this sway, which at times derides those whom it holds in subjection. "To please you, O Athenians!" Alexander exclaimed. Paris makes more than the law, for it sets the fashion; and it makes more than fashion, for it produces routine. Paris may be stupid, if it think proper; at times it indulges in that luxury, and then the universe is stupid with it; but Paris soon wakes up, rubs its eyes, says, "How stupid I am!" and laughs in the face of the human race. What a marvel such a city is! How strange it is to find this grandeur and this buffoonery side by side; to see how all this majesty is not deranged by this parody, and the same mouth to-day blowing the trumpet of the last judgment, and to-morrow a penny whistle! Paris has a sovereign gayety; but the gayety is lightning, and its farce holds a sceptre. Its hurricane at times issues from a furnace; its explosions, its days, its masterpieces, its prodigies, its epics, go to the end of the world, and so do its cock-and-bull tales. Its laugh is the crater of a volcano which bespatters the world, and its jokes are sparks of fire. It imposes upon nations its caricatures as well as its ideal, and the loftiest monuments of human civilization accept its ironies and lend their eternity to its jokes. It is superb; it has a prodigious July 14, which delivers the globe; its night of August 4 dissolves in three hours a thousand years of feudalism; it makes with its logic the muscle of the unanimous will; it multiplies itself in every form of sublimity; it fills with its lustre Washington, Kosciusko, Bolivar, Bozzaris, Riégo, Bem, Manin, Lopez, John Brown, and Garibaldi. It is found wherever the future bursts into a flash, – at Boston in 1779, at the Isle of Leon in 1820, at Pesth in 1848, at Palermo in 1860; it whispers the powerful watchword "Liberty" in the ear of the American abolitionists assembled at Harper's Ferry, and in that of the patriots of Ancona assembled in the darkness before the Gozzi inn, on the sea-shore; it creates Canaris, it creates Quiroga, it creates Pisacane, it radiates grandeur upon the earth; it was by going whither its blast impelled him that Byron died at Missolonghi, and Mazet at Barcelona; it is a tribune under the feet of Mirabeau, and a crater under those of Robespierre; its books, plays, art, science, literature, and philosophy are the manuals of the human race; it has Pascal, Regnier, Corneille, Descartes, and Jean Jacques; Voltaire for any moment, Molière for all ages; it makes the universal mouth speak its language; it constructs in every mind the idea of progress; the liberating dogmas which it fuses are well-tried friends for generations, and it is with the mind of its thinkers and its poets that all the heroes of all nations have been formed since 1789. Still, this does not prevent it from playing the gamin; and the enormous genius which is called Paris, while transfiguring the world with its light, draws Bouginier's nose with charcoal on the wail of the Temple of Theseus, and writes Crédeville Voleur upon the Pyramids.

Paris constantly shows its teeth, and when it is not scolding it is laughing; such is Paris. The smoke from its chimneys constitutes the ideas of the universe; it is a pile of mud and stones if you like, but it is, before all, a moral being. It is more than grand, it is immense; and why? Because it dares. Daring is the price paid for progress. All sublime contests are more or less the rewards of boldness. For the Revolution to take place, it was not enough that Montesquieu should foresee it, Diderot preach it, Beaumarchais announce it, Condorcet calculate it, Arouet prepare it, and Rousseau premeditate it, – it was necessary that Danton should dare it.

The cry "Audace!" is a *Fiat lux*. In order that the human race may progress, it must have proved lessons of courage permanently before it. Rashness dazzles history, and is one of the great brightnesses of man. The dawn dares when it breaks. To attempt, to brave, persist, and persevere, to be faithful to one's self, to wrestle with destiny, to astound the catastrophe by the slight fear which it causes us, at one moment to confront unjust power, at another to insult intoxicated victory, to hold firm and withstand, – such is the example which people need and which electrifies them. The same formidable flash goes from the torch of Prometheus to the short clay pipe of Cambronne.

CHAPTER XII

THE FUTURE LATENT IN THE PEOPLE

As for the Parisian people, even when full grown, it is always the gamin. Depicting the lad is depicting the city, and that is the reason why we have studied the eagle in the sparrow.

The Parisian race, we say again, is found most truly in the faubourg; there it is pure-blooded, there we find the real physiognomy, there the people work and suffer, and toil and suffering are the two faces of the man. There are there immense numbers of strange beings, among whom may be found the wildest types, from the porter of la Râpée to the quarryman of Montfauçon. *Fæx urbis*, Cicero exclaims; "Mob," Burke adds, indignantly; a crowd, a multitude, a population, — these words are quickly uttered; but no matter! what do I care that they go about barefoot? They cannot read; all the worse. Will you abandon them on that account? Will you convert their distress into a curse? Cannot light penetrate these masses? Let us revert to that cry of light, and insist upon it, light, light! who knows whether this opaqueness may not become transparent? For are not revolutions themselves transfigurations? Come, philosophers, teach, enlighten, illumine, think aloud, speak loudly, run joyfully into the sunshine, fraternize with the public places, announce the glad tidings, spread alphabets around, proclaim the right, sing the Marseillaise, sow enthusiasm, and pluck green branches from the oaks. Make a whirlwind of the idea. This crowd may be sublimated, so let us learn how to make use of that vast conflagration of principles and virtues which crackles and bursts into a flame at certain hours. These bare feet, these naked arms, these rags, this ignorance, this abjectness, this darkness, may be employed for the conquest of the ideal. Look through the people, and you will perceive the truth; the vile sand which you trample under foot, when cast into the furnace and melted will become splendid crystal, and by its aid Galileo and Newton discover planets.

CHAPTER XIII

LITTLE GAVROCHE

Eight or nine years after the events recorded in the second portion of this story, there might be noticed on the Boulevard du Temple and in the regions of the Château d'Eau, a boy of about eleven or twelve years of age, who would have tolerably well realized the ideal of a gamin as sketched above, had he not had, with the smile of his age on his lips, a heart absolutely gloomy and void. This child was dressed in a man's trousers, but he had not got them from his father, and a woman's jacket, which did not come from his mother. Some persons had clothed him in rags out of charity. Yet he had a father and a mother, but his father did not think of him and his mother did not love him. He was one of those children worthy of pity before all, who have father and mother and are orphans.

This child was never so comfortable anywhere as in the street, for the paving-stones were less hard to him than his mother's heart. His parents had kicked him out into life, and he had simply tried his wings. He was a noisy, pale, active, sharp, impudent lad, with a cunning and sickly look. He came and went, sang, played at hop-scotch, searched the gutters, pilfered a little, but gayly, like cats and sparrows, laughed when he was called a scamp, and felt angry when called a thief. He had no bed, no bread, no fire, no love: but he was happy because he was free. When these poor beings are men, the mill of social order nearly always crushes them: but so long as they are children they escape because they are small. The slightest hole saves them.

Still, abandoned as this child was, it happened every two or three months that he said, – "Well, I'll go and see mamma." Then he quitted the boulevard, the circus, the Porte St. Martin, went along the quay, crossed the bridge, reached the Salpêtrière, and arrived where? Exactly at that double No. 50-52, which the reader knows, – the Maison Gorbeau. At this period No. 50-52, which was habitually deserted and eternally decorated with a bill of "Lodgings to Let," was, strange to say, inhabited by several persons who had no acquaintance with each other, as is always the case in Paris. All belonged to that indigent class which begins with the last small tradesman in difficulties, and is prolonged from wretchedness to wretchedness to those two beings to whom all the material things of civilization descend, – the scavenger and the rag-picker.

The chief lodger of Jean Valjean's day was dead, and her place had been taken by another exactly like her. I forget now what philosopher said, "There is never any want of old women." This new old woman was called Madame Burgon, and had nothing remarkable in her life save a dynasty of three parrots, which had successively reigned over her soul. The most wretched of all the persons inhabiting the house were a family of four persons, father, mother, and two nearly grown-up daughters, all four living in the same attic, one of the cells to which we have alluded.

This family offered at the first glance nothing very peculiar beyond its poverty; and the father, on hiring the room, stated that his name was Jondrette. A short time after he moved in, which had borne a striking resemblance – to employ the memorable remark of the chief lodger – to the coming in of nothing at all, this Jondrette had said to the woman, who, like her predecessor, was also portress and swept the stairs, "Mother So-and-so, if any one were to ask by chance for a Pole, or an Italian, or perhaps a Spaniard, I am the party."

This was the family of the merry little vagabond. He joined it, and found distress, and, what is sadder still, not a smile; a cold hearth and cold heart. When he entered, they asked him, "Where do you come from?" and he answered, "From the street: " when he went away, "Where are you going?" and he answered, "To the street." His mother would say to him, "What do you want here?" The boy lived in this absence of affection like the pale grass which grows in cellars. He was not hurt by its being so, and was not angry with any one: he did not know exactly how a father and mother ought to be. Moreover, his mother loved his sisters.

We have forgotten to mention that on the boulevard the lad was called Little Gavroche. Why was he called Gavroche? Probably because his father's name was Jondrette. Breaking the thread seems the instinct of some wretched families. The room which the Jondrettes occupied at the Maison Gorbeau was the last in the passage, and the cell next to it was occupied by a very poor young man of the name of Monsieur Marius. Let us state who this Monsieur Marius was.

