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Author: Honoré de Balzac

Translator: Clara Bell

Translator: James Waring

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE EXILES ***

THE EXILES

By Honore de Balzac

Translated by Clara Bell and James Waring

ALMAE SORORI

In the year 1308 few houses were yet standing on the Island formed by the alluvium and sand deposited by the Seine above the Cite, behind the Church of Notre-Dame. The first man who was so bold as to build on this strand, then liable to frequent floods, was a constable of the watch of the City of Paris, who had been able to do some service to their Reverences the Chapter of the Cathedral; and in return the Bishop leased him twenty-five perches of land, with exemptions from all feudal dues or taxes on the buildings he might erect.

Seven years before the beginning of this narrative, Joseph Tirechair, one of the sternest of Paris constables, as his name (Tear Flesh) would indicate, had, thanks to his share of the fines collected by him for delinquencies committed within the precincts of the Cite, had been able to build a house on the bank of the Seine just at the end of the Rue du Port-Saint-Landry. To protect the merchandise landed on the strand, the municipality had constructed a sort of break-water of masonry, which may still be seen on some old plans of Paris, and which preserved the piles of the landing-place by meeting the rush of water and ice at the upper end of the Island. The constable had taken advantage of this for the foundation of his house, so that there were several steps up to his door.

Like all the houses of that date, this cottage was crowned by a peaked roof, forming a gable-end to the front, or half a diamond. To the great regret of historians, but two or three examples of such roofs survive in Paris. A round opening gave light to a loft, where the constable's wife dried the linen of the Chapter, for she had the honor of washing for the Cathedral—which was certainly not a bad customer. On the first floor were two rooms, let to lodgers at a rent, one year with another, of forty sous *Paris* each, an exorbitant sum, that

was however justified by the luxury Tirechair had lavished on their adornment. Flanders tapestry hung on the walls, and a large bed with a top valance of green serge, like a peasant's bed, was amply furnished with mattresses, and covered with good sheets of fine linen. Each room had a stove called a *chauffe-doux*; the floor, carefully polished by Dame Tirechair's apprentices, shone like the woodwork of a shrine. Instead of stools, the lodgers had deep chairs of carved walnut, the spoils probably of some raided castle. Two chests with pewter mouldings, and tables on twisted legs, completed the fittings, worthy of the most fastidious knights-banneret whom business might bring to Paris.

The windows of those two rooms looked out on the river. From one you could only see the shores of the Seine, and the three barren islands, of which two were subsequently joined together to form the Ile Saint-Louis; the third was the Ile de Louviers. From the other could be seen, down a vista of the Port-Saint-Landry, the buildings on the Greve, the Bridge of Notre-Dame, with its houses, and the tall towers of the Louvre, but lately built by Philippe-Auguste to overlook the then poor and squalid town of Paris, which suggests so many imaginary marvels to the fancy of modern romancers.

The ground floor of Tirechair's house consisted of a large hall, where his wife's business was carried on, through which the lodgers were obliged to pass on their way to their own rooms up a stairway like a mill-ladder. Behind this were a kitchen and a bedroom, with a view over the Seine. A tiny garden, reclaimed from the waters, displayed at the foot of this modest dwelling its beds of cabbages and onions, and a few rose-bushes, sheltered by palings, forming a sort of hedge. A little structure of lath and mud served as a kennel for a big dog, the indispensable guardian of so lonely a dwelling. Beyond this kennel was a little plot, where the hens cackled whose eggs were sold to the Canons. Here and there on this patch of earth, muddy or dry according to the whimsical Parisian weather, a few trees grew, constantly lashed by the wind, and teased and broken by the passer-by—willows, reeds, and tall grasses.

The Eyot, the Seine, the landing-place, the house, were all overshadowed on the west by the huge basilica of Notre-Dame casting its cold gloom over the whole plot as the sun moved. Then, as now, there was not in all Paris a more deserted spot, a more solemn or more melancholy prospect. The noise of waters, the chanting of priests, or the piping of the wind, were the only sounds that disturbed this wilderness, where lovers would sometimes meet to discuss their secrets when the church-folds and clergy were safe in church at the services.

One evening in April in the year 1308, Tirechair came home in a remarkably bad temper. For three days past everything had been in good order on the King's highway. Now, as an officer of the peace, nothing annoyed him so much as to feel himself useless. He flung down his halbert in a rage, muttered inarticulate words as he pulled off his doublet, half red and half blue, and slipped on a shabby camlet jerkin. After helping himself from the bread-box to a hunch of bread, and spreading it with butter, he seated himself on a bench, looked round at his four whitewashed walls, counted the beams of the ceiling, made a mental inventory of the household goods hanging from the nails, scowled at the neatness which left him nothing to complain of, and looked at his wife, who said not a word as she ironed the albs and surplices from the sacristy.

"By my halidom," he said, to open the conversation, "I cannot think, Jacqueline, where you go to catch your apprenticed maids. Now, here is one," he went on, pointing to a girl who was folding an altar-cloth, clumsily enough, it must be owned, "who looks to me more like a damsel rather free of her person than a sturdy country wench. Her hands are as white as a fine lady's! By the Mass! and her hair smells of essences, I verily believe, and her hose are as fine as a queen's. By the two horns of Old Nick, matters please me but ill as I find them here."

The girl colored, and stole a look at Jacqueline, full of alarm not unmixed with pride. The mistress answered her glance with a smile, laid down her work, and turned to her husband.

"Come now," said she, in a sharp tone, "you need not harry me. Are you going to accuse me next of some underhand tricks? Patrol your roads as much as you please, but do not meddle here with anything but what concerns your sleeping in peace, drinking your wine, and eating what I set before you, or else, I warn you, I will have no more to do with keeping you healthy and happy. Let any one find me a happier man in all the town," she went on, with a scolding grimace. "He has silver in his purse, a gable over the Seine, a stout halbert on one hand, an honest wife on the other, a house as clean and smart as a new pin! And he growls like a pilgrim smarting from Saint Anthony's fire!"

"Hey day!" exclaimed the sergeant of the watch, "do you fancy, Jacqueline, that I have any wish to see my house razed down, my halbert given to another, and my wife standing in the pillory?"

Jacqueline and the dainty journeywoman turned pale.

"Just tell me what you are driving at," said the washerwoman sharply, "and make a clean breast of it. For some days, my man, I have observed that you have some maggot twisting in your poor brain. Come up, then, and have it all out. You must be a pretty coward indeed if you fear any harm when you have only to guard the common council and live under the protection of the Chapter! Their Reverences the Canons would lay the whole bishopric under an interdict if Jacqueline brought a complaint of the smallest damage."

As she spoke, she went straight up to her husband and took him by the arm.

"Come with me," she added, pulling him up and out on to the steps.

When they were down by the water in their little garden, Jacqueline looked saucily in her husband's face.

"I would have you to know, you old gaby, that when my lady fair goes out, a piece of gold comes into our savings-box."

