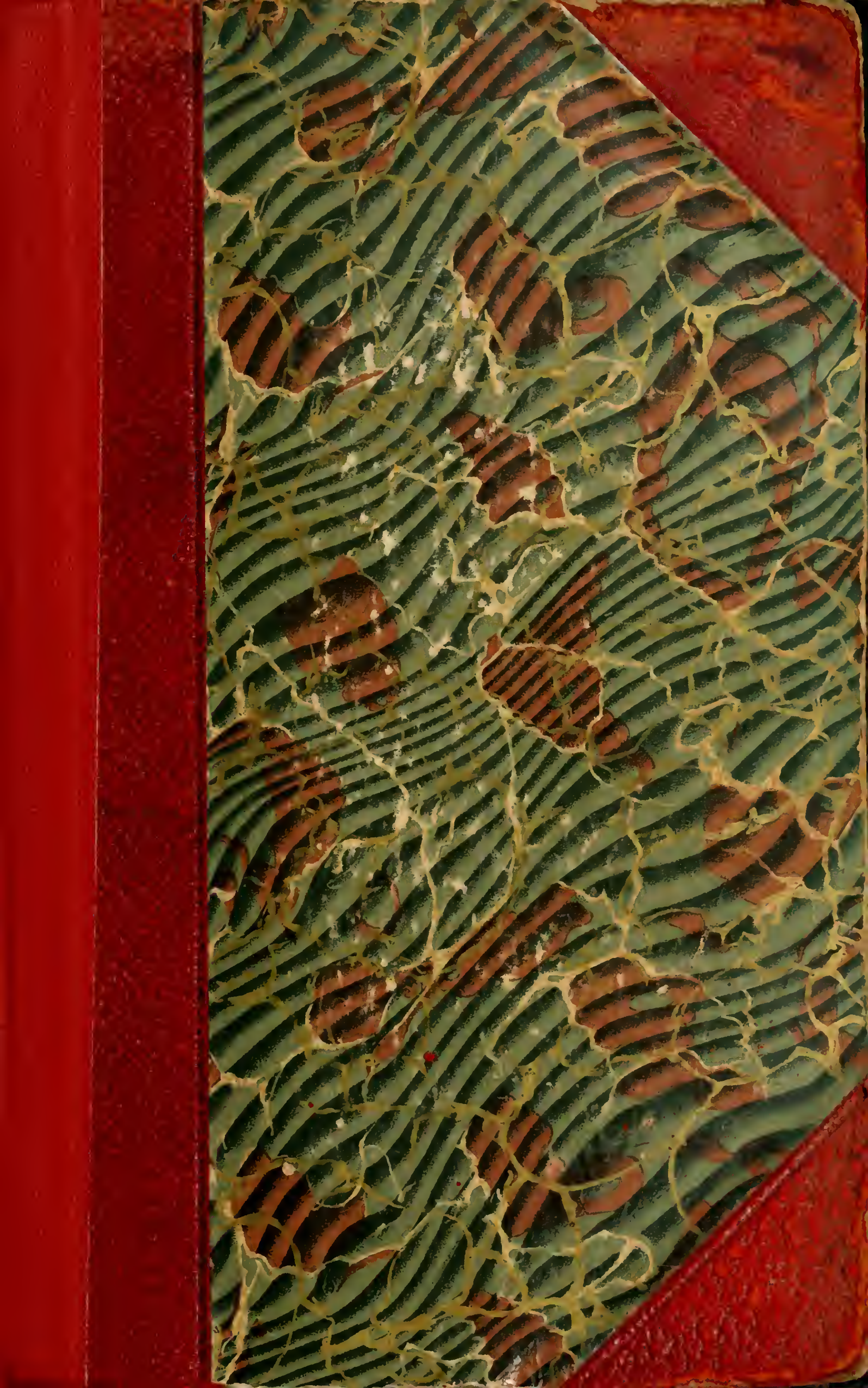

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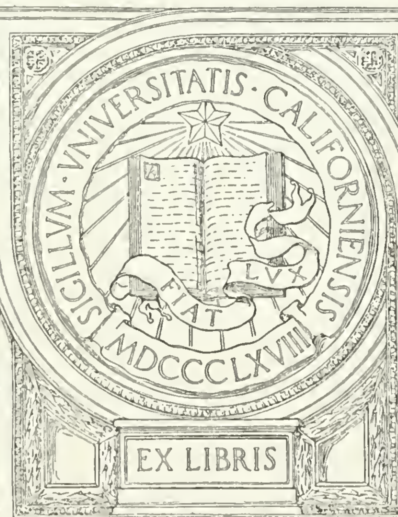

STATE NORMAL SCHOOL,
LOS ANGELES, CAL.

CLASSIC TALES BY FAMOUS AUTHORS

COMPLETE IN

TWENTY VOLUMES

VOLUME X

Victor Marie Hugo

Photogravure. From a Photograph

Classic Tales by Famous Authors

CONTAINING COMPLETE SELECTIONS FROM THE WORLD'S BEST AUTHORS WITH PREFATORY BIOGRAPHICAL AND SYNOPTICAL NOTES

Edited and Arranged by

FREDERICK B. DE BERARD

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With a General Introduction by

ROSSITER JOHNSON, LL.D.

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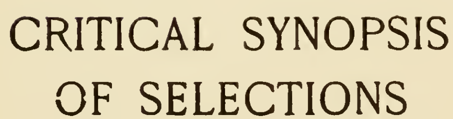


CRITICAL SYNOPSIS OF SELECTIONS

CRITICAL SYNOPSIS OF SELECTIONS

A Dog of Flanders: By Ouida (Louise De la Ramee):

Nello is a little Flemish boy who lives alone with his old grandfather. They are very poor and barely manage to subsist by selling milk. Nello finds a great dog, sick by the roadside, takes it home with him, heals it and names it Patrasche. When the dog grows strong again he draws the milk-cart to the city each day and becomes the devoted and faithful follower of the boy.

Nello grows, and wishes to become an artist. He paints a picture which is entitled to the prize in a great competition; but through some mistake the money is given to another, and Nello, his grandfather being dead, is left to starve. He goes to the Cathedral to look once more at the pictures by the great Rubens and is found there dead on the floor the next morning, with Patrasche lying frozen by his side.

Cosette: By Victor Hugo:

Cosette, an infant waif, becomes the timid, shrinking child-drudge of a village inn, over-tasked by a brutal master and tortured by the cruel caprices of a tigerish mistress, jealous for her own children. She is sent at night to the distant spring in the forest to bring water—a task far beyond her little strength. The darkness fills her with agonies of terror. As she struggles breathlessly but vainly to hasten with her burden, Jean Valjean, a silent and lonely wayfarer, comes to her relief. It is the first kindness she has ever known. The silent stranger, sitting in the inn kitchen, notes the abuse that is showered upon the

little drudge, and the pitiful misery that crushes her. It is Christmas Eve. The landlady's petted little girls are in ecstacies of delight at the gift of beautiful dolls. Cosette has never had a plaything. Hidden beneath the table, she finds silent happiness in cherishing a wisp of rags which is transformed by her childish fancy into a pretty doll. Jean Valjean astounds the inn people by bestowing upon the forlorn child the loveliest and most wonderful of dolls, which, enthroned in the shop window, has inspired all the village folk with admiring awe and envy. The heart of the lonely man goes out to the forlorn little creature; he buys her release, and the child passes into a new life of love and happiness.

The story is an episode of "Les Miserables," of which Cosette becomes one of the principal characters.

HOW THE COUNT'S SON DIED: FROM SIR JOHN FROISSART'S "CHRONICLES".

In the garrulous chronicles wherein Sir John Froissart sets down the events that happened during his life and much gossip of courts and intrigues told him by others, he relates in quaint language the "Piteous Death of Gaston, Son of the Count of Foix."

The great Count of Foix and the King of Navarre, his brother-in-law, were at enmity because of an unpaid ransom, and the Countess of Foix had left her husband and was living at the Court of Navarre. The Count had a son called Gaston, and when he was about fifteen years of age he went to visit his mother and his uncle. When it was time for him to go back the King gave him a little purse of powder and told him that if he should put it in his father's food, then the king would once more love his wife, the boy's mother. So Gaston took the purse and hid it in his bosom. but when he would have put it in the food, his father, who had been told of the powder by his other son, detected his attempt and would have killed him at once, for the powder was deadly poison. But all the nobles prayed for the boy's life, so the Count cast him into prison. For ten days he took neither meat nor drink, and on the

tenth day the Count, hearing of it, came to him, and, grasping him roughly by the throat, by accident caused him to die, for he chanced to have a little knife in his hand which entered the great vein so that he bled to death. Then the Count, filled with remorse, mourned deeply for his son Gaston, whom he had killed; but it was the King of Navarre who was the cause of his death.

La Belle Nivernaise: By Alphonse Daudet:

This little story from the French of Daudet is full of both humor and pathos. It tells of a kind-hearted old bargeman, Francis Louveau, who finds a stray child, takes him home against the wishes of his wife, and brings him up with his own children on his canal boat, "La Belle Nivernaise." Victor grows up under the bargeman's care; and it then turns out that he is the son of the rich M. Maugendre, from whom he had been stolen in infancy. His father sends him to school, but he is taken with a fever and returns to Louveau's boat. Maugendre, to show his gratitude, has a beautiful new boat built and presents it to Louveau. It is called "La Nouvelle Nivernaise." Victor, now grown, cannot sever the ties of friendship, nor tear himself from his past life, humble though it be, to enter a new sphere of wealth and grandeur. He loves Clara, the daughter of his foster-father, and the two are wedded on the day that "La Nouvelle Nivernaise" receives its name.

The Water Babies: By Charles Kingsley.

This charming idyl tells how Tom the chimney-sweep, the child-drudge of a brutal taskmaster, knowing naught of life but misery, cruelty, hardship and grime, lost his mortal form and became a water-baby; how his child-soul escaped from its hard surroundings into a beautiful rivulet, and was born into a new life; how, borne by the dancing wavelets, he journeyed down rivulet, and brook, and river, to the sea; how he made friends with the water-folk—the fishes, the water-insects, and the water-babies of all kinds; and how he finally finds peace and love and eternal happiness in the beautiful islands of the blest. Editor.

BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF AUTHORS

Vol. 10—1

BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF AUTHORS

DAUDET, ALPHONSE: This author is one of the most perfect of literary artists, combining exquisite delicacy of style with the daintiest grace of sentiment and thought, and often with great emotional power and dramatic force. He is at his best in his short stories, which are full of human sympathy and free from the moral taint which poisons the charming literary quality of his more ambitious novels and romances. One of the most charming and delightful of books is "Lettres du Mon Moulin" ("Letters from My Mill"), a collection of essays, brief character sketches and notes of rural scenes. "Sapho" is perhaps his most powerful novel—a work of consummate literary art, but morbid, repellant and painful beyond expression. His principal other works are: "Jack," "Kings in Exile," "Artists and Their Wives," three delightful storiettes, "Tartarin of Tarascon," "Tartarin on the Alps," and "Last Adventures of Tartarin."

Daudet was born at Nimes, in the south of France, in 1840; was for many years one of the chief literary figures of Paris, a journalist and dramatist, and died in that city, 1900.

FROISSART, SIR JOHN: One of the most entertaining and also most exact and illuminating of old chroniclers is Sir John Froissart, a Knight of Hainault, born at Valenciennes, 1337, trained to the church, and at twenty years of age starting upon a long career in court and camp, to become an eye-witness of many great events of the time, and to duly chronicle them for more than forty years. He became a personal attendant upon King John of France. fought at Crécy, Agincourt and Poitiers,

went to England as secretary of Phillipa when she became wife and queen of Edward III, was personal attendant upon that king, went on embassies and private missions, saw many courts and wrote down all that he saw and heard—a garrulous, chatty, naïve and vivid account of the actualities of the fourteenth century. A genial, pleasing man, who knew how to make powerful friends, he had exceptional opportunities for observation, and made good use of them for his history. In lighter vein, he wrote rondels, virelais, chansons, pastorals, romances, wherein he delicately flattered his powerful friends by scarcely-veiled allusions to their bravery or beauty. He died in 1400.

KINGSLEY, CHARLES: This author was a man of manifold mental activities, intense, intellectually arrogant—essentially the type of the partisan controversialist. Most of his many works are marred by offensive assertiveness and irrelevant, and often trivial, discussions; but three of his books deserve, and have won, enduring fame—"Hypatia," a beautiful and pathetic story of fidelity to noble ideals; "Westward Ho!" a tale of brave men and heroic adventure; and finally, "The Water Babies"—a strange compound, in which idyllic beauty is united to utterly trivial and inane metaphysical nonsense. The essential part of the story is a perfect idyll, in conception, sentiment and diction; but it is burdened with wholly irrelevant and disconnected rubbish, and having reached a climax, maunders on interminably without purpose and without knowing how to stop. As here arranged, all the redundant portions—about one-half the story as written—have been omitted. Kingsley wrote innumerable tracts, sermons, essays, lectures and critical reviews on a great variety of topics, whose essential force was usually lost in dogmatism and arrogant assumption. He published "Andromeda and Other Poems," 1858; several works of travel and natural history, and a number of other romances and novels, including "Hereward;" "The Heroes, or Greek Fairy Tales;" "Alton Locke," and "Yeast."

Charles Kingsley was born in Devonshire, 1819,

and died at Eversley, Hampshire, 1875. Educated for the church, he was successively Canon of Middleham, Chester and Westminster. He also was professor of English literature, Queen's College, London, and later professor of modern history at Cambridge.

"OUIDA," PSEUDONYM OF LOUISE DE LA RAMÉE: This prolific novelist was born in England, 1840, her father being of French extraction and her mother English. Her parents led a roving and bohemian life in the various capitals of Europe, and the child Louise saw much of the artificial, meretricious and dissolute aspects of the world, and of the shady society which later she depicted in her stories of alleged high life. Her admirable talent, her graphic and often beautiful diction, her notable intellectual force, her strong dramatic sense and constructive strength, have been unworthily employed upon a series of lurid, theatrical and wholly artificial novels—utterly false in sentiment, manners, incident and morals. In a few instances she has struck a far different chord; and some of her stories are admirable for their delicacy, beauty and genuineness of sentiment and tender pathos. Miss De la Ramée has for many years been a resident of Italy.

Her principal works are: "Strathmore" (1865); "Chandos" (1866); "Idalia" (1867); "Tricotrin" (1868); "Pascarel" (1873); "Ariadne" (1880); "Moths" (1880); "Princess Napraxine" (1884); "Wanda," and more recently many controversial reviews and critiques upon social and literary topics. EDITOR.

THE WATER BABIES

THE WATER BABIES

Abridged: Charles Kingsley

CHAPTER I

4529

ONCE upon a time there was a little chimney-sweep, and his name was Tom. He lived in a great town in the north country, where there were plenty of chimneys to sweep, and plenty of money for Tom to earn and his master to spend. He could not read nor write, and did not care to do either; and he never washed himself, for there was no water up the court where he lived. He had never been taught to say his prayers. He never had heard of God, or of Christ, except in words which you never have heard, and which it would have been well if he had never heard. He cried half his time, and laughed the other half. He cried when he had to climb the dark flues, rubbing his poor knees and his elbows raw; and when the soot got into his eyes, which it did every day in the week; and when his master beat him, which he did every day in the week; and when he had not enough to eat, which happened every day in the week likewise. And he laughed the other half of the day, when he was tossing halfpennies with the other boys, or playing leapfrog over the posts, or bowling stones at the horses' legs as they trotted by, which last was excellent fun, when there was a wall at hand behind which to hide. As for chimney-sweeping, and being hungry, and being

beaten, he took all that for the way of the world, like the rain and snow and thunder, and stood manfully with his back to it till it was over, as his old donkey did to a hailstorm; and then shook his ears and was as jolly as ever; and thought of the fine times coming, when he would be a man, and a master sweep, and sit in the public-house with a quart of beer and a long pipe, and play cards for silver money, and wear velveteens and ankle-jacks, and keep a white bulldog with one gray ear, and carry her puppies in his pocket, just like a man. And he would have apprentices, one, two, three, if he could. How he would bully them, and knock them about, just as his master did to him; and make them carry home the soot sacks, while he rode before them on his donkey, with a pipe in his mouth and a flower in his buttonhole, like a king at the head of his army. Yes, there were good times coming; and, when his master let him have a pull at the leavings of his beer, Tom was the jolliest boy in the whole town.

One day a smart little groom rode into the court where Tom lived. Tom was just hiding behind a wall, to heave half a brick at his horse's legs, as is the custom of that country when they welcome strangers; but the groom saw him, and halloed to him to know where Mr. Grimes, the chimney-sweep, lived. Now, Mr. Grimes was Tom's own master, and Tom was a good man of business, and always civil to customers, so he put the half-brick down quietly behind the wall, and proceeded to take orders.

Mr. Grimes was to come up next morning to Sir John Harthover's, at the Place, for his old chimney-sweep was gone to prison, and the chimneys wanted sweeping. And so he rode away, not giving Tom time to ask what the sweep had gone to prison for, which was a matter of interest to Tom, as he had

been in prison once or twice himself. Moreover, the groom looked so very neat and clean, with his drab gaiters, drab breeches, drab jacket, snow-white tie with a smart pin in it, and clean, round, ruddy face, that Tom was offended and disgusted at his appearance, and considered him a stuck-up fellow, who gave himself airs because he wore smart clothes, and other people paid for them; and went behind the wall to fetch the half-brick after all; but did not, remembering that he had come in the way of business, and was, as it were, under a flag of truce.

His master was so delighted at his new customer that he knocked Tom down out of hand, and drank more beer that night than he usually did in two, in order to be sure of getting up in time next morning; for the more a man's head aches when he wakes, the more glad he is to turn out, and have a breath of fresh air. And, when he did get up at four the next morning, he knocked Tom down again, in order to teach him (as young gentlemen used to be taught at public schools) that he must be an extra good boy that day, as they were going to a very great house, and might make a very good thing of it, if they could but give satisfaction.

And Tom thought so likewise, and, indeed, would have done and behaved his best, even without being knocked down. For, of all places upon earth, Harthover Place (which he had never seen) was the most wonderful, and, of all men on earth, Sir John (whom he had seen, having been sent to jail by him twice) was the most awful.

Harthover Place was really a grand place, even for the rich north country; with a house so large that in the frame-breaking riots, which Tom could just remember, the Duke of Wellington, and ten thousand soldiers to match, were easily housed therein; at least,

so Tom believed; with a park full of deer, which Tom believed to be monsters who were in the habit of eating children; with miles of game preserves, in which Mr. Grimes and the collier lads poached at times, on which occasions Tom saw pheasants, and wondered what they tasted like; with a noble salmon-river, in which Mr. Grimes and his friends would have liked to poach; but then they must have got into cold water, and that they did not like at all. In short, Harthover was a grand place, and Sir John a grand old man, whom even Mr. Grimes respected; for not only could he send Mr. Grimes to prison when he deserved it, as he did once or twice a week; not only did he own all the land about for miles; not only was he a jolly, honest, sensible squire as ever kept a pack of hounds, who would do what he thought right by his neighbors, as well as get what he thought right for himself; but, what was more, he weighed full fifteen stone, was nobody knew how many inches round the chest, and could have thrashed Mr. Grimes himself in fair fight.

So he and his master set out; Grimes rode the donkey in front, and Tom and the brushes walked behind; out of the court, and up the street, past the closed window-shutters, and the winking, weary policemen, and the roofs all shining gray in the gray dawn.

They passed through the pitmen's village all shut up and silent now, and through the turnpike; and then they were out in the real country, and plodding along the black, dusty road, between black slag walls, with no sound but the groaning and thumping of the pit-engine in the next field. But soon the road grew white, and the walls likewise; and at the wall's foot grew long grass and gay flowers, all drenched with dew; and instead of the groaning of the pit-engine they heard the skylark saying his matins high up in

the air, and the pit-bird warbling in the sedges, as he had warbled all night long.

All else was silent. For old Mrs. Earth was still fast asleep; and, like many pretty people, she looked still prettier asleep than awake. The great elm trees in the gold-green meadows were fast asleep above, and the cows fast asleep beneath them; nay, the few clouds which were about were fast asleep likewise, and so tired that they had lain down on the earth to rest, in long white flakes and bars, among the stems of the elm trees, and along the tops of the alders by the stream, waiting for the sun to bid them rise and go about their day's business in the clear blue overhead.

On they went; and Tom looked, and looked, for he never had been so far into the country before; and longed to get over a gate, and pick buttercups, and look for birds' nests in the hedge; but Mr. Grimes was a man of business, and would not have heard of that.

Soon they came up with a poor Irishwoman, trudging along with a bundle at her back. She had a gray shawl over her head, and a crimson madder petticoat. She had neither shoes nor stockings, and limped along as if she were tired and footsore; but she was a very tall, handsome woman, with bright gray eyes, and heavy black hair hanging about her cheeks. And she took Mr. Grimes' fancy so much, that when he came alongside he called out to her:

"This is a hard road for a gradely foot like that. Will ye up, lass, and ride behind me?"

But, perhaps, she did not admire Mr. Grimes' look and voice for she answered quietly:

"No, thank you; I'd sooner walk with your little lad here."

"You may please yourself," growled Grimes, and went on smoking.

So she walked beside Tom, and talked to him, and

asked him where he lived, and what he knew, and all about himself till Tom thought he had never met such a pleasant-spoken woman. And she asked him, at last, whether he said his prayers! and seemed sad when he told her that he knew no prayers to say.

Then he asked her where she lived, and she said far away by the sea. And Tom asked her about the sea; and she told him how it rolled and roared over the rocks in winter nights, and lay still in the bright summer days for the children to bathe and play in it; and many a story more, till Tom longed to go and see the sea, and bathe in it likewise.

At last, at the bottom of a hill, they came to a spring; not such a spring as you see here, which soaks up out of a white gravel in the bog, among red fly-catchers, and pink bottle-heath, and sweet white orchis; nor such a one as you may see, too, here, which bubbles up under the warm sandbank in the hollow lane by the great tuft of lady ferns, and makes the sand dance reels at the bottom, day and night, all the year round; not such a spring as either of those; but a real north country limestone fountain, like one of those in Sicily or Greece, where the old heathen fancied the nymphs sat cooling themselves the hot summer's day, while the shepherds peeped at them from behind the bushes. Out of a low cave of rock, at the foot of a limestone crag, the great fountain rose, quelling, and bubbling, and gurgling, so clear that you could not tell where the water ended and the air began; and ran away under the road, a stream large enough to turn a mill; among blue geranium, and golden globe-flower, and wild raspberry, and the bird-cherry, with its tassels of snow.

And there Grimes stopped, and looked; and Tom looked, too. Tom was wondering whether anything lived in that dark cave, and came out at night to fly in

the meadows. But Grimes was not wondering at all. Without a word he got off his donkey, and clambered over the low road wall, and knelt down, and began dipping his ugly head into the spring—and very dirty he made it.

Tom was picking the flowers as fast as he could. The Irishwoman helped him, and showed him how to tie them up; and a very pretty nosegay they had made between them. But when he saw Grimes actually wash, he stopped, quite astonished; and when Grimes had finished, and began shaking his ears to dry them, he said:

"Why, master, I never saw you do that before."

"Nor will again, most likely. 'Twasn't for cleanliness I did it, but for coolness. I'd be ashamed to want washing every week or so, like any smutty collier lad."

"I wish I might go and dip my head in," said poor little Tom. "It must be as good as putting it under the town-pump; and there is no beadle here to drive a chap away."

"Thou come along," said Grimes; "what dost want with washing thyself? Thou did not drink half a gallon of beer last night, like me."

"I don't care for you," said naughty Tom, and ran down to the stream, and began washing his face.

Grimes was very sulky, because the woman preferred Tom's company to his; so he dashed at him with horrid words, and tore him up from his knees, and began beating him. But Tom was accustomed to that, and got his head safe between Mr. Grimes' legs, and kicked his shins with all his might.

"Are you not ashamed of yourself, Thomas Grimes?" cried the Irishwoman over the wall.

Grimes looked up, startled at her knowing his name;

but all he answered was, "No, nor never was yet;" and went on beating Tom.

"True for you. If you ever had been ashamed of yourself, you would have gone over into Vendale long ago."

"What do you know about Vendale?" shouted Grimes; but he left off beating Tom.

"I know about Vendale, and about you, too. I know, for instance, what happened in Aldermire Copse, by night, two years ago come Martinmas."

"You do?" shouted Grimes; and leaving Tom, he climbed up over the wall and faced the woman. Tom thought he was going to strike her; but she looked him too full and fierce in the face for that.

"Yes, I was there," said the Irishwoman, quietly.

"You are no Irishwoman by your speech," said Grimes, after many bad words.

"Never mind who I am. I saw what I saw; and if you strike that boy again, I can tell what I know."

Grimes seemed quite cowed, and got on his donkey without another word.

"Stop!" said the Irishwoman. "I have one more word for you both; for you will both see me again before all is over. Those that wish to be clean, clean they will be; and those that wish to be foul, foul they will be. Remember."

And she turned away, and through a gate into the meadow. Grimes stood still a moment, like a man who had been stunned. Then he rushed after her, shouting, "You come back." But when he got into the meadow, the woman was not there.

Had she hidden away? There was no place to hide in. But Grimes looked about, and Tom also, for he was as puzzled as Grimes himself at her disappearing so suddenly; but look where they would, she was not there.

Grimes came back again, as silent as a post, for he was a little frightened; and, getting on his donkey, filled a fresh pipe, and smoked away, leaving Tom in peace.

And now they had gone three miles and more, and came to Sir John's lodge-gates.

Very grand lodges they were, with very grand iron gates and stone gate-posts, and on the top of each a most dreadful bogy, all teeth, horns, and tail, which was the crest which Sir John's ancestors wore in the wars of the Roses; and very prudent men they were to wear it, for all their enemies must have run for their lives at the very first sight of them.

Grimes rang at the gate, and out came a keeper on the spot, and opened.

"I was told to expect thee," he said. "Now thou'lt be so good as to keep to the main avenue, and not let me find a hare or a rabbit on thee when thou comest back. I shall look sharp for one, I tell thee."

"Not if it's in the bottom of the soot bag," quoth Grimes, and at that he laughed; and the keeper laughed and said:

"If that's thy sort, I may as well walk up with thee to the hall."

"I think thou best had. It's thy business to see after thy game, man, and not mine."

And by this time they were come up to the great iron gates in front of the house; and Tom stared through them at the rhododendrons and azaleas, which were all in flower; and then at the house itself, and wondered how many chimneys there were in it, and how long ago it was built, and what was the man's name that built it, and whether he got much money for his job?

These last were very difficult questions to answer. For Harthover had been built at ninety different times,

and in nineteen different styles, and looked as if somebody had built a whole street of houses of every imaginable shape, and then stirred them together with a spoon.

But Tom and his master did not go in through the great iron gates, as if they had been dukes or bishops, but round the back way, and a very long way round it was; and into a little back-door, where the ash-boy let them in, yawning horribly; and then in a passage the housekeeper met them, in such a flowered chintz dressing gown, that Tom mistook her for my lady herself, and she gave Grimes solemn orders about "You will take care of this, and take care of that," as if he was going up the chimneys, and not Tom. And Grimes listened, and said every now and then, under his voice, "You'll mind that, you little beggar?" and Tom did mind, all at least that he could. And then the housekeeper turned them into a grand room, all covered up in sheets of brown paper, and bade them begin, in a lofty and tremendous voice; and so after a whimper or two, and a kick from his master, into the grate Tom went, and up the chimney, while a housemaid stayed in the room to watch the furniture; to whom Mr. Grimes paid many playful and chivalrous compliments, but met with very slight encouragement in return.

How many chimneys Tom swept I cannot say; but he swept so many that he got quite tired, and puzzled, too, for they were not like the town flues to which he was accustomed, but such as you would find in old country-houses, large and crooked chimneys, which had been altered again and again, till they ran one into another. Tom fairly lost his way in them; not that he cared much for that, though he was in pitchy darkness, for he was as much at home in a chimney as a mole is underground; but at last, coming down as he thought the right chimney, he came down the wrong

one, and found himself standing on the hearthrug in a room the like of which he had never seen before.

He had never been in gentlefolks' rooms but when the carpets were all up and the curtains down, and the furniture huddled together under a cloth, and the pictures covered with aprons and dusters; and he had often enough wondered what the rooms were like when they were all ready for the quality to sit in. And now he saw, and he thought the sight very pretty.

The room was all dressed in white—white window-curtains, white bed-curtains, white furniture, and white walls, with just a few lines of pink here and there. The carpet was all over gay little flowers; and the walls were hung with pictures in gilt frames, which amused Tom very much. There were pictures of ladies and gentlemen, and pictures of horses and dogs. The horses he liked; but the dogs he did not care for much, for there were no bulldogs among them, not even a terrier. But the two pictures which took his fancy most were, one a man in long garments, with little children and their mothers round him, who was laying his hand upon the children's heads. That was a very pretty picture, Tom thought, to hang in a lady's room. For he could see that it was a lady's room by the dresses which lay about.

The other picture was that of a man nailed to a cross, which surprised Tom much. He fancied that he had seen something like it in a shop-window. But why was it there? "Poor man," thought Tom, "and he looks so kind and quiet. But why should the lady have such a sad picture as that in her room? Perhaps it was some kinsman of hers, who had been murdered by the savages in foreign parts, and she kept it there for a remembrance." And Tom felt sad, and awed, and turned to look at something else.

The next thing he saw, and that too puzzled him,

was a washing-stand, with ewers and basins, and soap and brushes, and towels, and a large bath full of clean water—what a heap of things all for washing! "She must be a very dirty lady," thought Tom, "by my master's rule, to want as much scrubbing as all that. But she must be very cunning to put the dirt out of the way so well afterward, for I don't see a speck about the room, not even on the very towels."

And then, looking toward the bed, he saw that dirty lady, and held his breath with astonishment.

Under the snow-white coverlet, upon the snow-white pillow, lay the most beautiful little girl that Tom had ever seen. Her cheeks were almost as white as the pillow, and her hair was like threads of gold spread all about over the bed. She might have been as old as Tom, or maybe a year or two older; but Tom did not think of that. He thought only of her delicate skin and golden hair, and wondered whether she was a real live person, or one of the wax dolls he had seen in the shops. But when he saw her breathe, he made up his mind that she was alive, and stood staring at her, as if she had been an angel out of heaven.

No. She cannot be dirty. She never could have been dirty, thought Tom to himself. And then he thought, "And are all people like that when they are washed?" And he looked at his own wrist, and tried to rub the soot off, and wondered whether it would ever come off. "Certainly I should look much prettier then, if I grew at all like her."

And looking around, he suddenly saw, standing close to him, a little, ugly, black, ragged figure, with bleared eyes and grinning white teeth. He turned on it angrily. What did such a little black ape want in that sweet young lady's room? And behold, it was himself, reflected in a great mirror the like of which Tom had never seen before.

And Tom, for the first time in his life, found out that he was dirty; and burst into tears with shame and anger; and turned to sneak up the chimney again and hide; and upset the fender and threw the fireirons down, with a noise as of ten thousand tin kettles tied to ten thousand mad dogs' tails.

Up jumped the little white lady in her bed, and seeing Tom, screamed as shrill as any peacock. In rushed a stout old nurse from the next room, and seeing Tom likewise, made up her mind that he had come to rob, plunder, destroy, and burn; and dashed at him, as he lay over the fender, so fast that she caught him by the jacket.

But she did not hold him. Tom had been in a policeman's hands many a time, and out of them, too, what is more; and he would have been ashamed to face his friends forever if he had been stupid enough to be caught by an old woman; so he doubled up under the good lady's arm, across the room, and out of the window in a moment.

Under the window spread a tree, with great leaves and sweet white flowers, almost as big as his head. It was a magnolia, I suppose; but Tom knew nothing about that, and cared less; for down the tree he went, like a cat, and across the garden lawn, and over the iron railings, and up the park toward the wood, leaving the old nurse to scream murder and fire at the window.

The under gardener, mowing, saw Tom, and threw down his scythe; caught his leg in it, and cut his shin open, whereby he kept his bed for a week; but in his hurry he never knew it, and gave chase to poor Tom. The dairymaid heard the noise, got the churn between her knees, and tumbled over it, spilling all the cream; and yet she jumped up and gave chase to Tom. A groom cleaning Sir John's hack at the stables let him

go loose, whereby he kicked himself lame in five minutes; but he ran out and gave chase to Tom. Grimes upset the soot sack in the new-graveled yard, and spoiled it all utterly; but he ran out and gave chase to Tom. The old steward opened the park gate in such a hurry, that he hung up his pony's chin upon the spikes, and, for aught I know, it hangs there still; but he jumped off, and gave chase to Tom. The plowman left his horses at the headland, and one jumped over the fence, and pulled the other into the ditch, plow and all; but he ran on, and gave chase to Tom. The keeper, who was taking a stoat out of a trap, let the stoat go, and caught his own finger; but he jumped up, and ran after Tom; and considering what he said, and how he looked, I should have been sorry for Tom if he had caught him. Sir John looked out of his study window (for he was an early old gentleman) and up at the nurse, and a marten dropped mud in his eye, so that he had at last to send for the doctor; and yet he ran out, and gave chase to Tom. The Irishwoman, too, who was walking up to the house to beg—she must have got round by some by-way—but she threw away her bundle, and gave chase to Tom likewise.

In a word, never was there heard at Hall Place—not even when the fox was killed in the conservatory, among acres of broken glass, and tons of smashed flower-pots—such a noise as that day, when Grimes, the gardener, the groom, the dairymaid, Sir John, the steward, the plowman, the keeper, and the Irishwoman, all ran up the park, shouting, "Stop thief," in the belief that Tom had at least a thousand pounds' worth of jewels in his empty pockets; and the very magpies and jays followed Tom up, screaking and screaming, as if he were a hunted fox, beginning to droop his brush.

And all the while poor Tom paddled up the park with his little bare feet, like a small black gorilla fleeing

to the forest. Alas for him! there was no big father gorilla therein to take his part—to scratch out the gardener's inside with one paw, toss the dairymaid into a tree with another, and wrench off Sir John's head with a third, while he cracked the keeper's skull with his teeth as easily as if it had been a cocoanut or a paving-stone.

However, Tom did not remember ever having had a father; so he did not look for one, and expected to have to take care of himself; while as for running, he could keep up for a couple of miles with any stage-coach, if there was the chance of a copper or a cigar-end, and turn coach-wheels on his hands and feet ten times following, which is more than you can do. Wherefore his pursuers found it very difficult to catch him; and we will hope that they did not catch him at all.

Tom of course made for the woods. He had never been in a wood in his life; but he was sharp enough to know that he might hide in a bush, or swarm up a tree, and, altogether, had more chance there than in the open. If he had not known that, he would have been foolisher than a mouse or a minnow.

But when he got into the wood, he found it a very different sort of place from what he had fancied. He pushed into a thick cover of rhododendrons, and found himself at once caught in a trap. The boughs laid hold of his legs and arms, poked him in his face and his stomach, made him shut his eyes tight (though that was no great loss, for he could not see at best a yard before his nose); and when he got through the rhododendrons, the hassock-grass and sedges tumbled him over, and cut his poor little fingers afterward most spitefully; the birches birched him as soundly as if he had been a nobleman at Eton, and over the face too (which is not fair swishing, as all brave boys will

agree); and the lawyers tripped him up and tore his shins as if they had sharks' teeth.

"I must get out of this," thought Tom, "or I shall stay here till somebody comes to help me—which is just what I don't want."

But how to get out was the difficult matter. And indeed I don't think he would ever have got out at all, but have stayed there till the cock-robins covered him with leaves, if he had not suddenly run his head against a wall.

Now running your head against a wall is not pleasant, especially if it is a loose wall, with the stones all set on edge, and so Tom hurt his head; but he was a brave boy, and did not mind that a penny. He guessed that over the wall the cover would end; and up it he went, and over like a squirrel.

And there he was, out on the great grouse-moors, which the country folk called Harthover Fell—heather and bog and rock, stretching away and up, up to the very sky.

Now, Tom was a cunning little fellow—as cunning as an old Exmoor stag. Why not? Though he was but ten years old, he had lived longer than most stags, and had more wits to start with into the bargain.

He knew as well as a stag that if he backed he might throw the hounds out. So the first thing he did when he was over the wall was to make the neatest double sharp to his right, and run along under the wall for nearly half a mile.

Whereby Sir John and the keeper, and the steward, and the gardener, and the plowman, and the dairymaid, and all the hue-and-cry together, went on ahead half a mile in the very opposite direction, and inside the wall, leaving him a mile off on the outside; while Tom heard their shouts die away in the woods and chuckled to himself merrily.

At last he came to a dip in the land, and went to the bottom of it, and then he turned bravely away from the wall and up the moor; for he knew that he had put a hill between him and his enemies, and could go on without their seeing him.

But the Irishwoman, alone of them all, had seen which way Tom went. She had kept ahead of everyone the whole time; and yet she neither walked nor ran. She went along quite smoothly and gracefully, while her feet twinkled past each other so fast that you could not see which was foremost; till everyone asked the other who the strange woman was; and all agreed, for want of anything better to say, that she must be in league with Tom.

But when she came to the plantation, they lost sight of her; and they could do no less. For she went quietly over the wall after Tom, and followed him wherever he went. Sir John and the rest saw no more of her; and out of sight was out of mind.

And now Tom was right away into the heather, with rocks and stones lying about everywhere; and instead of the moor growing flat as he went upward, it grew more and more broken and hilly, but not so rough but that little Tom could jog along well enough, and find time, too, to stare about at the strange place, which was like a new world to him.

He saw great spiders there, with crowns and crosses marked on their backs, who sat in the middle of their webs, and when they saw Tom coming shook them so fast that they became invisible. Then he saw lizards, brown and gray and green, and thought they were snakes, and would sting him; but they were as much frightened as he, and shot away into the heath. And then, under a rock, he saw a pretty sight—a great, brown, sharp-nosed creature, with a white tag to her brush, and round her four or five smutty little cubs,

the funniest fellows Tom ever saw. She lay on her back, rolling about, and stretching out her legs and head and tail in the bright sunshine; and the cubs jumped over her, and ran round her, and nibbled her paws, and lugged her about by the tail; and she seemed to enjoy it mightily. But one selfish little fellow stole away from the rest to a dead crow close by, and dragged it off to hide it, though it was nearly as big as he was. Whereat all his little brothers set off after him in full cry, and saw Tom; and then all ran back, and up jumped Mrs. Vixen, and caught one up in her mouth, and the rest toddled after her, and into a dark crack in the rocks; and there was an end of the show.

And next he had a fright; for, as he scrambled up a sandy brow—whirr-poof-poof-cock-cock-kick—something went off in his face, with a most horrid noise. He thought the ground had blown up and the end of the world come.

And when he opened his eyes (for he shut them very tight) it was only an old cock-grouse, who had been washing himself in sand, like an Arab, for want of water; and who, when Tom had all but trodden on him, jumped up with a noise like the express train, leaving his wife and children to shift for themselves, like an old coward, and went off, screaming, "Cur-ru-u-uck, cur-ru-u-uck—murder, thieves, fire—cur-u-uck-cock-kick—the end of the world is come—kick-kick-cock-kick." He was always fancying that the end of the world was come, when anything happened which was farther off than the end of his own nose.

So the old grouse came back to his wife and family an hour afterwards, and said solemnly, "Cock-cock-kick; my dears, the end of the world is not quite come; but I assure you it is coming the day after to-morrow—cock." But his wife had heard that so often that she

knew all about it, and a little more. And, besides, she was the mother of a family, and had seven little poults to wash and feed every day; and that made her very practical, and a little sharp-tempered; so all she answered was: "Kick-kick-kick—go and catch spiders, go and catch spiders—kick."

So Tom went on and on, he hardly knew why; but he liked the great, wide, strange place, and the cool, fresh, bracing air. But he went more and more slowly as he got higher up the hill; for now the ground grew very bad indeed. Instead of soft turf and springy heather, he met great patches of flat limestone rock, just like ill-made pavements, with deep cracks between the stones and ledges, filled with ferns; so he had to hop from stone to stone, and now and then he slipped in between, and hurt his little bare toes, though they were tolerably tough ones; but still he would go on and up, he could not tell why.

What would Tom have said if he had seen, walking over the moor behind him, the very same Irishwoman who had taken his part upon the road? But whether it was that he looked too little behind him, or whether it was that she kept out of sight behind the rocks and knolls, he never saw her, though she saw him.

And now he began to get a little hungry, and very thirsty; for he had run a long way, and the sun had risen high in heaven, and the rock was as hot as an oven, and the air danced reels over it, as it does over a limekiln, till everything round seemed quivering and melting in the glare.

But he could see nothing to eat anywhere, and still less to drink.

The heath was full of bilberries and whimberries; but they were only in flower yet, for it was June. And as for water, who can find that on the top of a limestone rock? Now and then he passed by a deep, dark

swallow-hole, going down into the earth, as if it was the chimney of some dwarf's house underground; and more than once, as he passed, he could hear water falling, trickling, tinkling, many, many feet below. How he longed to get down to it, and cool his poor, baked lips! But, brave little chimney-sweep as he was, he dared not climb down such chimneys as those.

So he went on and on, till his head spun round with the heat, and he thought he heard church-bells ringing, a long way off.

"Ah!" he thought, "where there is a church there will be houses and people; and, perhaps, some one will give me a bit and a sup." So he set off again to look for the church; for he was sure that he heard the bells quite plain.

And in a minute more, when he looked round, he stopped again, and said, "Why, what a big place the world is!"

And so it was; for, from the top of the mountain he could see—what could he not see?

Behind him, far below, was Harthover, and the dark woods, and the shining salmon river; and on his left, far below, was the town, and the smoking chimneys of the collieries; and far, far away, the river widened to the shining sea; and little white specks, which were ships, lay on its bosom. Before him lay, spread out like a map, great plains, and farms, and villages, amid dark knots of trees. They all seemed at his very feet; but he had sense to see that they were long miles away.

And to his right rose moor after moor, hill after hill, till they faded away, blue into blue sky. But between him and those moors, and really at his very feet, lay something, to which, as soon as Tom saw it, he determined to go, for that was the place for him.

A deep, deep green and rocky valley, very narrow,

and filled with wood; but through the wood, hundreds of feet below him, he could see a clear stream glance. Oh, if he could but get down to that stream! Then, by the stream, he saw the roof of a little cottage, and a little garden set out in squares and beds. And there was a tiny little red thing moving in the garden, no bigger than a fly. As Tom looked down, he saw that it was a woman in a red petticoat. Ah! perhaps she would give him something to eat. And there were the church-bells ringing again. Surely there must be a village down there. Well, nobody would know him, or what had happened at the Place. The news could not have got there yet, even if Sir John had set all the policemen in the country after him; and he could get down there in five minutes.

Tom was quite right about the hue-and-cry not having got thither; for he had come, without knowing it, the best part of ten miles from Harthover; but he was wrong about getting down in five minutes, for the cottage was more than a mile off, and a good thousand feet below.

However, down he went, like a brave little man as he was, though he was very footsore and tired, and hungry and thirsty; while the church-bells rang so loud he began to think that they must be inside his own head, and the river chimed and tinkled far below.