BOOK II

LE GRAND BOURGEOIS

CHAPTER I

NINETY YEARS AND TWO-AND-THIRTY TEETH

There are still a few persons residing in the Rue Boucherat, Rue de Normandie, and Rue de Saintonge, who can remember a gentleman of the name of M. Gillenormand, and speak kindly about him. This good man was old when they were young. This profile has not entirely disappeared, with those who look sadly at the vague congregation of shadows called the past, from the labyrinth of streets near the Temple, which in the reign of Louis XIV. received the names of all the provinces of France, exactly in the same way as in our time the names of all the capitals of Europe have been given to the streets in the new Tivoli quarter; a progression, by the bye, in which progress is visible.

M. Gillenormand, who was most lively in 1831, was one of those men who have become curious to look on solely because they have lived a long time, and are strange because they once resembled everybody and now no longer resemble any one. He was a peculiar old man, and most certainly the man of another age, the genuine, perfect bourgeois of the 18th century, who carried his honest old bourgeoisie with the same air as Marquises did their marquise. He had passed his ninetieth year, walked upright, talked loudly, saw clearly, drank heartily, and ate, slept, and snored. He still had his two-and-thirty teeth, and only wore spectacles to read with. He was of an amorous temper, but said that for the last ten years he had decidedly and entirely given up the sex. "He could not please," he said: and he did not add "I am too old," but "I am too poor. If I were not ruined – he, he, he!" In fact, all that was left him was an income of about fifteen thousand francs. His dream was to make a large inheritance, and have one hundred thousand francs a year, in order to keep mistresses. As we see, he did not belong to that weak variety of octogenarians, who, like M. de Voltaire, were dying all their life; his longevity was not that of the cracked jug, and this jolly old gentleman had constantly enjoyed good health. He was superficial, rapidly and easily angered, and he would storm at the slightest thing, most usually an absurd trifle. When he was contradicted, he raised his cane and thrashed his people, as folk used to do in the great age. He had a daughter, upwards of fifty years of age and unmarried, whom he gave a hearty thrashing to when he was in a passion, and whom he would have liked to whip, for he fancied her eight years of age. He boxed his servant's ears energetically, and would say, "Ah, carrion!" One of his oaths was, "By the *pantoflouché* of the *pantouflochade*!" His tranquillity was curious; he was shaved every morning by a barber who had been mad and who detested him, for he was jealous of M. Gillenormand on account of his wife, who was a pretty little coquette. M. Gillenormand admired his own discernment in everything, and declared himself extremely sagacious. Here is one of his remarks, – "I have in truth some penetration. I am able to say, when a flea bites me, from what woman I caught it." The words he employed most frequently were "the sensitive man" and "nature," but he did not give to the latter word the vast acceptance of our age. But there was a certain amount of homeliness in his satirical remarks. "Nature," he would say, "anxious that civilization may have a little of everything, even gives it specimens of amusing barbarism. Europe has specimens of Asia and Africa in a reduced size; the cat is a drawing-room tiger, the lizard a pocket crocodile. The ballet girls at the opera are pink savages; they do not eat men, but they live on them: the little magicians change them into oysters and swallow them. The Caribs only leave the bones, and they only leave the shells. Such are our manners; we do not devour, but we nibble; we do not exterminate, but we scratch."

CHAPTER II

LIKE MASTER, LIKE HOME

He lived in the Marais, at No. 6 Rue des Filles de Calvaire, and the house belonged to him. This house has since been pulled down and rebuilt, and the number has probably been changed in the numbering revolutions which the streets of Paris undergo. He occupied an old and vast suite of rooms on the first floor, furnished up to the ceiling with large Gobelins and Beauvais tapestry, representing shepherd scenes; the subjects of the ceiling and panels were repeated in miniature upon the chairs. He surrounded his bed with an immense screen of Coromandel lacquer-work; long curtains hung from the windows, and made very splendid, large, broken folds. The garden immediately under the windows was reached by a flight of twelve or fifteen steps running from one of them, which the old gentleman went up and down very nimbly. In addition to a library adjoining his bed-room, he had a boudoir, which he was very fond of, a gallant withdrawing-room hung with a magnificent fleur-de-lysed tapestry, made in the galleys of Louis XIV., which M. de Vivonne had ordered of his convicts for his mistress. M. Gillenormand inherited this from a stern maternal great-aunt, who died at the age of one hundred. He had had two wives. His manners were midway between those of the courtier, which he had never been, and of the barrister, which he might have been. He was gay and pleasing when he liked; in his youth he had been one of those men who are always deceived by their wives and never by their mistresses, because they are at once the most disagreeable husbands and the most charming lovers imaginable. He was a connoisseur of pictures, and had in his bed-room a marvellous portrait of somebody unknown, painted by Jordaens with bold strokes of the brush, and with an infinitude of details. M. Gillenormand's coat was not in the style of Louis XV., or even Louis XVI., but it was in the style of the exquisites of the Directory. He had believed himself quite a youth at that time, and followed the fashions. His coat was of light cloth with large cuffs, a long codfish tail, and large steel buttons. Add to these knee-breeches and buckle-shoes. He always had his hands in his fobs, and said authoritatively, "The French Revolution is a collection of ruffians."

CHAPTER III

LUC ESPRIT

At the age of sixteen, when at the opera one night, he had the honor of being examined simultaneously by two beauties, at that time, celebrated and sung by Voltaire, – la Camargo, and la Salle. Caught between two fires, he beat an heroic retreat towards a little dancing – girl of the name of Naheury, sixteen years of age, like himself, obscure as a cat, of whom he was enamoured. He abounded in recollections, and would exclaim, "How pretty that Guimard-Guimardini-Guimardinette was, the last time I saw her at Longchamps, with her hair dressed in 'sustained feelings,' her 'come and see them' of turquoises, her dress of the color of 'newly-arrived people,' and her muff of 'agitation.'" He had worn in his youth a jacket of Nain-Londeur, to which he was fond of alluding: "I was dressed like a Turk of the Levantine Levant." Madame Boufflers, seeing him accidentally when he was twenty years of age, declared him to be "a charming madcap." He was scandalized at all the names he saw in politics and power, and considered them low and bourgeois. He read the journals, the *newspapers*, the *gazettes*, as he called them, and burst into a laugh. "Oh!" he would say, "who are these people? Corbière! Humann! Casimir Périer! There's a ministry for you! I can imagine this in a paper, – M. Gillenormand, Minister; it would be a farce, but they are so stupid that it might easily happen." He lightly called everything by its proper or improper name, and was not checked by the presence of ladies; and he uttered coarseness, obscenity, and filth with a peculiarly calm and slightly amazed accent in which was elegance. Such was the loose manner of the age. It is to be remarked that the season of circumlocution in verse was that of crudities in prose. His grandfather had predicted that he would be a man of genius, and gave him the two significant Christian names, Luc Esprit.

CHAPTER IV AN ASPIRING CENTENARIAN

He gained prizes in his youth at the college of Moulins, in which town he was born, and was crowned by the hand of the Due de Nivernais, whom he called the Due de Nevers. Neither the Convention, the death of Louis XVI., Napoleon, nor the return of the Bourbons, had effaced the recollection of this coronation. The Due de Nevers was to him the grand figure of the age. "What a charming nobleman!" he would say, "and how well his blue ribbon became him!" In the eyes of M. Gillenormand, Catherine II. repaired the crime of the division of Poland by purchasing of Bestucheff, for three thousand roubles, the secret of the elixir of gold, and on this point he would grow animated. "The elixir of gold!" he would exclaim. "Bestucheff's yellow tincture and the drops of General Lamotte were, in the 18th century, at one louis the half-ounce bottle, the grand remedy for love catastrophes, the panacea against Venus. Louis XV. sent two hundred bottles of it to the Pope." He would have been greatly exasperated had he been told that the gold elixir is nothing but perchloride of iron. M. Gillenormand adored the Bourbons, and held 1789 in horror; he incessantly described in what way he had escaped during the Reign of Terror, and how he had been obliged to display great gayety and wit in order not to have his head cut off. If any young man dared in his presence to praise the Republic, he turned blue, and grew so angry as almost to faint. Sometimes he alluded to his ninety years, and said, "I trust that I shall not see ninety-three twice." At other times, he informed persons that he intended to live to be a hundred.

