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THE ROMANCISTS

HENRI MURGER

BOHEMIAN LIFE

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ROMAN CONTEMPORAIN

HENRI MURGER

BOHEMIAN LIFE

TEN ETCHINGS

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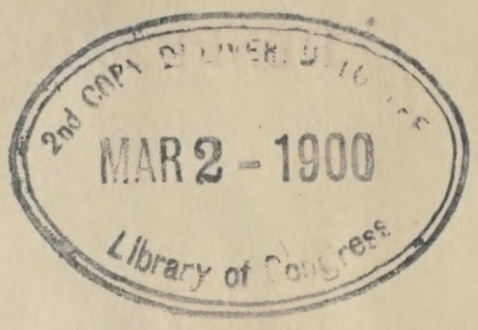

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THIS EDITION OF

BOHEMIAN LIFE

HAS BEEN COMPLETELY TRANSLATED

BY

GEORGE B. IVES

THE ETCHINGS ARE BY

CHARLES-LOUIS COURTRY

AND DRAWINGS BY

PIERRE-MARIE-ALFRED MONTADER

BOHEMIAN LIFE

PREFACE

The Bohemians who figure in the following pages have no connection with the Bohemians whose names the petty playwrights of the boulevards have made synonymous with pickpockets and assassins. Nor are they recruited from among the bear-leaders, sword-swallowers, dealers in watch-guards, professors of the you win at every throw, *denizens of the shallow waters of usury, and the thousand other vague and mysterious tradesmen whose principal business is to have none, and who are always ready to do everything except good.*

The Bohemians of whom this book treats are not a race born to-day; they have existed in all ages and everywhere, and can trace their descent from illustrious sources. In Grecian antiquity, to go back no farther in their genealogy, there existed a celebrated Bohemian who, living at haphazard from day to day, roamed through the flower-strewn fields of Ionia, eating the bread of charity, and at night hung up by the fireside of hospitality the melodious lyre that had sung of the Loves of Helen *and the* Fall of Troy. *Descending the ladder of the ages, modern Bohemia finds ancestors in all the artistic and literary epochs. In*

the Middle Ages it continues the Homeric tradition with the minstrels and improvisatores, *the children of gay and lightsome mind, all the sweet-voiced vagabonds of the Touranian fields; all the vagrant muses, who with the mendicant's wallet and the troubadour's harp on their backs, wandered, singing, through the meadows of the lovely region where Clémence Isaure's eglantine was destined to bloom.*

In the epoch which serves as a period of transition from the days of chivalry to the dawn of the Renaissance, Bohemia continues to haunt all the high-roads of the kingdom and begins to appear in the streets of Paris. Its herald is Master Pierre Gringoire, friend of the beggars and enemy of fasting; gaunt and starved as a man may well be whose life is simply one long Lent, he walks the city streets, with his nose in the air like a dog rising from the scent, sniffing the odor of the kitchens and cookshops; his eyes, instinct with gluttonous craving, make the hams that hang on hooks in the porkshop windows grow thin simply by looking at them, while he jingles—in his imagination, not in his pockets, alas!—the ten crowns that messieurs the échevins *have promised him as payment for the* very pious and very devout farce *he has composed for the theatre in the great hall of the Palais de Justice. Beside that pitiful, melancholy profile of Esmeralda's lover, the chronicles of Bohemia can evoke a companion of less ascetic and more frolicsome humor, Master François Villon, to-wit, the lover of* la belle qui fut haultmière. *Poet and vagabond* par excellence *was he! and his poetry, largely imaginative, doubtless because of the presentiments which the ancients attribute to their* vates, *was incessantly beset by a strange dwelling upon the gallows, whereon the said*

Villon was one day very near having his neck stretched with hemp for having attempted to inspect too closely the color of the king's coins. This same Villon, who had more than once outrun the sheriff's posse sent in pursuit of him, this uproarious guest of the brothels on Rue Pierre-Lescot, this hanger-on at the court of the Duke of Egypt, this Salvator Rosa of poetry, wrote elegiacs whose heart-breaking sentiment and sincere tone move the most pitiless, and cause them to forget the knave, the vagabond and the rake in presence of that muse wet with its own tears.

However, among all those whose little known works are familiar only to those people in whose eyes French literature began to be before "Malherbe arrived," François Villon has had the honor of being one of the most ruthlessly pillaged, even by the bright lights of the modern Parnassus. They have flung themselves on the poor man's carcass, and coined glory with his humble treasure. There are ballads written by the Bohemian rhapsodist on cold days in winter, at street corners, or in the gutter, amorous stanzas improvised in the hovel where la belle qui fut haultmière *removed her golden girdle for every comer, which to-day metamorphosed into fashionable madrigals redolent of musk and amber, figure in the armorial album of many an aristocratic Chloris.*

But the great epoch of the Renaissance opens. Michael Angelo climbs the scaffolding of the Sistine Chapel and gazes with a thoughtful air at the youthful Raphael ascending the steps of the Vatican, carrying under his arm the sketches of the Loggia. Benvenuto is meditating upon his Perseus, *Ghiberti is carving the doors of the Baptistery at the same time that Donatello is setting up his marble figures on the bridges of the Arno; and while the city of*

the Medicis is vying in the production of Chefs-d'œuvre *of art with the city of Leo X. and Julius II., Titian and Veronese are bringing honor to the city of the Doges; St. Mark's contests the palm with St. Peter's.*

This fever of genius which suddenly breaks out with epidemic violence in the Italian peninsula, spreads its glorious contagion throughout Europe. Art, the rival of God, stands on an equal footing with kings. Charles V. stoops to pick up Titian's pencil and François I. holds a reception in the printing-office where Étienne Dolet is, for aught we know, correcting the proofs of Pantagruel.

In the midst of this resurrection of the intelligence, Bohemia continues, as in the past, to seek a bone and a niche, as Balzac expresses it. Clément Marot, having become a frequenter of the antechambers of the Louvre, becomes, even before he has been a king's favorite, the favorite of the fair Diane, whose smile illumined three reigns. From the boudoir of Diane de Poitiers, the poet's unfaithful muse passes to Marguerite de Valois, a perilous favor for which Marot paid by imprisonment. Almost at the same period, another Bohemian, whose childhood had been caressed by the kisses of an epic muse on the strand of Sorrento—Tasso—entered the court of the Duke of Ferrara as Marot entered that of François I.; but, less fortunate than the lover of Diane and Marguerite, the author of Jerusalem *atoned for his audacious love for a daughter of the house of Este by the loss of his reason and his genius.*

The religious wars and political tempests that signalized the arrival of the Medicis in France did not stay the flight of art. At the moment that Jean Goujon, who had found the pagan chisel of Phidias, was struck down by a bullet on the scaffold of the Innocents, *Ronsard found the lyre*

of Pindar, and founded, with the assistance of his Pleiad, the great French lyric school. That school of the springtime *was succeeded by the reaction of Malherbe and his followers, who expelled from the language all the exotic charms that their predecessors had tried to naturalize upon Parnassus. It was a Bohemian, Mathurin Régnier, who defended one of the last boulevards of lyric poetry, attacked by the phalanx of rhetoricians and grammarians, who declared Rabelais a barbarian and Montaigne obscure. It was this same Mathurin Régnier the cynic, who, adding new knots to the satirical scourge of Horace, cried indignantly as he reflected upon the manners of his time:*

Honor is an old-fashioned saint, whom men no longer worship.

In the seventeenth century the muster-roll of Bohemia contains the names of some of the literary lights of the reigns of Louis XIII. and Louis XIV.; it has members among the wits of the Hôtel Rambouillet where it collaborates in the composition of the Guirlande de Julie; *it has the right of entry at the Palais Cardinal, where it collaborates in the tragedy of* Marianne *with the poet-minister, the Robespierre of the monarchy. It strews with madrigals the alcove of Marion de Lorme and pays court to Ninon under the trees on Place Royale; it breakfasts in the morning at the* Goinfres *tavern or at the* Épée Royale, *and sups at night at the Duc de Joyeuse's table; it fights duels under the lamps for the sonnet of Urania against the sonnet of Job. Bohemia makes love and war and even tries its hand at diplomacy; and, in its old age, weary of adventures, it makes a poetic version of the Old and New Testament, figures largely on all the lists of crown livings, and, well nourished upon fat prebends, takes its*

seat upon the bench of bishops or upon a chair at the Academy, founded by one of its number.

It was during the transition from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century that those two great geniuses appeared, whom their respective nations still oppose to each other in the struggles of their literary rivalry—Molière and Shakespeare; those illustrious Bohemians whose destinies present only too many points of resemblance.

The most eminent names in the literature of the eighteenth century also are to be found in the archives of Bohemia, which can lay claim among the illustrious men of that epoch, to Jean-Jacques Rousseau and D'Alembert, the foundling of the parvis of Notre-Dame, and, among the more obscure, to Malfilâtre and Gilbert; two over-estimated reputations; for the inspiration of the first was simply the dim reflection of the pale lyricism of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, and of the other, simply a combination of impotent pride with a hatred which had not even the excuse of initiative and sincerity, as it was only the paid instrument of the rancor and animosities of a party.

We have now concluded this summary sketch of Bohemia in the different periods of its existence, a prelude strewn with illustrious names which we have designedly placed in the forefront of this book to put the reader on his guard against any false assumption that he might otherwise make, upon espying the name Bohemians, which has long been given to classes of persons whom those whose manners and language we have tried to sketch, deem it a point of honor not to resemble.

To-day, as formerly, every man who enters upon an artistic career, without other means of subsistence than art itself, will be compelled to pass through the paths of

Bohemia. The majority of our contemporaries who exhibit the finest blazonry of art are Bohemians; and in their tranquil and prosperous renown, they often remember, and perhaps regret the time when, as they climbed the green hill of youth, they had, in the sunshine of their twenty years, no other fortune than courage, which is the virtue of the young, and hope, which is the treasure of the poor.

For the benefit of the anxious reader, of the timorous bourgeois, of all those who can never have too many dots to the i's *of a definition, we will repeat in the form of an axiom:*

"Bohemia is the stage of artistic life; it is the preface to the Academy, the Hôtel-Dieu or the Morgue."

We will add that Bohemia does not exist and is not possible, except in Paris.

Like every social stratum, Bohemia includes different varieties, diverse species which are themselves subdivided, and which it will be well to classify.

We will begin with unknown Bohemia, the most numerous subdivision. It is made up of the great family of poor artists, doomed to submit to the law of incognito, *because they do not know or cannot find an entering wedge of publicity to attest their existence in the world of art, and to prove, by what they already are, what they may be some day. They are the race of persistent dreamers, to whom art has become a faith, not a trade; enthusiastic men of strong convictions, with whom the mere sight of a* chef d'œuvre *is enough to bring on a fever, and whose loyal hearts beat high before whatever is beautiful, without asking the name of the master or the school. That portion of Bohemia finds its recruits among the young men of*

whom it is said that they are young men of promise, and among those who keep the promises they make, but who, from thoughtlessness, timidity or ignorance of practical life imagine that all is said when the work is finished, and wait for public admiration and wealth to enter their apartments by escalade and acts of burglary. They live, so to speak, on the edge of society, in isolation and indolence. Petrified in art, they take literally the symbolical language of the academic dithyramb concerning a halo about the brow of poets, and, being persuaded that they are emitting flames in the darkness, they wait for the public to come and seek them. We once knew of a small school composed of artists of this strange type, so strange that one can hardly believe in its existence; they called themselves disciples of art for art's sake. *According to those artless creatures, art for art's sake consisted in deifying one another, in refusing to assist chance, which did not even know their address, and in waiting for pedestals to come and place themselves under their feet.*

This is, as everyone will see, stoicism reduced to an absurdity. And so we declare once more, in order to be believed, that, in the heart of unknown Bohemia, such creatures do exist, whose misery arouses a feeling of compassion which your good sense soon compels you to banish; for if you calmly call their attention to the fact that we are living in the nineteenth century, that the hundred-sou piece is the Empress of mankind, and that boots do not fall all polished from the sky, they turn their backs on you and call you a bourgeois.

They are logical, however, in their insane heroism; they utter neither shrieks nor groans and passively submit to the harsh, obscure destiny which they create for them-

selves. They die, for the most part, of that disease to which science dares not give its real name, want. And yet, if they chose, many of them might escape that fatal catastrophe which puts an end to their lives at an age when life is usually just beginning. All that would be necessary would be to make a few concessions to the stern laws of necessity, that is to say, to learn how to make their natures twofold, to have two different beings in their bodies: the poet, always dreaming of the lofty peaks whereon the chorus of inspired voices sings; and the man, the artisan of his own life and able to knead his daily bread. But this dualism, which almost always exists in well-tempered natures, one of whose distinctive characteristics it is, is not found in most of the young men to whom we refer, who are made invulnerable to all the advice of good sense by pride, a false pride. And so they die young, sometimes leaving behind them a work which the world admires later, and which it would doubtless have applauded sooner, had it not been kept out of sight.

It is almost the same in the struggles of art as in war: all the glory won surrounds the names of the leaders; the army's reward consists in a few lines in the orders of the day. As for the private soldiers who are killed in the battle, they are buried where they fell, and a single epitaph suffices for twenty thousand dead.

So also the multitude, which always has its eyes fixed upon anybody who is rising, never lowers them to the underground regions where the obscure toilers are struggling; they live their lives unknown, and leave the world wrapped in a shroud of indifference, without even having had the consolation now and then of smiling upon a completed work.

There is another class of dwellers in unknown Bohemia; it consists of young people who have been deceived or have deceived themselves. They mistake a whim for a serious vocation, and, impelled by a homicidal mania, they die, some the victims of a never-ending paroxysm of pride, others the idolatrous worshippers of a chimera.

At this point we ask leave to make a short digression.

The highways of art, crowded and dangerous as they are, are becoming every day more crowded, notwithstanding the crowd and the dangers, so that Bohemia was never more thickly populated.

If we should look closely among all the different reasons that may have caused this increase, we might perhaps find this one.

Many young people have taken seriously, the loud talk on the subject of unfortunate artists and poets. The names of Gilbert, Malfilâtre, Chatterton and Moreau have been bandied about too much, too recklessly, and, above all, too uselessly. The graves of those luckless creatures have been taken as pulpits from which to preach the martyrdom of art and poetry.

> *O all too-barren earth, farewell,*
> *And human plagues, and frozen sun!*
> *I, like lone phantom doomed to dwell,*
> *Shall pass away, observed by none.*

Those despairing lines of Victor Escousse, suffocated by the pride which a factitious triumph had inspired in him, became for a considerable time the Marseillaise *of the volunteers of art, who were destined to inscribe their names on the martyrology of mediocrity.*

For, as all such depressing apotheoses, such laudatory

Requiems, *have all the attraction of the abyss for weak minds and for the vain and ambitious, many, feeling the influence of that attraction, have thought that fatality was half of genius; many have dreamed of the hospital bed on which Gilbert died, hoping that they might become poets, as he did half an hour before his death, and believing that that was a necessary halting-place on the road to glory.*

It would be impossible to reprobate too severely these shameful falsehoods, these deadly paradoxes, which turn aside from a career, in which they might have succeeded, so many men who come to a miserable end in a career where they are simply in the way of those to whom a genuine calling gives the right to enter upon it.

This dangerous preaching, this useless posthumous laudation are what have created the absurd race of the misunderstood, the tear-stained poets whose muse always has red eyes and dishevelled hair, and all the mediocrities of impotence, who, confined behind the bars of non-publication, call the muse a cruel step-mother, and art a hangman.

All minds of real power have their word to say and say it sooner or later. Genius and talent are not accidents unprovided for in the ordering of the human race; they have a reason for being, and on that very account could not remain always in obscurity; for, if the multitude does not go out to meet them, they know enough to go to meet the multitude. Genius is the sun: the whole world sees it. Talent is the diamond which may remain for a long while out of sight in the darkness, but which is always discovered by someone. It is wrong therefore to be moved to pity by the lamentations and worn out methods of that class of worthless intruders who have forced their way into art, in spite of art itself, and who form a section of

Bohemia in which indolence, debauchery and sycophancy make up the foundation of manners.

AXIOM

"Unknown Bohemia is not a highway, it is a cul-de-sac."

In very truth that sort of life is something that leads to nothing. It is brutish destitution, amid which the intellect goes out like a lamp in a vacuum; in which the heart turns to stone in savage misanthropy, and in which the best natures become the worst. If one has the misfortune to remain there too long and to penetrate too far into that blind-alley he either cannot find his way out or else he escapes through a dangerous breach in the wall, only to fall into an adjacent Bohemia, whose manners belong to another sphere than that of literary physiology.

We will mention one other singular variety of Bohemians, who may be called amateurs. They are not the least interesting. They find life in Bohemia an existence full of charm: not to dine every day, to sleep in the open air under the tears of rainy nights, and to dress in nankeen in the month of December seem to them the paradise of earthly felicity, and to enter therein they abandon, one the family hearth, another the studies that lead to a certain result. They turn their backs abruptly on an honorable future in order to run the risks of a hand-to-mouth existence. But as the more robust do not take kindly to a diet that would make Hercules consumptive, they soon abandon the game, ride back at full speed to the paternal roast beef, to marry their second cousins and set up as notaries in a town of twenty or thirty thousand souls; and in the evening, sitting in the chimney corner, they have

the satisfaction of describing their poverty when they were artists, *with all the gusto of a traveller describing a tiger hunt. Others persist and consider their self-esteem at stake; but when they have once exhausted the credit that young men of family always command, they are more wretched than the genuine Bohemians, who, although they never have had any other resources, have at least those which intelligence affords. We once knew one of these amateur Bohemians, who, after he had remained three years in Bohemia and had fallen out with his family, died one fine morning, and was taken to the common grave in the pauper's cart; he had ten thousand francs a year!*

It is needless to say that Bohemians of that stripe have nothing in common with art, and that they are the most obscure among the least known denizens of unknown Bohemia.

We come now to the true Bohemia; to that which is in part the subject of this book. They who compose it are in very truth the called *of art and have an opportunity to be also its* chosen. *This Bohemia, like the others, bristles with dangers; on each side is a deep abyss: on one side want, on the other doubt. But between the two there is at all events a road leading to a goal which the Bohemians can touch with their glance, pending the time when they can touch it with their hands.*

This is official Bohemia; so-called because they who belong there have publicly declared their existence, because they have given evidence of their presence in life otherwise than by the entry of their names on the civic roll; and lastly because, to use an expression of their own, their names are on the poster, because they are known on the literary and artistic market-place, because their produc-

tions, which bear their signatures, find a sale there, although at moderate prices.

To reach their goal, which is perfectly well-defined, all roads are good, and the Bohemians know how to make the most of the slightest incidents of the journey. Rain or dust, sunshine or shadow, nothing stays these bold adventurers, whose vices are lined with a virtue. Their minds are kept always on the alert by their ambition, which sounds the charge in front of them and urges them on to the assault; they are constantly at odds with necessity, and their invention, which always marches with matches lighted, removes the obstacle almost before it impedes them. Their existence from day to day is a work of genius, a daily problem which they always succeed in solving with the aid of some daring mathematics. Such fellows would induce Harpagon to lend them money and would find truffles on Medusa's raft. At need they can practise abstinence with all the firmness of an anchorite; but, let a little money fall into their hands and you see them plunge at once into the most ruinous courses, making love to the fairest and youngest, drinking the best and the oldest, and never finding enough windows to throw their money through. And then, when their last crown is dead and buried, they begin again to dine at the table d'hôte of chance where covers are always laid for them, and, preceded by a whole pack of stratagems, poaching in all the lines of industry which have any connection with art, they hunt from morning to night that ferocious beast called a five-franc piece.

The Bohemians know everything and go everywhere, according as their boots are polished or down at the heel. You meet them one day with their elbows on the mantel-

piece of a fashionable salon, and the next day sitting at table under the arbor of a low dance hall. They could not take ten steps on the boulevard without meeting a friend, or thirty steps anywhere without meeting a creditor.

Bohemia speaks a language of its own, borrowed from the familiar conversation of the studio, the jargon of the wings and the discussions in editorial offices. All the eclecticisms of style meet by appointment in that extraordinary idiom, where incomprehensible bombast rubs elbows with idle nonsense, where the homeliness of popular slang is conjoined with stilted periods from the same mould in which Cyrano cast the tirades put into the mouths of the Matamoras ; *where paradox, that spoiled child of modern literature, treats common sense as Cassandra is treated in the pantomimes ; where irony has all the violence of the most powerful acids and the skill of those marksmen who hit a fly with their eyes bandaged ; slang which has a meaning, although it is unintelligible to all those who have not the key to it, and whose audacity surpasses that of the most unbridled tongues. The vocabulary of Bohemia is the hell of rhetoric and the paradise of neologism.*

Such, briefly summarized, is the life in Bohemia, little known to the Puritans of society, decried by the Puritans of art, abused by all the whining and envious mediocrities who have not enough lies and calumnies and clamor at their command to stifle the voices and the names of those who attain renown by this road, harnessing audacity to their talent.

A life of patience and courage, in which one can not support the combat unless he be clad in a cuirass of indifference strong enough to resist the assaults of fools and envious detractors ; in which one cannot for a single mo-

ment, unless he wishes to stumble by the way, lay aside the self-pride which serves as a staff to lean upon; a fascinating, yet terrible life, which has its victors and its martyrs, and upon which no one should enter unless he has first resigned himself to submit to the pitiless law of væ victis.