CHAPTER II

A MILE off, and a thousand feet down.

So Tom found it; though it seemed as if he could have chucked a pebble onto the back of the woman in the red petticoat who was weeding in the garden, or even across the dale to the rocks beyond. For the bottom of the valley was just one field broad and on the other side ran the stream; and above it gray crag, gray down, gray stair, gray moor walled up to heaven.

So Tom went to go down; and first he went down three hundred feet of steep heather, mixed up with loose brown gritstone, as rough as a file; which was not pleasant to his poor little heels, as he came bump, stump, jump, down the steep. And still he thought he could throw a stone into the garden.

Then he went down three hundred feet of limestone terraces, one below the other, as straight as if a carpenter had ruled them with his ruler and then cut them out with his chisel. There was no heath there, but—

First, a little grass slope, covered with the prettiest flowers, rockrose and saxifrage, and thyme and basil, and all sorts of sweet herbs.

Then bump down a two-foot step of limestone.

Then another bit of grass and flowers.

Then bump down a one-foot step.

Then another bit of grass and flowers for fifty yards, as steep as the house-roof, where he had to slide down on his dear little tail.

Then another step of stone, ten feet high; and there

he had to stop himself, and crawl along the edge to find a crack; for if he had rolled over, he would have rolled right into the old woman's garden, and frightened her out of her wits.

Then, when he had found a dark, narrow crack, full of green-stalked fern, such as hangs in the basket in the drawing-room, and had crawled down through it, with knees and elbows, as he would down a chimney, there was another grass slope, and another step, and so on, till—oh, dear me! I wish it was all over; and so did he. And yet he thought he could throw a stone into the old woman's garden.

At last he came to a bank of beautiful shrubs; white-beam with its great silver-backed leaves, and mountain ash, and oak; and below them cliff and crag, cliff and crag, with great beds of crown-ferns and wood-sedge; while through the shrubs he could see the stream sparkling, and hear it murmur on the white pebbles. He did not know that it was three hundred feet below.

You would have been giddy, perhaps, at looking down; but Tom was not. He was a brave little chimney-sweep; and when he found himself on the top of a high cliff, instead of sitting down and crying for his baba (though he never had had any baba to cry for), he said, "Ah, this will just suit me!" though he was very tired; and down he went, by stock and stone, sedge and ledge, bush and rush, as if he had been born a jolly little black ape, with four hands instead of two.

And all the while he never saw the Irishwoman coming down behind him.

But he was getting terribly tired now. The burning sun on the fells had sucked him up; but the damp heat of the woody crag sucked him up still more; and the perspiration ran out of the ends of his fingers and toes,

and washed him cleaner than he had been for a whole year.

At last he got to the bottom. But, behold, it was not the bottom—as people usually find when they are coming down a mountain. For at the foot of the crag were heaps and heaps of fallen limestone of every size from that of your head to that of a stage wagon, with holes between them full of sweet heath-fern; and before Tom got through them, he was out in the bright sunshine again; and then he felt, once for all and suddenly, as people generally do, that he was b-e-a-t, beat.

He could not get on. The sun was burning, and yet he felt chill all over. He was quite empty, and yet he felt quite sick. There was but two hundred yards of smooth pasture between him and the cottage, and yet he could not walk down it. He could hear the stream murmuring only one field beyond it, and yet it seemed to him as if it was a hundred miles off.

He lay down on the grass till the beetles ran over him, and the flies settled on his nose. I don't know when he would have got up again, if the gnats and the midges had not taken compassion on him. But the gnats blew their trumpets so loud in his ear, and the midges nibbled so at his hands and face wherever they could find a place free from soot, that at last he woke up, and stumbled away, down over a low wall, and into a narrow road, and up to the cottage door.

And a neat, pretty cottage it was, with clipped yew hedges all round the garden, and yews inside, too, cut into peacocks and trumpets and teapots and all kinds of queer shapes. And out of the open door came a noise like that of the frogs when they know that it is going to be scorching hot to-morrow—and how they know that I don't know, and you don't know, and nobody knows.

He came slowly up to the open door, which was all

hung round with clematis and roses; and then peeped in, half afraid.

And there sat by the empty fireplace, which was filled with a pot of sweet herbs, the nicest old woman that was ever seen, in her red petticoat, and short dimity bedgown, and clean white cap, with a black silk handkerchief over it, tied under her chin. At her feet sat the grandfather of all cats; and opposite her sat, on two benches, twelve or fourteen neat, rosy, chubby, little children, learning their Chris-cross-row; and gabble enough they made about it.

Such a pleasant cottage it was, with a shiny, clean, stone floor, and curious old prints on the walls, and an old black oak sideboard full of bright pewter and brass dishes, and a cuckoo clock in the corner, which began shouting as soon as Tom appeared; not that it was frightened at Tom, but that it was just eleven o'clock.

All the children started at Tom's dirty black figure—the girls began to cry, and the boys began to laugh, and all pointed at him rudely enough; but Tom was too tired to care for that.

"What art thou, and what dost want?" cried the old dame. "A chimney-sweep! Away with thee! I'll have no sweeps here."

"Water," said poor little Tom, quite faint.

"Water? There's plenty i' the beck," she said, quite sharply.

"But I can't get there; I'm most clemmed with hunger and drought." And Tom sank down upon the doorstep, and laid his head against the post.

And the old dame looked at him through her spectacles one minute, and two and three; and then she said, "He's sick; and a bairn's a bairn, sweep or none."

"Water," said Tom.

"God forgive me!" and she put by her spectacles, and rose, and came to Tom. "Water's bad for thee;

I'll give thee milk." And she toddled off into the next room, and brought a cup of milk and a bit of bread.

Tom drank the milk off at one draught, and then looked up revived.

"Where didst come from?" said the dame.

"Over Fell, there," said Tom, and pointed up into the sky.

"Over Harthover? and down Lewthwaite Crag? Art sure thou art not lying?"

"Why should I?" said Tom, and leaned his head against the post.

"And how got ye up there?"

"I came over from the Place;" and Tom was so tired and desperate he had no heart or time to think of a story, so he told all the truth in a few words.

"Bless thy little heart! And thou hast not been stealing, then?"

"No."

"Bless thy little heart! and I'll warant not. Why, God's guided the bairn, because he was innocent! Away from the Place, and over Harthover Fell, and down Lewthwaite Crag! Who ever heard the like, if God hadn't led him? Why dost not eat thy bread?"

"I can't."

"It's good enough, for I made it myself."

"I can't," said Tom, and he laid his head on his knees, and then asked:

"Is it Sunday?"

"No, then; why should it be?"

"Because I hear the church-bells ringing so."

"Bless thy pretty heart! The bairn's sick. Come wi' me, and I'll hap thee up somewhere. If thou wert a bit cleaner I'd put thee in my own bed, for the Lord's sake. But come along here."

But when Tom tried to get up, he was so tired and giddy that she had to help him and lead him.

She put him in an outhouse upon soft, sweet hay and an old rug, and bade him sleep off his walk, and she would come to him when school was over, in an hour's time.

And so she went in again, expecting Tom to fall fast asleep at once.

But Tom did not fall asleep.

Instead of it he turned and tossed and kicked about in the strangest way, and felt so hot all over that he longed to get into the river and cool himself; and then he fell half asleep, and dreamed that he heard the little white lady crying to him, "Oho, you're so dirty; go and be washed;" and then that he heard the Irishwoman saying, "Those that wish to be clean, clean they will be." And then he heard the church-bells ring so loud, close to him, too, that he was sure it must be Sunday, in spite of what the old dame had said; and he would go to church; and see what a church was like inside, for he had never been in one, poor little fellow, in all his life. But the people would never let him come in, all over soot and dirt like that. He must go to the river and wash first. And he said out loud again and again, though being half asleep he did not know it, "I must be clean, I must be clean."

And all of a sudden he found himself, not in the outhouse on the hay, but in the middle of a meadow, over the road, with the stream just before him, saying continually, "I must be clean, I must be clean." He had got there on his own legs, between sleep and awake, as children will often get out of bed, and go about the room, when they are not quite well. But he was not a bit surprised, and went on to the bank of the brook, and lay down on the grass, and looked into the clear, clear limestone water, with every pebble at the bottom bright and clean, while the little silver trout dashed about in fright at the sight of his black

face; and he dipped his hand in and found it so cool, cool, cool; and he said: "I will be a fish; I will swim in the water; I must be clean, I must be clean."

So he pulled off all his clothes in such haste that he tore some of them, which was easy enough with such ragged old things. And he put his poor, hot, sore feet into the water; and then his legs; and the farther he went in, the more the church-bells rang in his head.

"Ah," said Tom, "I must be quick and wash myself; the bells are ringing quite loud now: and they will stop soon, and then the door will be shut, and I shall never be able to get in at all."

And all the while he never saw the Irishwoman, not behind him this time but before.

For just before he came to the river side, she had stepped down into the cool, clear water; and her shawl and her petticoat floated off her, and the green water weeds floated around her sides, and the white water-lilies floated round her head, and the fairies of the stream came up from the bottom and bore her away and down upon their arms; for she was the queen of them all; and perhaps of more besides.

"Where have you been?" they asked her.

"I have been smoothing sick folks' pillows, and whispering sweet dreams into their ears; opening cottage casements, to let out the stifling air; coaxing little children away from gutters, and foul pools where fever breeds; turning women from the gin-shop door, and staying men's hands as they were going to strike their wives; doing all I can to help those who will not help themselves: and little enough that is, and weary work for me. But I have brought you a new little brother, and watched him safe all the way here."

Then all the fairies laughed for joy at the thought that they had a little brother coming.

"But mind, maidens, he must not see you, or know

The Water Babies

that you are here. He is but a savage now, and like the beasts which perish; and from the beasts which perish he must learn. So you must not play with him, or speak to him, or let him see you: but only keep him from being harmed."

Then the fairies were sad, because they could not play with their new brother, but they always did what they were told.

And their queen floated away down the river; and whither she went, thither she came. But all this Tom, of course, never saw or heard; and perhaps if he had it would have made little difference in the story; for he was so hot and thirsty, and longed so to be clean for once, that he tumbled himself as quick as he could into the clear, cool stream.

And he had not been in it two minutes before he fell fast asleep, into the quietest, sunniest, cosiest sleep that ever he had in his life; and he dreamed about the green meadows by which he had walked that morning, and the tall elm trees, and the sleeping cows; and after that he dreamed of nothing at all.

The reason of his falling into such a delightful sleep is very simple; and yet hardly anyone has found it out. It was merely that the fairies took him.

The kind old dame came back at twelve, when school was over, to look at Tom: but there was no Tom there.

So the old dame went in again quite sulky, thinking that little Tom had tricked her with a false story, and shammed ill, and then run away again.

But she altered her mind the next day. For, when Sir John and the rest of them had run themselves out of breath, and lost Tom, they went back again, looking very foolish.

And they looked more foolish still when Sir John heard more of the story from the nurse; and more fool-

ish still, again, when they heard the whole story from Miss Ellie, the little lady in white. All she had seen was a poor little black chimney-sweep, crying and sobbing, and going to get up the chimney again. Of course, she was very much frightened: and no wonder. But that was all. The boy had taken nothing in the room; by the mark of his little sooty feet, they could see that he had never been off the hearthrug till the nurse caught hold of him. It was all a mistake.

So Sir John told Grimes to go home, and promised him five shillings if he would bring the boy quietly up to him, without beating him, that he might be sure of the truth. For he took for granted, and Grimes, too, that Tom had made his way home.

But no Tom came back to Mr. Grimes that evening; and he went to the police office, to tell them to look out for the boy. But no Tom was heard of. As for his having gone over those great fells to Vendale, they no more dreamed of that than of his having gone to the moon.

So Mr. Grimes came up to Harthover next day with a very sour face; but when he got there, Sir John was over the hills and far away; and Mr. Grimes had to sit in the outer servants' hall all day, and drink strong ale to wash away his sorrows; and they were washed away long before Sir John came back.

For good Sir John had slept very badly that night; and he said to his lady, "My dear, the boy must have got over into the grouse-moors, and lost himself; and he lies very heavily on my conscience, poor little lad. But I know what I will do."

So, at five the next morning up he got, and into his bath, and into his shooting jacket and gaiters, and into the stableyard, like a fine old English gentleman, with a face as red as a rose, and a hand as hard as a table, and a back as broad as a bullock's; and bade them

bring his shooting pony, and the keeper to come on his pony, and the huntsman, and the first whip, and the second whip, and the under-keeper with the bloodhound in a leash—a great dog as tall as a calf, of the color of a gravel-walk, with mahogany ears and nose, and a throat like a church-bell. They took him up to the place where Tom had gone into the wood; and there the hound lifted up his mighty voice, and told them all he knew.

Then he took them to the place where Tom had climbed the wall; and they shoved it down, and all got through.

And then the wise dog took them over the moor, and over the fells, step by step, very slowly; for the scent was a day old, you know, and very light from the heat and drought. But that was why cunning old Sir John started at five in the morning.

And at last he came to the top of Lewthwaite Crag, and there he bayed, and looked up in their faces, as much as to say, "I tell you he has gone down here!"

They could hardly believe that Tom would have gone so far; and when they looked at that awful cliff, they could never believe that he would have dared to face it. But if the dog said so, it must be true.

"Heaven forgive us!" said Sir John. "If we find him at all, we shall find him lying at the bottom." And he slapped his great hand upon his great thigh, and said:

"Who will go down over Lewthwaite Crag, and see if that boy is alive? Oh, that I were twenty years younger, and I would go down myself!" And so he would have done, as well as any sweep in the country. Then he said:

"Twenty pounds to the man who brings me that

boy alive!" And, as was his way, what he said he meant.

Now, among the lot was a little groom-boy, a very little groom indeed; and he was the same who had ridden up the court, and told Tom to come to the hall; and he said:

"Twenty pounds or none, I will go down over Lewthwaite Crag, if it's only for the poor boy's sake. For he was as civil a spoken little chap as ever climbed a flue."

So down over Lewthwaite Crag he went: a very smart groom he was at the top, and a very shabby one at the bottom; for he tore his gaiters, and he tore his breeches, and he tore his jacket, and he burst his braces, and he burst his boots, and he lost his hat, but he never saw anything of Tom.

And all the while Sir John and the rest were riding round, full three miles to the right, and back again, to get into Vendale, and to the foot of the crag.

When they came to the old dame's school, all the children came out to see. And the old dame came out, too; and when she saw Sir John, she curtsied very low, for she was a tenant of his.

"Well, dame, and how are you?" said Sir John.

"Blessings on you as broad as your back, Harthover," says she—she didn't call him Sir John, but only Harthover, for that is the fashion in the north country —"and welcome into Vendale: but you're no hunting the fox this time of the year."

"I am hunting, and strange game, too," said he.

"Blessings on your heart, and what makes you look so sad the morn?"

"I'm looking for a lost child, a chimney-sweep, that is run away."

"Oh, Harthover, Harthover," says she, "ye were

always a just man and a merciful; and ye'll no harm the poor little lad if I give you tidings of him?"

"Not I, not I, dame. I'm afraid we hunted him out of the house all on a miserable mistake, and the hound has brought him to the top of Lewthwaite Crag, and—"

Whereat the old dame broke out crying, without letting him finish his story.

"So he told me the truth after all, poor little dear! Ah, first thoughts are best, and a body's heart'll guide them right, if they will but hearken to it." And then she told Sir John all.

"Bring the dog here, and lay him on," said Sir John, without another word, and he set his teeth very hard.

And the dog opened at once; and went away at the back of the cottage, over the road, and over the meadow and through a bit of alder copse; and then, upon an alder stump, they saw Tom's clothes lying. And then they knew as much about it all as there was any need to know.

And Tom?

Ah, now comes the most wonderful part of this wonderful story. Tom, when he woke, for of course he woke—children always wake after they have slept exactly as long as is good for them—found himself swimming about in the stream, being about four inches long, and having round his cheeks a set of gills, just like those of a sucking eft, which he mistook for a lace frill, till he pulled at them, found he hurt himself, and made up his mind that they were part of himself, and best left alone.

In fact, the fairies had turned him into a water-baby.

A water-baby? You never heard of a water-baby. Perhaps not. That is the very reason why this story was written.

But at all events, so it happened to Tom. And, there-

fore, the keeper, and the groom, and Sir John made a great mistake, and were very unhappy (Sir John at least) without any reason, when they found a black thing in the water, and said it was Tom's body, and that he had been drowned. They were utterly mistaken. Tom was quite alive; and cleaner, and merrier, than he ever had been. The fairies had washed him, you see, in the swift river, so thoroughly, that not only his dirt, but his whole husk and shell had been washed quite off him, and the pretty little real Tom was washed out of the inside of it, and swam away, as a caddis does when its case of stones and silk is bored through, and away it goes on its back, paddling to the shore, there to split its skin, and fly away as a caperer, on four fawn-colored wings, with long legs and horns. They are foolish fellows, the caperers, and fly into the candle at night, if you leave the door open. We will hope Tom will be wiser, now he has got safe out of his sooty old shell.

But good Sir John did not understand all this, and he took it into his head that Tom was drowned. When they looked into the empty pockets of his shell, and found no jewels there, nor money—nothing but three marbles, and a brass button with a string to it—then Sir John did something as like crying as ever he did in his life, and blamed himself more bitterly than he need have done. So he cried, and the groom-boy cried, and the huntsman cried, and the dame cried, and the little girl cried, and the dairymaid cried, and the old nurse cried (for it was somewhat her fault), and my lady cried; but the keeper did not cry, though he had been so good-natured to Tom the morning before; for he was so dried up with running after poachers that you could no more get tears out of him than milk out of leather; and Grimes did not cry, for Sir John gave him ten pounds, and he drank it all in a week. Sir John

sent, far and wide, to find Tom's father and mother; but he might have looked till doomsday for them, for one was dead, and the other was in Botany Bay. And the little girl would not play with her dolls for a whole week, and never forgot poor little Tom. And soon my lady put a pretty little tombstone over Tom's shell in the little churchyard in Vendale, where the old dalesmen all sleep side by side between the limestone crags. And the dame decked it with garlands every Sunday, till she grew so old that she could not stir abroad; then the little children decked it for her. And always she sang an old, old song. as she sat spinning what she called her wedding-dress. The children could not understand it, but they liked it none the less for that; for it was very sweet, and very sad; and that was enough for them. And these are the words of it:

When all the world is young, lad,
  And all the trees are green;
And every goose a swan, lad,
  And every lass a queen;
Then hey for boot and horse, lad,
  And round the world away;
Young blood must have its course lad,
  And every dog his day.

When all the world is old, lad,
  And all the trees are brown;
And all the sport is stale, lad,
  And all the wheels run down;
Creep home, and take your place there,
  The spent and maimed among;
God grant you find one face there,
  You loved when all was young.

Those are the words; but they are only the body of it; the soul of the song was the dear old woman's sweet

face, and sweet voice, and the sweet old air to which she sang; and that, alas! one cannot put on paper. And at last she grew so stiff and lame, that the angels were forced to carry her; and they helped her on with her wedding-dress, and carried her up over Harthover Fells, and a long way beyond that too; and there was a new schoolmistress in Vendale.

And all the while Tom was swimming about in the river, with a pretty little lace-collar of gills about his neck, as lively as a grig, and as clean as a fresh-run salmon.

CHAPTER III

TOM was now quite amphibious, and what is better still, he was clean. For the first time in his life he felt how comfortable it was to have nothing on him but himself. But he only enjoyed it: he did not know it, or think about it; just as you enjoy life and health, and yet never think about being alive and healthy; and may it be long before you have to think about it!

He did not remember having ever been dirty. Indeed he did not remember any of his old troubles, being tired, or hungry, or beaten, or sent up dark chimneys. Since that sweet sleep, he had forgotten all about his master, and Harthover Place, and the little white girl, and in a word, all that had happened to him when he lived before; and what was best of all, he had forgotten all the bad words which he had learned from Grimes, and the rude boys with whom he used to play.

That is not strange; for you know, when you came into this world, and became a land-baby, you remembered nothing. So why should he, when he became a water-baby?

But Tom was very happy in the water. He had been sadly overworked in the land-world; and so now, to make up for that, he had nothing but holidays in the water-world for a long, long time to come. He had nothing to do now but enjoy himself, and look at all the pretty things which are to be seen in the cool, clear water-world, where the sun is never too hot, and the frost is never too cold.

And what did he live on? Water-cresses, perhaps; or perhaps water-gruel, and water-milk; too many land-

babies do so likewise. But we do not know what one-tenth of the water-things eat; so we are not answerable for the water-babies.

Sometimes he went along the smooth gravel water-ways, looking at the crickets which ran in and out among the stones, as rabbits do on land; or he climbed over the ledges of rock, and saw the sandpipes hanging in thousands, with every one of them a pretty little head and legs peeping out; or he went into a still corner, and watched the caddises eating dead sticks as greedily as you would eat plum-pudding, and building their houses with silk and glue. Very fanciful ladies they were; none of them would keep to the same materials for a day. One would begin with some pebbles; then she would stick on a piece of green wood; then she found a shell, and stuck it on too; and the poor shell was alive, and did not like at all being taken to build houses with; but the caddis did not let him have any voice in the matter, being rude and selfish, as vain people are apt to be; then she stuck on a piece of rotten wood, then a very smart pink stone, and so on, till she was patched all over like an Irishman's coat. Then she found a long straw, five times as long as herself, and said, "Hurrah! my sister has a tail, and I'll have one too," and she stuck it on her back, and marched about with it quite proud, though it was very inconvenient indeed. And, at that, tails became all the fashion among the caddis-baits in that pool, and they all toddled about with long straws sticking out behind, getting between each other's legs, and tumbling over each other, and looking so ridiculous that Tom laughed at them till he cried.

Then sometimes he came to a deep still reach; and there he saw the water-forests. They would have looked to you only little weeds; but Tom, you must remember, was so little that everything looked a hundred

times as big to him as it does to you, just as things do to a minnow, who sees and catches the little water-creatures which you can only see in a microscope.

And in the water-forest he saw the water-monkeys and water-squirrels (they had all six legs, though; everything almost has six legs in the water except efts and water-babies); and nimbly enough they ran among the branches. There were water-flowers there too, in thousands; and Tom tried to pick them; but as soon as he touched them they drew themselves in and turned into knots of jelly; and then Tom saw that they were all alive—bells, and stars, and wheels, and flowers of all beautiful shapes and colors; and all alive and busy, just as Tom was. So now he found that there was a great deal more in the world than he had fancied at first sight.

There was one wonderful little fellow, too, who peeped out of the top of a house built of round bricks. He had two big wheels, and one little one, all over teeth, spinning round and round like the wheels in a thrashing-machine; and Tom stood and stared at him, to see what he was going to make with his machinery. And what do you think he was doing? Brick-making. With his two big wheels he swept together all the mud which floated in the water; all that was nice in it he put into his stomach and ate; and all the mud he put into the little wheel on his breast, which really was a round hole set with teeth; and there he spun it into a neat hard round brick; and then he took it and stuck it on the top of his house-wall, and set to work to make another. Now was not he a clever little fellow?

Tom thought so; but when he wanted to talk to him the brick-maker was much too busy and proud of his work to take notice of him.

Now you must know that all the things under the water talk; only not such a language as ours; but such

as horses, and dogs, and cows, and birds talk to each other; and Tom soon learned to understand them and talk to them: so that he might have had very pleasant company if he had only been a good boy. But I am sorry to say, he was too like some other little boys, very fond of hunting and tormenting creatures for mere sport.

But Tom did not know that; and he pecked and howked the poor water-things about sadly, till they were all afraid of him, and got out of his way, or crept into their shells; so he had no one to speak to or play with.

The water-fairies, of course, were very sorry to see him so unhappy, and longed to take him, and tell him how naughty he was, and teach him to be good, and to play and romp with him too; but they had been forbidden to do that. Tom had to learn his lesson for himself by sound and sharp experience, as many another foolish person has to do, though there may be many a kind heart yearning over them all the while, and longing to teach them what they can only teach themselves.

At last one day he found a caddis, and wanted it to peep out of its house: but its house-door was shut. He had never seen a caddis with a house-door before; so what must he do, the meddlesome little fellow, but pull it open, to see what the poor lady was doing inside. What a shame! How should you like to have any one breaking your bedroom-door in, to see how you looked when you were in bed? So Tom broke to pieces the door, which was the prettiest little grating of silk, stuck all over with shining bits of crystal; and when he looked in, the caddis poked out her head, and it had turned into just the shape of a bird's. But when Tom spoke to her she could not answer; for her mouth and face were tight tied up in a new nightcap of neat pink

skin. However, if she didn't answer, all the other caddises did; for they held up their hands and shrieked like the cats in Struwelpeter.

"Oh, you nasty, horrid boy; there you are at it again! And she had just laid herself up for a fortnight's sleep, and then she would have come out with such beautiful wings, and flown about, and laid such lots of eggs; and now you have broken her door, and she can't mend it because her mouth is tied up for a fortnight, and she will die. Who sent you here to worry us out of our lives?"

So Tom swam away. He was very much ashamed of himself, and felt all the naughtier; as little boys do when they have done wrong and won't say so.

Then he came to a pool full of little trout, and began tormenting them, and trying to catch them; but they slipped through his fingers, and jumped clean out of water in their fright. But as Tom chased them, he came close to a great dark hover under an alder root, and out floushed a huge old brown trout ten times as big as he was, and ran right against him, and knocked all the breath out of his body; and I don't know which was the more frightened of the two.

Then he went on sulky and lonely, as he deserved to be; and under a bank he saw a very ugly, dirty creature sitting, about half as big as himself; which had six legs, and a big stomach, and a most ridiculous head with two great eyes and a face just like a donkey's.

"Oh," said Tom, "you are an ugly fellow to be sure!" and he began making faces at him; and put his nose close to him, and halloed at him, like a very rude boy.

When, hey presto; all the thing's donkey-face came off in a moment, and out popped a long arm with a pair of pincers at the end of it, and caught Tom by the nose. It did not hurt him much; but it held him quite tight.

"Yah, ah! Oh, let me go!" cried Tom.

"Then let me go," said the creature. "I want to be quiet. I want to split."

Tom promised to let him alone, and he let go. "Why do you want to split?" said Tom.

"Because my brothers and sisters have all split, and turned into beautiful creatures with wings; and I want to split too. Don't speak to me. I am sure I shall split. I will split!"

Tom stood still, and watched him. And he swelled himself, and puffed, and stretched himself out stiff, and at last—crack, puff, bang—he opened all down his back, and then up to the top of his head.

And out of his inside came the most slender, elegant, soft creature, as soft and smooth as Tom; but very pale and weak, like a little child who has been ill a long time in a dark room. It moved its legs very feebly, and looked about it half ashamed, like a girl when she goes for the first time into a ball-room; and then it began walking slowly up a grass stem to the top of the water.

Tom was so astonished that he never said a word; but he stared with all his eyes. And he went up to the top of the water too, and peeped out to see what would happen.

And as the creature sat in the warm bright sun, a wonderful change came over it. It grew strong and firm; the most lovely colors began to show on its body, blue and yellow and black, spots and bars and rings; out of its back rose four great wings of bright brown gauze; and its eyes grew so large that they filled all its head, and shone like ten thousand diamonds.

"Oh, you beautiful creature!" said Tom; and he put out his hand to catch it.

But the thing whirred up into the air, and hung poised on its wings a moment, and then settled down again by Tom, quite fearless.

"No!" it said, "you cannot catch me. I am a dragon-

fly now, the king of all the flies; and I shall dance in the sunshine, and hawk over the river, and catch gnats, and have a beautiful wife like myself. I know what I shall do. Hurrah!" And he flew away into the air, and began catching gnats.

"Oh; come back, come back," cried Tom, "you beautiful creature. I have no one to play with, and I am so lonely here. If you will but come back I will never try to catch you."

"I don't care whether you do or not," said the dragon-fly; "for you can't. But when I have had my dinner, and looked a little about this pretty place, I will come back, and have a little chat about all I have seen in my travels. Why, what a huge tree this is! and what huge leaves on it!"

It was only a big dock; but you know the dragon-fly had never seen any but little water-trees; starwort, and milfoil, and water-crowfoot, and such like; so it did look very big to him. Besides, he was very short-sighted, as all dragon-flies are; and never could see a yard before his nose; any more than a great many other folks, who are not half as handsome as he.

The dragon-fly did come back, and chatted away with Tom. He was a little conceited about his fine colors and his large wings; but you know, he had been a poor dirty ugly creature all his life before; so there were great excuses for him. He was very fond of talking about all the wonderful things he saw in the trees and the meadows; and Tom liked to listen to him, for he had forgotten all about them. So in a little while they became great friends.

And I am very glad to say, that Tom learned such a lesson that day, that he did not torment creatures for a long time after.

And then the caddises grew quite tame, and used to tell him strange stories about the way they built their

houses; and changed their skins, and turned at last into winged flies; till Tom began to long to change his skin, and have wings like them some day.

And the trout and he made it up (for trout very soon forget if they have been frightened and hurt). So Tom used to play with them at hare and hounds, and great fun they had; and he used to try to leap out of the water, head over heels, as they did before a shower came on; but somehow he never could manage it. He liked most, though, to see them rising at the flies, as they sailed round and round under the shadow of the great oak, where the beetles fell flop into the water, and the green caterpillars let themselves down from the boughs by silk ropes for no reason at all; and then changed their foolish minds for no reason at all either; and hauled themselves up again into the tree, rolling up the rope in a ball between their paws.

And very often Tom caught them just as they touched the water; and caught the alder-flies, and the caperers, and the cock-tailed duns and spinners, yellow, and brown, and claret, and gray, and gave them to his friends the trout. Perhaps he was not quite kind to the flies; but one must do a good turn to one's friends when one can.

And at last he gave up catching even the flies; for he made acquaintance with one by accident and found him a very merry little fellow. And this was the way it happened; and it is all quite true.

He was basking at the top of the water one hot day in July, catching duns and feeding the trout, when he saw a new sort, a dark-gray little fellow with a brown head. He was a very little fellow indeed; but he made the most of himself, as people ought to do. He cocked up his head, and he cocked up his wings, and he cocked up his tail, and he cocked up the two whisks at his tail-end, and in short, he looked the cockiest little man

of all little men. And so he proved to be; for instead of getting away, he hopped upon Tom's finger, and sat there as bold as nine tailors; and he cried out in the tiniest, shrillest, squeakiest little voice you ever heard:

"Much obliged to you, indeed; but I don't want it yet."

"Want what?" said Tom, quite taken aback by his impudence.

"Your leg, which you are kind enough to hold out for me to sit on. I must just go and see after my wife for a few minutes. Dear me! what a troublesome business a family is!" (though the idle little rogue did nothing at all, but left his poor wife to lay all the eggs by herself). "When I come back, I shall be glad of it, if you'll be so good as to keep it sticking out just so;" and off he flew.

Tom thought him a very cool sort of personage; and still more so, when in five minutes he came back, and said, "Ah, you were tired waiting? Well, your other leg will do as well."

And he popped himself down on Tom's knee, and began chatting away in his squeaking voice.

"So you live under the water? It's a low place. I lived there for some time; and was very shabby and dirty. But I didn't choose that that should last. So I turned respectable, and came up to the top and put on this gray suit. It's a very business-like suit you think, don't you?"

"Very neat and quiet indeed," said Tom.

"Yes, one must be quiet and neat and respectable, and all that sort of thing for a little, when one becomes a family man. But I'm tired of it, that's the truth. I've done quite enough business, I consider, in the last week, to last me my life. So I shall put on a ball dress, and go out and be a smart man, and see the gay world,

and have a dance or two. Why shouldn't one be jolly if one can?"

"And what will become of your wife?"

"Oh! she is a very plain, stupid creature, and that's the truth; and thinks about nothing but eggs. If she chooses to come, why she may; and if not, why I go without her—and here I go."

And, as he spoke, he turned quite pale, and then quite white.

"Why, you're ill!" said Tom. But he did not answer.

"You're dead," said Tom looking at him as he stood on his knee as white as a ghost.

"No, I ain't!" answered a little squeaking voice over his head. "This is me up here, in my ball-dress; and that's my skin. Ha, ha! you could not do such a trick as that!"

The little rogue had jumped clean out of his own skin, and left it standing on Tom's knee, eyes, wings, legs, tail, exactly as if it had been alive.

"Ha, ha!" he said, and he jerked and skipped up and down, never stopping an instant, just as if he had St. Vitus' dance. "Ain't I a pretty fellow now?"

And so he was; for his body was white, and his tail orange, and his eyes all the colors of a peacock's tail. And what was the oddest of all, the whisks at the end of his tail had grown five times as long as they were before.

"Ah!" said he, "now I will see the gay world. My living won't cost me much, for I have no mouth, you see, and no inside; so I can never be hungry nor have the stomach-ache either.""

No more he had. He had grown as dry and hard and empty as a quill, as such silly shallow-hearted fellows deserve to grow.

But, instead of being ashamed of his emptiness he was quite proud of it, as a good many fine gentlemen

are, and began flirting and flipping up and down, and singing:

> "My wife shall dance, and I shall sing,
>   So merrily pass the day;
> For I hold it for quite the wisest thing,
>   To drive dull care away."

And he danced up and down for three days and three nights till he grew so tired that he tumbled into the water and floated down. But what became of him Tom never knew, and he himself never minded; for Tom heard him singing to the last, as he floated down:

> "To drive dull care away-ay-ay!"

And if he did not care, why nobody else cared either.

But one day Tom had a new adventure. He was sitting on a water-lily leaf, he and his friend the dragon-fly, watching the gnats dance. The dragon-fly had eaten as many as he wanted, and was sitting quite still and sleepy, for it was very hot and bright. The gnats (who did not care the least for their poor brothers' death) danced a foot over his head quite happily, and a large black fly settled within an inch of his nose, and began washing his own face and combing his hair with his paws; but the dragon-fly never stirred, and kept on chatting to Tom about the times when he lived under the water.

Suddenly, Tom heard the strangest noise up the stream; cooing, and grunting, and whining, and squeaking, as if you had put into a bag two stock-doves, nine mice, three guinea-pigs, and a blind puppy, and left them there to settle themselves and make music.

He looked up the water, and there he saw a sight as strange as the noise; a great ball rolling over and

over down the stream, seeming one moment of soft brown fur, and the next of shining glass; and yet it was not a ball; for sometimes it broke up and streamed away in pieces, and then it joined again; and all the while the noise came out of it louder and louder.

Tom asked the dragon-fly what it could be; but, of course, with his short sight, he could not even see it, though it was not ten yards away. So he took the neatest little header into the water, and started off to see for himself; and, when he came near, the ball turned out to be four or five beautiful creatures, many times larger than Tom, who were swimming about, and rolling, and diving, and twisting, and wrestling, and cuddling, and kissing, and biting, and scratching, in the most charming fashion that ever was seen. And if you don't believe me, you may go to the Zoological Gardens and then say if otters at play in the water are not the merriest, lithest, gracefulest creatures you ever saw.

But, when the biggest of them saw Tom, she darted out from the rest, and cried in the water-language sharply enough, "Quick children, here is something to eat, indeed!" and came at poor Tom, showing such a wicked pair of eyes, and such a set of sharp teeth in a grinning mouth, that Tom, who had thought her very handsome, said to himself, Handsome is that handsome does, and slipped in between the water-lily roots as fast as he could, and then turned round and made faces at her.

"Come out," said the wicked otter, "or it will be worse for you."

But Tom looked at her from between two thick roots, and shook them with all his might, making horrible faces all the while, just as he used to grin through the railings at the old women, when he lived before. It was not quite well bred, no doubt; but you know, Tom had not finished his education yet.

"Come away, children," said the otter in disgust, "it is not worth eating after all. It is only a nasty eft, which nothing eats, not even those vulgar pike in the pond."

"I am not an eft!" said Tom; "efts have tails."

"You are an eft," said the otter, very positively; "I see your two hands, quite plain, and I know you have a tail."

"I tell you I have not," said Tom. "Look here!" and he turned his pretty little self quite round; and, sure enough, he had no more tail than you.

The otter might have got out of it by saying that Tom was a frog; but, like a great many other people, when she had once said a thing, she stood to it, right or wrong; so she answered:

"I say you are an eft, and therefore you are, and not fit food for gentlefolk like me and my children. You may stay there till the salmon eat you" (she knew the salmon would not, but she wanted to frighten poor Tom). "Ha, ha! they will eat you, and we will eat them;" and the otter laughed such a wicked, cruel laugh—as you may hear them do sometimes; and the first time that you hear it you will probably think it is bogies.

"What are salmon?" asked Tom.

"Fish, you eft; great fish, nice fish to eat. They are the lords of the fish, and we are lords of the salmon;" and she laughed again. "We hunt them up and down the pools, and drive them up into a corner, the silly things; they are so proud, and bully the little trout, and the minnows, till they see us coming, and then they are so meek all at once; and we catch them, but we disdain to eat them all; we just bite out their soft throats and suck their sweet juice—oh, so good!" (and she licked her wicked lips)—"and then throw them away, and go and catch another. They are coming

soon, children, coming soon; I can smell the rain coming up off the sea, and then hurrah for a fresh, and salmon, and plenty of eating all day long."

And the otter grew so proud that she turned head over heels twice, and then stood upright half out of the water, grinning like a Cheshire cat.

"And where do they come from?" asked Tom, who kept himself very close, for he was considerably frightened.

"Out of the sea, eft, the great wide sea, where they might stay and be safe if they liked. But out of the sea the silly things come, into the great river down below, and we come up to watch for them; and when they go down again we go down and follow them. And there we fish for the bass and the pollock, and have jolly days along the shore, and toss and roll in the breakers, and sleep snug in the warm dry crags. Ah, that is a merry life, too, children, if it were not for these horrid men."

"What are men?" asked Tom; but somehow he seemed to know before he asked.

"Two-legged things, eft: and, now I come to look at you, they are actually something like you, if you had not a tail" (she was determined that Tom should have a tail), "only a great deal bigger, worse luck for us; and they catch the fish with hooks and lines, which get into our feet sometimes, and set pots along the rocks to catch lobsters. They speared my poor dear husband as he went out to find something for me to eat. I was laid up among the crags then, and we were very low in the world, for the sea was so rough that no fish would come in shore. But they speared him, poor fellow, and I saw them carrying him away upon a pole. Ah, he lost his life for your sakes, my children, poor dear obedient creature that he was."

Then she sailed solemnly away down the burn, and

Tom saw her no more for that time. And lucky it was for her that she did so: for no sooner was she gone, than down the bank came seven little rough terrier dogs, snuffing and yapping, and grubbing and splashing, in full cry after the otter. Tom hid among the water-lilies till they were gone; for he could not guess that they were the water-fairies come to help him.

But he could not help thinking of what the otter had said about the great river and the broad sea. And, as he thought, he longed to go and see them. He could not tell why; but the more he thought, the more he grew discontented with the narrow little stream in which he lived, and all his companions there; and wanted to get out into the wide, wide world, and enjoy all the wonderful sights of which he was sure it was full.

And once he set off to go down the stream. But the stream was very low; and when he came to the shallows he could not keep under water, for there was no water left to keep under. So the sun burned his back and made him sick; and he went back again and lay quiet in the pool for a whole week more.

And then, on the evening of a very hot day, he saw a sight.

He had been very stupid all day, and so had the trout; for they would not move an inch to take a fly, though there were thousands on the water, but lay dozing at the bottom under the shade of the stones; and Tom lay dozing too, and was glad to cuddle their smooth cool sides, for the water was quite warm and unpleasant.

But toward evening it grew suddenly dark, and Tom looked up and saw a blanket of black clouds lying right across the valley above his head, resting on the crags right and left. He felt not quite frightened, but very still; for everything was still. There was not a whisper of wind, nor a chirp of a bird to be heard; and next a few great drops of rain fell plop into the

water, and one hit Tom on the nose, and made him pop his head down quickly enough.

And then the thunder roared, and the lightning flashed, and leaped across Vendale and back again, from cloud to cloud, and cliff to cliff, till the very rocks in the stream seemed to shake: and Tom looked up at it through the water, and thought it the finest thing he ever saw in his life.

But out of the water he dared not put his head; for the rain came down by bucketsful, and the hail hammered like shot on the stream, and churned it into foam; and soon the stream rose and rushed down, higher and higher, and fouler and fouler, full of beetles, and sticks; and straws, and worms, and addle-eggs, and wood-lice, and leeches, and odds and ends, and omnium-gatherums, and this, that, and the other, enough to fill nine museums.

Tom could hardly stand against the stream, and hid behind a rock. But the trout did not; for out they rushed from among the stones, and began gobbling the beetles and leeches in the most greedy and quarrelsome way, and swimming about with great worms hanging out of their mouths, tugging and kicking to get them away from each other.

And now, by the flashes of the lightning, Tom saw a new sight—all the bottom of the stream alive with great eels, turning and twisting along, all down stream and away. They had been hiding for weeks past in the cracks of the rocks, and in burrows in the mud; and Tom had hardly ever seen them, except now and then at night: but now they were all out, and went hurrying past him so fiercely and wildly that he was quite frightened. And as they hurried past he could hear them say to each other, "We must run, we must run. What a jolly thunder storm! Down to the sea, down to the sea!"

And then the otter came by with all her brood, twining and sweeping along as fast as the eels themselves; and she spied Tom as she came by, and said:

"Now is your time, eft, if you want to see the world. Come along, children, never mind those nasty eels: we shall breakfast on salmon to-morrow. Down to the sea, down to the sea!"

Then came a flash brighter than all the rest, and by the light of it—in the thousandth part of a second they were gone again—but he had seen them, he was certain of it—three beautiful little white girls, with their arms twined round each others' necks, floating down the torrent, as they sang, "Down to the sea, down to the sea!"

"Oh, stay! Wait for me!" cried Tom; but they were gone: yet he could hear their voices clear and sweet through the roar of thunder and water and wind, singing as they died away, "Down to the sea!"

"Down to the sea?" said Tom; "everything is going to the sea, and I will go too. Good-by, trout." But the trout were so busy gobbling worms that they never turned to answer him; so that Tom was spared the pain of bidding them farewell.

And now, down the rushing stream, guided by the bright flashes of the storm; past tall birch-fringed rocks, which shone out one moment as clear as day, and the next were dark as night; past dark hovers under swirling banks from which great trout rushed out on Tom, thinking him to be good to eat, and turned back sulkily, for the fairies sent them home again with a tremendous scolding, for daring to meddle with a water-baby; on through narrow strids and roaring cataracts, where Tom was deafened and blinded for a moment by the rushing waters; along deep reaches, where the white water-lilies tossed and flapped beneath the wind and hail; past sleeping villages; under

dark bridge-arches, and away and away to the sea. And Tom could not stop, and did not care to stop; he would see the great world below, and the salmon, and the breakers, and the wide, wide sea.

And when the daylight came, Tom found himself out in the salmon river.

And what sort of a river was it? Was it like an Irish stream, winding through the brown bogs, where the wild ducks squatter up from among the white water-lilies, and the curlews flit to and fro, crying, "Tullie-wheep, mind your sheep;" and Dennis tells you strange stories of the Peishtamore, the great bogy-snake which lies in the black peat pools among the old pine stems, and puts his head out at night to snap at the cattle as they come down to drink?

Or was it such a salmon stream as I trust you will see among the Hampshire water-meadows?

