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AN "ATTIC" PHILOSOPHER
(Un Philosophe sous les Toits)

By EMILE SOUVESTRE

With a Preface by JOSEPH BERTRAND, of the French Academy

BOOK 1.

EMILE SOUVESTRE

No one succeeds in obtaining a prominent place in literature, or in surrounding himself with a faithful and steady circle of admirers drawn from the fickle masses of the public, unless he possesses originality, constant variety, and a distinct personality. It is quite possible to gain for a moment a few readers by imitating some original feature in another; but these soon vanish and the writer remains alone and forgotten. Others, again, without belonging to any distinct group of authors, having found their standard in themselves, moralists and educators at the same time, have obtained undying recognition.

Of the latter class, though little known outside of France, is Emile Souvestre, who was born in Morlaix, April 15, 1806, and died at Paris July 5, 1854. He was the son of a civil engineer, was educated at the college of Pontivy, and intended to follow his father's career by entering the Polytechnic School. His father, however, died in 1823, and Souvestre matriculated as a law-student at Rennes. But the young student soon devoted himself entirely to literature. His first essay, a tragedy, 'Le Siege de

Missolonghi' (1828), was a pronounced failure. Disheartened and disgusted he left Paris and established himself first as a lawyer in Morlaix. Then he became proprietor of a newspaper, and was afterward appointed a professor in Brest and in Mulhouse. In 1836 he contributed to the 'Revue des Deux Mondes' some sketches of life in Brittany, which obtained a brilliant success. Souvestre was soon made editor of La Revue de Paris, and in consequence early found a publisher for his first novel, 'L'Echelle de Femmes', which, as was the case with his second work, 'Riche et Pauvre', met with a very favorable reception. His reputation was now made, and between this period and his death he gave to France about sixty volumes—tales, novels, essays, history, and drama.

A double purpose was always very conspicuous in his books: he aspired to the role of a moralist and educator, and was likewise a most impressive painter of the life, character, and morals of the inhabitants of Brittany.

The most significant of his books are perhaps 'Les Derniers Bretons (1835-1837, 4 vols.), Pierre Landais (1843, 2 vols.), Le Foyer Breton (1844, 2 vols.), Un Philosophe sous les Toits, crowned by the Academy (1850), Confessions d'un Ouvrier (1851), Recits et Souvenirs (1853), Souvenirs d'un Vieillard (1854); also La Bretagne Pittoresque (1845), and, finally, Causeries Historiques et Litteraires (1854, 2 vols.)'. His comedies deserve honorable mention: 'Henri Hamelin, L'Oncle Baptiste (1842), La Parisienne, Le Mousse, etc'. In 1848, Souvestre was appointed professor of the newly created school of administration, mostly devoted to popular lectures. He held this post till 1853, lecturing partly in Paris, partly in Switzerland.

His death, when comparatively young, left a distinct gap in the literary world. A life like his could not be extinguished without general sorrow. Although he was unduly modest, and never aspired to the role of a beacon-light in literature, always seeking to remain in obscurity, the works of Emile Souvestre must be placed in the first rank by their morality and by their instructive character. They will always command the entire respect and applause of mankind. And thus it happens that, like many others, he was only fully appreciated after his death.

Even those of his 'confreres' who did not seem to esteem him, when alive, suddenly found out that they had experienced a great loss in his demise. They expressed it in emotional panegyrics; contemporaneous literature discovered that virtue had flown from its bosom, and the French Academy, which had at its proper time crowned his 'Philosophe sous les Toits' as a work contributing supremely to morals, kept his memory green by bestowing on his widow the "Prix Lambert," designed for the "families of authors who by their integrity, and by the probity of their efforts have well deserved this token from the Republique des Lettres."

JOSEPH
BERTRAND
de
'Academie
Francaise.

AN "ATTIC" PHILOSOPHER

CHAPTER I

NEW-YEAR'S GIFTS

January 1st

The day of the month came into my mind as soon as I awoke. Another year is separated from the chain of ages, and drops into the gulf of the past! The crowd hasten to welcome her young sister. But while all looks are turned toward the future, mine revert to the past. Everyone smiles upon the new queen; but, in spite of myself, I think of her whom time has just wrapped in her winding-sheet. The past year!—at least I know what she was, and what she has given me; while this one comes surrounded by all the forebodings of the unknown. What does she hide in the clouds that mantle her? Is it the storm or the sunshine? Just now it rains, and I feel my mind as gloomy as the sky. I have a holiday today; but what can one do on a rainy day? I walk up and down my attic out of temper, and I determine to light my fire.

Unfortunately the matches are bad, the chimney smokes, the wood goes out!

I throw down my bellows in disgust, and sink into my old armchair.

In truth, why should I rejoice to see the birth of a new year? All those who are already in the streets, with holiday looks and smiling faces—do they understand what makes them so gay? Do they even know what is the meaning of this holiday, or whence comes the custom of New-Year's gifts?

Here my mind pauses to prove to itself its superiority over that of the vulgar. I make a parenthesis in my ill-temper in favor of my vanity, and I bring together all the evidence which my knowledge can produce.

(The old Romans divided the year into ten months only; it was Numa Pompilius who added January and February. The former took its name from Janus, to whom it was dedicated. As it opened the new year, they surrounded its beginning with good omens, and thence came the custom of visits between neighbors, of wishing happiness, and of New-Year's gifts. The presents given by the Romans were symbolic. They consisted of dry figs, dates, honeycomb, as emblems of "the sweetness of the auspices under which the year should begin its course," and a small piece of money called stips, which foreboded riches.)

Here I close the parenthesis, and return to my ill-humor. The little speech I have just addressed to myself has restored me my self-satisfaction, but made me more dissatisfied with others. I could now enjoy my breakfast; but the portress has forgotten my morning's milk, and the pot of preserves is empty! Anyone else would have been vexed: as for me, I affect the most supreme indifference. There remains a hard crust, which I break by main strength, and which I carelessly nibble, as a man far above the vanities of the world and of fresh rolls.

However, I do not know why my thoughts should grow more gloomy by reason of the difficulties of mastication. I once read the story of an Englishman who hanged himself because they had brought him his tea without sugar. There are hours in life when the most trifling cross takes the form of a calamity. Our tempers are like an opera-glass, which makes the object small or great according to the end you look through.

Usually, the prospect that opens out before my window delights me. It is a mountain-range of roofs, with ridges crossing, interlacing, and piled on one another, and upon which tall chimneys raise their peaks. It was but yesterday that they had an Alpine aspect to me, and I waited for the first snowstorm to see glaciers among them; to-day, I only see tiles and stone flues. The pigeons, which assisted my rural illusions, seem no more than miserable birds which have mistaken the roof for the back yard; the smoke, which rises in light clouds, instead of making me dream of the panting of Vesuvius, reminds me of kitchen preparations and dishwater; and lastly, the telegraph, that I see far off on the old tower of Montmartre, has the effect of a vile gallows stretching its arms over the city.

My eyes, thus hurt by all they meet, fall upon the great man's house which faces my attic.

The influence of New-Year's Day is visible there. The servants have an air of eagerness proportioned to the value of their New-Year's gifts, received or expected. I see the master of the house crossing the court with the morose look of a man who is forced to be generous; and the visitors increase, followed by shop porters who carry flowers, bandboxes, or toys. Suddenly the great gates are opened, and a new carriage, drawn by thoroughbred horses, draws up before the doorsteps. They are, without doubt, the New-Year's gift presented to the mistress of the house by her husband; for she comes herself to look at the new equipage. Very soon she gets into it with a little girl, all streaming with laces, feathers and velvets, and loaded with parcels which she goes to distribute as New-Year's gifts. The door is shut, the windows are drawn up, the carriage sets off.

Thus all the world are exchanging good wishes and presents to-day. I alone have nothing to give or to receive. Poor Solitary! I do not even know one chosen being for whom I might offer a prayer.

Then let my wishes for a happy New Year go and seek out all my unknown friends—lost in the multitude which murmurs like the ocean at my feet!

To you first, hermits in cities, for whom death and poverty have created a solitude in the midst of the crowd! unhappy laborers, who are condemned to toil in melancholy, and eat your daily bread in silence and desertion, and whom God has withdrawn from the intoxicating pangs of love and friendship!

To you, fond dreamers, who pass through life with your eyes turned toward some polar star, while you tread with indifference over the rich harvests of reality!

To you, honest fathers, who lengthen out the evening to maintain your families! to you, poor widows, weeping and working by a cradle! to you, young men, resolutely set to open for yourselves a path in life, large enough to lead through it the wife of your choice! to you, all brave soldiers of work and of

self-sacrifice!

To you, lastly, whatever your title and your name, who love good, who pity the suffering; who walk through the world like the symbolical Virgin of Byzantium, with both arms open to the human race!

Here I am suddenly interrupted by loud and increasing chirpings. I look about me: my window is surrounded with sparrows picking up the crumbs of bread which in my brown study I had just scattered on the roof. At this sight a flash of light broke upon my saddened heart. I deceived myself just now, when I complained that I had nothing to give: thanks to me, the sparrows of this part of the town will have their New-Year's gifts!