H. M.

BOHEMIAN LIFE

L'ANCRE D'OR
PORT DE MARSEILLE
HIPPODROME
MESTIBLES
FETE
SAINT GERMAIN
EN LAYE
OPÉRA
CHEMIN DE FER
A. Montader

Chapter XVII

A week after that festival, Marcel learned in what gallery his picture had taken its place. As he was passing through Faubourg Saint-Honoré, he stopped in the centre of a group of people who seemed to be watching with interest the operation of placing a sign over a shop. That sign was nothing else than Marcel's picture, which Medicis had sold to a dealer in food products.

Chapter XVI

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Montader inv. Courtry sc.

BOHEMIAN LIFE

I

HOW THE BOHEMIAN CLUB WAS ORGANIZED

This is the way in which Chance, which sceptics call the good Lord's man of business, brought together one day the individuals whose paternal association was later to become the club made up from that portion of Bohemia with which the author of this book has tried to make the public acquainted.

One morning—it was the 8th of April—Alexandre Schaunard, who cultivated the two liberal arts of painting and music, was awakened abruptly by the ditty warbled by a rooster in the neighborhood, which acted as his clock.

"*Sacrebleu!*" cried Schaunard, "my feathered time-piece is too fast, it isn't possible that it's to-day already."

As he spoke he jumped quickly out of a piece of furniture of his own untiring invention, which, after playing

the part of a bed during the night—it does not follow that it did not play it very badly—filled, during the day, the *rôle* of all the other pieces of furniture, which were absent as a result of the very severe cold weather for which the preceding winter had been remarkable: a sort of Jack-at-all-trades piece of furniture, as you see.

To protect himself from the biting blast of the morning north wind, Schaunard hastily donned a pink satin skirt with gold spangles, which did duty as a dressing-gown. That relic had been accidentally left behind in the artist's apartment on the night of a *bal masqué* by a *Folly*, who had committed the folly of allowing herself to be taken in by the deceitful promises of Schaunard, who, disguised as the Marquis de Mondor, seductively jingled in his pockets a dozen crowns, fictitious coins, cut with a punch from a metal plate and borrowed from the properties of a theatre.

When he was arrayed in his fireside costume, the artist went to open his window and its shutter. A sunbeam at once burst into the room, like an arrow of light, and made him blink, his eyes being still veiled by the haze of sleep; at the same moment a clock in the vicinity struck five.

"It is Aurora herself," muttered Schaunard; "it is surprising. But," he added, consulting a calendar that hung on the wall, "there's a mistake none the less. The calculations of science declare that at this time of the year the sun should not rise until half-past five: it is only

five and there he is on his legs already. Reprehensible zeal! the orb is a transgressor and I propose to enter a complaint at the Bureau of Longitude. However," he continued, "I must begin to look about me a bit; this is certainly the day after yesterday, and, as yesterday was the 7th, this must be the 8th of April, unless Saturn is moving backward, and, if I am to believe what this paper has to say," said Schaunard, reading for the second time a notice to quit affixed to the wall, "to-day, at noon precisely, I am to have vacated these premises and to have counted into the hands of Monsieur Bernard, my landlord, the sum of seventy-five francs for three quarters' rent, which sum he demands in very bad handwriting. I had hoped, as always, that Chance would assume the burden of adjusting this matter, but it would seem that it has not had time. However, I still have six hours before me, and by making a good use of them, perhaps— Come, come, let's be off," added Schaunard.

He was preparing to put on a frock coat, the material of which, originally endowed with a long nap, had become quite bald, when suddenly, as if he had been bitten by a tarantula, he began to execute a choregraphic measure of his own composition, which had often won for him the honor of attention from the police at public balls.

"Well! well!" he cried, "it's a strange thing how the morning air puts ideas into your head; it seems to me that I am on the scent of the air I want. Let's see—"

And Schaunard, half naked, took his seat at the piano, and, having aroused the sleeping instrument by a tempestuous medley of chords, he began, soliloquizing the while, to pursue on the keyboard the melodic phrase he had been seeking so long.

"*Do, sol, mi, do, la, si, do, re,* boum, boum. *Fa, re, mi, re.* Ah! that *re* is as false as Judas," he exclaimed, pounding violently on the note of doubtful tone. "Let's try the minor. It must adroitly express the grief of a young woman pulling the leaves off a marguerite on the shores of a blue lake. The idea's not particularly novel. However, as it's the fashion, and as you couldn't find a publisher who would dare publish a song in which there was no blue lake, one must conform to it. *Do, sol, mi, do, la, si, do, re;* I don't think that's bad at all, it conveys the idea of a daisy clearly enough, especially to those who are strong in botany. *La, si, do, re,*—you villain of a *re!* Now, to convey the idea of the blue lake, we must have something moist, sky-blue, with a touch of moonlight—for the moon comes in too; good! we're coming on—but we mustn't forget the swan. *Fa, mi, la, sol,*" he continued, running his fingers over the clear notes of the upper octave. "Now there's the young girl's farewell, when she makes up her mind to throw herself into the blue lake, to join her lover who is buried under the snow. The dénouement is not very clear, but it is interesting. We must have something tender and melancholy; it's coming, it's coming, there

are a dozen measures that weep like Madeleines; it's enough to break your heart!—Brr! brr!" exclaimed Schaunard, shivering in his star-spangled skirt, "if it would only break up some wood! There's a beam in my alcove that annoys me exceedingly when I have company—to dinner; I might make a little fire with *la, la, re, mi,*—for I feel that my inspiration is impeded by a cold in the head. Bah! so much the worse! let's go on drowning my young woman."

And while his fingers ran up and down the throbbing keyboard, Schaunard, with flashing eyes and ear stretched, pursued his melody, which, like an intangible sylph, fluttered about amid the resonant haze with which the vibrations of the instrument seemed to fill the room.

"Now," said Schaunard, "let us see how my music fits my poet's words."

And he hummed in an unpleasant voice this fragment of verse, employed especially in opera comique and popular ditties:

Toward the star-strewn sky,
Glanced the maiden fair
As she threw her mantle by,
Glanced with sombre air,
And in the *azure* flood
Of the *silver*-billowed lake——
* * * * *

"What! what!" exclaimed Schaunard in an outburst of righteous indignation, "'the azure flood of the silver-billowed lake!'—I hadn't noticed that—it's too romantic

altogether, the poet's an idiot, he never saw silver or a lake either. His ballad is stupid, too; the metre bothered me in writing the music; hereafter I'll compose my own poems, and not later than this very minute; as I feel in the mood, I'll just make a rough draft of some lines to fit my tune."

Schaunard took his head in his hands and assumed the solemn attitude of a mortal who corresponds with the Muses.

After a few moments of that sanctified concubinage, he brought into the world one of those misshapen creations which the writers of libretti rightly call *monsters*, and which they improvise on the spur of the moment to serve as a temporary canvas for the inspiration of the composer to work upon.

But Schaunard's monster had commonsense; it expressed clearly the disquietude aroused in his mind by the heartless arrival of that date—the 8th of April!

Here are his verses:

Eight and eight make sixteen, so
Jot down six and carry one.
Oh! what comfort I should know
Could I only find some one
Poor and honest, heart full large,
Who would francs eight hundred lend,
That I might my debts discharge
When I find the time to spend.

REFRAIN.

Then when from highest dial *sounds*
A quarter of mid-day,

My rent, like honest man and *proud*,
My rent, like honest man and *proud*,
My rent, like honest man and *proud*,
To old Bernard I'll pay.

"The devil," said Schaunard, reading over his composition, "*sounds* and *proud*,—there's a rhyme that's no millionaire, but I haven't time to enrich it. Now let's see how the notes mate with the syllables."

In the horrible, nasal voice that was peculiar to him, he began anew to execute his ballad. Content, doubtless, with the result attained, Schaunard congratulated himself with an exultant grimace which bestrode his nose like a circumflex accent whenever he was satisfied with himself. But his proud felicity was not of long duration.

The clock in the neighborhood struck eleven; each stroke of the hammer entered the room and died away in mocking tones that seemed to say to the unhappy Schaunard: "Are you ready?"

The artist leaped from his chair.

"Time runs like a stag," he said, "I have only three-quarters of an hour left to find my seventy-five francs and my new lodging. I shall never succeed in doing it, it comes too near the domain of magic. Well, I give myself five minutes to think up something;" and, burying his head between his knees, he descended into the abyss of reflection.

The five minutes passed and Schaunard raised his head without having found anything that resembled seventy-five francs.

"Decidedly there's only one way for me to get out of here, and that is to go away naturally; it's a fine day, my friend Chance may be taking a walk in the sun. He must take me in until I have found a way to settle with Monsieur Bernard."

Schaunard, having stuffed the cavernous pockets of his frock coat with all the objects they would hold, tied up a few linen effects in a silk handkerchief, and left the room, not without saying a few farewell words to his domicile.

As he was crossing the courtyard, the concierge, who seemed to be on the watch for him, suddenly stopped him.

"Ho! Monsieur Schaunard," he cried, blocking the artist's path, "don't you remember? to-day's the 8th."

"Eight and eight make sixteen, so
Jot down six and carry one,"

hummed Schaunard; "I can't think of anything but that."

"You're a little late about moving," said the concierge; "it's half-past eleven, and the new tenant who's hired your room may arrive any minute. You must hurry!"

"Let me pass then," replied Schaunard, "I am going to look for a furniture wagon."

"No doubt, but there is a little formality to be attended to before you move. I have orders not to let you

take away a hair until you've paid the rent for the last three quarters. You're ready, I suppose?"

"*Parbleu!* yes," said Schaunard, stepping forward.

"Then if you'll just come into my lodge, I'll give you a receipt."

"I'll get it when I come back."

"But why not now?" persisted the concierge.

"I am going to the bank. I have no change."

"Oho!" rejoined the other uneasily, "you are going to get the change, are you? Then, just to oblige you, I'll take care of that little bundle you have under your arm; it may be in your way."

"Monsieur le concierge," said Schaunard with great dignity, "can it be that you do not trust me? Do you think I am carrying my furniture in a pocket-handkerchief?"

"Excuse me, monsieur," replied the concierge, lowering his tone a little, "but those are my orders. Monsieur Bernard told me expressly not to let you take away a hair until you had paid."

"Well, look here," said Schaunard, opening his bundle, "these aren't hairs, but shirts which I am taking to the laundress who lives by the bank, not twenty steps from here."

"That's a different matter," said the concierge, after examining the contents of the bundle. "Without impertinence, Monsieur Schaunard, might I ask you for your new address?"

"I live on Rue de Rivoli," replied the artist coldly; and, having once put his foot in the street, he gained an offing as quickly as possible.

"Rue de Rivoli," muttered the concierge, rubbing his nose, "it's very strange that anyone would let him rooms on Rue de Rivoli and not even come here to ask about him,—that's very strange. However, he won't carry his furniture away without paying. If only the other tenant won't move in just as Monsieur Schaunard moves out! That would make a fine mess on my stairway. Well, upon my word," he exclaimed, putting his head out of the window, "here's my new tenant now."

Followed by a porter, who did not seem overburdened by his load, a young man in a Louis XIII. hat was just passing through the vestibule.

"Monsieur," he said to the concierge, who had gone to meet him, "is my room empty?"

"Not yet, monsieur, but it soon will be. The gentleman who occupies it has gone to get a wagon to move his goods. Meanwhile, monsieur might have his furniture left in the courtyard."

"I am afraid it will rain," replied the young man, calmly chewing a bunch of violets which he held between his teeth; "my furniture might be ruined. Porter," he added, addressing the man who remained behind him, carrying a sack laden with articles whose nature the concierge was unable to make out, "put that under the ves-

tibule and return to my former lodging to get what valuable pieces of furniture and objects of art are left there."

The porter stood up against the wall several frames six or seven feet high, whose leaves, which were folded together, seemed capable of being unfolded to a great length.

"See!" said the young man, partly opening one of the leaves and pointing to a rent in the canvas, "here's a misfortune, you have scarred my Venetian mirror; try to be more careful on your second trip and take special care of my library."

"What does he mean by his Venetian mirror?" mumbled the concierge, walking uneasily about the frames leaning against the wall, "I don't see any mirror; it's a joke, I suppose, for I can't see anything but a screen; however, we'll see what he brings on the second trip."

"Isn't your tenant going to let me have the room soon? It's half-past twelve and I would like to move in," said the young man.

"I don't think he'll be long now," replied the concierge; "at all events, there's no harm done yet, as your furniture hasn't arrived," he added, dwelling on the last words.

The young man was about to reply when a dragoon on orderly duty entered the courtyard.

"Monsieur Bernard?" he asked, taking a letter from a great leathern portfolio that was strapped to his side.

"He is here," the concierge replied.

"Here's a letter for him," said the dragoon, handing the concierge a list of despatches, which he took into his lodge to sign.

"Excuse me for leaving you alone," he said to the young man, who was walking impatiently up and down the courtyard; "but this is a letter from the ministry for Monsieur Bernard, my landlord, and I must go and give it to him."

When the concierge entered his room, Monsieur Bernard was in the act of shaving.

"What do you want, Durand?"

"Monsieur," replied the concierge, removing his cap, "an orderly just brought this for you; it's from the ministry."

And he handed Monsieur Bernard the letter, whose envelope bore the seal of the department of war.

"O *Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed Monsieur Bernard, so excited that he nearly made a gash with his razor, "from the Ministry of War! I am sure that it's my appointment to the rank of chevalier in the Legion of Honor, which I have solicited so long; at last justice is done me for my firm attitude. Here, Durand," he added, feeling in his waistcoat pocket, "here's a hundred sous to drink my health. No, I haven't my purse with me, but I'll give you the money in a moment; wait."

The concierge was so moved by this overwhelming

paroxysm of generosity to which his employer had not accustomed him, that he replaced his cap on his head.

But Monsieur Bernard, who at any other time would have sternly rebuked that infraction of the laws of the social hierarchy, did not seem to notice it. He put on his spectacles, broke the seal with the respectful emotion of a vizier who receives a firman from the Sultan, and began to read the enclosure. At the first line, a horrible grimace furrowed crimson folds in the fat of his monkish cheeks, and his little eyes emitted sparks which almost set fire to the hair of his bushy wig.

Finally all his features were so transformed that you would have said that his face had felt the shock of an earthquake.

The contents of the missive which was written upon paper with the heading of the Ministry of War and brought by a dragoon at full speed, and for which Monsieur Durand had given the government a receipt, were as follows :

"Monsieur and Landlord,

"Policy, which, if mythology is to be believed, is the great grandmother of good manners, compels me to inform you that I find myself in the cruel position of being unable to conform to the custom people have of paying their rent, especially when they owe it. Until this morning I had cherished the fond hope that I should be able to celebrate this lovely day by liquidating

the three quarters' rent due. Chimera, delusion, vain hope! While I lay sleeping upon the pillow of security, bad luck—in Greek *αναγκη*—scattered my hopes. The receipts upon which I relied—Great God! how bad business is!—did not materialize, and out of the considerable sums I expected to receive, I have as yet received only three francs, which were lent to me, and those I do not offer you. Better days will dawn for our dear France and for me, doubt it not, monsieur. As soon as they have arrived, I will take wings to fly and inform you of the fact, and to remove from your house the valuable articles which I have left there and which I place under your protection and that of the law, which forbids your disposing of them within a year, in case you should be tempted to do so in order to recover the sums with which you are credited on the ledger of my honor. I commend my piano to your special care, and the large frame in which are sixty locks of hair whose different colors cover the whole gamut of capillary shades, and which have been cut from the brow of the Graces by the scalpel of Love.

"You may therefore, monsieur and landlord, dispose of the roof beneath which I have dwelt. I hereby grant you my permission to do so, sealed with my seal.

"ALEXANDRE SCHAUNARD."

When he had finished this epistle, which the artist had written on the desk of one of his friends employed

at the Ministry of War, Monsieur Bernard indignantly crumpled it in his hands; and, as his eyes fell upon Père Durand, who was awaiting the promised gratuity, he asked him brutally what he was doing there.

"I am waiting, monsieur."

"Waiting for what?"

"Why, for the money monsieur generously—on account of the good news!" stammered the concierge.

"Leave the room! What, knave! you remain in my presence with your hat on!"

"But monsieur—"

"Off with you, no answer—or rather, wait for me. We'll go up to that scoundrelly artist's room, he has left without paying me."

"What," said the concierge, "Monsieur Schaunard?"

"Yes," continued the landlord, whose rage increased like Nicollet's. "And if he's taken away the smallest thing, I discharge you, do you hear? I discha-a-a-arge you."

"Why, it's impossible," murmured the poor concierge. "Monsieur Schaunard hasn't moved; he went out to get the money to pay monsieur and to order a wagon to move his furniture."

"Move his furniture!" exclaimed Monsieur Bernard; "let's hurry, I am sure he's moving it now; he spread a trap for you to get you away from your lodge and play his trick, idiot that you are."

"Ah! *Mon Dieu!* idiot that I am, indeed," cried

Père Durand, trembling from head to foot before the Olympian wrath of his superior, who was dragging him to the stairway.

As they reached the courtyard, the concierge was apostrophized by the young man in the white hat.

"Look you, concierge," he cried, "am I not to be put in possession of my domicile soon? is this the 8th of April? isn't this the house in which I hired a room, and did I not pay you earnest money, yes or no?"

"Your pardon, monsieur, your pardon," said the landlord. "I am at your service. Durand," he added, turning to the concierge, "I will answer monsieur's questions myself. Go upstairs; that villain Schaunard has come back to pack up his goods, I haven't a doubt; if you catch him there, lock him in and come down to fetch the police."

Père Durand disappeared in the hall.

"Your pardon, monsieur," said the landlord, bowing to the young man, with whom he was now left alone, "to whom have I the honor of speaking?"

"I am your new tenant, monsieur; I hired a room on the sixth floor in this house, and I am beginning to lose my patience because the room is not vacant yet."

"I am in despair, monsieur," said Monsieur Bernard; "a difficulty has arisen between myself and one of my tenants, the one whose room you are to take."

"Monsieur, monsieur!" cried Père Durand from a window on the top floor, "Monsieur Schaunard is not

here—but his room is—what a fool I am! I mean that he hasn't taken anything, not a hair, monsieur."

"Very good, come down," Monsieur Bernard replied.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he continued, addressing the young man, "have a little patience, I beg. My concierge will remove to the cellar the articles with which my insolvent tenant's room is furnished, and you can take possession in half an hour; besides, your furniture hasn't arrived yet."

"I beg your pardon, monsieur," the young man calmly replied.

Monsieur Bernard looked about and saw naught but the great screens which had already disturbed his concierge.

"Why! excuse me," he murmured, "but I see nothing."

"Look," replied the young man, unfolding the leaves and presenting to the gaze of the bewildered landlord a magnificent palace interior with pillars of jasper, bas-reliefs and pictures by the great masters.

"But your furniture?" queried Monsieur Bernard.

"Here it is," replied the young man, pointing to the sumptuous furniture painted on the canvas *palace*, which he had purchased at the Hôtel Bullion, where it was offered for sale as part of the scenery of a society theatre.

"Monsieur," rejoined the landlord, "I prefer to believe that you have some more serious furniture than that."

"What, pure Boule!"

"You understand that I must have security for my rent."

"The devil! isn't a palace sufficient security for the rent of an attic?"

"No, monsieur, I want furniture, real mahogany furniture!"

"Alas! neither gold nor mahogany can make us happy, some ancient writer has said, monsieur. And then, I can't endure mahogany, it's too common, everybody has it."

"But of course, monsieur, you have some furniture of some sort?"

"No, it takes up too much room in one's apartments, as soon as you have chairs, you don't know where to sit down."

"But you certainly have a bed? On what do you take your repose?"

"I repose on Providence, monsieur!"

"One more question," said Monsieur Bernard, "your profession, if you please?"

At that very moment the young man's porter returned from his second trip and entered the courtyard. Among the objects that he carried in his straps was an easel.

"Ah! monsieur," cried Père Durand in dismay, calling the landlord's attention to the easel. "He's a painter!"

"An artist, I was sure of it!" exclaimed Monsieur Bernard, and the hair of his wig stood on end with

terror; "a painter!!! Why, didn't you make any inquiries about monsieur?" he continued, addressing the concierge, "Didn't you know what he did?"

"*Bless me!*" the poor man replied, "he gave me five francs in advance; could I suspect—"

"When will you have finished?" interposed the young man.

"Monsieur," rejoined Monsieur Bernard, straightening his spectacles on his nose, "as you have no furniture, you cannot move in. The law authorizes the landlord to refuse a tenant who brings no security."

"And what about my word, pray?" said the artist with dignity.

"That's not worth as much as furniture—you can look for a lodging elsewhere. Durand will return what you have paid."

"*Hein!*" exclaimed the wondering concierge; "I put it in the strong box."

"But, monsieur," said the young man, "I can't find another lodging on the minute. At least, give me hospitality for a day."