"Oh, ho!" said the constable, who stood silent and meditative before his wife. But he presently said, "Any way, we are done for.—What brings the dame to our house?"

"She comes to see the well-favored young clerk who lives overhead," replied Jacqueline, looking up at the window that opened on to the vast landscape of the Seine valley.

"The Devil's in it!" cried the man. "For a few base crowns you have ruined me, Jacqueline. Is that an honest trade for a sergeant's decent wife to ply? And, be she Countess or Baroness, the lady will not be able to get us out of the trap in which we shall find ourselves caught sooner or later. Shall we not have to square accounts with some puissant and offended husband? for, by the Mass, she is fair to look upon!"

"But she is a widow, I tell you, gray gander! How dare you accuse your wife of foul play and folly? And the lady has never spoken a word to yon gentle clerk, she is content to look on him and think of him. Poor lad! he would be dead of starvation by now but for her, for she is as good as a mother to him. And he, the sweet cherub! it is as easy to cheat him as to rock a new-born babe. He believes his pence will last for ever, and he has eaten them through twice over in the past six months."

"Woman," said the sergeant, solemnly pointing to the Place de Greve, "do you remember seeing, even from this spot, the fire in which they burnt the Danish woman the other day?"

"What then?" said Jacqueline, in a fright.

"What then?" echoed Tirechair. "Why, the two men who lodge with us smell of scorching. Neither Chapter nor Countess or Protector can serve them. Here is Easter come round; the year is ending; we must turn our company out of doors, and that at once. Do you think you can teach an old constable how to know a gallows-bird? Our two lodgers were on terms with la Porette, that heretic jade from Denmark or Norway, whose last cries you heard from here. She was a brave witch; she never blenched at the stake, which was proof enough of her compact with the Devil. I saw her as plain as I see you; she preached to the throng, and declared she was in heaven and could see God.

"And since that, I tell you, I have never slept quietly in my bed. My lord, who lodges over us, is of a surety more of a wizard than a Christian. On my word as an officer, I shiver when that old man passes near me; he never sleeps of nights; if I wake, his voice is ringing like a bourdon of bells, and I hear him muttering incantations in the language of hell. Have you ever seen him eat an honest crust of bread or a hearth-cake made by a good Catholic baker? His brown skin has been scorched and tanned by hell-fires. Marry, and I tell you his eyes hold a spell like that of serpents. Jacqueline, I will have none of those two men under my roof. I see too much of the law not to know that it is well to have nothing to do with it.—You must get rid of our two lodgers; the elder because I suspect him; the youngster, because he is too pretty. They neither of them seem to me to keep Christian company. The boy is ever staring at the moon, the stars, and the clouds, like a wizard watching for the hour when he shall mount his broomstick; the other old rogue certainly makes some use of the poor boy for his black art. My house stands too close to the river as it is, and that risk of ruin is bad enough without bringing down fire from heaven, or the love affairs of a countess. I have spoken. Do not rebel."

In spite of her sway in the house, Jacqueline stood stupefied as she listened to the edict fulminated against his lodgers by the sergeant of the watch. She mechanically looked up at the window of the room inhabited by the old man, and shivered with horror as she suddenly caught sight of the gloomy, melancholy face, and the piercing eye that so affected her husband, accustomed as he was to dealing with criminals.

At that period, great and small, priests and laymen, all trembled before the idea of any supernatural power. The word "magic" was as powerful as leprosy to root up feelings, break social ties, and freeze piety in the most generous soul. It suddenly struck the constable's wife that she had never, in fact, seen either of her lodgers exercising any human function. Though the younger man's voice was as sweet and melodious as the tones of a flute, she so rarely heard it that she was tempted to think his silence the result of a spell. As she recalled the strange beauty of that pink-and-white face, and saw in memory the fine hair and moist brilliancy of those eyes, she believed that they were indeed the artifices of the Devil. She remembered that for days at a time she had never heard the slightest sound from either room. Where were the strangers during all those hours?

Suddenly the most singular circumstances recurred to her mind. She was completely overmastered by fear, and could even discern witchcraft in the rich lady's interest in the young Godefroid, a poor orphan who had come from Flanders to study at the University of Paris. She hastily put her hand into one of her pockets, pulled out four livres of Tournay in large silver coinage, and looked at the pieces with an expression of avarice mingled with terror.

"That, at any rate, is not false coin," said she, showing the silver to her husband. "Besides," she went on, "how can I turn them out after taking next year's rent paid in advance?"

"You had better inquire of the Dean of the Chapter," replied Tirechair. "Is not it his business to tell us how we should deal with these extraordinary persons?"

"Ay, truly extraordinary," cried Jacqueline. "To think of their cunning; coming here under the very shadow of Notre-Dame! Still," she went on, "or ever I ask the Dean, why not warn that fair and noble lady of the risk she runs?"

As she spoke, Jacqueline went into the house with her husband, who had not missed a mouthful. Tirechair, as a man grown old in the tricks of his trade, affected to believe that the strange lady was in fact a work-girl; still, this assumed indifference could not altogether cloak the timidity of a courtier who respects a royal incognito. At this moment six was striking by the clock of Saint-Denis du Pas, a small church that stood between Notre-Dame and the Port-Saint-Landry—the first church erected in Paris, on the very spot where Saint-Denis was laid on the gridiron, as chronicles tell. The hour flew from steeple to tower all over the city. Then suddenly confused shouts were heard on the left bank of the Seine, behind Notre-Dame, in the quarter where the schools of the University harbored their swarms.

At this signal, Jacqueline's elder lodger began to move about his room. The sergeant, his wife, and the strange lady listened while he opened and shut his door, and the old man's heavy step was heard on the steep stair. The constable's suspicions gave such interest to the advent of this personage, that the lady was startled as she observed the strange expression of the two countenances before her. Referring the terrors of this couple to the youth she was protecting—as was natural in a lover—the young lady awaited, with some uneasiness, the event thus heralded by the fears of her so-called master and mistress.

The old man paused for a moment on the threshold to scrutinize the three persons in the room, and seemed to be looking for his young companion. This glance of inquiry, unsuspecting as it was, agitated the three. Indeed, nobody, not even the stoutest man, could deny that Nature had bestowed exceptional powers on this being, who seemed almost supernatural. Though his eyes were somewhat deeply shaded by the wide sockets fringed with long eyebrows, they were set, like a kite's eyes, in eyelids so broad, and bordered by so dark a

circle sharply defined on his cheek, that they seemed rather prominent. These singular eyes had in them something indescribably domineering and piercing, which took possession of the soul by a grave and thoughtful look, a look as bright and lucid as that of a serpent or a bird, but which held one fascinated and crushed by the swift communication of some tremendous sorrow, or of some super-human power.