Twelve o'clock.—A knock at my door; a poor girl comes in, and greets me by name. At first I do not recollect her; but she looks at me, and smiles. Ah! it is Paulette! But it is almost a year since I have seen her, and Paulette is no longer the same: the other day she was a child, now she is almost a young woman.

Paulette is thin, pale, and miserably clad; but she has always the same open and straightforward look—the same mouth, smiling at every word, as if to court your sympathy—the same voice, somewhat timid, yet expressing fondness. Paulette is not pretty—she is even thought plain; as for me, I think her charming. Perhaps that is not on her account, but on my own. Paulette appears to me as one of my happiest recollections.

It was the evening of a public holiday. Our principal buildings were illuminated with festoons of fire, a thousand flags waved in the night winds, and the fireworks had just shot forth their spouts of flame into the midst of the Champ de Mars. Suddenly, one of those unaccountable alarms which strike a multitude with panic fell upon the dense crowd: they cry out, they rush on headlong; the weaker ones fall, and the frightened crowd tramples them down in its convulsive struggles. I escaped from the confusion by a miracle, and was hastening away, when the cries of a perishing child arrested me: I reentered that human chaos, and, after unheard-of exertions, I brought Paulette out of it at the peril of my life.

That was two years ago: since then I had not seen the child again but at long intervals, and I had almost forgotten her; but Paulette's memory was that of a grateful heart, and she came at the beginning of the year to offer me her wishes for my happiness. She brought me, besides, a wallflower in full bloom; she herself had planted and reared it: it was something that belonged wholly to herself; for it was by her care, her perseverance, and her patience, that she had obtained it.

The wallflower had grown in a common pot; but Paulette, who is a bandbox-maker, had put it into a case of varnished paper, ornamented with arabesques. These might have been in better taste, but I did not feel the attention and good-will the less.

This unexpected present, the little girl's modest blushes, the compliments she stammered out, dispelled, as by a sunbeam, the kind of mist which had gathered round my mind; my thoughts suddenly changed from the leaden tints of evening to the brightest colors of dawn. I made Paulette sit down, and questioned her with a light heart.

At first the little girl replied in monosyllables; but very soon the tables were turned, and it was I who interrupted with short interjections her long and confidential talk. The poor child leads a hard life. She was left an orphan long since, with a brother and sister, and lives with an old grandmother, who has "brought them up to poverty," as she always calls it.

However, Paulette now helps her to make bandboxes, her little sister Perrine begins to use the needle, and her brother Henry is apprentice to a printer. All would go well if it were not for losses and want of work—if it were not for clothes which wear out, for appetites which grow larger, and for the winter, when you cannot get sunshine for nothing. Paulette complains that her candles go too quickly, and that her wood costs too much. The fireplace in their garret is so large that a fagot makes no more show in it than a match; it is so near the roof that the wind blows the rain down it, and in winter it hails upon the hearth; so they have left off using it. Henceforth they must be content with an earthen chafing-dish, upon which they cook their meals. The grandmother had often spoken of a stove that was for sale at the broker's close by; but he asked seven francs for it, and the times are too hard for such an expense: the family, therefore, resign themselves to cold for economy!

As Paulette spoke, I felt more and more that I was losing my fretfulness and low spirits. The first disclosures of the little bandbox-maker created within me a wish that soon became a plan. I questioned her about her daily occupations, and she informed me that on leaving me she must go, with her brother, her sister, and grandmother, to the different people for whom they work. My plan was immediately settled. I told the child that I would go to see her in the evening, and I sent her away with fresh thanks.

I placed the wallflower in the open window, where a ray of sunshine bid it welcome; the birds were singing around, the sky had cleared up, and the day, which began so loweringly, had become bright. I sang as I moved about my room, and, having hastily put on my hat and coat, I went out.

Three o'clock.—All is settled with my neighbor, the chimney-doctor; he will repair my old stove, and answers for its being as good as new. At five o'clock we are to set out, and put it up in Paulette's grandmother's room.

Midnight.—All has gone off well. At the hour agreed upon, I was at the old bandbox-maker's; she was still out. My Piedmontese

[In Paris a chimney-sweeper is named "Piedmontese" or "Savoyard," as they usually come from that country.]

fixed the stove, while I arranged a dozen logs in the great fireplace, taken from my winter stock. I shall make up for them by warming myself with walking, or by going to bed earlier.

My heart beat at every step that was heard on the staircase; I trembled lest they should interrupt me in my preparations, and should thus spoil my intended surprise. But no!—see everything ready: the lighted stove murmurs gently, the little lamp burns upon the table, and a bottle of oil for it is provided on the shelf. The chimney-doctor is gone. Now my fear lest they should come is changed into impatience at their not coming. At last I hear children's voices; here they are: they push open the door and rush in—but they all stop in astonishment.

At the sight of the lamp, the stove, and the visitor, who stands there like a magician in the midst of these wonders, they draw back almost frightened. Paulette is the first to comprehend it, and the arrival of the grandmother, who is more slowly mounting the stairs, finishes the explanation. Then come tears, ecstasies, thanks!

But the wonders are not yet ended. The little sister opens the oven, and discovers some chestnuts just roasted; the grandmother puts her hand on the bottles of cider arranged on the dresser; and I draw forth from the basket that I have hidden a cold tongue, a pot of butter, and some fresh rolls.

Now their wonder turns into admiration; the little family have never seen such a feast! They lay the cloth, they sit down, they eat; it is a complete banquet for all, and each contributes his share to it. I had brought only the supper: and the bandbox-maker and her children supplied the enjoyment.

What bursts of laughter at nothing! What a hubbub of questions which waited for no reply, of replies which answered no question! The old woman herself shared in the wild merriment of the little ones! I have always been struck at the ease with which the poor forget their wretchedness. Being used to live only for the present, they make a gain of every pleasure as soon as it offers itself. But the surfeited rich are more difficult to satisfy: they require time and everything to suit before they will consent to be happy.

The evening has passed like a moment. The old woman told me the history of her life, sometimes smiling, sometimes drying her eyes. Perrine sang an old ballad with her fresh young voice. Henry told us what he knows of the great writers of the day, to whom he has to carry their proofs. At last we were obliged to separate, not without fresh thanks on the part of the happy family.

I have come home slowly, ruminating with a full heart, and pure enjoyment, on the simple events of my evening. It has given me much comfort and much instruction. Now, no New-Year's Day will come amiss to me; I know that no one is so unhappy as to have nothing to give and nothing to receive.

As I came in, I met my rich neighbor's new equipage. She, too, had just returned from her evening's party; and, as she sprang from the carriage- step with feverish impatience, I heard her murmur "At last!"

I, when I left Paulette's family, said "So soon!"

CHAPTER II

February 20th

What a noise out of doors! What is the meaning of these shouts and cries? Ah! I recollect: this is the last day of the Carnival, and the maskers are passing.

Christianity has not been able to abolish the noisy bacchanalian festivals of the pagan times, but it has changed the names. That which it has given to these "days of liberty" announces the ending of the feasts, and the month of fasting which should follow; carn-ival means, literally, "farewell to flesh!" It is a forty days' farewell to the "blessed pullets and fat hams," so celebrated by Pantagrue's minstrel. Man prepares for privation by satiety, and finishes his sin thoroughly before he begins to repent.

Why, in all ages and among every people, do we meet with some one of these mad festivals? Must we believe that it requires such an effort for men to be reasonable, that the weaker ones have need of rest at intervals? The monks of La Trappe, who are condemned to silence by their rule, are allowed to speak once in a month, and on this day they all talk at once from the rising to the setting of the sun.

Perhaps it is the same in the world. As we are obliged all the year to be decent, orderly, and reasonable, we make up for such a long restraint during the Carnival. It is a door opened to the incongruous fancies and wishes that have hitherto been crowded back into a corner of our brain. For a moment the slaves become the masters, as in the days of the Saturnalia, and all is given up to the "fools of the family."

The shouts in the square redouble; the troops of masks increase—on foot, in carriages, and on horseback. It is now who can attract the most attention by making a figure for a few hours, or by exciting curiosity or envy; to-morrow they will all return, dull and exhausted, to the employments and troubles of yesterday.

Alas! thought I with vexation, each of us is like these masqueraders; our whole life is often but an unsightly Carnival! And yet man has need of holidays, to relax his mind, rest his body, and open his heart. Can he not have them, then, with these coarse pleasures? Economists have been long inquiring what is the best disposal of the industry of the human race. Ah! if I could only discover the best disposal of its leisure! It is easy enough to find it work; but who will find it relaxation? Work supplies the daily bread; but it is cheerfulness that gives it a relish. O philosophers! go in quest of pleasure! find us amusements without brutality, enjoyments without selfishness; in a word, invent a Carnival that will please everybody, and bring shame to no one.