CHAPTER V

BASQUE AND NICOLETTE

He had his theories; here is one of them: "When a man passionately loves women, and himself has a wife for whom he cares little, – a wife that is ugly, legitimate, full of her rights, reliant on the Code, and jealous when she likes to be so, he has only one way of getting out of the hobble and living at peace; it is to leave his purse – strings to his wife. This abdication renders him free; the wife is henceforth occupied, grows passionately fond of handling specie, verdigrises her fingers, undertakes to instruct the peasants and train the farmers, harangues the notaries, visits their offices, follows the course of lawsuits, draws up leases, dictates contracts, knows she is absolute, sells, buys, regulates, orders, promises and compromises, yields, concedes and recedes, arranges, deranges, saves, and squanders; she commits follies, and this affords her supreme personal pleasure and consolation. While her husband disregards her she has the satisfaction of ruining her husband." This theory M. Gillenormand applied to himself, and it became his history. His wife, the second one, managed his fortune in such a manner that one fine day when he found himself a widower, he had just enough to live on, by buying an annuity, three fourths of which would expire with him. He had not hesitated, for he did not care much about leaving anything to his heir, and, besides, he had seen that patrimonies had their adventures, and, for instance, became "National Property;" he had seen the avatars of the three per cent consols, and put but little faith in the great Book. "All that is Rue Quincampoix!" he would say. His house in the Rue des Filles du Calvaire belonged, as we stated, to him, and he had, two servants, "a he and a she." When a servant came into his house M. Gillenormand rechristened him, and gave the men the name of their province, Nîmois, Comtois, Poitevin, or Picard. His last valet was a fat cunning man of fifty-five, incapable of running twenty yards; but as he was born at Bayonne, M. Gillenormand called him Basque. As for the maid-servants, he called them all Nicolette (even la Magnon, to whom we shall allude directly). One day a bold cook, a Cordon Bleu, of the proud concierge race, presented herself "What wages do you expect a month?" M. Gillenormand asked her. "Thirty francs." "What is your name?" "Olympie." "I will give you forty, and call you Nicolette."

CHAPTER VI

MAGNON AND HER TWO LITTLE ONES

In Gillenormand sorrow was translated into choler; he was furious at being in despair. He had every prejudice and took every license. One of the things of which he composed his external relief and internal satisfaction was, as we have indicated, having remained a gay fellow, and passing energetically for such. He called this having a "royal renown," but this renown at times brought him into singular scrapes. One day a big baby, wrapped in rags and crying lustily, was brought to him in a basket, which a maid-servant, discharged six months previously, attributed to him. M. Gillenormand was at that time past his eighty-fourth year, and people around him became indignant and clamorous. "Does the impudent wench expect to make anybody believe this? What audacity! What an abominable calumny!" M. Gillenormand, however, did not feel at all angry. He looked at the brat with the amiable smile of a man flattered by the calumny, and said to the company, "Well, what is the matter? Is there anything so wonderful in it, that you should stand there like stuck pigs and display your ignorance? M. le Duc d'Angoulême, bastard of his Majesty Charles IX., married at the age of eighty-five a girl of fifteen; Monsieur Virginal, Marquis d'Alleuze, and brother of Cardinal de Sourdis, Archbishop of Bordeaux, had at the age of eighty-three by the lady's-maid of Madame Jacquin, the President's wife, a genuine love-child, who was a Knight of Malta, and Member of the Privy Council. One of the great men of this age, Abbé Tabaraud, is the son of a man of eighty-seven years of age. These things are common enough. And then take the Bible! After this, I declare that this little gentleman is none of mine; but take care of him, for it is not his fault." The creature, the aforesaid Magnon, sent him a second parcel the next year, also a boy, and M. Gillenormand thought it time to capitulate. He sent the two brats to their mother, agreeing to pay eighty francs a month for their support, but on condition that the mother was not to begin again. He added, "I expect that the mother will treat them well, and I shall go and see them now and then," which he did. He had a brother, a priest, who was for three-and-thirty years Rector of the Poitiers academy, and died at the age of seventy-nine. "I lost him when quite young," he would say. This brother, who is not much remembered, was a great miser, who, as he was a priest, thought himself bound to give alms to the poor he met, but he never gave them aught but bad or called-in money, thus finding means of going to Hades by the road to Paradise. As for M. Gillenormand the elder, he gave alms readily and handsomely; he was benevolent, brusque, and charitable, and had he been rich his downfall would have been magnificent. He liked everything that concerned him to be done grandly; even when he was swindled one day, having been plundered in the matter of an inheritance by a man of business in a clumsy and obvious manner, he made the solemn remark, "Sir, that was done very awkwardly, and I feel ashamed of such clumsiness. Everything has degenerated in this age, even the swindlers. Morbleu! a man of my stamp ought not to be robbed in that way; I was plundered as if I were in a wood, but badly plundered, *sylvæ sint consule dignæ!*" He had married twice, as we said; by his first wife he had a girl, who remained an old maid, and by the second another girl, who died at the age of thirty, and who married through love, or chance, or otherwise, a soldier of fortune who had served in the armies of the Republic and the Empire, won the cross at Austerlitz, and his colonel's commission at Waterloo. "He is the disgrace of my family," the old gentleman used to say. He took a great deal of snuff, and had a peculiarly graceful way of shaking his shirt-frill with the back of his hand. He believed very little in God.

CHAPTER VII

RULE: NO ONE RECEIVED UNTIL EVENING

Such was M. Luc Esprit Gillenormand, who had not lost his hair, which was rather gray than white, and always wore it in dog's ears, – altogether venerable. He was a man of the 18th century, frivolous and great. In 1814, and the early years of the Restoration, M. Gillenormand, who was still a youth, – he was only seventy-four, – resided in the Rue Sirvandoni, Faubourg St. Germain. He only retired to the Marais on leaving society, that is to say, long after his eightieth year, and on leaving the world he immured himself in his habits; the chief one, and in that he was invariable, was to keep his door closed by day and receive nobody, no matter the nature of his business, till night. He dined at five, and then his door was thrown open; it was the fashion of his century, and he did not like to give it up. "Day is low," he would say, "and only deserves closed shutters." People of fashion light up their wit when the zenith illumines its stars, and he barricaded himself against everybody, even had it been the King; such was old-time elegance.

CHAPTER VIII

TWO DO NOT MAKE A PAIR

As for M. Gillenormand's two daughters, they were born at an interval of ten years. In their youth they had been very little alike, and both in character and face were as little sisters as was possible. The younger was a charming creature, who turned to the light, loved flowers, poetry, and music, was enthusiastic, ethereal, and mentally betrothed from her youth up to some heroic figure. The elder had her chimera too; she saw in the azure an army-contractor, some fat and very rich man, a splendidly stupid husband, a million converted into a man, or else a prefect; the reception at the prefecture, an usher in the ante-room with a chain round his neck, the official balls, the addresses at the mansion-house to be "Madame la Prefète," – all this buzzed in her imagination. The two sisters wandered each in her own reverie, at the period when they were girls, and both had wings, – the one those of an angel, the other those of a goose.

No ambition is fully realized, at least not in this nether world, and no paradise becomes earthly in our age. The younger married the man of her dreams, but she was dead, while the elder did not marry. At the period when she enters into our narrative, she was an old virtue, an incombustible prude, with one of the most acute noses and most obtuse intellects imaginable. It is a characteristic fact that, beyond her family, no one had ever known her family name; she was called Mlle. Gillenormand the elder. In the matter of cant, Mlle. Gillenormand could have given points to a Miss. It was modesty pushed to the verge of the impure. She had one frightful reminiscence in her life, – one day a man saw her garter.

Age had only heightened this pitiless modesty, – her chemisette was never sufficiently opaque, and never was high enough. She multiplied brooches and pins at places where no one dreamed of looking. The peculiarity of prudery is to station the more sentries the less the fortress is menaced. Still, let who will explain these old mysteries of innocence, she allowed herself to be kissed without displeasure by an officer in the Lancers, who was her grand-nephew, and Théodule by name. In spite of this favored Lancer, however, the ticket of "Prude," which we have set upon her, suited her exactly. Mlle. Gillenormand's was a species of twilight soul, and prudery is a semi-virtue and a semi-vice. She added to prudery the congenial lining of bigotry; she belonged to the Sisterhood of the Virgin, wore a white veil on certain saints' days, muttered special orisons, revered "the holy blood," venerated "the sacred heart," remained for hours in contemplation before a rococo-Jesuit altar in a closed chapel, and allowed her soul to soar among the little marble clouds and through the large beams of gilt wood.

She had a chapel friend, an old maid like herself, of the name of Mlle. Vaubois, absolutely imbecile, and by whose side Mlle. Gillenormand had the pleasure of being an eagle. Beyond Agnus Deis and Ave Marias, Mlle. Vaubois knew nothing except the different ways of making preserves. Perfect of her kind, she was the ermine of stupidity, without a single spot of intelligence. We must add that Mlle. Gillenormand rather gained than lost by growing old. She had never been wicked, which is a relative goodness; and then years abrade angles, and time had softened her. She had an obscure melancholy, of which she did not herself possess the secret, and about her entire person there was the stupor of a finished life which has not begun. She kept house for her father; such families, consisting of an old man and an old maid, are not rare, and have the ever-touching appearance of two weaknesses supporting each other.

There was also in this house a child, – a little boy, – who was always trembling and dumb in the old gentleman's presence. M. Gillenormand never spoke to this boy except with a stern voice, and at times with upraised cane. "Come here, sir, – scamp, scoundrel, come here, – answer me, fellow, – let me see you, vagabond!" etc., etc. He adored him; it was his grandson, and we shall meet him again.

Book III GRANDFATHER AND GRANDSON

CHAPTER I AN OLD DRAWING-ROOM

When M. Gillenormand lived in the Rue Servandoni, he frequented several very good and highly noble salons. Although a bourgeois, M. Gillenormand was welcome in them, and as he had a two-fold stock of wit, namely, that which he had, and that attributed to him, he was sought after and made much of. There are some people who desire influence and to be talked about, no matter what price they pay; and when they cannot be oracles, they make themselves buffoons. M. Gillenormand was not of that nature; and his domination in the Royalist drawing-rooms which he frequented did not cost him any of his self-respect. He was an oracle everywhere; and at times he held his own against M. de Bonald, and even M. Bengy-Puy-Vallée.