"Go and take a room at the hotel," replied Monsieur Bernard. "By the way," he added hastily, as if upon sudden reflection, "if you like, I will let you the room you were to occupy, furnished; my insolvent tenant's furniture is there. But you know that the rent is always paid in advance for that sort of tenancy."

"It would be well to know what you propose to ask

for this kennel?" said the artist, forced to accept the suggestion.

"Why, it's a very nice room; the rent will be twenty-five francs a month under the circumstances. You must pay in advance."

"You have said that already; the phrase doesn't deserve the honor of an encore," said the young man, fumbling in his pockets. "Have you change for five hundred francs?"

"What?" demanded the thunderstruck landlord, "you say?"

"The half of a thousand, then! Didn't you ever see such a thing?" added the artist, waving the note before the eyes of the landlord and the concierge, who seemed to lose their equilibrium at the sight.

"I will go and get the change," replied Monsieur Bernard respectfully, "there will be only twenty francs to come out, as Durand will return the earnest money."

"I will let him keep it," said the artist, "on condition that he comes every morning to tell me the day of the week and date of the month, the quarter of the moon, what kind of weather it is and the form of government we live under."

"O monsieur!" cried Père Durand, describing a curve of ninety degrees.

"It's all right, my good man, you shall be my almanac. Meanwhile, go and help my porter to move in my things."

"Monsieur," said the landlord, "I will send you your receipt."

That same evening Monsieur Bernard's new tenant, the painter Marcel, was installed in the late apartment of the fugitive Schaunard, now transformed into a palace.

Meanwhile the said Schaunard was doing what is called in Paris sounding the recall for money.

Schaunard had raised borrowing to the level of an art. Foreseeing an emergency in which he might have to *oppress* foreigners, he had learned how to borrow five francs in all the languages of the earth. He had made an exhaustive study of the repertory of stratagems which the precious metal employs to elude those who are in pursuit of it; and he was more familiar than a pilot is with the hours of high and low tide, with the periods when the *waters* were low or high, that is to say, when his friends and acquaintances were in the habit of receiving money. So there were houses where, when they saw him appear, they did not say: "Here's Monsieur Schaunard," but: "This is the first of the month, or the fifteenth of the month." To facilitate and, at the same time, equalize this species of tithe which he collected, when necessity forced him to do it, from those who had the means of paying it, Schaunard had drawn up an alphabetical list of all his friends and acquaintances, arranged by quarters and arrondissements. Opposite each name was entered the maximum sum he could borrow from that person in view of the amount of his in-

come, the times when he was in funds, his hours for meals and his usual bill of fare. In addition to that list, Schaunard also kept a little set of books, in perfect order, in which he kept an account of the sums lent to him, to the smallest fractions, for he did not intend to involve himself beyond a certain figure which was still at the end of the pen of a Norman uncle, whose heir he was. As soon as he owed twenty francs to one person, Schaunard stopped borrowing from him and paid him to the last sou, although in order to do so, he had to borrow from others to whom he owed less. In that way he always had a certain amount of credit on the market, which he called his floating debt; and as everyone knew that he was in the habit of paying up as soon as his resources enabled him to do it, they willingly accommodated him when they could.

Now, since eleven o'clock in the morning, when he had started out to try to collect the seventy-five francs he needed, he had as yet collected only a small crown—three francs—due to the collaboration of the letters M. V. and R. on his famous list; all the rest of the alphabet, having rent to pay like himself, dismissed his petition.

At six o'clock a ferocious appetite rang the dinner-bell in his stomach; he was then at the Barrière du Maine, where the letter U. lived. Schaunard called upon the letter U., where a napkin was always at his service when there were napkins there.

Chapter I

"But your furniture?" queried Monsieur Bernard.

"Here it is," replied the young man, pointing to the sumptuous furniture painted on the canvas palace, *which he had purchased at the Hôtel Bullion, where it was offered for sale as part of the scenery of a society theatre.*

Chapter I

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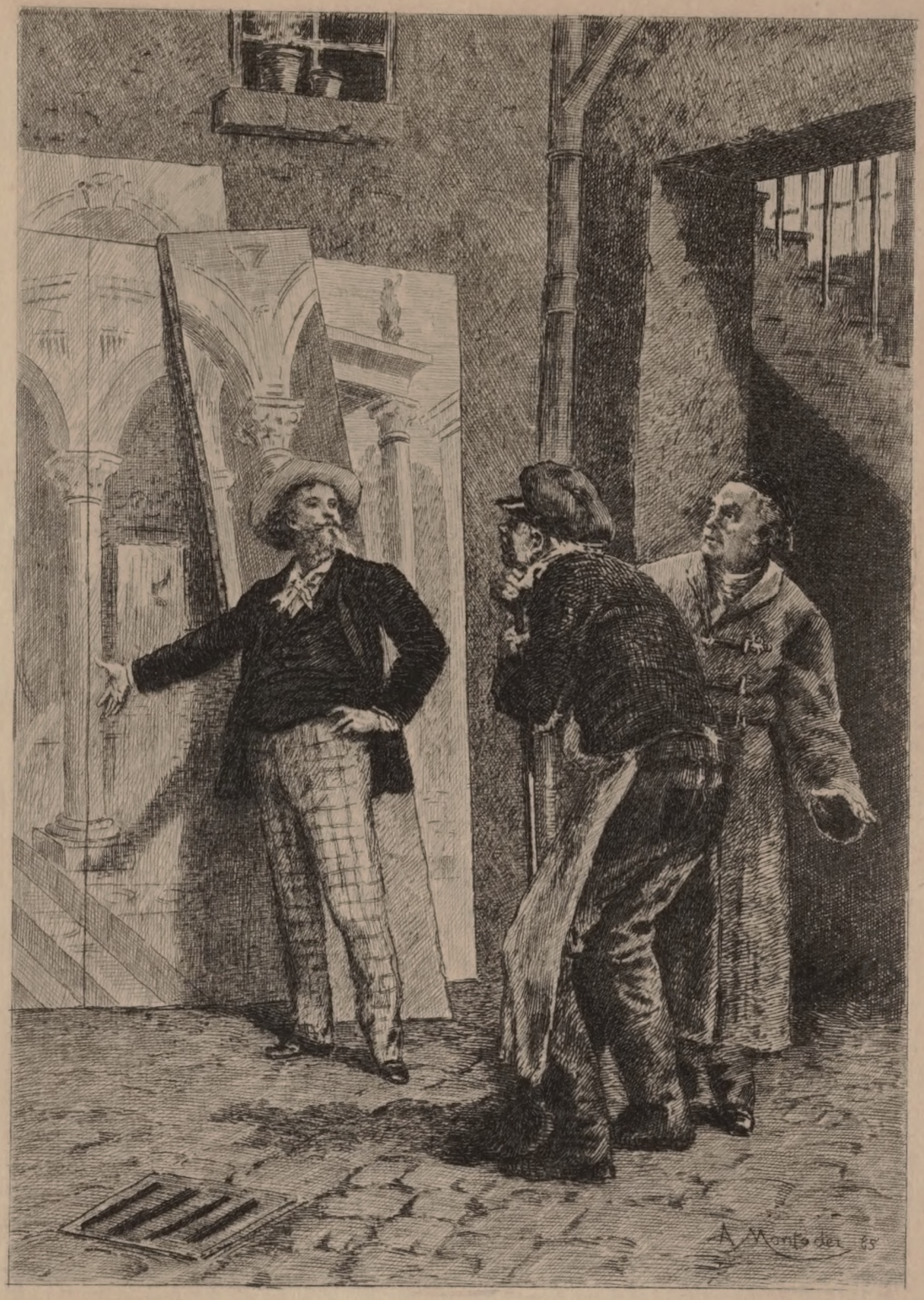

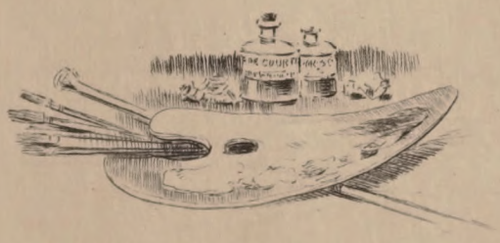

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"Where are you going, monsieur?" asked the concierge, stopping him as he passed.

"To Monsieur U——'s," the artist replied.

"He's not in."

"And Madame?"

"She's not in, either; they told me to tell one of their friends who was to call on them this evening, that they were dining out; if you are the gentleman they expected, here's the address they left for you," and he handed Schaunard a bit of paper on which U—— had written:

"We have gone to dine with Schaunard, number — Rue ——; come and join us there."

"Very good," said he, taking his leave, "when chance takes a hand, it plays some curious tricks."

Schaunard remembered just then that he was within a few steps of a little tavern where he had obtained a meal two or three times at a low figure, so he bent his steps toward the establishment in question, which is situated on Chaussée du Maine, and is known in Lower Bohemia by the name of *La Mère Cadet.* It is an eating-house whose ordinary clientage consists of carriers on the Orléans road, songstresses from Montparnasse and *jeunes premiers* from Bobino. In the fine season the drudges from various studios near the Luxembourg, unknown men of letters and scribblers for mysterious newspapers, come in chorus to dine at *La Mère Cadet,* which is famous for its rabbit stews, its

genuine sauerkraut and a little white wine that smells of flint.

Schaunard took a seat in one of the arbors; that is the name given at *La Mère Cadet* to the sparse foliage of two or three stunted trees, whose sickly verdure forms the ceiling.

"Faith, never mind," said Schaunard to himself, "I propose to have a good square meal and enjoy a secluded Balthasar's feast."

And without more ado he ordered a soup, half a portion of sauerkraut and two half-portions of rabbit-stew. He had noticed that by dividing the portions you get at least a fourth more.

That bountiful order attracted the attention of a young woman dressed in white, with orange blossoms in her hair and dancing shoes on her feet; a veil of sham imitation lace fell over her shoulders, which ought to have remained hidden. She was a singer from the Théâtre Montparnasse, whose wings opened into the kitchen of *La Mère Cadet*, so to speak. She had come to take a bite during an entr'acte of *Lucia*, and was at that moment finishing with a small cup of coffee, a dinner consisting exclusively of an artichoke with oil and vinegar.

"Two stews! the deuce!" she said in an undertone to the girl who acted as waiter; "there's a young man who takes good care of himself. How much do I owe, Adèle?"

"Four for the artichoke, four for the coffee, and a sou's worth of bread. That makes nine sous."

"Here you are," said the cantatrice, and she went out humming:

"This love that God gives me!"

"Hallo, she gives the *la*," observed a mysterious personage who was sitting at the same table with Schaunard, half-hidden behind a rampart of old books.

"Gives it?" said Schaunard; "I should say that she keeps it, for my part. She doesn't know what she's doing," he added, pointing to the plate from which *Lucia de Lammermoor* had consumed her artichoke, "to pickle her upper register in vinegar!"

"It is a powerful acid, it is true," rejoined the person who had already spoken. "The city of Orléans produces a vinegar which justly enjoys a great reputation."

Schaunard closely scrutinized the face of the individual who cast hooks thus into the conversation. The steadfast gaze of his great blue eyes, which seemed always to be looking for something, gave to his countenance the expression of beatific placidity which you observe in seminarists. His face was of the tint of old ivory, except the cheeks, which were spread with a layer of the color of powdered brick. His mouth seemed to have been designed by a pupil of *first principles*, whose elbow somebody had jostled while he was at work. The

lips, turned up a little at the corners as in the negro race, disclosed a set of hunting-dog's teeth, and his chin rested its double folds on a white cravat, one of whose ends pointed threateningly to the stars, while the other seemed inclined to stick into the earth. From beneath a worn felt hat, with a prodigiously broad brim, his hair escaped in blond cascades. He was dressed in a nut-brown frock-coat with a broad collar, the material of which, being worn to the woof, was as rough as a nut-meg-grater. From the yawning pockets of his coat protruded bundles of papers and pamphlets. Paying no attention to the scrutiny of which he was the object, he ate with relish a sauerkraut, giving vent from time to time to loud expressions of satisfaction. As he ate, he was reading a book that lay open on the table in front of him, making annotations thereon occasionally with a pencil that he carried behind his ear.

"Well, well!" cried Schaunard suddenly, striking his glass with his knife, "where's my stew?"

"There isn't any more, monsieur," replied the girl, coming up with a plate in her hand; "this is the last, and monsieur ordered it," she added, depositing the plate in front of the man with the books.

"*Sacrebleu!*" cried Schaunard.

There was such a world of melancholy disappointment in that *sacrebleu* that the man with the books was touched to the heart. He put aside the barricade of books between himself and Schaunard, and said to him,

bringing into play the softest chords of his voice as he placed the dish between them :

"Might I dare ask you, monsieur, to share this dish with me?"

"I do not wish to deprive you of it, monsieur," was the reply.

"And so you will deprive me of the pleasure of obliging you?"

"If that is true, monsieur—" And Schaunard passed his plate.

"Permit me not to offer you the head," said the stranger.

"O monsieur, I can't allow that," cried Schaunard.

But as he drew back his plate, he saw that the stranger had served him the portion that he said that he proposed to keep for himself.

"Well, well! what did all his courtesy amount to?" grumbled Schaunard inwardly.

"The head may be the noblest part of man," said the stranger, "but it's the most disagreeable part of the rabbit. Indeed we find many people who can't endure it. But it's different with me, I adore it."

"In that case," said Schaunard, "I keenly regret that you have robbed yourself of it for me."

"What do you say? I beg your pardon," said the man with the books, "but I have kept the head. I even had the honor to call your attention to the fact that—"

"Allow me," said Schaunard, thrusting his plate under his companion's nose. "What is that piece there?"

"Great heaven! what do I see? ye gods! Another head! It's a bicephalous rabbit!" cried the stranger.

"Biceph—" said Schaunard.

"—alous. The word comes from the Greek. Indeed Monsieur de Buffon, who wore ruffles, quotes examples of this peculiarity. Well, upon my word! I am not sorry to have eaten the phenomenon."

Thanks to this incident, the conversation was fairly started. Schaunard, who did not choose to be left behind in the matter of courtesy, ordered an extra quart. The man with the books ordered another. Schaunard offered a salad. The man with the books offered dessert. At eight o'clock in the evening there were six empty bottles on the table. As they talked, the spirit of frankness watered by libations of the red wine, impelled them mutually to tell each other the stories of their lives, and they were as well acquainted already as if they had never been separated. The man with the books, after listening to Schaunard's confidences, informed him that his name was Gustave Colline; he carried on the profession of a philosopher and lived by giving lessons in mathematics, scholastics and several other sciences in *ics*.

The little money that he earned thus by playing the pedagogue, Colline spent in purchases of books. His nut-brown coat was known to all the keepers of book-stalls along the quay, from Pont de la Concorde to Pont

Saint-Michel. What he did with all his books, which were so numerous that a man's life would not have sufficed to read them, no one knew, and he knew least of all. But that fancy had taken on the proportions of a passion with him; and when he returned home without a new book, he repeated for his own use the remark of Titus, and said: "I have wasted my day." His coaxing manners, his language, which presented a mosaic of all styles, and the ghastly puns with which he interlarded his conversation, had fascinated Schaunard, who asked Colline's permission on the spot to add his name to those which made up the famous list of which we have already spoken.

They left *La Mère Cadet* at nine in the evening, both passably tipsy and with the gait of men who had been colloguing with bottles.

Colline suggested coffee to Schaunard, who accepted on condition that he should supply the liquors. They entered a café on Rue Saint-Germain-l' Auxerrois, bearing the name of *Momus*, the god of Sport and Laughter.[1]

Just as they entered the establishment, a very earnest discussion had arisen between two of the habitués. One of them was a young man whose face was lost in the depths of an enormous thicket of multicolored beard. By way of antithesis to this abundance of hair on his face, premature baldness had laid bare his scalp, which resembled a knee, and whose nakedness a cluster of hair, so thin that its members could be counted, tried vainly

to conceal. He was dressed in a black coat, threadbare at the elbows, which, when he raised his arms, revealed air-holes where the sleeves were attached. His trousers might once have been black, but his boots, which had never been new, looked as if they had already made the tour of the world several times on the feet of the Wandering Jew.

Schaunard noticed that his friend Colline and the young man with the long beard bowed to each other.

"Do you know that gentleman?" he asked the philosopher.

"Not exactly," he replied; "but I meet him sometimes at the Library. I believe he's a man of letters."

"He has the coat of one at all events," rejoined Schaunard.

The person with whom the young man was engaged in discussion was a man of about forty, doomed to be struck by the lightning of apoplexy, as the great head placed directly between the two shoulders, with no neck between, clearly indicated. Insanity was written in capital letters on his depressed forehead, covered with a small black cap. His name was Monsieur Mouton, and he was employed to keep the record of deaths at the mayor's office of the fourth arrondissement.

"Monsieur Rodolphe!" he cried in a voice like a eunuch's, shaking the young man, whom he grasped by a button of his coat, "do you want me to give you my opinion? Well, all the newspapers are good for nothing.

Suppose a case; I am the father of a family, am I not? —good. I come to the café to play a game of dominoes. Follow my argument closely."

"Go on, go on," said Rodolphe.

"Well," continued Père Mouton, emphasizing every phrase with a blow of his fist that made the mugs and glasses on the table tremble. "Very good, I happen to get hold of the papers. What do I see? One says white, the other says black, and so they gabble senselessly. What good does that do me? I am a good husband and father who comes here to play—"

"His game of dominoes," said Rodolphe.

"Every evening," continued Monsieur Mouton. "Well, suppose a case! You understand——"

"Very well!" said Rodolphe.

"I read an article that I don't agree with. That makes me angry and I fret, because you see, Monsieur Rodolphe, the newspapers are all lies. Yes, lies!" he yelled in his shrillest falsetto, "and journalists are brigands, scribblers."

"And yet, Monsieur Mouton——"

"Yes, brigands," continued the civil servant. "They're the cause of everybody's misfortunes; they made the Revolution and the *assignats;* witness Murat."

"Excuse me," said Rodolphe, "you mean Marat."

"No indeed, no indeed," rejoined Monsieur Mouton; "Murat, for I saw his funeral when I was a child—"

"I assure you——"

"They even had a play about him at the *Cirque*. There!"

"Yes, exactly," said Rodolphe; "that was Murat."

"Well, what have I been telling you for the last hour?" cried the obstinate Mouton. "Murat, who worked in a cellar, you know! Well, suppose a case. Didn't the Bourbons do right to guillotine him, as he was a traitor?"

"Who? guillotined! a traitor! what are you talking about?" cried Rodolphe, seizing Monsieur Mouton by his coat button in his turn.

"Why, Marat."

"No, no, Monsieur Mouton, Murat. *Sacrebleu!* let us understand each other."

"Certainly, Marat, a cur. He betrayed the Emperor in 1815. That's why I say that all newspapers are alike," continued Mouton, returning to his main theme from what he called an explanation. "Do you know what I would like, Monsieur Rodolphe? Well, suppose a case: I would like a good newspaper—Oh! not great—good! one which wouldn't manufacture phrases.—There!"

"You are exacting," Rodolphe interposed. "A newspaper without phrases!"

"Why, yes, follow my line of thought."

"I am trying to."

"A newspaper which would simply tell about the king's health and the price of produce. For, after all,

what's the use of all your newspapers, which nobody can understand? Let us suppose a case: I am at the mayor's office, am I not? I keep my records—well and good! well it's just as if some one should come to me and say: 'Monsieur Mouton, you record deaths; well, do this and do that.' Well, but what is this? what is that? It's just the same with newspapers," he concluded.

"Evidently," said a neighbor, who had understood.

And Monsieur Mouton, having received the congratulations of some of the habitués, who shared his opinion, resumed his game of dominoes.

"I put him down where he belongs," he said, pointing to Rodolphe, who had taken his seat at the same table at which Schaunard and Colline were sitting.

"What a blockhead," he said to the two young men, indicating the clerk.

"He has a fine head with his eyelids like the hood of a cabriolet and goggle eyes in the bargain," said Schaunard, producing a short pipe marvellously colored.

"*Parbleu!* monsieur," said Rodolphe, "you have a very pretty pipe there."

"Oh! I have a prettier one to take into society," rejoined Schaunard carelessly. "Pass me some tobacco, Colline."

"The deuce!" cried the philosopher; "I have no more."

"Allow me to offer you some," said Rodolphe, taking

a package of tobacco from his pocket and laying it on the table.

Colline felt called upon to respond to that courteous act by the offer of a glass of something.

Rodolphe accepted. The conversation turned upon literature. Rodolphe, when questioned as to his profession, which was clearly betrayed by his coat, confessed to his relations with the Muses and ordered a second round. As the waiter was about to take away the bottle, Schaunard begged him to forget it. He had heard the silvery chink of two five-franc pieces in one of Colline's pockets. Rodolphe soon reached the level of expansiveness already attained by the two friends and in his turn confided in them.

They would undoubtedly have passed the night at the café, had they not been requested to withdraw. They had not taken ten steps in the street and had spent quarter of an hour in taking them, when they were surprised by a heavy shower. Colline and Rodolphe lived at the two opposite extremities of Paris, one at Isle-Saint-Louis, the other at Montmartre.

Schaunard, who had entirely forgotten that he was without domicile, offered them his hospitality.

"Come home with me," he said, "I have a room near by; we will pass the night talking of literature and the fine arts."