Three o'clock.—I have just shut my window, and stirred up my fire. As this is a holiday for everybody, I will make it one for myself, too. So I light the little lamp over which, on grand occasions, I make a cup of the coffee that my portress's son brought from the Levant, and I look in my bookcase for one of my favorite authors.

First, here is the amusing parson of Meudon; but his characters are too fond of talking slang:—Voltaire; but he disheartens men by always bantering them:—Moliere; but he hinders one's laughter by making one think:—Lesage; let us stop at him. Being profound rather than grave, he preaches virtue while ridiculing vice; if bitterness is sometimes to be found in his writings, it is always in the garb of mirth: he sees the miseries of the world without despising it, and knows its cowardly tricks without hating it.

Let us call up all the heroes of his book.... Gil Blas, Fabrice, Sangrado, the Archbishop of Granada, the Duke of Lerma, Aurora, Scipio! Ye gay or graceful figures, rise before my eyes, people my solitude; bring hither for my amusement the world-carnival, of which you are the brilliant maskers!

Unfortunately, at the very moment I made this invocation, I recollected I had a letter to write which could not be put off. One of my attic neighbors came yesterday to ask me to do it. He is a cheerful old man, and has a passion for pictures and prints. He comes home almost every day with a drawing or painting—probably of little value; for I know he lives penuriously, and even the letter that I am to write for him shows his poverty. His only son, who was married in England, is just dead, and his widow—left without any means, and with an old mother and a child—had written to beg for a home. M. Antoine asked me first to translate the letter, and then to write a refusal. I had promised that he should have this answer to-day: before everything, let us fulfil our promises.

The sheet of "Bath" paper is before me, I have dipped my pen into the ink, and I rub my forehead to invite forth a sally of ideas, when I perceive that I have not my dictionary. Now, a Parisian who would speak English without a dictionary is like a child without leading-strings; the ground trembles under him, and he stumbles at the first step. I run then to the bookbinder's, where I left my Johnson, who lives close by in the square.

The door is half open; I hear low groans; I enter without knocking, and I see the bookbinder by the bedside of his fellow-lodger. This latter has a violent fever and delirium. Pierre looks at him perplexed and out of humor. I learn from him that his comrade was not able to get up in the morning, and that since then he has become worse every hour.

I ask whether they have sent for a doctor.

"Oh, yes, indeed!" replied Pierre, roughly; "one must have money in one's pocket for that, and this fellow has only debts instead of savings."

"But you," said I, rather astonished; "are you not his friend?"

"Friend!" interrupted the bookbinder. "Yes, as much as the shaft-horse is friend to the leader—on condition that each will take his share of the draught, and eat his feed by himself."

"You do not intend, however, to leave him without any help?"

"Bah! he may keep in his bed till to-morrow, as I'm going to the ball."

"You mean to leave him alone?"

"Well! must I miss a party of pleasure at Courtville—[A Parisian summer resort.]—because this fellow is lightheaded?" asked Pierre, sharply. "I have promised to meet some friends at old Desnoyer's. Those who are sick may take their broth; my physic is white wine."

So saying, he untied a bundle, out of which he took the fancy costume of a waterman, and proceeded to dress himself in it.

In vain I tried to awaken some fellow-feeling for the unfortunate man who lay groaning there close by him; being entirely taken up with the thoughts of his expected pleasure, Pierre would hardly so much as hear me. At last his coarse selfishness provoked me. I began reproaching instead of remonstrating with him, and I declared him responsible for the consequences which such a desertion must bring upon the sick man.

At this the bookbinder, who was just going, stopped with an oath, and stamped his foot. "Am I to spend my Carnival in heating water for footbaths, pray?"

"You must not leave your comrade to die without help!" I replied.

"Let him go to the hospital, then!"

"How can he by himself?"

Pierre seemed to make up his mind.

"Well, I'm going to take him," resumed he; "besides, I shall get rid of him sooner. Come, get up, comrade!" He shook his comrade, who had not taken off his clothes. I observed that he was too weak to walk, but the bookbinder would not listen: he made him get up, and half dragged, half supported him to the lodge of the porter, who ran for a hackney carriage. I saw the sick man get into it, almost fainting, with the impatient waterman; and they both set off, one perhaps to die, the other to dine at Courtville Gardens!

Six o'clock.—I have been to knock at my neighbor's door, who opened it himself; and I have given him his letter, finished at last, and directed to his son's widow. M. Antoine thanked me gratefully, and made me sit down.

It was the first time I had been into the attic of the old amateur. Curtains stained with damp and hanging down in rags, a cold stove, a bed of straw, two broken chairs, composed all the furniture. At the end of the room were a great number of prints in a heap, and paintings without frames turned against the wall.

At the moment I came in, the old man was making his dinner on some hard crusts of bread, which he was soaking in a glass of 'eau sucrée'. He perceived that my eyes fell upon his hermit fare, and he looked a little ashamed.

"There is nothing to tempt you in my supper, neighbor," said he, with a smile.

I replied that at least I thought it a very philosophical one for the Carnival.

M. Antoine shook his head, and went on again with his supper.

"Every one keeps his holidays in his own way," resumed he, beginning again to dip a crust into his glass. "There are several sorts of epicures, and not all feasts are meant to regale the palate; there are some also for the ears and the eyes."

I looked involuntarily round me, as if to seek for the invisible banquet which could make up to him for such a supper.

Without doubt he understood me; for he got up slowly, and, with the magisterial air of a man confident in what he is about to do, he rummaged behind several picture frames, drew forth a painting, over which he passed his hand, and silently placed it under the light of the lamp.

It represented a fine-looking old man, seated at table with his wife, his daughter, and his children, and singing to the accompaniment of musicians who appeared in the background. At first sight I recognized the subject, which I had often admired at the Louvre, and I declared it to be a splendid copy of Jordaens.

"A copy!" cried M. Antoine; "say an original, neighbor, and an original retouched by Rubens! Look closer at the head of the old man, the dress of the young woman, and the accessories. One can count the pencil-strokes of the Hercules of painters. It is not only a masterpiece, sir; it is a treasure—a relic! The picture at the Louvre may be a pearl, this is a diamond!"

And resting it against the stove, so as to place it in the best light, he fell again to soaking his crusts, without taking his eyes off the wonderful picture. One would have said that the sight of it gave the crusts an unexpected relish, for he chewed them slowly, and emptied his glass by little sips. His shrivelled features became smooth, his nostrils expanded; it was indeed, as he said himself, "a feast for the eyes."

"You see that I also have my treat," he resumed, nodding his head with an air of triumph. "Others may run after dinners and balls; as for me, this is the pleasure I give myself for my Carnival."

"But if this painting is really so precious," replied I, "it ought to be worth a high price."

"Eh! eh!" said M. Antoine, with an air of proud indifference. "In good times, a good judge might value it at somewhere about twenty thousand francs."

I started back.

"And you have bought it?" cried I.

"For nothing," replied he, lowering his voice. "These brokers are asses; mine mistook this for a student's copy; he let me have it for fifty louis, ready money! This morning I took them to him, and now he wishes to be off the bargain."

"This morning!" repeated I, involuntarily casting my eyes on the letter containing the refusal that M. Antoine had made me write to his son's widow, which was still on the little table.

He took no notice of my exclamation, and went on contemplating the work of Jordaens in an ecstasy.

"What a knowledge of chiaroscuro!" he murmured, biting his last crust in delight. "What relief! what fire! Where can one find such transparency of color! such magical lights! such force! such nature!"

As I was listening to him in silence, he mistook my astonishment for admiration, and clapped me on the shoulder.

"You are dazzled," said he merrily; "you did not expect such a treasure! What do you say to the bargain I have made?"

"Pardon me," replied I, gravely; "but I think you might have done better."

M. Antoine raised his head.

"How!" cried he; "do you take me for a man likely to be deceived about the merit or value of a painting?"

"I neither doubt your taste nor your skill; but I cannot help thinking that, for the price of this picture of a family party, you might have had—"

"What then?"

"The family itself, sir."

The old amateur cast a look at me, not of anger, but of contempt. In his eyes I had evidently just proved myself a barbarian, incapable of understanding the arts, and unworthy of enjoying them. He got up without answering me, hastily took up the Jordaens, and replaced it in its hiding-place behind the prints.

It was a sort of dismissal; I took leave of him, and went away.

Seven o'clock.—When I come in again, I find my water boiling over my lamp, and I busy myself in grinding my Mocha, and setting out my coffee- things.

The getting coffee ready is the most delicate and most attractive of domestic operations to one who lives alone: it is the grand work of a bachelor's housekeeping.

Coffee is, so to say, just the mid-point between bodily and spiritual nourishment. It acts agreeably, and at the same time, upon the senses and the thoughts. Its very fragrance gives a sort of delightful activity to the wits; it is a genius that lends wings to our fancy, and transports it to the land of the Arabian Nights.

When I am buried in my old easy-chair, my feet on the fender before a blazing fire, my ear soothed by the singing of the coffee-pot, which seems to gossip with my fire-irons, the sense of smell gently excited by the aroma of the Arabian bean, and my eyes shaded by my cap pulled down over them, it often seems as if each cloud of the fragrant steam took a distinct form. As in the mirages of the desert, in each as it rises, I see some image of which my mind had been longing for the reality.