Every feature was in harmony with this eye of lead and of fire, at once rigid and flashing, stern and calm. While in this eagle eye earthly emotions seemed in some sort extinct, the lean, parched face also bore traces of unhappy passions and great deeds done. The nose, which was narrow and aquiline, was so long that it seemed to hang on by the nostrils. The bones of the face were strongly marked by the long, straight wrinkles that furrowed the hollow cheeks. Every line in the countenance looked dark. It would suggest the bed of a torrent where the violence of former floods was recorded in the depth of the water-courses, which testified to some terrible, unceasing turmoil. Like the ripples left by the oars of a boat on the waters, deep lines, starting from each side of his nose, marked his face strongly, and gave an expression of bitter sadness to his mouth, which was firm and straight-lipped. Above the storm thus stamped on his countenance, his calm brow rose with what may be called boldness, and crowned it as with a marble dome.

The stranger preserved that intrepid and dignified manner that is frequently habitual with men inured to disaster, and fitted by nature to stand unmoved before a furious mob and to face the greatest dangers. He seemed to move in a sphere apart, where he poised above humanity. His gestures, no less than his look, were full of irresistible power; his lean hands were those of a soldier; and if your own eyes were forced to fall before his piercing gaze, you were no less sure to tremble when by word or action he spoke to your soul. He moved in silent majesty that made him seem a king without his guard, a god without his rays.

His dress emphasized the ideas suggested by the peculiarities of his mien and face. Soul, body, and garb were in harmony, and calculated to impress the coldest imagination. He wore a sort of sleeveless gown of black cloth, fastened in front, and falling to the calf, leaving the neck bare with no collar. His doublet and boots were likewise black. On his head was a black velvet cap like a priest's, sitting in a close circle above his forehead, and not showing a single hair. It was the strictest mourning, the gloomiest habit a man could wear. But for a long sword that hung by his side from a leather belt which could be seen where his surcoat hung open, a priest would have hailed him as a brother. Though of no more than middle height, he appeared tall; and, looking him in the face he seemed a giant.

"The clock has struck, the boat is waiting; will you not come?"

At these words, spoken in bad French, but distinctly audible in the silence, a little noise was heard in the other top room, and the young man came down as lightly as a bird.

When Godefroid appeared, the lady's face turned crimson; she trembled, started, and covered her face with her white hands.

Any woman might have shared her agitation at the sight of this youth of about twenty, of a form and stature so slender that at a first glance he might have been taken for a mere boy, or a young girl in disguise. His black cap—like the *beret* worn by the Basque people—showed a brow as white as snow, where grace and innocence shone with an expression of divine sweetness—the light of a soul full of faith. A poet's fancy would have seen there the star which, in some old tale, a mother entreats the fairy godmother to set on the forehead of an infant abandoned, like Moses, to the waves. Love lurked in the thousand fair curls that fell over his shoulders. His throat, truly a swan's throat, was white and exquisitely round. His blue eyes, bright and liquid, mirrored the sky. His features and the mould of his brow were refined and delicate enough to enchant a painter. The bloom of beauty, which in a woman's face causes men such indescribable delight, the exquisite purity of outline, the halo of light that bathes the features we love, were here combined with a masculine complexion, and with strength as yet but half developed, in the most enchanting contrast. His was one of those melodious countenances which even when silent speak and attract us. And yet, on marking it attentively, the incipient blight might have been detected which comes of a great thought or a passion, the faint yellow tinge that made him seem like a young leaf opening to the sun.

No contrast could be greater or more startling than that seen in the companionship of these two men. It was like seeing a frail and graceful shrub that has grown from the hollow trunk of some gnarled willow, withered by age, blasted by lightning, standing decrepit; one of those majestic trees that painters love; the trembling sapling takes shelter there from storms. One was a god, the other was an angel; one the poet that feels, the other the poet that expresses—a prophet in sorrow, a levite in prayer.

They went out together without speaking.

"Did you mark how he called him to him?" cried the sergeant of the watch when the footsteps of the couple were no longer audible on the strand. "Are not they a demon and his familiar?"

"Phooh!" puffed Jacqueline. "I felt smothered! I never marked our two lodgers so carefully. 'Tis a bad thing for us women that the Devil can wear so fair a mien!"

"Ay, cast some holy water on him," said Tirechair, "and you will see him turn into a toad.—I am off to tell the office all about them."

On hearing this speech, the lady roused herself from the reverie into which she had sunk, and looked at the constable, who was donning his red-and-blue jacket.

"Whither are you off to?" she asked.

"To tell the justices that wizards are lodging in our house very much against our will."

The lady smiled.

"I," said she, "am the Comtesse de Mahaut," and she rose with a dignity that took the man's breath away. "Beware of bringing the smallest trouble on your guests. Above all, respect the old man; I have seen him in the company of your Lord the King, who entreated him courteously; you will be ill advised to trouble him in any way. As to my having been here—never breathe a word of it, as you value your life."

She said no more, but relapsed into thought.

Presently she looked up, signed to Jacqueline, and together they went up into Godefroid's room. The fair Countess looked at the bed, the carved chairs, the chest, the tapestry, the table, with a joy like that of the

exile who sees on his return the crowded roofs of his native town nestling at the foot of a hill.

"If you have not deceived me," she said to Jacqueline, "I promise you a hundred crowns in gold."

"Behold, madame," said the woman, "the poor angel is confiding—here is all his treasure."

As she spoke, Jacqueline opened a drawer in the table and showed some parchments.

"God of mercy!" cried the Countess, snatching up a document that caught her eye, on which she read, *Gothofredus Comes Gantiacus* (Godefroid, Count of Ghent).

She dropped the parchment, and passed her hand over her brow; then, feeling, no doubt, that she had compromised herself by showing so much emotion, she recovered her cold demeanor.

"I am satisfied," said she.

She went downstairs and out of the house. The constable and his wife stood in their doorway, and saw her take the path to the landing-place.

A boat was moored hard by. When the rustle of the Countess' approach was audible, a boatman suddenly stood up, helped the fair laundress to take her seat in it, and rowed with such strength as to make the boat fly like a swallow down the stream.

"You are a sorry fellow," said Jacqueline, giving the officer's shoulder a familiar slap. "We have earned a hundred gold crowns this morning."

"I like harboring lords no better than harboring wizards. And I know not, of the two, which is the more like to bring us to the gallows," replied Tirechair, taking up his halbert. "I will go my rounds over by Champfleuri; God protect us, and send me to meet some pert jade out in her bravery of gold rings to glitter in the shade like a glow-worm!"

Jacqueline, alone in the house, hastily went up to the unknown lord's room to discover, if she could, some clue to this mysterious business. Like some learned men who give themselves infinite pains to complicate the clear and simple laws of nature, she had already invented a chaotic romance to account for the meeting of these three persons under her humble roof. She hunted through the chest, examined everything, but could find nothing extraordinary. She saw nothing on the table but a writing-case and some sheets of parchment; and as she could not read, this discovery told her nothing. A woman's instinct then took her into the young man's room, and from thence she descried her two lodgers crossing the river in the ferry boat.