About 1817, he invariably spent two afternoons a week at the house of the Baronne de T – , a worthy and respectable person whose husband had been, under Louis XVI., Ambassador to Berlin. The Baron de T – , who, when alive, was passionately devoted to magnetic ecstasies and visions, died abroad a ruined man, leaving as his sole fortune ten MS. volumes bound in red Morocco and gilt-edged, which contained very curious memoirs about Mesmer and his trough. Madame de T – did not publish these memoirs through dignity, and lived on a small annuity, which survived no one knew how. Madame de T – lived away from Court, "which was a very mixed society," as she said, in noble, proud, and poor isolation. Some friends collected twice a week round her widow's fire, and this constituted a pure Royalist salon. Tea was drunk, and people uttered there, according as the wind blew to elegiacs or dithyrambics, groans or cries of horror about the age, the charter, the Buonapartists, the prostitution of the Cordon Bleu to untitled persons, and the Jacobinism of Louis XVIII.; and they also whispered about the hopes which Monsieur, afterwards Charles X., produced.

Low songs, in which Napoleon was called Nicholas, were greeted here with transports of delight. Duchesses, the most charming and delicate of ladies, went into ecstasies there about couplets like the following, which were addressed to the "Federalists":

"Renforcez dans vos culottes
Le bout d'chemise qui vous pend.
Qu'on n'dis pas qu'les patriotes
Ont arboré l'drapeau blanc!"

They amused themselves with puns which they fancied tremendous, with innocent jokes which they supposed venomous, with quatrains and even distichs; here is one on the Dessolles Ministry, the moderate cabinet of which Mons. Decazes and Deserre formed part: —

"Pour raffermir le trône ébranlé sur sa base,
Il faut changer de sol, et de serre et de case;"

or else they played upon the list of the House of Peers, "an abominably Jacobin chamber," and combined names on this list so as to form, for instance, phrases like the following: "Damas, Sabran, Gouvion de St. Cyr." In this society the Revolution was parodied, and they had some desire to sharpen the same passions in the contrary sense, and sang their *ça, ira*.

"Ah! ça ira! ça ira! ça ira!
Les buonapartist' à la lanterne!"

Songs are like the guillotine, – they cut off indiscriminately to-day this head, and to-morrow that. It is only a variation. In the Fualdès affair, which belongs to this period (1816), they sided with Bastide and Jansion, because Fualdès was "buonapartiste," They called the Liberals friends and brothers, and that was the last degree of insult. Like some church-steeple, the salon of the Baronne de T – had two cocks: one was M. Gillenormand, the other the Comte de Lamothe Valois, of whom they whispered with a species of respect, – "You know? the Lamothe of the necklace business," – parties have these singular amnesties.

Let us add this; in the bourgeoisie, honored situations are lessened by too facile relations, and care must be taken as to who is admitted. In the same way as there is a loss of caloric in the vicinity of cold persons, there is a diminution of respect on the approach of despised persons. The old high society held itself above this law, as above all others; Marigny, brother of the Pompadour, visited the Prince de Soubise, not although, but because, he was her brother. Du Barry, godfather of the Vaubernier, is most welcome at the house of the Maréchal de Richelieu. That world is Olympus, and Mercury and the Prince de Guemenée are at home in it. A robber is admitted to it, provided he be a god.

The Comte de Lamothe, who, in 1815, was seventy-five years of age, had nothing remarkable about him beyond his silent and sententious air, his angular and cold face, his perfectly polite manners, his coat buttoned up to the chin, and his constantly crossed legs, covered with trousers of the color of burnt Sienna. His face was the same color as his trousers. This M. de Lamothe was esteemed in this salon on account of his "celebrity," and, strange to say, but true, on account of his name of Valois.

As for M. Gillenormand, the respect felt for him was of perfectly good alloy. He was an authority; in spite of his levity, he had a certain imposing, worthy, honest, and haughty manner, which did not at all injure his gayety, and his great age added to it. A man is not a century with impunity, and years eventually form a venerable fence around a head. He made remarks, too, which had all the sparkle of the old régime. Thus, when the King of Prussia, after restoring Louis XVIII., paid him a visit under the name of the Comte de Ruppín, he was received by the descendant of Louis XIV. somewhat as if he were Marquis de Brandebourg, and with the most delicate impertinence. M. Gillenormand approved of it. "All kings who are not King of France," he said, "are provincial kings." One day the following question was asked, and answer given in his presence, – "What has been done about the editor of the *Courrier Français*?" "He is to be changed." "There's a *c* too much," M. Gillenormand dryly observed. At an anniversary Te Deum for the return of the Bourbons, on seeing M. de Talleyrand pass, he said, – "There's his Excellency the Devil."

M. Gillenormand was generally accompanied by his daughter, a tall young lady, who at that time was forty and looked fifty; and by a pretty boy of nine years of age, red and white, fresh, with happy, confident eyes, who never appeared in this drawing-room without hearing all the voices buzz around him, – "How pretty he is! What a pity, poor boy!" This lad was the one to whom we referred just now, and he was called "poor boy" because he had for father "a brigand of the Loire." This brigand was that son-in-law of M. Gillenormand, who has already been mentioned, and whom the old gentleman called the "disgrace of his family."

CHAPTER II

A RED SPECTRE OF THAT DAY

Any one who had passed at that period through the little town of Vernon, and walked on the handsome stone bridge, which, let us hope, will soon be succeeded by some hideous wire bridge, would have noticed, on looking over the parapet, a man of about fifty, wearing a leathern cap, and trousers and jacket of coarse gray cloth, to which something yellow, which had been a red ribbon, was sewn, with a face tanned by the sun, and almost black, and hair almost white, with a large scar on his forehead and running down his cheek, bowed and prematurely aged, walking almost every day, spade and pick in hand, in one of the walled enclosures near the bridge, which border, like a belt of terraces, the left bank of the Seine. There are delicious enclosures full of flowers, of which you might say, were they much larger, "They are gardens," and if they were a little smaller, "They are bouquets." All these enclosures join the river at one end and a house at the other. The man in the jacket and wooden shoes, to whom we have alluded, occupied in 1817 the narrowest of these enclosures and the smallest of these houses. He lived there alone and solitary, silently and poorly, with a woman who was neither young nor old, neither pretty nor ugly, neither peasant nor bourgeoisie, who waited on him. The square of land which he called his garden was celebrated in the town for the beauty of the flowers he cultivated, and they were his occupation.

Through his toil, perseverance, attention, and watering-pot, he had succeeded in creating after the Creator; and he had invented sundry tulips and dahlias which seemed to have been forgotten by nature. He was ingenious, and preceded Soulange Bodin in the formation of small patches of peat-soil for the growth of the rare and precious shrubs of America and China. From daybreak in summer he was in his walks, pricking out, clipping, hoeing, watering, or moving among his flowers, with an air of kindness, sorrow, and gentleness. At times he would stand thoughtful and motionless for hours, listening to the song of a bird in a tree, the prattle of a child in a house, or else gazing at a drop of dew on a blade of grass, which the sun converted into a carbuncle. He lived very poorly, and drank more milk than wine: a child made him give way, and his servant scolded him. He was timid to such an extent that he seemed stern, went out rarely, and saw no one but the poor, who tapped at his window, and his curé, Abbé Mabœuf, a good old man. Still, if the inhabitants of the town or strangers, curious to see his roses or tulips, came and tapped at his little door, he opened it with a smile. He was the brigand of the Loire.

Any one who, at the same time, read military memoirs and biographies, the *Moniteur* and the bulletins of the great army, might have been struck by a name which pretty often turns up, that of George Pontmercy. When quite a lad this Pontmercy was a private in the Saintonge regiment, and when the Revolution broke out, this regiment formed part of the army of the Rhine, for the regiments of the Monarchy kept their provincial names even after the fall of the Monarchy, and were not brigaded till 1794. Pontmercy fought at Spire, Worms, Neustadt, Turkheim, Alzey, and at Mayence, where he was one of the two hundred who formed Houchard's rear-guard. He, with eleven others, held out against the corps of the Prince of Hesse behind the old rampart of Andernach, and did not fall back on the main body until the enemy's guns had opened a breach from the parapet to the talus. He was under Kléber at Marchiennes, and at the fight of Mont Palissel, where his arm was broken by a rifle-ball; then he went to the frontier of Italy, and was one of the thirty who defended the Col de Tenda with Joubert. Joubert was appointed adjutant-general, and Pontmercy sub-lieutenant; he was by Berthier's side amid the grape-shot on that day of Lodi which made Bonaparte say, "Berthier was gunner, trooper, and grenadier." He saw his old general Joubert fall at Novi at the moment when he was shouting, with uplifted sabre, "Forward!" Having embarked with his company on board a cutter which sailed from Genoa to some little port of the coast, he fell into a wasps' nest of seven or eight English sail. The Genoese commandant wished to throw his guns into the sea, hide the soldiers