At first the vapor increases, and its color deepens. I see a cottage on a hillside: behind is a garden shut in by a whitethorn hedge, and through the garden runs a brook, on the banks of which I hear the bees humming.

Then the view opens still more. See those fields planted with apple- trees, in which I can distinguish a plough and horses waiting for their master! Farther on, in a part of the wood which rings with the sound of the axe, I perceive the woodsman's hut, roofed with turf and branches; and, in the midst of all these rural pictures, I seem to see a figure of myself gliding about. It is my ghost walking in my dream!

The bubbling of the water, ready to boil over, compels me to break off my meditations, in order to fill up the coffee-pot. I then remember that I have no cream; I take my tin can off the hook and go down to the milkwoman's.

Mother Denis is a hale countrywoman from Savoy, which she left when quite young; and, contrary to the custom of the Savoyards, she has not gone back to it again. She has neither husband nor child, notwithstanding the title they give her; but her kindness, which never sleeps, makes her worthy of the name of mother.

A brave creature! Left by herself in the battle of life, she makes good her humble place in it by working, singing, helping others, and leaving the rest to God.

At the door of the milk-shop I hear loud bursts of laughter. In one of the corners of the shop three children are sitting on the ground. They wear the sooty dress of Savoyard boys, and in their hands they hold large slices of bread and cheese. The youngest is besmeared up to the eyes with his, and that is the reason of their mirth.

Mother Denis points them out to me.

"Look at the little lambs, how they enjoy themselves!" said she, putting her hand on the head of the little glutton.

"He has had no breakfast," puts in one of the others by way of excuse.

"Poor little thing," said the milkwoman; "he is left alone in the streets of Paris, where he can find no other father than the All-good God!"

"And that is why you make yourself a mother to them?" I replied, gently.

"What I do is little enough," said Mother Denis, measuring out my milk; "but every day I get some of them together out of the street, that for once they may have enough to eat. Dear children! their mothers will make up for it in heaven. Not to mention that they recall my native mountains to me: when they sing and dance, I seem to see our old father again."

Here her eyes filled with tears.

"So you are repaid by your recollections for the good you do them?" resumed I.

"Yes! yes!" said she, "and by their happiness, too! The laughter of these little ones, sir, is like a bird's song; it makes you gay, and gives you heart to live."

As she spoke she cut some fresh slices of bread and cheese, and added some apples and a handful of nuts to them.

"Come, my little dears," she cried, "put these into your pockets against to-morrow."

Then, turning to me:

"To-day I am ruining myself," added she; "but we must all have our Carnival."

I came away without saying a word: I was too much affected.

At last I have discovered what true pleasure is. After beholding the egotism of sensuality and of intellect, I have found the happy self-sacrifice of goodness. Pierre, M. Antoine, and Mother Denis had all kept their Carnival; but for the first two, it was only a feast for the senses or the mind; while for the third, it was a feast for the heart.

CHAPTER III

WHAT WE MAY LEARN BY LOOKING OUT OF WINDOW

March 3d

A poet has said that life is the dream of a shadow: he would better have compared it to a night of fever! What alternate fits of restlessness and sleep! what discomfort! what sudden starts! what ever-returning thirst! what a chaos of mournful and confused fancies! We can neither sleep nor wake; we seek in vain for repose, and we stop short on the brink of action. Two thirds of human existence are wasted in hesitation, and the last third in repenting.

When I say human existence, I mean my own! We are so made that each of us regards himself as the mirror of the community: what passes in our minds infallibly seems to us a history of the universe. Every man is like the drunkard who reports an earthquake, because he feels himself staggering.

And why am I uncertain and restless—I, a poor day-laborer in the world—who fill an obscure station in a corner of it, and whose work it avails itself of, without heeding the workman? I will tell you, my unseen friend, for whom these lines are written; my unknown brother, on whom the solitary call in sorrow; my imaginary confidant, to whom all monologues are addressed and who is but the shadow of our own conscience.

A great event has happened in my life! A crossroad has suddenly opened in the middle of the monotonous way along which I was travelling quietly, and without thinking of it. Two roads present themselves, and I must choose between them. One is only the continuation of that I have followed till now; the other is wider, and exhibits wondrous prospects. On the first there is nothing to fear, but also little to hope; on the other are great dangers and great fortune. Briefly, the question is, whether I shall give up the humble office in which I thought to die, for one of those bold speculations in which chance alone is banker! Ever since yesterday I have consulted with myself; I have compared the two and I remain undecided.

Where shall I find light—who will advise me?

Sunday, 4th.—See the sun coming out from the thick fogs of winter! Spring announces its approach; a soft breeze skims over the roofs, and my wallflower begins to blow again.

We are near that sweet season of fresh green, of which the poets of the sixteenth century sang with so much feeling:

Now the gladsome month of May
All things newly doth array;
Fairest lady, let me too
In thy love my life renew.

The chirping of the sparrows calls me: they claim the crumbs I scatter to them every morning. I open my window, and the prospect of roofs opens out before me in all its splendor.

He who has lived only on a first floor has no idea of the picturesque variety of such a view. He has never contemplated these tile-colored heights which intersect each other; he has not followed with his eyes these gutter-valleys, where the fresh verdure of the attic gardens waves, the deep shadows which evening spreads over the slated slopes, and the sparkling of windows which the setting sun has kindled to a blaze of fire. He has not studied the flora of these Alps of civilization, carpeted by lichens and mosses; he is not acquainted with the myriad inhabitants that people them, from the microscopic insect to the domestic cat—that reynard of the roofs who is always on the prowl, or in ambush; he has not witnessed the thousand aspects of a clear or a cloudy sky; nor the thousand effects of light, that make these upper regions a theatre with ever-changing scenes! How many times have my days of leisure passed away in contemplating this wonderful sight; in discovering its darker or brighter episodes; in seeking, in short, in this unknown world for the impressions of travel that wealthy tourists look for lower!

Nine o'clock.—But why, then, have not my winged neighbors picked up the crumbs I have scattered for them before my window? I see them fly away, come back, perch upon the ledges of the windows, and chirp at the sight of the feast they are usually so ready to devour! It is not my presence that frightens them; I have accustomed them to eat out of my hand. Then, why this fearful suspense? In vain I look around: the roof is clear, the windows near are closed. I crumble the bread that remains from my breakfast to attract them by an ampler feast. Their chirpings increase, they bend down their heads, the boldest approach upon the wing, but without daring to alight.

Come, come, my sparrows are the victims of one of the foolish panics which make the funds fall at the Bourse! It is plain that birds are not more reasonable than men!

With this reflection I was about to shut my window, when suddenly I perceived, in a spot of sunshine on my right, the shadow of two pricked-up ears; then a paw advanced, then the head of a tabby-cat showed itself at the corner of the gutter. The cunning fellow was lying there in wait, hoping the crumbs would bring him some game.

And I had accused my guests of cowardice! I was so sure that no danger could menace them! I thought I had looked well everywhere! I had only forgotten the corner behind me!

In life, as on the roofs, how many misfortunes come from having forgotten a single corner!

Ten o'clock.—I cannot leave my window; the rain and the cold have kept it shut so long that I must reconnoitre all the environs to be able to take possession of them again. My eyes search in succession all the points of the jumbled and confused prospect, passing on or stopping according to what they light upon.

Ah! see the windows upon which they formerly loved to rest; they are those of two unknown neighbors, whose different habits they have long remarked.

One is a poor work-woman, who rises before sunrise, and whose profile is shadowed upon her little muslin window-curtain far into the evening; the other is a young songstress, whose vocal flourishes sometimes reach my attic by snatches. When their windows are open, that of the work-woman discovers a humble but decent abode; the other, an elegantly furnished room. But to-day a crowd of tradespeople throng the latter: they take down the silk hangings and carry off the furniture, and I now remember that the young singer passed under my window this morning with her veil down, and walking with the hasty step of one who suffers some inward trouble. Ah! I guess it all. Her means are exhausted in elegant fancies, or have been taken away by some unexpected misfortune, and now she has fallen from luxury to indigence. While the work-woman manages not only to keep her little room, but also to furnish it with decent comfort by her steady toil, that of the singer is become the property of brokers. The one sparkled for a moment on the wave of prosperity; the other sails slowly but safely along the coast of a humble and laborious industry.

Alas! is there not here a lesson for us all? Is it really in hazardous experiments, at the end of which we shall meet with wealth or ruin, that the wise man should employ his years of strength and freedom? Ought he to consider life as a regular employment which brings its daily wages, or as a game in which

the future is determined by a few throws? Why seek the risk of extreme chances? For what end hasten to riches by dangerous roads? Is it really certain that happiness is the prize of brilliant successes, rather than of a wisely accepted poverty? Ah! if men but knew in what a small dwelling joy can live, and how little it costs to furnish it!