Or was it like a Scotch stream, such as Arthur Clough drew in his "Bothie:"

"Where over a ledge of granite
Into a granite basin the amber torrent descended . .
Beautiful there for the color derived from green rocks under;
Beautiful most of all, where beads of foam uprising
Mingle their clouds of white with the delicate hue of the stillness. . . .
Cliff over cliff for its sides, with rowan and pendant birch boughs." . . .

Ah, my little man, when you are a big man, and fish such a stream as that, you will hardly care, I think, whether she be roaring down in full spate, like coffee covered with scald cream, while the fish are swirling at your fly as an oar-blade swirls in a boat race, or flashing up the cataract like silver arrows, out

of the fiercest of the foam; or whether the fall be dwindled to a single thread, and the shingle below be as white and dusty as a turnpike road, while the salmon huddle together in one dark cloud in the clear amber pool, sleeping away their time till the rain creeps back again off the sea. You will not care much, if you have eyes and brains, for you will lay down your rod contentedly, and drink in at your eyes the beauty of that glorious place; and listen to the water-ouzel piping on the stones, and watch the yellow roes come down to drink and look up at you with their great soft trustful eyes, as much as to say, "You could not have the heart to shoot at us?"

No. It was none of these, the salmon stream at Harthover. A full hundred yards broad it was, sliding on from broad pool to broad shallow, and broad shallow to broad pool, over great fields of shingle, under oak and ash coverts, past low cliffs of sandstone, past green meadows, and fair parks and a great house of gray stone, and brown meres above, and here and there against the sky the smoking chimmey of a colliery.

Tom thought nothing about what the river was like. All his fancy was, to get down to the wide, wide sea.

And after awhile he came to a place where the river spread out into broad, still, shallow reaches, so wide that little Tom, as he put his head out of the water, could hardly see across.

And there he stopped. He got a little frightened.

"This must be the sea," he thought. "What a wide place it is! If I go on into it I shall surely lose my way, or some strange thing will bite me. I will stop here and look out for the otter, or the eels, or some one to tell me where I shall go."

So he went back a little way, and crept into a crack of the rock, just where the river opened out into the

wide shallows, and watched for some one to tell him his way: but the otter and the eels were gone on miles and miles down the stream.

There he waited, and slept, too, for he was quite tired with his night's journey; and, when he woke, the stream was clearing to a beautiful amber hue, though it was still very high. And after awhile he saw a sight which made him jump; for he knew in a moment it was one of the things which he had come to look for.

Such a fish! ten times as big as the biggest trout, and a hundred times as big as Tom, sculling up the stream past him, as easily as Tom had sculled down.

Such a fish! shining silver from head to tail, and here and there a crimson dot; with a grand hooked nose and grand curling lip, and a grand bright eye, looking round him as proudly as a king, and surveying the water right and left as if all belonged to him. Surely he must be the salmon, the king of all the fish.

Tom was so frightened that he longed to creep into a hole; but he need not have been; for salmon are all true gentlemen, and, like true gentlemen, they look noble and proud enough, and yet, like true gentlemen, they never harm or quarrel with any one, but go about their own business, and leave rude fellows to themselves.

The salmon looked at him full in the face, and then went on without minding him, with a swish or two of his tail which made the stream boil again. And in a few minutes came another, and then four or five, and so on; and all passed Tom, rushing and plunging up the cataract with strong strokes of their silver tails, now and then leaping clean out of the water and up over a rock, shining gloriously for a moment in the bright sun; while Tom was so delighted that he could have watched them all day long.

And at last one came up bigger than all the rest; but he came slowly, and stopped, and looked back, and seemed very anxious and busy. And Tom saw that he was helping another salmon, an especially handsome one, who had not a single spot upon it, but was clothed in pure silver from nose to tail.

"My dear," said the great fish to his companion, "you really look dreadfully tired, and you must not over exert yourself at first. Do rest yourself behind this rock;" and he shoved her gently with his nose to the rock where Tom sat.

You must know that this was the salmon's wife. For salmon, like other true gentlemen, always choose their lady, and love her, and are true to her, and take care of her, and work for her, and fight for her, as every true gentleman ought; and are not like vulgar chub and roach and pike, who have no high feelings, and take no care of their wives.

Then he saw Tom, and looked at him very fiercely one moment, as if he was going to bite him.

"What do you want here?" he said, very fiercely.

"Oh, don't hurt me!" cried Tom. "I only want to look at you; you are so handsome."

"Ah?" said the salmon, very stately but very civilly. "I really beg your pardon; I see what you are, my little dear. I have met one or two creatures like you before, and found them very agreeable and well behaved. Indeed, one of them showed me a great kindness lately, which I hope to be able to repay. I hope we shall not be in your way here. As soon as this lady is rested, we shall proceed on our journey."

What a well-bred old salmon he was!

"So you have seen things like me before?" asked Tom.

"Several times, my dear. Indeed, it was only last night that one at the river's mouth came and warned

me and my wife of some new stake-nets which had got into the stream, I cannot tell how, since last winter, and showed us the way round them, in the most charmingly obliging way."

"So there are babies in the sea?" cried Tom, and clapped his little hands. "Then I shall have some one to play with there? How delightful!"

"Were there no babies up this stream?" asked the lady salmon.

"No! and I grew so lonely. I thought I saw three last night; but they were gone in an instant, down to the sea. So I went, too; for I had nothing to play with but caddises and dragon flies and trout."

"Ugh!" cried the lady, "what low company!"

"My dear, if he has been in low company, he has certainly not learned their low manners," said the salmon.

"No, indeed, poor little dear: but how sad for him to live among such people as caddises, who have actually six legs, the nasty things; and dragon-flies, too! why they are not even good to eat; for I tried them once, and they are all hard and empty; and, as for trout, every one knows what they are." Whereon she curled up her lip, and looked dreadfully scornful, while her husband curled up his, too, till he looked as proud as Alcibiades.

"Why do you dislike the trout so?" asked Tom.

"My dear, we do not even mention them, if we can help it; for I am sorry to say they are relations of ours who do us no credit. A great many years ago they were just like us: but they were so lazy, and cowardly, and greedy, that instead of going down to the sea every year to see the world and grow strong and fat, they chose to stay and poke about in the little streams and eat worms and grubs; and they are very properly punished for it; for they have grown ugly and brown and

spotted and small; and are actually so degraded in their tastes that they will eat our children."

"And then they pretend to scrape acquaintance with us again," said the lady. "Why, I have actually known one of them to propose to a lady salmon, the impudent little creature.

"I should hope," said the gentleman, "that there are very few ladies of our race who would degrade themselves by listening to such a creature for an instant. If I saw such a thing happen, I should consider it my duty to put them both to death upon the spot." So the old salmon said, like an old, blue-blooded hidalgo of Spain; and what is more he would have done it, too. For you must know, no enemies are so bitter against each other as those who are of the same race; and a salmon looks on a trout, as some great folks look on some little folks, as something just too much like himself to be tolerated.

CHAPTER IV

SO the salmon went up, after Tom had warned them of the wicked old otter; and Tom went down, but slowly and cautiously, coasting along the shore. He was many days about it, for it was many miles down to the sea; and perhaps he would never have found his way if the fairies had not guided him, without his seeing their fair faces or feeling their gentle hands.

And, as he went, he had a very strange adventure. It was a clear, still September night, and the moon shone so brightly down through the water, that he could not sleep, though he shut his eyes as tight as possible. So at last he came up to the top, and sat upon a little point of rock, and looked up at the broad, yellow moon, and wondered what she was, and thought that she looked at him. And he watched the moonlight on the rippling river, and the black heads of the firs, and the silver-frosted lawns, and listened to the owl's hoot, and the snipe's bleat, and the fox's bark, and the otter's laugh; and smelled the soft perfume of the birches, and the wafts of heather honey off the grouse moor far above; and felt very happy, though he could not well tell why. You, of course, would have been very cold sitting there on a September night, without the least bit of clothes on your wet back; but Tom was a water baby, and therefore felt cold no more than a fish.

Suddenly he saw a beautiful sight. A bright red light moved along the river-side, and threw down into the water a long tap-root of flame. Tom, curious little rogue that he was, must needs go and see what

it was; so he swam to the shore, and met the light as it stopped over a shallow run at the edge of a low rock.

And there, underneath the light, lay five or six great salmon, looking up at the flame with their great goggle eyes, and wagging their tails, as if they were very much pleased at it.

Tom came to the top to look at this wonderful light nearer, and heard a splash.

And he heard a voice say:

"There was a fish rose."

He did not know what the words meant: but he seemed to know the sound of them, and to know the voice which spoke them; and he saw on the bank three great two-legged creatures, one of whom held the light, flaring and spluttering, and another a long pole. And he knew that they were men, and was frightened, and crept into a hole in the rock, from which he could see what went on.

The man with the torch bent down over the water, and looked earnestly in; and then he said:

"Tak' that muckle fellow, lad; he's ower fifteen punds; and haud your hand steady."

Tom felt that there was some danger coming, and longed to warn the foolish salmon, who kept staring up at the light as if he was bewitched. But before he could make up his mind, down came the pole through the water; there was a fearful splash and struggle, and Tom saw the poor salmon was speared right through, and was lifted out of the water.

And then, from behind, there sprang on these three men three other men; and there were shouts, and blows, and words which Tom recollected to have heard before; and he shuddered and turned sick at them now, for he felt somehow that they were strange, and ugly, and wrong, and horrible. And it all began to

come back to him. They were men; and they were fighting; savage, desperate, up-and-down fighting, such as Tom had seen too many times before.

And he stopped his little ears, and longed to swim away; and was very glad that he was a water baby, and had nothing to do any more with horrid, dirty men, with foul clothes on their backs, and foul words on their lips; but he dared not stir out of his hole: while the rock shook over his head with the trampling and struggling of the keepers and the poachers.

All of a sudden there was a tremendous splash, and a frightful flash, and a hissing, and all was still.

For into the water, close to Tom, fell one of the men; he who held the light in his hand. Into the swift river he sank, and rolled over and over in the current. Tom heard the men above run along, seemingly looking for him; but he drifted down into the deep hole below, and there lay quite still, and they could not find him.

Tom waited a long time, till all was quiet; and then he peeped out, and saw the man lying. At last he screwed up his courage and swam down to him. "Perhaps," he thought, "the water has made him fall asleep, as it did me."

Then he went nearer. He grew more and more curious, he could not tell why. He must go and look at him. He would go very quietly, of course; so he swam round and round him, closer and closer; and, as he did not stir, at last he came quite close and looked him in the face.

The moon shone so bright that Tom could see every feature; and, as he saw, he recollected, bit by bit, it was his old master, Grimes.

Tom turned tail, and swam away as fast as he could.

"Oh, dear me!" he thought, "now he will turn into a

water baby. What a nasty, troublesome one he will be! And perhaps he will find me out, and beat me again."

So he went up the river again a little way, and lay there the rest of the night under an alder root; but, when morning came, he longed to go down again to the big pool, and see whether Mr. Grimes had turned into a water baby yet.

So he went very carefully, peeping round all the rocks, and hiding under all the roots. Mr. Grimes lay there still; he had not turned into a water baby. In the afternoon Tom went back again. He could not rest till he had found out what had become of Mr. Grimes. But this time Mr. Grimes was gone: and Tom made up his mind that he was turned into a water baby.

He might have made himself easy, poor little man; Mr. Grimes did not turn into a water baby, or anything like one at all. But he did not make himself easy; and for a long time he was fearful lest he should meet Grimes suddenly in some deep pool. He could not know that the fairies had carried him away, and put him, where they put everything which falls into the water, exactly where it ought to be.

Then Tom went on down, for he was afraid of staying near Grimes: and as he went all the vale looked sad. The red and yellow leaves showered down into the river: the flies and beetles were all dead and gone; the chill autumn fog lay low upon the hills, and sometimes spread itself so thickly on the river that he could not see his way. But he felt his way instead, following the flow of the stream, day after day, past great bridges, past boats and barges, past the great town, with its wharfs and mills, and tall smoking chimneys, and ships which rode at anchor in the stream: and now and then he ran against the hawsers, and wondered what

they were, and peeped out and saw the sailors lounging on board, smoking their pipes; and ducked under again, for he was terribly afraid of being caught by a man and turned into a chimney-sweep once more. He did not know that the fairies were close to him always, shutting the sailors' eyes lest they should see him, and turning him aside from millraces, and sewer-mouths, and all foul and dangerous things. Poor little fellow, it was a dreary journey for him; and more than once he longed to be back in Vendale, playing with the trout in the bright summer sun. But it could not be. What has been once can never come over again. And people can be little babies, even water babies, only once in their lives.

Besides, people who make up their minds to go and see the world, as Tom did, must needs find it a weary journey. Lucky for them if they do not lose heart and stop half-way, instead of going on bravely to the end as Tom did. For then they will remain neither boys nor men, neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring: having learned a great deal too much, and yet not enough; and sown their wild oats, without having the advantage of reaping them.

But Tom was always a brave, determined, little English bulldog, who never knew when he was beaten; and on and on he held, till he saw a long way off the red buoy through the fog. And then he found, to his surprise, the stream turned round, and running up inland.

It was the tide, of course: but Tom knew nothing of the tide. He only knew that in a minute more the water, which had been fresh, turned salt all round him. And then there came a change over him. He felt as strong, and light, and fresh as if his veins had run champagne; and gave, he did not know why, three skips out of the water, a yard high, and head over heels, just as the

salmon do when they first touch the noble, rich salt water, which, as some wise men tell us, is the mother of all living things.

He did not care now for the tide being against him. The red buoy was in sight, dancing in the open sea; and to the buoy he would go, and to it he went. He passed great shoals of bass and mullet, leaping and rushing in after the shrimps, but he never heeded them, nor they him, and once he passed a great, black, shining seal, who was coming in after the mullet. The seal put his head and shoulders out of water, and stared at him, looking exactly like a fat, old, greasy negro with a gray pate. And Tom, instead of being frightened, said, "How d'ye do, sir; what a beautiful place the sea is!" and the old seal, instead of trying to bite him, looked at him with his soft, sleepy, winking eyes, and said, "Good tide to you, my little man; are you looking for your brothers and sisters? I passed them all at play outside."

"Oh, then," said Tom, "I shall have playfellows at last," and he swam on to the buoy, and got upon it (for he was quite out of breath) and sat there, and looked round for water babies: but there were none to be seen.

The sea breeze came in freshly with the tide and blew the fog away; and the little waves danced for joy around the buoy, and the old buoy danced with them. The shadows of the clouds ran races over the bright blue bay, and yet never caught each other up; and the breakers plunged merrily upon the wide white sands, and jumped up over the rocks to see what the green fields inside were like, and tumbled down and broke themselves all to pieces, and never minded it a bit, but mended themselves and jumped up again. And the terns hovered over Tom like huge white dragon-flies with black heads, and the gulls laughed like girls at

play, and the sea-pies, with their red bills and legs, flew to and fro from shore to shore, and whistled sweet and wild. And Tom looked and looked, and listened; and he would have been very happy, if he could only have seen the water babies. Then when the tide turned he left the buoy, and swam round and round in search of them; but in vain. Sometimes he thought he heard them laughing; but it was only the laughter of the ripples. And sometimes he thought he saw them at the bottom: but it was only white and pink shells. And once he was sure he had found one, for he saw two bright eyes peeping out of the sand. So he dived down, and began scraping the sand away, and cried, "Don't hide; I do want some one to play with so much!" And out jumped a great turbot with his ugly eyes and mouth all awry, and flopped away along the bottom, knocking poor Tom over. And he sat down at the bottom of the sea, and cried salt tears from sheer disappointment.

To have come all this way, and faced so many dangers, and yet to find no water babies! How hard! Well, it did seem hard: but people, even little babies, cannot have all they want without waiting for it, and working for it too, my little man, as you will find out some day.

And Tom sat upon the buoy long days, long weeks, looking out to sea, and wondering when the water babies would come back; and yet they never came.

Then he began to ask all the strange things which came in out of the sea if they had seen any; and some said "Yes," and some said nothing at all.

He asked the bass and the pollock; but they were so greedy after the shrimps that they did not care to answer him a word.

Then there came in a whole fleet of purple sea-snails, floating along, each on a sponge full of foam, and Tom

said, "Where do you come from, you pretty creatures? and have you seen the water babies?"

And the sea-snails answered, "Whence we come we know not; and whither we are going, who can tell? We float out our life in the mid-ocean, with the warm sunshine above our heads, and the warm gulf-stream below; and that is enough for us. Yes, perhaps we have seen the water babies. We have seen many strange things as we sailed along." And they floated away, the happy stupid things, and all went ashore upon the sands.

Then there came in a great lazy sunfish, as big as a fat pig cut in half: and he seemed to have been cut in half too, and squeezed in a clothes-press till he was flat; but to all his big body and big fins he had only a little rabbit's mouth, no bigger than Tom's; and, when Tom questioned him, he answered in a little squeaky, feeble voice:

"I'm sure I don't know; I've lost my way. I meant to go to the Chesapeake, and I'm afraid I've got wrong somehow. Dear me! it was all by following that pleasant warm water. I'm sure I've lost my way."

And, when Tom asked him again, he could only answer, "I've lost my way. Don't talk to me; I want to think."

But, like a good many other people, the more he tried to think, the less he could think; and Tom saw him blundering about all day, till the coast guardsmen saw his big fin above the water, and rowed out, and struck a boat-hook into him, and took him away. They took him up to the town and showed him for a penny a head, and made a good day's work of it. But of course Tom did not know that.

Then there came by a shoal of porpoises, rolling as they went—papas, and mammas, and little children—and all quite smooth and shiny, because the fairies

French-polish them every morning; and they sighed so softly as they came by, that Tom took courage to speak to them; but all they answered was, "Hush, hush, hush;" for that was all they had learned to say.

And then there came a shoal of basking sharks, some of them as long as a boat, and Tom was frightened at them. But they were very lazy, good-natured fellows, not greedy tyrants, like white sharks and blue sharks and ground sharks and hammer-heads, who eat men, or saw-fish and threshers and ice-sharks, who hunt the poor whales. They came and rubbed their great sides against the buoy, and lay basking in the sun with their backfins out of water; and winked at Tom: but he never could get them to speak. They had eaten so many herrings that they were quite stupid; and Tom was glad when a collier brig came by and frightened them all away; for they did smell most horribly, certainly, and he had to hold his nose tight as long as they were there.

And then there came by a beautiful creature, like a ribbon of pure silver with a sharp head and very long teeth; but it seemed very sick and sad. Sometimes it rolled helpless on its side; and then it dashed away glittering like white fire; and then it lay sick again and motionless.

"Where do you come from?" asked Tom. "And why are you so sick and sad?"

"I come from the warm Carolinas, and the sand-banks fringed with pines; where the great owl-rays leap and flap, like giant bats, upon the tide. But I wandered north and north, upon the treacherous warm gulf-stream, till I met with the cold icebergs, afloat in the mid-ocean. So I got tangled among the icebergs, and chilled with their frozen breath. But the water babies helped me from among them, and set me free again. And now I am mending every day; but I am

very sick and sad; and perhaps I shall never get home again to play with the owl-rays any more."

"Oh!" cried Tom. "And you have seen water babies? Have you seen any near here?"

"Yes; they helped me again last night, or I should have been eaten by a great black porpoise."

How vexatious! The water babies close to him, and yet he could not find one.

And then he left the buoy, and used to go along the sands and round the rocks, and come out in the night and sit upon a point of rock, among the shining sea-weeds, in the low October tides, and cry and call for the water babies; but he never heard a voice call in return. And at last, with his fretting and crying, he grew quite lean and thin.

But one day among the rocks he found a playfellow. It was not a water baby, alas! but it was a lobster; and a very distinguished lobster he was; for he had live barnacles on his claws, which is a great mark of distinction in lobsterdom, and no more to be bought for money than a good conscience or the Victoria Cross.

Tom had never seen a lobster before; and he was mightily taken with this one; for he thought him the most curious, odd, ridiculous creature he had ever seen; and there he was not far wrong; for all the ingenious men, and all the scientific men, and all the fanciful men in the world, with all the old German bogy-painters into the bargain, could never invent, if all their wits were boiled into one, anything so curious, and so ridiculous, as a lobster.

He had one claw knobbed and the other jagged; and Tom delighted in watching him hold on to the seaweed with his knobbed claw, while he cut up salads with his jagged one, and then put them into his mouth, after smelling at them, like a monkey. And always the little barnacles threw out their casting-nets and swept the

water, and came in for their share of whatever there was for dinner.

But Tom was most astonished to see how he fired himself off—snap! like the leap-frogs which you make out of a goose's breastbone. Certainly he took the most wonderful shots, and backward, too. For, if he wanted to get into a narrow crack ten yards off, what do you think he did? If he had gone in head foremost, of course he could not have turned round. So he used to turn his tail to it, and lay his long horns, which carry his sixth sense in their tips (and nobody knows what that sixth sense is), straight down his back to guide him and twist his eyes back till they almost came out of their sockets, and then made ready, present, fire, snap!—and away he went, pop into the hole; and peeped out and twiddled his whiskers, as much as to say, "You couldn't do that."

Tom asked him about water babies. "Yes," he said. He had seen them often. But he did not think much of them. They were meddlesome little creatures, that went about helping fish and shells which got into scrapes. Well, for his part, he should be ashamed to be helped by little soft creatures that had not even a shell on their backs. He had lived quite long enough in the world to take care of himself.

He was a conceited fellow, the old lobster, and not very civil to Tom; and you will hear how he had to alter his mind before he was done, as conceited people generally have. But he was so funny, and Tom so lonely, that he could not quarrel with him; and they used to sit in holes in the rocks, and chat for hours.

And about this time there happened to Tom a very strange and important adventure—so important, indeed, that he was very near never finding the water babies at ah; and I am sure you would have been sorry for that.

I hope that you have not forgotten the little white lady all this while. At least, here she comes, looking like a clean white good little darling, as she always was, and always will be. For it befell in the pleasant short December days, when the wind always blows from the southwest, till Old Father Christmas comes and spreads the great white table-cloth, ready for little boys and girls to give the birds their Christmas dinner of crumbs—it befell in the pleasant December days, that Sir John was so busy hunting that nobody at home could get a word out of him. Four days a week he hunted, and very good sport he had; and the other two he went to the bench and the board of guardians, and very good justice he did; and, when he got home in time, he dined at five. Sir John, hunting all day, and dining at five, fell asleep every evening, and snored so terribly that all the windows in Harthover shook, and the soot fell down the chimneys. Whereon my lady, being no more able to get conversation out of him than a song out of a dead nightingale, determined to go off and leave him and the doctor, and Captain Swinger the agent, to snore in concert every evening to their hearts' content. So she started for the seaside with all the children, in order to put herself and them into condition by mild applications of iodine.

But where she went to nobody must know, for fear young ladies should begin to fancy that there are water babies there!

Now it befell that, on the very shore, and over the very rocks, where Tom was sitting with his friend the lobster, there walked one day the little white lady, Ellie herself, and with her a very wise professor.

He was, as I said, a very great naturalist; but he was a very worthy, kind, good-natured little old gentleman; and very fond of children; and very good to all the world as long as it was good to him. Only

one fault he had, which cock-robins have likewise, as you may see if you look out of the nursery window—that, when any one else found a curious worm, he would hop round them, and peck them, and set up his tail, and bristle up his feathers, just as a cock-robin would; and declare that he found the worm first; and that it was his worm; and, if not, that then it was not a worm at all.

He had met Sir John at Scarborough, or Fleetwood, or somewhere or other (if you don't care where, nobody else does), and had made acquaintance with him, and become very fond of his children. Now, Sir John knew nothing about seacockyolybirds, and cared less, provided the fishmonger sent him good fish for dinner; and my lady knew as little: but she thought it proper that the children should know something.

So Ellie and he were walking on the rocks, and he was showing her about one in ten thousand of all the beautiful and curious things which are to be seen there. But little Ellie was not satisfied with them at all. She liked much better to play with live children, or even with dolls, which she could pretend were alive; and at last she said honestly, "I don't care about all these things, because they can't play with me, nor talk to me. If there were little children now in the water, as there used to be, and I could see them, I should like that."

"Children in the water, you strange little duck?" said the professor.

"Yes," said Ellie. "I know there used to be children in the water, and mermaids too, and mermen. I saw them all in a picture at home, of a beautiful lady sailing in a car drawn by dolphins, and babies flying round her, and one sitting in her lap; and the mermaids swimming and playing, and the mermen trumpeting on conch-shells; and it is called 'The Triumph of Galatea:' and there is a burning mountain in the picture

behind. It hangs on the great staircase, and I have looked at it ever since I was a baby, and dreamed about it a hundred times; and it is so beautiful that it must be true."

But the professor had not the least notion of allowing that things were true, merely because people thought them beautiful. The professor, indeed, went further, and held that no man was forced to believe anything to be true, but what he could see, hear, taste, or handle. From all which you may guess that the professor was not the least of little Ellie's opinion.

Now little Ellie was, I suppose, a stupid little girl; for, instead of being convinced by Professor Ptthmllnsprts' arguments, she only asked the same question over again.

"But why are there not water babies?"

I trust and hope that it was because the professor trod at that moment on the edge of a very sharp mussel, and hurt one of his corns sadly, that he answered quite sharply:

"Because there ain't."

And he groped with his net under the weeds so violently, that, as it befell, he caught poor little Tom.

He felt the net very heavy; and lifted it out quickly, with Tom all entangled in the meshes.

"Dear me!" he cried. "What a large pink Holothurian; with hands, too! It must be connected with Synapta."

And he took him out.

"It has actually eyes!" he cried. "Why, it must be a Cephalopod! This is most extraordinary!"

"No, I ain't!" cried Tom, as loud as he could; for he did not like to be called bad names.

"It is a water baby!" cried Ellie; and of course it was.

"Water-fiddlesticks, my dear!" said the professor; and he turned away sharply.

There was no denying it. It was a water baby; and he had said a moment ago that there were none. What was he to do?

He would have liked, of course, to have taken Tom home in a bucket. He would not have put him in spirits. Of course not. He would have kept him alive, and petted him (for he was a very kind old gentleman), and written a book about him, and given him two long names, of which the first would have said a little about Tom, and the second all about himself; for they are forced to call everything by long names now, because they have used up all the short ones, ever since they took to making nine species out of one. But—what would all the learned men say to him after his speech at the British Association? And what would Ellie say, after what he had just told her?

Now, if the professor had said to Ellie, "Yes, my darling, it is a water baby, and a very wonderful thing it is; and it shows how little I know of the wonders of nature, in spite of forty years' honest labor. I was just telling you that there could be no such creatures; and, behold! here is one come to confound my conceit and show me that Nature can do, and has done, beyond all that man's poor fancy can imagine. So, let us thank the Maker, and Inspirer, and Lord of Nature for all His wonderful and glorious works, and try and find out something about this one;"—I think that, if the professor had said that, little Ellie would have believed him more firmly, and respected him more deeply, and loved him better, than ever she had done before. But he was of a different opinion. He hesitated a moment. He longed to keep Tom, and yet he half wished he never had caught him; and at last he quite longed to get rid of him. So he turned away and poked Tom

with his finger, for want of anything better to do; and said carelessly, "My dear little maid, you must have dreamed of water babies last night, your head is so full of them."

Now Tom had been in the most horrible and unspeakable fright all the while; and had kept as quiet as he could, though he was called a Holothurian and a Cephalopod; for it was fixed in his little head that if a man with clothes on caught him, he might put clothes on him too, and make a dirty black chimney-sweep of him again. But, when the professor poked him, it was more than he could bear; and, between fright and rage, he turned to bay as valiantly as a mouse in a corner, and bit the professor's finger till it bled.

"Oh, ah, yah!" cried he; and glad of an excuse to be rid of Tom, dropped him on to the seaweed, and thence he dived into the water and was gone in a moment.

"But it was a water-baby, and I heard it speak!" cried Ellie. "Ah, it is gone!" And she jumped down off the rock to try and catch Tom before he slipped into the sea.

Too late! and what was worse, as she sprang down, she slipped, and fell some six feet with her head on a sharp rock, and lay quite still.

The professor picked her up, and tried to waken her, and called to her, and cried over her, for he loved her very much: but she would not waken at all. So he took her up in his arms and carried her to her governess, and they all went home; and little Ellie was put to bed, and lay there quite still; only now and then she woke up and called out about the water baby; but no one knew what she meant, and the professor did not tell, for he was ashamed to tell.

And, after a week, one moonlight night, the fairies came flying in at the window and brought her such a

pretty pair of wings that she could not help putting them on; and she flew with them out of the window, and over the land, and over the sea, and up through the clouds, and nobody heard or saw anything of her for a very long while.

CHAPTER V

BUT what became of little Tom?

He slipped away off the rocks into the water, as I said before.

But he could not help thinking of little Ellie. He did not remember who she was; but he knew that she was a little girl, though she was a hundred times as big as he. That is not surprising: size has nothing to do with kindred. A tiny weed may be first cousin to a great tree; and a little dog like Vick knows that Lioness is a dog too, though she is twenty times larger than herself. So Tom knew that Ellie was a little girl, and thought about her all that day, and longed to have had her to play with; but he had very soon to think of something else.

He was going along the rocks in three-fathom water, watching the pollock catch prawns, and the wrasses nibble barnacles off the rocks, shells and all, when he saw a round cage of green withes; and inside it, looking very much ashamed of himself, sat his friend the lobster, twiddling his horns, instead of thumbs.

"What, have you been naughty, and have they put you in the lock-up?" asked Tom.

The lobster felt a little indignant at such a notion, but he was too much depressed in spirits to argue; so he only said, "I can't get out."

"Why did you get in?"

"After that nasty piece of dead fish." He had thought it looked and smelled very nice when he was outside, and so it did, for a lobster; but now he turned

round and abused it because he was angry with himself.

"Where did you get in?"

"Through that round hole at the top."

"Then why don't you get out through it?"

"Because I can't;" and the lobster twiddled his horns more fiercely than ever, but he was forced to confess.

"I have jumped upward, downward, backward, and sideways, at least four thousand times; and I can't get out: I always get up underneath there, and can't find the hole."

Tom looked at the trap, and having more wit than the lobster, he saw plainly enough what was the matter; as you may if you will look at a lobster-pot.

"Stop a bit," said Tom. "Turn your tail up to me, and I'll pull you through hindforemost, and then you won't stick in the spikes."

But the lobster was so stupid and clumsy that he couldn't hit the hole. Like a great many fox-hunters, he was very sharp as long as he was in his own country; but as soon as they get out of it they lose their heads; and so the lobster, so to speak, lost his tail.

Tom reached and clawed down the hole after him, till he caught hold of him; and then, as was to be expected, the clumsy lobster pulled him in head foremost.

"Hullo! here is a pretty business," said Tom. "Now take your great claws, and break the points off those spikes, and then we shall both get out easily."

"Dear me, I never thought of that," said the lobster; "and after all the experience of life that I have had!"

You see, experience is of very little good unless a man, or a lobster, has wit enough to make use of it. For a good many people, like old Polonius, have seen all the world, and yet remain little better than children after all.

But they had not got half the spikes away when

they saw a great dark cloud over them: and lo, and behold, it was the otter.

How she did grin and grin when she saw Tom. "Yar!" said she, "you little meddlesome wretch, I have you now! I will serve you out for telling the salmon where I was!" And she crawled all over the pot to get in.

Tom was horribly frightened, and still more frightened when she found the hole in the top, and squeezed herself right down through it, all eyes and teeth. But no sooner was her head inside than valiant Mr. Lobster caught her by the nose and held on.

And there they were all three in the pot, rolling over and over, and very tight packing it was. And the lobster tore at the otter, and the otter tore at the lobster, and both squeezed and thumped poor Tom till he had no breath left in his body; and I don't know what would have happened to him if he had not at last got on the otter's back, and safe out of the hole.

He was right glad when he got out: but he would not desert his friend who had saved him; and the first time he saw his tail uppermost he caught hold of it, and pulled with all his might.

But the lobster would not let go.

"Come along," said Tom; "don't you see she is dead?" And so she was, quite drowned and dead.

And that was the end of the wicked otter.

But the lobster would not let go.

"Come along, you stupid old stick-in-the-mud," cried Tom, "or the fisherman will catch you!" And that was true, for Tom felt some one above beginning to haul up the pot.

But the lobster would not let go.

Tom saw the fisherman haul him up to the boatside, and thought it was all up with him. But when Mr. Lobster saw the fisherman, he gave such a furious and

tremendous snap, that he snapped out of his hand, and out of the pot, and safe into the sea. But he left his knobbed claw behind him; for it never came into his stupid head to let go after all, so he just shook his claw off as the easier method.

Tom asked the lobster why he never thought of letting go. He said very determinedly that it was a point of honor among lobsters.

And now happened to Tom a most wonderful thing; for he had not left the lobster five minutes before he came upon a water baby.

A real live water baby, sitting on the white sand, very busy about a little point of rock. And when it saw Tom it looked up for a moment, and then cried, "Why, you are not one of us. You are a new baby! Oh, how delightful!"

And it ran to Tom, and Tom ran to it, and they hugged and kissed each other for ever so long, they did not know why. But they did not want any introductions there under the water.

At last Tom said, "Oh, where have you been all this while? I have been looking for you so long, and I have been so lonely."

"We have been here for days and days. There are hundreds of us about the rocks. How was it you did not see us, or hear us when we sing and romp every evening before we go home?"

Tom looked at the baby again, and then he said: "Well, this is wonderful! I have seen things just like you again and again, but I thought you were shells, or sea creatures. I never took you for water babies like myself."

Now, was not that very odd? So odd, indeed, that you will, no doubt, want to know how it happened, and why Tom could never find a water baby till after he had got the lobster out of the pot. And, if you will

read this story nine times over, and then think for yourself, you will find out why. It is not good for little boys to be told everything, and never to be forced to use their own wits.

'Now," said the baby, "come and help me, or I shall not have finished before my brothers and sisters come, and it is time to go home."

"What shall I help you at?"

"At this poor dear little rock; a great clumsy boulder came rolling by in the last storm, and knocked all its head off, and rubbed off all its flowers. And now I must plant it again with seaweeds, and coralline, and anemones, and I will make it the prettiest little rock-garden on all the shore."

So they worked away at the rock, and planted it, and smoothed the sand down round it, and capital fun they had till the tide began to turn. And then Tom heard all the other babies coming, laughing and singing and shouting and romping; and the noise they made was just like the noise of the ripple. So he knew that he had been hearing and seeing water babies all along; only he did not know them, because his eyes and ears were not opened.

And in they came, dozens and dozens of them, some bigger than Tom and some smaller, all in the neatest little white bathing dresses; and when they found that he was a new baby, they hugged him and kissed him, and then put him in the middle and danced round him on the sand, and there was no one ever so happy as poor little Tom.

"Now then," they cried all at once, "we must come away home, we must come away home, or the tide will leave us dry. We have mended all the broken seaweed, and put all the rock-pools in order, and planted all the shells again in the sand, and nobody will see where the ugly storm swept in last week."

And this is the reason why the rock-pools are always so neat and clean; because the water babies come in-shore after every storm to sweep them out, and comb them down, and put them all to rights again.

And where is the home of the water babies? In St. Brandan's fairy isle.

Did you never hear of the blessed St. Brandan, how he preached to the wild Irish on the wild, wild Kerry coast, he and five other hermits, till they were weary and longed to rest? And far away, before the setting sun, he saw a blue fairy sea, and golden fairy islands, and he said, "Those are the islands of the blest." Then he and his friends sailed away and away to the westward, and were never heard of more.

And when St. Brandan and the hermits came to that fairy isle they found it overgrown with cedars and full of beautiful birds; and he sat down under the cedars and preached to all the birds in the air. And they liked his sermons so well that they told the fishes in the sea; and they came, and St. Brandan preached to them; and the fishes told the water babies, who live in the caves under the isle. And there he taught the water babies for a great many hundred years, till his eyes grew too dim to see. And at last he and the five hermits fell fast asleep under the cedar shades, and there they sleep unto this day. But the fairies took to the water babies, and taught them their lessons themselves.

And some say that St. Brandan will awake and begin to teach the babies once more; but some think that he will sleep on forever. On still clear summer evenings, when the sun sinks down into the sea, among golden cloud capes and cloud islands, and locks and friths of azure sky, the sailors fancy that they see, away to westward, St. Brandan's fairy isle.

When Tom got there he found that the isle stood all

on pillars, and that its roots were full of caves. There were pillars of black basalt, and pillars of green and crimson serpentine, and pillars ribboned with red and white and yellow sandstone; and there were blue grottoes like Capri, and white grottoes like Adelsberg; all curtained and draped with seaweeds, purple and crimson, green and brown; and strewn with soft white sand, on which the water babies sleep every night. The rocks were covered with ten thousand sea-anemones, and corals and madrepores, and the fairies dressed them all in the most beautiful colors and patterns, till they look like vast flower-beds of gay blossoms.

And there were the water babies in thousands; all the little children whom the good fairies take to, because their cruel mothers and fathers will not; all who are untaught and brought up heathens, and all who come to grief by ill-usage or ignorance or neglect; all the little children who are overlaid, or given gin when they are young, or are let to drink out of hot kettles, or to fall into the fire; all the little children in alleys and courts, and tumble-down cottages, who die by fever, and cholera, and measles, and scarlatina, and all the little children who have been killed by cruel masters and wicked soldiers; they were all there, except, of course, the babes of Bethlehem who were killed by wicked King Herod; for they were taken straight to heaven long ago, as everybody knows, and we call them the Holy Innocents.

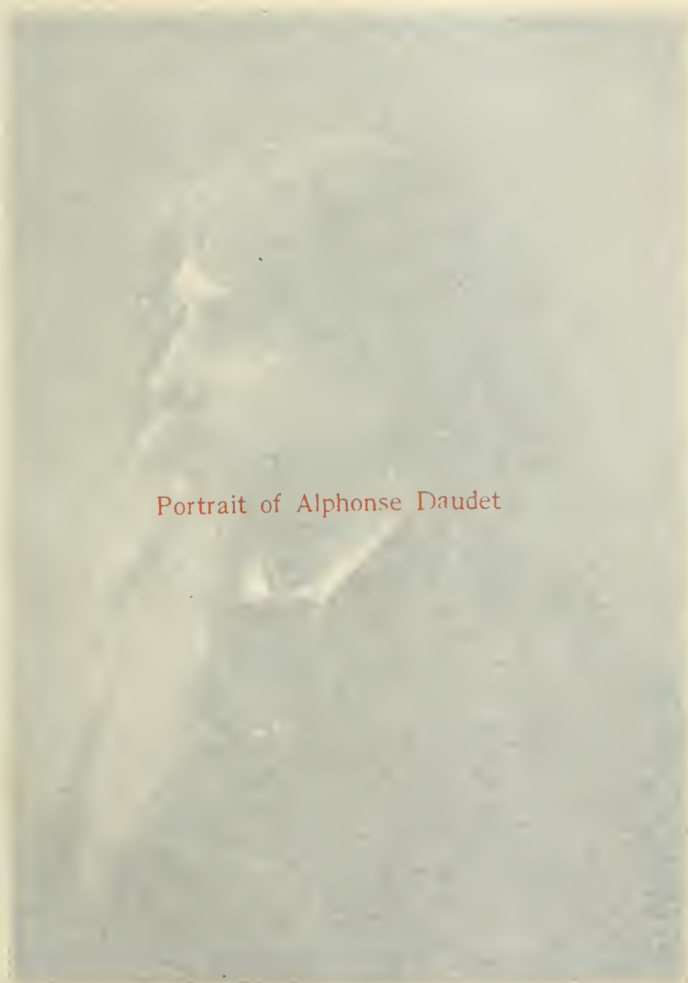
The first thing which Tom saw was the black cedars, high and sharp against the rosy dawn; and St. Brandan's Isle reflected double in the still broad silver sea. The wind sang softly in the cedars, and the water sang among the caves: the sea-birds sang as they streamed out into the ocean, and the land-birds as they built among the boughs; and the air was so full of song that it stirred St. Brandan and his hermits, as they

slumbered in the shade; and they moved their good old lips, and sang their morning hymn amid their dreams. But among all the songs one came across the water more sweet and clear than all; for it was the song of a young girl's voice.

And what was the song which she sang? Ah, my little man, I am too old to sing that song, and you too young to understand it. But have patience, and keep your eye single, and your hands clean, and you will learn some day to sing it yourself, without needing any man to teach you.

And as Tom neared the island, there sat upon a rock the most graceful creature that ever was seen, looking down, with her chin upon her hand, and paddling with her feet in the water. And when they came to her she looked up, and behold it was Ellie!

LA BELLE NIVERNAISE



Portrait of Alphonse Daudet

LA BELLE NIVERNAISE

From the French of Alphonse Daudet

CHAPTER I

A RASH ACT

THE street Des Enfants-Rouges is in the Temple quarter—a very narrow street, with stagnant gutters and puddles of black mud, with foul water and mouldy smells pouring from its gaping passages. The houses on each side are very lofty, and have barrack-like windows, that show no curtains behind their dirty panes. These are common lodging houses, and dwellings of artisans, of day-laborers, and of men who work at their trade in their own rooms. There are shops on the ground floor, many pork-dealers, wine retailers, vendors of chestnuts, bakers of coarse bread, butchers displaying viands of repulsive tints. In this street you see no carriages, no flounced gowns, no elegant loungers on the pavement; but there are costermongers crying the refuse of the market-places, and a throng of workmen crowding out of the factories with their blouses rolled up under their arms.

This is the eighth of the month, the day when poor people pay their rents, the day when landlords who are tired of waiting any longer turn Want out of doors. On this day you see removal carts going past with

piles of iron bedsteads, torn mattresses, kitchen utensils, and lame tables rearing up their legs in the air; and with not even a handful of straw to pack the wretched things, damaged and worn out as they are by being knocked about on dirty staircases, and tumbled down from attic to basement.

It is now getting dark, and one after another the gas-lamps are lighted, and send their reflections from the gutters and the shop windows. The passers-by, however, hasten onwards; for the fog is chilly.

But there, in a warm comfortable wine-shop, is the honest old bargeman Louveau, leaning against the counter, and taking a friendly glass with the joiner from La Villette. The bargeman's big, weather-beaten face dilates into a hearty laugh that makes the copper rings in his ears shake again, as he exclaims:

"So it's settled, friend Dubac, that you take my load of timber at the price I have named?"

"Agreed."

"Your good health."

"Here's to yours."

They clink their glasses together, and Louveau drinks with his head thrown back and his eyes half closed, smacking his lips in order to taste better the flavor of his white wine.

It can't be helped, look you, but every one has his failing, and white wine is the special weakness of our friend Louveau. Not that he is a drunkard. Far from it. Indeed, his wife, who is a woman of sense, would not allow fuddling; but when one has to live like our bargeman, with his feet in the water, and his pate in the sun, it is quite necessary to quaff off a glass now and then.

Louveau is getting more and more elated, and he smiles at the shining zinc counter—which he now sees rather indistinctly—for it brings to his mind the heap

of new, bright coins he will pocket to-morrow when he delivers his timber.

After a parting glass, and a shake of the hands, our friends separate.

"To-morrow without fail?"

"You may depend on me."