in the hold, and pass like a merchant vessel; but Pontmercy had the tricolor flag hoisted at the peak, and proudly passed under the guns of the British frigates. Twenty leagues farther on, his audacity increasing, he attacked and captured a large English transport conveying troops to Sicily, and so laden with men and horses that the vessel's deck was almost flush with the sea. In 1805 he belonged to Malher's division, which took Gunzburg from the Archduke Ferdinand, and at Wettingen he caught in his arms, amid a shower of bullets, Colonel Maupilet, who was mortally wounded at the head of the 9th Dragoons. He distinguished himself at Austerlitz in that admirable march in columns of companies performed under the enemy's fire; and when the Russian Imperial Horse Guards destroyed one of the battalions of the 4th line Infantry, Pontmercy was among those who took their revenge, and drove back these Guards. For this the Emperor gave him the Cross. Pontmercy saw in turn Wurmser made prisoner at Mantua, Mélas at Alessandria, and Mack at Ulm, and he belonged to the 8th corps of the grand army which Mortier commanded, and which took Hamburg. Then he joined the 55th regiment of the line, which was the old regiment of Flanders; at Eylau, he was in the cemetery where the heroic Captain Louis Hugo, uncle of the author of this book, withstood, with his company of eighty-three men, for two hours, the whole effort of the enemy's army. Pontmercy was one of the three who left this cemetery alive. He was at Friedland; then he saw Moscow, the Beresina, Lutzen, Bautzen, Dresden, Wacha, Leipsic, and the defiles of Gelnhausen; then at Montmercil, Château-Thierry, Craon, the banks of the Marne, the banks of the Aisne, and the formidable position of Laon. At Arnay le Duc, as captain, he sabred ten Cossacks, and saved not his general, but his corporal; he was cut to pieces on this occasion, and seven-and-twenty splinters were taken out of his left arm alone. Eight days before the capitulation of Paris he exchanged with a comrade and entered the cavalry; for he had what was called under the old régime a "double hand;" that is to say, an equal aptitude in handling, as private, a sabre or musket, as officer, a squadron or a company. From this aptitude, improved by military education, special arms sprang, for instance, the dragoons, who are at once cavalry and infantry. He accompanied Napoleon to Elba, and at Waterloo was a Major of cuirassiers in Dubois' brigade. It was he who took the colors of the Limburg battalion, and himself threw them at the Emperor's feet. He was covered with blood; for, on seizing the colors, he received a sabre-cut across the face. The Emperor, who was pleased, cried out to him, "You are a Colonel, a Baron, and officer of the Legion of Honor!" Pontmercy answered, – "Sire, I thank you on behalf of my widow." An hour later he fell into the ravine of Ohain. And now who was this George Pontmercy? He was the same brigand of the Loire.

We have already seen some portion of his history. After Waterloo, Pontmercy, drawn as we remember out of the sunken road of Ohain, succeeded in rejoining the army, and dragged himself from ambulance to ambulance as far as the cantonments of the Loire. The Restoration put him on half-pay, and then sent him to Vernon, under honorable surveillance. King Louis XVIII., regarding all that was done in the Hundred Days as if it had not happened, recognized neither his quality as officer of the Legion of Honor, nor his commission as Colonel, nor his title as Baron. He for his part neglected no opportunity to sign himself, "Colonel Baron de Pontmercy." He had only one old blue coat, and never went out without attaching to it the rosette of the Legion of Honor. The King's attorney advised him that he would be tried for illegally wearing this decoration; and when this hint was given him by an officious intermediary, Pontmercy replied, with a bitter smile, "I do not know whether it is I that no longer understand French, or whether you are not speaking it, but the fact remains the same: I do not understand you." Then he went out for eight days in succession with his rosette, and the authorities did not venture to interfere with him. Twice or thrice the Minister of War or the General commanding the department wrote to him with the following superscription: "M. le Commandant Pontmercy," and he sent back the letters unopened. At the same moment Napoleon at St. Helena was treating in the same fashion the missives of Sir Hudson Lowe, addressed to "General Bonaparte." If we may be forgiven the remark, Pontmercy finished by having the same saliva in

his mouth as the Emperor. There were also at Rome, Carthaginian prisoners who refused to salute Flaminius, and had a little of Hannibal's soul in them.

One morning he met the King's attorney in a street of Vernon, went up to him, and said, "Monsieur le Procureur du Roi, am I allowed to wear my scar?"

He had nothing but his scanty half-pay as Major, and he had taken the smallest house in Vernon, where he lived alone, in what way we have just seen. Under the Empire and between two wars he found time to marry Mlle. Gillenormand. The old bourgeois, who was indignant in his heart, concluded with a sigh and saying, "The greatest families are forced into it." In 1815, Madame Pontmercy, a most admirable woman in every respect, and worthy of her husband, died, leaving a child. This child would have been the Colonel's delight in his solitude; but the grandfather imperiously claimed him, declaring that if he were not given up to him he would disinherit him. The father yielded for the sake of the little one, and, unable to love his son, he took to loving flowers.

He had, however, given up everything, and did not join the opposition or conspire. He shared his thoughts between the innocent things he did and the great things he had done, and he spent his time in hoping for a carnation or calling to mind Austerlitz. M. Gillenormand kept up no relations with his son-in-law; the Colonel was to him a "bandit," and he was for the Colonel an "ass." M. Gillenormand never spoke about the Colonel, except at times to make mocking allusions to "his barony." It was expressly stipulated that Pontmercy should never attempt to see his son or speak to him, under penalty of having him thrown on his hands disinherited. To the Gillenormands, Pontmercy was a plague patient, and they intended to bring up the child after their fashion. The Colonel perhaps did wrong in accepting these terms, but he endured them, in the belief that he was acting rightly, and only sacrificing himself.

The inheritance of the grandfather was a small matter, but that of Mlle. Gillenormand the elder was considerable, for this aunt was very rich on her mother's side, and her sister's son was her natural heir. The boy, who was called Marius, knew that he had a father, but nothing more, and no one opened his lips to him on the subject. Still, in the society to which his grandfather took him, the whisperings and winks eventually produced light in the boy's mind; he understood something at last, and, as he naturally accepted, by a species of infiltration and slow penetration, the ideas and opinions which were, so to speak, his breathing medium, he gradually came to think of his father only with shame.

While he was thus growing up in this way, the Colonel every two or three months came furtively to Paris, like a convict who is breaking his ban, and posted himself at St. Sulpice, at the hour when Aunt Gillenormand took Marius to Mass. Trembling lest the aunt should turn round, concealed behind a pillar, motionless, and scarce daring to breathe, he looked at this boy; the scarred warrior was frightened at this old maid.

Prom this very circumstance emanated his friendship with the Abbé Mabœuf, Curé of Vernon. This worthy priest had a brother, churchwarden of St. Sulpice, who had several times noticed this man contemplating his child, and the scar on his cheek, and the heavy tear in his eye. This man, who looked so thoroughly a man, and who wept like a child, struck the churchwarden, and this face adhered to his memory. One day when he went to Vernon to see his brother he met on the bridge Colonel Pontmercy, and recognized his man of St. Sulpice. The churchwarden told the affair to the Curé, and both made some excuse to pay a visit to the Colonel. This visit led to others; and the Colonel, though at first very close, eventually opened his heart, and the Curé and the churchwarden learned the whole story, and how Pontmercy sacrificed his own happiness to the future of his child. The result was that the Curé felt a veneration and tenderness for him, and the Colonel, on his side, took the Curé into his affection. By the way, when both are equally sincere and good, no men amalgamate more easily than an old priest and an old soldier, for they are the same men at the bottom. One devotes himself to his country down here, the other to his country up there; that is the sole difference.

Twice a year, on January 1st, and Saint George's day, Marius wrote his father letters dictated by his aunt, and which looked as if copied from a handbook, for that was all M. Gillenormand tolerated;

and the father sent very affectionate replies, which the grandfather thrust into his pocket without reading.

CHAPTER III REQUIESCANT!

The salon of Madame de T – was all that Marius Pontmercy knew of the world, and it was the sole opening by which he could look out into life. This opening was gloomy, and more cold than heat, more night than day, reached him through this trap. This boy, who was all joy and light on entering the strange world, became thus, in a short time, sad, and what is more contrary still to his age, serious. Surrounded by all these imposing and singular persons, he looked about him with serious astonishment, and all contributed to augment his stupor. There were in Madame de T – 's drawing-room old, noble, and very venerable ladies, who called themselves Mathau, Noé, Levis (pronounced Levi), and Cambis, (pronounced Cambyse). These ancient faces and these Biblical names were mingled in the boy's mind with his Old Testament, which he learned by heart, and when they were all present, seated in a circle round an expiring fire, scarce illumined by a green-shaded lamp, with their severe faces, their gray or white hair, their long dresses of another age, in which only mournful colors could be seen, and uttering at lengthened intervals words at once majestic and stern, little Marius regarded them with wandering eyes and fancied that he saw not women, but patriarchs, and Magi, – not real beings, but ghosts.