"You will play to us and Rodolphe will tell us of his poems," said Colline.

"Faith, yes," said Schaunard, "we must enjoy ourselves, we have but one life."

Having reached his house, which he had some difficulty in recognizing, Schaunard sat down for a moment on a stone, waiting for Colline and Rodolphe who had gone to a wine-shop that was still open, to procure the first elements of a supper. When they had returned, Schaunard knocked several times at the door, for he remembered vaguely that the concierge was in the habit of making him wait. The door opened at last, and Père Durand, heavy with the delicious first sleep, and forgetting that Schaunard was no longer his tenant, was not at all disturbed when that worthy shouted his name through the window.

When they had all three arrived at the top of the stairs, after an ascent that was no less long than difficult, Schaunard, who was walking ahead, uttered an exclamation of amazement upon finding the key in the door of his room.

"What's the matter?" queried Rodolphe.

"I can't make anything out of it," he muttered; "I find in my door the key that I carried away this morning. Ah! we'll see. I put it in my pocket, *Parbleu!* here it is still!" he cried, producing the key.

"It's magic!"

"Hallucination," said Colline.

"Fancy," added Rodolphe.

"But, listen—do you hear?" said Schaunard, whose voice betrayed a beginning of terror.

"What?"

"What?"

"My piano, playing all by itself—*fa, la mi re do, la si sol, re.* That infernal *re!* it will always strike false."

"Why, it isn't your room, of course," said Rodolphe, adding in a whisper to Colline, upon whom he was leaning heavily, "he's drunk."

"I believe you. In the first place it isn't a piano, it's a flute."

"Why, you're drunk too, my dear fellow," the poet replied to the philosopher, who had seated himself on the floor: "it's a violin."

"A vio—Bah! I say, Schaunard," lisped Colline, pulling his friend by the leg, "that's pretty good, that is! monsieur here insists that it's a vio——"

"*Sacrebleu!*" cried Schaunard, beside himself with fright, "my piano keeps on playing! it's witchcraft!"

"Halluci-ci-nation!" shouted Colline, dropping one of the bottles he held in his hand.

"Fancy," howled Rodolphe in his turn.

Amid the hurly-burly, the chamber door opened suddenly, and an individual appeared on the threshold, holding in his hand a three-branched candlestick, in which pink candles were burning.

"What do you wish, messieurs?" he asked, saluting the three friends courteously.

"Great heaven, what have I done? I have made a mistake; this isn't my room," said Schaunard.

"Monsieur," added Colline and Rodolphe in unison, addressing the person who had opened the door, "pray excuse our friend; he is very drunk."

Suddenly a gleam of light flashed through Schaunard's intoxication, as he read on his door this line written in chalk:

"I have been three times to get my New Year's present.

"PHÉMIE."

"Why yes, why yes, I am at home!" he cried; "there's the visiting card Phémie left for me New Year's Day; this is my door and no mistake."

"*Mon Dieu*, monsieur," said Rodolphe, "I am really bewildered."

"Believe, monsieur," added Colline, "that I for my part am an earnest collaborator in my friend's bewilderment."

The young man could not restrain a smile.

"If you will come in for a moment," he answered, "your friend will undoubtedly realize that he is mistaken as soon as he sees the room."

"Willingly."

And the poet and the philosopher, each taking Schaunard by one arm, led him into the chamber, we ought rather to say the palace, occupied by Marcel, whom our readers will doubtless have recognized.

Schaunard glanced vaguely around, muttering.

"It's amazing how my room is improved."

"Well, are you convinced now?" queried Colline.

But Schaunard, having caught sight of the piano, had staggered to it and was playing scales.

"I say, you fellows, listen to that," he said, striking a few resonant chords. "It's all right! The beast has recognized his master: *si la sol, fa mi re!* Ah! you rascal of a *re!* you'll always be the same! I said it was my piano."

"He insists," said Colline to Rodolphe.

"He insists," Rodolphe repeated to Marcel.

"And look at that," added Schaunard, pointing to the star-spangled petticoat, which was thrown over a chair, "perhaps that isn't mine! ah!" He looked Marcel squarely in the face.

"And that," he added, taking from the wall the notice to quit that we mentioned above."

And he began to read:

"'Wherefore Monsieur Schaunard is ordered to vacate the premises and restore them in good condition with all repairs chargeable to the tenant duly made, before twelve o'clock noon on April 8th: In witness whereof I have set my hand to this notice, the cost of which is five francs.' Aha! so I am not Monsieur Schaunard, who receives a notice to quit, with the honors of the stamp office, the cost of which is five francs? And those too," he added, recognizing his

Chapter I

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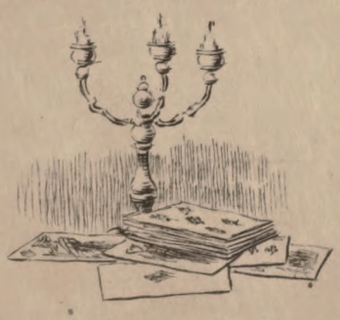
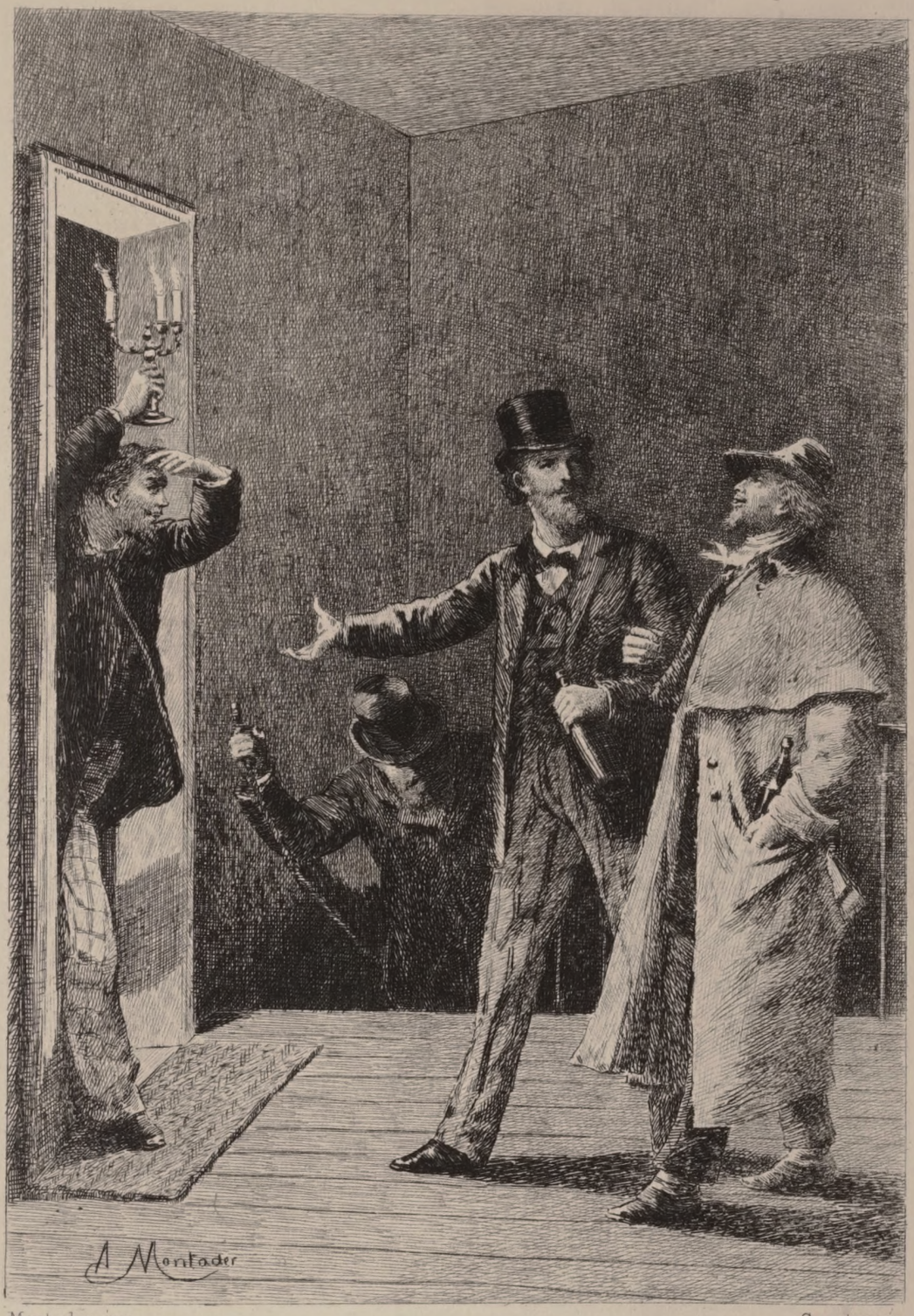
J. Montador





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slippers on Marcel's feet, "I suppose those aren't my Turkish slippers, a present from a dear hand? It's your turn now, monsieur," he said to Marcel; "explain your presence among my household gods."

"Messieurs," replied Marcel, addressing himself particularly to Colline and Rodolphe, "monsieur,"—and he pointed to Schaunard—"is in his own room, I admit."

"Ah!" exclaimed Schaunard, "that's lucky for you."

"But," continued Marcel, "I also am in my room."

"And yet, monsieur," Rodolphe interrupted, "if our friend recognizes——"

"Yes," continued Colline, "if our friend——"

"And if you, on your part, admit that—;" added Rodolphe, "how does it happen——"

"Yes," repeated Colline, the echo, "how does it happen?"

"Be good enough to be seated, gentlemen," replied Marcel, "and I will explain the mystery."

"Suppose we should moisten the explanation?" suggested Colline.

"By breaking a crust together," added Rodolphe.

The four young men seated themselves at the table and began an assault on a piece of cold veal that the wine-shop keeper had thrown in with the wine.

Marcel then proceeded to explain what had taken place that morning between him and the landlord, when he had come to move in.

"In that case," said Rodolphe, "monsieur is perfectly right, and we are in his apartments."

"You are at home," said Marcel politely.

But an enormous amount of hard work was required to make Schaunard understand what had taken place. A comical incident added to the complication of the situation. Schaunard, as he was looking for something in a buffet, discovered the change from the five-hundred-franc note with which Marcel had paid Monsieur Bernard in the morning.

"Ah!" he cried, "I was sure that Chance wouldn't desert me. I remember now—that I went out this morning to run after Chance. Of course, because it was quarter-day he came during my absence. We missed each other, that's all. How shrewd it was of me to leave the key in the drawer!"

"Mild insanity!" murmured Rodolphe, as he watched Schaunard arranging the coins in piles of equal height.

"A dream, a falsehood, such is life," added the philosopher.

Marcel laughed.

An hour later they were all four asleep.

The next day, at noon, they awoke and seemed vastly astonished to find themselves together. Schaunard, Colline and Rodolphe seemed not to recognize one another and addressed one another as *Monsieur*. Marcel had to remind them that they had arrived together the night before.

At that moment Père Durand entered the room.

"Monsieur," he said to Marcel, "this is the ninth of April, one thousand eight hundred and forty—the streets are muddy, and His Majesty Louis-Philippe is still King of France and Navarre.—Well, well?" he exclaimed as he spied his former tenant; "Monsieur Schaunard! How did you come here, then?"

"By telegraph," Schaunard replied.

"I see," rejoined the concierge. "You must still have your joke!"

"Durand," said Marcel, "I don't care to have servants take part in my conversation; you will go to the nearest restaurant and order breakfast sent to this room, for four persons. Here's the order," he added, handing him a slip of paper on which he had written the menu. "Begone."

"Messieurs," continued Marcel, addressing the three young men, "you invited me to supper last night, permit me to invite you to breakfast this morning—not in my rooms, but in yours," he added, offering Schaunard his hand.

At the conclusion of the repast, Rodolphe claimed the floor.

"Messieurs," he said, "allow me to leave you."

"Oh! no," said Schaunard sentimentally, "let us never part."

"True, we are very comfortable here," added Colline.

"To leave you for a moment," continued Rodolphe;

"to-morrow, *L' Écharpe d' Iris* appears, a journal of fashion, of which I am editor-in-chief; and I must go and correct my proofs: I will return in an hour."

"The devil!" said Colline, "that reminds me that I have to give a lesson to an Indian prince, who has come to Paris to learn Arabic."

"You can go to-morrow," said Marcel.

"Oh! no," rejoined the philosopher, "the prince is to pay me to-day. And then, I will admit that this fine day would be ruined for me if I didn't go and take a little turn at the old bookshops."

"But you will return?" Schaunard asked.

"With the rapidity of an arrow discharged by a sure hand," replied the philosopher, who was fond of eccentric metaphors, and he went out with Rodolphe.

"By the way," said Schaunard, when he was left alone with Marcel, "suppose that, instead of pampering myself on the pillow of the *dolce far niente*, I should go to try to find some gold with which to appease Monsieur Bernard's cupidity?"

"Why," said Marcel uneasily, "do you still intend to move?"

"*The devil!*" replied Schaunard, "I must, as I have a notice to quit, cost five francs."

"But," Marcel continued, "if you move, will you take away your furniture?"

"I should say so; I won't leave a hair, as Monsieur Bernard says."

"The devil! that will embarrass me, for I hired your room furnished."

"The deuce! that's a fact," said Schaunard. "But alas!" he added in a melancholy tone, "there is nothing to prove that I shall find my seventy-five francs to-day or to-morrow or the day after."

"Wait a moment," exclaimed Marcel, "I have an idea."

"Trot it out," said Schaunard.

"This is the condition of affairs: legally, this lodging is mine, as I paid a month's rent in advance."

"The lodging, yes; but as to the furniture, if I pay what I owe, I have a legal right to take it away; and, if it were possible, I'd take it away, legally or illegally," said Schaunard.

"So that you have furniture and no lodging," rejoined Marcel, "and I have a lodging and no furniture."

"That's about it," said Schaunard.

"For my part, I like this lodging," said Marcel.

"And so do I," added Schaunard; "I never liked it better than at this moment."

"What do you say?"

"Liked it better for liked it more. Oh! I know how to talk!"

"Well, we can arrange matters," said Marcel; "stay with me, I'll furnish the lodging and you furnish the furniture."

"And the rent?" queried Schaunard.

"As I have money to-day, I'll pay it; the next time it will be your turn. Think it over."

"I never think anything over, especially a proposition that pleases me; I accept on the spot: after all, painting and music are sisters."

"Sisters-in-law," said Marcel.

At that moment Colline and Rodolphe returned, having met outside.

Marcel and Schaunard informed them of their partnership.

"Messieurs," cried Rodolphe, jingling the coin in his pocket, "I invite the company to dinner."

"That is precisely what I proposed to have the honor of suggesting," said Colline, taking a gold piece from his pocket and sticking it in his eye. "My prince gave me this to purchase a Hindostanee-Arabic grammar, for which I paid six sous cash."

"And I," said Rodolphe, "procured an advance of thirty francs from the treasurer of *L'Écharpe d'Iris*, on the plea that I needed it to pay for being vaccinated."

"So this is the day for receipts, is it?" said Schaunard; I'm the only one who hasn't given away anything; it's humiliating."

"Meanwhile," Rodolphe added, "my invitation to dinner holds good."

"And mine, too," said Colline.

"I'll tell you," said Rodolphe, "we'll toss up to see which of us shall pay the bill."

"No," cried Schaunard. "I have something better; oh! infinitely better than that to suggest, to relieve your embarrassment."

"What is it?"

"Let Rodolphe pay for the dinner and Colline invite us to supper."

"That's what I call the jurisprudence of Solomon," cried the philosopher.

"It's worse than Gamache's wedding," added Marcel.

The dinner was given in a Provençal restaurant on Rue Dauphine, famous for its literary waiters and its *ayoli*. As it was necessary to leave room for the supper, they ate and drank moderately. The acquaintance begun the night before between Colline and Schaunard, and later between them both and Marcel, became more intimate; each of the four young men hoisted the flag of his own opinion on artistic matters; all four recognized the fact that they were equal in courage and had like hopes. As they talked and discussed, they discovered that their likes and dislikes were the same, that they all had a like dexterity in the art of witty fencing, which enlivens without wounding, and that all the attractive virtues of youth had left no void in their hearts, which were easily moved by the sight or description of anything beautiful. All four, having set out from the same point to reach the same goal, believed that there was in their meeting something more than the commonplace

jesting of chance, and that it might well be Providence, the natural guardian of the deserted, who placed them thus hand in hand, and whispered low in their ears the parable of the gospel, which should be the only chart for the guidance of mankind: "Be of good cheer and love one another."

At the conclusion of the dinner, which came to an end in something like gravity, Rodolphe rose to propose a toast to the future, and Colline replied with a little speech which was taken from no old book, had no suggestion of a flowery style, but was couched in the simple pathos of perfect frankness which conveys so clearly the idea that it expresses so ill.

"What a fool this philosopher is!" muttered Schaunard, with his nose in his glass; "he actually compels me to put water in my wine."

After dinner they adjourned to *Momus*, where they had passed the preceding evening, for a cup of coffee. From that day forth, the café became uninhabitable for its other frequenters.

After the coffee and liqueurs the Bohemian clan, being definitively established, returned to Marcel's apartment, which received the name of *Élysée* Schaunard. While Colline went to order the supper he had promised, the others procured bombs, rockets and other pyrotechnical pieces; and before taking their places at the table, they discharged, through the window, a magnificent collection of fireworks, which turned the whole

house topsy-turvy, and during which the four friends sang at the top of their voices :

"Let us celebrate, celebrate, celebrate this glorious day!"

The next morning they found themselves together once more, but that time they were not surprised. Before separating to attend to their respective affairs, they went together to partake of a frugal breakfast at the Café *Momus*, where they made an appointment to meet in the evening, and whither they repaired regularly every day for a long while.

Such are the principal characters who will reappear in the brief sketches which go to make up this volume, which is not a novel and makes no pretensions beyond those indicated by its title; for the Scenes from Life in Bohemia are in fact nothing more than studies in manners, the heroes of which belong to a class hitherto sadly misjudged, whose main default is lack of order; and they may well excuse themselves on the ground that that same lack of order is a necessity imposed upon them by life itself.

II

A MESSENGER FROM PROVIDENCE

Schaunard and Marcel, who had set valiantly to work betimes in the morning, suddenly suspended their labors.

"*Sacrebleu!* how hungry I am!" exclaimed Schaunard; and he added negligently: "Don't we breakfast to-day?"

Marcel seemed very much astonished at this question, which was never more untimely.

"Since when have we been in the habit of breakfasting two days in succession?" he said. "Yesterday was Thursday."

And he finished his rejoinder by pointing with his maul-stick to the precept of the church:

> "On Friday flesh thou shalt not eat
> Nor anything that's like thereto."

Schaunard had no answer to make and returned to his picture, which represented a field occupied by a red tree and a blue tree shaking hands with their branches.

A transparent allusion to the joys of friendship, which was in truth very philosophical.

At that moment the concierge knocked at the door. He brought a letter for Marcel.

"Three sous," he said.

"Are you sure?" inquired the artist. "All right, you can owe them to us." And he shut the door in his face.

Marcel had taken the letter and broken the seal. At the first words, he began to leap around the studio like an acrobat and to thunder at the top of his voice the following famous ballad, which denoted in him the apogee of exultation:

Four youths there were in our quarter,
And these four youths fell sick;
They packed them off to the Hôtel-Dieu
Eu! eu! eu! eu!

"Even so," said Schaunard, and he continued:

In one large bed the four were put,
Two at the head and two at the foot.

"We know that."

Marcel went on:

They saw a "Little Sister" come,
Um! um! um! um!

"If you don't keep quiet," said Schaunard, who already felt symptoms of mental alienation, "I'll perform

the *allegro* of my symphony on the *influence of blue in the arts.*"

And he walked toward his piano.

That threat produced the effect of a drop of cold water falling into a boiling liquid.

Marcel became composed as if by enchantment.

"Here," said he, passing the letter to his friend. "Look at this."

It was an invitation to dinner from a member of the Chamber of Deputies, an enlightened patron of the arts and of Marcel in particular, who had painted a portrait of his country house.

"It's for to-day," said Schaunard; "it's a pity the card isn't good for two. But now I think of it, your deputy's a ministerialist; you cannot, you must not accept. Your principles forbid you to eat bread soaked in the sweat of the people."

"Bah!" said Marcel, "my deputy's of the Left Centre; he voted against the government the other day. Besides, he may get an order for me, and he has promised to present me in society; and then, you see, even if it is Friday, I'm as voracious as Ugolino and I propose to dine to-day, that's all."

"There are other obstacles too," pursued Schaunard, who did not fail to be a little jealous of the good fortune that had fallen to his friend's lot. "You can't dine out in a red jacket and a waterman's cap."

"I'll go and borrow Colline's clothes or Rodolphe's."

"Young idiot! do you forget that the twentieth of the month has passed, and that at this time those gentlemen's clothes are *pawned* and *repawned?*"

"I can at least find a black coat between now and five o'clock."

"It took me three weeks to find one when I went to my cousin's wedding; and that was early in January."

"Very well, then I'll go as I am," retorted Marcel, striding back and forth. "It shan't be said that a wretched question of etiquette prevented me from taking my first step in society."

"By the way," interposed Schaunard, taking much pleasure in vexing his friend, "how about boots?"