Louveau, at least, will not fail to keep the appointment. The bargain is too good, and has been too hard driven for him to be behind.

So in high glee, our bargeman turns down towards the Seine, rolling his shoulders and elbowing his way along, with the exuberant delight of a school-boy who has a franc piece in his pocket.

What will mother Louveau say—the wife with a head-piece—when she learns that her husband has sold his timber right off, and that at a good profit? Two or three more bargains like this, and then they can afford to buy a new boat and drop the Belle Nivernaise, for she is beginning to get much too leaky.

Not that she is to blame for that, for she was a fine boat when she was new; only, you see, everything gets old and goes to decay, and Louveau himself feels that even he is not now as active as when he used to assist in steering the timber rafts on the Marne.

But what is going on down there? The gossips are collected before a door, and people are stopping, and engaging in conversation, while the policeman standing in the middle of the gathering is writing something in his note book. Like everybody else, our bargeman crosses the road to satisfy his curiosity, and see whether a dog has been run over, or a vehicle has stuck fast, or a tipsy man has fallen into the gutter, or what other equally uninteresting event has occurred. Something different this time! A small child with disordered hair, and cheeks all over jam, is sitting on a wooden chair, rubbing his eyes with his hands, and crying. The

tears that have streamed down his rather dirty face have left upon it fantastically shaped marks. The officer is questioning the little fellow, with a calm and dignified air, as if he were examining a prisoner, and he is taking notes of the answers.

"What is your name?"

"Totor."

"Victor What?"

No answer; only the poor little brat cried more, and sobbed, "Mamma! Mamma!"

At this moment a very plain and untidy woman of the laboring class was passing by, dragging her two children after her. She advanced through the group, and asked the police officer to allow her to try what she could do. She knelt down, wiped the little fellow's nose, dried his eyes, and kissed his sticky cheeks.

"What is your mammy's name, my dear?"

He did not know. Then the policeman addressed himself to one of the neighbors:

"Now you should know something about these people, as you are the door-keeper."

No, he had never heard their name, and then there were so many tenants going backwards and forwards in the house. All that could be ascertained was that they had lived there for a month, that they had never paid a farthing of rent, that the landlord had just turned them out, and that it was a good riddance.

"What did they do?"

"Nothing at all."

The father and mother used to spend the day in drinking and the evening in fighting. They never agreed together in anything, except in thrashing their other children, two lads that used to beg in the streets, and steal things there exposed for sale. A nice family, as you may believe.

"Do you think they will come to look for their child?"

"I am sure they will not."

The removal had, in fact, afforded them an opportunity of abandoning the child. That was not the first time such a thing had happened on the term days.

"Did anybody see the parents leaving?" asked the policeman.

Yes, they went away in the morning, the husband pushing the hand-cart, while his wife carried a package in her apron, and the two lads had nothing, but their hands, in their pockets.

The passers-by, after indignantly exclaiming that these people should be caught, continued on their way.

The poor little brat had been there since noon, when his mother had set him in the chair and told him to "be good," and all that time he had been waiting. But when he began to cry for hunger, the fruit woman over the way had given him a slice of bread with jam on it. This had long ago been devoured, and the poor little wretch was beginning to cry again.

The poor innocent too was nearly dying with fear. He was afraid of the dogs prowling round him—of the night that was coming on—afraid of the strangers talking to him—and his little heart was beating violently in his bosom, like that of an expiring bird.

As the crowd round him continued to increase, the police officer, tired of the scene, took the child by the hand to lead him to the station.

"Come now; does anybody claim him?"

"Stop a minute!"

Every one turned round, and saw a great ruddy face wearing a silly smile that extended from one copper-ringed ear to the other.

"Stop a minute! If nobody wants him, I will take him myself."

Loud exclamations burst from the crowd: "Well done,"—"That's right,"—"You are a good fellow."

Old Louveau, excited by the white wine, the success of his bargain, and the general approbation, stood with folded arms in the middle of the admiring circle.

"Oh, it's a simple matter."

Those who were curious went on with him to the police magistrate's, without letting his enthusiasm cool, When he got there he was asked the questions usual in such cases.

"Your name?'

"Francis Louveau, your Honor, a married man, and if I may say so, well married, to a wife with a headpiece. And that is lucky for me, your Honor, for you see I am not very clever myself, ha! ha! not very clever. I'm not an eagle. 'Francis is not an eagle,' my wife says."

He had never before been so eloquent, but now he felt his tongue loosened, and all the assurance of a man who had just concluded a good bargain—and who had drunk a bottle of white wine.

"Your occupation?"

"Bargeman, your Honor, master of the Belle Nivernaise, rather a rough boat, but manned by a smartish crew. Ah! now mine is a famous crew. . . . Ask the lockkeepers all the way from the Pont Marie to Clamecy . . . has your Honor ever been there, at Clamecy?"

The people about him were smiling, but Louveau went on, spluttering and clipping short his syllables.

"Well now, Clamecy is a nice place, if you like! It's wooded from top to bottom, and with good workable wood; all the joiners know that. . . . It is there I buy my timber. He! he! I am famous for my tim-

ber. I see a thing at a glance, look you! Not because I am clever, as my wife says, I am by no means an eagle; but in fact I do see a thing at a glance. . . . For instance, now, I take a tree as thick as you—asking your Honor's pardon—and I lap a string round it, this way. . . ."

He had drawn a cord from his pocket, and seizing hold of the officer standing by, had encircled him with it.

The officer struggled to disentangle himself

"Please leave me alone."

"Yes . . . yes . . . I want to show his Honor how I pass the string round it, and then when I have the girth, I multiply it by . . . I multiply it by . . . I forget now what I multiply by. . . . My wife does the calculation. She has a good head-piece, has my wife."

The audience was highly amused, and the magistrate himself could not refrain from smiling behind his table. When the laughter had subsided a little, he asked:

"What will you make of this child?"

"Certainly not a gentleman. We have never had a gentleman in our family. But he shall be a bargeman, a smart barge lad, like the rest."

"Have you any children?"

"I should think I have! I have one able to walk, another at the breast, and there is a third one coming. That's not so bad, is it? for a man who is not an eagle? With this one there will be four; but, pooh! where there is enough for three, there is enough for four. Packed a little closer, that's all. One must put one's belt a little tighter and try to get more for one's wood."

And his laughter again shook the earrings as he turned a complacent look on those present.

A big book was put before him, but as he could not write he had to sign with a cross.

The magistrate thereupon gave the lost child up to him.

"Take the little fellow away, Francis Louveau, and mind you bring him up well. If any inquiries are made about him, I will let you know. But it is not likely that his parents will ever claim him. As for you, you seem to me an honest man, and I have confidence in you. Always be guided by your wife, and now good bye, and don't you take too much white wine."

A dark night, a cold fog, a lot of unconcerned people hurrying away home—that all tends to quickly bring a man to his senses.

Hardly had our bargeman got into the street by himself, leading by the hand the child he had taken under his care, and carrying his stamped document in his pocket, than he felt his enthusiasm suddenly cool down, and he became aware of the serious import of his act.

Is he then always to be like this? Always to be a simpleton and a braggart? Why could not he go on his way like other people without meddling in what did not concern him?

Now for the first time, he pictured to himself the wrath of mother Louveau. Just fancy the kind of reception he will meet with!

What a dreadful thing it is for a simple kind-hearted man to have a shrewd wife! He would never have the courage to go home, and yet he dared not go back to the police magistrate's. Whatever should he do?

They went on through the fog, Louveau gesticulating and talking to himself. He was getting a speech ready.

Victor was dragging his shoes in the mud and letting himself be pulled along like a dead weight. At length he could go no further, and then Louveau stopped, lifted him up and carried him, wrapping his

overall round him. The twining of the little arms round his neck caused our bargeman to resume his journey with a rather better heart.

Faith, bad as it was, he would run the risk. If mother Louveau turned them out, there would still be time to carry the little brat back to the police-office; but if she would keep him only for one night, he would be the gainer by a good meal.

They came to the Bridge of Austerlitz where the Belle Nivernaise was moored, and the faint, pleasant odor from the loads of newly-cut wood filled the night air. A whole fleet of boats was rocking in the dark shade of the river's bank, and the movement of the water made the lamps swing and the chains grate together.

To get to his boat, Louveau had to pass over two lighters connected by planks. He went on with timid steps and trembling limbs, hampered by the hug of the child's arms about his neck.

The night was extremely dark, and the only signs of life about the Belle Nivernaise were the little lamp shining in the cabin window and the ray of light that found its way beneath the door.

Mother Louveau's voice was heard chiding the children, while she was cooking the evening meal.

"Be quiet, Clara!"

It was now too late for retreat, and the bargeman pushed the door open. Mother Louveau had her back towards it, and was leaning over her frying-pan, but she knew his footstep, and without turning round, said:

"Is it you, Francis? How late you are in getting back?"

The frying potatoes were dancing about in the crackling oil; and as the steam from the pan passed

towards the open door, it dimmed the panes of the cabin windows.

Francis had put the poor brat on the floor, and the little fellow, impressed by the warmth of the place, and feeling his reddened fingers restored to animation, smiled and said in a rather soft and sweet voice:

"Warm here. . ."

Mother Louveau turned round, and pointing to the ragged child standing in the middle of the room, asked her husband in angry tones:

"What is that?"

But even in the best of households, there are such moments.

"A surprise for you, he! he! a surprise."

The bargeman grinned from ear to ear, in order to keep himself in countenance; but he very much wished that he was still in the street. However, as his wife was waiting for an explanation, and glaring at him with a dreadful look, he faltered out his story in a jumbled way, with the supplicating eyes of a dog threatened with the whip.

His parents had abandoned him, and he had found him crying on the pavement. Some one had asked if anybody would take him. He said he would. And the police magistrate had told him he might take him away.

"Didn't he, my child?"

Then the storm burst upon him:

"You are mad, or drunk! Did ever any one hear tell of such a piece of folly! I suppose you want us to die of starvation? Do you think we are too well off? That we have too much to eat? Too much room to lie in?"

Francis contemplated his shoes without answering a word.

"Think of yourself, you wretch, and think of us!

Your boat is holed like my skimmer, and yet you must go and amuse yourself by picking up other people's children out of the gutter!"

But the poor fellow knew all that too well already, and did not attempt to deny it. He bowed his head like a criminal listening to the statement of his guilt.

"You will do me the favor of taking that child back to the police magistrate, and if any objections are made about receiving him back again, you must say that your wife won't have him. Do you understand?"

She advanced towards him pan in hand, with a threatening gesture, and the bargeman promised to do all she wished.

"Come, now, don't get vexed. I thought I was doing right. I have made a mistake. That's enough. Must he be taken back at once?"

Her good man's submission softened mother Louveau's heart. Perhaps also there arose in her mind the vision of a child of her own, lost and alone at night, stretching out its hands towards the passers-by.

She turned to put her pan on the fire, and said in a testy tone:

"It cannot be done to-night, for the office is closed. And now that you have brought him, you cannot set him down again on the pavement. He shall remain to-night; but to-morrow morning. . ."

Mother Louveau was so enraged that she poked the fire first with one hand and then with the other.

"But I vow that to-morrow you shall rid me of him!"

There was silence.

The housewife laid the table savagely, knocking the glasses together, and dashing the forks down. Clara was frightened, and kept very quiet in one corner.

The baby was whining on the bed, and the lost

child was looking with wonder at the cinders in the stove getting red hot. Perhaps he had never seen a fire in all his life before.

There was, however, another pleasure in store for him, when he was put to the table with a napkin round his neck, and a heap of potatoes on his plate. He ate like a robin-redbreast picking crumbs off the snow.

Mother Louveau helped him furiously, but at heart she was a little bit touched by the appetite of the starved child. Little Clara was delighted, and stroked him with her spoon. Louveau was dismayed and dared not lift an eye.

When she had removed the table things and put her children to bed, mother Louveau seated herself near the fire, and took the child between her knees to give him a little wash.

"We can't put him to bed in that dirty state."

I lay he had never before seen either sponge or comb. Under her hands the poor child twirled round like a top.

But when once he had been washed and tidied up, the little lad did not look bad, with his pink, poodle-like nose, and hands as plump as rosy apples.

Mother Louveau looked upon her work with a certain degree of satisfaction.

"I wonder how old he is?"

Francis laid down his pipe, delighted once more to be an actor in the scene. This was the first time he had been spoken to all the evening, and a question addressed to him was almost like a recall to grace. He rose up and drew his cords from his pocket.

"How old? He! he! I'll tell you in a minute."

He took the little fellow in his arms and wound lines round him as he did to the tree at Clamecy.

Mother Louveau looked on with amazement.

"Whatever are you doing?"

"I am taking his dimensions."

She snatched the cord from his hands, and flung it to the other end of the apartment.

"My good man, how silly you make yourself with these mad tricks. The child is not a young tree."

No chance for you, this evening, poor Francis! Quite abashed he beats a retreat, whilst mother Louveau puts the little one to bed in Clara's cot.

The little girl is sleeping with closed hands and taking up all the room. She is vaguely conscious that something is put beside her, stretches out her arms, pushes her neighbor into a corner, digs her elbows into his eyes, turns over and goes to sleep again.

In the meantime the lamp has been blown out, and the Seine rippling round the boat gently rocks the wooden habitation.

The poor lost child feels a gentle warmth steal over him, and he falls asleep with the new sensation of something like a caressing hand upon his head, just as his eyes are closing.

CHAPTER II

THE BELLE NIVERNAISE

MADEMOISELLE CLARA used always to awake early, and this morning she was surprised at not seeing her mother in the cabin, and at finding another head on the pillow beside her. She rubbed her eyes with her little fingers, then took hold of her bedfellow by the hair and shook him.

Poor "Totor" was roused by the strangest sensations, for roguish fingers were teasing him by tickling his neck and seizing hold of his nose.

He cast his wondering eyes round about him, and was quite surprised that his dream still continued. Above them there was a creaking of footsteps, and a rumbling sound caused by the unloading of the planks upon the quay.

Mademoiselle Clara seemed greatly perplexed. She pointed her little finger to the ceiling with a gesture that seemed to ask her friend:

"What is that?"

It was the delivery of the wood beginning. Dubac, the joiner from La Villette, had come at six o'clock with his horse and cart, and Louveau had very quickly set to work, with a hitherto unknown ardor.

The good fellow had not closed an eye all night for thinking that he would have to take that child, who had been so cold and hungry, back to the police magistrate.

He expected to have a scene in the morning again; but mother Louveau had some other notions in her

head, for she did not mention Victor to him, and Francis thought that much might be gained by postponing the time for explanations.

He was striving to efface himself, and to escape from his wife's view, and he was working with all his might, lest mother Louveau should see him idle, and should call out to him:

"Come now, as you have nothing to do, take the little boy back where you found him."

And he did work! The pile of planks was visibly diminishing. Dubac had already made three journeys, and mother Louveau, standing on the gangway with her nursling on her arm, had her time fully taken up in counting the lots as they passed.

Working with a will, Francis selected for his burdens rafters as long as masts and as thick as walls. If the beam were too heavy, he called the Crew to help him to load.

The Crew was a boatman with a wooden leg, and he alone formed the personal equipment of the Belle Nivernaise. He had been picked up from charity, and retained from habit.

This maimed one would prop himself up on his peg, or raise up the log with great effort, and Louveau, bending beneath the load, with his belt tight round his waist, would pass slowly over the movable bridge.

How could a man so busily occupied be interrupted in his work? Mother Louveau could not think of it. She went up and down on the gangway, intent only on Mimile, who was at her breast.

He was always thirsty, that Mimile. Like his father. But Louveau, thirsty? . . . he certainly was not so to-day. He had been working since morning, and the question of white wine had never been raised. He had not even taken breathing time, or wiped his brow, or drunk a drop at the edge of a counter. Even when,

after a little, Dubac proposed to go and have a glass, Francis heroically replied:

"We shall have time later on."

Refuse a glass! the housewife could not understand it at all; this could not be her Louveau, but must be some substitute.

Her Clara now seems a changeling, also, for eleven o'clock has struck, and the little girl, who would never remain in bed, has not stirred the whole morning.

Mother Louveau hastens into the cabin to see what is going on. Francis remains on deck, swinging his arms, and gasping for breath, as if he had just received in his stomach a blow from a joist.

Now for it! His wife has bethought herself of Victor; she is going to bring him on deck, and he must start for the police office. . . . But no; mother Louveau reappears all alone. She is laughing and she beckons to him:

"Just come and look here, it is so funny!"

The good man cannot understand this sudden hilarity, and he follows her like an automaton, the fulness of his emotion almost depriving him of the use of his legs.

The two monkeys were sitting on the edge of the bed, in their shirts, and with bare feet. They had possessed themselves of the bowl of soup that the mother left within reach of their little arms when she got up. As there was only one spoon for the two mouths, they were cramming each other in turns, like fledglings in a nest; and Clara, who used always to be averse to taking her soup, was laughing and stretching out her mouth for the spoon. Although some crumbs of bread might have got into eyes or ears, the two babies had broken nothing, had upset nothing, and they were amusing themselves so heartily that it was impossible to find fault with them.

Mother Louveau continued to laugh.

"As they are agreeing so well as that, we need not trouble ourselves about them."

Francis immediately returned to his work, quite delighted with the turn things were taking.

Usually, at the unloading time, he would take a rest during the day; that is to say, he would go the round of all the bargemen's taverns, from the Point-du-Jour to the Quai de Bercy. So that the unloading used to drag on for a whole week, during which mother Louveau's wrath would continue unappeased.

But this time there was no idleness, no white wine, but a passionate desire to do well by ardent and sustained labor.

On his part the little fellow, as if he understood that his cause must be won, was doing all that he possibly could to amuse Clara.

For the first time in her life this little girl passed a whole day without tears, without dashing herself about, without making holes in her stockings. Her companion amused her, soothed her. He was always willing to make a sacrifice of his hair to stop Clara's tears on the edges of her eyelids.

And she tugged at her big friend's rough poll by handfuls, teasing him like a pug dog nipping a poodle.

Mother Louveau observed all this from a distance, and inwardly remarked that this child was just as useful as a little nurse. So they might keep Victor until the unloading was finished. There would be time to take him back afterwards, just before their departure.

For this reason, she did not that evening make any allusion to sending him back, but gorged him with potatoes, and put him to bed as on the night before.

One would have thought that Louveau's little friend was a member of the family, and to see the way Clara put her arm round his neck as she went to sleep, would

lead one to suppose that she had taken him under her special protection.

The unloading of the Belle Nivernaise lasted three days. Three days of impetuous labor, without any relaxation, without any break. About midday the last cart was laden and the boat was empty.

They could not take the tug until the morrow, and Francis passed the whole day between decks, repairing the planks, but still haunted by those words that for three days had been ringing in his ears:

"Take him back to the police magistrate!"

Ah, that magistrate! He was not more dreaded in the house of wicked Mr. Punch than he was in the cabin of the Belle Nivernaise. He had become a kind of bogie that mother Louveau availed herself of to keep Clara quiet.

Every time she pronounced that name of fear, the little fellow fixed upon her the restless eyes of a child who has too early had experience of suffering.

He vaguely understood all that this word meant of dangers to come. The magistrate! That meant no more Clara, no more caresses, no more warmth, no more potatoes; but a return to a cheerless life, to days without bread, to slumbers without bed, to awakening in the morning without kisses.

How he therefore clung to Mother Louveau's skirts on the eve of the boat's departure!—when Francis, in a trembling voice, asked:

"Come, now, shall we take him back—yes or no?"

Mother Louveau did not answer. You would even fancy she was thinking of some pretext for keeping Victor.

As for Clara, she rolled on the floor, choking with sobs, and determined to have convulsions if she were separated from her friend.

Then the wife with a head-piece spoke seriously:

"My good man, you have done a foolish act, as usual. And now you have to pay for it. This child has become attached to us, Clara is fond of him, and every one would be grieved to see him leave. I am going to try and keep him, but I will have each one to bear a part. The first time that Clara works herself up into a fit of passion, or that you get drunk, I shall take him back to the police magistrate's."

Old Louveau became radiant.

It was done. He would drink no more.

He smiled right up to his earrings and sang away as he coiled his cable on the deck, whilst the tug towed along the Belle Nivernaise, together with quite a fleet of other boats.

CHAPTER III

UNDER WAY

VICTOR was under way. Under way for the suburban country, where the water mirrors little houses and green gardens—under way for the white land of the chalk hills—under way beside the flagged, resounding towing-paths—under way for the uplands, for the canal of the Yonne, slumbering within its locks—under way for the verdure of winter, and for the woods of Morvan.

Francis leant against the tiller of his boat, firm in his resolution not to drink, and turned a deaf ear to the invitations of the lock-keepers, and of the wine-dealers, who were astonished to see him passing free. He was obliged to cling to the tiller to keep the Belle Nivernaise from going alongside of the taverns. The old boat, from the time she had made the same voyage, seemed as if she knew the stations, and wanted to stop at them of her own accord, like an omnibus horse.

The Crew was perched on one leg in the prow, where, handling an immense boat-hook in a melancholy way, he pushed back the bushes, rounded the turns, and grappled the locks.

It was not much work he used to do, although the noise of his wooden leg on the deck might be heard day and night.

Resigned and silent, he was one of those for whom everything in life had gone wrong. A school-fellow had caused him the loss of an eye; an axe had lamed

him at the saw-mill; a vat had scalded him at the sugar refinery.

He would have been a beggar dying of hunger at the edge of a ditch, if Louveau—who always saw a thing at a glance—had not, as he was coming out of the hospital, engaged him to help in working the boat.

This was, at the time, the occasion of a great quarrel—exactly as for Victor. The wife with a head-piece was vexed, whereupon Louveau gave in.

In the end, the Crew remained, and at this time he formed part of the household of the Belle Nivernaise, on the same footing as the cat and the raven.

Old Louveau steered so exactly, and the Crew worked the boat so well, that after having ascended the river and the canals, the Belle Nivernaise, twelve days after her departure from Paris, got moored at the bridge of Corbigny, there to rest peacefully in her winter sleep.

From December to the end of February, the barge-men make no voyages, but repair their boats, and look through the forests to buy the spring cuttings as they stand.

As wood is cheap, they keep good fires in the cabins; and if the autumn sale has been successful, this idle time is made into a very enjoyable holiday.

The Belle Nivernaise was laid up for wintering; that is to say, the rudder was detached, the jury-mast was stowed away between decks, and the whole space was clear for playing and running about on the upper deck.

What a change in his life for the foundling! During all the voyage, he had continued in a state of astonishment and fear. He was like a cage-bird surprised by being set free, that in the suddenness of the change, forgets its song and its wings. Though too young to enjoy the charms of the landscape spread before his

eyes, he had nevertheless been impressed by the grandeur of the passage up the river between two ever-changing horizons.

Mother Louveau, seeing him shy and silent, kept on all day saying:

"He is deaf and dumb."

But the little Parisian from the Temple district was not dumb! When he got to understand that he was not dreaming, that he should no more go back to his garret, and that, in spite of mother Louveau's threats, there was really not much to fear from the police magistrate, his tongue was loosed. It was like the blossoming of a plant grown in a cellar and then put upon a window shelf. He ceased to cower timidly down in corners like a hunted ferret. His eyes, deeply set under his projecting brow, lost their uneasy restlessness, and although he remained rather pale and had a thoughtful look, he learned to laugh with Clara.

The little girl passionately loved her play-fellow, as people do love each other at that age—for the pleasure of falling out and making it up again. Although she was as self-willed as a little donkey, she had a very tender heart, and the mention of the magistrate was enough to make her do as she was bid.

They had hardly arrived at Corbigny, when another sister came into the world. Mimile was just eighteen months old, and that made cots enough in the cabin—and work enough likewise; for, with all the encumbrances they had, they could not afford a servant.

Mother Louveau grumbled so much that the Crew's wooden leg quaked with fear. But nobody in the place had any pity for her. Even the peasants did not hesitate to say what they thought about it to the priest, who used to hold up the bargeman as a pattern.

"Say what your Reverence likes, there's no common sense in a man who has three children of his own

picking up those of other people. But the Louveaus have always been like that. They are full of vanity and conceit, and no advice you can give them will alter them."

People did not wish them ill, but were not sorry they had got a lesson.

The vicar was a kind, well-meaning man, who easily adopted the opinions of others, and always wound up by recollecting some passage of Scripture, or sentence from the Fathers, with which to keep his own mind easy about his sudden turns and changes.

"My parishioners are right," said he to himself, as he passed his hand under his badly shaven chin, "we must not tempt divine Providence."

But as the Louveaus were, on the whole, good honest people, he made his pastoral call on them as usual.

He found mother Louveau cutting breeches for Victor out of an old jacket, for the little brat had brought no clothes with him, and she could not bear rags and tatters about her.

She placed a seat for his Reverence, and when he spoke to her about Victor, hinting that with the influence of the Bishop they might perhaps get him into the orphanage at Autun, mother Louveau, who would speak her mind to everybody, abruptly answered:

"The little fellow may be a burden to poor folks like us, certainly; I think that when he brought him home, Francis gave one more proof that he is not an eagle. I am not harder hearted than my husband; if I had met Victor, I should have been sorry for him, but yet I would have left him where he was. But now that we have taken him, it is not in order to get rid of him; and if we should some day find ourselves in a difficulty through him, we shall not go and ask charity from anybody."

At this moment Victor came into the cabin with Mimile in his arms.

The little monkey, angry at having been weaned, was seeking his revenge by refusing to be set down, and was showing his teeth and biting everybody.

Touched by this sight, the vicar put his hand on the foundling's head and gravely remarked:

"God's blessing is on large families."

And away he went, delighted with himself for having recollected a sentence so appropriate to the situation.

Mother Louveau but told the truth when she said that Victor was now one of the family.

While continually grumbling, and talking about taking the little fellow back to the police magistrate's, this woman with a head-piece was getting to like the pale-faced child that clung so persistently to her skirts.

When old Louveau thought they were making too much of him, she always replied:

"Then you should not have taken him."

As soon as he was eight years of age, she sent him to school with Clara.

Victor would always carry the books and the basket. He would fight bravely in defending their luncheon against the unscrupulous appetites of the young Morvandians.

Nor did he show less spirit in his work than in his fighting, and although he attended the school in winter only, when no voyages were made, he knew more on his return than the little peasants, who, dull and noisy as their wooden shoes, would yawn over their alphabet for twelve months together.

Victor and Clara used to come back from the school through the forest, and it amused the two children to see the wood-cutters hewing down the trees.

As Victor was light and nimble, they would get him

to climb to the top of the pines in order to fasten the rope that served to pull them down. He would appear smaller and smaller as he clambered higher up, and when he got to the top, Clara would be very frightened. But he was fearless, and would sometimes swing on a branch purposely to plague her.

At other times they would go to see M. Maugendre in his wood-yard. The wood-dealer was a thin man and as dry as a stick. He lived alone, away from the village, amid the forest.

Nobody ever knew him to have any friends; and the curiosity of the village had for a long time been baulked by the seclusion and reserve of the unknown, who had come from the farthest part of the Nièvre to set up a wood-yard away from others.

For six years he worked in all weathers, never taking a holiday, and like a very drudge. Yet it was supposed he had plenty of money, for he did a large trade, and often went to Corbigny to consult the notary about the investment of his savings.

He once told the vicar that he was a widower, but beyond this nothing was known of him.

When Maugendre observed the children coming he used to lay down his saw, and leave his work to have a chat with them. He took a great liking for Victor, and taught him to cut hulls of boats out of splinters of wood.

He once said to him:

"You remind me so much of a child I lost."

Then, as if afraid he had told too much, he added:

"Oh! it is a long time ago—a very long time ago."

Another day he said to Louveau:

"When you get tired of Victor give him to me. I have no heirs, and I will deny myself something to send him to college in the town. He shall pass examinations, and be entered at the School of Forestry."

But Francis was still in the flush of his good action, and he declined. Maugendre resolved to wait patiently until the progressive increase of the Louveau family, or some money difficulty, should have put the bargeman out of conceit with adoptions.

It seemed as if Fate wished to grant his desires. For one might almost believe that ill-luck had embarked on board the Belle Nivernaise at the same hour as Victor.

From that moment everything went wrong. The wood did not sell well. The Crew always broke some limb on the eve of the unloading. And at length, one fine day, just as they were setting out for Paris, mother Louveau fell ill.

Francis nearly lost his senses amidst the yelling of the little brats. He mistook soups for draughts, and draughts for soups, and so annoyed the sick woman by his stupidity, that he had to give up attending to her, and let Victor do it.

For the first time in his life, the bargeman bought his wood by himself. It was in vain he lapped his strings round the trees, and took thirty-six times in succession the same measure, for he always went wrong in his calculations. You know the famous calculation:

"I multiply by—I multiply by . . . "

It was mother Louveau that knew how to do that!

He executed his orders all wrong, set out for Paris in a very uneasy state of mind, and fell in with a dishonest purchaser, who took advantage of the circumstances to cheat him.

He came back to his boat with a very full heart, sat down at the foot of the bed, and said in a despairing tone:

"My dear, you must try to get well, or we shall be ruined."

Mother Louveau recovered slowly. She strove against ill-fortune, and did unheard-of things to make both ends meet.

If they had something to buy a new boat with, they would have been able to get their trade back again; but during her illness they had expended all their savings, and the profits were now going to fill up the holes in the Belle Nivernaise, which was worn out.

Victor became a heavy burden for them. He was no longer a child of four years of age that could be dressed out of an old jacket, and his food never missed.

He was now twelve years of age, and he ate like a man, although he remained a thin, nervous child, such as they could not think of requiring to handle the boat-hook—when the Crew had broken any limb.

Everything kept going from bad to worse. On their last voyage they had great difficulty in getting up the Seine as far as Clamecy. The Belle Nivernaise was letting in water at every part, and patching up would no longer suffice; it would be necessary to repair the entire hull, or rather to put the vessel aside to be broken up, and replace her by a new one.

One evening in March, on the eve of getting under sail for Paris, as Louveau, full of care, was taking leave of Maugendre after having settled his account for wood, the timber merchant asked him to come and drink a bottle in his house.

"I want to talk with you, Francis."

They went into the cottage, and Maugendre filled two glasses as they placed themselves opposite each other at the table.

"I have not always led a lonely life such as you see now, Louveau. I can remember the time when I had everything that is necessary for happiness; a little

money and a wife who loved me. I have lost all—by my own fault."

The wood merchant stopped; the confession that was sticking in his throat was nearly choking him.

"I have never been a wicked man, Francis; but I had a vice."

"You?"

"I have it still. I love the 'rhino' above everything. That has been the cause of my misfortunes."

"How is that, my dear Maugendre?"

"I am going to tell you. When we were married and had our baby, the idea came into my head of sending my wife to Paris to seek a nurse's place. That pays well when the husband is an orderly man, and knows how to manage his house by himself. But my wife was unwilling to be separated from her infant. She said to me—'But, husband, we are earning money enough as it is. The rest would be money accursed, and would not profit us. Leave such resources as these to poor households already burdened with children, and spare me the pain of leaving you.' I would not hear of it, Louveau, and I compelled her to go."

"Well?"

"Well, when my wife had found a situation she gave her child into the charge of an old woman to take it back to our place. She saw them to the railway station and they have never been heard of since."

"And your wife, my dear Maugendre."

"When this news was told her, it caused her milk to turn, and she died."

They were both silent, Louveau touched by what he had just heard, Maugendre overcome by his remembrances. The wood merchant spoke the first:

"For my punishment, I am condemned to the existence I now lead. I have lived for twelve years apart from every one. I can endure it no longer. I have a

dread of dying alone. If you have any pity for me, you will give me Victor, that he may take for me the place of the child I have lost."

Louveau was much embarrassed. Victor was costing them much; but if they parted with him at the time he was about to make himself useful, all the sacrifices that they made would be thrown away. Maugendre guessed his thoughts.

"I need not say, Francis, that if you give him to me, I shall recoup you what he has cost. It would, moreover, be a good thing for the lad. I can never see the forestry pupils in the wood, without saying to myself, 'I should have been able to make a gentleman of my boy, like those gentlemen.' Victor is industrious, and he pleases me. You know I shall treat him like my own son. Come, now, is it agreed?"

When the children had been put to bed in the cabin of the Belle Nivernaise, this matter was talked over. The wife with the head-piece attempted to reason.

"You see, Francis, we have done for that child all that we could. God knows, one would like to keep him, but now that there is an opportunity of parting from him, without making him wretched, we must try to have courage."

Despite themselves, their eyes turn towards the bed, where Victor and Mimile are sleeping the deep and calm sleep of childhood.

"Poor little fellow!" said Francis, in a low voice.

They heard the river rippling along the planks, and the occasional whistle of the railway engine piercing the stillness of the night.

Mother Louveau burst out in sobs:

"God help us, Francis, we will keep him."

CHAPTER IV

LIFE IS HARD.

VICTOR was nearly fifteen years of age. He had grown up all at once; the little pale-faced child had become a stout lad, with big shoulders and a quiet carriage.

Since he first sailed on the Belle Nivernaise he began to find his way like an old bargeman, knowing the clear channels, guessing the depths of the water, passing from the handling of the pole to that of the rudder. Now he had a red waist-band, and wore a striped vest about his hips.

When Louveau gave up the tiller to him, Clara, who was growing a big girl, would come and knit beside him, much taken by his calm face and robust movements.

This time the passage from Corbigny to Paris had been a hard one. The Seine, swollen by the autumn rains, had carried away the weirs, and was rushing towards the sea like a wild beast let loose.

The anxious bargemen hurried on with their deliveries, for the stream was already rolling by at the level of the quays, and messages sent from the lock stations, hour after hour, brought bad news. It was reported that the tributary streams were breaking down their banks and overflowing the country, and that the flood was getting higher and higher.

The quays were filled with a busy crowd, a swarm of men, carts and horses; while up aloft the steam cranes were working their huge arms. The wine market

was already cleared out, and drays were carrying away cases of sugar. The mooring-men were leaving their cabins; the quays were getting empty, and a file of wagons was ascending the slope of the incline, retreating from the flood like an army on the march.

The Louveaus were so hindered by the roughness of the water and the intermission of work in the moonless nights, that they despaired of delivering their wood in time. Everybody had taken his share of the work, and they labored till very late in the evening, by the light of lanterns and of the gas lamps on the quay.

At eleven o'clock, all the cargo was piled up at the foot of the incline, and as Dubac the joiner's cart did not reappear, they went to bed.

It was a dreadful night, with much grinding together of chains, creaking of planks, and bumping of boats. The Belle Nivernaise, with her timbers loosened by the shocks, groaned like one in pain.

It was impossible to close an eye. Louveau, his wife, Victor and the Crew rose up at daybreak, and left the children in bed.

The Seine had risen still higher during the night, and rough and surging like a sea, its green waters were rushing on under a heavy sky. On the quays there was no movement of life—on the river not a boat; nothing but the remains of roofs and fences borne along in the current of the stream. Beyond the bridges the outline of Notre Dame was shadowed out against the fog.

There was not a moment to be lost, for the river had already got over the parapets of the lower quay, and the little waves that lapped the ends of the planks had caused the stacks of wood to tumble down.

While Francis, mother Louveau, and Dubac were loading the cart, with the water halfway up to their knees, they were startled by a loud crash on one side

of them. A lighter laden with mill-stones had parted its mooring chain, and had come against the quay and foundered, being split up from stem to stern. It sank with a dreadful noise, and a strong eddy took its place.

They were standing motionless, impressed by this sudden wreck, when they heard shouts behind them. The Belle Nivernaise, unmoored by the agitation, was leaving the quay. Mother Louveau raised a cry:

"My children!"

Victor had already rushed into the cabin, and he now reappeared on deck with the little one in his arms. Clara and Mimile followed him, and all stretched out their hands towards the quay.

"Take them!"

"A boat!"

"A rope!"

What was to be done? It was impossible to take all of them to shore by swimming. The Crew was running from one plank to another, bewildered, useless. They must get alongside at any cost.

In presence of this bewildered man, and of these sobbing little children, Victor thus unexpectedly made into a captain, felt within himself the energy that was needed to save them. He gave his orders:

"Come, throw a cable! Quick!"

This was done three times over, but the Belle Nivernaise was already too far from the quay, and the cable fell into the water.

Victor then ran to the rudder, and they heard him shout:

"Don't be afraid. I'll see after them."

And, in fact, by a vigorous movement of the tiller, he brought the craft right, for having been taken by the water broadside on, she was drifting into the current.

On the quay, poor Louveau quite lost his senses, and

wanted to leap into the water in order to reach his children; but Dubac threw his arms round him, whilst mother Louveau covered her face with her hands to shut out the dreadful sight.

The Belle Nivernaise was now keeping in the current, and shooting towards the bridge of Austerlitz with the velocity of a tug-boat.

Composedly leaning against the tiller Victor steered, encouraged the little ones, and gave his orders to the Crew. He knew he was in the right channel, for he had steered for the red flag that hung in the middle of the center arch to show the bargemen the way.

But, good heavens, would there be height enough to pass through! He saw the bridge approaching very quickly.

"Get your boat hook ready, Crew. You, Clara, don't leave the children."

He was clinging to the rudder, and already he felt the wind from the arch moving his hair. They are in it! Carried on by her impetus, the Belle Nivernaise disappeared under the span with a dreadful sound, yet not so fast but that the crowd collected on the bridge of Austerlitz saw the wooden-legged boatman miss the stroke with his boat-hook and fall flat down, whilst the lad at the helm cried out:

"A grapnel! A grapnel!"

The Belle Nivernaise was under the bridge. In the shade of the arch Victor distinctly observed the enormous rings made fast to the layer of piles, and the joints of the vault above his head, and in the distance the line of other bridges, inclosing their pieces of sky.

Then it seemed as if there were an enlargement of the horizon, a dazzling glare as when one comes out of a cellar into the light, a sound of hurrahs above his head, and the vision of the cathedral, like a frigate anchored in the stream.

The boat abruptly stopped. The bridgeman had succeeded in throwing a hook on board, and Victor ran to the mooring line and wound the rope firmly round the timber-head.

The Belle Nivernaise was seen to put about, turn round on the mooring line, and, obeying the new impulse that was given to her, slowly come alongside the quay of the Tournelle, with her crew of little children and her captain of fifteen years.

Oh! what joy when thy found themselves all assembled in the evening, round the steaming stew in the cabin of the boat—this time well anchored, well moored.

The little hero had the place of honor—the captain's seat. They had not much appetite after the experiences of the morning, with its violent emotions, but their hearts were expanded as after a period of anguish, and they breathed freely.

There was a wink across the table, as much as to say:

"Ha! if we had taken him back to the police magistrate's?"

Louveau laughed from ear to ear, as he cast his moistened eyes over his brood. You would have supposed that some good luck had befallen them, that they had gained a big prize in the lottery, or that the Belle Nivernaise had no longer any holes in her sides.

The bargeman kept knocking Victor about with punches in the ribs. It was his way of showing his affection. "What a chap Victor is! What a pull of the tiller! Did you see that, Crew? I could not have done better myself, he! he! master as I am!"

For a fortnight the good fellow could do nothing else but express his admiration, and go along the quays to describe this pull at the tiller. "You know, the boat was drifting. Then he . . . Ah!"

And he showed by a gesture how it was done.

In the meantime the Seine was getting lower, and the time for setting out was again at hand. One morning, as Victor and Louveau were pumping on the deck, the postman brought a letter.

It had a blue seal on the back. The bargeman opened the letter with a rather trembling hand, and, as he could not trust to his own ability in reading more than in arithmetic, he said to Victor:

"You spell that out for me."

And Victor read:

"OFFICE OF THE COMMISSARY OF POLICE
12th Arrondissement.

"Monsieur Louveau (Francis), master bargeman, is requested to call at the Office of the Cômmissary of Police with as little delay as possible."

"Is that all?"

"That is all."

"What can he want with me?"

Louveau was away all day.

When he came back in the evening all his cheerfulness had disappeared; he was gloomy, cross, sullen.

Mother Louveau could make nothing of it; and as the youngsters had gone to play on the deck, she asked him:

"Whatever has happened?"

"I am weary of it."

"What, of unloading?"

"No; about Victor."

And then he told her about his visit to the police magistrate.

"You must understand that the woman who abandoned him was not his mother."

"No, really?"

"She had stolen him."

"How do they know that?"

"She herself confessed it to the police magistrate before she died."

"Then they told you the name of his parents?"

Louveau gave a start.

"Why do you think they would tell me?"

"Well, because they had sent for you."

Francis got vexed.

"If I knew it, you think, perhaps, I should tell you!"

He was quite red with anger, and he went out, slamming the door after him.

Mother Louveau was overcome with astonishment.

"Whatever is the matter with him?"

Yes, what could have been the matter with you, Francis? From that time his ways, his words, his character were quite changed. He could not eat, he slept badly, he talked all night. He even answered his wife back! He fell out with the Crew. He spoke harshly to everybody, and to Victor most of all. When mother Louveau, quite amazed, asked him what was the matter, he answered savagely—

"Nothing at all. Do I look as if anything was the matter with me? You are all plotting against me."

The poor woman got nothing for her pains.

"Take my word for it, he is going out of his senses."

She thought he was quite cracked, when one evening he made a dreadful scene for them about Maugendre.

They were at the end of the voyage, and had got nearly to Clamecy. Victor and Clara were talking about the school, and the youth having said that he should be glad to see Maugendre again, Louveau flew into a passion:

"Don't talk to me about your Maugendre. I want to have nothing more to do with him."

Mother Louveau interposed.

"What has he done to you?"

"He has . . . he has . . . It does not matter to you. I am the master, I suppose."

Alas! he was so much the master now that instead of making fast at Corbigny, as usual, he went two leagues higher up, into the heart of the forest.

He declared that Maugendre thought of nothing else than duping him in all their bargains, and that he could do business on better terms with another vender.

They were now too far from the village to think of attending the classes, and therefore Victor and Clara rambled through the woods all day, gathering sticks.

When they were tired carrying their burden they would put it down beside a ditch, and sit down on the ground amidst the flowers. Victor would pull a book out of his pocket, and would get Clara to read.

They liked to see the sun peeping through the branches, and throw a flickering light on the page and on their hair, while about there was the hum of millions of little creatures, and surrounding all reigned the silence of the woods.

When they got late, they had to return very quickly, all along the great avenue, barred by shadows of the tree trunks. The mast of the Belle Nivernaise would be visible in the opening at the end, as well as the gleam of a fire through the slight fog rising from the river.

It was mother Louveau cooking, in the open air at the margin of the stream, over a fire of waste rubbish.

Mimile would be sitting close by her, with his hair all ruffled, his shirt bursting through his breeches, and he would be lovingly contemplating the pot, while his little sister rolled about on the ground, while Louveau and the Crew smoked their pipes.

One evening, at supper time, they saw some one come out of the wood and advance towards them.

"Ha! Maugendre!"

It was the timber merchant. He looked much older, and much grayer. He had a stick in his hand, and seemed to talk with difficulty.

He came forward to Louveau and held out his hand. "Well, you have left me then, Francis?"

The bargeman stammered out a confused reply.

"Oh, I am not vexed at you."

He had so wearied a look that mother Louveau was touched by it, and without giving any heed to her husband's bad humor, she handed him a seat.

"You are not ill, I hope, M. Maugendre?"

"I have got a bad cold."