"They stand like two statues," said she to herself. "Ah, ha! They are landing at the Rue du Fouarre. How nimble he is, the sweet youth! He jumped out like a bird. By him the old man looks like some stone saint in the Cathedral.—They are going to the old School of the Four Nations. Presto! they are out of sight.—And this is where he lives, poor cherub!" she went on, looking about the room. "How smart and winning he is! Ah! your fine gentry are made of other stuff than we are."

And Jacqueline went down again after smoothing down the bed-coverlet, dusting the chest, and wondering for the hundredth time in six months:

"What in the world does he do all the blessed day? He cannot always be staring at the blue sky and the stars that God has hung up there like lanterns. That dear boy has known trouble. But why do he and the old man hardly ever speak to each other?"

Then she lost herself in wonderment and in thoughts which, in her woman's brain, were tangled like a skein of thread.

The old man and his young companion had gone into one of the schools for which the Rue du Fouarre was at that time famous throughout Europe. At the moment when Jacqueline's two lodgers arrived at the old School des Quatre Nations, the celebrated Sigier, the most noted Doctor of Mystical Theology of the University of Paris, was mounting his pulpit in a spacious low room on a level with the street. The cold stones were strewn with clean straw, on which several of his disciples knelt on one knee, writing on the other, to enable them to take notes from the Master's improvised discourse, in the shorthand abbreviations which are the despair of modern decipherers.

The hall was full, not of students only, but of the most distinguished men belonging to the clergy, the court, and the legal faculty. There were some learned foreigners, too—soldiers and rich citizens. The broad faces were there, with prominent brows and venerable beards, which fill us with a sort of pious respect for our ancestors when we see their portraits from the Middle Ages. Lean faces, too, with burning, sunken eyes, under bald heads yellow from the labors of futile scholasticism, contrasted with young and eager countenances, grave faces, warlike faces, and the ruddy cheeks of the financial class.

These lectures, dissertations, theses, sustained by the brightest geniuses of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, roused our forefathers to enthusiasm. They were to them their bull-fights, their Italian opera, their tragedy, their dancers; in short, all their drama. The performance of Mysteries was a later thing than these spiritual disputations, to which, perhaps, we owe the French stage. Inspired eloquence, combining the attractions of the human voice skilfully used, with daring inquisition into the secrets of God, sufficed to satisfy every form of curiosity, appealed to the soul, and constituted the fashionable entertainment of the time. Not only did Theology include the other sciences, it was science itself, as grammar was science to the Ancient Greeks; and those who distinguished themselves in these duels, in which the orators, like Jacob, wrestled with the Spirit of God, had a promising future before them. Embassies, arbitrations between sovereigns, chancellorships, and ecclesiastical dignities were the meed of men whose rhetoric had been schooled in theological controversy. The professor's chair was the tribune of the period.

This system lasted till the day when Rabelais gibbeted dialectics by his merciless satire, as Cervantes demolished chivalry by a narrative comedy.

To understand this amazing period and the spirit which dictated its voluminous, though now forgotten, masterpieces, to analyze it, even to its barbarisms, we need only examine the Constitutions of the University of Paris and the extraordinary scheme of instruction that then obtained. Theology was taught under two faculties—that of Theology properly so called, and that of Canon Law. The faculty of Theology, again, had three sections—Scholastic, Canonical, and Mystic. It would be wearisome to give an account of the attributes

of each section of the science, since one only, namely, Mystic, is the subject of this *Etude*.

Mystical Theology included the whole of Divine Revelation and the elucidation of the Mysteries. And this branch of ancient theology has been secretly preserved with reverence even to our own day; Jacob Boehm, Swendenborg, Martinez Pasqualis, Saint-Martin, Molinos, Madame Guyon, Madame Bourignon, and Madame Krudener, the extensive sect of the Ecstatics, and that of the Illuminati, have at different periods duly treasured the doctrines of this science, of which the aim is indeed truly startling and portentous. In Doctor Sigier's day, as in our own, man has striven to gain wings to fly into the sanctuary where God hides from our gaze.

This digression was necessary to give a clue to the scene at which the old man and the youth from the island under Notre-Dame had come to be audience; it will also protect this narrative from all blame on the score of falsehood and hyperbole, of which certain persons of hasty judgment might perhaps suspect me.

Doctor Sigier was a tall man in the prime of life. His face, rescued from oblivion by the archives of the University, had singular analogies with that of Mirabeau. It was stamped with the seal of fierce, swift, and terrible eloquence. But the Doctor bore on his brow the expression of religious faith that his modern double had not. His voice, too, was of persuasive sweetness, with a clear and pleasing ring in it.

At this moment the daylight, that was stintingly diffused through the small, heavily-leaded window-panes, tinted the assembly with capricious tones and powerful contrasts from the chequered light and shade. Here, in a dark corner, eyes shone brightly, their dark heads under the sunbeams gleamed light above faces in shadow, and various bald heads, with only a cirlet of white hair, were distinguished among the crowd like battlements silvered by moonlight. Every face was turned towards the Doctor, mute but impatient. The drowsy voices of other lecturers in the adjoining schools were audible in the silent street like the murmuring of the sea; and the steps of the two strangers, as they now came in, attracted general attention. Doctor Sigier, ready to begin, saw the stately senior standing, looked round for a seat for him, and then finding none, as the place was full, came down from his place, went to the newcomer, and with great respect, led him to the platform of his professor's chair, and there gave him his stool to sit upon. The assembly hailed this mark of deference with a murmur of approval, recognizing the old man as the orator of a fine thesis admirably argued not long since at the Sorbonne.

The stranger looked down from his raised position on the crowd below with that deep glance that held a whole poem of sorrow, and those who met his eye felt an indescribable thrill. The lad, following the old man, sat down on one of the steps, leaning against the pulpit in a graceful and melancholy attitude. The silence was now profound, and the doorway and even the street were blocked by scholars who had deserted the other classes.

Doctor Sigier was to-day to recapitulate, in the last of a series of discourses, the views he had set forth in the former lectures on the Resurrection, Heaven, and Hell. His strange doctrine responded to the sympathies of the time, and gratified the immoderate love of the marvelous, which haunts the mind of man in every age. This effort of man to clutch the infinite, which for ever slips through his ineffectual grasp, this last tourney of thought against thought, was a task worthy of an assembly where the most stupendous human imagination ever known, perhaps, at that moment shone.

The Doctor began by summing up in a mild and even tone the principal points he had so far established:

"No intellect was the exact counterpart of another. Had man any right to require an account of his Creator for the inequality of powers bestowed on each? Without attempting to penetrate rashly into the designs of God, ought we not to recognize the fact that by reason of their general diversity intelligences could be classed in spheres? From the sphere where the least degree of intelligence gleamed, to the most translucent souls who could see the road by which to ascend to God, was there not an ascending scale of spiritual gift? And did not spirits of the same sphere understand each other like brothers in soul, in flesh, in mind, and in feeling?"