Marcel rushed from the room in a state of agitation impossible to describe. Two hours later he returned with a false collar.

"That's all I have been able to find," he said piteously.

"It wasn't worth while to run your legs off for so little," replied Schaunard, "there's paper enough here to make a dozen."

"But," said Marcel, tearing his hair, "we must have something here, damnation!"

And he began an exhaustive search in every corner of the two rooms.

After an hour's work, he got together a costume made up as follows:

Scotch pantaloons,

A gray hat,

A red cravat,

One glove formerly white,

One black glove.

"You can pass them off for a pair of black gloves, if necessary," said Schaunard. "But when you are dressed, you'll look like the solar spectrum. And you a colorist, too!"

Meanwhile Marcel was trying on boots.

Fatality! It was impossible to find mates!

The artist, in despair, cast his eye upon an old boot in a corner, that was used as a waste-basket. He pounced upon it.

"From *Garrick* to *Syllabe*," said his satirical companion; "this one is pointed and the other square."

"Nobody will notice that, and I'll polish them."

"That's an idea! all you need now is the regulation black coat."

"Oh!" said Marcel, gnawing his knuckles, "I would give ten years of my life and my right hand for one!"

There was another knock at the door. Marcel opened it.

"Monsieur Schaunard?" queried a stranger, who stood in the doorway.

"I am he," the painter replied, requesting him to enter.

"Monsieur," said the unknown, who possessed a guileless, honest face of the true provincial type, "my cousin

has told me much of your talent for painting portraits; and being on the point of making a journey to the colonies, where I am sent by the sugar-refiners of the city of Nantes, I desired to leave my family something to remember me by. That is why I have called on you."

"O blessed Providence!" muttered Schaunard. "Marcel, give monsieur a chair."

"Monsieur Blancheron," continued the stranger; "Blancheron of Nantes, agent of the sugar-refiners, ex-mayor of V——, captain in the National Guard, and author of a pamphlet on the sugar question."

"I am highly honored by having been selected by you for the work," said the artist, bowing low to the sugar refiners' agent. "How would you like to have your portrait?"

"In miniature, like that," replied Monsieur Blancheron, indicating a portrait in oil; for in his mind as in that of many other people, everything that is not house-painting is miniature; there is nothing between.

This proof of innocence gave Schaunard the measure of the goodman with whom he had to do, especially when he added that he wished his portrait to be done in fine colors.

"I use no others," said Schaunard. "How large does monsieur wish his portrait to be?"

"As large as that," replied Monsieur Blancheron, pointing to a canvas twenty inches square. "But what will be the price of that?"

"From fifty to sixty francs; fifty without the hands, sixty with."

"The devil! my cousin said something about thirty francs."

"It depends on the season," said the painter; "colors are much dearer at some times of the year."

"Like sugar, eh?"

"Precisely."

"Fifty francs it is then," said Monsieur Blancheron.

"You are making a mistake; for ten francs more you could have the hands and I would put your pamphlet on the sugar question in them, which would be a flattering thing for you."

"On my word, you are right."

"*Sacrebleu!*" said Schaunard to himself, "if he keeps on, I shall burst, and wound him with one of the pieces."

"Have you noticed?" Marcel whispered in his ear.

"What?"

"He has a black coat."

"I understand and I catch your idea. Let me deal with him."

"Well, monsieur," said the refiners' agent, "when will you begin? we must not delay, for I start very soon."

"I have to take a little trip myself; I leave Paris the day after to-morrow. So, if you are willing, we will begin at once. One good sitting will give us a fair start."

"But it will soon be dark and you can't work by candlelight," said Monsieur Blancheron.

"My studio is arranged so that I can work at all hours," rejoined the painter. "If you will kindly remove your coat, and pose, we will begin."

"Take off my coat! What for?"

"Didn't you say that you intend your portrait for your family?"

"To be sure."

"Very well; then you should be painted in the costume you wear in the house, in your dressing-gown. It's the custom, too."

"But I have no dressing-gown here."

"But I have. The emergency is provided for," said Schaunard, handing his model a ragged garment embellished with spots of paint which made the worthy provincial hesitate at first.

"This is a very strange garment," he said.

"And very valuable," rejoined the painter. "It was presented by a Turkish vizier to Monsieur Horace Vernet, who presented it to me. I am a pupil of his."

"You are a pupil of Vernet?" said Blancheron.

"Yes, monsieur, I am proud to say that I am— Horrible," he muttered under his breath, "I am denying my gods."

"You have reason to be proud, young man," said the agent, putting on the dressing-gown that had such a noble origin.

"Hang monsieur's coat in the wardrobe," said Schaunard to his friend, with a significant wink.

"I say," Marcel whispered as he pounced upon his prey, "he's very good! suppose you could keep a piece of him?"

"I will try! but never mind about that, dress yourself quickly and off you go. Be back at ten o'clock, I'll keep him till then. Above all, bring me back something in your pockets."

"I'll bring you a pineapple," said Marcel, hurrying from the room.

He dressed in hot haste—the coat fitted him like a glove—then went out into the hall by the other door.

Schaunard had set about his task. It was quite dark when Monsieur Blancheron heard the clock strike six and remembered that he had not dined. He so informed the painter.

"I am in the same fix; but, to accommodate you, I will go without my dinner to-night. By the way, I was invited to dine with a friend in Faubourg Saint-Germain. But we can't stop now, it would endanger the resemblance."

He returned to his work.

"After all," he said suddenly, "we can dine without interfering with our work. There's an excellent restaurant near by; they'll send up whatever we want."

Schaunard awaited the effect of his trio of plurals.

"I am obliged for your suggestion," said Monsieur

Blancheron, "and I am pleased to think that, in return for it, you will do me the honor to be my guest."

Schaunard bowed.

"Upon my word," he said to himself, "he's a fine fellow, a veritable messenger from Providence. Will you write the order?" he asked his host.

"You will oblige me if you will take that upon yourself," he replied politely.

"You will repent of it, Nicolas," sang the painter, as he went down the stairs four by four.

He entered the restaurant, went to the desk and drew up a bill of fare that made the wine-shop Vatel turn pale.

"And Bordeaux *à l'ordinaire.*"

"Who's to pay?"

"Not I probably," said Schaunard, "but an uncle of mine whom you will see upstairs, a great epicure. So try to distinguish yourself and see that we are served in half an hour, and above all things, on fine china."

At eight o'clock, Monsieur Blancheron felt that he must pour his ideas upon the sugar industry into a friendly bosom, and he repeated his pamphlet to Schaunard.

The latter accompanied him on the piano.

At ten o'clock, Monsieur Blancheron and his friend were dancing the galop and calling each other "thee" and "thou." At eleven, they swore never to part, and made wills wherein each left his whole fortune to the other.

At midnight, Marcel returned and found them locked in each other's arms; they were weeping copiously. There was already half an inch of water in the studio. Marcel stumbled against the table, and saw there the glorious remains of the superb banquet. He examined the bottles; they were all absolutely empty.

He tried to wake Schaunard, but he threatened to kill him if he attempted to rouse Monsieur Blancheron, whom he was using for a pillow.

"Ingrate!" said Marcel, taking a handful of nuts from his coat pocket. "When I brought him some dinner!"

III

LENTEN AMOURS

One evening during Lent, Rodolphe returned home early, intending to work. But he had no sooner seated himself at the table and dipped his pen in the inkstand, than his attention was attracted by a strange noise; and, applying his ear to the frail partition that separated him from the adjoining room, he listened, and distinguished perfectly a dialogue of kisses, alternating with other amorous onomatopoetic sounds.

"The devil!" thought Rodolphe, glancing at his clock, "it isn't late, and my neighbor is a Juliet who ordinarily keeps her Romeo long after the lark's song. I shall not be able to work to-night."

So he took his hat and went out.

As he left the key at the lodge, he found the concierge's wife half-imprisoned in the embrace of a gallant. The poor woman was so terrified that it was five minutes before she was able to draw the cord.

"After all," thought Rodolphe, "there are moments when concierges' wives become women once more."

As he opened the door, he found a fireman and a cook in a corner, hand in hand and exchanging the earnest money of love.

"*Parbleu!*" exclaimed Rodolphe, alluding to the fire-fighter and his buxom companion, "those heretics seem to forget that this is Lent."

And he went his way to call on one of his friends who lived near by.

"If Marcel is at home," he said to himself, "we will pass the evening blackguarding Colline. One must do something."

As he knocked lustily, the door was partly opened, and a young man simply clad in an eyeglass and a shirt made his appearance.

"I can't let you in," he said to Rodolphe.

"Why not?" asked the latter.

"Look!" said Marcel, pointing to a female face that was visible behind a curtain; "there is my answer."

"She's not beautiful," replied Rodolphe, as the door was shut in his face. "Well," he said to himself when he was in the street, "now what shall I do? Suppose I should go and see Colline? We could pass the time speaking ill of Marcel."

As he passed through Rue de l'Ouest, ordinarily dark and unfrequented, Rodolphe distinguished a shadow walking along mechanically, mumbling rhymes between his teeth.

"Ha! ha!" said Rodolphe, "what sonnet is that hanging about here? I say, Colline!"

"Hallo, Rodolphe! Where are you going?"

"To your house."

"You won't find me there."

"What are you doing here?"

"Waiting."

"What are you waiting for?"

"Ah!" said Colline with mocking emphasis, "what does a man wait for when he is twenty years old, when there are stars in the heavens and ballads in the air?"

"Speak in prose."

"I am waiting for a woman."

"Good-evening," said Rodolphe; and he went his way soliloquizing. "Pah!" he said, "is this Saint-Cupid's Day, and can't I take a step without jostling a pair of lovers? It is immoral and scandalous. What are the police doing?"

As the Luxembourg was still open, Rodolphe went through the garden to shorten his road. Amid the deserted paths he constantly saw fleeing before him, as if alarmed by his footsteps, couples mysteriously entwined and seeking, as some poet says: "the double joy of silence and of darkness."

"This is an evening that has been copied in a novel," said Rodolphe. And yet, yielding, in spite of himself, to a sort of languorous charm, he sat down on a bench and gazed sentimentally at the moon.

In a short time he was completely under the spell of a fevered hallucination. It seemed to him that the marble gods and heroes that peopled the garden left their pedestals to pay court to their neighbors, the goddesses and heroines; and he distinctly heard the huge Hercules pay a fulsome compliment to the Velléda, whose tunic seemed to him to have grown shorter to an extraordinary degree.

From the bench on which he was sitting, he saw the swan in the basin swimming toward a nymph on the shore.

"Good!" thought Rodolphe, who accepted all the legends of mythology; "there's Jupiter going to keep his appointment with Leda. If only the watchman doesn't take them by surprise!"

Then he took his head in his hands and plunged still deeper among the hawthorns of sentiment. But at that blissful point in his dream, Rodolphe was suddenly awakened by a watchman, who approached him and tapped him on the shoulder.

"You must go out, monsieur," he said.

"That's fortunate," thought Rodolphe. "If I stayed there five minutes longer, I should have more *vergiss-mein-nicht* in my heart than there is on the shores of the Rhine or in Alphonse Karr's novels."

He went hurriedly forth from the Luxembourg, humming in a low voice a sentimental ballad, which was to him the Marseillaise of love.

Half an hour later, he was at the *Prado*—no one knows how he got there—sitting in front of a bowl of punch and talking with a tall young man remarkable by reason of his nose, which has the unusual privilege of being aquiline in profile and flat when looked at in front; a master nose, which does not lack wit, and has had enough amorous adventures to be able to give sound advice and to be useful to a friend in such matters.

"And so," said Alexandre Schaunard, the man with the nose, "you are in love!"

"Yes, my dear fellow—it took me just now, suddenly, as if I had a horrible toothache in the heart."

"Pass me the tobacco," said Alexandre.

"Just consider," continued Rodolphe, "that for two whole hours I have met nobody but lovers, men and women, two by two. It occurred to me to go into the Luxembourg, where I saw all sorts of phantasmagoria, and it stirred my heart to an extraordinary degree; elegiacs are springing in my brain; I bleat and I coo; I am becoming half lamb, half pigeon. Just look me over. I must have wool and feathers."

"What have you been drinking?" asked Alexandre, impatiently; "you make a fool of me."

"I assure you that I am perfectly cool," said Rodolphe. "Not just that, either. But I will tell you that I feel the need of kissing somebody. You see, Alexandre, man ought not to live alone; in a word, you must

help me to find a woman. We'll make a tour of the ball rooms, and the first one I point out to you, you must go and tell her I love her."

"Why not go and tell her so yourself?" replied Alexandre with his superb nasal bass.

"Why, my dear fellow," said Rodolphe, "I assure you that I have altogether forgotten how you go to work to say such things. My friends have written the prefaces to all my love stories, and the endings of some of them. I never knew how to begin."

"It's enough to know how to end," said Alexandre; "but I understand you. I have seen a girl who is very fond of the hautboy, and perhaps you'll suit her."

"Ah!" rejoined Rodolphe, "I would like her to wear white gloves, and have blue eyes."

"The devil! Blue eyes are all right—but as to the gloves—you can't have everything at once, you know. However, let's go into the aristocratic quarter."

"Look," said Rodolphe, as they entered a salon, where the fashionable damsels of the district congregate, "there's one who looks very sweet and nice;" and he pointed to a fashionably dressed young girl who was standing in a corner.

"All right!" said Alexandre, "stay back a little and I will throw the burning brand of passion at her for you. When it's time for you to come, I'll call you."

For ten minutes Alexandre talked to the girl, who, from time to time, laughed heartily, and ended by dart-

ing a smile at Rodolphe which meant: "Come, your advocate has won his case."

"Go on," said Alexandre, "the victory is with us; the little one is not inclined to be cruel, I fancy, but play the innocent to begin with."

"You don't need to give me that advice."

"Then give me a little tobacco," said Alexandre, "and go and sit down with her."

"*Mon Dieu!*" said the girl, when Rodolphe took his place beside her; "how amusing your friend is! he talks like a hunting-horn!"

"He's a musician, you see," said Rodolphe.

"Two hours later, Rodolphe and his companion were in front of a house on Rue Saint-Denis.

"This is where I live," said the girl.

"Well, dear Louise, when shall I see you again, and where?"

"At eight o'clock to-morrow evening at your rooms."

"Sure?"

"There's my promise," said Louise, offering her rosy cheeks to Rodolphe, who bit eagerly at that lovely ripe fruit of youth and health.

Rodolphe returned home drunk with passion.

"Ah!" he said, as he strode up and down his chamber, "this will never do. I must write some poetry."

The next morning his concierge found in the room some thirty sheets of paper, at the top of which was this one line in majestic solitude:

O Love! O love! the prince of youth!

On that next morning, Rodolphe, contrary to his usual custom, awoke very early, and, although he had slept little, he arose at once.

"Ah!" he cried, "so to-day is the great day. But twelve hours to wait—how shall I while away those twelve eternities?"

As his glance fell upon his desk, it seemed to him that he could see his pen move as if it would say to him: "Work!"

"Ah! yes, work indeed! the devil take the work! I can't stay here, it smells of ink."

He installed himself in a café, where he was sure of not meeting any of his friends.

"They would see that I'm in love," he thought, "and make up their minds about my ideal in advance."

After a very brief meal, he hurried to the railway station and entered a carriage.

Half an hour later he was in the woods of Ville d'Avray.

He walked about all day amid the signs of the rejuvenation of nature, and did not return to Paris until nightfall.

After putting in order the temple that was to receive his idol, Rodolphe made a special toilet for the occasion, and sorely regretted his inability to dress in white.

From seven to eight o'clock he was a victim of the cruel fever of suspense, a slow torture which recalled his

earlier days and the love-affairs which had made them delightful. Then, according to his custom, he began to dream of a grand passion, a love-affair in ten volumes, a veritable lyric poem with moonlight, sunsets, appointments under the willows, jealousy, sighs and the rest. It was so whenever chance brought a woman to his door, and not one had left him without a halo around her head, and a necklace of tears on her neck.

"They would prefer a hat or a pair of boots," his friends used to say.

But Rodolphe persisted, and the numerous mistakes he had committed had thus far failed to cure him. He was still waiting for a woman who would be willing to pose as an idol, an angel in a velvet robe, to whom he could at his ease address sonnets written on willow leaves.

At last Rodolphe heard the clock strike the "blessed hour," and as the last stroke of the bell rang out, he thought that he saw the *Cupid* and *Psyche* on top of the clock entwine their alabaster bodies. At the same moment some one tapped timidly at the door.

Rodolphe opened the door; it was Louise.

"I keep my word, you see," she said.

Rodolphe drew the curtains and lighted a fresh candle.

Meanwhile, the little one had removed her hat and shawl which she placed on the bed. The dazzling whiteness of the sheets made her smile and almost blush.

Louise was rather pleasing than pretty; her fresh face

presented a tempting mixture of innocence and mischief. She was something like one of Greuze's figures arranged by Gavarni. All the fascinating youthfulness of the girl was brought out by a costume, which, although very simple, bore witness to that innate science of coquetry which all women possess from their first swaddling-clothes to their wedding-gown. Louise seemed, furthermore, to have made a special study of the theory of attitudes, and assumed before Rodolphe, who examined her as an artist, a multitude of seductive poses, which were more noticeable for grace than for naturalness; her daintily shod feet were satisfactorily small—even for a romantic creature enamored of Andalusian or Chinese miniatures. The delicacy of her hands bore witness to an idle life. Indeed for six months past they had had no reason to fear the wounds of the needle. In a word, Louise was one of those fickle birds of passage who, from caprice and often from need, build their nests for a day, or rather for a night, in the attics of the Latin Quarter, and are willing to remain a few days if you know how to detain them by a caprice or by ribbons.

After talking an hour with Louise, Rodolphe called her attention to Cupid and Psyche as a precedent.

"Isn't it a Paul and Virginie?" she asked.

"Yes," said Rodolphe, who did not wish to annoy her at the outset by a contradiction.

"They're well copied," said Louise.

"Alas!" thought Rodolphe as he gazed at her, "the

poor child isn't exactly literary. I am sure that she confines herself to the orthography of the heart, which doesn't add an *s* in the plural. I must buy her a grammar."

Meanwhile, as Louise complained that her shoes hurt her, he obligingly assisted her to unlace them.

Suddenly the light went out.

"Hallo!" cried Rodolphe, "who blew out the candle?"

A merry peal of laughter was the answer.

A few days later, Rodolphe met one of his friends in the street.

"What are you doing nowadays?" his friend asked him. "No one ever sees you."

"I am writing domestic poetry," Rodolphe replied.

The poor fellow told the truth. He had chosen to ask more of Louise than the poor child could give him. Bagpipe that she was, she had not the tones of a lyre. She talked the patois of love, and Rodolphe insisted upon talking high-flown language. And so they hardly understood each other.

A week later, at the same ball room at which she had fallen in with Rodolphe, Louise met a fair-haired young man, who danced with her several times, and at the close of the evening took her home with him.

He was a student in his second year, he spoke the prose of pleasure very fluently, had fine eyes and a jingling pocket.

Louise asked him for paper and ink and wrote Rodolphe a letter in these words:

"Do not recon on me any more at all. I kis you for the last tim. Good-by."

"LOUISE."

As Rodolphe was reading this epistle after he returned home that night, his light went out.

"Ah!" said Rodolphe pensively, "that's the candle I lighted the night Louise came; it was bound to end with our *liaison*. If I had known, I'd have chosen a longer one," he added in a tone that was half displeasure, half regret; and he placed his mistress's note in a drawer which he sometimes called the catacombs of his amours.

One day when he was at Marcel's, Rodolphe picked up from the floor, to light his pipe, a bit of paper on which he recognized Louise's handwriting and orthography.

"I have an autograph letter from the same person; but there are two mistakes less than in yours," he said. "Doesn't that prove that she loved me better than you?"

"It proves that you're a fool," Marcel replied; "white shoulders and white arms don't need to know grammar."

IV

ALI-RODOLPHE, OR THE TURK FROM NECESSITY

Ostracized by a heartless landlord, Rodolphe lived for some time a life more errant than the clouds, and did his best to perfect the art of going to bed without supping or of supping without going to bed; his cook's name was Chance, and he lodged frequently at the inn of La Belle Étoile.[2]

There were two things, however, that did not desert Rodolphe amid his painful reverses—those were his good-humor and the manuscript of the *Vengeur*, a drama which had made stops at all the dramatic posting-stations in Paris.

One day Rodolphe, being taken to the lock-up because of a too frolicsome choregraphic performance, found himself face to face with an uncle of his, Sieur Monetti, a stove-maker and chimney-builder, and sergeant in the National Guard, whom Rodolphe had not seen for an eternity.

Touched by his nephew's misfortunes, Uncle Monetti promised to better his condition, and we will go and see

how he did it, if the reader is not frightened at having to ascend six flights of stairs.

Let us seize the stair-rail and go up. Ouf! a hundred and twenty-five stairs. Here we are at last. One step more and we are in the room, another, and we should be out of it. It is small, but it is high; fresh air, moreover, and a beautiful view.