He spoke slowly, almost in a whisper. Suffering had softened him. He told them that he was about to leave the neighborhood, to go to live in the distant part of the Nièvre.

"It's all done with. I have given up business. I am now rich; I have money, plenty of money. But what is the good of it? I cannot buy back the happiness I have lost."

Francis listened with knit brows.

Maugendre continued:

"The older I get, the more keenly do I suffer from being lonely. Formerly, I used to forget all when I was working; but now, I have no longer any heart for work. I have lost interest in everything. So I am going to banish myself; that may perhaps give me some distraction."

And, in spite of himself, his eyes turned towards the children. At this moment Victor and Clara issued from the avenue with their load of branches, and seeing Maugendre, they threw down their bundles and ran to him.

He received them as cordially as usual, and said to Louveau, who remained sullen:

"You are a happy man to have four children. I have none now."

And he sighed: "I must not complain, it is my own fault."

He rose up, and everybody did the same.

"Good-by, Victor. Be industrious, and love your parents; you ought to."

He had put his hand on the boy's shoulder and was looking at him fixedly.

"Ah, if I had a child, he should be like him."

Louveau opposite to him, with compressed lips, bore an expression that seemed to say: "Begone from hence."

Yet at the moment the timber merchant was leaving, Francis felt an impulse of sympathy towards him, and he called him back, saying:

"Maugendre, won't you take soup with us?"

This was said as if against the grain, and in a gruff tone of voice that did not encourage acceptance. The old man shook his head.

"No, I thank you. I am not hungry. When one is melancholy, look you, other people's happiness does not do one much good."

And he departed, bending over his stick.

Louveau did not speak a word the whole evening. He passed the night in walking up and down the deck, and in the morning he went away without saying a word to any one.

He went to the vicarage, which was close to the church. It was a large square building, with a court in front and a kitchen garden behind. Fowls were foraging at the threshold, and a cow was lowing in the grass.

Louveau felt his heart lightened by the resolution he had taken. As he opened the gate, he said to him-

self, with a sigh of satisfaction, that when he came out of it again he should be relieved of his care.

He found the vicar seated in his cool dining room. The good priest had finished his breakfast, and was dozing lightly with his head leaning over his breviary. Aroused by Louveau's entrance, he turned down the page, and having closed the book, he motioned to the bargeman, who was twirling his cap in his fingers, to sit down.

"Well, now, Francis, what can I do for you?"

He wanted advice, and he asked to be allowed to tell his story from the beginning.

"Because, as your Reverence knows, I am not very clever. I am not an eagle, he! he! as my wife tells me."

And having put himself at his ease by this preamble, he told his business, very much out of breath, very red, and all the while gazing intently at the peak of his cap.

"Your Reverence will recollect that Maugendre told you he was a widower? He has been so for the last fifteen years. His wife went to Paris to be a nurse. She showed her child to the doctor, as the custom is, gave it the breast for the last time, and then she intrusted it to a meneuse."

The priest interrupted him.

"What is a meneuse, Francis?"

"A meneuse, your Reverence, is a woman who is employed to take back home the children of wet nurses. She carries them away in a creel or basket like kittens."

"That's a queer trade."

"There are some honest people that carry it on, your Reverence; but mother Maugendre had fallen in with a woman that nobody knew, a witch who stole children

and let them out to other idle vagabonds to drag them about the streets in order to excite commiseration."

"You do not mean to say that, Francis?"

"It is the simple truth, your Reverence. This wretch of a woman carried off a lot of children and Maugendre's little one among the rest. She kept him for four years. She wanted to teach him to beg; but as he was the son of an honest man, he refused to hold out his hand. Thereupon she abandoned him in the street, and then—become what you can! But now, six months ago, on her deathbed in the hospital, she was stricken with remorse. I know what that is, your Reverence, it is devilish hard to bear. . . ."

And he turned his eyes up to the ceiling, poor man, as if to call Heaven to witness the truth of his statement.

"Then she asked for the police magistrate, and she told him the name of the child. The magistrate has informed me. It is Victor."

The Vicar let his breviary fall.

"Is Victor Maugendre's son?"

"He is."

The ecclesiastic was taken all aback. He muttered a phrase in which the words "poor child," "finger of God," were distinguishable. He got up, walked about the room, went near the window, drank a glass of water, and ended by stopping in front of Louveau with his hands in his waist-band. He was trying to recollect a sentence that would apply to the circumstance, but as he could not find one, he simply said:

"Ah, well, but he must be restored to his father."

Louveau started.

"That is exactly my trouble, your Reverence. For the six months that I have known all this, I have never had the courage to tell any one, not even my wife. We have denied ourselves so much to bring up that child,

we have endured so much poverty together, that now I do not know how I can bring myself to part from him."

All this was true, and if Maugendre seemed to deserve compassion, some pity should also be felt for poor Francis. Possessed by these contradictory sentiments, the vicar was perspiring visibly, while mentally he was requesting light from on high. And forgetting that Louveau had come to ask for his advice, he murmured in a subdued voice:

"Come, now, Francis, if you were in my place, what would you advise?"

The bargeman looked down.

"I quite understand, your Reverence, that Victor must be given up. I felt that the other day, when Maugendre came upon us unexpectedly. It cut me to the heart to see him so old, so sad, and so broken down. I was as ashamed as if I had his money, stolen money, in my pocket. I could no longer keep this secret to myself, and I have come to tell it you."

"And you have done right, Louveau," said the vicar, delighted at seeing the bargeman find him a solution of the question. "It is never too late to repair an error. I am going with you to Maugendre's, and there you will confess all to him."

"To-morrow, your Reverence."

"No, Francis; immediately."

And observing the poor fellow's grief, and the nervous twisting about of his cap, he entreated in a softer voice:

"I beg of you to do it now, Louveau, whilst we are both resolved."

CHAPTER V

MAUGENDRE'S AMBITIONS

A SON! Maugendre has a son!

He is gazing at him complacently, as he sits on the opposite cushion in the buzz and hum of the railway carriage that is bearing them towards Nevers.

It was really an abduction. The old man had taken his son away, almost without saying thank you, like a rustic who has won the big prize in the lottery, and runs straight off with it.

He did not want to leave his child open to the old attachments. He was now as greedy for affection, as he formerly was for gold. No borrowing, no sharing; but his treasure is to be for himself only, without the peering eyes of others.

There was a buzzing in Maugendre's ears like that of the express. His head was hot like the locomotive. But his dreams were hastening on faster than any locomotives or express trains, and passing at a dash over days, and months, and years.

His dreams were of a Victor dressed in dark-green faced with silver; a student of the School of Forestry! One might even say that this student Maugendre had a sword at his side, and the two-cornered hat on his head, like a student of the Ecole Polytechnique—for all the schools and all the uniforms were a little mixed in Maugendre's dreams.

No matter! Embroidery and gold lace are not spared by the wood merchant. He has the "rhino" to pay for

all that . . . and Victor shall be a gentleman covered with gold lace from head to foot.

Men will speak to him with their hats off.

Fine ladies will be madly in love with him.

And, in one corner, there will be an old man with horny hands, who will say, bridling up:

"This is my son."

"Come now, my son."

'My son" also is dreaming, with his little cap over his eyes—until he gets the two-cornered gold-laced hat.

He would not like his father to see him weeping. But it was sudden, that separation. Clara had given him a kiss that still glowed on his cheek. Old Louveau turned away, and mother Louveau was very pale.

And Mimile brought him his porringer of soup, to console him. All! even to little Mimile. Oh! how will they live without him? And how will he live without them? The future student of the School of Forestry is so troubled by these thoughts that every time his father speaks to him he answers:

"Yes, Monsieur Maugendre."

And he is not yet at the end of his tribulations, our little bargeman of the Belle Nivernaise. For it costs not only money to become a gentleman, but also sacrifices and sorrows.

Some of these Victor is conscious of as the quick train passes with a whistle over the bridges above the suburbs of Nevers. It seems to him that he has before seen somewhere, in a sad and distant past, these same narrow streets, and those windows small as the air-holes of a prison, with raveled rags hanging out of them.

Now they have the pavement beneath their feet, and round them there is the station rout, the crowd of lookers-on, the press of people laden with parcels,

the roll of cabs and of heavy railway omnibuses, which travelers carrying rugs tied up with straps, noisily take by assault.

Victor and his father go out of the station gates in a carriage. The wood merchant sticks to his idea. He must have an immediate transformation. So he takes his son straight away to the college tailor's.

The shop is new, the counters lustrous, and well-dressed gentlemen, like those shown in the colored engravings hung on the wall, open the door for the customers with a patronizing smile.

They put before old Maugendre the choicest of the Fashion Plates, where a collegian is smoking in company with a lady in a riding-habit, a gentleman in a complete hunting suit, and a bride dressed in white satin.

The tailor happens just to have in hand a pattern tunic, padded back and front, with square skirts and gilt buttons. He displays it to the wood merchant, who, beaming with pride, cries:

"In that, you will look like a soldier."

A gentleman in his shirt sleeves, with a tape round his neck, now comes up to the student Maugendre, and takes the measure of his legs, his waist, and his backbone.

This operation brings to the mind of the little bargeman remembrances that call the tears to his eyes! The ways of dear old Louveau, the tempers of the wife with the head-piece—all that has he left behind him for ever.

It is all past and gone now. The correct young man in the regulation uniform, that Victor beholds in the big looking-glass, has nothing in common with the ship-lad of the Belle Nivernaise.

The tailor with his toe contemptuously pushes the dishonored boat garments under his bench like a bundle of rags.

Victor feels that he has been made to leave there all his past life. How much is there in that word "leave"! Here now is he forbidden even to retain the memory of it.

"You must detach yourself from all the errors of your early education," said the Principal, sternly, without concealing his distrust.

And in order to facilitate this regeneration, it is decided that the student Maugendre shall go out of the college only on the first Sunday in each month.

Oh! how he weeps the first night, at the end of the cold, dreary dormitory, while the other scholars are snoring on their iron bedsteads, and the assistant master is devouring a romance on the sly, by the glimmer of a night-light.

How he suffers during the hated hour of recreation, whilst his comrades hustle and mob him!

How weary he is in the study, with his head bent over his desk, trembling at the anger of the usher as the latter with all his might hits his table, repeating ever the same phrase:

"Silence, there, sirs."

That shrill voice, by stirring up in Victor the bitter dregs of sad memories, blights his whole life.

It reminds him of the dark days of his early childhood, of the crannies in the Temple suburb; of the blows, of the quarrels—of all that he had forgotten.

He clung desperately to the images of Clara and the Belle Nivernaise, as to the one ray of sunshine amid the gloom of his life.

This no doubt was the reason for the drawings of boats that the usher was so astonished at finding on every page of the student Maugendre's books.

Always the same barge reproduced on every leaf with the persistence of one possessed.

Sometimes she was slowly ascending the narrow path of the margins, shut in as if on a canal.

Sometimes she was wrecked in the midst of a theorem, splashing over the deserted diagrams and the corollaries in the small print.

Sometimes she was under full sail on the oceans of the maps, and on them she rode at ease, spread all her canvas, and flew her flag.

The Principal, tired of the circumstantial reports made to him on this subject, at length spoke of it to M. Maugendre, the father.

The wood merchant could not get over it.

"A lad so manageable!"

"He is as obstinate as a donkey."

"So intelligent!"

"He cannot be taught anything."

And nobody would understand that the student Maugendre had learnt to read amidst woods looking over Clara's shoulder, and that studying geometry under the ferule of a bearded usher is a very different kind of thing.

This is the reason why the student Maugendre goes down from the "middle school" to the "lower":—it is because there is a singular difference between the lessons of the magister at Corbigny, and those of MM. the Professors of the College of Nevers. A distance as great as between teaching in a rabbit-skin cap and teaching in an ermine hat.

Maugendre the elder was in despair. It seemed to him that the Forester in the two-cornered hat was taking great strides far into the distance.

The father chides, he entreats, he promises.

"Do you want lessons? Would you like to have tutors? You shall have the best, the most expensive."

In the meantime, the student Maugendre is becoming

a vexation and the "Quarterly Reports" mercilessly exhibit his faultiness. For his own part, he is conscious of his stupidity, and every day he withdraws more and more into obscurity and sadness.

If Clara and the rest could but see what has been done with their Victor! How they would come and throw wide open the doors of his prison! How cordially they would offer him a share of their last crust of bread, of their last bit of bedding!

But they also are unhappy, poor people. Things are going from bad to worse. The boat is getting older and older.

That Victor knows by Clara's letters, which from time to time come to him with a great, savage "seen," scrawled in red pencil by the Principal, who hates these interfering correspondences.

"Ah! when you used to be here," say these letters of Clara's, always tender, but becoming more and more distressful. . . . "Ah! if you were but with us now!"

Was not this as much as to say that all used to go on well in those days, and that all would yet be saved if Victor came back?

Well, then, Victor will save all. He will buy a new boat. He will console Clara. He will bring back the trade. He will show them that they have not loved one who is without gratitude, and have not succored one incapable of helping them.

But to do this, he must become a man. Money must be earned, and for that, he must acquire knowledge.

So Victor re-opens his books, and turns over a new leaf.

Now arrows may fly, the usher may strike on his desk with all his might, and emit his parrot phrase:

"Silence, there, sirs."

Victor does not lift his eyes from his books. He draws no more boats. He despises the paper missiles that strike his face. He works . . . he works . . .

"A letter for the student Maugendre."

This reminder of Clara, redolent of liberty and of affection, was like a blessing unexpectedly coming to encourage him in the midst of his studies.

Victor hid his head in his desk to kiss the zigzag, painfully written address, shaky as if a constant heaving of the boat rocked the table Clara was writing on.

Alas! it was not the heaving of the boat, but the agitation of feeling that had made Clara's hand tremble.

"It is all over, my dear Victor; the Belle Nivernaise will never sail more. She has perished, and her destruction is our ruin. There is this ugly notice on her stern:

WOOD TO SELL

FROM THE BREAKING UP

"People came and calculated the value of everything, from the Crew's boathook to the cradle in which my little sister was sleeping. It seems they are going to sell everything, and we have nothing left.

"What will become of us? Mamma is nearly dying of grief, and papa is so changed. . . ."

Victor did not finish the letter. The words were dancing before his eyes; his face was flushed, and there was a humming in his ears.

Ah! study was now out of the question. Exhausted by work, grief and fever, he was becoming delirious.

He thought he was drifting on the open Seine, on the beautiful cool river. He wanted to bathe his brow in the stream.

Then he heard vaguely the sound of a bell. No doubt some tug that was passing in the fog. Presently it was like the noise of many waters, and he cried:

"The flood! The flood!"

He began to shiver at the thought of the deep shadow under the arch of the bridge; and amid all these visions he was conscious of the usher's scared, hirsute countenance under the lamp-shade.

"Are you ill, Maugendre?"

The student Maugendre was indeed ill. It is no use the doctor shaking his head, when the poor father, who follows him to the college door, asks him in a voice choked with anxiety:

"He is not going to die, is he?"

For it is plain that the doctor is not confident, at least his gray hairs are not, for they say "no" faintly as if they were afraid of committing themselves.

No mention now of green coats or of two-cornered hats. It is solely a matter of saving the student Maugendre's life.

The doctor told them frankly that if he should recover, they would do well to restore him to his country freedom.

If he should recover!

The idea of losing the child just restored to him annihilated all the ambitious desires of the rich father. It is all over with his dream, he renounces it for ever. He is quite ready to bury the student of the School of Forestry with his own hands. He will nail up the coffin, if desired. He will wear no mourning for him. Only but let the other one consent to live! Let him but speak to him, get up, throw his arms round his neck, and say:

"Be comforted, father. I am getting well now."

And the wood merchant leant over Victor's bed.

It is done. The old tree is cleft to the core. Maugendre's heart has been softened.

"I will let you leave here, my lad. You shall return to them, you shall sail again. And it will be good enough for me to see you sometimes in passing."

At this time, the bell no longer rings the hours for recreation, for study, and for meals. It is the vacation, and the great college is deserted. Not a sound is heard save that of the fountain in the courtyard, and the sparrows chirping on the grassplots. The rattle of an occasional carriage sounds dull and distant, for they have laid down straw in the street.

It is in the midst of this silence and this solitude, that the student Maugendre comes to himself again.

He is surprised to find himself in a very white bed, surrounded by large muslin curtains that spread about him the seclusion of subdued light and quietude.

He would much like to raise himself up on the pillow, and draw them apart a little, to see where he is; but his strength is unequal to the effort, although he feels himself most delightfully refreshed. So he waits.

But there are voices whispering near him. One would fancy there were feet walking on tiptoe over the floor, and even a well-known stumping, something like the promenade of a broom-handle over the boards. Victor had heard that before. Where? Surely on the deck of the Belle Nivernaise. That's it!

And the patient, collecting all his strength, cries out with a feeble voice, which he however means for a loud one:

"Ye ho! Crew! ye ho!"

The curtains are withdrawn, and in the dazzling burst of light, he sees all the dear ones he has so often called on in his delirium.

All? Yes, all! They are all there. Clara, Maugendre, Louveau, mother Louveau, Mimile, the little sister;

and the scalded old heron, as thin as his own boat hook, was smiling immensely his silent smile.

And every arm is stretched towards him, every head is bent, there are kisses from everybody, smiles, shakes of the hand, questions.

"Where am I? Why are you here?"

But the doctor's orders are precise, and the gray hairs were in downright earnest when thus prescribing:

"He must keep his arms under the bed-clothes, be quiet, and not get excited."

And in order to prevent his child from talking, Maugendre goes on speaking all the time.

"Would you believe that it is ten days ago—the day you fell ill—that I had just seen the Principal to speak to him about you? He told me you were making progress, and that you were working like a machine. . . . You may imagine how pleased I was! I asked to see you, and you were sent for, when at that moment your master rushed into the Principal's study quite frightened. You had just had an attack of high fever. I ran to the infirmary; you did not recognize me, your eyes were like tapers, you were in delirium! Ah, my dear lad, how ill you were! I did not leave you for a moment. You kept raving on. You were talking about the Belle Nivernaise, about Clara, about the new boat, and I know not what else. Then I recollected the letter—Clara's letter; it had been found in your hands, and they had given it to me, and, for the time, I had forgotten all about it, you know! I drew it from my pocket, I read it. I shook my head, and I said to myself, 'Maugendre, your disappointment must not make you forget your friends' trouble.' Then I wrote to all these good people to come and see us. No answer. I took advantage of a day on which you were rather better, to go and find them, and I brought

them to my house, where they are now living, and where they will live, until some means of settling their affairs has been found. Is it not so, friend Louveau?"

Every one has a tear in his eye, and, on my word—so much the worse for the doctor's gray hairs—the two arms come out of the bed-clothes, and Maugendre is embraced as he has never been before—the real kiss of an affectionate child.

Then, as it is impossible to take Victor home, they arrange their future life—Clara will remain with the patient in order to sweeten his draughts and chat with him; mother Louveau will go to keep house; Francis shall go and superintend a building that the timber merchant has contracted for in the Grande Rue.

As for Maugendre, he is going to Clamecy. He is going to see some acquaintances who have a large contract for wood. These people will be delighted to engage so clever a bargeman as Louveau.

No! no! No objections, no opposition. It is an understood thing, quite a simple matter.

Certainly it is not for Victor to object.

He is now lifted up and rolled in his big arm-chair to the window.

He is alone with Clara, in the silent infirmary.

And Victor is delighted. He blesses his illness. He blesses the sale of the Belle Nivernaise. He blesses all the sales and all the illnesses in the world.

"Do you remember, Clara, when I used to hold the tiller, and you would come and sit beside me, with your knitting?"

Clara remembered so well that she cast down her eyes, and blushed, and both of them were rather embarrassed.

For now, he is no longer the little lad in a red cap, whose feet could not reach to the deck when he climbed up on the tiller, and sat astride it.

And she, when she comes in the morning and takes off her little shawl, and throws it on the bed, appears quite a handsome young woman; her arms are so round, and her waist is so slender.

"Come early, Clara, and stop as long as you can."

It is so nice to have breakfast and dinner, the two together, near the window in the shade of the white curtains.

They are reminded of their early childhood, of the pap eaten at the edge of the bed with the same spoon. Ah! those memories of childhood!

They flit about the college infirmary like birds in an aviary. No doubt they make their nest in every corner of the curtains, for each morning there are fresh ones newly opened for their flight.

And truly, if you heard their conversations about the past, you would say that they were a couple of octogenarians looking back only on the distance behind them.

Now, is there not a future, which also may have some interest for them?

Yes, there is such a future, and it is often thought of, if it is never mentioned.

Besides, it is not absolutely necessary to use phrases in conversing. There is a certain way of taking hold of a hand, and of blushing at every turn, which says a great deal more than words. Victor and Clara talk in that language all day long.

That is probably the reason why they are so often silent. And that, too, is why the days pass so quickly that the month glides by noiselessly and imperceptibly.

That is the reason why the doctor is obliged to make his gray hairs bristle up, and to turn his patient out of the infirmary.

Just at this time Maugendre the elder returns from

his journey. He finds them all assembled in his house. And he cannot help smiling when poor Louveau very anxiously asks him:

"Well, will they have anything to do with me, down there?"

"Will they not, old man? . . . They wanted a master for a new boat, and they thanked me for the gift I was giving them."

Who can these people be? Old Louveau was so delighted he did not inquire further. And everybody set off for Clamecy without knowing anything more about it.

What a pleasure, when they get to the banks of the canal!

There, on the quay, a magnificent boat, adorned with flags from top to bottom, and brand new, raises her polished mast amid the green fields.

They are giving her the last touch of varnish, and the stern on which the name of the craft is painted remains covered with gray canvas.

A cry breaks from every mouth:

"What a fine boat!"

Louveau does not believe his eyes. He has a deuced queer feeling of smarting in the eyelids, of a splitting open of his mouth about a foot wide, and of a shaking of his earrings like a couple of salad paniers.

"That is too grand! I would not dare undertake to steer a boat like that. She was never made to sail. She should be put under a glass case."

Maugendre had to push him by force on the footbridge, where the Crew was making signals to them.

How is this! Has the Crew himself been repaired? Yes; repaired, refitted, caulked afresh. He has a boathook and a wooden leg, both quite new.

These are the gift of the contractor, a man of intelligence, who has done the thing well. As for ex-

ample, the deck is of waxed wood, and is surrounded by a handrail. There is a seat for resting yourself, and an awning to afford shade from the sun.

The hold is big enough to carry a double cargo. And the cabin!—oh, the cabin!

"Three apartments!"

"A kitchen!"

"Mirrors!"

Louveau drew Maugendre aside on the deck. He was touched, shaken by his feelings—as were his earrings. He stammered out:

"Dear old Maugendre . . ."

"What's the matter?"

"You have forgotten one thing."

"Yes?"

"You have not told me the name of the firm on account of whom I am to sail."

"You want to know?"

"Certainly!"

"Well, then, on your own account!"

"How? . . . but then . . . the boat . ."

"Is yours!"

What an event, my friends! What close pressings of breast to breast!

It is fortunate that the contractor—who is a man of intelligence—had bethought himself of putting a seat upon the deck.

Louveau drops upon it like a man felled by a blow.

"It is impossible . . . we cannot accept."

Maugendre has an answer ready for everything:

"Come, now, you are forgetting our old debt, the money you have laid out for Victor. Keep your mind easy, Francis; it is I who owe you the most."

And the two companions kissed each other like brothers. No mistakes this time; they wept.

Assuredly Maugendre has arranged everything to

make the surprise complete, for whilst they are embracing each other on the deck, behold his Reverence, the Vicar, issuing from the wood, with a band behind him and a banner floating on the wind.

What can this be for? It is for the benediction of the boat, most certainly. All Clamecy has come in procession to be present at the celebration.

The banner is floating out in the breeze.

And the band is playing—

"Rum—dum—dum."

Every face looks happy, and over all there is a bright sun that makes the silver of the cross and the brass of the musicians' instruments flash again.

What a celebration! They have just taken away the canvas that covered the stern; and the name of the boat shows up in gold letters on an azure ground:

"LA NOUVELLE NIVERNAISE"

Hurrah for the Nouvelle Nivernaise!

May she have as long a life as the old one, and a happier old age!

The Vicar steps up to the boat. Behind him, the singers and the musicians are drawn up in a row, while the banner forms a background.

"Benedicat Deus . . . ."

Victor is the godfather, Clara the godmother. The Vicar asks them to come forward to the edge of the quay close to himself.

They hold each other's hand, and are bashful, trembling. They confusedly stammer out the words that the choir boy whispers to them, whilst the Vicar is shaking the holy water sprinkler over them:

"Benedicat Deus . . . ."

Would you not have taken them for a young couple at the altar? That thought occurs to everybody. Per-

haps it occurs to themselves also, for they dare not look at each other, and they get more and more confused as the ceremony proceeds.

At length, it is finished. The crowd retires. The Nouvelle Nivernaise has received her benediction.

But you cannot let the musicians go away like that, without any refreshments.

And whilst Louveau is pouring out bumpers for the musicians, Maugendre, winking at mother Louveau, takes the godfather and godmother by the hand and turning towards the Vicar, asks:

"Here is the baptism finished, your Reverence; when will the marriage come off?"

Victor and Clara become as red as poppies. Mimile and his little sister clap their hands.

And, in the midst of the general enthusiasm, old Louveau, very excited, leans over his daughter's shoulder, and laughing up to his ears in anticipation of his joke, the honest bargeman says in a bantering tone:

"Well, now, Clara, now's the time, . . . shall we take Victor back to the magistrate's?"

HOW THE COUNT'S SON DIED

HOW THE COUNT'S SON DIED

Froissart's Chronicles

[Froissart describes the court of Gaston, Count de Foix, one of the most powerful feudal nobles of the fourteenth century. Ruling a great domain bordering France, Castile and Navarre, he held the state of a semi-independent prince in his capital of Orthes.]

AT midnight, when he came out of his chamber into the hall to supper, he had ever before him twelve torches burning, borne by twelve varlets, standing before his table all supper. They gave a great light, and the hall was ever full of knights and squires, and many other tables were dressed to sup who would. There was none should speak to him at his table but if he were called. His meat was lightly, wild fowl, the legs and wings only, and in the day he did eat and drink but little. He had great pleasure in harmony of instruments; he could do it right well himself: he would have songs sung before him. He would gladly see conceits and fantasies at his table, and when he had seen it, then he would send it to the other tables bravely; all this I considered and advised. And ere I came to his court I had been in many courts of kings, dukes, princes, counts, and great ladies; but I was never in one that so well liked me. Nor there was none more rejoiced in deeds of arms than the count did; there was seen in his hall, chamber, and court, knights and squires of honor going up and down, and talking of arms and of

armors: all honor there was found, all manner of tidings of every realm and country there might be heard, for out of every country there was resort, for the valiantness of this count.

[Froissart describes his own intense curiosity to know "how Gaston, the count's son, died;" but no one would satisfy him. At last "so much I inquired that an ancient squire, and a notable man, showed the matter to me," and began thus]:

"True it is," quoth he, "that the Count of Foix and my Lady of Foix, his wife, agreeth not well together, nor have not done of a long season, and the discord between them was first moved by the King of Navarre, who was brother to the lady; for the King of Navarre pledged himself for the Duke Dalbret, whom the Count of Foix had in prison, for the sum of fifty thousand francs; and the Count of Foix, who knew that the King of Navarre was crafty and malicious, in the beginning would not trust him, wherewith the Countess of Foix had great displeasure and indignation against the count her husband, and said to him:

" 'Sir, ye repute but small honor in the King of Navarre, my brother, when ye will not trust him for fifty thousand francs: though ye have no more of the Armagnacs, nor of the house of Dalbret, than ye have, it ought to suffice. And also, sir, ye know well ye should assign out my dower, which amounteth to fifty thousand francs, which ye should put into the hands of my brother, the King of Navarre; wherefore, sir, ye cannot be evil paid.'

" 'Dame,' quoth he, 'ye say truth; but if I thought that the King of Navarre would stop the payment for that cause, the Lord Dalbret should never have gone out of Orthes, and so I should have been paid to the last penny; and since ye desire it, I will do it; not for the love of you, but for the love of my son.'

"So by these words, and by the King of Navarre's

obligation, who became debtor to the Count of Foix, the Lord Dalbret was delivered quit, and became French, and was married in France to the sister of the Duke of Burbon, and paid at his ease to the King of Navarre, the sum of fifty thousand francs for his ransom, for the which sum the king was bound to the Count of Foix; but he would not send it to the count.

"Then the Count of Foix said to his wife: 'Dame, ye must go into Navarre to the king your brother, and show him how I am not well content with him, that he will not send me that he hath received of mine.'

"The lady answered, how that she was ready to go at his commandment. And so she departed, and rode to Pampeluna to the king her brother, who received her with great joy. The lady did her message from point to point.

"Then the king answered: 'Fair lady, the sum of money is yours. The count should give it for your dower; it shall never go out of the realm of Navarre since I have it in possession.'

"'Ah, sir,' quoth the lady, 'by this ye shall set great hate between the count, my husband, and you; and if ye hold your purpose, I dare not return again into the county of Foix, for my husband will slay me. He will say I have deceived him.'

"'I cannot tell,' quoth the king, 'what ye will do; either tarry or depart; but as for the money I will not depart from it; it pertaineth to me to keep it for you, but it shall never go out of Navarre.'

"The countess could have none other answer of the king, her brother, and so she tarried still in Navarre, and durst not return again. The Count of Foix, when he saw the dealing of the King of Navarre, he began to hate his wife, and was evil content with her; howbeit she was in no fault, but that she had not returned again when she had done her message. But she durst not, for

she knew well the count, her husband, was cruel where he took displeasure. Thus the matter standeth.

"The count's son, called Gaston, grew and waxed goodly, and was married to the daughter of the Count of Armagnac, a fair lady, sister to the count that now is, the Lord Bertrand of Armagnac; and, by the conjunction of that marriage, there should have been peace between Foix and Armagnac. The child was a fifteen or sixteen years of age, and resembled right well to his father. On a time he desired to go into Navarre to see his mother, and his uncle the King of Navarre; which was in an evil hour for him and for all this country. When he was come into Navarre, he had there good cheer, and tarried with his mother a certain space, and then took his leave; but for all that he could do, he could not get his mother out of Navarre, to have gone with him into Foix. For she demanded if the count had commanded him so to do, or no; and he answered, that when he departed the count spake nothing thereof. Therefore the lady durst not go thither, but so tarried still.

"Then the child went to Pampeluna to take his leave of the king, his uncle. The king made him great cheer, and tarried him there a ten days, and gave to him great gifts, and to his men. Also the last gift that the king gave him was his death. I shall show you how.

"When this gentleman should depart, the king drew him apart into his chamber, and gave him a little purse full of powder, which powder was such, that if any creature living did eat thereof, he should incontinent die without remedy. Then the king said, 'Gaston, fair nephew, ye shall do as I shall show to you. Ye see how the Count of Foix, your father, wrongfully hath your mother, my sister, in great hate; whereof I am sore displeased, and so ought ye to be; howbeit, to perform all the matter, and that your father should love

again your mother, to that intent ye shall take a little of this powder and put it on some meat that your father may eat it; but beware that no man see you. And as soon as he hath eaten it, he shall intend to nothing but to have again his wife, and so to love her ever after, which ye ought greatly to desire; and of this that I show you let no man know, but keep it secret, or else ye lose all the deed.' The child, who thought all that the king said to him had been true, said, 'Sir, it shall be done as ye have devised;' and so he departed from Pampeluna, and returned to Orthes. The count, his father, made him good cheer, and demanded tidings of the King of Navarre, and what gifts he had given him; and the child showed him how he had given him divers, and showed him all except the purse with the powder.

"Ofttimes this young Gaston and Juan, his bastard brother, lay together, for they loved each other like brethren, and were like arrayed and apparelled, for they were near of a greatness and of one age; and it happened on a time, as their clothes lay together on their bed, Juan saw a purse at Gaston's coat, and said, 'What thing is this that ye bear ever about you?' Whereof Gaston had no joy, and said, 'Juan, give me my coat, ye have nothing to do therewith;' and all that day after Gaston was pensive.

"And it fortuned a three days after, as God would, that the count should be saved, Gaston and his brother Juan fell out together, playing at tennis, and Gaston gave him a blow, and the child went into his father's chamber and wept. And the count as then had heard mass, and when the count saw him weep, he said, 'Son Juan, what ailest thou?' 'Sir,' quoth he, 'Gaston hath beaten me, but he were more worthy to be beaten than me.' 'Why so?' quoth the count, and incontinent suspected something. 'By my faith, sir,' said he, 'since he

returned out of Navarre, he beareth privily at his breast a purse full of powder; I wot not what it is, or what he will do therewith, but he hath said to me once or twice, that my lady, his mother, should shortly be again in your grace, and better beloved than ever she was.' 'Peace!' quoth the count, 'and speak no more, and show this to no man living.' 'Sir,' said he, 'no more I shall.' Then the count entered into imagination, and so came to the hour of his dinner; and he washed, and sat down at his table in the hall. Gaston, his son, was used to set down all his service, and to make the essays.* And when he had set down the first course, the count cast his eyes on him, and saw the strings of the purse hanging at his bosom. Then his blood changed, and he said, 'Gaston, come hither, I would speak with thee in thine ear.' And the child came to him, and the count took him by the bosom, and found out the purse, and with his knife cut it from his bosom. The child was abashed, and stood still, and spake no word, and looked as pale as ashes, for fear, and began to tremble. The Count of Foix opened the purse, and took of the powder, and laid it on a trencher of bread, and called to him a dog, and gave it him to eat; and as soon as the dog had eaten the first morsel, he turned his eyes in his head, and died incontinent. And when the count saw that, he was sore displeased, and also he had good cause, and so rose from the table, and took his knife, and would have stricken his son. Then the knights and squires ran between them, and said, 'Sir, for God's sake have mercy, and be not so hasty; be well informed first of the matter, ere ye do any evil to your child.' And the first word that the count said, was, 'Ah! Gaston! traitor! for to increase thine heritage that should come to thee, I have had war and hatred of the French King, of the King of England, of the King of Spain, of the King of Na-

* Tasted the dishes, to prevent the poisoning of the prince.

varre, and of the King of Arragon, and as yet I have borne all their malice, and now thou wouldst murder me; it moveth of an evil nature: but first thou shalt die with this stroke.' And so he stepped forth with his knife and would have slain him; but then all the knights and squires kneeled down before him weeping, and said, 'Ah sir, have mercy for God's sake—slay not Gaston, your son. Remember ye have no more children; Sir, cause him to be kept, and take good information of the matter: peradventure he knew not what he bare, and peradventure is nothing guilty of the deed.' 'Well,' quoth the count, 'incontinent put him in prison, and let him be so kept that I may have a reckoning of him.' Then the child was put into the tower.

"And the count took a great many of them that served his son, and some of them departed; and as yet the Bishop of Lescar is out of the country, for he was had in suspect, and so were divers others. The count caused to be put to death a fifteen right horribly; and the cause that the count laid to them was, he said, it could be none otherwise but that they knew of the child's secrets, wherefore they ought to have showed it to him, and to have said, 'Sir; Gaston, your son, beareth a purse at his bosom.' Because they did not thus, they died horribly; whereof it was great pity, for some of them were as fresh and jolly squires as were any in all the country. For ever the count was served with good men.

"This thing touched the count near to the heart, and that he well showed: for, on a day, he assembled at Orthes all the nobles and prelates of Foix and of Bierne, and all the notable persons of his country; and when they were all assembled, he showed them whereof he sent for them, as how he had found his son in this default, for the which he said his intent was to put him to death, as he had well deserved. Then all the people

answered to that case with one voice, and said, 'Sir, saving your grace, we will not that Gaston should die; he is your heir, and ye have no more.' And when the count heard the people, how they desired for his son, he somewhat refrained his ire. Then he thought to chastise him in prison a month or two, and then to send him on some voyage for two or three years, till he might somewhat forget his evil will, and that the child might be of greater age and of more knowledge.

"Then he gave leave to all the people to depart; but they of Foix would not depart from Orthes till the count should assure them that Gaston should not die; they loved the child so well. Then the count promised them, but he said he would keep him in prison a certain time to chastise him; and so upon this promise every man departed, and Gaston abode still in prison.

"These tidings spread abroad into divers places, and at that time Pope Gregory the Eleventh was at Avignon. Then he sent the Cardinal of Amiens in legation into Bierne, to have come to the Count of Foix for that business. And by that time he came to Beziers, he heard such tidings that he needed not go any further for that matter; for there he heard how Gaston, son to the Count of Foix, was dead. Since I have showed you so much, now I will show you how he died.

"The Count of Foix caused his son to be kept in a dark chamber, in the town of Orthes, a ten days; little did he eat or drink, yet he had enough brought him every day, but when he saw it he would go therefrom, and set little thereby. And some said that all the meat that had been brought him stood whole and entire the day of his death, wherefore it was great marvel that he lived so long, for divers reasons. The count caused him to be kept in the chamber alone, without any company, either to counsel or comfort him; and all that season the child lay in his clothes as he came in, and

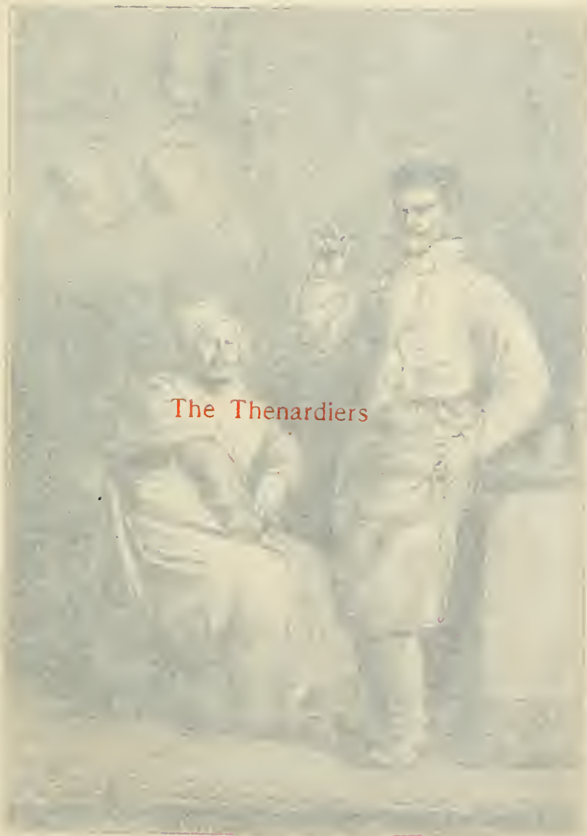
he argued in himself, and was full of melancholy, and cursed the time that ever he was born and engendered, to come to such an end.

"The same day that he died, they that served him of meat and drink, when they came to him, they said, 'Gaston, here is meat for you;' he made no care thereof, and said, 'Set it down there.' He that served him regarded and saw in the prison all the meat stand whole as it had been brought him before, and so departed and closed the chamber door, and went to the count and said, 'Sir, for God's sake have mercy on your son, Gaston, for he is near famished in prison; there he lieth. I think he never did eat anything since he came into prison, for I have seen there this day all that ever I brought him before, lying together in a corner.' Of these words the count was sore displeased; and without any word speaking, went out of his chamber, and came to the prison where his son was, and in an evil hour. He had the same time a little knife in his hand, to pare withal his nails. He opened the prison door, and came to his son, and had the little knife in his hand, and in great displeasure he thrust his hand to his son's throat, and the point of the knife a little entered into his throat into a certain vein, and said, 'Ah traitor! why dost not thou eat thy meat?' And therewith the earl departed without any more doing or saying, and went into his own chamber. The child was abashed, and afraid of the coming of his father, and also was feeble of fasting, and the point of the knife a little entered into a vein of his throat, and so he fell down suddenly and died. The count was scarcely in his chamber, but the keeper of the child came up to him and said, 'Sir, Gaston, your son, is dead!' 'Dead?' quoth the count. 'Yea, truly, Sir,' answered he. The count would not believe it, but sent thither a squire that was by him, and he went, and came again, and said, 'Sir, surely he is dead.' Then

the count was sorely displeased and made great complaint for his son, and said. 'Ah, Gaston! what a poor adventure is this for thee, and for me! In an evil hour thou wentest to Navarre to see thy mother; I shall never have the joy that I had before!' Then the count caused his barber to shave him, and clothed himself in black, and all his house, and with much sore weeping the child was borne to the Friars in Orthes, and there buried.

"Thus, as I have shown you, the Count of Foix slew Gaston, his son; but the King of Navarre gave the occasion of his death."

COSETTE



The Thenardiers

COSETTE

From "Les Miserables:" Victor Hugo

CHAPTER I

ONE MOTHER MEETS ANOTHER MOTHER

THERE was, at Montfermeil, near Paris, during the first quarter of this century, a sort of cook-shop which no longer exists.

Nothing is more common than a cart or a truck at the door of a hostelry. Nevertheless, the vehicle, or, to speak more accurately, the fragment of a vehicle, which encumbered the street in front of the cook-shop of the Sergeant of Waterloo, one evening in the spring of 1818, would certainly have attracted, by its mass, the attention of any painter who had passed that way.

It was the fore-carriage of one of those trucks which are used in wooded tracts of country, and which serve to transport thick planks and the trunks of trees. This fore-carriage was composed of a massive iron axle-tree with a pivot, into which was fitted a heavy shaft, and which was supported by two huge wheels. The whole thing was compact, overwhelming, and misshapen. It seemed like the gun-carriage of an enormous cannon. The ruts of the road had bestowed on the wheels, the fellies, the hub, the axle, and the shaft, a layer of mud, a hideous yellowish daubing hue, tolerably like that

with which people are fond of ornamenting cathedrals. The wood was disappearing under mud, and the iron beneath rust. Under the axle-tree hung, like drapery, a huge chain, worthy of some Goliath of a convict.

The center of the chain swung very near the ground in the middle, and in the loop, as in the rope of a swing, there were seated and grouped, on that particular evening, in exquisite interlacement, two little girls; one about two years and a half old, the other, eighteen months; the younger in the arms of the other. A handkerchief, cleverly knotted about them, prevented their falling out. A mother had caught sight of that frightful chain, and had said, "Come! there's a plaything for my children."

The two children, who were dressed prettily and with some elegance, were radiant with pleasure; one would have said that they were two roses amid old iron; their eyes were a triumph; their fresh cheeks were full of laughter. One had chestnut hair; the other, brown. Their innocent faces were two delighted surprises; a blossoming shrub which grew near wafted to the passers-by perfumes which seemed to emanate from them.

A few paces apart, crouching down upon the threshold of the hostelry, the mother, not a very prepossessing woman, by the way, though touching at that moment, was swinging the two children by means of a long cord, watching them carefully, for fear of accidents, with that animal and celestial expression which is peculiar to maternity. At every backward and forward swing the hideous links emitted a strident sound, which resembled a cry of rage; the little girls were in ecstasies; the setting sun mingled in this joy, and nothing could be more charming than this caprice of chance which had made of a chain of Titans the swing of cherubim.

As she rocked her little ones, the mother hummed in a discordant voice a romance then celebrated:

"It must be, said a warrior."

Her song, and the contemplation of her daughters, prevented her hearing and seeing what was going on in the street.