From this the Doctor went on to unfold the most wonderful theories of sympathy. He set forth in Biblical language the phenomena of love, of instinctive repulsion, of strong affinities which transcend the laws of space, of the sudden mingling of souls which seem to recognize each other. With regard to the different degrees of strength of which our affections are capable, he accounted for them by the place, more or less near the centre, occupied by beings in their respective circles.

He gave mathematical expression to God's grand idea in the co-ordination of the various human spheres. "Through man," he said, "these spheres constituted a world intermediate between the intelligence of the brute and the intelligence of the angels." As he stated it, the divine Word nourishes the spiritual Word, the spiritual Word nourishes the living Word, the living Word nourishes the animal Word, the animal Word nourishes the vegetable Word, and the vegetable Word is the expression of the life of the barren Word. These successive evolutions, as of a chrysalis, which God thus wrought in our souls, this infusorial life, so to speak, communicated from each zone to the next, more vivid, more spiritual, more perceptive in its ascent, represented, rather dimly no doubt, but marvelously enough to his inexperienced hearers, the impulse given to Nature by the Almighty. Supported by many texts from the Sacred Scriptures, which he used as a commentary on his own statements to express by concrete images the abstract arguments he felt to be wanting, he flourished the Spirit of God like a torch over the deep secrets of creation, with an eloquence peculiar to himself, and accents that urged conviction on his audience. As he unfolded his mysterious system and all its consequences, he gave a key to every symbol and justified the vocation, the special gifts, the genius, the talent of each human being.

Then, instinctively becoming physiological, he remarked on the resemblance to certain animals stamped on some human faces, accounting for them by primordial analogies and the upward tendency of all creation. He showed his audience the workings of Nature, and assigned a mission and a future to minerals, plants, and animals. Bible in hand, after thus spiritualizing Matter and materializing Spirit, after pointing to the Will of God in all things, and enjoining respect for His smallest works, he suggested the possibility of rising by faith from sphere to sphere.

This was the first portion of his discourse, and by adroit digressions he applied the doctrine of his system to

feudalism. The poetry—religious and profane—and the abrupt eloquence of that period had a grand opening in this vast theory, wherein the Doctor had amalgamated all the philosophical systems of the ancients, and from which he brought them out again classified, transfigured, purified. The false dogmas of two adverse principles and of Pantheism were demolished at his word, which proclaimed the Divine Unity, while ascribing to God and His angels the knowledge, the ends to which the means shone resplendent to the eyes of man. Fortified by the demonstrations that proved the existence of the world of Matter, Doctor Sigier constructed the scheme of a spiritual world dividing us from God by an ascending scale of spheres, just as the plant is divided from man by an infinite number of grades. He peopled the heavens, the stars, the planets, the sun.

Quoting Saint Paul, he invested man with a new power; he might rise, from globe to globe, to the very Fount of eternal life. Jacob's mystical ladder was both the religious formula and the traditional proof of the fact. He soared through space, carrying with him the passionate souls of his hearers on the wings of his word, making them feel the infinite, and bathing them in the heavenly sea. Then the Doctor accounted logically for hell by circles placed in inverse order to the shining spheres that lead to God, in which torments and darkness take the place of the Spirit and of light. Pain was as intelligible as rapture. The terms of comparison were present in the conditions of human life and its various atmospheres of suffering and of intellect. Thus the most extraordinary traditions of hell and purgatory were quite naturally conceivable.

He gave the fundamental *rationale* of virtue with admirable clearness. A pious man, toiling onward in poverty, proud of his good conscience, at peace with himself, and steadfastly true to himself in his heart in spite of the spectacle of exultant vice, was a fallen angel doing penance, who remembered his origin, foresaw his guerdon, accomplished his task, and obeyed his glorious mission. The sublime resignation of Christians was then seen in all its glory. He depicted martyrs at the burning stake, and almost stripped them of their merit by stripping them of their sufferings. He showed their inner angel as dwelling in the heavens, while the outer man was tortured by the executioner's sword. He described angels dwelling among men, and gave tokens by which to recognize them.

He next strove to drag from the very depths of man's understanding the real sense of the word fall, which occurs in every language. He appealed to the most widely-spread traditions in evidence of this one true origin, explaining, with much lucidity, the passion all men have for rising, mounting—an instinctive ambition, the perennial revelations of our destiny.

He displayed the whole universe at a glance, and described the nature of God Himself circulating in a full tide from the centre to the extremities, and from the extremities to the centre again. Nature was one and homogeneous. In the most seemingly trivial, as in the most stupendous work, everything obeyed that law; each created object reproduced in little an exact image of that nature—the sap in the plant, the blood in man, the orbits of the planets. He piled proof on proof, always completing his idea by a picture musical with poetry.

And he boldly anticipated every objection. He thundered forth an eloquent challenge to the monumental works of science and human excrescences of knowledge, such as those which societies use the elements of the earthly globe to produce. He asked whether our wars, our disasters, our depravity could hinder the great movement given by God to all the globes; and he laughed human impotence to scorn by pointing to their efforts everywhere in ruins. He cried upon the manes of Tyre, Carthage, and Babylon; he called upon Babel and Jerusalem to appear; and sought, without finding them, the transient furrows made by the ploughshare of civilization. Humanity floated on the surface of the earth as a ship whose wake is lost in the calm level of ocean.

These were the fundamental notions set forth in Doctor Sigier's address, all wrapped in the mystical language and strange school Latin of the time. He had made a special study of the Scriptures, and they supplied him with the weapons with which he came before his contemporaries to hasten their progress. He hid his boldness under his immense learning, as with a cloak, and his philosophical bent under a saintly life. At this moment, after bringing his hearers face to face with God, after packing the universe into an idea, and almost unveiling the idea of the world, he gazed down on the silent, throbbing mass, and scrutinized the stranger with a look. Then, spurred on, no doubt, by the presence of this remarkable personage, he added these words, from which I have eliminated the corrupt Latinity of the Middle Ages:—

"Where, think you, may a man find these fruitful truths if not in the heart of God Himself?—What am I?—The humble interpreter of a single line left to us by the greatest of the Apostles—a single line out of thousands all equally full of light. Before us, Saint Paul said, '*In Deo vivimus movemur et sumus.*' In our day, less believing and more learned, or better instructed and more sceptical, we should ask the Apostle, 'To what end this perpetual motion? Whither leads this life divided into zones? Wherefore an intelligence that begins with the obscure perfection of marble and proceeds from sphere to sphere up to man, up to the angel, up to God? Where is the Fount, where is the ocean, if life, attaining to God across worlds and stars, through Matter and Spirit, has to come down again to some other goal?'

"You desire to see both aspects of the universe at once. You would adore the Sovereign on condition of being suffered to sit for an instant on His throne. Mad fools that we are! We will not admit that the most intelligent animals are able to understand our ideas and the object of our actions; we are merciless to the creatures of the inferior spheres, and exile them from our own; we deny them the faculty of divining human thoughts, and yet we ourselves would fain master the highest of all ideas—the Idea of the Idea!