Twelve o'clock.—I have been walking up and down my attic for a long time, with my arms folded and my eyes on the ground! My doubts increase, like shadows encroaching more and more on some bright space; my fears multiply; and the uncertainty becomes every moment more painful to me! It is necessary for me to decide to-day, and before the evening! I hold the dice of my future fate in my hands, and I dare not throw them.

Three o'clock.—The sky has become cloudy, and a cold wind begins to blow from the west; all the windows which were opened to the sunshine of a beautiful day are shut again. Only on the opposite side of the street, the lodger on the last story has not yet left his balcony.

One knows him to be a soldier by his regular walk, his gray moustaches, and the ribbon that decorates his buttonhole. Indeed, one might have guessed as much from the care he takes of the little garden which is the ornament of his balcony in mid-air; for there are two things especially loved by all old soldiers—flowers and children. They have been so long, obliged to look upon the earth as a field of battle, and so long cut off from the peaceful pleasures of a quiet lot, that they seem to begin life at an age when others end it. The tastes of their early years, which were arrested by the stern duties of war, suddenly break out again with their white hairs, and are like the savings of youth which they spend again in old age. Besides, they have been condemned to be destroyers for so long that perhaps they feel a secret pleasure in creating, and seeing life spring up again: the beauty of weakness has a grace and an attraction the more for those who have been the agents of unbending force; and the watching over the frail germs of life has all the charms of novelty for these old workmen of death.

Therefore the cold wind has not driven my neighbor from his balcony. He is digging up the earth in his green boxes, and carefully sowing the seeds of the scarlet nasturtium, convolvulus, and sweet-pea. Henceforth he will come every day to watch for their first sprouting, to protect the young shoots from weeds or insects, to arrange the strings for the tendrils to climb on, and carefully to regulate their supply of water and heat!

How much labor to bring in the desired harvest! For that, how many times shall I see him brave cold or heat, wind or sun, as he does to-day! But then, in the hot summer days, when the blinding dust whirls in clouds through our streets, when the eye, dazzled by the glare of white stucco, knows not where to rest, and the glowing roofs reflect their heat upon us to burning, the old soldier will sit in his arbor and perceive nothing but green leaves and flowers around him, and the breeze will come cool and fresh to him through these perfumed shades. His assiduous care will be rewarded at last.

We must sow the seeds, and tend the growth, if we would enjoy the flower.

Four o'clock.—The clouds that have been gathering in the horizon for a long time are become darker; it thunders loudly, and the rain pours down! Those who are caught in it fly in every direction, some laughing and some crying.

I always find particular amusement in these helter-skelters, caused by a sudden storm. It seems as if each one, when thus taken by surprise, loses the factitious character that the world or habit has given him, and appears in his true colors.

See, for example, that big man with deliberate step, who suddenly forgets his indifference, made to order, and runs like a schoolboy! He is a thrifty city gentleman, who, with all his fashionable airs, is afraid to spoil his hat.

That pretty woman yonder, on the contrary, whose looks are so modest, and whose dress is so elaborate, slackens her pace with the increasing storm. She seems to find pleasure in braving it, and does not think of her velvet cloak spotted by the hail! She is evidently a lioness in sheep's clothing.

Here, a young man, who was passing, stops to catch some of the hailstones in his hand, and examines them. By his quick and business-like walk just now, you would have taken him for a tax-gatherer on his rounds, when he is a young philosopher, studying the effects of electricity. And those schoolboys who leave their ranks to run after the sudden gusts of a March whirlwind; those girls, just now so demure, but who now fly with bursts of laughter; those national guards, who quit the martial attitude of their days of duty to take refuge under a porch! The storm has caused all these transformations.

See, it increases! The hardiest are obliged to seek shelter. I see every one rushing toward the shop in front of my window, which a bill announces is to let. It is for the fourth time within a few months. A year ago all the skill of the joiner and the art of the painter were employed in beautifying it, but their works are already destroyed by the leaving of so many tenants; the cornices of the front are disfigured by mud; the arabesques on the doorway are spoiled by bills posted upon them to announce the sale of the effects. The splendid shop has lost some of its embellishments with each change of the tenant. See it now empty, and left open to the passersby. How much does its fate resemble that of so many who, like it, only change their occupation to hasten the faster to ruin!

I am struck by this last reflection: since the morning everything seems to speak to me, and with the same warning tone. Everything says: "Take care! be content with your happy, though humble lot; happiness can be retained only by constancy; do not forsake your old patrons for the protection of those who are unknown!"

Are they the outward objects which speak thus, or does the warning come from within? Is it not I myself who give this language to all that surrounds me? The world is but an instrument, to which we give sound at will. But what does it signify if it teaches us wisdom? The low voice that speaks in our breasts is always a friendly voice, for it tells us what we are, that is to say, what is our capability. Bad conduct results, for the most part, from mistaking our calling. There are so many fools and knaves, because there are so few men who know themselves. The question is not to discover what will suit us, but for what we are suited!

What should I do among these many experienced financial speculators? I am only a poor sparrow, born among the housetops, and should always fear the enemy crouching in the dark corner; I am a prudent workman, and should think of the business of my neighbors who so suddenly disappeared; I am a timid observer, and should call to mind the flowers so slowly raised by the old soldier, or the shop brought to ruin by constant change of masters. Away from me, ye banquets, over which hangs the sword of Damocles! I am a country mouse. Give me my nuts and hollow tree, and I ask nothing besides—except security.

And why this insatiable craving for riches? Does a man drink more when he drinks from a large glass? Whence comes that universal dread of mediocrity, the fruitful mother of peace and liberty? Ah! there is the evil which, above every other, it should be the aim of both public and private education to anticipate! If that were got rid of, what treasons would be spared, what baseness avoided, what a chain of excess and crime would be forever broken! We award the palm to charity, and to self-sacrifice; but, above all, let us award it to moderation, for it is the great social virtue. Even when it does not create the others, it stands instead of them.

Six o'clock.—I have written a letter of thanks to the promoters of the new speculation, and have declined their offer! This decision has restored my peace of mind. I stopped singing, like the cobbler, as long as I entertained the hope of riches: it is gone, and happiness is come back!

O beloved and gentle Poverty! pardon me for having for a moment wished to fly from thee, as I would from Want. Stay here forever with thy charming sisters, Pity, Patience, Sobriety, and Solitude; be ye my queens and my instructors; teach me the stern duties of life; remove far from my abode the weakness of heart and giddiness of head which follow prosperity. Holy Poverty! teach me to endure without complaining, to impart without grudging, to seek the end of life higher than in pleasure, farther off than in power. Thou givest the body strength, thou makest the mind more firm; and, thanks to thee, this life, to which the rich attach themselves as to a rock, becomes a bark of which death may cut the cable without awakening all our fears. Continue to sustain me, O thou whom Christ hath called Blessed!

CHAPTER IV

LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER

April 9th

The fine evenings are come back; the trees begin to put forth their shoots; hyacinths, jonquils, violets, and lilacs perfume the baskets of the flower-girls—all the world have begun their walks again on the quays and boulevards. After dinner, I, too, descend from my attic to breathe the evening air.

It is the hour when Paris is seen in all its beauty. During the day the plaster fronts of the houses weary the eye by their monotonous whiteness; heavily laden carts make the streets shake under their huge wheels; the eager crowd, taken up by the one fear of losing a moment from business, cross and jostle one another; the aspect of the city altogether has something harsh, restless, and flurried about it. But, as soon as the stars appear, everything is changed; the glare of the white houses is quenched in the gathering shades; you hear no more any rolling but that of the carriages on their way to some party of pleasure; you see only the loungee or the light-hearted passing by; work has given place to leisure. Now each one may breathe after the fierce race through the business of the day, and whatever strength remains to him he gives to pleasure! See the ballrooms lighted up, the theatres open, the eating-shops along the walks set out with dainties, and the twinkling lanterns of the newspaper criers. Decidedly Paris has laid aside the pen, the ruler, and the apron; after the day spent in work, it must have the evening for enjoyment; like the masters of Thebes, it has put off all serious matter till tomorrow.

I love to take part in this happy hour; not to mix in the general gayety, but to contemplate it. If the enjoyments of others embitter jealous minds, they strengthen the humble spirit; they are the beams of sunshine, which open the two beautiful flowers called trust and hope.

Although alone in the midst of the smiling multitude, I do not feel myself isolated from it, for its gayety is reflected upon me: it is my own kind, my own family, who are enjoying life, and I take a brother's share in their happiness. We are all fellow-soldiers in this earthly battle, and what does it matter on whom the honors of the victory fall? If Fortune passes by without seeing us, and pours her favors on others, let us console ourselves, like the friend of Parmenio, by saying, "Those, too, are Alexanders."

While making these reflections, I was going on as chance took me. I crossed from one pavement to another, I retraced my steps, I stopped before the shops or to read the handbills. How many things there are to learn in the streets of Paris! What a museum it is! Unknown fruits, foreign arms, furniture of old times or other lands, animals of all climates, statues of great men, costumes of distant nations! It is the world seen in samples!