The furniture consists of several Prussian chimneys, two stoves, economical furnaces—especially when no fire is built in them—a dozen or more pipes made of red clay or sheet-iron, and a great variety of heating apparatus; to close the inventory, we will mention a hammock hanging from two nails driven into the wall, a garden chair minus one leg, a candlestick with its *bobèche*, and divers other objects of art and fantasy.

The second room was transformed into a park for the summer by a balcony and two dwarf cypresses.

At the moment that we enter, the host, a young man dressed like a Turk in an opera comique, is finishing a repast in which he impudently defies the law of the prophet, as the presence of what was once a ham and a bottle originally full of wine sufficiently indicate. His repast at an end, the young Turk stretches himself out in Eastern fashion on the floor and begins nonchalantly to smoke a nargileh marked J. G. Yielding to the delicious sense of Asiatic felicity, he passes his hand from time to time over the back of a superb Newfoundland

dog, which would doubtless return his caresses if it were not made of terra cotta.

Suddenly the sound of footsteps was heard in the corridor and the chamber door opened, giving admittance to a person who, without speaking, walked directly to one of the stoves which did duty as a secretary, opened the oven door and took out a roll of papers, which he examined carefully.

"How's this!" cried the newcomer with a strong Piedmontese accent, "haven't you finished the chapter on Ventilators yet?"

"Allow me, uncle," replied the Turk; "the chapter on Ventilators is one of the most interesting in your work, and requires to be studied with care. I am studying it."

"But you always tell me the same thing, you wretch. And how about my chapter on Airtight Stoves?"

"The Airtights are coming on. But, by the way, uncle, if you could give me a little wood, I wouldn't mind. It's a little Siberia here. I'm so cold that I could send the thermometer down below zero simply by looking at it."

"What, have you used up a bundle of wood already?"

"Excuse me, uncle, there are bundles and bundles, and yours was very small."

"I'll send you some economical fuel. It retains the heat."

"That's just why it doesn't give out any."

"All right," said the Piedmontese, leaving the room again, "I'll send you a small bundle of wood. But I want my chapter on Airtight Stoves for to-morrow."

"When I have a fire, it will inspire me," said the Turk, whom his uncle had locked into the room.

If we were writing a tragedy, this would be the moment to introduce the confidant. His name would be Noureddin or Osman, and with a discreet and, at the same time, patronizing manner, he would walk up to our hero and would adroitly extort verses from him by the aid of these:

> My lord, what grief besets you now?
> And why so blanched your noble brow?
> Does Allah thwart your soul's desire?
> Or Ali fierce, with vengeful ire,
> Your secret gained, to distant shore
> Expel the charmer you adore?

But we are not writing tragedy, and, despite our need of a confidant, we must do without one.

Our hero is not what he seems to be, the turban does not make the Turk. The young man is our friend Rodolphe, taken in by his uncle, for whom he is at present preparing a manual of the *Perfect Chimney-Builder*. In truth, Monsieur Monetti, passionately devoted to his trade, had consecrated his life to chimney-building. The worthy Piedmontese had adopted for his own use a maxim almost identical with Cicero's, and in his en-

thusiastic moments he cried: *Nascuntur poê-liers*! [3] One day it had occurred to him to formulate, for the use of future races, a code of the theoretical principles of an art in the practice of which he excelled, and he had, as we have seen, selected his nephew to clothe his ideas in a form which would make them comprehensible. Rodolphe was boarded, lodged, etc., and was to receive a fee of three hundred francs on the completion of the *Manual.*

In the beginning, to encourage his nephew in the work, Monetti had generously advanced him fifty francs. But Rodolphe, who had not *seen* such a sum for nearly a year, left the house half insane, accompanied by his money, and remained away three days: on the fourth day he returned alone!

Monetti, who was in great haste to see the completion of his *Manual,* for he expected to obtain a diploma, dreaded some new escapade on his nephew's part; and in order to compel him to work by preventing him from going out, he took away his clothes and left in their place the disguise in which we have just seen him arrayed.

The famous *Manual,* however, continued to advance *piano, piano,* Rodolphe being absolutely without the necessary chords for that variety of literature. The uncle took his revenge for his indolent indifference to the subject of chimneys by compelling his nephew to undergo a multitude of privations. Sometimes he cut

down his supplies of food, and he often deprived him of smoking tobacco.

One Sunday, after he had laboriously sweated blood and ink over the famous chapter on Ventilators, Rodolphe broke his quill, which burned his fingers, and went out to walk in his park.

As if to taunt him and excite his envy in addition, he could not venture to glance in any direction without seeing a smoker at every window.

On the gilded balcony of a newly-built house, a dandy in a dressing-gown held the aristocratic *panatella* between his teeth. On the floor above, an artist exhaled the fragrant mist of Turkish tobacco burning in a pipe with an amber mouthpiece. At the window of a tavern, a burly German was consuming beer and expelling, with mathematical precision, opaque clouds of smoke from a meerschaum pipe. In every other direction, groups of workmen passed singing on their way to the barriers, their short clay-pipes between their teeth. Indeed, all the foot-passengers with whom the street was filled were smoking.

"Alas!" Rodolphe exclaimed enviously, "everybody in creation is smoking at this moment, except myself and my uncle's chimneys."

He rested his head against the balcony rail and thought how full of bitterness life was.

Suddenly he heard a prolonged, ringing peal of laughter below him. He leaned over to see whence

Chapter IV

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Chapter IV

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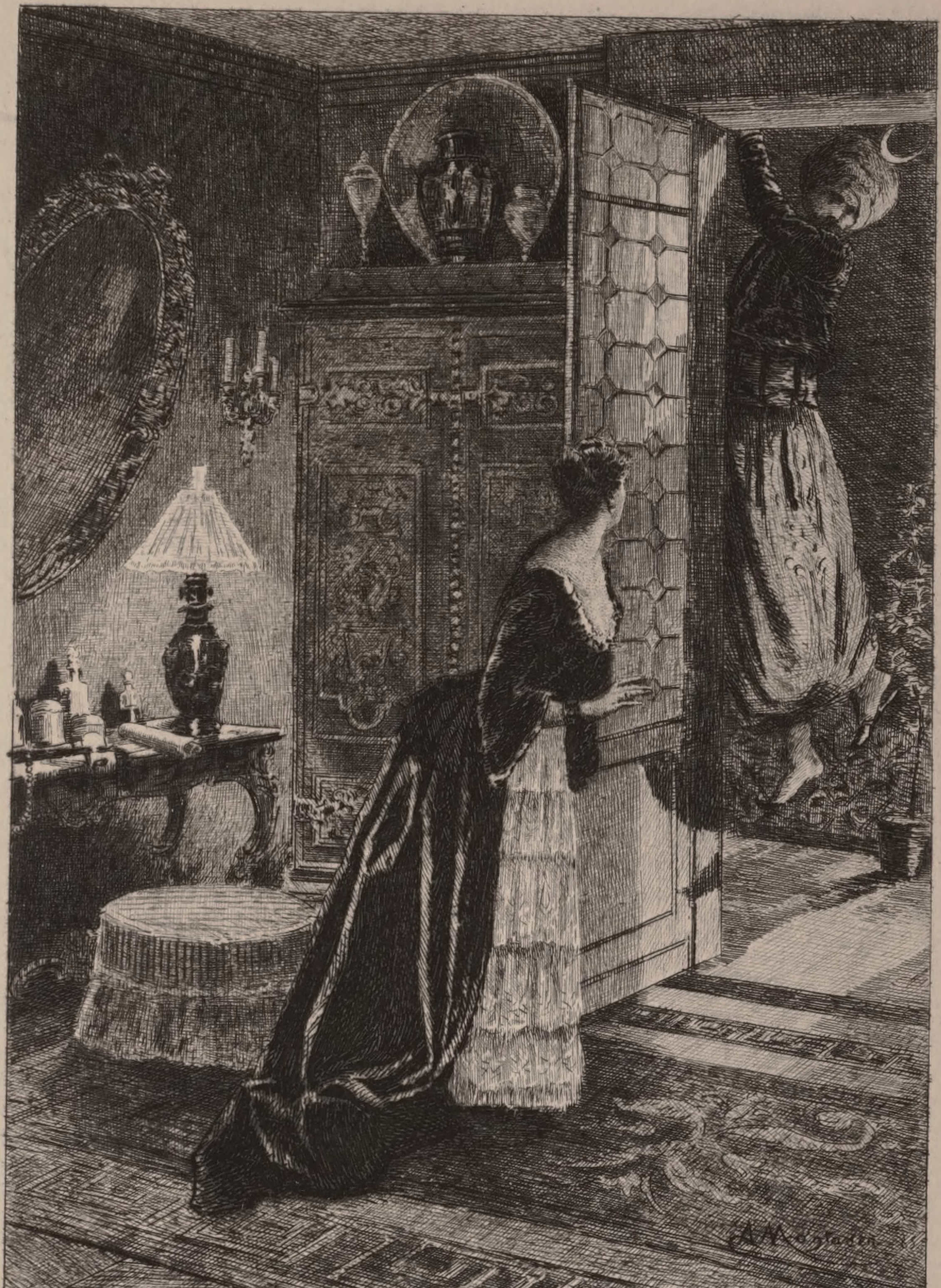

Mortader inv.

that volley of wild glee came, and he *perceived* that he had been *perceived* by the tenant of the floor below, Mademoiselle Sidonie, a *jeune première* at the Théâtre du Luxembourg.

Mademoiselle Sidonie came out upon her balcony, rolling between her fingers, with true Castilian dexterity, a bit of paper filled with light-colored tobacco, which she took from an embroidered velvet pouch.

"Oh! the lovely tobacco-pouch!" murmured Rodolphe in contemplative admiration.

"Who is that Ali-Baba?" Mademoiselle Sidonie was thinking.

And she cudgelled her brains for a pretext for opening a conversation with Rodolphe, who, for his part, was doing the same.

"Ah! *mon Dieu!*" cried Mademoiselle Sidonie, as if she were talking to herself; "*mon Dieu!* what a bore! I haven't a match."

"Will you allow me to offer you one, mademoiselle?" said Rodolphe, dropping two or three matches wrapped in paper.

"A thousand thanks!" said Sidonie, lighting her cigarette.

"*Mon Dieu*, mademoiselle," continued Rodolphe, "shall I venture to ask you, in exchange for the trifling service which my good angel allowed me to render you,——"

"What! he is asking already!" thought Sidonie,

looking at Rodolphe more attentively. "Ah! these Turks!" she said to herself; "they say they are fickle, but very pleasant. Speak, monsieur," she said aloud, looking up at Rodolphe; "what do you wish?"

"*Mon Dieu*, mademoiselle, I will ask you for the boon of a little tobacco; it's two days since I have smoked. Just one pipeful."

"With pleasure, monsieur. But how can I do it? If you will take the trouble to come down one flight."

"Alas! that is impossible. I am locked in; but I am free to employ a very simple method," said Rodolphe.

He tied his pipe to a string and lowered it to the balcony, where Mademoiselle Sidonie filled it generously. Rodolphe then proceeded, slowly and cautiously, to draw it up and recovered it safely.

"Ah! mademoiselle!" he said to Sidonie, "how much sweeter this pipe would taste if I could have lighted it at the fire of your eyes."

This agreeable pleasantry was in its hundredth edition at least, but Mademoiselle Sidonie considered it most magnificent, none the less.

"You flatter me!" she thought it her duty to reply.

"Ah! mademoiselle, I assure you that you seem to me as lovely as the three Graces."

"Really, Ali-Baba is very polite," thought Sidonie. "Are you really a Turk?" she asked Rodolphe.

"Not by preference," he said, "but from necessity; I am a dramatic author, madame."

"And I a dramatic artist," said Sidonie. "Monsieur my neighbor," she added, "will you do me the honor to dine and pass the evening with me?"

"Alas! mademoiselle, although that suggestion opens the gates of heaven to me, it is impossible for me to accept. As I have had the honor to tell you, I am locked in by my uncle, Sieur Monetti, stove-maker and chimney-builder, whose secretary I at present am."

"You shall dine with me, none the less," rejoined Sidonie; "listen to what I say: I will go back into my room and knock on the ceiling. Look carefully at the spot where I knock and you will find the marks of a small window that used to be there and was closed up; find some way of removing the piece of wood with which the hole is stopped up, and, although we shall both be in our own rooms, we shall be almost together."

Rodolphe set to work at once. Within five minutes communication was established between the two rooms.

"It's a small hole," said Rodolphe, "but it will be large enough for me to pass my heart through to you."

"Now we will dine," said Sidonie. "Set your table and I'll pass you the things to eat."

Rodolphe lowered his turban at the end of a string and drew it back filled with eatables; whereupon the poet and the artiste dined together, in their respective quarters. Rodolphe devoured the pâté with his teeth and Mademoiselle Sidonie with his eyes.

"Ah! mademoiselle," said Rodolphe when they had

finished their repast, "thanks to you, my stomach is satisfied. Could you not satisfy also the hunger of my heart which has fasted so long?"

"Poor boy!" said Sidonie; and, standing on a chair, she put her hand to Rodolphe's lips, which *gloved* it with kisses.

"Alas!" he cried, "what a pity that you can't do as Saint-Denis did, who enjoyed the privilege of carrying his head in his hands."

After dinner they engaged in an amoroso-literary conversation. Rodolphe mentioned the *Vengeur*, and Mademoiselle Sidonie asked him to read it. Leaning over the edge of the hole, Rodolphe began to declaim his drama to the actress, who, in order to be as near as possible, had seated herself in an armchair mounted on a commode. Mademoiselle Sidonie declared the *Vengeur* a masterpiece; and as she enjoyed some little authority at the theatre, she promised Rodolphe that his play should be accepted there.

At the most touching moment of their interview, uncle Monetti's step, as light and airy as the *Commander's*,[4] was heard in the corridor. Rodolphe barely had time to close the opening.

"Here's a letter that's been chasing around after you for a month," said Monetti to his nephew.

"Let me see it," said Rodolphe.—"Ah! uncle," he cried, "I am rich! This letter tells me that I have won a prize of three hundred francs in a competition for

Floral Games. Give me my coat and my other clothes quickly, that I may go to gather my laurels! They await me at the Capitol."

"And what about my chapter on Ventilators?" said Monetti coldly.

"Eh! much I care for that, uncle! Give me my clothes. I don't want to go out in this rig."

"You won't go out till my *Manual* is finished," said the uncle, giving the key a double turn.

Rodolphe, once more alone, did not hesitate as to the course he should take. He transformed a coverlid into a knotted rope and tied it firmly to his balcony rail; and, despite the perilous nature of the undertaking, he descended with the aid of this improvised ladder to Mademoiselle Sidonie's balcony.

"Who's there?" she cried, as Rodolphe knocked at her window.

"Hush!" he replied; "open——"

"What do you want? Who are you?"

"Can you ask? I am the author of the *Vengeur*, and I have come in search of my heart which I dropped into your room through the skylight."

"Unhappy youth," said the actress; "you might have killed yourself."

"Listen, Sidonie," rejoined Rodolphe, showing her the letter he had received. "As you see, fortune and glory smile upon me—let love follow their example!"

The next morning, with the aid of a masculine disguise furnished by Sidonie, Rodolphe was able to escape from his uncle's house. He hurried to the correspondent of the conductors of the Floral Games, and received a golden eglantine of about the worth of a hundred crowns, which lived almost as long as the roses live.

A month later Monsieur Monetti was invited by his nephew to be present at the first performance of the *Vengeur*. Thanks to Mademoiselle Sidonie's talent, the piece was played seventeen times, and brought its author forty francs.

Some time after—it was in the summer—Rodolphe was living on Avenue Saint Cloud, on the fifth branch of the third tree at your left as you leave the Bois de Boulogne.

V

CHARLEMAGNE'S CROWN

Toward the close of the month of December, the postmen employed by the Bidault administration were called upon to distribute about one hundred copies of an invitation, of which we certify the following to be a true and faithful copy:

"Monsieur ———

"Messieurs Rodolphe and Marcel request you to do them the honor of passing the evening with them on Saturday next, Christmas eve. There will be sport.

"P. S.—We have but one life ! !

"PROGRAMME OF FESTIVITIES

"At 7 o'clock, the salons will be open; brisk and animated conversation.

"At 8 o'clock, grand *entrée* and promenade through the salons by the clever authors of the *Mountain in Labor*, a comedy declined at the Theâtre de l'Odéon.

"At 8.30 o'clock, Monsieur Alexandre Schaunard, a

distinguished musical artist, will perform on the piano the *Influence of the Blue in Art,* an imitative symphony.

"At 9, first reading of the memorial concerning the abolition of the torture of tragedy.

"At 9.30, Monsieur Gustave Colline, hyperphysical philosopher, and Monsieur Schaunard will indulge in a discussion of the comparative merits of philosophy and metapolitics. In order to avoid any possible collision between the two disputants, they will be tied together.

"At 10, Monsieur Tristan, man of letters, will describe his first love-affairs. Monsieur Alexandre Schaunard will accompany him on the piano.

"At 10.30, second reading of the Memorial concerning the abolition of the torture of tragedy.

"At 11, description of a cassowary hunt, by a foreign prince.

SECOND PART

"At midnight, Monsieur Marcel, historical painter, will have his eyes blindfolded, and will sketch in chalk the interview between Napoléon and Voltaire in the Elysian Fields. Monsieur Rodolphe will at the same time present an extemporaneous parallel between the author of *Zaire* and the author of the *Battle of Austerlitz.*

"At 12.30, Monsieur Gustave Colline, in modest *deshabille,* will imitate the athletic games of the 4th Olympiad.

At 1 o'clock in the morning, third reading of the Me-

morial concerning the abolition of the torture of tragedy, and collection for the benefit of the tragic authors who may some day find themselves out of employment.

"At 2, opening of the games and formation of quadrilles, which will last till morning.

"At 6 o'clock, sunrise and final chorus.

"Throughout the festivities, ventilators will be in operation.

"N. B.—Any person who shall undertake to read or recite poetry will be instantly removed from the salons and turned over to the police; guests are also requested not to carry away candle-ends."

Two days later, copies of this invitation were in circulation in the lowest depths of literature and art, and caused a profound sensation there.

There were some, however, among the invited guests who cast doubt on the splendors promised by the two friends.

"I'm very sceptical," said one; "I have been to Rodolphe's Wednesdays now and then on Rue de la Tour d'Auvergne. There was no chance to sit down except in your mind's eye, and nothing to drink but filtered water in eclectic pottery."

"This time it's a serious matter," said another; "Marcel showed me the scheme of the entertainment, and it promises to be wonderfully effective."

"Will there be women?"

"Yes. Phémie Teinturière has asked to be queen of the fête, and Schaunard is to bring some society women."

This, in a few words, was the origin of this function, which caused such profound amazement in the Bohemian world that lives on the other side of the bridges. For a year past Marcel and Rodolphe had announced this luxurious entertainment, which was always to take place *next Saturday;* but painful circumstances had compelled their promise to make a fifty-two weeks' tour, so that they had reached a point where they could not take a step without colliding with some ironical remark from their friends, among whom there were those who were unmannerly enough to make emphatic demands upon them for the promised diversion. As the thing was beginning to be tiresome, the two friends determined to put an end to it by carrying out the engagements they had entered into. Thus it was that they had sent the above invitation.

"Now," said Rodolphe, "there is no drawing back, we have burned our ships, and we have a week to find the hundred francs that are absolutely indispensable in order to do the thing properly."

"As we must have them, we shall have them," Marcel replied. And the two friends fell asleep, trusting serenely in Chance and convinced that their hundred francs were already on the road—the road of the impossible.

But on the second day before that appointed for the

fête, as nothing had turned up, Rodolphe thought that it would perhaps be the surer way to give Chance a lift, if he did not wish to be disgraced when the time came to light the candles. To lighten the task, the friends made various modifications in the sumptuous bill of fare they had intended to provide.

And by these successive modifications, after they had ut down the article Cakes a considerable extent, and ..ad carefully reviewed and lessened in length the article Refreshments, the total expense was reduced to fifteen francs.

The problem was simplified but not yet solved.

"Well," said Rodolphe, "now we must employ heroic measures: of course we cannot relax our efforts now."

"Impossible," said Marcel.

"How long is it since I heard the story of the Battle of Studzianka?"

"About two months."

"Two months, good, that's a reasonable time, my uncle can't complain. I'll go to-morrow and have him tell me about the Battle of Studzianka; that will mean five francs, sure."

"And I," said Marcel, "will go and sell old Médicis a *Deserted Manor-house*. That will make five francs more. If I have time to put in three turrets and a mill, it will be worth ten francs to me perhaps, and our budget will be complete."

And the friends went to sleep, dreaming that the Prin-

cesse de Belgiojoso begged them to change their reception days in order not to take away her habitués.

Rising betimes, Marcel took a canvas and proceeded hastily to the construction of a *Deserted Manor-house*, an article which was in special request at a second-hand dealer's in Place du Carrousel. Rodolphe meanwhile went to call upon his uncle Monetti, who excelled in describing the retreat from Russia, and to whom Rodolphe afforded five or six times a year, in serious emergencies, the satisfaction of telling the story of his campaigns, in consideration of a small loan, which the stove-making, chimney-building veteran hardly ever refused if his listener displayed abundant enthusiasm over his narrative.

About two o'clock, Marcel, with a cloud on his brow and a picture under his arm, met Rodolphe on Place du Carrousel returning from his uncle's; his manner announced bad news.