"Well, go then, start! Fly by faith up from globe to globe, soar through space! Thought, love, and faith are its mystical keys. Traverse the circles, reach the throne! God is more merciful than you are; He opens His temple to all His creatures. Only, do not forget the pattern of Moses; put your shoes from off your feet, cast off all filth, leave your body far behind; otherwise you shall be consumed; for God—God is Light!"

Just as Doctor Sigier spoke these grand words, his face radiant, his hand uplifted, a sunbeam pierced through an open window, like a magic jet from a fount of splendor, a long triangular shaft of gold that lay like a scarf over the whole assembly. They all clapped their hands, for the audience accepted this effect of the sinking sun as a miracle. There was a universal cry of:

"*Vivant! Vivant!*"

The very sky seemed to shed approval. Godefroid, struck with reverence, looked from the old man to Doctor

Sigier; they were talking together in an undertone.

"All honor to the Master!" said the stranger.

"What is such transient honor?" replied Sigier.

"I would I could perpetuate my gratitude," said the older man.

"A line written by you is enough!" said the Doctor. "It would give me immortality, humanly speaking."

"Can I give what I have not?" cried the elder.

Escorted by the crowd, which followed in their footsteps, like courtiers round a king, at a respectful distance, Godefroid, with the old man and the Doctor, made their way to the oozy shore, where as yet there were no houses, and where the ferryman was waiting for them. The Doctor and the stranger were talking together, not in Latin nor in any Gallic tongue, but in an unknown language, and very gravely. They pointed with their hands now to heaven and now to the earth. Sigier, to whom the paths by the river were familiar, guided the venerable stranger with particular care to the narrow planks which here and there bridged the mud; the following watched them inquisitively; and some of the students envied the privileged boy who might walk with these two great masters of speech. Finally, the Doctor took leave of the stranger, and the ferry-boat pushed off.

At the moment when the boat was afloat on the wide river, communicating its motion to the soul, the sun pierced the clouds like a conflagration blazing up on the horizon, and poured forth a flood of light, coloring slate roof-tops and humbler thatch with a ruddy glow and tawny reflections, fringed Philippe Auguste's towers with fire, flooded the sky, dyed the waters, gilded the plants, and aroused the half-sleeping insects. The immense shaft of light set the clouds on fire. It was like the last verse of the daily hymn. Every heart was thrilled; nature in such a moment is sublime.

As he gazed at the spectacle, the stranger's eyes moistened with the tenderest of human tears: Godefroid too was weeping; his trembling hand touched that of the elder man, who, looking round, confessed his emotion. But thinking his dignity as a man compromised, no doubt, to redeem it, he said in a deep voice:

"I weep for my native land. I am an exile! Young man, in such an hour as this I left my home. There, at this hour, the fireflies are coming out of their fragile dwellings and clinging like diamond sparks to the leaves of the iris. At this hour the breeze, as sweet as the sweetest poetry, rises up from a valley bathed in light, bearing on its wings the richest fragrance. On the horizon I could see a golden city like the Heavenly Jerusalem—a city whose name I may not speak. There, too, a river winds. But that city and its buildings, that river of which the lovely vistas, and the pools of blue water, mingled, crossed, and embraced each other, which gladdened my sight and filled me with love—where are they?"

"At that hour the waters assumed fantastic hues under the sunset sky, and seemed to be painted pictures; the stars dropped tender streaks of light, the moon spread its pleasing snares; it gave another life to the trees, to the color and form of things, and a new aspect to the sparkling water, the silent hills, the eloquent buildings. The city spoke, it glittered, it called to me to return!"

"Columns of smoke rose up by the side of the ancient pillars, whose marble sheen gleamed white through the night; the lines of the horizon were still visible through the mists of evening; all was harmony and mystery. Nature would not say farewell; she desired to keep me there. Ah! It was all in all to me; my mother and my child, my wife and my glory! The very bells bewailed my condemnation. Oh, land of marvels! It is as beautiful as heaven. From that hour the wide world has been my dungeon. Beloved land, why hast thou rejected me?"

"But I shall triumph there yet!" he cried, speaking with an accent of such intense conviction and such a ringing tone, that the boatman started as at a trumpet call.

The stranger was standing in a prophetic attitude and gazing southwards into the blue, pointing to his native home across the skyey regions. The ascetic pallor of his face had given place to a glow of triumph, his eyes flashed, he was as grand as a lion shaking his mane.

"But you, poor child," he went on, looking at Godefroid, whose cheeks were beaded with glittering tears, "have you, like me, studied life from blood-stained pages? What can you have to weep for, at your age?"

"Alas!" said Godefroid, "I regret a land more beautiful than any land on earth—a land I never saw and yet remember. Oh, if I could but cleave the air on beating wings, I would fly——"

"Whither?" asked the exile.

"Up there," replied the boy.

On hearing this answer, the stranger seemed surprised; he looked darkly at the youth, who remained silent. They seemed to communicate by an unspeakable effusion of the spirit, hearing each other's yearnings in the teeming silence, and going forth side by side, like two doves sweeping the air on equal wing, till the boat, touching the strand of the island, roused them from their deep reverie.

Then, each lost in thought, they went together to the sergeant's house.

"And so the boy believes that he is an angel exiled from heaven!" thought the tall stranger. "Which of us all has a right to undeceive him? Not I—I, who am so often lifted by some magic spell so far above the earth; I who am dedicate to God; I who am a mystery to myself. Have I not already seen the fairest of the angels dwelling in this mire? Is this child more or less crazed than I am? Has he taken a bolder step in the way of faith? He believes, and his belief no doubt will lead him into some path of light like that in which I walk. But though he is as beautiful as an angel, is he not too feeble to stand fast in such a struggle?"

Abashed by the presence of his companion, whose voice of thunder expressed to him his own thoughts, as lightning expresses the will of Heaven, the boy was satisfied to gaze at the stars with a lover's eyes. Overwhelmed by a luxury of sentiment, which weighed on his heart, he stood there timid and weak—a midge in the sunbeams. Sigier's discourse had proved to them the mysteries of the spiritual world; the tall, old man was to invest them with glory; the lad felt them in himself, though he could in no way express them. The three represented in living embodiment Science, Poetry, and Feeling.

On going into the house, the Exile shut himself into his room, lighted the inspiring lamp, and gave himself

over to the ruthless demon of Work, seeking words of the silence and ideas of the night. Godefroid sat down in his window sill, by turns gazing at the moon reflected in the water, and studying the mysteries of the sky. Lost in one of the trances that were frequent to him, he traveled from sphere to sphere, from vision to vision, listening for obscure rustlings and the voices of angels, and believing that he heard them; seeing, or fancying that he saw, a divine radiance in which he lost himself; striving to attain the far-away goal, the source of all light, the fount of all harmony.

Presently the vast clamor of Paris, brought down on the current, was hushed; lights were extinguished one by one in the houses; silence spread over all; and the huge city slept like a tired giant.