With these ghosts were mingled several priests, habitués of this old salon, and a few gentlemen: the Marquis de Sass – , secretary to Madame de Berry; the Vicomte de Val – , who published odes under the pseudonym of Charles Antoine; the Prince de Beauff – , who, though still young, had a gray head and a pretty, clever wife, whose dress of scarlet velvet, with gold embroidery, cut very low in the neck, startled this gloom; the Marquis de C – , d'E – , the Frenchman, who was most acquainted with "graduated politeness;" the Comte d'Am – , a gentleman with a benevolent chin; and the Chevalier de Port de Guy, the pillar of the library of the Louvre, called the King's Cabinet. M. de Port de Guy, bald and rather aging than old, used to tell how in 1793, when he was sixteen years of age, he was placed in the hulks as refractory, and chained to an octogenarian, the Bishop of Mirepoix, also a refractory, but as priest, while he was so as soldier. It was at Toulon, and their duty was to go at night to collect on the scaffold the heads and bodies of persons guillotined during the day. They carried these dripping trunks on their backs, and their red jackets had behind the nape of the neck a crust of blood, which was dry in the morning and moist at night. These tragical narratives abounded in the salon of Madame de T – , and through cursing Marat they came to applaud Trestaillon. A few deputies of the "introuvable" sort played their rubber of whist there; for instance, M. Thibord du Chalard, M. Lemarchant de Gomicourt, and the celebrated jester of the right division, M. Cornet Dincourt. The Bailiff of Ferrette, with his knee-breeches and thin legs, at times passed through this room, when proceeding to M. de Talleyrand's; he had been a companion of the Comte d'Artois, and acting in the opposite way to Aristotle reclining on Campaspe, he had made the Guimard crawl on all fours, and thus displayed to ages a philosopher avenged by a bailiff.

As for the priests, there was the Abbé Halma, the same to whom M. Larose, his fellow-contributor on *la Foudre*, said, "Stuff, who is not fifty years of age? a few hobble-de-hoys, perhaps." Then came the Abbé Letourneur, preacher to the King; the Abbé Frayssinous, who at that time was neither Bishop, Count, Minister, nor Peer, and who wore a soutane, from which buttons were absent; and the Abbé Keravenant, Curé of St. Germain des Prés. To them must be added the Papal Nuncio, at that date Monsignore Macchi, Archbishop of Nisibi, afterwards Cardinal, and remarkable for his long pensive nose; and another Monsignore, whose titles ran as follow: Abbate Palmieri, domestic Prelate, one of the seven Prothonotaries sharing in the Holy See, Canon of the glorious Liberian Basilica, and advocate of the Saints, *postulatore Dei Santi*, an office relating to matters of canonization, and meaning very nearly, Referendary to the department of Paradise. Finally, two Cardinals, M. de la Luzerne, and M. de Cl – T – . The Cardinal de Luzerne was an author, and was destined to have the

honor a few years later of signing articles in the *Conservateur* side by side with Chateaubriand; M. de Cl – T –, was Archbishop of Toulouse, and frequently spent the summer in Paris with his nephew the Marquis de T –, who had been Minister of the Navy and of War. The Cardinal de Cl – T – was a merry little old gentleman, who displayed his red stockings under his tucked-up cassock. His specialty was hating the Encyclopædia and playing madly at billiards; and persons who on summer evenings passed along the Rue M –, where M. de Cl – T – then resided, stopped to listen to the sound of the balls and the sharp voice of the Cardinal crying to his Conclavist Monseigneur Cottret, Bishop *in partibus* of Caryste, "Mark me a carom, Abbé." The Cardinal de Cl – T – had been introduced to Madame de T – by his most intimate friend, M. de Roquelaure, ex-Bishop of Senlis and one of the Forty. M. de Roquelaure was remarkable for his great height and his assiduity at the Academy. Through the glass door of the room adjoining the library, in which the French Academy at that time met, curious persons could contemplate every Thursday the ex-Bishop of Senlis, usually standing with hair freshly powdered, in violet stockings, and turning his back to the door, apparently to display his little collar the better. All these ecclesiastics, although mostly courtiers as much as churchmen, added to the gravity of the salon, to which five Peers of France, the Marquis de Vib –, the Marquis de Tal –, the Marquis d'Herb –, the Vicomte Damb –, and the Duc de Val –, imparted the lordly tone. This Duc de Val –, though Prince de Mon –, that is to say, a foreign sovereign prince, had so lofty an idea of France and the Peerage, that he looked at everything through them. It was he who said, "The Cardinals are the French Peers of Rome, and the Lords are the French Peers of England." Still, as in the present age the Revolution must be everywhere, this feudal salon was ruled, as we have seen, by M. Gillenormand, a bourgeois.

It was the essence and quintessence of white Parisian society, and reputations, even Royalist ones, were kept in quarantine there, for there is always anarchy in reputation. Had Chateaubriand come in he would have produced the effect of Père Duchêne. Some converts, however, entered this orthodox society through a spirit of toleration. Thus the Comte Beug – was admitted for the purpose of correction. The "noble" salons of the present day in no way resemble the one which I am describing, for the Royalists of to-day, let us say it in their praise, are demagogues. At Madame de T –'s the society was superior, and the taste exquisite and haughty beneath a grand bloom of politeness. The habits there displayed all sorts of involuntary refinement, which was the ancient régime itself, which lived though interred. Some of these habits, especially in conversation, seemed whimsical, and superficial persons would have taken for provincialism what was merely antiquated. They called a lady "Madame la Générale," and "Madame la Colonelle" had not entirely been laid aside. The charming Madame de Léon, doubtless remembering the Duchesses de Longueville and de Chevreuse, preferred that appellation to her title of Princess, and the Marquise de Créquy was also called "Madame la Colonelle."

It was this small high society which invented at the Tuileries the refinement of always speaking of the King in the third person, and never saying, "Your Majesty," as that qualification had been "sullied by the usurper." Facts and men were judged there, and the age was ridiculed – which saved the trouble of comprehending it. They assisted one another in amazement, and communicated mutually the amount of enlightenment they possessed. Methusalem instructed Epimenides, – the deaf put the blind straight. The time which had elapsed since Coblenz was declared not to have passed, and in the same way as Louis XVIII. was *Dei gratia* in the twenty-fifth year of his reign, the *émigrés* were *de jure* in the twenty-fifth year of their adolescence.

Everything harmonized there: no one was too lively, the speech was like a breath, and the newspapers, in accordance with the salon, seemed a papyrus. The liveries in the ante-room were old, and these personages who had completely passed away were served by footmen of the same character. All this had the air of having lived a long time and obstinately struggling against the tomb. To Conserve, Conservation, Conservative, represented nearly their entire dictionary, and "to be in good odor" was the point. There were really aromatics in the opinions of these venerable groups, and

their ideas smelt of vervain. It was a mummy world, in which the masters were embalmed and the servants stuffed. A worthy old Marchioness, ruined by the emigration, who had only one woman-servant left, continued to say, "My people."

What did they do in Madame de T – 's salon? They were ultra. This remark, though what it represent has possibly not disappeared, has no meaning at the present day, so let us explain it To be ultra is going beyond; it is attacking the sceptre in the name of the throne and the mitre in the name of the altar; it is mismanaging the affair you have in hand; it is kicking over the traces; it is disputing with the executioner about the degree of roasting which heretics should undergo; it is reproaching the idol for its want of idolatry; it is insulting through excess of respect; it is finding in the Pope insufficient Papism, in the King too little royalty, and too much light in the night; it is being dissatisfied with alabaster, snow, the swan, and the lily, on behalf of whiteness; it is being a partisan of things to such a pitch that you become their enemy; it is being so strong for, that you become against.

The ultra spirit specially characterizes the first phase of the Restoration. Nothing in history ever resembled that quarter of an hour which begins in 1814 and terminates in 1820, with the accession of M. de Villèle, the practical man of the Right. These six years were an extraordinary moment, at once noisy and silent, silent and gloomy, enlightened, as it were, by a beam of dawn, and covered, at the same time, by the darkness of the great catastrophe which still filled the horizon, and was slowly sinking into the past. There was in this light and this shadow an old society and a new society, buffoon and melancholy, juvenile and senile, and rubbing its eyes, for nothing is so like a re-awaking as a return. There were groups that regarded France angrily and which France regarded ironically; the streets full of honest old Marquis-owls, returned and returning, "ci-devants," stupefied by everything; brave and noble gentlemen smiling at being in France and also weeping at it, ravished at seeing their country again, and in despair at not finding their monarchy; the nobility of the Crusades spitting on the nobility of the Empire, that is to say, of the sword; historic races that had lost all feeling of history; the sons of the companions of Charlemagne disdainful of the companions of Napoleon. The swords, as we have said, hurled insults at one another; the sword of Fontenoy was ridiculous, and only a bar of rusty iron; the sword of Marengo was odious, and only a sabre. The olden times misunderstood yesterday, and no one had a feeling of what is great or what is ridiculous. Some one was found to call Bonaparte Scapin. This world no longer exists, and nothing connected with it, let us repeat, remains at the present day. When we draw out of it some figure hap-hazard, and try to bring it to bear again mentally, it seems to us as strange as the antediluvian world; and, in fact, it was also swallowed up by a deluge and disappeared under two revolutions. What waves ideas are! How quickly do they cover whatever they have a mission to destroy and bury, and how promptly do they produce unknown depths!