Let us then look at this people, whose knowledge is gained from the shop- windows and the tradesman's display of goods. Nothing has been taught them, but they have a rude notion of everything. They have seen pineapples at Chevet's, a palm-tree in the Jardin des Plantes, sugar- canes selling on the Pont-Neuf. The Redskins, exhibited in the Valentine Hall, have taught them to mimic the dance of the bison, and to smoke the calumet of peace; they have seen Carter's lions fed; they know the principal national costumes contained in Babin's collection; Goupil's display of prints has placed the tiger-hunts of Africa and the sittings of the English Parliament before their eyes; they have become acquainted with Queen Victoria, the Emperor of Austria, and Kossuth, at the office- door of the Illustrated News. We can certainly instruct them, but not astonish them; for nothing is completely new to them. You may take the Paris ragamuffin through the five quarters of the world, and at every wonder with which you think to surprise him, he will settle the matter with that favorite and conclusive answer of his class—"I know."

But this variety of exhibitions, which makes Paris the fair of the world, does not offer merely a means of instruction to him who walks through it; it is a continual spur for rousing the imagination, a first step of the ladder always set up before us in a vision. When we see them, how many voyages do we take in imagination, what adventures do we dream of, what pictures do we sketch! I never look at that shop near the Chinese baths, with its tapestry hangings of Florida jessamine, and filled with magnolias, without seeing the forest glades of the New World, described by the author of *Atala*, opening themselves out before me.

Then, when this study of things and this discourse of reason begin to tire you, look around you! What contrasts of figures and faces you see in the crowd! What a vast field for the exercise of meditation! A half- seen glance, or a few words caught as the speaker passes by, open a thousand vistas to your imagination. You wish to comprehend what these imperfect disclosures mean, and, as the antiquary endeavors to decipher the mutilated inscription on some old monument, you build up a history on a gesture or on a word! These are the stirring sports of the mind, which finds in fiction a relief from the wearisome dullness of the actual.

Alas! as I was just now passing by the carriage-entrance of a great house, I noticed a sad subject for one of these histories. A man was sitting in the darkest corner, with his head bare, and holding out his hat for the charity of those who passed. His threadbare coat had that look of neatness which marks that destitution has been met by a long struggle. He had carefully buttoned it up to hide the want of a shirt. His face was half hid under his gray hair, and his eyes were closed, as if he wished to escape the sight of his own humiliation, and he remained mute and motionless. Those who passed him took no notice of the beggar, who sat in silence and darkness! They had been so lucky as to escape complaints and

importunities, and were glad to turn away their eyes too.

Suddenly the great gate turned on its hinges; and a very low carriage, lighted with silver lamps and drawn by two black horses, came slowly out, and took the road toward the Faubourg St. Germain. I could just distinguish, within, the sparkling diamonds and the flowers of a ball-dress; the glare of the lamps passed like a bloody streak over the pale face of the beggar, and showed his look as his eyes opened and followed the rich man's equipage until it disappeared in the night.

I dropped a small piece of money into the hat he was holding out, and passed on quickly.

I had just fallen unexpectedly upon the two saddest secrets of the disease which troubles the age we live in: the envious hatred of him who suffers want, and the selfish forgetfulness of him who lives in affluence.

All the enjoyment of my walk was gone; I left off looking about me, and retired into my own heart. The animated and moving sight in the streets gave place to inward meditation upon all the painful problems which have been written for the last four thousand years at the bottom of each human struggle, but which are propounded more clearly than ever in our days.

I pondered on the uselessness of so many contests, in which defeat and victory only displace each other by turns, and on the mistaken zealots who have repeated from generation to generation the bloody history of Cain and Abel; and, saddened with these mournful reflections, I walked on as chance took me, until the silence all around insensibly drew me out from my own thoughts.

I had reached one of the remote streets, in which those who would live in comfort and without ostentation, and who love serious reflection, delight to find a home. There were no shops along the dimly lighted street; one heard no sounds but of distant carriages, and of the steps of some of the inhabitants returning quietly home.

I instantly recognized the street, though I had been there only once before.

That was two years ago. I was walking at the time by the side of the Seine, to which the lights on the quays and bridges gave the aspect of a lake surrounded by a garland of stars; and I had reached the Louvre, when I was stopped by a crowd collected near the parapet they had gathered round a child of about six, who was crying, and I asked the cause of his tears.

"It seems that he was sent to walk in the Tuileries," said a mason, who was returning from his work with his trowel in his hand; "the servant who took care of him met with some friends there, and told the child to wait for him while he went to get a drink; but I suppose the drink made him more thirsty, for he has not come back, and the child cannot find his way home."

"Why do they not ask him his name, and where he lives?"

"They have been doing it for the last hour; but all he can say is, that he is called Charles, and that his father is Monsieur Duval—there are twelve hundred Duvals in Paris."

"Then he does not know in what part of the town he lives?"

"I should not think, indeed! Don't you see that he is a gentleman's child? He has never gone out except in a carriage or with a servant; he does not know what to do by himself."

Here the mason was interrupted by some of the voices rising above the others.

"We cannot leave him in the street," said some.

"The child-stealers would carry him off," continued others.

"We must take him to the overseer."

"Or to the police-office."

"That's the thing. Come, little one!"

But the child, frightened by these suggestions of danger, and at the names of police and overseer, cried louder, and drew back toward the parapet. In vain they tried to persuade him; his fears made him resist the more, and the most eager began to get weary, when the voice of a little boy was heard through the confusion.

"I know him well—I do," said he, looking at the lost child; "he belongs in our part of the town."

"What part is it?"

"Yonder, on the other side of the Boulevards—Rue des Magasins."

"And you have seen him before?"

"Yes, yes! he belongs to the great house at the end of the street, where there is an iron gate with gilt points."

The child quickly raised his head, and stopped crying. The little boy answered all the questions that were put to him, and gave such details as left no room for doubt. The other child understood him, for he went up to him as if to put himself under his protection.

"Then you can take him to his parents?" asked the mason, who had listened with real interest to the little boy's account.

"I don't care if I do," replied he; "it's the way I'm going."

"Then you will take charge of him?"

"He has only to come with me."

And, taking up the basket he had put down on the pavement, he set off toward the postern-gate of the Louvre.

The lost child followed him.

"I hope he will take him right," said I, when I saw them go away.

"Never fear," replied the mason; "the little one in the blouse is the same age as the other; but, as the saying is, he knows black from white; poverty, you see, is a famous schoolmistress!"

The crowd dispersed. For my part, I went toward the Louvre; the thought came into my head to follow the two children, so as to guard against any mistake.

I was not long in overtaking them; they were walking side by side, talking, and already quite familiar with each other. The contrast in their dress then struck me. Little Duval wore one of those fanciful children's dresses which are expensive as well as in good taste; his coat was skilfully fitted to his figure, his trousers came down in plaits from his waist to his boots of polished leather with mother-of-pearl buttons, and his ringlets were half hid by a velvet cap. The appearance of his guide, on the contrary, was that of the class who dwell on the extreme borders of poverty, but who there maintain their ground with no surrender. His old blouse, patched with pieces of different shades, indicated the perseverance of an industrious mother struggling against the wear and tear of time; his trousers were become too short, and showed his stockings darned over and over again; and it was evident that his shoes were not made for him.

The countenances of the two children were not less different than their dress. That of the first was delicate and refined; his clear blue eye, his fair skin, and his smiling mouth gave him a charming look of innocence and happiness. The features of the other, on the contrary, had something rough in them; his eye was quick and lively, his complexion dark, his smile less merry than shrewd; all showed a mind sharpened by too early experience; he walked boldly through the middle of the streets thronged by carriages, and followed their countless turnings without hesitation.

I found, on asking him, that every day he carried dinner to his father, who was then working on the left bank of the Seine; and this responsible duty had made him careful and prudent. He had learned those hard but forcible lessons of necessity which nothing can equal or supply the place of. Unfortunately, the wants of his poor family had kept him from school, and he seemed to feel the loss; for he often stopped before the printshops, and asked his companion to read him the names of the engravings. In this way we reached the Boulevard Bonne Nouvelle, which the little wanderer seemed to know again. Notwithstanding his fatigue, he hurried on; he was agitated by mixed feelings; at the sight of his house he uttered a cry, and ran toward the iron gate with the gilt points; a lady who was standing at the entrance received him in her arms, and from the exclamations of joy, and the sound of kisses, I soon perceived she was his mother.

Not seeing either the servant or child return, she had sent in search of them in every direction, and was waiting for them in intense anxiety.

I explained to her in a few words what had happened. She thanked me warmly, and looked round for the little boy who had recognized and brought back her son; but while we were talking, he had

disappeared.

It was for the first time since then that I had come into this part of Paris. Did the mother continue grateful? Had the children met again, and had the happy chance of their first meeting lowered between them that barrier which may mark the different ranks of men, but should not divide them?