"Well," said Marcel, "did you succeed?"

"No, my uncle has gone to Versailles to see the museum. And you?"

"That beast of a Médicis doesn't want any more *Ruined Châteaux;* he has ordered a *Bombardment of Tangier.*"

"Our reputations are ruined if we don't give our party," muttered Rodolphe. "What will our friend the influential critic think, if I make him put on a white cravat and yellow gloves for nothing?"

They returned together to the studio, torn by keen anxiety.

At that moment a clock in the neighborhood struck four.

"We have only three hours before us," said Rodolphe.

"But," cried Marcel, walking up to his friend, "are you quite sure, very sure, that we haven't any money left here? Eh?"

"Neither here nor elsewhere. What would it be left from?"

"Suppose we look under the furniture—in the chairs? They say that the *émigrés* used to hide their treasures in Robespierre's time. Who knows? Perhaps our easy chair belongs to an *émigré*; indeed it's so hard that I have often had an idea that there was metal in the seat. Shall we make an autopsy?"

"That's all nonsense," rejoined Rodolphe, in a tone in which severity was mingled with indulgence.

Suddenly Marcel, who had continued his investigations in every corner of the studio, uttered a loud shout of triumph.

"We are saved!" he cried, "I was sure that there were valuables here. Here, look at this!" and he showed Rodolphe a piece of money about the size of a crown and half-eaten by rust and verdigris.

It was a Carlovingian coin of some artistic value. The legend was luckily preserved, and they could make out a date in the reign of Charlemagne.

"That's worth thirty sous," said Rodolphe with a disdainful glance at his friend's find.

"Thirty sous well employed produce a great effect," replied Marcel. "With twelve hundred men Bonaparte compelled ten thousand Austrians to surrender. Skill is of equal value with numbers. I am going to change Charlemagne's crown at old Médicis'. Isn't there anything else here that we can sell? Look here, suppose I take the casting of the tibia of Jaconowski, the Russian drum-major? it would make a good club."

"Take the tibia. But it's too bad, we shan't have a single object of art left here."

During Marcel's absence, Rodolphe, who was determined to give the party whether or not, called upon his friend Colline, the hyperphysical philosopher, who lived only a few steps away.

"I have come to ask you to do me a favor," he said. "As master of the house, I absolutely must have a dress coat, and—I haven't one—lend me yours."

"But," said Colline, hesitating, "as an invited guest, I need my dress coat myself."

"I give you leave to come in your frock-coat."

"I never owned a frock-coat, you know very well."

"Well, listen, we can arrange it another way. If need be you can stay away from my party and lend me your dress coat."

"That would be very unpleasant; besides, I am on the programme, I can't fail."

"There are plenty of other things that will fail," said Rodolphe. "Lend me your dress coat, and, if you choose to come, come as you choose—in your shirt sleeves—you can pass yourself off as a faithful servant."

"Oh, no!" said Colline, blushing. "I'll wear my nut-brown great-coat. But after all, it's very disagreeable, do you know." And as he saw that Rodolphe had already taken possession of the famous dress coat, he cried:

"Just wait a moment—There are some few little things in the pockets."

Colline's coat deserves special mention. In the first place it was unmistakably blue, and it was from habit solely that Colline called it his black coat. As he was at that time the only one of the little band who possessed a dress coat, his friends also had acquired the habit of saying, when they spoke of the philosopher's state garment: "Colline's dress coat." Furthermore, that celebrated garment had a peculiar shape, the most peculiar that you can imagine: in the very long skirts, attached to a very short waist, were two pockets, veritable caverns, in which Colline was accustomed to accommodate some thirty or more volumes which he always had about him: a peculiarity which led his friends to say that, during the vacation at the libraries, scholars and men of letters could go for information to the skirts of Colline's coat, a library that was always open to readers.

On that day, by some extraordinary chance, the coat

contained only a quarto volume of Bayle, a treatise on the hyperphysical faculties, in three volumes, a volume of Condillac, two of Swedenborg, and Pope's *Essay on Man*. When he had emptied his coat-library, he allowed Rodolphe to put it on.

"Here," said the latter, "the left pocket is very heavy still; you have left something in it."

"Ah! yes," said Colline, "I forgot to empty the foreign languages pocket." And he took out an Arabic grammar, a Malayan dictionary, and a *Perfect Drover* in Chinese, his favorite reading.

When Rodolphe returned home, he found Marcel playing with five-franc pieces to the number of three. Obeying his first impulse, Rodolphe pushed back the hand his friend offered him; he thought he must have committed a crime.

"Let us make haste, let us make haste," said Marcel. "We have the fifteen francs we wanted. This is how I got them. I met an antiquary at Médicis.' When he saw my coin he nearly fainted away: it was the only one lacking in his collection. He had sent all over the world to fill the gap and had lost all hope. And so, when he had examined my Charlemagne piece, he didn't hesitate a moment about offering me five francs. Médicis nudged my elbow and his look did the rest. It said: 'Divide the price with me and I'll bid him up.' We went up to thirty francs. I gave the Jew fifteen and here's the rest. Now our guests can come, for we're in

a condition to dazzle them. Oho! so you have a dress coat, have you?"

"Yes," said Rodolphe, "Colline's." And as he was feeling in the pocket for his handkerchief, he pulled out a small volume in Manchurian, which had been overlooked in the foreign languages pocket.

The two friends proceeded at once to their preparations. They put the studio in order, they made a fire in the stove; a canvas frame, with candles attached, was suspended from the ceiling in the guise of a chandelier, a desk was placed in the centre of the studio to serve as a tribune for the orators; they placed it in front of the only armchair, which was to be occupied by the influential critic, and arranged on a table all the volumes,—novels, poems, *feuilletons*,—whose authors were to honor the occasion with their presence. In order to avoid any collision between the different corps of men of letters, the studio was divided into four compartments, at the entrances of which, upon four hastily constructed placards, could be read:

POETS	ROMANTICISTS
PROSE WRITERS	CLASSICISTS

The ladies were to occupy a space reserved for them in the centre.

"By the way, chairs are rather scarce," said Rodolphe.

"I tell you," said Marcel, "there are several chairs standing against the wall in the corridor. Suppose we gather them in!"

"Certainly we must gather them in," said Rodolphe, at once taking possession of the chairs, which belonged to some neighbor.

Six o'clock struck; the two friends went out and dined in haste, then returned to illuminate the salons. They were fairly dazzled themselves. At seven o'clock Schaunard arrived, accompanied by three ladies who had forgotten to bring their diamonds and their hats. One of them had a red shawl with black spots. Schaunard called Rodolphe's attention to her particularly.

"She's a very *comme il faut* woman," he said, "an Englishwoman driven into exile by the fall of the Stuarts; she makes a modest living by giving lessons in English. Her father was Chancellor under Cromwell, so she tells me; you must be polite to her; don't be too familiar."

Numerous footsteps were heard on the stairs; the guests were arriving; they seemed astonished to see a fire in the stove.

Rodolphe's dress coat went to meet the ladies and kissed their hands with a grace reminiscent of the Regency; when there were about a score present, Schaunard asked if they could not have a drink of something.

"Directly," said Marcel; "we are waiting for the influential critic to arrive before lighting the punch."

At eight o'clock, the invited guests had all arrived and they began to carry out the programme. The members alternated with drinks of something; none ever knew what.

About ten o'clock the white waistcoat of the influential critic appeared; he remained only an hour and was very moderate in his libations.

About midnight, as there was no more wood and it was very cold, the guests who were seated drew lots to see who should throw his chair into the fire.

At one o'clock they were all on their feet.

Nothing occurred to disturb the good-humored gayety that prevailed. There were no incidents to be regretted, except a rent in the foreign language pocket of Colline's coat, and a cuff administered by Schaunard to the daughter of Cromwell's chancellor.

The memorable affair was the subject of gossip in the quarter for a week; and Phémie Teinturière, who was the queen of the fête, was accustomed to say in speaking of it to her friends:

"It was mighty fine; there were wax candles, my dear."

VI

MADEMOISELLE MUSETTE

Mademoiselle Musette was a pretty girl of twenty, who, shortly after her arrival in Paris, became what pretty girls generally become when they have a slender waist, a large stock of coquetry, a little ambition and almost no orthography. After she had been for a long while the delight of supper-parties in the Latin Quarter, where she would sing in a voice that was always very fresh, if not very true, a great number of country ditties, which won for her the name under which the most cunning lapidaries of rhyme have since made her famous, Mademoiselle Musette suddenly left Rue de la Harpe to dwell on the Cytherean heights of the Breda Quarter.

She soon became one of the lionesses of the aristocracy of pleasure, and made gradual progress toward that celebrity which consists in being mentioned in the Paris newspapers or sold in lithographs at picture-dealers.

And yet Mademoiselle Musette was an exception among the women in the midst of whom she lived. Of an instinctively refined and poetic nature, like all women

who are truly women, she loved wealth and all the enjoyments it affords; her coquettish fancy ardently desired all that was beautiful and distinguished; girl of the people that she was, she would have been in no wise out of her element amid the most royal luxury. But Mademoiselle Musette, who was young and fair, would never have consented to be the mistress of a man who was not young and fair like herself. She had once bravely declined the magnificent offers of an old man who was so rich that he was called the Peru of the Chaussée-d'Antin and who had placed a golden staircase at the feet of Musette's caprices. She was intelligent and bright and had a repugnance for fools and ninnies whatever their age, name or title.

A lovely and excellent girl, therefore, was Musette, who in love adopted half of Champfort's celebrated aphorism: "Love is the interchange of two caprices." So it was that her liaisons had never been preceded by any of those shameful bargains which dishonor modern gallantry. As she herself said, Musette played with her cards on the table and demanded to be repaid in the coin of sincerity.

But although her attachments were spontaneous and warm, they were never sufficiently lasting to reach the height of a passion. And the extraordinary mobility of her fancies, the little anxiety she manifested to look at the purse or the boots of those who tried to play the gallant, imported a great deal of variety into her

life, which was a perpetual alternation of blue-lined coupés and omnibuses, entresols and fifth floors, silk dresses and calico dresses. O, charming damsel! thou living poem of youth with the ringing laugh and the joyous song! thou pitiful heart, beating for everybody beneath the half-open kerchief! O Mademoiselle Musette! sister of Bernerette and Mimi Pinson! it would need the pen of Alfred de Musset worthily to tell the story of your heedless, vagabond course through the flowery paths of youth; and he would certainly have wished to immortalize you, if he had, as I have, heard you sing in your pretty false voice this rustic stanza of one of your favorite ballads:

One day when Spring the earth new blessed,
A lover true I stood confessed,
  A brunette's lover I,
A cupid's heart she bore;
  And poised like butterfly
The dainty cap she wore.

The story we are about to tell is one of the most charming episodes in the life of that charming adventuress, who so often threw conventionality to the winds.

At a time when she was the mistress of a young Councillor of State, who had gallantly placed in her hands the key to his patrimony, Mademoiselle Musette was accustomed to give evening parties once a week in her pretty little salon on Rue de la Bruyère. Those parties

resembled the majority of similar functions in Paris, with the difference that the guests enjoyed themselves there; when there was not enough room, they sat in one another's laps, and it often happened that the same glass served for two. Rodolphe, who was a friend of Musette, and who was never anything more than a friend —neither of them ever knew why—Rodolphe asked Musette's permission to bring the painter Marcel; a talented fellow, he added, for whom the future was embroidering an academician's coat.

"Bring him!" said Musette.

On the evening when they were to go to Musette's together, Rodolphe called at Marcel's room for him. The artist was dressing.

"What!" said Rodolphe, "are you going into society with a colored shirt?"

"Does that wound custom?" inquired Marcel calmly.

"Wound it? to the quick, misguided youth."

"The devil!" said Marcel, gazing at his shirt, which had a blue ground, with vignettes representing wild boars chased by a pack of hounds, "you see I haven't any other here. Bah! never mind! I'll wear a false collar, and as *Methuselah* buttons up to my neck, no one will see the color of my linen."

"What!" said Rodolphe uneasily, "are you going to wear *Methuselah* again?"

"Alas! I must," said Marcel; "God wills it, and so

Chapter VI

Ignorant of the fact that she strongly suspected herself of being in love with him, he looked every morning at the flowers whose death was to mark the close of their liaison, and he was sorely puzzled to explain their constantly-renewed freshness. But at last he procured the key to the mystery: one night he awoke and found that Musette was not by his side. He rose and looked around the room and found his mistress taking advantage of his slumber to water the flowers and keep them alive.

Chapter VI

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does my tailor; besides it has a new set of buttons and I've patched it as well as I could with black stuff."

Methuselah was Marcel's dress coat; he called it by that name because it was the dean of his wardrobe. *Methuselah* was made in the latest style of four years before, and was, moreover, of an atrocious green; but Marcel declared that, by candlelight, it made a good black.

In five minutes Marcel was dressed; he was dressed in the most perfect bad taste: the costume of a studio drudge going into society.

Monsieur Casimir Bonjour will not be so surprised on the day he hears of his election to the Institute, as Marcel and Rodolphe were upon arriving at Mademoiselle Musette's house. This was the reason of their surprise:—Mademoiselle Musette, who had fallen out some time before with her lover the Councillor of State, had been abandoned by him at a very critical moment. She was sued by her tradesmen and her landlord, and her furniture had been seized and taken down into the courtyard, to be carried away and sold the next day. Despite that incident it did not for a moment occur to Mademoiselle Musette to disappoint her guests, and she did not renounce her evening at home. In all seriousness, she ordered the courtyard to be arranged as a salon, spread a carpet on the ground, prepared everything as usual, dressed to receive her guests and

invited all the other tenants to her little fête, to whose splendor the good Lord vouchsafed to contribute the illumination.

The joke was a tremendous success; Musette's evenings had never been so animated and hilarious; they were still dancing and singing when the agents came to take away furniture and carpets, and the company was compelled to retire.

Musette escorted all her guests to the street, singing:

"They'll talk a long while, la ri ra,
Of my Thursday evening's glee;
They'll talk a long while, la ri ri."

Marcel and Rodolphe were left alone with Musette, who had gone up to her room, where there was nothing but the bed.

"Ah ça!" said Musette, "my adventure isn't so amusing as it was; you see I shall have to go and take lodgings in the open air. I am well acquainted with those lodgings; there are horrible draughts there."

"Ah! madame," said Marcel, "if I had the power of Plutus, I should be glad to offer you a temple more beautiful than Solomon's, but—"

"You are not Plutus, my friend. All the same I thank you for your good intentions. Pshaw!" she added, glancing around the apartment, "I was awfully bored here; and then the furniture was old, I'd had

it nearly six months! But that's not all; after the ball, people sup, I suppose."

"Let us sup-pose then," said Marcel, who had a mania for punning, especially in the morning, when he was terrible.

As Rodolphe had won some money at a game of ansquenet which had been in progress during the night, e took Marcel and Musette to a restaurant that had ;ıst opened.

After breakfast, the three boon companions, who had no desire to sleep, spoke of finishing the day in the country, and as they were near a railway station, they took the first train that was ready to start, and were landed at Saint-Germain.

They wandered through the woods all day, and did not return to Paris until seven in the evening, and even then in spite of the opposition of Marcel, who insisted that it could not be later than half-past twelve, and that the reason it was so dark was because it was a cloudy day.

During the night of the fête and the day that followed it, Marcel, whose heart was a magazine that a single glance would explode, had fallen in love with Mademoiselle Musette and had paid *high-colored* court to her, as he said to Rodolphe. He had gone so far as to suggest to the fair damsel that he should purchase for her a new supply of furniture finer than the old, with the proceeds of the sale of his famous picture, the

Passage of the Red Sea. So it was that the artist was pained at the thought that the hour was approaching when he must part from Musette, who, while allowing him to kiss her hands and neck and divers other accessories, confined herself to repulsing him gently whenever he attempted to take possession of her heart by violence.

On reaching Paris, Rodolphe left his friend with the young woman, who requested the artist to escort her to her door.

"Will you allow me to come to see you?" Marcel asked; "I will paint your portrait."

"My dear friend," said the pretty creature, "I can't give you my address, as I shall have none to-morrow; but I will come to see you, and I will mend your coat, which has such a great hole that one could move out through it without paying the rent."

"I will await you as the Messiah," said Marcel.

"Not so long as that," said Musette, laughing.

"What a charming girl!" said Marcel to himself as he walked slowly away; "she's the goddess of gayety. I will make two holes in my coat."

He had not taken thirty steps when he felt a hand on his shoulder; it was Mademoiselle Musette.

"My dear Monsieur Marcel," said she, "are you a true French knight?"

"I am: 'Rubens and my lady' is my motto."

"Then listen to my tale of woe and have compassion

on me, noble sir," rejoined Musette, who was slightly tinctured with literature, although she committed direful St. Bartholomews on syntax; "my landlord has taken the key to my apartment, and it is eleven o'clock at night: do you understand?"

"I understand," said Marcel, offering Musette his arm.

He escorted her to his studio on Quai aux Fleurs.

Musette was fairly dropping with sleep; but she still had sufficient strength to say to Marcel as she pressed his hand:

"You will remember what you promised me."

"O Musette! charming damsel!" said the artist in a slightly tremulous voice, "you are beneath a hospitable roof; good-night, sleep in peace! I am going away!"

"Why?" said Musette, her eyes almost shut; "I'm not afraid, I assure you; there are two rooms, and I'll sleep on your couch."

"My couch is too hard to sleep on, it's stuffed with pebbles. I offer you hospitality in my quarters and I am going to ask hospitality from a friend who lives on this same floor; it is the more prudent course," he said. "I keep my word ordinarily; but I am twenty-two years old and you are eighteen, O Musette!—and I go. Good-night."

The next morning, at eight o'clock, Marcel entered his room with a jar of flowers he had bought at the market. He found Musette, who had thrown herself

fully dressed on the bed, still asleep. At the noise he made, she awoke and offered Marcel her hand.

"Good boy!" she said.

"Good boy," Marcel repeated, "isn't that equivalent to mockery?"

"Oh! why do you say that?" said Musette; "it isn't nice of you; instead of saying unkind things, offer me that pretty jar of flowers."

"I brought it for you," said Marcel. "So take it, and in return for my hospitality sing me one of your pretty songs; perhaps the echoes of my attic will retain something of your voice, and I shall still hear you even after you have gone."

"Oho! so you propose to turn me out of doors, do you?" said Musette. "And suppose I don't choose to go? Listen to me, Marcel; I don't go up thirty-six ladders to say what I think. I like you and you like me. That isn't love, but it may be the seed of it. Very good; I'm not going away; I propose to stay, and to stay until the flowers you have just given me have faded."

"Ah!" cried Marcel, "they will be withered in two days; if I had known I'd have brought immortelles."

Musette and Marcel had lived together for a fortnight, leading the most charming life imaginable, although they were often without money. Musette felt for the artist an affection which had nothing in common with her previous passions, and Marcel was beginning to fear

that he was seriously in love with his mistress. Ignorant of the fact that she strongly suspected herself of being in love with him, he looked every morning at the flowers whose death was to mark the close of their liaison, and he was sorely puzzled to explain their constantly-renewed freshness. But at last he procured the key to the mystery: one night he awoke and found that Musette was not by his side. He rose and looked around the room and found his mistress taking advantage of his slumber to water the flowers and keep them alive.

VII

THE SANDS OF PACTOLUS

It was the 19th of March—and though he should live to the advanced age of Monsieur Raoul-Rochette, who saw the building of Nineveh, Rodolphe will never forget that day; for, on that day, the feast of St. Joseph, at three o'clock in the afternoon, our friend emerged from the office of a banker where he had received five hundred francs in resonant current coin.

The first use Rodolphe made of this slice of Peru which had fallen into his pocket, was not to pay his debts, inasmuch as he had registered an oath internally to economize and not to indulge in any extras. Moreover he had some extraordinarily well-defined ideas on that subject, and said that one should provide the necessaries of life, before turning his attention to the superfluities; that is why he did not pay his creditors but did buy a Turkish pipe which he had long coveted.

Armed with that purchase, he repaired to the abode of his friend Marcel, who had furnished him with a lodging for some time past, As he entered the artist's studio, Rodolphe's pockets carolled like a village bell on some

great holiday. Hearing that unaccustomed sound, Marcel supposed that it was one of his neighbors, a great bear in the stock market, counting up his profits, and he muttered:

"There's that schemer opposite beginning his epigrams again. If this is to last, I shall give notice. It's impossible to work in such an uproar. It makes one think of dropping the profession of a poor artist to become forty thieves." And without the least suspicion that his friend Rodolphe was metamorphosed into a Crœsus, Marcel returned to his picture of the *Passage of the Red Sea*, which had been on his easel three years.

Rodolphe, who had not yet spoken a word, but was ruminating over an experiment he proposed to try on his friend, was saying to himself:

"We will have some sport directly, ah! how amusing it will be, *mon Dieu!*" and he dropped a five-franc piece on the floor.

Marcel raised his eyes and looked at Rodolphe, who was as solemn as an article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

The artist picked up the piece with a well-satisfied air and bestowed a warm welcome upon it, for although a hard-working artist, he was well brought up, and was very civil to strangers. But, knowing that Rodolphe had gone out to look for money, and seeing that he had apparently been successful in his search, Marcel confined

himself to admiring the result without inquiring by what means it had been attained.