In the meantime, some one had approached her, as she was beginning the first couplet of the romance, and suddenly she heard a voice saying very near her ear:

"You have two beautiful children there, Madame."

"To the fair and tender Imogene—"

replied the mother, continuing her romance; then she turned her head.

A woman stood before her, a few paces distant. This woman also had a child, which she carried in her arms.

She was carrying, in addition, a large carpet-bag, which seemed very heavy.

This woman's child was one of the most divine creatures that it is possible to behold. It was a girl, two or three years of age. She could have entered into competition with the two other little ones, so far as the coquetry of her dress was concerned; she wore a cap of fine linen, ribbons on her bodice, and Valenciennes lace on her cap. The folds of her skirt were raised so as to permit a view of her white, firm, and dimpled leg. She was admirably rosy and healthy. The little beauty inspired a desire to take a bite from the apples of her cheeks. Of her eyes nothing could be known, except that they must be very large, and that they had magnificent lashes. She was asleep.

She slept with that slumber of absolute confidence

peculiar to her age. The arms of mothers are made of tenderness; in them children sleep profoundly.

As for the mother, her appearance was sad and poverty-stricken. She was dressed like a working-woman who is inclined to turn into a peasant again. She was young. Was she handsome? Perhaps; but in that attire it was not apparent. Her hair, a golden lock of which had escaped, seemed very thick, but was severely concealed beneath an ugly, tight, close nun-like cap, tied under the chin. A smile displays beautiful teeth when one has them; but she did not smile. Her eyes did not seem to have been dry for a long time. She was pale; she had a very weary and rather sickly appearance. She gazed upon her daughter asleep in her arms with the air peculiar to a mother who has nursed her own child. A large blue handkerchief, such as the Invalides use, was folded into a fichu, and concealed her figure clumsily. Her hands were sunburnt and all dotted with freckles, her forefinger was hardened and lacerated with the needle; she wore a cloak of coarse brown woolen stuff, a linen gown, and coarse shoes.

Charms exist. These two little girls were a charm to this mother.

She gazed at them in much emotion. The presence of angels is an announcement of Paradise. She thought that, above this inn, she beheld the mysterious HERE of Providence. These two little creatures were evidently happy. She gazed at them, she admired them, in such emotion that at the moment when their mother was recovering her breath between two couplets of her song, she could not refrain from addressing to her the remark which we have just read:

"You have two pretty children, Madame."

The most ferocious creatures are disarmed by caresses bestowed on their young.

The mother raised her head and thanked her, and

bade the wayfarer sit down on the bench at the door, she herself being seated on the threshold. The two women began to chat.

"My name is Madame Thénardier," said the mother of the two little girls. "We keep this inn."

Then, her mind still running on her romance, she resumed, humming between her teeth:

"It must be so; I am a knight,
And I am off to Palestine."

The traveler told her story, with slight modifications. That she was a working-woman; that her husband was dead; that her work in Paris had failed her, and that she was on her way to seek it elsewhere, in her own native parts; that she had left Paris that morning, on foot; that, as she was carrying her child, and felt fatigued, she had got into the Villemomble coach when she met it; that from Villemomble she had come to Montfermeil on foot; that the little one had walked a little, but not much, because she was so young, and that she had been obliged to take her up, and the jewel had fallen asleep.

At this word she bestowed on her daughter a passionate kiss, which woke her. The child opened her eyes, great blue eyes like her mother's, and looked at—what? Nothing; with that serious and sometimes severe air of little children, which is a mystery of their luminous innocence in the presence of our twilight of virtue. One would say that they feel themselves to be angels, and that they know us to be men. Then the child began to laugh, and although the mother held fast to her, she slipped to the ground with the unconquerable energy of a little being which wished to run. All at once she caught sight of the two others in the swing,

stopped short, and put out her tongue, in sign of admiration.

Mother Thénardier released her daughters, made them descend from the swing, and said:

"Now amuse yourselves, all three of you."

Children become acquainted quickly at that age, and at the expiration of a minute the little Thénardiers were playing with the new-comer at making holes in the ground, which was an immense pleasure.

The new-comer was very gay; the goodness of the mother is written in the gayety of the child, and she had seized a scrap of wood which served her for a shovel, and energetically dug a cavity big enough for a fly. The grave-digger's business becomes a subject for laughter when performed by a child.

The two women pursued their chat.

"What is your little one's name?"

"Cosette."

For Cosette read Euphrasie. The child's name was Euphrasie. But out of Euphrasie the mother had made Cosette by that sweet and graceful instinct of mothers and of the populace which changes Josepha into Pepita, and Françoise into Sillette.

"How old is she?"

"She is going on three."

"That is the age of my eldest."

In the meantime, the three little girls were grouped in an attitude of profound anxiety and blissfulness; an event had happened; a big worm had emerged from the ground, and they were afraid, and they were in ecstasies over it.

Their radiant brows touched each other; one would have said that there were three heads in one aureole.

"How easily children get acquainted at once!" exclaimed Mother Thénardier; "one would swear that they were three sisters!"

This remark was probably the spark which the other mother had been waiting for. She seized the Thénardier's hand, looked at her fixedly, and said:

"Will you keep my child for me?"

The Thénardier made one of those movements of surprise which signify neither assent nor refusal.

Cosette's mother continued:

"You see, I cannot take my daughter to the country. My work will not permit it. With a child one can find no situation. People are ridiculous in the country. It was the good God who caused me to pass your inn. When I caught sight of your little ones, so pretty, so clean and so happy, it overwhelmed me. I said, 'Here is a good mother. That is just the thing; that will make three sisters.' And then, it will not be long before I return. Will you keep my child for me?"

"I must see about it," replied the Thénardier.

"I will give you six francs a month."

Here a man's voice called from the depths of the cook-shop:

"Not for less than seven francs. And six months paid in advance."

"Six times seven makes forty-two," said the Thénardier.

"I will give it," said the mother.

"And fifteen francs in addition for preliminary expenses," added the man's voice.

"Total, fifty-seven francs," said Madame Thénardier. And she hummed vaguely with these figures:

"It must be, said a warrior."

"I will pay it," said the mother. "I have eighty francs. I shall have enough left to reach the country,

by traveling on foot. I shall earn money there, and as soon as I have a little, I will return for my darling."

The man's voice resumed:

"The little one has an outfit?"

"That is my husband," said the Thénardier.

"Of course she has an outfit, the poor treasure.—I understood perfectly that it was your husband.—And a beautiful outfit, too! A senseless outfit, everything by the dozen, and silk gowns like a lady. It is here, in my carpet-bag."

"You must hand it over," struck in the man's voice again.

"Of course I shall give it to you," said the mother. "It would be very queer if I were to leave my daughter quite naked."

The master's face appeared.

"That's good," said he.

The bargain was concluded. The mother passed the night at the inn, gave up her money and left her child, fastened her carpet-bag once more, now reduced in volume by the removal of the outfit, and light henceforth, and set out on the following morning intending to return soon. People arrange such departures tranquilly; but they are despairs!

A neighbor of the Thénardiers met this mother as she was setting out, and came back with the remark:

"I have just seen a woman crying in the street so that it was enough to rend your heart."

When Cosette's mother had taken her departure, the man said to the woman:

"That will serve to pay my note for one hundred and ten francs which falls due to-morrow; I lacked fifty francs. Do you know that I should have had a bailiff and a protest after me? You played the mouse-trap nicely with your young ones."

"Without suspecting it," said the woman.

CHAPTER II

THE LARK

IT is not all in all sufficient to be wicked in order to prosper. The cook-shop was in a bad way.

Thanks to the traveler's fifty-seven francs, Thénardier had been able to avoid a protest and to honor his signature. On the following month they were again in need of money. The woman took Cosette's outfit to Paris and pawned it at the pawnbroker's for sixty francs. As soon as that sum was spent, the Thénardier's grew accustomed to look on the little girl merely as a child whom they were caring for out of charity; and they treated her accordingly. As she had no longer any clothes, they dressed her in the cast-off petticoats and chemises of the Thénardier brats; that is to say, in rags. They fed her on what all the rest had left—a little better than the dog, a little worse than the cat. Moreover, the cat and the dog were her habitual table-companions; Cosette ate with them under the table, from a wooden bowl similar to theirs.

The mother wrote, or, more correctly, caused to be written, a letter every month, that she might have news of her child. The Thénardiers replied invariably, "Cosette is doing wonderfully well."

At the expiration of the first six months the mother sent seven francs for the seventh month, and continued her remittances with tolerable regularity from month to month. The year was not completed when Thénardier said: "A fine favor she is doing us, in sooth! What does she expect us to do with her seven

francs?" and he wrote to demand twelve francs. The mother, whom they had persuaded into the belief that her child was happy, "and was coming on well," submitted, and forwarded the twelve francs.

Certain natures cannot love on the one hand without hating on the other. Mother Thénardier loved her two daughters passionately, which caused her to hate the stranger.

It is sad to think that the love of a mother can possess villainous aspects. Little as was the space occupied by Cosette, it seemed to her as though it were taken from her own, and that that little child diminished the air which her daughters breathed. This woman, like many women of her sort, had a load of caresses and a burden of blows and injuries to dispense each day. If she had not had Cosette, it is certain that her daughters, idolized as they were, would have received the whole of it; but the stranger did them the service to divert the blows to herself. Her daughters received nothing but caresses. Cosette could not make a motion which did not draw down upon her head a heavy shower of violent blows and unmerited chastisement. The sweet, feeble being, who should not have understood anything of this world or of God, incessantly punished, scolded, ill-used, beaten and seeing beside her two little creatures like herself, who lived in a ray of dawn!

Madame Thénardier was vicious with Cosette. Eponine and Azelma were vicious. Children at that age are only copies of their mother. The size is smaller; that is all.

A year passed; then another.

People in the village said:

"Those Thénardiers are good people. They are not rich, and yet they are bringing up a poor child who was abandoned on their hands!"

They thought that Cosette's mother had forgotten her.

In the meanwhile, Thénardier exacted fifteen francs a month, saying that "the creature" was growing and "eating," and threatening to send her away.

From year to year the child grew, and so did her wretchedness.

As long as Cosette was little she was the scapegoat of the two other children, as soon as she began to develop a little, that is to say, before she was even five years old, she became the servant of the household.

Five years old! the reader will say; that is not probable. Alas! it is true. Social suffering begins at all ages. Have we not recently seen the trial of a man named Dumollard, an orphan turned bandit, who, from the age of five, as the official documents state, being alone in the world, "worked for his living and stole?"

Cosette was made to run on errands, to sweep the rooms, the courtyard, the street, to wash the dishes, to even carry burdens. The Thénardiers considered themselves all the more authorized to behave in this manner, since the mother had become irregular in her payments. Some months she was in arrears.

If this mother had returned to Montfermeil at the end of these three years, she would not have recognized her child. Cosette, so pretty and rosy on her arrival in that house, was now thin and pale. She had an indescribably uneasy look. "The sly creature," said the Thénardiers.

Injustice had made her peevish, and misery had made her ugly. Nothing remained to her except her beautiful eyes, which inspired pain, because, large as they were, it seemed as though one beheld in them a still larger amount of sadness.

It was a heart-breaking thing to see this poor child,

not yet six years old, shivering in the winter in her old rags of linen, full of holes, sweeping the street before daylight, with an enormous broom in her tiny red hands and a tear in her great eyes.

She was called the Lark in the neighborhood. The populace, who are fond of these figures of speech, had taken a fancy to bestow this name on this trembling, frightened and shivering little creature, no bigger than a bird, who was awake every morning before any one else in the house or the village, and was always in the street or the fields before daybreak.

Only the little lark never sang.

CHAPTER III

THE WATER QUESTION AT MONTFERMEIL

MONTFERMEIL was only a village in the forest. Water was rare there, on account of the elevation of the plateau. It was necessary to fetch it from a considerable distance; the end of the village towards Gagny drew its water from the magnificent ponds which exist in the woods there. The other end, which surrounds the church, and which lies in the direction of Chelles, found drinking water only at a little spring half way down the slope, near the road to Chelles, about a quarter of an hour from Montfermeil.

Thus each household found it hard work to keep supplied with water. The large houses, the aristocracy, of which the Thénardier tavern formed a part, paid half a farthing a bucketful to a man who made a business of it, and who earned about eight sous a day in his enterprise of supplying Montfermeil with water; but this good man only worked until seven o'clock in the evening in summer, and five in winter; and night once come and the shutters on the ground floor once closed, he who had no water to drink went to fetch it for himself or did without it.

This constituted the terror of the poor creature, little Cosette. It will be remembered that Cosette was useful to the Thénardiers in two ways: they made the mother pay them and they made the child serve them. So when the mother ceased to pay altogether the Thénardiers kept Cosette. She took the place of a servant in their house. In this capacity she it was who ran to

fetch water when it was required. So the child, who was greatly terrified at the idea of going to the spring at night, took great care that water should never be lacking in the house.

On Christmas eve a number of men, carters and pedlers, were seated at table, drinking and smoking around four or five candles in the public room of Thénardier's hostelry. This room resembled all drinking-shop rooms—tables, pewter jugs, bottles, drinkers, smokers; but little light and a great deal of noise. The female Thénardier was attending to the supper, which was roasting in front of a clear fire; her husband was drinking with his customers and talking politics.

Cosette was in her usual place, seated on the cross-bar of the kitchen table near the chimney. She was in rags; her bare feet were thrust into wooden shoes, and by the firelight she was engaged in knitting woolen stockings destined for the young Thénardiers. A very young kitten was playing about among the chairs. Laughter and chatter were audible in the adjoining room, from two fresh children's voices: it was Eponine and Azelma.

In the chimney-corner a cat-o'-nine-tails was hanging on a nail.

Cosette was like a creature who is at the same time being ground up in a mill and pulled to pieces with pincers. The man and the woman each had a different method: Cosette was overwhelmed with blows—this was the woman's; she went barefooted in winter—that was the man's doing.

Cosette ran up stairs, and down, washed, swept, rubbed, dusted, ran, fluttered about, panted, moved heavy articles, and weak as she was, did the coarse work. There was no mercy for her; a fierce mistress and venomous master. The Thénardier hostelry was

like a spider's web in which Cosette had been caught, and where she lay trembling. The ideal of oppression was realized by this sinister household. It was something like the fly serving the spiders.

The poor child passively held her peace.

What takes place within these souls when they have but just quitted God, find themselves thus, at the very dawn of life, very small and in the midst of men all naked!

Four new travelers had arrived.

Cosette was meditating sadly; for, although she was only eight years old, she had already suffered so much that she reflected with the lugubrious air of an old woman. Her eye was black in consequence of a blow from Madame Thénardier's fist, which caused the latter to remark from time to time, "How ugly she is with her fist-blow on her eye!"

Cosette was thinking that it was dark, very dark; that the pitchers and caraffes in the chambers of the travelers who had arrived must have been filled and that there was no more water in the cistern.

She was somewhat reassured because no one in the Thénardier establishment drank much water. Thirsty people were never lacking there, but their thirst was of the sort which applies to the jug rather than to the pitcher. Any one who had asked for a glass of water among all those glasses of wine would have appeared a savage to all these men. But there came a moment when the child trembled; Madame Thénardier raised the cover of a stew-pan which was boiling on the stove, then seized a glass and briskly approached the cistern. She turned the faucet; the child had raised her head and was following all the woman's movements. A thin stream of water trickled from the faucet, and half filled the glass. "Well," said she, "there is no

more water!" A momentary silence ensued. The child did not breathe.

"Bah!" resumed Madame Thénardier, examining the half-filled glass, "this will be enough."

Cosette applied herself to her work once more, but for a quarter of an hour she felt her heart leaping in her bosom like a big snow-flake.

She counted the minutes that passed in this manner and wished it were the next morning.

From time to time one of the drinkers looked into the street, and exclaimed, "It's as black as an oven!" or, "One must needs be a cat to go about the streets without a lantern at this hour!" And Cosette trembled.

All at once one of the pedlers who lodged in the hostelry entered, and said in a harsh voice:

"My horse has not been watered."

"Yes, it has," said Madame Thénardier.

"I tell you that it has not," retorted the pedler.

Cosette had emerged from under the table.

"Oh, yes, sir!" said she, "the horse has had a drink; he drank out of a bucket, a whole bucketful, and it was I who took the water to him, and I spoke to him."

It was not true; Cosette lied.

"There's a brat as big as my fist who tells lies as big as the house," exclaimed the pedler. "I tell you that he has not been watered, you little jade! He has a way of blowing when he has had no water, which I know well."

Cosette persisted, and added in a voice rendered hoarse with anguish, and which was hardly audible:

"And he even drank heartily."

"Come," said the pedler, in a rage, "this won't do at all; let my horse be watered, and let that be the end of it!"

Cosette crept under the table again.

"In truth, that is fair!" said Madame Thénardier, "if the beast has not been watered, it must be."

Then glancing about her:

"Well, now! Where's that other beast?"

She bent down and discovered Cosette cowering at the other end of the table, almost under the drinkers' feet.

"Are you coming?" shrieked Madame Thénardier.

Cosette crawled out of the sort of hole in which she had hidden herself. The Thénardier resumed:

"Miss Nobody's dog, go and water that horse."

"But, Madame," said Cosette, feebly, "there is no water."

The Thénardier threw the street door wide open:

"Well, go and get some, then."

Cosette dropped her head and went for an empty bucket which stood near the chimney corner.

This bucket was bigger than she was, and the child could have sat down in it at her ease.

The Thénardier returned to her stove, and tasted what was in the stewpan with a wooden spoon, grumbling the while:

"There's plenty in the spring. There never was such a malicious creature as that. I think I should have done better to strain my onions."

Then she rummaged in a drawer which contained sous, pepper, and shallots.

"See here, Mam'selle Toad," she added, "on your way back, you will get a big loaf from the baker. Here's a fifteen-sou piece."

Cosette had a little pocket on one side of her apron; she took the coin without saying a word, and put it in that pocket.

Then she stood motionless, bucket in hand, the open door before her. She seemed to be waiting for some one to come to her rescue.

"Get along with you!" screamed the Thénardier.

Cosette went out. The door closed behind her.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHILD AND THE DOLL

THE line of open-air booths, starting at the church, extended as far as the hostelry of the Thénardiers. These booths were all illuminated, because the citizens would soon pass on their way to the midnight mass, with candles burning in paper funnels, which, as the schoolmaster, then seated at the table at the Thénardiers' observed, produced "a magical effect." In compensation, not a star was visible in the sky.

The last of these stalls, established precisely opposite the Thénardiers' door, was a toy-shop all glittering with tinsel, glass, and magnificent objects of tin. In the first row, and far forwards, the merchant had placed on a background of white napkins, an immense doll, nearly two feet high, dressed in a robe of pink crepe, with gold wheat-ears on her head, real hair and enamel eyes. All that day, this marvel had been displayed to the wonderment of all passers-by under ten years of age, without a mother being found in Montfermeil sufficiently rich or sufficiently extravagant to give it to her child. Eponine and Azelma had passed hours in contemplating it, and Cosette herself had ventured to cast a glance at it, on the sly, it is true.

At the moment when Cosette emerged, bucket in hand, melancholy and overcome as she was, she could not refrain from lifting her eyes to that wonderful doll, towards "the lady," as she called it. The poor child paused in amazement. She had not yet beheld that doll close to. The whole shop seemed a palace

to her: the doll was not a doll, it was a vision. It was joy, splendor, riches, happiness, which appeared in a sort of chimerical halo to that unhappy little being so profoundly engulfed in gloomy and chilly misery. With the sad and innocent sagacity of childhood, Cosette measured the abyss which separated her from that doll. She said to herself that one must be a queen, or at least a princess, to have a "thing" like that. She gazed at that beautiful pink dress, that beautiful smooth hair, and she thought, "How happy that doll must be!" She could not take her eyes from that fantastic stall. The more she looked, the more dazzled she grew. She thought she was gazing at paradise. There were other dolls behind the large one, which seemed to her fairies and genii. The merchant, who was pacing back and forth in front of his shop, produced on her somewhat the effect of being the Eternal Father.

In this adoration she forgot everything, even the errand with which she was charged.

All at once the Thénardier's coarse voice recalled her to reality: "What, you silly jade! you have not gone? Wait! I'll give it to you! I want to know what you are doing there! Get along, you little monster!"

The Thénardier had cast a glance into the street, and had caught side of Cosette in her ecstasy.

Cosette fled, dragging her pail, and taking the longest strides of which she was capable.

CHAPTER V

THE TERROR OF DARKNESS

SO long as she was in the neighborhood of the church, the lighted stalls illuminated the road; but soon the last light from the last stall vanished. The poor child found herself in the dark. She plunged into it. Only, as a certain emotion overcame her, she made as much motion as possible with the handle of the bucket as she walked along. This made a noise which afforded her company.

The further she went, the denser the darkness became. There was no one in the streets. However, she did encounter a woman, who turned around on seeing her, and stood still, muttering between her teeth: "Where can that child be going? Is it a werewolf child?" Then the woman recognized Cosette. "Well," said she, "it's the Lark!"

So long as she had the houses or even the walls only on both sides of her path, she proceeded with tolerable boldness. From time to time she caught the flicker of a candle through the crack of a shutter—this was light and life; there were people there, and it reassured her. But in proportion as she advanced, her pace slackened mechanically, as it were. When she had passed the corner of the last house, Cosette paused. It had been hard to advance further than the last stall; it became impossible to proceed further than the last house. She set her bucket on the ground, thrust her hand into her hair, and began slowly to scratch her head,—a gesture peculiar to children when terrified and undecided

what to do. It was no longer Montfermeil; it was the open fields. Black and desert space was before her. She gazed in despair at that darkness, where there was no longer any one, where there were beasts, where there were specters, possibly. She took a good look, and heard the beasts walking on the grass, and she distinctly saw specters moving in the trees. Then she seized her bucket again; fear had lent her audacity. "Bah!" said she; "I will tell him that there was no more water!" And she resolutely re-entered Montfermeil.

Hardly had she gone a hundred paces when she paused and began to scratch her head again. Now it was the Thénardier who appeared to her, with her hideous, hyena mouth, and wrath flashing in her eyes. The child cast a melancholy glance before her and behind her. What was she to do? What was to become of her? Where was she to go? In front of her was the specter of the Thénardier; behind her all the phantoms of the night and of the forest. It was before the Thénardier that she recoiled. She resumed her path to the spring, and began to run. She emerged from the village, she entered the forest at a run, no longer looking at or listening to anything. She only paused in her course when her breath failed her; but she did not halt in her advance. She went straight before her in desperation.

As she ran she felt like crying.

The nocturnal quivering of the forest surrounded her completely.

She no longer thought, she no longer saw. The immensity of night was facing this tiny creature. On the one hand, all shadow; on the other, an atom.

It was only seven or eight minutes' walk from the edge of the woods to the spring. Cosette knew the way, through having gone over it many times in daylight. Strange to say, she did not get lost. A rem-

nant of instinct guided her vaguely. But she did not turn her eyes either to right or to left, for fear of seeing things in the branches and in the brushwood. In this manner she reached the spring.

It was a narrow, natural basin, hollowed out by the water in a clayey soil, about two feet deep, surrounded with moss and with those tall, crimped grasses which are called Henry IV.'s frills, and paved with several large stones. A brook ran out of it, with a tranquil little noise.

Cosette did not take time to breathe. It was very dark, but she was in the habit of coming to this spring. She felt with her left hand in the dark for a young oak which leaned over the spring, and which usually served to support her, found one of its branches, clung to it, bent down, and plunged the bucket in the water. She was in a state of such violent excitement that her strength was trebled. While thus bent over, she did not notice that the pocket of her apron had emptied itself into the spring. The fifteen-sou piece fell into the water. Cosette neither saw nor heard it fall. She drew out the bucket nearly full, and set it on the grass.

That done, she perceived that she was worn out with fatigue. She would have liked to set out again at once, but the effort required to fill the bucket had been such that she found it impossible to take a step. She was forced to sit down. She dropped on the grass, and remained crouching there.

She shut her eyes; then she opened them again, without knowing why, but because she could not do otherwise. The agitated water in the bucket beside her was describing circles which resembled tin serpents.

Overhead the sky was covered with vast black clouds, which were like masses of smoke. The tragic mask of shadow seemed to bend vaguely over the child.

There are no words to express the strangeness of that shiver which chilled her to the very bottom of her heart; her eye grew wild.

Then, by a sort of instinct, she began to count aloud, one, two, three, four, and so on up to ten, in order to escape from that which terrified her, and, when she had finished, she began again; this restored her to a true perception of the things about her. Her hands, which she had wet in drawing the water, felt cold; she rose; her terror, a natural and unconquerable terror, had returned; she had but one thought now, to flee at full speed through the forest, across the fields to the houses, to the windows, to the lighted candles. Her glance fell upon the water which stood before her; such was the fright which the Thénardier inspired in her that she dared not flee without that bucket of water: she seized the handle with both hands, she could hardly lift the pail.

In this manner she advanced a dozen paces, but the bucket was full; it was heavy; she was forced to set it on the ground once more. She took breath for an instant, then lifted the handle of the bucket again, and resumed her march, proceeding a little further this time, but again she was obliged to pause. After some seconds of repose she set out again. She walked bent forward, with drooping head, like an old woman; the weight of the bucket strained and stiffened her thin arms. The iron handle completed the benumbing and freezing of her wet and tiny hands. She was forced to halt from time to time, and each time that she did so, the cold water which splashed from the pail fell on her bare legs. This took place in the depths of a forest, at night, in winter, far from all human sight; she was a child of eight; no one but God saw that sad thing at the moment.

And her mother, no doubt, alas!

For there are things that make the dead open their eyes in their graves.

She panted with a sort of painful rattle; sobs contracted her throat, but she dared not weep, so afraid was she of the Thénardier, even at a distance; it was her custom to imagine the Thénardier always present.

However, she could not make much headway in that manner, and she went on very slowly. In spite of diminishing the length of her stops, and of walking as long as possible between them, she reflected with anguish that it would take her more than an hour to return to Montfermeil in this manner, and that the Thénardier would beat her. This anguish was mingled with her terror at being alone in the woods at night; she was worn out with fatigue, and had not yet emerged from the forest. On arriving near an old chestnut tree, with which she was acquainted, she made a last halt, longer than the rest, in order that she might get well rested; then she summoned up all her strength, picked up her bucket again, and courageously resumed her march, but the poor little desperate creature could not refrain from crying, "O my God! my God!"

At that moment she suddenly became conscious that her bucket no longer weighed anything at all: a hand, which seemed to her enormous, had just seized the handle, and lifted it vigorously. She raised her head. A large black form, straight and erect, was walking beside her through the darkness: it was a man who had come up behind her and whose approach she had not heard. This man, without uttering a word, had seized the handle of the bucket which she was carrying.

There are instincts for all the encounters of life.

The child was not afraid.

CHAPTER VI

SORROW AND PITY

COSETTE, as we have said, was not frightened.

The man accosted her. He spoke in a voice that was grave and almost bass.

"My child, what you are carrying is very heavy for you."

Cosette raised her head and replied:

"Yes, sir."

"Give it to me," said the man; "I will carry it for you."

Cosette let go of the bucket handle. The man walked along beside her.

"It really is very heavy," he muttered between his teeth. Then he added:

"How old are you, little one?"

"Eight, sir."

"And have you come from far like this?"

"From the spring in the forest."

"Are you going far?"

"A good quarter of an hour's walk from here."

The man said nothing for a moment, then he remarked abruptly:

"So you have no mother?"

"I don't know," answered the child.

Before the man had time to speak again, she added:

"I don't think so. Other people have mothers. I have none."

And after a silence she went on:

"I think that I never had any."

The man halted; he set the bucket on the ground, bent down and placed both hands on the child's shoulders, making an effort to look at her and to see her face in the dark.

Cosette's thin and sickly face was vaguely outlined by the livid light in the sky.

"What is your name?" said the man.

"Cosette."

The man seemed to have received an electric shock. He looked at her once more; then he removed his hands from Cosette's shoulders, seized the bucket, and set out again.

After a moment he inquired:

"Where do you live, little one?"

"At Montfermeil, if you know where that is."

"That is where we are going?"

"Yes, sir."

He paused; then began again:

"Who sent you at such an hour to get water in the forest?"

"It was Madame Thénardier."

The man resumed, in a voice which he strove to render indifferent, but in which there was, nevertheless, a singular tremor:

"What does your Madame Thénardier do?"

"She is my mistress," said the child. "She keeps the inn."

"The inn?" said the man. "Well, I am going to lodge there to-night. Show me the way."

"We are on the way there," said the child.

The man walked tolerably fast. Cosette followed him without difficulty. She no longer felt any fatigue. From time to time she raised her eyes towards the man, with a sort of tranquility and an indescribable confidence. She had never been taught to turn to Providence and to pray; nevertheless, she felt within

her something which resembled hope and joy, and which mounted towards heaven.

Several minutes elapsed. The man resumed:

"Is there no servant in Madame Thénardier's house?"

"No, sir."

"Are you alone there?"

"Yes, sir."

Another pause ensued. Cosette lifted up her voice:

"That is to say, there are two little girls."

"What little girls?"

"Ponine and Zelma."

This was the way the child simplified the romantic names so dear to the female Thénardier.

"Who are Ponine and Zelma?"

"They are Madame Thénardier's young ladies; her daughters, as you would say."

"And what do those girls do?"

"Oh!" said the child, "they have beautiful dolls; things with gold in them, all full of fixings. They play; they amuse themselves."

"All day long?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you?"

"I! I work."

"All day long?"

The child raised her great eyes, in which hung a tear, which was not visible because of the darkness, and replied gently:

"Yes, sir."

After an interval of silence she went on:

"Sometimes, when I have finished my work and they let me, I amuse myself, too."

"How do you amuse yourself?"

"In the best way I can. They let me alone; but I have not many playthings. Ponine and Zelma will

not let me play with their dolls. I have only a little lead sword, no longer than that."

The child held up her tiny finger.

"And it will not cut?"

"Yes, sir," said the child; "it cuts salad and the heads of flies."

They reached the village. Cosette guided the stranger through the streets. They passed the bakeshop, but Cosette did not think of the bread which she had been ordered to fetch. The man had ceased to ply her with questions, and now preserved a gloomy silence.

When they had left the church behind them, the man, on perceiving all the open-air booths, asked Cosette:

"So there is a fair going on here?"

"No, sir; it is Christmas."

As they approached the tavern, Cosette timidly touched his arm:

"Monsieur?"

"What, my child?"

"We are quite near the house."

"Well?"

"Will you let me take my bucket now?"

"Why?"

"If madame sees that some one has carried it for me, she will beat me."

The man handed her the bucket. An instant later they were at the tavern door.

Cosette could not refrain from casting a sidelong glance at the big doll, which was still displayed at the toy-merchant's; then she knocked. The door opened. The Thénardier appeared with a candle in her hand.

"Ah! so it's you, you little wretch! Good mercy, but you've taken your time! The hussy has been amusing herself!"

"Madame," said Cosette, trembling all over, "here is a gentleman who wants a lodging."

The Thénardier speedily replaced her gruff air by her amiable grimace, a change of aspect common to tavern-keepers, and eagerly sought the new-comer with her eyes.

"This is the gentleman?" said she.

"Yes, Madame," replied the man, raising his hand to his hat.

Wealthy travelers are not so polite. This gesture, and an inspection of the stranger's costume and baggage, which the Thénardier passed in review with one glance, caused the amiable grimace to vanish, and the gruff mien to disappear. She resumed dryly:

"Enter, my good man."

The "good man" entered. The Thénardier cast a second glance at him, paid particular attention to his frock-coat, which was absolutely threadbare, and to his hat, which was a little battered, and, tossing her head, wrinkling her nose, and screwing up her eyes, she consulted her husband, who was still drinking with the carters. The husband replied by that imperceptible movement of the forefinger, which, backed up by an inflation of the lips, signifies in such cases: A regular beggar. Thereupon, the Thénardier exclaimed:

"Ah! see here, my good man; I am very sorry, but I have no room left."

"Put me where you like," said the man; "in the attic, in the stable. I will pay as though I occupied a room."

"Forty sous."

"Forty sous; agreed."

"Very well, then!"

"Forty sous!" said a carter, in a low tone, to the Thénardier woman; "why, the charge is only twenty sous!"

"It is forty in his case," retorted the Thénardier, in the same tone. "I don't lodge poor folks for less."

"That's true," added her husband, gently; "it ruins a house to have such people in it."

In the meantime, the man, laying his bundle and his cudgel on a bench, had seated himself at a table, on which Cosette made haste to place a bottle of wine and a glass. The merchant who had demanded the bucket of water took it to his horse himself. Cosette resumed her place under the kitchen table, and her knitting.

The man, who had barely moistened his lips in the wine which he had poured out for himself, observed the child with peculiar attention.

Cosette was ugly. If she had been happy, she might have been pretty. Cosette was thin and pale; she was nearly eight years old, but she seemed to be hardly six. Her large eyes, sunken in a sort of shadow, were almost put out with weeping. The corners of her mouth had that curve of habitual anguish which is seen in condemned persons and desperately sick people. Her hands were, as her mother had divined, "ruined with chilblains." The fire which illuminated her at that moment, brought into relief all the angles of her bones, and rendered her thinness frightfully apparent. As she was always shivering, she had acquired the habit of pressing her knees one against the other. Her entire clothing was but a rag, which would have inspired pity in summer, and which inspired horror in winter. All she had on was hole-ridden linen, not a scrap of woolen. Her skin was visible here and there, and everywhere black and blue spots could be descried, which marked the places where the Thénardier woman had touched her. Her naked legs were thin and red. The hollows in her neck were enough to make one weep. This child's whole person, her mien, her attitude, the sound of her voice, the intervals which she

allowed to elapse between one word and the next, her glance, her silence, her slightest gesture, expressed and betrayed one sole idea—fear.

Fear was diffused all over her; she was covered with it, so to speak; fear drew her elbows close to her hips, withdrew her heels under her petticoat, made her occupy as little space as possible, allowed her only the breath that was absolutely necessary, and had become what might be called the habit of her body, admitting of no possible variation except an increase. In the depths of her eyes there was an astonished nook where terror lurked.

Her fear was such that on her arrival, wet as she was, Cosette did not dare to approach the fire and dry herself, but sat silently down to her work again.

The expression in the glance of that child of eight years was habitually so gloomy, and at times so tragic, that it seemed at certain moments as though she were on the verge of becoming an idiot or a demon.

As we have stated, she had never known what it is to pray; she had never set foot in a church. "Have I the time?" said the Thénardier.

The man in the yellow coat never took his eyes from Cosette.

All at once the Thénardier exclaimed:

"By the way, where's that bread?"

Cosette, according to her custom whenever the Thénardier uplifted her voice, emerged with great haste from beneath the table.

She had completely forgotten the bread. She had recourse to the expedient of children who live in a constant state of fear. She lied.

"Madame, the baker's shop was shut."

"You should have knocked."

"I did knock, Madame."

"Well."

"He did not open the door."

"I'll find out to-morrow whether that is true," said the Thénardier, "and if you are telling me a lie, I'll lead you a pretty dance. In the meantime, give me back my fifteen-sou piece."

Cosette plunged her hand into the pocket of her apron and turned green. The fifteen-sou piece was not there.

"Ah, come now," said Madame Thénardier, "did you hear me."

Cosette turned her pocket inside out; there was nothing in it. What could have become of that money? The unhappy little creature could not find a word to say. She was petrified.

"Have you lost that fifteen-sou piece?" screamed the Thénardier, hoarsely, "or do you want to rob me of it?"

At the same time she stretched out her arms towards the cat-o'-nine-tails which hung on a nail in the chimney corner.

This formidable gesture restored to Cosette sufficient strength to shriek:

"Mercy, Madame, Madame! I will not do so any more!"

The Thénardier took down the whip.

In the meantime the man in the yellow coat had been fumbling in the fob of his waistcoat, without any one having noticed his movements. Besides, the other travelers were drinking or playing cards, and were not paying attention to anything.

Cosette contracted herself into a ball, with anguish, within the angle of the chimney, endeavoring to gather up and conceal her poor half-nude limbs. The Thénardier raised her arm.

"Pardon me, Madame," said the man, "but just now I caught sight of something which had fallen from this

little one's apron pocket and rolled aside. Perhaps this is it."

At the same time he bent down and seemed to be searching on the floor for a moment.

"Exactly; here it is," he went on, straightening himself up.

And he held out a silver coin to the Thénardier.

"Yes, that's it," said she.

It was not it, for it was a twenty-sou piece, but the Thénardier found it to her advantage. She put the coin in her pocket, and confined herself to casting a fierce glance at the child, accompanied with the remark, "Don't let this ever happen again."

Cosette returned to what the Thénardier called "her kennel," and her large eyes, which were riveted on the traveler, began to take on an expression such as they had never worn before. Thus far it was only an innocent amazement, but a sort of stupified confidence was mingled with it.

"By the way, would you like some supper?" the Thénardier inquired of the traveler.

He made no reply. He appeared to be absorbed in thought.

"What sort of a man is that?" she muttered between her teeth. "He's some frightfully poor wretch. He hasn't a sou to pay for a supper. Will he even pay me for his lodging? It's very lucky, all the same, that it did not occur to him to steal the money that was on the floor."

In the meantime a door had opened, and Eponine and Azelma entered.

They were two really pretty little girls, more bourgeois than peasant in looks, and very charming; the one with shining chestnut tresses, the other with long black braids hanging down her back, both vivacious, neat, plump, rosy and healthy, and a delight to the eye.

They were warmly clad, but with so much maternal art that the thickness of the stuffs did not detract from the coquetry of arrangement. There was a hint of winter, though the springtime was not wholly effaced. Light emanated from these two little beings. Besides this, they were on the throne. In their toilettes, in their gayety, in the noise which they made there was sovereignty. When they entered, the Thénardier said to them in a grumbling tone which was full of adoration, "Ah! there you are, you children!"

Then drawing them, one after the other to her knees, smoothing their hair, tying their ribbons afresh, and then releasing them with that gentle manner of shaking off which is peculiar to mothers, she exclaimed, "What frights they are!"

They went and seated themselves in the chimney-corner. They had a doll, which they turned over and over on their knees with all sorts of joyous chatter. From time to time Cosette raised her eyes from her knitting, and watched their play with a melancholy air.

Eponine and Azelma did not look at Cosette. She was the same as a dog to them. These three little girls did not yet reckon up four and twenty years between them, but they already represented the whole society of man; envy on the one side, disdain on the other.

The doll of the Thénardier sisters was very much faded, very old, and much broken; but it seemed none the less admirable to Cosette, who had never had a doll in her life, a real doll, to make use of the expression which all children will understand.

All at once, the Thénardier, who had been going back and forth in the room, perceived that Cosette's mind was distracted, and that, instead of working, she was paying attention to the little ones at their play.

"Ah! I've caught you at it!" she cried. "So that's

the way you work! I'll make you work to the tune of the whip; that I will."

The stranger turned to the Thénardier, without quitting his chair.

"Bah, Madame," he said, with an almost timid air, "let her play."

Such a wish expressed by a traveler who had eaten a slice of mutton and had drunk a couple of bottles of wine with his supper, and who had not the air of being frightfully poor, would have been equivalent to an order. But that a man with such a hat should permit himself such a desire, and that a man with such a coat should permit himself to have a will, was something which Madame Thénardier did not intend to tolerate. She retorted with acrimony:

"She must work, since she eats. I don't feed her to do nothing."

"What is she making?" went on the stranger, in a gentle voice which contrasted strangely with his beggarly garments and his porter's shoulders.

The Thénardier deigned to reply:

"Stockings, if you please. Stockings for my little girls, who have none, so to speak, and who are absolutely barefoot just now."

The man looked at Cosette's poor little red feet, and continued:

"When will she have finished this pair of stockings?"

"She has at least three or four good days' work on them still, the lazy creature."

"And how much will that pair of stockings be worth when she has finished them?"

The Thénardier cast a glance of disdain on him.

"Thirty sous at least."

"Will you sell them for five francs?" went on the man.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed a carter who was listening, with a loud laugh. "Five francs! the deuce, I should think so! five balls!"

Thénardier thought it time to strike in.

"Yes, sir; if such is your fancy, you will be allowed to have that pair of stockings for five francs. We can refuse nothing to travelers."

"You must pay on the spot," said the Thénardier, in her curt and peremptory fashion.

"I will buy that pair of stockings," replied the man, "and," he added, drawing a five-franc piece from his pocket, and laying it on the table, "I will pay for them."

Then he turned to Cosette.

"Now I own your work; play, my child."

The carter was so much touched by the five-franc piece, that he abandoned his glass and hastened up.

"But it's true!" he cried, examining it. "A real hind wheel! and not counterfeit!"

Thénardier approached and silently put the coin in his pocket.

The Thénardier had no reply to make. She bit her lips, and her face assumed an expression of hatred.

In the meantime, Cosette was trembling. She ventured to ask:

"Is it true, Madame? May I play?"

"Play!" said the Thénardier, in a terrible voice.

"Thanks, Madame," said Cosette.

And while her mouth thanked the Thénardier, her whole little soul thanked the traveler.

Thénardier had resumed his drinking; his wife whispered in his ear:

"Who can this yellow man be?"

"I have seen millionaires with coats like that," replied Thénardier, in a sovereign manner.

Cosette had dropped her knitting, but had not left

her seat. Cosette always moved as little as possible. She picked up some old rags and her little lead sword from a box behind her.

Eponine and Azelma paid no attention to what was going on. They had just executed a very important operation; they had just got hold of the cat. They had thrown their doll on the ground, and Eponine, who was the elder, was swathing the little cat, in spite of its mewing and its contortions, in a quantity of clothes and red and blue scraps. While performing this serious and difficult work she was saying to her sister in that sweet and adorable language of children, whose grace, like the splendor of the butterfly's wing, vanishes when one essays to fix it fast:

"You see, sister, this doll is more amusing than the other. She twists, she cries, she is warm. See, sister, let us play with her. She shall be my little girl. I will be a lady. I will come to see you, and you shall look at her. Gradually, you will perceive her whiskers, and that will surprise you. And then you will see her ears, and then you will see her tail, and it will amaze you. And you will say to me, 'Ah, Mon Dieu!' and I will say to you, 'Yes, Madame, it is my little girl. Little girls are made like that just at present.' "

Azelma listened admiringly to Eponine.

As birds make nests out of everything, so children make a doll out of anything which comes to hand. While Eponine and Azelma were bundling up the cat, Cosette, on her side, had dressed up her sword. That done, she laid it in her arms, and sang to it softly, to lull it to sleep.

The doll is one of the most imperious needs and, at the same time, one of the most charming instincts of feminine childhood. To care for, to clothe, to deck, to dress, to undress, to redress, to teach, scold a little, to rock, to dandle, to lull to sleep, to imagine that some-

thing is some one—therein lies the whole woman's future. While dreaming and chattering, making tiny outfits and baby clothes, while sewing little gowns and corsages and bodices, the child grows into a young girl, the young girl into a big girl, the big girl into a woman. The first child is the continuation of the last doll.

So Cosette had made herself a doll out of the sword.

Madame Thénardier approached the yellow man. "My husband is right," she thought; "perhaps it is M. Laffitte; there are such queer rich men!"

She came and set her elbows on the table.

"Monsieur," said she. At this word, Monsieur, the man turned; up to that time the Thénardier had addressed him only as brave homme or bonhomme.