While putting these questions to myself, I slackened my pace, and fixed my eyes on the great gate, which I just perceived. Suddenly I saw it open, and two children appeared at the entrance. Although much grown, I recognized them at first sight; they were the child who was found near the parapet of the Louvre, and his young guide. But the dress of the latter was greatly changed: his blouse of gray cloth was neat, and even spruce, and was fastened round the waist by a polished leather belt; he wore strong shoes, but made for his feet, and had on a new cloth cap. Just at the moment I saw him, he held in his two hands an enormous bunch of lilacs, to which his companion was trying to add narcissuses and primroses; the two children laughed, and parted with a friendly good-by. M. Duval's son did not go in till he had seen the other turn the corner of the street.

Then I accosted the latter, and reminded him of our former meeting; he looked at me for a moment, and then seemed to recollect me.

"Forgive me if I do not make you a bow," said he, merrily, "but I want both my hands for the nosegay Monsieur Charles has given me."

"You are, then, become great friends?" said I.

"Oh! I should think so," said the child; "and now my father is rich too!"

"How's that?"

"Monsieur Duval lent him some money; he has taken a shop, where he works on his own account; and, as for me, I go to school."

"Yes," replied I, remarking for the first time the cross that decorated his little coat; "and I see that you are head-boy!"

"Monsieur Charles helps me to learn, and so I am come to be the first in the class."

"Are you now going to your lessons?"

"Yes, and he has given me some lilacs; for he has a garden where we play together, and where my mother can always have flowers."

"Then it is the same as if it were partly your own."

"So it is! Ah! they are good neighbors indeed. But here I am; good-by, sir."

He nodded to me with a smile, and disappeared.

I went on with my walk, still pensive, but with a feeling of relief. If I had elsewhere witnessed the painful contrast between affluence and want, here I had found the true union of riches and poverty. Hearty good-will had smoothed down the more rugged inequalities on both sides, and had opened a road of true neighborhood and fellowship between the humble workshop and the stately mansion. Instead of hearkening to the voice of interest, they had both listened to that of self-sacrifice, and there was no place left for contempt or envy. Thus, instead of the beggar in rags, that I had seen at the other door cursing the rich man, I had found here the happy child of the laborer loaded with flowers and blessing him! The problem, so difficult and so dangerous to examine into with no regard but for the rights of it, I had just seen solved by love.

CHAPTER V

COMPENSATION

Sunday, May 27th

Capital cities have one thing peculiar to them: their days of rest seem to be the signal for a general

dispersion and flight. Like birds that are just restored to liberty, the people come out of their stone cages, and joyfully fly toward the country. It is who shall find a green hillock for a seat, or the shade of a wood for a shelter; they gather May flowers, they run about the fields; the town is forgotten until the evening, when they return with sprigs of blooming hawthorn in their hats, and their hearts gladdened by pleasant thoughts and recollections of the past day; the next day they return again to their harness and to work.

These rural adventures are most remarkable at Paris. When the fine weather comes, clerks, shop keepers, and workingmen look forward impatiently for the Sunday as the day for trying a few hours of this pastoral life; they walk through six miles of grocers' shops and public-houses in the faubourgs, in the sole hope of finding a real turnip-field. The father of a family begins the practical education of his son by showing him wheat which has not taken the form of a loaf, and cabbage "in its wild state." Heaven only knows the encounters, the discoveries, the adventures that are met with! What Parisian has not had his Odyssey in an excursion through the suburbs, and would not be able to write a companion to the famous Travels by Land and by Sea from Paris to St. Cloud?

We do not now speak of that floating population from all parts, for whom our French Babylon is the caravansary of Europe: a phalanx of thinkers, artists, men of business, and travellers, who, like Homer's hero, have arrived in their intellectual country after beholding "many peoples and cities;" but of the settled Parisian, who keeps his appointed place, and lives on his own floor like the oyster on his rock, a curious vestige of the credulity, the slowness, and the simplicity of bygone ages.

For one of the singularities of Paris is, that it unites twenty populations completely different in character and manners. By the side of the gypsies of commerce and of art, who wander through all the several stages of fortune or fancy, live a quiet race of people with an independence, or with regular work, whose existence resembles the dial of a clock, on which the same hand points by turns to the same hours. If no other city can show more brilliant and more stirring forms of life, no other contains more obscure and more tranquil ones. Great cities are like the sea: storms agitate only the surface; if you go to the bottom, you find a region inaccessible to the tumult and the noise.

For my part, I have settled on the verge of this region, but do not actually live in it. I am removed from the turmoil of the world, and live in the shelter of solitude, but without being able to disconnect my thoughts from the struggle going on. I follow at a distance all its events of happiness or grief; I join the feasts and the funerals; for how can he who looks on, and knows what passes, do other than take part? Ignorance alone can keep us strangers to the life around us: selfishness itself will not suffice for that.

These reflections I made to myself in my attic, in the intervals of the various household works to which a bachelor is forced when he has no other servant than his own ready will. While I was pursuing my deductions, I had blacked my boots, brushed my coat, and tied my cravat; I had at last arrived at the important moment when we pronounce complacently that all is finished, and that well.

A grand resolve had just decided me to depart from my usual habits. The evening before, I had seen by the advertisements that the next day was a holiday at Sevres, and that the china manufactory would be open to the public. I was tempted by the beauty of the morning, and suddenly decided to go there.

On my arrival at the station on the left bank, I noticed the crowd hurrying on in the fear of being late. Railroads, besides many other advantages, possess that of teaching the French punctuality. They will submit to the clock when they are convinced that it is their master; they will learn to wait when they find they will not be waited for. Social virtues, are, in a great degree, good habits. How many great qualities are grafted into nations by their geographical position, by political necessity, and by institutions! Avarice was destroyed for a time among the Lacedaemonians by the creation of an iron coinage, too heavy and too bulky to be conveniently hoarded.

I found myself in a carriage with two middle-aged women belonging to the domestic and retired class of Parisians I have spoken of above. A few civilities were sufficient to gain me their confidence, and after some minutes I was acquainted with their whole history.

They were two poor sisters, left orphans at fifteen, and had lived ever since, as those who work for their livelihood must live, by economy and privation. For the last twenty or thirty years they had worked in jewelry in the same house; they had seen ten masters succeed one another, and make their fortunes in it, without any change in their own lot. They had always lived in the same room, at the end of one of the passages in the Rue St. Denis, where the air and the sun are unknown. They began their work before daylight, went on with it till after nightfall, and saw year succeed to year without their lives being marked by any other events than the Sunday service, a walk, or an illness.

The younger of these worthy work-women was forty, and obeyed her sister as she did when a child.

The elder looked after her, took care of her, and scolded her with a mother's tenderness. At first it was amusing; afterward one could not help seeing something affecting in these two gray-haired children, one unable to leave off the habit of obeying, the other that of protecting.

And it was not in that alone that my two companions seemed younger than their years; they knew so little that their wonder never ceased. We had hardly arrived at Clamart before they involuntarily exclaimed, like the king in the children's game, that they "did not think the world was so great"!

It was the first time they had trusted themselves on a railroad, and it was amusing to see their sudden shocks, their alarms, and their courageous determinations: everything was a marvel to them! They had remains of youth within them, which made them sensible to things which usually only strike us in childhood. Poor creatures! they had still the feelings of another age, though they had lost its charms.

But was there not something holy in this simplicity, which had been preserved to them by abstinence from all the joys of life? Ah! accursed be he who first had the had courage to attach ridicule to that name of "old maid," which recalls so many images of grievous deception, of dreariness, and of abandonment! Accursed be he who can find a subject for sarcasm in involuntary misfortune, and who can crown gray hairs with thorns!

The two sisters were called Frances and Madeleine. This day's journey was a feat of courage without example in their lives. The fever of the times had infected them unawares. Yesterday Madeleine had suddenly proposed the idea of the expedition, and Frances had accepted it immediately. Perhaps it would have been better not to yield to the great temptation offered by her younger sister; but "we have our follies at all ages," as the prudent Frances philosophically remarked. As for Madeleine, there are no regrets or doubts for her; she is the life-guard of the establishment.

"We really must amuse ourselves," said she; "we live but once."

And the elder sister smiled at this Epicurean maxim. It was evident that the fever of independence was at its crisis in both of them.

And in truth it would have been a great pity if any scruple had interfered with their happiness, it was so frank and genial! The sight of the trees, which seemed to fly on both sides of the road, caused them unceasing admiration. The meeting a train passing in the contrary direction, with the noise and rapidity of a thunderbolt, made them shut their eyes and utter a cry; but it had already disappeared! They look around, take courage again, and express themselves full of astonishment at the marvel.

Madeleine declares that such a sight is worth the expense of the journey, and Frances would have agreed with her if she had not recollected, with some little alarm, the deficit which such an expense must make in their budget. The three francs spent upon this single expedition were the savings of a whole week of work. Thus the joy of the elder of the two sisters was mixed with remorse; the prodigal child now and then turned its eyes toward the back street of St. Denis.