Midnight struck. The least noise, the fall of a leaf, or the flight of a jackdaw changing its perching-place among the pinnacles of Notre-Dame, would have been enough to bring the stranger's mind to earth again, to have made the youth drop from the celestial heights to which his soul had soared on the wings of rapture.

And then the old man heard with dismay a groan mingling with the sound of a heavy fall—the fall, as his experienced ear assured him, of a dead body. He hastened into Godefroid's room, and saw him lying in a heap with a long rope tight round his neck, the end meandering over the floor.

When he had untied it, the poor lad opened his eyes.

"Where am I?" he asked, with a hopeful gleam.

"In your own room," said the elder man, looking with surprise at Godefroid's neck, and at the nail to which the cord had been tied, and which was still in the knot.

"In heaven?" said the boy, in a voice of music.

"No; on earth!"

Godefroid rose and walked along the path of light traced on the floor by the moon through the window, which stood open; he saw the rippling Seine, the willows and plants on the island. A misty atmosphere hung over the waters like a smokey floor.

On seeing the view, to him so heartbreaking, he folded his hands over his bosom, and stood in an attitude of despair; the Exile came up to him with astonishment on his face.

"You meant to kill yourself?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Godefroid, while the stranger passed his hand about his neck again and again to feel the place where the rope had tightened on it.

But for some slight bruises, the young man had been but little hurt. His friend supposed that the nail had given way at once under the weight of the body, and the terrible attempt had ended in a fall without injury.

"And why, dear lad, did you try to kill yourself?"

"Alas!" said Godefroid, no longer restraining the tears that rolled down his cheeks, "I heard the Voice from on high; it called me by name! It had never named me before, but this time it bade me to Heaven! Oh, how sweet is that voice!—As I could not fly to Heaven," he added artlessly, "I took the only way we know of going to God."

"My child! oh, sublime boy!" cried the old man, throwing his arms round Godefroid, and clasping him to his heart. "You are a poet; you can boldly ride the whirlwind! Your poetry does not proceed from your heart; your living, burning thoughts, your creations, move and grow in your soul.—Go, never reveal your ideas to the vulgar! Be at once the altar, the priest, and the victim!"

"You know Heaven, do you not? You have seen those myriads of angels, white-winged, and holding golden sistrums, all soaring with equal flight towards the Throne, and you have often seen their pinions moving at the breath of God as the trees of the forest bow with one consent before the storm. Ah, how glorious is unlimited space! Tell me."

The stranger clasped Godefroid's hand convulsively, and they both gazed at the firmament, whence the stars seemed to shed gentle poetry which they could bear.

"Oh, to see God!" murmured Godefroid.

"Child!" said the old man suddenly, in a sterner voice, "have you so soon forgotten the holy teaching of our good master, Doctor Sigier? In order to return, you to your heavenly home, and I to my native land on earth, must we not obey the voice of God? We must walk on resignedly in the stony paths where His almighty finger points the way. Do not you quail at the thought of the danger to which you exposed yourself? Arriving there without being bidden, and saying, 'Here I am!' before your time, would you not have been cast back into a world beneath that where your soul now hovers? Poor outcast cherub! Should you not rather bless God for having suffered you to live in a sphere where you may hear none but heavenly harmonies? Are you not as pure as a diamond, as lovely as a flower?"

"Think what it is to know, like me, only the City of Sorrows!—Dwelling there I have worn out my heart.—To search the tombs for their horrible secrets; to wipe hands steeped in blood, counting them over night after night, seeing them rise up before me imploring forgiveness which I may not grant; to mark the writhing of the assassin and the last shriek of his victim; to listen to appalling noises and fearful silence, the silence of a father devouring his dead sons; to wonder at the laughter of the damned; to look for some human form among the livid heaps wrung and trampled by crime; to learn words such as living men may not hear without dying; to call perpetually on the dead, and always to accuse and condemn!—Is that living?"

"Cease!" cried Godefroid; "I cannot see you or hear you any further! My reason wanders, my eyes are dim. You light a fire within me which consumes me."

"And yet I must go on!" said the senior, waving his hand with a strange gesture that worked on the youth like a spell.

For a moment the old man fixed Godefroid with his large, weary, lightless eyes; then he pointed with one finger to the ground. A gulf seemed to open at his bidding. He remained standing in the doubtful light of the moon; it lent a glory to his brow which reflected an almost solar gleam. Though at first a somewhat disdainful expression lurked in the wrinkles of his face, his look presently assumed the fixity which seems to gaze on an object invisible to the ordinary organs of sight. His eyes, no doubt, were seeing then the remoter images

which the grave has in store for us.

Never, perhaps, had this man presented so grand an aspect. A terrible struggle was going on in his soul, and reacted on his outer frame; strong man as he seemed to be, he bent as a reed bows under the breeze that comes before a storm. Godefroid stood motionless, speechless, spellbound; some inexplicable force nailed him to the floor; and, as happens when our attention takes us out of ourselves while watching a fire or a battle, he was wholly unconscious of his body.

“Shall I tell you the fate to which you were hastening, poor angel of love? Listen! It has been given to me to see immeasurable space, bottomless gulfs in which all human creations are swallowed up, the shoreless sea whither flows the vast stream of men and of angels. As I made my way through the realms of eternal torment, I was sheltered under the cloak of an immortal—the robe of glory due to genius, and which the ages hand on—I, a frail mortal! When I wandered through the fields of light where the happy souls play, I was borne up by the love of a woman, the wings of an angel; resting on her heart, I could taste the ineffable pleasures whose touch is more perilous to us mortals than are the torments of the worser world.

“As I achieved my pilgrimage through the dark regions below I had mounted from torture to torture, from crime to crime, from punishment to punishment, from awful silence to heartrending cries, till I reached the uppermost circle of Hell. Already, from afar, I could see the glory of Paradise shining at a vast distance; I was still in darkness, but on the borders of day. I flew, upheld by my Guide, borne along by a power akin to that which, during our dreams, wafts us to spheres invisible to the eye of the body. The halo that crowned our heads seared away the shades as we passed, like impalpable dust. Far above us the suns of all the worlds shone with scarce so much light as the twinkling fireflies of my native land. I was soaring towards the fields of air where, round about Paradise, the bodies of light are in closer array, where the azure is easy to pass through, where worlds innumerable spring like flowers in a meadow.

“There, on the last level of the circles where those phantoms dwell that I had left behind me, like sorrows one would fain forget, I saw a vast shade. Standing in an attitude of aspiration, that soul looked eagerly into space; his feet were riveted by the will of God to the topmost point of the margin, and he remained for ever in the painful strain by which we project our purpose when we long to soar, as birds about to take wing. I saw the man; he neither looked at us nor heard us; every muscle quivered and throbbed; at each separate instant he seemed to feel, though he did not move, all the fatigue of traversing the infinite that divided him from Paradise where, as he gazed steadfastly, he believed he had glimpses of a beloved image. At this last gate of Hell, as at the first, I saw the stamp of despair even in hope. The hapless creature was so fearfully held by some unseen force, that his anguish entered into my bones and froze my blood. I shrank closer to my Guide, whose protection restored me to peace and silence.