"You see, sir," she pursued, assuming a sweetish air that was even more repulsive to behold than her fierce mien, "I am willing that the child should play; I do not oppose it, but it is good for once, because you are generous. You see, she has nothing; she must needs work."

"Then this child is not yours?" demanded the man.

"Oh, Mon Dieu, no, sir! She is a little beggar whom we have taken in through charity; a sort of imbecile child. She must have water on the brain; she has a large head, as you see. We do what we can for her, for we are not rich; we have written in vain to her native place, and have received no reply these six months. It must be that her mother is dead."

"Ah!" said the man, and fell into his reverie once more.

"Her mother didn't amount to much," added the Thénardier; "she abandoned her child."

During the whole of this conversation Cosette, as though warned by some instinct that she was under

discussion, had not taken her eyes from the Thénardier's face; she listened vaguely; she caught a few words here and there.

Cosette, from her post under the table, gazed at the fire, which was reflected from her fixed eyes. She had begun to rock the sort of baby which she had made, and, as she rocked it, she sang in a low voice, "My mother is dead! My mother is dead! My mother is dead!"

On being urged afresh by the hostess, the yellow man, "the millionaire," consented at last to take supper.

"What does Monsieur wish?"

"Bread and cheese," said the man.

"Decidedly, he is a beggar," thought Madame Thénardier.

The drunken men were still singing their song, and the child under the table was singing hers.

All at once, Cosette paused; she had just turned round and caught sight of the little Thénardier's doll, which they had abandoned for the cat and had left on the floor a few paces from the kitchen table.

Then she dropped the swaddled sword, which only half met her needs, and cast her eyes slowly round the room. Madame Thénardier was whispering to her husband and counting over some money; Ponine and Zelma were playing with the cat; the travelers were eating or drinking or singing; not a glance was fixed on her. She had not a moment to lose; she crept out from under the table on her hands and knees, made sure once more that no one was watching her; then she slipped quickly up to the doll and seized it. An instant later she was in her place again, seated motionless, and only turned so as to cast a shadow on the doll which she held in her arms. The happiness of playing

with a doll was so rare for her that it contained all the violence of voluptuousness.

No one had seen her except the traveler. who was slowly devouring his meagre supper.

This joy lasted about a quarter of an hour.

But with all the precautions that Cosette had taken she did not perceive that one of the doll's legs stuck out and that the fire on the hearth lighted it up very vividly. That pink and shining foot, projecting from the shadow, suddenly struck the eye of Azelma, who said to Eponine, "Look, sister!"

The two little girls paused in stupefaction; Cosette had dared to take their doll!

Eponine rose, and, without releasing the cat, she ran to her mother and begun to tug at her skirt.

"Let me alone!" said her mother; "what do you want?"

"Mother," said the child, "look there!"

And she pointed to Cosette.

Cosette, absorbed in the ecstasies of possession, no longer saw or heard anything.

Madame Thénardier's countenance assumed that peculiar expression which is composed of the terrible mingled with the trifles of life, and which has caused this style of woman to be named megaeras.

On this occasion wounded pride exasperated her wrath still further. Cosette had overstepped all bounds; Cosette had laid violent hands on the doll belonging to "these young ladies." A czarina who should see a muzhik trying on her imperial son's blue ribbon would wear no other face.

She shrieked in a voice rendered hoarse with indignation:

"Cosette!"

Cosette started as though the earth had trembled beneath her; she turned round.

"Cosette!" repeated the Thénardier.

Cosette took the doll and laid it gently on the floor with a sort of veneration mingled with despair; then, without taking her eyes from it, she clasped her hands, and, what is terrible to relate of a child of that age, she wrung them; then—not one of the emotions of the day, neither the trip to the forest nor the weight of the bucket of water, nor the loss of the money, nor the sight of the whip, nor even the sad words which she had heard Madame Thénardier utter had been able to wring this from her—she wept; she burst out sobbing.

Meanwhile, the traveler had risen to his feet.

"What is the matter?" he said to the Thénardier.

"Don't you see?" said the Thénardier, pointing to the corpus delicti which lay at Cosette's feet.

"Well, what of it?" resumed the man.

"That beggar," replied the Thénardier, "has permitted herself to touch the children's doll!"

"All this noise for that!" said the man; "well, what if she did play with that doll?"

"She touched it with her dirty hands!" pursued the Thénardier, "with her frightful hands!"

Here Cosette redoubled her sobs.

"Will you stop your noise?" screamed the Thénardier.

The man went straight to the street door, opened it and stepped out.

As soon as he had gone the Thénardier profited by his absence to give Cosette a hearty kick under the table, which made the child utter loud cries.

The door opened again, the man re-appeared; he carried in both hands the fabulous doll which we have mentioned, and which all the village brats had been staring at, ever since the morning, and he set it upright in front of Cosette, saying:

"Here; this is for you."

It must be supposed that in the course of the hour and more which he had spent there he had taken confused notice through his revery of that toy shop, lighted up by fire-pots and candles so splendidly that it was visible like an illumination through the window of the drinking shop.

Cosette raised her eyes; she gazed at the man approaching her with that doll as she might have gazed at the sun; she heard the unprecedented words, "It is for you;" she stared at him; she stared at the doll; then she slowly retreated, and hid herself at the extreme end, under the table in a corner of the wall.

She no longer cried; she no longer wept; she had the appearance of no longer daring to breathe.

The Thénardier, Eponine, and Azelma were like statues also; the very drinkers had paused; a solemn silence reigned through the whole room.

Madame Thénardier, petrified and mute, recommenced her conjectures: "Who is that old fellow? Is he a poor man? Is he a millionaire? Perhaps he is both; that is to say, a thief."

The tavern keeper stared alternately at the doll and at the traveler; he seemed to be scenting out the man, as he would have scented out a bag of money. This did not last longer than the space of a flash of lightning. He stepped up to his wife and said to her in a low voice:

"That machine costs at least thirty francs. No nonsense. Down on your belly before that man!"

"Well, Cosette," said the Thénardier, in a voice that strove to be sweet, and which was composed of the bitter honey of malicious women, "aren't you going to take your doll?"

Cosette ventured to emerge from her hole.

"The gentleman has given you a doll, my little Co-

sette," said Thénardier, with a caressing air. "Take it; it is yours."

Cosette gazed at the marvelous doll in a sort of terror. Her face was still flooded with tears, but her eyes began to fill, like the sky at daybreak, with strange beams of joy. What she felt at that moment was a little like what she would have felt if she had been abruptly told, "Little one, you are the Queen of France."

It seemed to her that if she touched that doll, lightning would dart from it.

This was true, up to a certain point, for she said to herself that the Thénardier would scold and beat her.

Nevertheless the attraction carried the day. She ended by drawing near and murmuring timidly as she turned towards Madame Thénardier:

"May I, Madame?"

No words can render that air, at once despairing, terrified, and ecstatic.

"Pardi!" cried the Thénardier, "it is yours. The gentleman has given it to you."

"Truly, sir?" said Cosette. "Is it true? Is the 'lady' mine?"

The stranger's eyes seemed to be full of tears. He appeared to have reached that point of emotion where a man does not speak for fear lest he should weep. He nodded to Cosette, and placed the "lady's" hand in her tiny hand.

Cosette hastily withdrew her hand, as though that of the "lady" scorched her, and began to stare at the floor. We are forced to add that at that moment she stuck out her tongue immoderately. All at once she wheeled round and seized the doll in a transport.

"I shall call her Catherine," she said.

It was an odd moment when Cosette's rags met and clasped the ribbons and fresh pink muslins of the doll.

"Madame," she resumed, "may I put her on a chair?"

"Yes, my child," replied the Thénardier.

It was now the turn of Eponine and Azelma to gaze at Cosette with envy.

Cosette placed Catherine on a chair, then seated herself on the floor in front of her, and remained motionless, without uttering a word, in an attitude of contemplation.

"Play, Cosette," said the stranger.

"Oh! I am playing," returned the child.

This stranger, this unknown individual, who had the air of a visit which Providence was making on Cosette, was the person whom the Thénardier hated worse than any one in the world at that moment. However, it was necessary to control herself. Habituated as she was to dissimulation through endeavoring to copy her husband in all his actions, these emotions were more than she could endure. She made haste to send her daughters to bed, then she asked the man's permission to send Cosette off also; "for she has worked hard all day," she added, with a maternal air. Cosette went off to bed, carrying Catherine in her arms.

As for the traveler, he had deposited his cudgel and his bundle in a corner. The landlord once gone, he threw himself into an arm-chair, and remained for some time buried in thought. Then he removed his shoes, took one of the two candles, blew out the other, opened the door, and quitted the room, gazing about him like a person who is in search of something. There he heard a very faint and gentle sound like the breathing of a child. He followed this sound, and came to a sort of triangular recess built under the staircase, or rather formed by the staircase itself. This recess was nothing else than the space under the steps. There, in the midst of all sorts of old papers and potsherds, among dust

and spiders' webs, was a bed—if one can call by the name of bed a straw pallet so full of holes as to display the straw, and a coverlet so tattered as to show the pallet. No sheets. This was placed on the floor.

In this bed Cosette was sleeping.

The man approached and gazed down upon her.

Cosette was in a profound sleep; she was fully dressed. In the winter she did not undress, in order that she might not be so cold.

Against her breast was pressed the doll, whose large eyes, wide open, glittered in the dark. From time to time, she gave vent to a deep sigh as though she were on the point of waking, and she strained the doll almost convulsively in her arms. Beside her bed there was only one of her wooden shoes.

A door which stood open near Cosette's pallet permitted a view of a rather large, dark room. The stranger stepped into it. At the further extremity, through a glass door, he saw two small, very white beds. They belonged to Eponine and Azelma. Behind these beds, and half hidden, stood an uncurtained wicker cradle, in which the little boy who had cried all the evening lay asleep.

The stranger conjectured that this chamber connected with that of the Thénardier pair. He was on the point of retreating when his eye fell upon the fireplace—one of those vast tavern chimneys where there is always so little fire when there is any fire at all, and which are so cold to look at. There was no fire in this one, there was not even ashes; but there was something which attracted the stranger's gaze, nevertheless. It was two tiny children's shoes, coquettish in shape, and unequal in size. The traveler recalled the graceful but immemorial custom in accordance with which children place their shoes in the chimney on Christmas eve, there to await in the darkness some sparking gift

from their good fairy. Eponine and Azelma had taken care not to omit this, and each of them had set one of her shoes on the hearth.

The traveler bent over them.

The fairy, that is to say, their mother, had already paid her visit, and in each he saw a brand-new and shining ten-sou piece.

The man straightened himself up, and was on the point of withdrawing, when far in, in the darkest corner of the hearth, he caught sight of another object. He looked at it, and recognized a wooden shoe, a frightful shoe of the coarsest description, half dilapidated and all covered with ashes and dried mud. It was Cosette's sabot. Cosette, with that touching trust of childhood, which can always be deceived yet never discouraged, had placed her shoe on the hearth-stone also.

Hope in a child who has never known anything but despair is a sweet and touching thing.

There was nothing in this wooden shoe.

The stranger fumbled in his waistcoat, bent over and placed a louis d'or in Cosette's shoe.

Then he regained his own chamber with the stealthy tread of a wolf.

CHAPTER VII

MASTIFF AND WOLF

ON the following morning, two hours at least before daybreak, Thénardier, seated beside a candle in the public room of the tavern, pen in hand, was making out the bill for the traveler with the yellow coat.

"Ah! by the way," resumed his wife, "you don't forget that I'm going to turn Cosette out of doors to-day? The monster! She breaks my heart with that doll of hers! I'd rather marry Louis XVIII. than keep her another day in the house."

Thénardier lighted his pipe, and replied between two puffs:

"You will hand that bill to the man."

Then he went out.

Hardly had he left the room when the traveler entered.

Thénardier instantly reappeared behind him and remained motionless in the half-open door, visible only to his wife.

The yellow man carried his bundle and his cudgel in his hand.

"Up so early," said Madame Thénardier; "is Monsieur leaving us already?"

As she spoke thus she was twisting the bill about in her hands with an embarrassed air, and making creases in it with her nails. Her hard face presented a shade which was not habitual with it—timidity and scruples.

To present such a bill to a man who had so com-

pletely the air "of a poor wretch" seemed difficult to her.

The traveler appeared to be preoccupied and absent-minded. He replied:

"Yes, Madame, I am going."

"So Monsieur has no business in Montfermeil?"

"No, I was passing through. That is all. What do I owe you, Madame?" he added.

The Thénardier silently handed him the folded bill.

The man unfolded the paper and glanced at it; but his thoughts were evidently elsewhere.

"Madame," he resumed, "is business good here in Montfermeil?"

"So so, Monsieur," replied the Thénadier, stupefied at not witnessing another sort of explosion.

She continued, in a dreary and lamentable tone:

"Oh, Monsieur, times are so hard, and then we have so few bourgeois in the neighborhood! All the people are poor, you see. If we had not, now and then, some rich and generous travelers like Monsieur, we should not get along at all. We have so many expenses. Just see, that child is costing us our very eyes."

"What child?"

"Why, the little one, you know! Cosette—the Lark, as she is called hereabouts!"

"Ah!" said the man.

She went on:

"How stupid these peasants are with their nicknames! She has more the air of a bat than of a lark. You see, sir, we do not ask charity, and we cannot bestow it. We earn nothing and we have to pay out a great deal. The license, the imposts, the door and window tax, the hundredths! Monsieur is aware that the government demands a terrible deal of money. And then, I have my daughters. I have no need to bring up other people's children."

The man resumed, in that voice which he strove to render indifferent, and in which there lingered a tremor:

"What if one were to rid you of her?"

'Who? Cosette?"

"Yes."

The landlady's red and violent face brightened up hideously.

"Ah, sir; my dear sir, take her, keep her, lead her off, carry her away, sugar her, stuff her with truffles, drink her, eat her, and the blessings of the good holy Virgin and of all the saints of paradise be upon you!"

"Agreed."

"Really! You will take her away?"

"I will take her away."

"Immediately?"

"Immediately. Call the child."

"Cosette!" screamed the Thénardier.

"In the meantime," pursued the man, "I will pay you what I owe you. How much is it?"

He cast a glance on the bill, and could not restrain a start of surprise.

"Twenty-three francs!"

He looked at the landlady, and repeated:

"Twenty-three francs?"

There was in the enunciation of these words, thus repeated, an accent between an exclamation and an interrogation point.

The Thénardier had had time to prepare herself for the shock. She replied, with assurance:

"Good gracious, yes, sir; it is twenty-three francs."

The stranger laid five five-franc pieces on the table.

"Go and get the child," said he.

At that moment Thénardier advanced to the middle of the room and said:

"Monsieur owes twenty-six sous."

"Twenty-six sous!" exclaimed his wife.

Cosette Leaving Montfermeil

"Twenty sous for the chamber," resumed Thénardier, coldly, "and six sous for his supper. As for the child, I must discuss that matter a little with the gentleman. Leave us, wife."

Madame Thénardier was dazzled as with the shock caused by unexpected lightning flashes of talent. She was conscious that a great actor was making his entrance on the stage,, uttered not a word in reply, and left the room.

As soon as they were alone, Thénardier offered the traveler a chair. The traveler seated himself; Thénardier remained standing, and his face assumed a singular expression of good-fellowship and simplicity.

"Sir," said he, "what I have to say to you is this, that I adore that child."

The stranger gazed intently at him.

"What child?"

Thénardier continued:

"How strange it is, one grows attached. What money is that? Take back your hundred sou piece. I adore the child."

"Whom do you mean?" demanded the stranger.

"Eh! our little Cosette! Are you not intending to take her away from us? Well, I speak frankly; as true as you are an honest man, I will not consent to it. I shall miss that child. I saw her first when she was a tiny thing. It is true that she costs us money; it is true that she has her faults; it is true that we are not rich; it is true that I have paid out over four hundred francs for drugs for just one of her illnesses! But one must do something for the good God's sake. She has neither father nor mother. I have brought her up. I have bread enough for her and for myself. In truth, I think a great deal of that child. You understand, one conceives an affection for a person; I am a good sort of a beast, I am; I do not reason; I love that little girl;

my wife is quick-tempered, but she loves her also. You see, she is just the same as our own child. I want to keep her to babble about the house."

The stranger kept his eye intently fixed on Thénardier. The latter continued:

"Excuse me, sir, but one does not give away one's child to a passer-by, like that. I am right, am I not? Still, I don't say—you are rich; you have the air of a very good man—if it were for her happiness. But one must find out that. You understand: suppose that I were to let her go and to sacrifice myself, I should like to know what becomes of her; I should not wish to lose sight of her; I should like to know with whom she is living, so that I could go to see her from time to time, so that she may know that her good foster-father is alive, that he is watching over her. In short, there are things which are not possible. I do not even know your name. If you were to take her away, I should say: 'Well, and the Lark, what has become of her?' One must, at least, see some petty scrap of paper, some trifle in the way of a passport, you know!"

The stranger, still surveying him with that gaze which penetrates, as the saying goes, to the very depths of the conscience, replied in a grave, firm voice:

"Monsieur Thénardier, one does not require a passport to travel five leagues from Paris. If I take Cosette away, I shall take her away, and that is the end of the matter. You will not know my name, you will not know my residence, you will not know where she is; and my intention is that she shall never set eyes on you again so long as she lives. I break the thread which binds her foot, and she departs. Does that suit you? Yes, or no?"

Since geniuses, like demons, recognize the presence of a superior God by certain signs, Thénardier comprehended that he had to deal with a very strong person.

It was like an intuition; he comprehended it with his clear and sagacious promptitude. While drinking with the carters, smoking, and singing coarse songs on the preceding evening, he had devoted the whole of the time to observing the stranger, watching him like a cat, and studying him like a mathematician. He had watched him, both on his own account, for the pleasure of the thing, and through instinct, and had spied upon him as though he had been paid for so doing. Not a movement, not a gesture, on the part of the man in the yellow great-coat had escaped him. Even before the stranger had so clearly manifested his interest in Cosette, Thénardier had divined his purpose. He had caught the old man's deep glances returning constantly to the child. Who was this man? Why this interest? Why this hideous costume, when he had so much money in his purse? Questions which he put to himself without being able to solve them, and which irritated him. He had pondered it all night long. He could not be Cosette's father. Was he her grandfather? Then why not make himself known at once When one has a right, one asserts it. This man evidently had no right over Cosette. What was it, then? Thénardier lost himself in conjectures. He caught glimpses of everything, but he saw nothing. Be that as it may, on entering into conversation with the man, sure that there was some secret in the case, that the latter had some interest in remaining in the shadow, he felt himself strong; when he perceived from the stranger's clear and firm retort, that this mysterious personage was mysterious in so simple a way, he became conscious that he was weak. He had expected nothing of the sort. His conjectures were put to the rout. He rallied his ideas. He weighed everything in the space of a second. Thénardier was one of those men who take in a situation at a glance. He decided that the moment had

arrived for proceeding straightforward, and quickly at that. He did as great leaders do at the decisive moment, which they know that they alone recognize; he abruptly unmasked his batteries.

"Sir," said he, "I am in need of fifteen hundred francs."

The stranger took from his side pocket an old pocket book of black leather, opened it, drew out three bank-bills, which he laid on the table. Then he placed his large thumb on the notes and said to the innkeeper:

"Go and fetch Cosette."

While this was taking place, what had Cosette been doing?

On waking up, Cosette had run to get her shoe. In it she had found the gold piece. It was not a Napoleon; it was one of those perfectly new twenty-franc pieces of the Restoration, on whose effigy the little Prussian queen had replaced the laurel wreath. Cosette was dazzled. Her destiny began to intoxicate her. She did not know what a gold piece was; she had never seen one; she hid it quickly in her pocket, as though she had stolen it. Still, she felt that it really was hers; she guessed whence her gift had come, but the joy which she experienced was full of fear. She was happy; above all she was stupefied. Such magnificent and beautiful things did not appear real. The doll frightened her, the gold piece frightened her. She trembled vaguely in the presence of this magnificence. The stranger alone did not frighten her. On the contrary, he reassured her. Ever since the preceding evening, amid all her amazement, even in her sleep, she had been thinking in her little childish mind of that man who seemed to be so poor, and so sad, and who was so rich and so kind. Everything had changed for her since she had met that good man in the forest. Cosette, less happy than the most insignificant swallow of heaven, had never

Cosette and Her Broom

known what it was to take refuge under a mother's shadow and under a wing. For the last five years, that is to say, as far back as her memory ran, the poor child had shivered and trembled. She had always been exposed completely naked to the sharp wind of adversity; now it seemed to her she was clothed. Formerly her soul had seemed cold, now it was warm. Cosette was no longer afraid of the Thénardier. She was no longer alone; there was some one there.

She hastily set about her regular morning duties. That louis, which she had about her, in the very apron pocket whence the fifteen-sou piece had fallen on the night before, distracted her thoughts. She dared not touch it, but she spent five minutes in gazing at it, with her tongue hanging out, if the truth must be told. As she swept the staircase, she paused, remained standing there motionless, forgetful of her broom and of the entire universe, occupied in gazing at that star which was blazing at the bottom of her pocket.

It was during one of these periods of contemplation that the Thénardier joined her. She had gone in search of Cosette at her husband's orders. What was quite unprecedented, she neither struck her nor said an insulting word to her.

"Cosette," she said, almost gently, "come immediately."

An instant later Cosette entered the public room.

The stranger took up the bundle which he had brought and untied it. This bundle contained a little woolen gown, an apron, a fustian bodice, a kerchief, a petticoat, woolen stockings, shoes—a complete outfit for a girl of seven years. All was black.

"My child," said the man, "take these, and go and dress yourself quickly."

Daylight was appearing when those of the inhabitants of Montfermeil who had begun to open their doors

beheld a poorly clad old man leading a little girl dressed in mourning, and carrying a pink doll in her arms, pass along the road to Paris. They were going in the direction of Livry.

It was our man and Cosette.

No one knew the man; as Cosette was no longer in rags, many did not recognize her. Cosette was going away. With whom? She did not know. Whither? She knew not. All that she understood was that she was leaving the Thénardier tavern behind her. No one had thought of bidding her farewell, nor had she thought of taking leave of any one. She was leaving that hated and hating house.

Poor, gentle creature, whose heart had been repressed up to that hour!

Cosette walked along gravely, with her large eyes wide open, and gazing at the sky. She had put her louis in the pocket of her new apron. From time to time, she bent down and glanced at it; then she looked at the good man. She felt something as though she were beside the good God.

A DOG OF FLANDERS

A DOG OF FLANDERS

Ouida (Louise de la Ramée)

NELLO and Patrasche were left all alone in the world.

They were friends in a friendship closer than brotherhood. Nello was a little Ardennois—Patrasche was a big Fleming. They were both of the same age by length of years, yet one was still young and the other was already old. They had dwelt together almost all their days; both were orphaned and destitute, and owed their lives to the same hand. It had been the beginning of the tie between them, their first bond of sympathy; and it had strengthened day by day, and had grown with their growth, firm and indissoluble, until they loved one another very greatly.

Their home was a little hut on the edge of a little village—a Flemish village a league from Antwerp, set amidst flat breadths of pasture and corn-lands, with long lines of poplars and of alders bending in the breeze on the edge of the great canal which ran through it. It had about a score of houses and homesteads, with shutters of bright green or sky-blue, and roofs rose-red or black and white, and walls whitewashed until they shone in the sun like snow. In the center of the village stood a windmill, placed on a little moss-grown slope; it was a landmark to all the level country round. It had once been painted scarlet, sails and all, but that had been in its infancy, half a century or more earlier, when it had

ground wheat for the soldiers of Napoleon; and it was now a ruddy brown, tanned by wind and weather. It went queerly by fits and starts, as though rheumatic and stiff in the joints from age, but it served the whole neighborhood, which would have thought it almost as impious to carry grain elsewhere, as to attend any other religious service than the mass that was performed at the altar of the little old gray church, with its conical steeple, which stood opposite to it, and whose single bell rang morning, noon and night with that strange, subdued, hollow sadness which every bell that hangs in the Low Countries seems to gain as an integral part of its melody.

Within sound of the little melancholy clock almost from their birth upward, they had dwelt together, Nello and Patrasche, in the little hut on the edge of the village, with the cathedral spire of Antwerp rising in the northeast, beyond the great, green plain of seeding grass and spreading corn that stretched away from them like a tideless, changeless sea. It was the hut of a very old man, of a very poor man, of old Jehan Daas, who in his time had been a soldier, and who remembered the wars that had trampled the country as oxen tread down the furrows, and who had brought from his service nothing except a wound, which had made him a cripple.

When old Jehan Daas had reached his full eighty, his daughter had died in the Ardennes, hard by Stavelot, and had left him in legacy her two-year-old son. The old man could ill contrive to support himself, but he took up the additional burden uncomplainingly, and it soon became welcome and precious to him. Little Nello—which was but a pet diminutive for Nicolas—throve with him, and the old man and the little child lived in the poor little hut contentedly.

It was a very humble little mud-hut indeed, but it was

clean and white as a sea-shell, and stood in a small plot of garden ground that yielded beans and herbs and pumpkins. They were very poor, terribly poor—many a day they had nothing at all to eat. They never by any chance had enough; to have had enough to eat would have been to have reached paradise at once. But the old man was very gentle and good to the boy, and the boy was a beautiful, innocent, truthful, tender-natured creature; and they were happy on a crust and a few leaves of cabbage, and asked no more of earth or Heaven; save indeed that Patrasche should be always with them, since without Patrasche where would they have been?

For Patrasche was their alpha and omega; their treasury and granary; their store of gold and wand of wealth; their bread-winner and minister; their only friend and comforter. Patrasche dead or gone from them, they must have laid themselves down and died likewise. Patrasche was body, brains, hands, head, and feet to both of them: Patrasche was their very life, their very soul. For Jehan Daas was old and a cripple, and Nello was but a child; and Patrasche was their dog.

A dog of Flanders—yellow of hide, large of head and limb, with wolf-like ears that stood erect, and legs bowed and feet widened in the muscular development wrought in his breed by many generations of hard service. Patrasche came of a race which had toiled hard and cruelly from sire to son in Flanders many a century—slaves of slaves, dogs of the people, beasts of the shafts and the harness, creatures that lived straining their sinews in the gall of the cart, and died breaking their hearts on the flints of the streets.

Patrasche had been born of parents who had labored hard all their days over the sharp-set stones of the various cities and the long, shadowless, weary roads of the two Flanders and of Brabant. He had been born

to no other heritage than those of pain and of toil. He had been fed on curses and baptized with blows. Why not? It was a Christian country, and Patrasche was but a dog. Before he was fully grown he had known the bitter gall of the cart and the collar. Before he had entered his thirteenth month he had become the property of a hardware dealer, who was accustomed to wander over the land north and south, from the blue sea to the green mountains. They sold him for a small price, because he was so young.

This man was a drunkard and a brute. The life of Patrasche was a life of hell. To deal the tortures of hell on the animal creation is a way which the Christians have of showing their belief in it. His purchaser was a sullen, ill-living, brutal Brabantois, who heaped his cart full with pots and pans and flagons and buckets, and other wares of crockery and brass and tin, and left Patrasche to draw the load as best he might, whilst he himself lounged idly by the side in fat and sluggish ease, smoking his black pipe and stopping at every wineshop or café on the road.

Happily for Patrasche—or unhappily—he was very strong; he came of an iron race, long born and bred to such cruel travail; so that he did not die, but managed to drag on a wretched existence under the brutal burdens, the scarifying lashes, the hunger, the thirst, the blows, the curses and the exhaustion which are the only wages with which the Flemings repay the most patient and laborious of all their four-footed victims. One day, after two years of this long and deadly agony, Patrasche was going on as usual along one of the straight, dusty, unlovely roads that lead to the city of Rubens. It was full midsummer and very warm. His cart was very heavy, piled high with goods in metal and in earthenware. His owner sauntered on without noticing him otherwise than by the crack of the whip as it

curled round his quivering loins. The Brabantois had paused to drink beer himself at every wayside house, but he had forbidden Patrasche to stop a moment for a draught from the canal. Going along thus, in the full sun, on a scorching highway, having eaten nothing for twenty-four hours, and, which was far worse to him, not having tasted water for nearly twelve, being blind with dust, sore with blows, and stupefied with the merciless weight which dragged upon his loins, Patrasche, for once, staggered and foamed a little at the mouth, and fell.

He fell in the middle of the white, dusty road, in the full glare of the sun; he was sick unto death, and motionless. His master gave him the only medicine in his pharmacy—kicks and oaths and blows with a cudgel of oak, which had been often the only food and drink, the only wage and reward, ever offered to him. But Patrasche was beyond the reach of any torture or of any curses. Patrasche lay, dead to all appearances, down in the white powder of the summer dust. After a while, finding it useless to assail his ribs with punishment and his ears with maledictions, the Brabantois—deeming life gone in him, or going so nearly that his carcass was forever useless, unless indeed some one should strip it of the skin for gloves—cursed him fiercely in farewell, struck off the leathern bands of the harness, kicked his body heavily aside into the grass, and, groaning and muttering in savage wrath, pushed the cart lazily along the road up hill, and left the dying dog there for the ants to sting and for the crows to pick.

It was the last day before Kermesse away at Louvain, and the Brabantois was in haste to reach the fair and get a good place for his truck of brass wares. He was in fierce wrath, because Patrasche had been a strong and much-enduring animal, and because he himself had

now the hard task of pushing his charette all the way to Louvain. But to stay to look after Patrasche never entered his thoughts: the beast was dying and useless, and he would steal, to replace him, the first large dog that he found wandering alone out of sight of its master. Patrasche had cost him nothing, or next to nothing, and for two long, cruel years he had made him toil ceaselessly in his service from sunrise to sunset, through summer and winter, in fair weather and foul.

He had got a fair use and a good profit out of Patrasche; being human, he was wise, and left the dog to draw his last breath alone in the ditch, and have his bloodshot eyes plucked out as they might be by the birds, whilst he himself went on his way to beg and to steal, to eat and to drink, to dance and to sing, in the mirth at Louvain. A dying dog, a dog of the cart—why should he waste hours over its agonies at peril of losing a handful of copper coins, at peril of a shout of laughter?

Patrasche lay there, flung in the grass-green ditch. It was a busy road that day, and hundreds of people, on foot and on mules, in wagons or in carts, went by, tramping quickly and joyously on to Louvain. Some saw him, most did not even look: all passed on. A dead dog more or less—it was nothing in Brabant; it would be nothing anywhere in the world.

After a time, amongst the holiday-makers, there came a little old man who was bent and lame, and very feeble. He was in no guise for feasting: he was very poorly and miserably clad, and he dragged his silent way slowly through the dust amongst the pleasure-seekers. He looked at Patrasche, paused, wondered, turned aside, then kneeled down in the rank grass and weeds of the ditch, and surveyed the dog with kindly eyes of pity. There was with him a little rosy, fair-haired, dark-eyed child of a few years old, who pattered

in amidst the bushes, that were for him breast high, and stood gazing with a pretty seriousness upon the poor, great, quiet beast.

Thus it was that these two first met—the little Nello and the big Patrasche.

The upshot of that day was that old Jehan Daas, with much laborious effort, drew the sufferer homeward to his own little hut, which was a stone's-throw off amidst the fields, and there tended him with so much care that the sickness, which had been a brain seizure, brought on by heat and thirst and exhaustion, with time and shade and rest passed away, and health and strength returned, and Patrasche staggered up again upon his four stout, tawny legs.

Now for many weeks he had been useless, powerless, sore, near to death; but all this time he had heard no rough word, had felt no harsh touch, but only the pitying murmurs of the little child's voice and the soothing caress of the old man's hand.

In his sickness they two had grown to care for him, this lonely old man and the little, happy child. He had a corner of the hut, with a heap of dry grass for his bed; and they had learned to listen eagerly for his breathing in the dark night, to tell them that he lived; and when he first was well enough to essay a loud, hollow, broken bay, they laughed aloud, and almost wept together for joy at such a sign of his sure restoration; and little Nello, in delighted glee, hung round his rugged neck with chains of marguerites, and kissed him with fresh and ruddy lips.

So then, when Patrasche arose, himself again, strong, big, gaunt, powerful, his great wistful eyes had a gentle astonishment in them that there were no curses to rouse him and no blows to drive him; and his heart awakened to a mighty love, which never wavered once in its fidelity whilst life abode with him.

But Patrasche, being a dog, was grateful. Patrasche lay pondering long with grave, tender, musing brown eyes, watching the movements of his friends.

Now, the old soldier, Jehan Daas, could do nothing for his living but limp about a little with a small cart, with which he carried daily the milk-cans of those happier neighbors who owned cattle away into the town of Antwerp. The villagers gave him the employment a little out of charity—more because it suited them well to send their milk into the town by so honest a carrier, and bide at home themselves to look after their gardens, their cows, their poultry, or their little fields. But it was becoming hard work for the old man. He was eighty-three, and Antwerp was a good league off, or more.

Patrasche watched the milk-cans come and go that one day when he had got well and was lying in the sun with the wreath of marguerites round his tawny neck.

The next morning, Patrasche, before the old man had touched the cart, arose and walked to it and placed himself betwixt its handles, and testified as plainly as dumb show could do his desire and his ability to work in return for the bread of charity that he had eaten. Jehan Daas resisted long, for the old man was one of those who thought it a foul shame to bind dogs to labor for which nature never formed them. But Patrasche would not be gainsayed: finding they did not harness him, he tried to draw the cart onward with his teeth.

At length Jehan Daas gave way, vanquished by the persistence and the gratitude of this creature whom he had succored. He fashioned his cart so that Patrasche could run in it, and this he did every morning of his life thenceforward.

When the winter came Jehan Daas thanked the blessed fortune that had brought him to the dying

dog in the ditch that fair-day of Louvain; for he was very old, and he grew feebler with each year, and he would ill have known how to pull his load of milk-cans over the snows and through the deep ruts in the mud if it had not been for the strength and the industry of the animal he had befriended. As for Patrasche, it seemed heaven to him. After the frightful burdens that his old master had compelled him to strain under, at the call of the whip at every step, it seemed nothing to him but amusement to step out with this little light green cart, with its bright brass cans, by the side of the gentle old man who always paid him with a tender caress and with a kindly word. Besides, his work was over by three or four in the day, and after that time he was free to do as he would—to stretch himself to sleep in the sun, to wander in the fields, to romp with the young child, or to play with his fellow-dogs. Patrasche was very happy.

Fortunately for his peace, his former owner was killed in a drunken brawl at the Kermesse of Mechlin, and so sought not after him nor disturbed him in his new and well-loved home.

A few years later, old Jehan Daas, who had always been a cripple, became so paralyzed with rheumatism that it was impossible for him to go out with the cart any more. Then little Nello, being now grown to his sixth year of age, and knowing the town well from having accompanied his grandfather so many times, took his place beside the cart, and sold the milk and received the coins in exchange, and brought them back to their respective owners with a pretty grace and seriousness which charmed all who beheld him.

The little Ardennois was a beautiful child, with dark, grave, tender eyes, and a lovely bloom upon his face, and fair locks that clustered to his throat; and many an artist sketched the group as it went by him—the

green oart with the brass flagons of Teniers and Mieris and Van Tal, and the great, tawny-colored, massive dog, with his belled harness that chimed cheerily as he went, and the small figure that ran beside him which had little white feet in great wooden shoes, and a soft, grave, innocent, happy face like the little fair children of Rubens.

Nello and Patrasche did the work so well and so joyfully together that Jehan Daas himself, when the summer came and he was better again, had no need to stir out, but could sit in the doorway in the sun and see them go forth through the garden wicket, and then doze and dream and pray a little, and then awake again as the clock tolled three and watch for their return. And on their return Patrasche would shake himself free of his harness with a bay of glee, and Nello would recount with pride the doings of the day; and they would all go in together to their meal of rye bread and milk or soup, and would see the shadows lengthen over the great plain, and see the twilight veil the fair cathedral spire; and then lie down together to sleep peacefully while the old man said a prayer.

So the days and the years went on, and the lives of Nello and Patrasche were happy, innocent and healthful.

In the spring and summer especially were they glad. Flanders is not a lovely land, and around the burgh of Rubens it is perhaps least lovely of all. Corn and colza, pasture and plough, succeed each other on the characterless plain in wearying repetition, and save by some gaunt, gray tower, with its peal of pathetic bells, or some figure coming athwart the fields, made picturesque by a gleaner's bundle or a woodman's fagot, there is no change, no variety, no beauty anywhere; and he who has dwelt upon the mountains or amidst the forests feels oppressed as by imprisonment with the tedium

and the endlessness of that vast and dreary level. But it is green and very fertile, and it has wide horizons that have a certain charm of their own even in their dulness and monotony; and amongst the rushes by the waterside the flowers grow, and the trees rise tall and fresh where the barges glide with their great hulks black against the sun, and their little green barrels and vari-colored flags gay against the leaves. Anyway, there is greenery and breadth of space enough to be as good as beauty to a child and a dog; and these two asked no better, when their work was done, than to lie buried in the lush grasses on the side of the canal, and watch the cumbrous vessels drifting by and bringing the crisp salt smell of the sea amongst the blossoming scents of the country summer.

True, in the winter it was harder, and they had to rise in the darkness and the bitter cold, and they had seldom as much as they could have eaten any day, and the hut was scarce better than a shed when the nights were cold, although it looked so pretty in warm weather, buried in a great, kindly-clambering vine, that never bore fruit, indeed, but which covered it with luxuriant green tracery all through the months of blossom and harvest. In winter the winds found many holes in the walls of the poor little hut, and the vine was black and leafless, and the bare lands looked very bleak and drear without, and sometimes within the floor was flooded and then frozen. In winter it was hard, and the snow numbed the little white limbs of Nello, and the icicles cut the brave, untiring feet of Patrasche.

But even then they were never heard to lament, either of them. The child's wooden shoes and the dog's four legs would trot manfully together over the frozen fields to the chime of the bells on the harness; and then sometimes, in the streets of Antwerp, some housewife

would bring them a bowl of soup and a handful of bread, or some kindly trader would throw some billets of fuel into the little cart as it went homeward, or some woman in their own village would bid them keep some share of the milk they carried for their own food; and then they would run over the white lands, through the early darkness, bright and happy, and burst with a shout of joy into their home.

So, on the whole, it was well with them, very well; and Patrasche, meeting on the highway or in the public streets the many dogs who toiled from daybreak into nightfall, paid only with blows and curses, and loosened from the shafts with a kick to starve and freeze as best they might—Patrasche in his heart was very grateful to his fate, and thought it the fairest and the kindliest the world could hold. Though he was often very hungry indeed when he lay down at night; though he had to work in the heats of summer noons and the rasping chills of winter dawns; though his feet were often tender with wounds from the sharp edges of the jagged pavement; though he had to perform tasks beyond his strength and against his nature—yet he was grateful and content: he did his duty with each day, and the eyes that he loved smiled down on him. It was sufficient for Patrasche.

There was only one thing which caused Patrasche any uneasiness in his life, and it was this. Antwerp, as all the world knows, is full at every turn of old piles of stones, dark and ancient and majestic, standing in crooked courts, jammed against gateways and taverns, rising by the water's edge, with bells ringing above them in the air, and ever and again out of their arched doors a swell of music pealing. There they remain, the grand old sanctuaries of the past, shut in amidst the squalor, the hurry, the crowds, the unloveliness and the commerce of the modern world, and all day long

the clouds drift and the birds circle and the winds sigh around them, and beneath the earth at their feet there sleeps Rubens.

And the greatness of the mighty Master still rests upon Antwerp, and wherever we turn in its narrow streets his glory lies therein, so that all mean things are thereby transfigured; and as we pace slowly through the winding ways, and by the edge of the stagnant water, and through the noisome courts, his spirit abides with us, and the heroic beauty of his visions is about us, and the stones that once felt his footsteps and bore his shadow seem to arise and speak of him with living voices. For the city which is the tomb of Rubens still lives to us through him, and him alone.

It is so quiet there by that great, white sepulchre—so quiet, save only when the organ peals and the choir cries aloud the Salva Regina or the Kyrie Eleison. Sure no artist ever had a greater gravestone than that pure marble sanctuary gives to him in the heart of his birthplace in the chancel of St. Jacques.

Without Rubens, what were Antwerp? A dirty, dusky, bustling mart, which no man would ever care to look upon save the traders who do business on its wharves. With Rubens, to the whole world of men it is a sacred name, a sacred soil, a Bethlehem where a god of Art saw light, a Golgotha where a god of Art lies dead.

O nations! closely should you treasure your great men, for by them alone will the future know of you. Flanders in her generations has been wise. In his life she glorified this greatest of her sons, and in his death she magnifies his name. But her wisdom is very rare.

Now, the trouble of Patrasche was this. Into these great, sad piles of stones, that reared their melancholy majesty above the crowded roofs, the child Nello would many and many a time enter, and disappear through

their dark, arched portals, whilst Patrasche, left without upon the pavement, would wearily and vainly ponder on what could be the charm which thus allured from him his inseparable and beloved companion. Once or twice he did essay to see for himself, clattering up the steps with his milk-cart behind him; but thereon he had been always sent back again summarily by a tall custodian in black clothes and silver chains of office; and fearful of bringing his little master into trouble, he desisted and remained couched patiently before the churches until such time as the boy reappeared. It was not the fact of his going into them which disturbed Patrasche: he knew that people went to church: all the village went to the small, tumble-down, gray pile opposite the red windmill. What troubled him was that little Nello always looked strangely when he came out, always very flushed or very pale; and whenever he returned home after such visitations would sit silent and dreaming, not caring to play, but gazing out at the evening skies beyond the line of the canal, very subdued and almost sad.

What was it? wondered Patrasche. He thought it could not be good or natural for the little lad to be so grave, and in his dumb fashion he tried all he could to keep Nello by him in the sunny fields or in the busy market-place. But to the churches Nello would go: most often of all would he go to the great cathedral; and Patrasche, left without on the stones by the iron fragments of Quentin Matsys's gate, would stretch himself and yawn and sigh, and even howl now and then, all in vain, until the doors closed and the child perforce came forth again, and winding his arms about the dog's neck would kiss him on his broad, tawny-colored forehead, and murmur always the same words: "If I could only see them, Patrasche—if I could only see them!"

What were they? pondered Patrasche, looking up with large, wistful, sympathetic eyes.

One day, when the custodian was out of the way and the doors left ajar, he got in for a moment after his little friend and saw. "They" were two great covered pictures on either side of the choir.

Nello was kneeling, rapt as in an ecstasy, before the altar-picture of the Assumption, and when he noticed Patrasche, and rose and drew the dog gently out into the air, his face was wet with tears, and he looked up at the veiled places as he passed them, and murmured to his companion, "It is so terrible not to see them, Patrasche, just because one is poor and cannot pay! He never meant that the poor should not see them when he painted them, I am sure. He would have had us see them any day, every day: that I am sure. And they keep them shrouded there—shrouded in the dark, the beautiful things!—and they never feel the light, and no eyes look on them, unless rich people come and pay. If I could only see them, I would be content to die."