But the motion and the succession of objects distract her. See the bridge of the Val surrounded by its lovely landscape: on the right, Paris with its grand monuments, which rise through the fog, or sparkle in the sun; on the left, Meudon, with its villas, its woods, its vines, and its royal castle! The two work-women look from one window to the other with exclamations of delight. One fellow-passenger laughs at their childish wonder; but to me it is deeply touching, for I see in it the sign of a long and monotonous seclusion: they are the prisoners of work, who have recovered liberty and fresh air for a few hours.

At last the train stops, and we get out. I show the two sisters the path that leads to Sevres, between the railway and the gardens, and they go on before, while I inquire about the time of returning.

I soon join them again at the next station, where they have stopped at the little garden belonging to the gatekeeper; both are already in deep conversation with him while he digs his garden-borders, and marks out the places for flower-seeds. He informs them that it is the time for hoeing out weeds, for making grafts and layers, for sowing annuals, and for destroying the insects on the rose-trees. Madeleine has on the sill of her window two wooden boxes, in which, for want of air and sun, she has never been able to make anything grow but mustard and cress; but she persuades herself that, thanks to this information, all other plants may henceforth thrive in them. At last the gatekeeper, who is sowing a border with mignonette, gives her the rest of the seeds which he does not want, and the old maid goes off delighted, and begins to act over again the dream of Paired and her can of milk, with these flowers of her imagination.

On reaching the grove of acacias, where the fair was going on, I lost sight of the two sisters. I went alone among the sights: there were lotteries going on, mountebank shows, places for eating and drinking, and for shooting with the cross-bow. I have always been struck by the spirit of these out-of-

door festivities. In drawing-room entertainments, people are cold, grave, often listless, and most of those who go there are brought together by habit or the obligations of society; in the country assemblies, on the contrary, you only find those who are attracted by the hope of enjoyment. There, it is a forced conscription; here, they are volunteers for gayety! Then, how easily they are pleased! How far this crowd of people is yet from knowing that to be pleased with nothing, and to look down on everything, is the height of fashion and good taste! Doubtless their amusements are often coarse; elegance and refinement are wanting in them; but at least they have heartiness. Oh, that the hearty enjoyments of these merry-makings could be retained in union with less vulgar feeling! Formerly religion stamped its holy character on the celebration of country festivals, and purified the pleasures without depriving them of their simplicity.

The hour arrives at which the doors of the porcelain manufactory and the museum of pottery are open to the public. I meet Frances and Madeleine again in the first room. Frightened at finding themselves in the midst of such regal magnificence, they hardly dare walk; they speak in a low tone, as if they were in a church.

"We are in the king's house," said the eldest sister, forgetting that there is no longer a king in France.

I encourage them to go on; I walk first, and they make up their minds to follow me.

What wonders are brought together in this collection! Here we see clay moulded into every shape, tinted with every color, and combined with every sort of substance!

Earth and wood are the first substances worked upon by man, and seem more particularly meant for his use. They, like the domestic animals, are the essential accessories of his life; therefore there must be a more intimate connection between them and us. Stone and metals require long preparations; they resist our first efforts, and belong less to the individual than to communities. Earth and wood are, on the contrary, the principal instruments of the isolated being who must feed and shelter himself.

This, doubtless, makes me feel so much interested in the collection I am examining. These cups, so roughly modelled by the savage, admit me to a knowledge of some of his habits; these elegant yet incorrectly formed vases of the Indian tell me of a declining intelligence,—in which still glimmers the twilight of what was once bright sunshine; these jars, loaded with arabesques, show the fancy of the Arab rudely and ignorantly copied by the Spaniard! We find here the stamp of every race, every country, and every age.

My companions seemed little interested in these historical associations; they looked at all with that credulous admiration which leaves no room for examination or discussion. Madeleine read the name written under every piece of workmanship, and her sister answered with an exclamation of wonder.

In this way we reached a little courtyard, where they had thrown away the fragments of some broken china.

Frances perceived a colored saucer almost whole, of which she took possession as a record of the visit she was making; henceforth she would have a specimen of the Sevres china, "which is only made for kings!" I would not undeceive her by telling her that the products of the manufactory are sold all over the world, and that her saucer, before it was cracked, was the same as those that are bought at the shops for sixpence! Why should I destroy the illusions of her humble existence? Are we to break down the hedge-flowers that perfume our paths? Things are oftenest nothing in themselves; the thoughts we attach to them alone give them value. To rectify innocent mistakes, in order to recover some useless reality, is to be like those learned men who will see nothing in a plant but the chemical elements of which it is composed.

On leaving the manufactory, the two sisters, who had taken possession of me with the freedom of artlessness, invited me to share the luncheon they had brought with them. I declined at first, but they insisted with so much good-nature, that I feared to pain them, and with some awkwardness gave way.

We had only to look for a convenient spot. I led them up the hill, and we found a plot of grass enamelled with daisies, and shaded by two walnut-trees.

Madeleine could not contain herself for joy. All her life she had dreamed of a dinner out on the grass! While helping her sister to take the provisions from the basket, she tells me of all her expeditions into the country that had been planned, and put off. Frances, on the other hand, was brought up at Montmorency, and before she became an orphan she had often gone back to her nurse's house. That which had the attraction of novelty for her sister, had for her the charm of recollection. She told of the vintage harvests to which her parents had taken her; the rides on Mother Luret's donkey, that they could not make go to the right without pulling him to the left; the cherry-gathering; and the sails on the lake in the innkeeper's boat.

These recollections have all the charm and freshness of childhood. Frances recalls to herself less what she has seen than what she has felt. While she is talking the cloth is laid, and we sit down under a tree. Before us winds the valley of Sevres, its many-storied houses abutting upon the gardens and the slopes of the hill; on the other side spreads out the park of St. Cloud, with its magnificent clumps of trees interspersed with meadows; above stretch the heavens like an immense ocean, in which the clouds are sailing! I look at this beautiful country, and I listen to these good old maids; I admire, and I am interested; and time passes gently on without my perceiving it.

At last the sun sets, and we have to think of returning. While Madeleine and Frances clear away the dinner, I walk down to the manufactory to ask the hour. The merrymaking is at its height; the blasts of the trombones resound from the band under the acacias. For a few moments I forget myself with looking about; but I have promised the two sisters to take them back to the Bellevue station; the train cannot wait, and I make haste to climb the path again which leads to the walnut-trees.

Just before I reached them, I heard voices on the other side of the hedge. Madeleine and Frances were speaking to a poor girl whose clothes were burned, her hands blackened, and her face tied up with bloodstained bandages. I saw that she was one of the girls employed at the gunpowder mills, which are built further up on the common. An explosion had taken place a few days before; the girl's mother and elder sister were killed; she herself escaped by a miracle, and was now left without any means of support. She told all this with the resigned and unhopeful manner of one who has always been accustomed to suffer. The two sisters were much affected; I saw them consulting with each other in a low tone: then Frances took thirty sous out of a little coarse silk purse, which was all they had left, and gave them to the poor girl. I hastened on to that side of the hedge; but, before I reached it, I met the two old sisters, who called out to me that they would not return by the railway, but on foot!

I then understood that the money they had meant for the journey had just been given to the beggar! Good, like evil, is contagious: I run to the poor wounded girl, give her the sum that was to pay for my own place, and return to Frances and Madeleine, and tell them I will walk with them.

.....

I am just come back from taking them home; and have left them delighted with their day, the recollection of which will long make them happy. This morning I was pitying those whose lives are obscure and joyless; now, I understand that God has provided a compensation with every trial. The smallest pleasure derives from rarity a relish otherwise unknown. Enjoyment is only what we feel to be such, and the luxurious man feels no longer: satiety has destroyed his appetite, while privation preserves to the other that first of earthly blessings: the being easily made happy. Oh, that I could persuade every one of this! that so the rich might not abuse their riches, and that the poor might have patience. If happiness is the rarest of blessings, it is because the reception of it is the rarest of virtues.

Madeleine and Frances! ye poor old maids whose courage, resignation, and generous hearts are your only wealth, pray for the wretched who give themselves up to despair; for the unhappy who hate and envy; and for the unfeeling into whose enjoyments no pity enters.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Brought them up to poverty
Carn-ival means, literally, "farewell to flesh!"
Coffee is the grand work of a bachelor's housekeeping
Defeat and victory only displace each other by turns
Did not think the world was so great
Do they understand what makes them so gay?
Each of us regards himself as the mirror of the community
Ease with which the poor forget their wretchedness
Every one keeps his holidays in his own way
Favorite and conclusive answer of his class—"I know"
Fear of losing a moment from business
Finishes his sin thoroughly before he begins to repent
Her kindness, which never sleeps
Hubbub of questions which waited for no reply
Moderation is the great social virtue

No one is so unhappy as to have nothing to give
Our tempers are like an opera-glass
Poverty, you see, is a famous schoolmistress
Prisoners of work
Question is not to discover what will suit us
Ruining myself, but we must all have our Carnival
Two thirds of human existence are wasted in hesitation
What a small dwelling joy can live

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK AN ATTIC PHILOSOPHER IN PARIS — VOLUME 1

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