Such was the physiognomy of the salon in those distant and candid days when M. Martainville had more wit than Voltaire. These salons had a literature and politics of their own: people in them believed in Fiévée, and M. Agier laid down the law there. M. Colnet, the publisher and bookseller of the Quai Malaquais, was commented on, and Napoleon was fully the ogre of Corsica there. At a later date the introduction into history of M. le Marquis de Buonaparté, Lieutenant-General of the armies of the King, was a concession to the spirit of the age. These salons did not long remain pure, and in 1818 a few doctrinaires, a very alarming tinge, began to culminate in them. In matters of which the ultras were very proud, the doctrinaires were somewhat ashamed; they had wit, they had silence, their political dogma was properly starched with hauteur, and they must succeed. They carried white neck-cloths and buttoned coats to an excessive length, though it was useful. The fault or misfortune of the doctrinaire party was in creating old youth: they assumed the posture of sages, and dreamed of grafting a temperate power upon the absolute and excessive principle. They opposed, and at times with rare sense, demolishing liberalism by conservative liberalism; and they might be heard saying: "Have mercy on Royalism, for it has rendered more than one service. It brought back traditions, worship, religion, and respect. It is faithful, true, chivalrous, loving, and devoted, and has blended, though reluctantly, the secular grandeurs of the Monarchy with the new grandeurs of the

nation. It is wrong in not understanding the Revolution, the Empire, glory, liberty, young ideas, young generations, and the age; but do we not sometimes act quite as wrongly against it? The Revolution of which we are the heirs ought to be on good terms with everything. Attacking the Royalists is the contrary of liberalism; what a fault and what blindness! Revolutionary France fails in its respect to historic France; that is to say, to its mother, to itself. After September 5th, the nobility of the Monarchy were treated like the nobility of the Empire after July 8th; they were unjust to the eagle and we are unjust to the *fleur-de-lys*. There must be, then, always something to proscribe! Is it very useful to ungild the crown of Louis XIV., and scratch off the escutcheon of Henri IV.? We sneer at M. de Vaublanc, who effaced the N's from the bridge of Jena; but he only did what we are doing. Bouvines belongs to us as much as Marengo, and the *fleur-de-lys* are ours, like the N's. They constitute our patrimony; then why should we diminish it? The country must be no more denied in the past than in the present; why should we not have a grudge with the whole of history? Why should we not love the whole of France?" It was thus that the doctrinaires criticised and protected the Royalists, who were dissatisfied at being criticised, and furious at being protected.

The ultras marked the first epoch of the Revolution, and the Congregation characterized the second; skill succeeded impetuosity. Let us close our sketch at this point.

In the course of his narrative, the author of this book found on his road this curious moment of contemporary history, and thought himself bound to take a passing glance at it, and retrace some of the singular features of this society, which is unknown at the present day. But he has done so rapidly, and without any bitter or derisive idea, for affectionate and respectful reminiscences, connected with his mother, attach him to this past. Moreover, let him add, this little world had a grandeur of its own, and though we may smile at it, we cannot despise or hate it. It was the France of other days.

Marius Pontmercy, like most children, received some sort of education. When he left the hands of Aunt Gillenormand, his grandfather intrusted him to a worthy professor of the finest classical innocence. This young mind, just expanding, passed from a prude to a pedant. Marius spent some years at college, and then entered the law-school; he was royalist, fanatic, and austere. He loved but little his grandfather, whose gayety and cynicism ruffled him, and he was gloomy as regarded his father. In other respects, he was an ardent yet cold, noble, generous, proud, religious, and exalted youth; worthy almost to harshness, and fierce almost to savageness.

CHAPTER IV THE END OF THE BRIGAND

The conclusion of Marius's classical studies coincided with M. Gillenormand's retirement from society; the old gentleman bade farewell to the Faubourg St. Germain and Madame de T – 's drawing-room, and proceeded to establish himself in the Marais at his house in the Rue des Filles du Calvaire. His servants were, in addition to the porter, that Nicolette who succeeded Magnon, and that wheezing, short-winded Basque, to whom we have already alluded. In 1827 Marius attained his seventeenth year; on coming home one evening he saw his grandfather holding a letter in his hand.

"Marius," said M. Gillenormand, "you will start to-morrow for Vernon."

"What for?" Marius asked.

"To see your father."

Marius trembled, for he had thought of everything excepting this, – that he might one day be obliged to see his father. Nothing could be more unexpected, more surprising, and, let us add, more disagreeable for him. It was estrangement forced into approximation, and it was not an annoyance so much as a drudgery. Marius, in addition to his motives of political antipathy, was convinced that his father, the trooper, as M. Gillenormand called him in his good-tempered days, did not love him; that was evident, as he had abandoned him thus and left him to others. Not feeling himself beloved, he did not love; and he said to himself that nothing could be more simple. He was so stupefied that he did not question his grandfather, but M. Gillenormand continued, —

"It seems that he is ill, and asks for you."

And after a silence he added, —

"Start to-morrow morning. I believe there is a coach which leaves at six o'clock and gets to Vernon at nightfall. Go by it, for he says that the matter presses."

Then he crumpled up the letter and put it in his pocket. Marius could have started the same night, and have been with his father the next morning; a diligence at that time used to run at night to Rouen, passing through Vernon. But neither M. Gillenormand nor Marius dreamed of inquiring. On the evening of the following day Marius arrived at Vernon, and asked the first passer-by for the house of "Monsieur Pontmercy;" for in his mind he was of the same opinion as the Restoration, and did not recognize either his father's Barony or Colonelcy. The house was shown him; he rang, and a woman holding a small hand-lamp opened the door for him.

"Monsieur Pontmercy?" Marius asked.

The woman stood motionless.

"Is this his house?" Marius continued.

The woman shook her head in the affirmative.

"Can I speak to him?"

The woman made a negative sign.

"Why, I am his son," Marius added; "and he expects me."

"He no longer expects you," the woman said.

Then he noticed that she was crying; she pointed to the door of a parlor, and he went in. In this room, which was lighted by a tallow candle placed on the mantel-piece, there were three men, one standing, one on his knees, and one lying full length upon the floor in his shirt. The one on the floor was the Colonel; the other two were a physician and a priest praying. The Colonel had been attacked by a brain fever three days before, and having a foreboding of evil, he wrote to M. Gillenormand, asking for his son. The illness grew worse, and on the evening of Marius' arrival at Vernon the Colonel had an attack of delirium. He leaped out of bed, in spite of the maid-servant, crying, "My son does not arrive, I will go to meet him." Then he left his bed-room, and fell on the floor of the ante-room; he had just expired. The physician and the curé were sent for, but both arrived too late; the son had

also arrived too late. By the twilight gleam of the candle, a heavy tear, which had fallen from the Colonel's dead eye, could be noticed on his pallid cheek. The eye was lustreless, but the tear had not dried up. This tear was his son's delay.

Marius gazed upon this man whom he saw for the first time and the last, upon this venerable and manly face, these open eyes which no longer saw, this white hair, and the robust limbs upon which could be distinguished here and there brown lines which were sabre-cuts, and red stars which were bullet-holes. He gazed at the gigantic scar which imprinted heroism on this face, upon which God had imprinted gentleness. He thought that this man was his father, and that this man was dead, and he remained cold. The sorrow he felt was such as he would have felt in the presence of any other man whom he might have seen lying dead before him.

Mourning and lamentation were in this room. The maid-servant was weeping in a corner, the priest was praying, and could be heard sobbing, the physician wiped his eyes, and the corpse itself wept. The physician, priest, and woman looked at Marius through their affliction without saying a word, for he was the stranger. Marius, who was so little affected, felt ashamed and embarrassed at his attitude, and he let the hat which he held in his hand fall on the ground, in order to induce a belief that sorrow deprived him of the strength to hold it. At the same time he felt a species of remorse, and despised himself for acting thus. But was it his fault? he had no cause to love his father.

The Colonel left nothing, and the sale of the furniture scarce covered the funeral expenses. The maid-servant found a scrap of paper, which she handed to Marius. On it were the following lines, written by the Colonel: —

"For my son. The Emperor made me a Baron on the field of Waterloo, and as the Restoration contests this title, which I purchased with my blood, my son will assume it and wear it. Of course he will be worthy of it." On the back the Colonel had added, "At this same battle of Waterloo a sergeant saved my life; his name is Thénardier, and I believe that he has recently kept a small inn in a village near Paris, either Chelles or Montfermeil. If my son meet this Thénardier he will do all he can for him."

Not through any affection for his father, but owing to that vague respect for death which is ever so imperious in the heart of man, Marius took this paper and put it away. Nothing was left of the Colonel. M. Gillenormand had his sword and uniform sold to the Jews; the neighbors plundered the garden and carried off the rare flowers, while the others became brambles and died. Marius remained only forty-eight hours in Vernon. After the funeral he returned to Paris and his legal studies, thinking no more of his father than if he had never existed. In two days the Colonel was buried, and in three forgotten.

Marius had a crape on his hat, and that was all.