But he could not see them, and Patrasche could not help him, for to gain the silver piece that the church exacts as the price for looking on the glories of the Elevation of the Cross and the Descent of the Cross was a thing as utterly beyond the powers of either of them as it would have been to scale the heights of the cathedral spire. They had never so much as a sou to spare: if they cleared enough to get a little wood for the stove, a little broth for the pot, it was the utmost they could do. And yet the heart of the child was set in sore and endless longing upon beholding the greatness of the two veiled Rubens.

The whole soul of the little Ardennois thrilled and stirred with an absorbing passion for Art. Going on his ways through the old city in the early days before

the sun or the people had risen, Nello, who looked only a little peasant boy, with a great dog drawing milk to sell from door to door, was in a heaven of dreams whereof Rubens was the god. Nello, cold and hungry, with stockingless feet in wooden shoes, and the winter winds blowing amongst his curls and lifting his poor, thin garments, was in a rapture of meditation, wherein all that he saw was the beautiful fair face of the Mary of the Assumption, with the waves of her golden hair lying upon her shoulders, and the light of an eternal sun shining down upon her brow. Nello, reared in poverty, and buffeted by fortune, and untaught in letters, and unheeded by men, had the compensation or the curse which is called Genius.

No one knew it. He as little as any. No one knew it. Only indeed Patrasche, who, being with him always, saw him draw with chalk upon the stones any and everything that grew or breathed, heard him on his little bed of hay murmur all manner of timid, pathetic prayers to the spirit of the great Master; watched his gaze darken and his face radiate at the evening glow of sunset or the rosy rising of the dawn; and felt many and many a time the tears of a strange, nameless pain and joy, mingled together, fall hotly from the bright, young eyes upon his own wrinkled, yellow forehead.

"I should go to my grave quite content if I thought, Nello, that when thou growest a man thou couldst own this hut and the little plot of ground, and labor for thyself, and be called Baas by thy neighbors," said the old man Jehan many an hour from his bed. For to own a bit of soil, and be called Baas—master—by the hamlet round, is to have achieved the highest ideal of a Flemish peasant; and the old soldier, who had wandered over all the earth in his youth, and had brought nothing back, deemed in his old age that to live and die on that spot in contented humility was the fairest

fate he could desire for his darling. But Nello said nothing.

The same leaven was working in him that in other times begat Rubens and Jordaens and the Van Eycks, and all their wondrous tribe, and in times more recent begat in the green country of the Ardennes, where the Meuse washes the old walls of Dijon, the great artist of the Patroclus, whose genius is too near us for us aright to measure its divinity.

Nello dreamed of other things in the future than of tilling the little rood of earth, and living under the wattle roof, and being called Baas by neighbors a little poorer or a little less poor than himself. The cathedral spire, where it rose beyond the fields in the ruddy evening skies or in the dim, gray, misty mornings, said other things to him than this. But these he told only to Patrasche, whispering, childlike, his fancies in the dog's ear when they went together at their work through the fogs of the daybreak, or lay together at their rest amongst the rustling rushes by the water's side.

For such dreams are not easily shaped into speech to awake the slow sympathies of human auditors; and they would only have sorely perplexed and troubled the poor old man bedridden in his corner, who, for his part, whenever he had trodden the streets of Antwerp, had thought the daub of blue and red that they called a Madonna, on the walls of the wine-shop where he drank his sou's worth of black beer, quite as good as any of the famous altar-pieces for which the stranger folk traveled far and wide into Flanders from every land on which the good sun shone.

There was only one other besides Patrasche to whom Nello could talk at all of his daring fantasies. This other was little Alois, who lived at the old red mill on the grassy mound, and whose father, the miller, was

the best-to-do husbandman in all the village. Little Alois was only a pretty baby with soft, round, rosy features, made lovely by those sweet, dark eyes that the Spanish rule has left in so many a Flemish face, in testimony of the Alvan dominion, as Spanish art has left broadsown throughout the country majestic palaces and stately courts, gilded house-fronts and sculptured lintels—histories in blazonry and poems in stone.

Little Alois was often with Nello and Patrasche. They played in the fields, they ran in the snow, they gathered the daisies and bilberries, they went up to the old gray church together, and they often sat together by the broad wood-fire in the mill-house. Little Alois, indeed, was the richest child in the hamlet. She had neither brother nor sister; her blue serge dress had never a hole in it; at Kermesse she had as many gilded nuts and Agni Dei in sugar as her hands could hold; and when she went up for her first communion her flaxen curls were covered with a cap of richest Mechlin lace, which had been her mother's and her grandmother's before it came to her. Men spoke already, though she had but twelve years, of the good wife she would be for their sons to woo and win; but she herself was a little gay, simple child, in no wise conscious of her heritage, and she loved no playfellows so well as Jehan Daas's grandson and his dog.

One day her father, Baas Cogez, a good man, but somewhat stern, came on a pretty group in the long meadow behind the mill, where the aftermath had that day been cut. It was his little daughter sitting amidst the hay, with the great tawny head of Patrasche on her lap, and many wreaths of poppies and blue cornflowers round them both: on a clean, smooth slab of pine wood the boy Nello drew their likeness with a stick of charcoal.

The miller stood and looked at the portrait with tears in his eyes, it was so strangely like, and he loved his only child closely and well. Then he roughly chid the little girl for idling there whilst her mother needed her within, and sent her indoors crying and afraid; then, turning, he snatched the wood from Nello's hands.

"Dost do much of such folly?" he asked, but there was a tremble in his voice.

Nello colored and hung his head. "I draw everything I see," he murmured.

The miller was silent; then he stretched his hand out with a franc in it. "It is folly, as I say, and evil waste of time; nevertheless, it is like Alois, and will please the house-mother. Take this silver bit for it and leave it for me."

The color died out of the face of the young Ardennois; he lifted his head and put his hands behind his back. "Keep your money and the portrait both, Baas Cogez," he said simply. "You have been often good to me." Then he called Patrasche to him, and walked away across the fields.

"I could have seen them with that franc," he murmured to Patrasche, "but I could not sell her picture —not even for them."

Baas Cogez went into his mill-house sore troubled in his mind. "That lad must not be so much with Alois," he said to his wife that night. "Trouble may come of it hereafter: he is fifteen now, and she is twelve; and the boy is comely of face and form."

"And he is a good lad and a loyal," said the housewife, feasting her eyes on the piece of pine wood where it was throned above the chimney with a cuckoo clock in oak and a Calvary in wax.

"Yea, I do not gainsay that," said the miller, draining his pewter flagon.

"Then, if what you think of were ever to come to

pass," said the wife, hesitatingly, "would it matter so much? She will have enough for both, and one cannot be better than happy."

"You are a woman, and therefore a fool," said the miller, harshly, striking his pipe on the table. "The lad is naught but a beggar, and, with these painter's fancies, worse than a beggar. Have a care that they are not together in the future, or I will send the child to the surer keeping of the nuns of the Sacred Heart."

The poor mother was terrified, and promised humbly to do his will. Not that she could bring herself altogether to separate the child from her favorite playmate, nor did the miller even desire that extreme of cruelty to a young lad who was guilty of nothing except poverty. But there were many ways in which little Alois was kept away from her chosen companion: and Nello, being a boy proud and quiet and sensitive, was quickly wounded, and ceased to turn his own steps and those of Patrasche, as he had been used to do with every moment of leisure, to the old red mill upon the slope. What his offense was he did not know: he supposed he had in some manner angered Baas Cogez by taking the portrait of Alois in the meadow; and when the child who loved him would run to him and nestle her hand in his, he would smile at her very sadly and say with a tender concern for her before himself, "Nay, Alois, do not anger your father. He thinks that I make you idle, dear, and he is not pleased that you should be with me. He is a good man and loves you well: we will not anger him, Alois."

But it was with a sad heart that he said it, and the earth did not look so bright to him as it had used to do when he went out at sunrise under the poplars down the straight roads with Patrasche. The old red mill had been a landmark to him, and he had been used to pause by it, going and coming, for a cheery greeting with its

people as her little flaxen head rose above the low mill-wicket, and her little rosy hands had held out a bone or a crust to Patrasche. Now the dog looked wistfully at a closed door, and the boy went on without pausing, with a pang at his heart, and the child sat within with tears dropping slowly on the knitting to which she was set on her little stool by the stove; and Baas Cogez, working among his sacks and his mill-gear, would harden his will and say to himself, "It is best so. The lad is all but a beggar, and full of idle, dreaming fooleries. Who knows what mischief might not come of it in the future?" So he was wise in his generation, and would not have the door unbarred, except upon rare and formal occasions, which seemed to have neither warmth nor mirth in them to the two children, who had been accustomed so long to a daily gleeful, careless, happy interchange of greeting, speech, and pastime, with no other watcher of their sports or auditor of their fancies than Patrasche, sagely shaking the brazen bells of his collar and responding with all a dog's swift sympathies to their every change of mood.

All this while the little panel of pine wood remained over the chimney in the mill-kitchen with the cuckoo clock and the waxen Calvary; and sometimes it seemed to Nello a little hard that whilst his gift was accepted he himself should be denied.

But he did not complain: it was his habit to be quiet: old Jehan Daas had said ever to him, "We are poor: we must take what God sends—the ill with the good: the poor cannot choose."

To which the boy had always listened in silence, being reverent of his old grandfather; but nevertheless a certain vague, sweet hope, such as beguiles the children of genius, had whispered in his heart, "Yet the poor do choose sometimes—choose to be great, so that men cannot say them nay." And he thought so still in his

innocence; and one day, when the little Alois, finding him by chance alone amongst the cornfields by the canal, ran to him and held him close, and sobbed piteously because the morrow would be her saint's day, and for the first time in all her life her parents had failed to bid him to the little supper and romp in the great barns with which her feast-day was always celebrated, Nello had kissed her and murmured to her in firm faith, "It shall be different one day, Alois. One day that little bit of pine wood that your father has of mine shall be worth its weight in silver; and he will not shut the door against me then. Only love me always, dear little Alois, only love me always, and I will be great."

"And if I do not love you?" the pretty child asked, pouting a little through her tears, and moved by the instinctive coquetries of her sex.

Nello's eyes left her face and wandered to the distance, where in the red and gold of the Flemish night the cathedral spire rose. There was a smile on his face so sweet and yet so sad that little Alois was awed by it. "I will be great still," he said under his breath —"great still, or die, Alois."

"You do not love me," said the little spoilt child, pushing him away; but the boy shook his head and smiled, and went on his way through the tall, yellow corn, seeing as in a vision some day in a fair future when he should come into that old familiar land and ask Alois of her people, and be not refused or denied, but received in honor, whilst the village folk should throng to look upon him and say in one another's ears, "Dost see him? He is a king among men, for he is a great artist and the world speaks his name; and yet he was only our poor little Nello, who was a beggar, as one may say, and only got his bread by the help of his dog." And he thought how he would fold his grand-

sire in furs and purples, and portray him as the old man is portrayed in the Family in the chapel of St. Jacques; and of how he would hang the throat of Patrasche with a collar of gold, and place him on his right hand, and say to the people, "This was once my only friend;" and of how he would build himself a great, white marble palace, and make to himself luxuriant gardens of pleasure, on the slope looking outward to where the cathedral spire rose, and not dwell in it himself, but summon to it, as to a home, all men young and poor and friendless, but of the will to do mighty things; and of how he would say to them always, if they sought to bless his name, "Nay, do not thank me—thank Rubens. Without him, what should I have been?" And these dreams, beautiful, impossible, innocent, free of all selfishness, full of heroical worship, were so closely about him as he went that he was happy—happy even on this sad anniversary of Alois's saint's day, when he and Patrasche went home by themselves to the little dark hut and the meal of black bread, whilst in the mill-house all the children of the village sang and laughed, and ate the big, round cakes of Dijon and the almond gingerbread of Brabant, and danced in the great barn to the light of the stars and the music of flute and fiddle.

"Never mind, Patrasche," he said, with his arms round the dog's neck as they both sat in the door of the hut, where the sounds of the mirth at the mill came down to them on the night air—"never mind. It shall all be changed by and by."

He believed in the future: Patrasche, of more experience and of more philosophy, thought that the loss of the mill-supper in the present was ill compensated by dreams of milk and honey in some vague hereafter. And Patrasche growled whenever he passed by Baas Cogez.

"This is Alois's name-day, is it not?" said the old man Daas that night from the corner where he was stretched upon his bed of sacking.

The boy gave a gesture of assent: he wished that the old man's memory had erred a little, instead of keeping such sure account.

"And why not there?" his grandfather pursued. "Thou hast never missed a year before, Nello."

"Thou art too sick to leave," murmured the lad, bending his handsome young head over the bed.

"Tut! tut! Mother Nulette would have come and sat with me, as she does scores of times. What is the cause, Nello?" the old man persisted. "Thou surely hast not had ill words with the little one?"

"Nay, grandfather—never," said the boy, quickly, with a hot color in his bent face. "Simply and truly, Baas Cogez did not have me asked this year. He has taken some whim against me."

"But thou hast done nothing wrong?"

"That I know—nothing. I took the portrait of Alois on a piece of pine: that is all."

"Ah!" The old man was silent: the truth suggested itself to him with the boy's innocent answer. He was tied to a bed of dried leaves in the corner of a wattle hut, but he had not wholly forgotten what the ways of the world were like.

He drew Nello's fair head fondly to his breast with a tenderer gesture. "Thou art very poor, my child," he said with a quiver the more in his aged, trembling voice—"so poor! It is very hard for thee."

"Nay, I am rich," murmured Nello; and in his innocence he thought so—rich with the imperishable powers that are mightier than the might of kings. And he went and stood by the door of the hut in the quiet autumn night, and watched the stars troop by and the tall poplars bend and shiver in the wind. All the case-

ments of the mill-house were lighted, and every now and then the notes of the flute came to him. The tears fell down his cheeks, for he was but a child, yet he smiled, for he said to himself, "In the future!" He stayed there until all was quite still and dark, then he and Patrasche went within and slept together, long and deeply, side by side.

Now he had a secret which only Patrasche knew. There was a little outhouse to the hut, which no one entered but himself—a dreary place, but with abundant clear light from the north. Here he had fashioned himself rudely an easel in rough lumber, and here on a great gray sea of stretched paper he had given shape to one of the innumerable fancies which possessed his brain. No one had ever taught him anything; colors he had no means to buy; he had gone without bread many a time to procure even the few rude vehicles that he had here; and it was only in black or white that he could fashion the things he saw. This great figure which he had drawn here in chalk was only an old man sitting on a fallen tree—only that. He had seen old Michael, the woodman, sitting so at evening many a time. He had never had a soul to tell him of outline or perspective, of anatomy or of shadow, and yet he had given all the weary, worn-out age, all the sad, quiet patience, all the rugged careworn pathos of his original, and given them so that the old, lonely figure was a poem, sitting there, meditative and alone, on the dead tree, with the darkness of the descending night behind him.

It was rude, of course, in a way, and had many faults, no doubt; and yet it was real, true in Nature, true in Art, and very mournful, and in a manner beautiful.

Patrasche had lain quiet countless hours watching its gradual creation after the labor of each day was done,

and he knew that Nello had a hope—vain and wild perhaps, but strongly cherished—of sending this great drawing to compete for a prize of two hundred francs a year which it was announced in Antwerp would be open to every lad of talent, scholar or peasant, under eighteen, who would attempt to win it with some unaided work of chalk or pencil. Three of the foremost artists in the town of Rubens were to be the judges and elect the victor according to his merits.

All the spring and summer and autumn Nello had been at work upon this treasure, which, if triumphant, would build him his first step toward independence and the mysteries of the art which he blindly, ignorantly and yet passionately adored.

He said nothing to any one: his grandfather would not have understood, and little Alois was lost to him. Only to Patrasche he told all, and whispered, "Rubens would give it me, I think, if he knew."

Patrasche thought so, too, for he knew that Rubens had loved dogs or he had never painted them with such exquisite fidelity; and men who loved dogs were, as Patrasche knew, always pitiful.

The drawings were to go in the first day of December, and the decision be given on the twenty-fourth, so that he who should win might rejoice with all his people at the Christmas season.

In the twilight of a bitter wintry day, and with a beating heart, now quick with hope, now faint with fear, Nello placed the great picture on his little green milk-cart, and took it, with the help of Patrasche, into the town, and there left it, as enjoined, at the doors of a public building.

"Perhaps it is worth nothing at all. How can I tell?" he thought, with the heart-sickness of a great timidity. Now that he had left it there, it seemed to him so hazardous, so vain, so foolish, to dream that he, a little lad

with bare feet, who barely knew his letters, could do anything at which great painters, real artists, could ever deign to look. Yet he took heart as he went by the cathedral: the lordly form of Rubens seemed to rise from the fog and the darkness, and to loom in its magnificence before him, whilst the lips with their kindly smile seemed to him to murmur, "Nay, have courage! It was not by a weak heart and by faint fears that I wrote my name for all time upon Antwerp."

Nello ran home through the cold night, comforted. He had done his best: the rest must be as God willed, he thought, in that innocent, unquestioning faith which had been taught him in the little gray chapel amongst the willows and the poplar trees.

The winter was very sharp already. That night, after they had reached the hut, snow fell; and fell for very many days after that, so that the paths and the divisions in the fields were all obliterated, and all the smaller streams were frozen over, and the cold was intense upon the plains. Then, indeed, it became hard work to go round for the milk while the world was all dark, and carry it through the darkness to the silent town. Hard work, especially for Patrasche, for the passage of the years, that were only bringing Nello a stronger youth, were bringing him old age, and his joints were stiff and his bones ached often. But he would never give up his share of the labor. Nello would fain have spared him and drawn the cart himself, but Patrasche would not allow it. All he would ever permit or accept was the help of a thrust from behind to the truck as it lumbered along through the ice-ruts. Patrasche had lived in harness, and he was proud of it. He suffered a great deal sometimes from frost and the terrible roads, and the rheumatic pains of his limbs, but he only drew his breath hard and bent his stout neck, and trod onward with steady patience.

"Rest thee at home, Patrasche—it is time thou didst rest—and I can quite well push in the cart by myself," urged Nello many a morning; but Patrasche, who understood him aright, would no more have consented to stay at home than a veteran soldier to shirk when the charge was sounding; and every day he would rise and place himself in his shafts, and plod along over the snow through the fields that his four round feet had left their print upon so many, many years.

"One must never rest till one dies," thought Patrasche; and sometimes it seemed to him that that time of rest for him was not very far off. His sight was less clear than it had been, and it gave him pain to rise after the night's sleep, though he would never lie a moment in his straw when once the bell of the chapel tolling five let him know that the daybreak of labor had begun.

"My poor Patrasche, we shall soon lie quiet together, you and I," said old Jehan Daas, stretching out to stroke the head of Patrasche with the old, withered hand which had always shared with him its one poor crust of bread; and the hearts of the old man and the old dog ached together with one thought: When they were gone who would care for their darling?

One afternoon, as they came back from Antwerp over the snow, which had become hard and smooth as marble over all the Flemish plains, they found dropped in the road a pretty little puppet, a tambourine player, all scarlet and gold, about six inches high, and, unlike greater personages when Fortune lets them drop, quite unspoiled and unhurt by its fall. It was a pretty toy. Nello tried to find its owner, and, failing, thought that it was just the thing to please Alois.

It was quite night when he passed the mill-house: he knew the little window of her room. It could be no harm, he thought, if he gave her his little piece of

treasure-trove, they had been playfellows so long. There was a shed with a sloping roof beneath her casement: he climbed it and tapped softly at the lattice: there was a little light within. The child opened it and looked out half frightened.

Nello put the tambourine-player into her hands. "Here is a doll I found in the snow, Alois. Take it," he whispered—"take it, and God bless thee, dear."

He slid down from the shed-roof before she had time to thank him, and ran off through the darkness.

That night there was a fire at the mill. Out-buildings and much corn were destroyed, although the mill itself and the dwelling-house were unharmed. All the village was out in terror, and engines came tearing through the snow from Antwerp. The miller was insured, and would lose nothing; nevertheless, he was in furious wrath, and declared aloud that the fire was due to no accident, but to some foul intent.

Nello, awakened from his sleep, ran to help with the rest: Baas Cogez thrust him angrily aside. "Thou wert loitering here after dark," he said roughly. "I believe, on my soul, that thou dost know more of the fire than any one."

Nello heard him in silence, stupefied, not supposing that any one could say such things except in jest, and not comprehending how any one could pass a jest at such a time.

Nevertheless, the miller said the brutal thing openly to many of his neighbors in the day that followed; and though no serious charge was ever preferred against the lad, it got bruited about that Nello had been seen in the mill-yard after dark on some unspoken errand, and that he bore Baas Cogez a grudge for forbidding his intercourse with little Alois; and so the hamlet, which followed the sayings of its richest landowner servilely, and whose families all hoped to secure the

riches of Alois in some future time for their sons, took the hint to give grave looks and cold words to old Jehan Daas's grandson. No one said anything to him openly, but all the village agreed together to humor the miller's prejudice, and at the cottages and farms where Nello and Patrasche called every morning for the milk for Antwerp, downcast glances and brief phrases replaced to them the broad smiles and cheerful greetings to which they had been always used. No one really credited the miller's absurd suspicions, nor the outrageous accusations born of them, but the people were all very poor and very ignorant, and the one rich man of the place had pronounced against him. Nello, in his innocence and his friendlessness, had no strength to stem the popular tide.

"Thou art very cruel to the lad," the miller's wife dared to say, weeping, to her lord. "Sure he is an innocent lad and a faithful, and would never dream of any such wickedness, however sore his heart might be."

But Baas Cogez being an obstinate man, having once said a thing, held to it doggedly, though in his innermost soul he knew well the injustice that he was committing.

Meanwhile, Nello endured the injury done against him with a certain proud patience that disdained to complain; he only gave way a little when he was quite alone with old Patrasche. Besides, he thought, "If it should win! They will be sorry then, perhaps."

Still, to a boy not quite sixteen, and who had dwelt in one little world all his short life, and in his childhood had been caressed and applauded on all sides, it was a hard trial to have the whole of that little world turn against him for naught. Especially hard in that bleak, snow-bound, famine-stricken winter-time, when the only light and warmth there could be found abode beside the village hearths and in the kindly greetings

of neighbors. In the winter time all drew nearer to each other, all to all, except to Nello and Patrasche, with whom none now would have anything to do, and who were left to fare as they might with the old, paralyzed, bed-ridden man in the little cabin, whose fire was often low, and whose board was often without bread, for there was a buyer from Antwerp who had taken to drive his mule in of a day for the milk of the various dairies, and there were only three or four of the people who had refused his terms of purchase and remained faithful to the little green cart. So that the burden which Patrasche drew had become very light, and the centime pieces in Nello's pouch had become, alas! very small likewise.

The dog would stop, as usual, at all the familiar gates which were now closed to him, and look up at them with wistful, mute appeal; and it cost the neighbors a pang to shut their doors and their hearts, and let Patrasche draw his cart on again, empty. Nevertheless, they did it, for they desired to please Baas Cogez.

Noel was close at hand.

The weather was very wild and cold. The snow was six feet deep, and the ice was firm enough to bear oxen and men upon it everywhere. At this season the little village was always gay and cheerful. At the poorest dwelling there were possets and cakes, joking and dancing, sugared saints and gilded Jesus. The merry Flemish bells jingled everywhere on the horses; everywhere within doors some well-filled soup-pot sang and smoked over the stove; and everywhere over the snow without laughing maidens pattered in bright kerchiefs and stout kirtles going to and from the mass. Only in the little hut it was very dark and very cold.

Nello and Patrasche were left utterly alone, for one night in the week before the Christmas day, death en-

tered there, and took away from life forever old Jehan Daas, who had never known of life aught save its poverty and its pains. He had long been half-dead, incapable of any movement except a feeble gesture, and powerless for anything beyond a gentle word; and yet his loss fell on them both with a great horror in it; they mourned him passionately. He had passed away from them in his sleep, and when in the gray dawn they learned their bereavement, unutterable solitude and desolation seemed to close around them. He had long been only a poor, feeble, paralyzed old man, who could not raise a hand in their defence, but he had loved them well; his smile had always welcomed their return. They mourned for him unceasingly, refusing to be comforted, as in the white winter day they followed the deal shell that held his body to the nameless grave by the little gray church. They were his only mourners, these two whom he had left friendless upon earth—the young boy and the old dog.

"Surely, he will relent now and let the poor lad come hither?" thought the miller's wife, glancing at her husband where he smoked by the hearth.

Baas Cogez knew her thought, but he hardened his heart, and would not unbar his door as the little, humble funeral went by. "The boy is a beggar," he said to himself; "he shall not be about Alois."

The woman dared not say anything aloud, but when the grave was closed and the mourners had gone, she put a wreath of immortelles into Alois's hands and bade her go and lay it reverently on the dark, unmarked mound where the snow was displaced.

Nello and Patrasche went home with broken hearts. But even of that poor, melancholy, cheerless home they were denied the consolation. There was a month's rent over-due for their little home, and when Nello had paid the last sad service to the dead he had not a

coin left. He went and begged grace of the owner of the hut, a cobbler who went every Sunday night to drink his pint of wine and smoke with Baas Cogez. The cobbler would grant no mercy. He was a harsh, miserly man, and loved money. He claimed in default of his rent every stick and stone, every pot and pan, in the hut, and bade Nello and Patrasche be out of it on the morrow.

Now, the cabin was lowly enough, and in some sense miserable enough, and yet their hearts clove to it with a great affection. They had been so happy there, and in the summer, with its clambering vine and its flowering beans, it was so pretty and bright in the midst of the sun-lighted fields! Their life in it had been full of labor and privation, and yet they had been so well content, so gay of heart, running together to meet the old man's never-failing smile of welcome.

All night long the boy and the dog sat by the fireless hearth in the darkness, drawn close together for warmth and sorrow. Their bodies were insensible to the cold, but their hearts seemed frozen in them.

When the morning broke over the white, chill earth it was the morning of Christmas Eve. With a shudder, Nello clasped close to him his only friend, while his tears fell hot and fast on the dog's frank forehead. "Let us go, Patrasche—dear, dear Patrasche," he murmured. "We will not wait to be kicked out: let us go."

Patrasche had no will but his, and they went sadly, side by side, out from the little place which was so dear to them both, and in which every humble, homely thing was to them precious and beloved. Patrasche drooped his head wearily as he passed by his own green cart; it was no longer his—it had to go with the rest to pay the rent, and his brass harness lay idle and glittering on the snow. The dog could have lain down beside it and died for very heart-sickness as he went,

but whilst the lad lived and needed him Patrasche would not yield and give way.

They took the old accustomed road into Antwerp. The day had yet scarce more than dawned, most of the shutters were still closed, but some of the villagers were about. They took no notice whilst the dog and the boy passed by them. At one door Nello paused and looked wistfully within: his grandfather had done many a kindly turn in neighbor's service to the people who dwelt there.

"Would you give Patrasche a crust?" he said timidly. "He is old and he has had nothing since last forenoon."

The woman shut the door hastily, murmuring some vague saying about wheat and rye being very dear that season. The boy and the dog went on again wearily: they asked no more.

By slow and painful ways they reached Antwerp as the chimes tolled ten.

"If I had anything about me I could sell to get him bread!" thought Nello, but he had nothing except the wisp of linen and serge that covered him, and his pair of wooden shoes.

Patrasche understood, and nestled his nose into the lad's hand, as though to pray him not to be disquieted for any woe or want of his.

The winner of the drawing-prize was to be proclaimed at noon, and to the public building where he had left his treasure Nello made his way. On the steps and in the entrance hall was a crowd of youths—some of his age, some older, all with parents or relatives or friends. His heart was sick with fear as he went amongst them, holding Patrasche close to him. The great bells of the city clashed out the hour of noon with brazen clamor. The doors of the inner hall were opened; the eager, panting throng rushed in: it was

known that the selected picture would be raised above the rest upon a wooden dais.

A mist obscured Nello's sight, his head swam, his limbs almost failed him. When his vision cleared he saw the drawing raised on high: it was not his own! A slow, sonorous voice was proclaiming aloud that victory had been adjudged to Stephen Kiesslinger, born in the burgh of Antwerp, son of a wharfinger in that town.

When Nello recovered his consciousness he was lying on the stones without, and Patrasche was trying with every art he knew to call him back to life. In the distance a throng of the youths of Antwerp were shouting around their successful comrade, and escorting him with acclamations to his home upon the quay.

The boy staggered to his feet and drew the dog into his embrace. "It is all over, dear Patrasche," he murmured—"all over!"

He rallied himself as best he could, for he was weak from fasting, and retraced his steps to the village. Patrasche paced by his side with his head drooping and his old limbs feeble from hunger and sorrow.

The snow was falling fast: a keen hurricane blew from the north: it was bitter as death on the plains. It took them long to traverse the familiar path, and the bells were sounding four of the clock as they approached the hamlet. Suddenly Patrasche paused, arrested by a scent in the snow, scratched, whined, and drew out with his teeth a small case of brown leather. He held it up to Nello in the darkness. Where they were there stood a little Calvary, and a lamp burned dully under the cross; the boy mechanically turned the case to the light: on it was the name of Baas Cogez, and within it were notes for two thousand francs.

The sight roused the lad a little from his stupor. He thrust it in his shirt, and stroked Patrasche and

drew him onward. The dog looked up wistfully in his face.

Nello made straight for the mill-house, and went to the house-door and struck on its panels. The miller's wife opened it weeping, with little Alois clinging close to her skirts. "Is it thee, thou poor lad?" she said kindly, through her tears. "Get thee gone ere the Baas see thee. We are in sore trouble to-night. He is out seeking for a power of money that he has let fall riding homeward, and in this snow he never will find it; and God knows it will go nigh to ruin us. It is Heaven's own judgment for the things we have done to thee."

Nello put the note-case in her hand and called Patrasche within the house. "Patrasche found the money to-night," he said quickly. "Tell Baas Cogez so; I think he will not deny the dog shelter and food in his old age. Keep him from pursuing me, and I pray of you to be good to him."

Ere either woman or dog knew what he meant he had stooped and kissed Patrasche, then closed the door hurriedly, and disappeared in the gloom of the fast-falling night.

The woman and the child stood speechless with joy and fear: Patrasche vainly spent the fury of his anguish against the iron-bound oak of the barred house-door. They did not dare unbar the door and let him forth: they tried all they could to solace him. They brought him sweet cakes and juicy meats; they tempted him with the best they had; they tried to lure him to abide by the warmth of the hearth; but it was of no avail. Patrasche refused to be comforted or to stir from the barred portal.

It was six o'clock when from an opposite entrance the miller at last came, jaded and broken, into his wife's presence. "It is lost forever," he said, with an

ashen cheek and a quiver in his stern voice. "We have looked with lanterns everywhere: it is gone—the little maiden's portion and all!"

His wife put the money into his hand and told him how it had come to her. The strong man sank trembling into a seat and covered his face, ashamed and almost afraid. "I have been cruel to the lad," he muttered at length: "I deserved not to have good at his hands."

Little Alois, taking courage, crept close to her father and nestled against him her fair, curly head. "Nello may come here again, father?" she whispered. "He may come to-morrow as he used to do?"

The miller pressed her in his arms: his hard, sunburned face was very pale, and his mouth trembled. "Surely, surely," he answered the child. "He shall bide here on Christmas Day, and any other day he will. God helping me, I will make amends to the boy —I will make amends."

Little Alois kissed him in gratitude and joy, then slid from his knees and ran to where the dog kept watch by the door. "And to-night I may feast Patrasche?" she cried, in a child's thoughtless glee.

Her father bent his head gravely: "Ay, ay! let the dog have the best;" for the stern old man was moved and shaken to his heart's depth.

It was Christmas Eve, and the mill-house was filled with oak logs and squares of turf, with cream and honey, with meat and bread, and the rafters were hung with wreaths of evergreen, and the Calvary and the cuckoo clock looked down from a mass of holly. There were little paper lanterns, too, for Alois, and toys of various fashions, and sweetmeats in bright-pictured papers. There were light, and warmth, and abundance everywhere, and the child would fain have made the dog a guest honored and feasted.

But Patrasche would neither lie in the warmth nor share in the cheer. Famished he was and very cold, but without Nello he would partake neither of comfort nor food. Against all temptation he was proof, and close against the door he leaned always, watching only for a means of escape.

"He wants the lad," said Baas Cogez. "Good dog! good dog! I will go over to the lad the first thing at day-dawn." For no one but Patrasche knew that Nello had left the hut, and no one but Patrasche divined that Nello had gone to face starvation and misery alone.

The mill-kitchen was very warm; great logs crackled and flamed on the hearth; neighbors came in for a glass of wine and a slice of the fat goose baking for supper. Alois, gleeful and sure of her playmate back on the morrow, bounded and sang and tossed back her yellow hair. Baas Cogez, in the fulness of his heart, smiled on her through moistened eyes, and spoke of the way in which he would befriend her favorite companion; the house-mother sat with calm, contented face at the spinning-wheel: the cuckoo in the clock chirped mirthful hours. Amidst it all Patrasche was bidden with a thousand words of welcome to tarry there a cherished guest. But neither peace nor plenty could allure him where Nello was not.

When the supper smoked on the board, and the voices were loudest and gladdest, and the Christ-child brought choicest gifts to Alois, Patrasche, watching always an occasion, glided out when the door was unlatched by a careless new-comer, and as swiftly as his weak and tired limbs would bear him sped over the snow in the bitter, black night. He had only one thought—to follow Nello. A human friend might have paused for the pleasant meal, the cheery warmth, the cosy slumber; but that was not the friendship of Pa-

trasche. He remembered a bygone time, when an old man and a little child had found him sick unto death in the wayside ditch.

Snow had fallen freshly all the evening long; it was now nearly ten; the trail of the boy's footsteps was almost obliterated. It took Patrasche long to discover any scent. When at last he found it, it was lost again quickly, and lost and recovered, and again lost and again recovered, a hundred times or more.

The night was very wild. The lamps under the wayside crosses were blown out; the roads were sheets of ice; the impenetrable darkness hid every trace of habitations; there was no living thing abroad. All the cattle were housed, and in all the huts and homesteads men and women rejoiced and feasted. There was only Patrasche out in the cruel cold—old and famished and full of pain, but with the strength and the patience of a great love to sustain him in his search.

The trail of Nello's steps, faint and obscure as it was under the new snow, went straightly along the accustomed tracks into Antwerp. It was past midnight when Patrasche traced it over the boundaries of the town and into the narrow, tortuous, gloomy streets. It was all quite dark in the town, save where some light gleamed ruddily through the crevices of house-shutters, or some group went homeward with lanterns chanting drinking songs. The streets were all white with ice: the high walls and roofs loomed black against them. There was scarce a sound save the riot of the winds down the passages as they tossed the creaking signs and shook the tall lamp-irons.

So many passers-by had trodden through and through the snow, so many diverse paths had crossed and recrossed each other, that the dog had a hard task to retain any hold on the track he followed. But he kept on his way, though the cold pierced him to the

bone, and the jagged ice cut his feet, and the hunger in his body gnawed like a rat's teeth. He kept on his way, a poor, gaunt, shivering thing, and by long patience traced the steps he loved into the very heart of the burg and up to the steps of the great cathedral.

"He is gone to the things that he loved," thought Patrasche; he could not understand, but he was full of sorrow and of pity for the art-passion that to him was so incomprehensible and yet so sacred.

The portals of the cathedral were unclosed after the midnight mass. Some heedlessness in the custodians, too eager to go home and feast or sleep, or too drowsy to know whether they turned the keys aright, had left one of the doors unlocked. By that accident the footfalls Patrasche sought had passed through into the building, leaving the white marks of snow upon the dark stone floor. By that slender white thread, frozen as it fell, he was guided through the intense silence, through the immensity of the vaulted space—guided straight to the gates of the chancel, and, stretched there upon the stones, he found Nello. He crept up and touched the face of the boy. "Didst thou dream that I should be faithless and forsake thee? I—a dog?" said that mute caress.

The lad raised himself with a low cry and clasped him close. "Let us lie down and die together," he murmured. "Men have no need of us, and we are all alone."

In answer, Patrasche crept closer yet, and laid his head upon the young boy's breast. The great tears stood in his brown, sad eyes; not for himself—for himself he was happy.

They lay close together in the piercing cold. The blasts that blew over the Flemish dykes from the northern seas were like waves of ice, which froze every living thing they touched. The interior of the im-

mense vault of stone in which they were was even more bitterly chill than the snow covered plains without. Now and then a bat moved in the shadows—now and then a gleam of light came on the ranks of carven figures. Under the Rubens they lay together quite still, and soothed almost into a dreaming slumber by the numbing narcotic of the cold. Together they dreamed of the old glad days when they had chased each other through the flowering grasses of the summer meadows, or sat hidden in the tall bulrushes by the water's side, watching the boats go seaward in the sun.

Suddenly through the darkness a great white radiance streamed through the vastness of the aisles; the moon, that was at her height, had broken through the clouds, the snow had ceased to fall, the light reflected from the snow without was clear as the light of dawn. It fell through the arches full upon the two pictures above, from which the boy on his entrance had flung back the veil: the Elevation and the Descent of the Cross were for one instant visible.

Nello rose to his feet and stretched his arms to them: the tears of a passionate ecstacy glistened on the paleness of his face. "I have seen them at last!" he cried aloud. "O God, it is enough!"

His limbs failed under him, and he sank upon his knees, still gazing upward at the majesty that he adored. For a few brief moments the light illumined the divine visions that had been denied to him so long—light clear and sweet and strong as though it streamed from the throne of Heaven. Then suddenly it passed away: once more a great darkness covered the face of Christ.

The arms of the boy drew close again the body of the dog. "We shall see His face—there," he murmured: "and He will not part us, I think."

On the morrow, by the chancel of the cathedral, the

people of Antwerp found them both. They were both dead: the cold of the night had frozen into stillness alike the young life and the old. When the Christmas morning broke and the priests came to the temple, they saw them lying thus on the stones together. Above, the veils were drawn back from the great visions of Rubens, and the fresh rays of the sunrise touched the thorn-crowned head of the Christ.

As the day grew on there came an old, hard-featured man who wept as women weep. "I was cruel to the lad," he muttered, "and now I would have made amends—yea, to the half of my substance—and he should have been to me as a son."

There came, also, as the day grew apace, a painter who had fame in the world, and who was liberal of hand and of spirit. "I seek one who should have had the prize yesterday had worth won," he said to the people —"a boy of rare promise and genius. An old woodcutter on a fallen tree at eventide—that was all his theme. But there was greatness for the future in it. I would fain find him, and take him with me and teach him Art."

And a little child with curling fair hair, sobbing bitterly as she clung to her father's arm, cried aloud, "O Nello, come! We have all ready for thee. The Christ-child's hands are full of gifts, and the old piper will play for us; and the mother says thou shalt stay by the hearth and burn nuts with us all the Noel week long—yes, even to the Feast of the Kings! And Patrasche will be so happy! O Nello, wake and come!"

But the young, pale face, turned upward to the light of the great Rubens with a smile upon its mouth, answered them all, "It is too late."

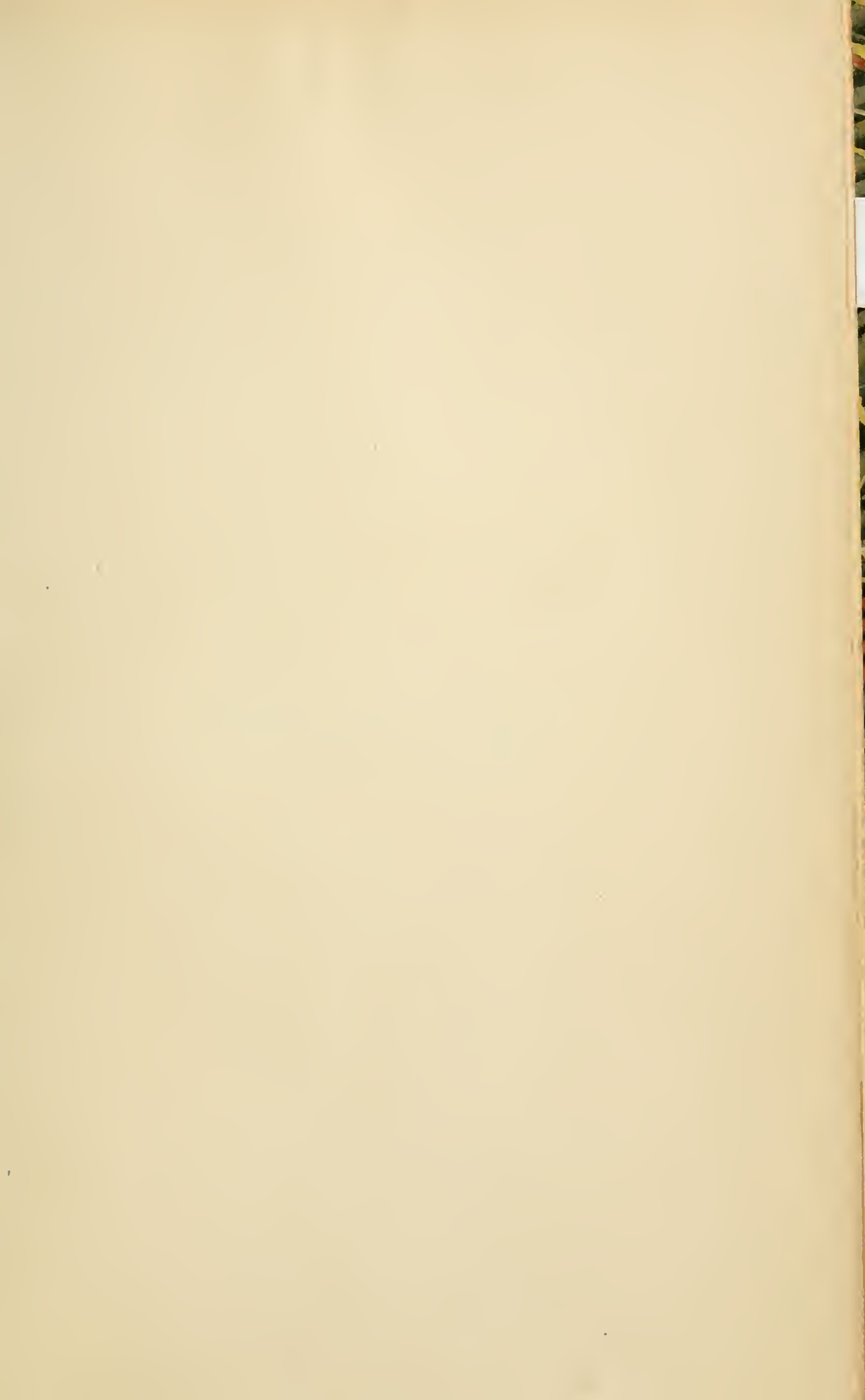
For the sweet, sonorous bells went ringing through the frost, and the sunlight shone upon the plains of snow, and the populace trooped gay and glad through

the streets, but Nello and Patrasche no more asked charity at their hands. All they needed now Antwerp gave unbidden.

Death had been more pitiful to them than longer life would have been. It had taken the one in the loyalty of love, and the other in the innocence of faith, from a world which for love has no recompense and for faith no fulfilment.

All their lives they had been together, and in their deaths they were not divided; for when they were found the arms of the boy were folded too closely around the dog to be severed without violence, and the people of their little village, contrite and ashamed, implored a special grace for them, and, making them one grave, laid them to rest there side by side—forever!

THE END



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