“Suddenly the Shade gave a cry of joy—a cry as shrill as that of the mother bird that sees a hawk in the air, or suspects its presence. We looked where he was looking, and saw, as it were, a sapphire, floating high up in the abysses of light. The glowing star fell with the swiftness of a sunbeam when it flashes over the horizon in the morning and its first rays shoot across the world. The Splendor became clearer and grew larger; presently I beheld the cloud of glory in which the angels move—a shining vapor that emanates from their divine substance, and that glitters here and there like tongues of flame. A noble face, whose glory none may endure that have not won the mantle, the laurel, and the palm—the attribute of the Powers—rose above this cloud as white and pure as snow. It was Light within light. His wings as they waved shed dazzling ripples in the spheres through which he descended, as the glance of God pierces through the universe. At last I saw the archangel in all his glory. The flower of eternal beauty that belongs to the angels of the Spirit shone in him. In one hand he held a green palm branch, in the other a sword of flame: the palm to bestow on the pardoned soul, the sword to drive back all the hosts of Hell with one sweep. As he approached, the perfumes of Heaven fell upon us as dew. In the region where the archangel paused, the air took the hues of opal, and moved in eddies of which he was the centre. He paused, looked at the Shade, and said:

“‘To-morrow.’

“Then he turned heavenwards once more, spread his wings, and clove through space as a vessel cuts through the waves, hardly showing her white sails to the exiles left on some deserted shore.

“The Shade uttered appalling cries, to which the damned responded from the lowest circle, the deepest in the immensity of suffering, to the more peaceful zone near the surface on which we were standing. This worst torment of all had appealed to all the rest. The turmoil was swelled by the roar of a sea of fire which formed a bass to the terrific harmony of endless millions of suffering souls.

“Then suddenly the Shade took flight through the doleful city, and down to its place at the very bottom of Hell; but as suddenly it came up again, turned, soared through the endless circles in every direction, as a vulture, confined for the first time in a cage, exhausts itself in vain efforts. The Shade was free to do this; he could wander through the zones of Hell icy, fetid, or scorching without enduring their pangs; he glided into that vastness as a sunbeam makes its way into the deepest dark.

“‘God has not condemned him to any torment,’ said the Master; ‘but not one of the souls you have seen suffering their various punishments would exchange his anguish for the hope that is consuming this soul.’

“And just then the Shade came back to us, brought thither by an irresistible force which condemned him to perch on the verge of Hell. My divine Guide, guessing my curiosity, touched the unhappy Shade with his palm-branch. He, who was perhaps trying to measure the age of sorrow that divided him from that ever-vanishing ‘To-morrow,’ started and gave a look full of all the tears he had already shed.

“‘You would know my woe?’ said he sadly. ‘Oh, I love to tell it. I am here, Teresa is above; that is all. On earth we were happy, we were always together. When I saw my loved Teresa Donati for the first time, she was ten years old. We loved each other even then, not knowing what love meant. Our lives were one; I turned pale if she were pale, I was happy in her joy; we gave ourselves up to the pleasure of thinking and feeling together; and we learned what love was, each through the other. We were wedded at Cremona; we never saw each other’s lips but decked with pearls of a smile; our eyes always shone; our hair, like our desires, flowed together; our heads were always bent over one book when we read, our feet walked in equal step. Life was one long kiss, our home was a nest.

“One day, for the first time, Teresa turned pale and said, “I am in pain!”—And I was not in pain!

“She never rose again. I saw her sweet face change, her golden hair fade—and I did not die! She smiled to hide her sufferings, but I could read them in her blue eyes, of which I could interpret the slightest trembling. “Honorino, I love you!” said she, at the very moment when her lips turned white, and she was clasping my hand still in hers when death chilled them. So I killed myself that she might not lie alone in her sepulchral bed, under her marble sheet. Teresa is above and I am here. I could not bear to leave her, but God has divided us. Why, then, did He unite us on earth? He is jealous! Paradise was no doubt so much the fairer on the day when Teresa entered in.

“Do you see her? She is sad in her bliss; she is parted from me! Paradise must be a desert to her.’

“‘Master,’ said I with tears, for I thought of my love, ‘when this one shall desire Paradise for God’s sake alone, shall he not be delivered?’ And the Father of Poets mildly bowed his head in sign of assent.

“We departed, cleaving the air, and making no more noise than the birds that pass overhead sometimes when we lie in the shade of a tree. It would have been vain to try to check the hapless shade in his blasphemy. It is one of the griefs of the angels of darkness that they can never see the light even when they are surrounded by it. He would not have understood us.”

At this moment the swift approach of many horses rang through the stillness, the dog barked, the constable’s deep growl replied; the horsemen dismounted, knocked at the door; the noise was so unexpected that it seemed like some sudden explosion.

The two exiles, the two poets, fell to earth through all the space that divides us from the skies. The painful shock of this fall rushed through their veins like strange blood, hissing as it seemed, and full of scorching sparks. Their pain was like an electric discharge. The loud, heavy step of a man-at-arms sounded on the stairs with the iron clank of his sword, his cuirass, and spurs; a soldier presently stood before the astonished stranger.

“We can return to Florence,” said the man, whose bass voice sounded soft as he spoke in Italian.

“What is that you say?” asked the old man.

“The *Bianchi* are triumphant.”

“Are you not mistaken?” asked the poet.

“No, dear Dante!” replied the soldier, whose warlike tones rang with the thrill of battle and the exultation of victory.

“To Florence! To Florence! Ah, my Florence!” cried Dante Alighieri, drawing himself up, and gazing into the distance. In fancy he saw Italy; he was gigantic.

“But I—when shall I be in Heaven?” said Godefroid, kneeling on one knee before the immortal poet, like an angel before the sanctuary.

“Come to Florence,” said Dante in compassionate tones. “Come! when you see its lovely landscape from the heights of Fiesole you will fancy yourself in Paradise.”

The soldier smiled. For the first time, perhaps for the only time in his life, Dante’s gloomy and solemn features wore a look of joy; his eyes and brows expressed the happiness he has depicted so lavishly in his vision of Paradise. He thought perhaps that he heard the voice of Beatrice.

A light step, and the rustle of a woman’s gown, were audible in the silence. Dawn was now showing its first streaks of light. The fair Comtesse de Mahaut came in and flew to Godefroid.

“Come, my child, my son! I may at last acknowledge you. Your birth is recognized, your rights are under the protection of the King of France, and you will find Paradise in your mother’s heart.”

“I hear, I know, the voice of Heaven!” cried the youth in rapture.

The exclamation roused Dante, who saw the young man folded in the Countess’ arms. He took leave of them with a look, and left his young companion on his mother’s bosom.

“Come away!” he cried in a voice of thunder. “Death to the Guelphs!”

PARIS, October 1831.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE EXILES ***

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