CHAPTER V

MARIUS MEETS A CHURCHWARDEN

Marius had retained the religious habits of his childhood. One Sunday, when he went to hear Mass at St. Sulpice, in the Chapel of the Virgin to which his aunt took him when a boy, being on that day more than usually absent and thoughtful, he placed himself behind a pillar, and knelt, without paying attention to the fact, upon a Utrecht velvet chair, on the back of which was written, "Monsieur Mabœuf, Churchwarden." The Mass had scarce begun when an old gentleman presented himself, and said to Marius, —

"This is my place, sir."

Marius at once stepped aside, and the old gentleman took his seat. When Mass was ended Marius stood pensively for a few moments, till the old gentleman came up to him and said, —

"I ask your pardon, sir, for having disturbed you just now, and for troubling you afresh at this moment; but you must have considered me ill-bred, and so I wish to explain the matter to you."

"It is unnecessary, sir," said Marius.

"No, it is not," the old man continued, "for I do not wish you to have a bad opinion of me. I am attached to this seat, and it seems to me that the Mass is better here, and I will tell you my reason. To this spot I saw during ten years, at regular intervals of two or three months, a poor worthy father come, who had no other opportunity or way of seeing his son, because they were separated through family arrangements. He came at the hour when he knew that his son would be brought to Mass. The boy did not suspect that his father was here — perhaps did not know, the innocent, that he had a father. The latter kept behind a pillar so that he might not be seen, looked at his child and wept; for the poor man adored him, as I could see. This spot has become, so to speak, sanctified for me, and I have fallen into the habit of hearing Mass here. I prefer it to the bench to which I should have a right as churchwarden. I even knew the unfortunate gentleman slightly. He had a father-in-law, a rich aunt, and other relatives, who threatened to disinherit the boy if the father ever saw him, and he sacrificed himself that his son might one day be rich and happy. They were separated through political opinions, and though I certainly approve of such opinions, there are persons who do not know where to stop. Good gracious! because a man was at Waterloo he is not a monster; a father should not be separated from his child on that account. He was one of Bonaparte's colonels, and is dead, I believe. He lived at Vernon, where I have a brother who is curé, and his name was something like Pontmarie or Montpercy. He had, on my word, a great sabre-cut."

"Pontmercy," Marius said, turning pale.

"Precisely, Pontmercy; did you know him?"

"He was my father, sir."

The old churchwarden clasped his hands and exclaimed, —

"Ah! you are the boy! Yes, yes, he would be a man now. Well, poor boy! you may say that you had a father who loved you dearly."

Marius offered his arm to the old gentleman and conducted him to his house. The next day he said to M. Gillenormand, —

"Some friends of mine have arranged a shooting-party; will you allow me to go away for three days?"

"Four," the grandfather answered; "go and amuse yourself." And he whispered to his daughter with a wink, "Some love affair!"

CHAPTER VI

WHAT RESULTED FROM MEETING A CHURCHWARDEN

Where Marius went we shall learn presently. He was away three days, then returned to Paris, went straight to the library of the Law-school and asked for a file of the *Moniteur*. He read it; he read all the histories of the Republic and the Empire; the Memorial of St. Helena, all the memoirs, journals, bulletins, and proclamations, – he fairly devoured them. The first time he came across his father's name in a bulletin of the grand army he had a fever for a whole week. He called upon the generals under whom George Pontmercy had served; among others, Count H – . The churchwarden, whom he saw again, told him of the life at Vernon, the Colonel's retirement, his flowers, and his solitude. Marius had at last a perfect knowledge of this rare, sublime, and gentle man, this species of lion-lamb, who had been his father.

While occupied with this study, which filled all his moments as well as all his thoughts, he scarce ever saw the Gillenormands. He appeared at meals, but when sought for after them he could not be found. His aunt sulked, but old Gillenormand smiled. "Stuff, stuff, it is the right age!" At times the old man would add, "Confound it! I thought that it was an affair of gallantry, but it seems that it is a passion." It was a passion in truth, for Marius was beginning to adore his father.

At the same time an extraordinary change took place in his ideas, and the phases of this change were numerous and successive. As this is the history of many minds in our day, we deem it useful to follow these phases step by step, and indicate them all. The history he had just read startled him, and the first effect was bedazzlement. The Republic, the Empire, had hitherto been to him but monstrous words, – the Republic a guillotine in the twilight; the Empire a sabre in the night. He had looked into it, and where he had only expected to find a chaos of darkness he had seen, with a species of extraordinary surprise, mingled with fear and delight, stars flashing, – Mirabeau, Vergniaud, St. Just, Robespierre, Camille Desmoulins, and Danton, – and a sun rise, Napoleon. He knew not where he was, and he recoiled, blinded by the brilliancy. Gradually, when the first surprise had worn off, he accustomed himself to this radiance. He regarded the deed without dizziness, and examined persons without terror; the Revolution and the Empire stood out in luminous perspective before his visionary eyeballs; he saw each of these two groups of events and facts contained in two enormous facts: the Revolution in the sovereignty of civic right restored to the masses, the Empire in the sovereignty of the French idea imposed on Europe; he saw the great figure of the people emerge from the Revolution, the great figure of France from the Empire, and he declared to himself on his conscience that all this was good.

What his bedazzlement neglected in this first appreciation, which was far too synthetical, we do not think it necessary to indicate here. We are describing the state of a mind advancing, and all progress is not made in one march. This said, once for all, as to what precedes and what is to follow, we will continue.

He then perceived that up to this moment he had no more understood his country than he had his father. He had known neither the one nor the other, and he had spread a species of voluntary night over his eyes. He now saw; and on one side he admired, on the other he adored. He was full of regret and remorse, and he thought with despair that he could only tell to a tomb all that he had in his mind. Oh, if his father were alive, if he had him still, if God in His compassion and His goodness had allowed this father to be still alive, how he would have flown, how he would have cried to his father, – "Father, here I am, it is I! I have the same heart as you! I am your son!" How he would have kissed his white head, bathed his hair with his tears, gazed at his scar, pressed his hand, adored his clothes, and embraced his feet! Oh, why did this father die so soon, before justice had been done him, before he had known his son's love? Marius had a constant sob in his heart, which said at every moment, "Alas!" At the same time he became more truly serious, more truly grave, more sure of his

faith and his thoughts. At each instant beams of light arrived to complete his reason, and a species of internal growth went on within him. He felt a natural aggrandizement produced by the two things so new to him, – his father and his country.

As a door can be easily opened when we hold the key, he explained to himself what he had hated, and understood what he had abhorred. Henceforth he saw clearly the providential, divine, and human meaning, the great things which he had been taught to detest, and the great men whom he had been instructed to curse. When he thought of his previous opinions, which were but of yesterday, and which yet seemed to him so old, he felt indignant and smiled. From the rehabilitation of his father he had naturally passed to that of Napoleon; but the latter, we must say, was not effected without labor. From childhood he had been imbued with the judgments of the party of 1814 about Bonaparte; now, all the prejudices of the Restoration, all its interests, and all its instincts, tended to disfigure Napoleon, and it execrated him, even more than Robespierre. It had worked rather cleverly upon the weariness of the nation and the hatred of mothers. Bonaparte had become a species of almost fabulous monster, and in order to depict him to the imagination of the people, which, as we said just now, resembles that of children, the party of 1814 brought forward in turn all the frightful masques, from that which is terrible while remaining grand, down to that which is terrible while becoming grotesque, – from Tiberius down to old Bogy. Hence, in speaking of Bonaparte, people were at liberty to sob or burst with laughter, provided that hatred sung the bass. Marius had never had on the subject of – that man, as he was called – any other ideas but these in his mind, and they were combined with his natural tenacity. He was a headstrong little man, who hated Napoleon.

On reading history, on studying before all documents and materials, the veil which hid Napoleon from Marius's sight was gradually rent asunder; he caught a glimpse of something immense, and suspected that up to this moment he had been mistaken about Bonaparte, as about all the rest; each day he saw more clearly, and he began climbing slowly, step by step, at the beginning almost reluctantly, but then with intoxication, and as if attracted by an irresistible fascination, first the gloomy steps, then the dimly-lighted steps, and at last the luminous and splendid steps of enthusiasm.

One night he was alone in his little garret, his candle was lighted, and he was reading at a table by the open window. All sorts of reveries reached him from the space, and were mingled with his thoughts. What a spectacle is night! We hear dull sounds and know not whence they come; we see Jupiter, which is twelve hundred times larger than the earth glowing like a fire-ball; the blue is black, the stars sparkle, and the whole forms a formidable sight. He was reading the bulletins of the grand army, those Homeric strophes written on the battle-field; he saw in them at intervals the image of his father, and ever that of the Emperor; the whole of the great Empire was before him; he felt, as it were, a tide within him swelling and mounting; it seemed at moments as if his father passed close to him like a breath, and whispered in his ear; little by little he grew strange, he fancied he could hear drums, cannon, and bugles, the measured tread of the battalions, and the hollow distant gallop of the cavalry; from time to time his eyes were raised and surveyed the colossal constellations flashing in the profundities, and then they fell again upon the book, and he saw in that other colossal things stirring confusedly. His heart was contracted, he was transported, trembling, and gasping; and all alone, without knowing what was within him or what he obeyed, he rose, stretched his arms out of the window, looked fixedly at the shadow, the silence, the dark infinitude, the eternal immensity, and shouted, "Long live the Emperor!"

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