He returned to his work therefore without a word and finished drowning an Egyptian in the waves of the Red Sea. As he was committing that homicidal act, Rodolphe dropped a second five-franc piece. And, anticipating the face that the painter would make, he began to laugh in his beard, which is tricolored as everybody knows.

At the ringing sound of the metal Marcel sprang suddenly to his feet, as if he had had an electric shock, and cried:

"How now! is there a second couplet?"

A third piece rolled on the floor, then another, then still another; at last a whole quadrille of coins went dancing around the room.

Marcel began to exhibit unmistakable symptoms of mental alienation, and Rodolphe laughed like the pit of the Théâtre-Français at the first performance of *Jeanne de Flandre*. Suddenly, and without any warning, Rodolphe plunged his hands into his pockets and the coins began a fabulous *steeple-chase*. It was the overflowing of Pactolus, the Bacchanalian dance of Jupiter entering the apartments of Danaë.

Marcel stood like a statue, dumb, with staring eyes; amazement produced in him a metamorphosis similar to that which curiosity brought upon Lot's wife long ago; and as Rodolphe threw upon the floor his last pile of a

hundred francs, one whole side of the artist's body turned to salt.

Rodolphe was still laughing. And beside that tempestuous hilarity, the thunders of one of Monsieur Sax's orchestras would have seemed like the sighing of children at the breast.

Dazzled, suffocated, stupefied by emotion, Marcel thought that he was dreaming; and to drive away the nightmare that beset him, he bit his finger till the blood came, thereby causing excruciating pain which made him cry out.

He discovered then that he was fully awake; and finding that he was trampling gold under his feet, he cried, as in tragedies:

"Can I believe my eyes!"

He took Rodolphe's hand in his.

"Explain this mystery," he said.

"If I should explain it to you, it wouldn't be a mystery."

"Tell me what it means."

"This gold is the fruit of the sweat of my brow," said Rodolphe, picking up the money and arranging it on a table; then, stepping back two or three feet, he contemplated with respect the five hundred francs arranged in piles, and he thought:

"Am I at last to see the realization of my dreams?"

"There must be nearly six thousand francs there," said Marcel to himself, gazing at the coins trembling on

the table. "I have an idea. I will make Rodolphe buy my *Passage of the Red Sea*."

Suddenly Rodolphe assumed a theatrical attitude, and with great solemnity of gesture and voice, he said to the artist:

"Hark ye, Marcel, the fortune which I have caused to gleam before your eyes is not the result of base manœuvres, I have not traded with my pen, I am rich but honest; this gold was given me by a generous hand, and I have sworn to use it to acquire by hard work an honorable position for a virtuous man. Work is the most sacred of duties."

"And the horse the noblest of animals," Marcel interrupted—"Bah!" he added, "what does this harangue mean, where do you get this prosy stuff? from the quarries of the school of common-sense, eh?"

"Do not interrupt me, and spare me your mockery," said Rodolphe; "it would lose its edge on the cuirass of invulnerable determination with which I am protected henceforth."

"Come, come, enough of such a prologue as this. What are you coming at?"

"These are my plans: Being beyond the reach of the material annoyances of life, I propose to go to work in earnest; I shall finish my *great machine*, and I shall set myself right in public opinion. In the first place I renounce Bohemia, I shall dress like other people, I shall have a black coat, and I shall frequent the salons. If

you choose to follow in my footsteps, we will continue to live together, but you must adopt my programme. The strictest economy will preside over our existence. If we are able to mend our ways, we have three months of hard work assured without anything to worry about. But we must be economical."

"My friend," said Marcel, "economy is a science that is within reach of the rich only, so that you and I are ignorant of its first elements. However, if you will advance six francs, we can purchase the works of Monsieur Jean-Baptiste Say, who is a very distinguished economist, and perhaps he will teach us how to practise the science—I say, is that a Turkish pipe you have there?"

"Yes," said Rodolphe, "I bought it for twenty-five francs."

"What! you put twenty-five francs in a pipe—and you talk about economy?"

"Why, this is certainly an economy," rejoined Rodolphe; "I break a two-sou pipe every day; that counts up at the end of the year to a much larger sum than I spent for this—So it's really a saving."

"After all," said Marcel, "you are right; I shouldn't have thought of that."

At that moment a clock in the neighborhood struck six.

"Let us dine at once," said Rodolphe, "I propose to make a start this very evening. But, speaking of

dinner, this thought occurs to me: every day we waste valuable time in doing our own cooking; now, time is the toiler's treasure, so we must be economical with it. Beginning to-day, we will take our meals away from home."

"Yes," said Marcel, "there's an excellent restaurant within twenty yards; it's a little dear, but as it's close at hand it won't take so long to go there, and we shall make up for the extra expense by the time we gain."

"We will go there to-day," said Rodolphe; "but to-morrow, or later, we will see about adopting some more economical plan; instead of going to the restaurant, we'll hire a cook."

"No, no," interposed Marcel; "rather let us hire a man-servant, who will also do our cooking. Here are a few of the tremendous advantages that will result. In the first place, our house will always be in order; he will polish our boots, wash my brushes, do our errands; I will try to inspire him with a taste for the fine arts, and I will make him my drudge. In that way we shall save between us at least six hours a day in petty duties and chores which would not fail to injure the quality of our work."

"Ah!" said Rodolphe, "I have another idea—but let's go to dinner."

Five minutes later, the two friends were installed in one of the private rooms at the neighboring restaurant, and continued to discuss economy.

"This is my idea: Suppose, instead of hiring a man, we should take a mistress?" queried Rodolphe.

"A mistress for two!" said Marcel in dismay; "that would be avarice carried to the point of extravagance, and we should be likely to spend our savings for knives to cut each other's throats. I prefer the servant. In the first place, it makes people think well of you."

"All right," said Rodolphe, "we will pick up some intelligent fellow, and if he has a smattering of orthography, I'll teach him to correct proof."

"That will be something to turn to in his old age," said Marcel, adding up the bill, which amounted to fifteen francs. "Look! it's pretty high. Usually we dine for thirty sous for both."

"True," rejoined Rodolphe, "but we dined badly, and were obliged to sup at night. So, take it all in all, it's a saving."

"You are too much for me," murmured the artist, vanquished by this logic; "you are always right. Are we to work to-night?"

"Faith, no. I am going to see my uncle; he's an excellent man, and I must tell him of my new position; he'll give me good advice. Where are you going, Marcel?"

"I am going to see old Médicis to ask him if he can't give me some pictures to restore. By the way, give me five francs."

"What for?"

"To go across the Pont des Arts."

"Oh! that's a useless expense, and although it's a small matter, it is contrary to our principle."

"I am wrong, I admit," said Marcel. "I will go by Pont Neuf. But I'll take a cab."

And the two friends parted, each taking a different road, which, by a curious chance, led them both to the same place, where they met.

"Hallo, so you didn't find your uncle?" queried Marcel.

"So you didn't see Médicis?" queried Rodolphe.

And they roared with laughter.

However, they returned home very early—the next day.

Two days later Rodolphe and Marcel were completely transformed. Dressed like bridegrooms of the first class, they were so fine, so resplendent, so elegant, that when they met in the street they were slow to recognize each other.

Their system of economy was in full vigor, but they found it hard to carry out their scheme of hard work. They had hired a man-servant. He was a tall fellow, thirty-four years old, of Swiss extraction, and with an intelligence that recalled Jocrisse's. He was not born to be a servant, by the way; and if one of his masters gave him a package to carry that was somewhat large, Baptiste would blush with indignation and send a porter on the errand. However, Baptiste had his good qualities; for instance, if you gave him a hare, he could make a stew of it at need. Furthermore, as he had been a distiller

before he became a valet, he had retained a great love for his trade, and spent a large part of the time he owed his masters in the attempt to compound a new vulnerary to which he proposed to give his name; he was successful also in brewing ratafia. But where Baptiste had no rival was in the art of smoking Marcel's cigars and lighting them with Rodolphe's manuscripts.

One day Marcel attempted to make Baptiste pose in the costume of Pharaoh for his picture of the *Passage of the Red Sea*. Baptiste met the suggestion with a downright refusal, and demanded his wages.

"Very good," said Marcel; "I will settle your account this evening."

When Rodolphe returned, his friend informed him that they must discharge Baptiste. "He's of absolutely no use to us," he said.

"True," was Rodolphe's reply, "he's a living object of art."

"He's a beast to be cooked."

"He's a lazy dog."

"We must discharge him."

"Let us discharge him."

"However, he has some good qualities. He makes jugged hare very well."

"And ratafia, too. He is the Raphael of ratafia."

"Yes, but he's good for nothing else, and that isn't enough for us. We waste all our time disputing with him."

"He prevents us from working."

"It's his fault that I shall not have my *Passage of the Red Sea* finished for the Salon. He has refused to pose for Pharaoh."

"Thanks to him I haven't been able to finish the work I was asked to do. He wouldn't go to the library to get the notes I needed."

"He is ruining us."

"Decidedly we can't afford to keep him."

"Let's discharge him. But in that case we must pay him."

"We'll pay him, but let him go! give me some money and I'll settle with him."

"Money! why, I don't keep the key to the cash-box; you do."

"Not at all; you do. You undertook the general stewardship," said Rodolphe.

"But I assure you that I haven't any money!" exclaimed Marcel.

"Can it be that it's all gone so soon? It's impossible! A man can't spend five hundred francs in a week, especially when he lives, as we have done, with the strictest economy and confines himself to what is absolutely necessary."—To what is absolutely superfluous, he should have said.—"We must audit the accounts; we shall find the error."

"Yes," said Marcel, "but we shan't find the money. Never mind, let us consult the book of expenses."

Here is a specimen of the account, which had been opened under the auspices of Saint Economy:

"'March 19.—Received, 500 fr. Spent: A Turkish pipe, 25 fr.; dinner, 15 fr.; divers expenses, 40 fr.'"

"What are those expenses?" Rodolphe asked Marcel, who was reading.

"You know very well," he replied; "it was the night when we didn't come home till morning. At all events, we economized in fuel and candles."

"What next? Go on."

"'March 20th. Breakfast, 1 fr. 50 c.; tobacco, 20 c.; dinner, 2 fr.; an eye-glass, 2 fr. 50.' Oho!" said Marcel, "that eye-glass was for you! What the devil did you need of an eye-glass? your sight's perfectly good."

"You know that I had to write an account of the Salon for *L'Écharpe d'Iris*; it isn't possible to write a criticism of paintings without an eye-glass; it was a legitimate expense. What next?"

"'A bamboo cane——'"

"Ah! that was for you," said Rodolphe; "you didn't need a cane."

"That's all we spent on the 20th," said Marcel without further comment. "On the 21st we breakfasted out, and dined out, and supped out too."

"We couldn't have spent much on that day?"

"No, very little. Barely thirty francs."

"But what for?"

"I don't know," said Marcel; "but it's put down under the heading *Divers expenses.*"

"A vague and treacherous heading!" said Rodolphe.

"The 22d. That was the day we hired Baptiste: we paid him 5 fr. on account of his salary; 'to the barrel-organ (*orgue de Barbarie*), 50 c.; for the ransom of four small Chinese children condemned to be thrown into the Yellow River by parents of incredible barbari-ty —*barbarie*—2 fr. 40 c.'"

"Ah, ça!" said Rodolphe, "just explain the contradiction that I notice in that entry. If you give money to *orgues de barbarie*, why do you insult *barbarous* parents? What necessity, moreover, for ransoming little Chinese. If the money had only been spent for eau-de-vie!"

"I was born generous," retorted Marcel, "go on; thus far we have departed very little from economical principles."

"On the 23d there was nothing special. On the 24th, ditto. There are two good days. 'On the 25th, 3 francs to Baptiste on account of his salary.'"

"It seems to me that we give him money very often," said Marcel, by way of reflection.

"We shall owe him less," said Rodolphe. "Go on."

"'The 26th of March, divers expenses, useful from the standpoint of art, 36 fr. 40 c.'"

"What the devil can we have bought that's so use-

ful?" said Rodolphe. "I don't remember. 36 fr. 40 c.—what can that have been?"

"You say you don't remember? It was the day we went up in the towers of Notre-Dame to get a bird's-eye view of Paris."

"It costs eight sous to go up in the towers," said Rodolphe.

"Yes, but when we came down we dined at Saint-Germain."

"That explanation sins on the side of clearness."

"On the 27th there was nothing special."

"Good! that's economy."

"'The 28th, Baptiste, on account of wages, 6 fr.'"

"Ah! now I am sure we don't owe him anything. It may well be that he owes us. We must see."

"29th. We didn't put down anything on the 29th; the expense column is occupied by the beginning of an article on morals."

"30th. Ah! we had company to dinner: expenses were heavy: 30 fr. 55 c. On the 31st, that's to-day, we haven't spent anything as yet. You see," said Marcel, rising, "the accounts have been kept very carefully. The total isn't 500 francs."

"Then there must be some money left in the treasury."

"We can find out," said Marcel, opening a drawer. "No, there's nothing here. There's only a cobweb."

"Cobwebs in the morning, disappointment," said Rodolphe.

"Where the devil can so much money have gone?" rejoined Marcel, thunderstruck at the sight of the empty drawer.

"*Parbleu!* it's very simple," said Rodolphe, "we've given it all to Baptiste."

"Wait a moment!" cried Marcel, thrusting his hand into the drawer, where he spied a paper. "A receipt for the last quarter's rent!" he exclaimed.

"The devil!" said Rodolphe, "how did that come there?"

"And signed, too," added Marcel; "did you pay the landlord, then?"

"I!—nonsense!" said Rodolphe.

"But what does it mean?"

"I assure you——"

"Pray, what is this mystery?" they sang in unison to the air of the final chorus of *La Dame Blanche*.

Baptiste, who loved music, at once came running in.

Marcel showed him the receipt.

"Oh! yes," said Baptiste carelessly, "I had forgotten to tell you that the landlord came this morning while you were out. I paid him, to save him the trouble of coming again."

"Where did you find the money?"

"Why, monsieur," said Baptiste, "I took it from the drawer, which was open; indeed I thought that you gentlemen had left it open for that purpose, and I said to myself: 'My masters forgot to tell me when they

went out: "Baptiste, the landlord will come for his rent to-day, you must pay him;" ' and I did as if they had ordered me to do so, without waiting for the order."

"Baptiste," said Marcel, white with wrath, "you went beyond our orders; from and after to-day you cease to be a part of our household. Give up your livery, Baptiste."

Baptiste removed the glazed linen cap which constituted his livery and handed it to Marcel.

"Very good," said the latter: "now you may go."

"And what about my wages?"

"What do you say, knave? You have received more than we owe you. I have given you fourteen francs in less than a fortnight. What do you do with so much money? Are you keeping a dancer?"

"A rope dancer," suggested Rodolphe.

"So I am to be abandoned," said the unfortunate servant, "without a roof to shelter my head!"

"Take back your livery," said Marcel, moved in spite of himself.

And he gave Baptiste his cap once more.

"That wretch is the one who has squandered our fortune, nevertheless," said Rodolphe, as poor Baptiste left the room. "Where shall we dine to-day?"

"We shall know to-morrow," replied Marcel.

VIII

WHAT A FIVE-FRANC PIECE COSTS

One Saturday evening, in the days before he set up housekeeping with Mademoiselle Mimi, who will soon appear upon the stage, Rodolphe made the acquaintance at his table d'hôte, of a dealer in toilet articles, known as Mademoiselle Laure. Having learned that Rodolphe was editor-in-chief of *L'Écharpe d'Iris* and *Le Castor*, journals of fashion, the modiste, in the hope of obtaining puffs for her goods, ogled him in a most significant way. Rodolphe answered her challenge by an explosion of madrigals calculated to arouse the jealousy of Benserade, Voiture and all the Ruggieris of the amorous school; and at the end of dinner Mademoiselle Laure, having learned that Rodolphe was a poet, gave him clearly to understand that she was not averse to accepting him for her Petrarch. Without needless circumlocution she made an appointment with him for the following day.

"*Parbleu!*" said Rodolphe to himself as he walked home with Mademoiselle Laure, "this is most cer-

tainly a very agreeable person. She seems to me to be well up in grammar and to have an ample wardrobe. I am quite disposed to make her happy."

Arrived at the door of her abode, Mademoiselle Laure dropped Rodolphe's arm and thanked him for the trouble he had taken in accompanying her to such a distant quarter of the city.

"O madame," replied Rodolphe, bowing to the ground, "I could wish that you lived at Moscow or the Sunda Isles, so that I might longer enjoy the pleasure of being your cavalier."

"That's a little far," said Laure affectedly.

"We could have gone by the boulevards, madame," said Rodolphe. "Allow me to kiss your hand by means of your cheek," he continued, kissing Laure on the lips, before she had time to resist.

"O monsieur!" she exclaimed, "you go too fast."

"In order to arrive sooner," retorted Rodolphe. "In love, the first stages ought to be taken at a gallop."

"What a saucy fellow!" thought the modiste as she entered the house.

"What a pretty creature!" said Rodolphe as he walked away.

Returning home, he hurried to bed and dreamed the sweetest dreams. He fancied himself at balls, theatres, and promenades, with Mademoiselle Laure on his arm arrayed in robes more gorgeous than those for which the coquettes in fairy tales sigh.

The next day Rodolphe rose, as usual, at eleven o'clock. His first thought was for Mademoiselle Laure.

"She's a very well-bred woman," he said. "I'm sure she was brought up at Saint-Denis. So at last I'm to have the delight of having a mistress who knows something. I certainly will make sacrifices for her, I'll draw my money at *L'Écharpe d'Iris*, I'll buy gloves and take Laure to dine at a restaurant where they furnish napkins. My coat isn't very handsome," he said as he dressed; "but never mind! black always looks well!"

He went out and started for the office of *L'Écharpe d'Iris*.

As he crossed the street he passed an omnibus with a placard on its side, which read:

TO-DAY, SUNDAY, THE FOUNTAINS WILL PLAY AT VERSAILLES

A thunderbolt falling at Rodolphe's feet would not have caused him a greater shock than the sight of that placard.

"To-day, Sunday! I had forgotten it," he cried; "I shall not be able to get any money. To-day, Sunday! ! ! Why, all the crowns there are in Paris are on the way to Versailles."

However, spurred on by one of those fabulous hopes to which man always clings, Rodolphe hurried to the

office of his newspaper, thinking that some lucky chance might have led the cashier thither.

Monsieur Boniface had in fact been there for a moment, but had left again immediately.

"To go to Versailles," the office-boy told Rodolphe.

"Well, it's no use," said Rodolphe. "But let us see," he reflected, "my appointment isn't until evening. It is noon now and I have five hours in which to pick up five francs,—twenty sous an hour, like the horses in the Bois de Boulogne. Off we go!"

As he happened to be in the quarter where a newspaper man whom he called the influential critic resided, Rodolphe thought he would try his luck with him.

"I am sure of finding him," he said as he climbed the stairs; "it's his day for the *feuilleton* and there's no danger of his going out. I will borrow five francs from him."

"Ah! it is you," said the man of letters, when he saw Rodolphe, "you come at a good time; I have a little favor to ask of you."

"How lucky!" thought the editor of *L'Écharpe d'Iris*.

"Were you at the Odéon last night?"

"I am always at the Odéon."

"Then you have seen the new play?"

"Who would have seen it, if not I? I am the audience of the Odéon."

"True," said the critic, "you are one of the caryatids of that theatre. Indeed, there is a rumor that you furnish the subsidy. Well, this is what I want to ask you: to give me a sketch of the new play."

"That's easily done; I have a creditor's memory."

"By whom is the play?" the critic asked Rodolphe, while the latter was writing.

"It's by a man."

"It can't be very strong."

"Not so strong as a Turk, most assuredly."

"In that case it isn't robust. The Turks, you see, have usurped the reputation for strength; they couldn't be Savoyards."

"What would prevent them?"

"Because all Savoyards are Auvergnats and the Auvergnats are porters. And then there aren't any Turks now except at the masked balls at the barriers and on the Champs-Élysées, where they sell dates. The Turk is a prejudice. I have a friend who knows the Orient, and he assures me that the whole nation came into the world on Rue Coquenard."

"What you say sounds very pretty," said Rodolphe.

"Do you think so?" said the critic. "I am going to put it in my *feuilleton*."

"Here's my analysis of the play; it's done summarily," said Rodolphe.

"Yes, but it's short."

"By putting in hyphens, and developing your critical opinion, it will fill up the space."

"I haven't the time, my dear fellow, and then, too, my critical opinion doesn't take up enough room."

"You can put in an adjective every three words."

"Couldn't you work into your analysis a short, or rather a long, estimate of the play?" queried the critic.

"*Bless me,*" said Rodolphe, "I have my own ideas about the tragedy, but I give you warning that I have printed them three times in *Le Castor* and *L'Écharpe d'Iris.*"

"Never mind, how many lines do your ideas make?"

"Forty."

"The deuce! you have extensive ideas, I must say! Well, lend me your forty lines."

"Good," thought Rodolphe, "if I give him twenty francs' worth of copy, he can't refuse to lend me five francs,—I ought to tell you," he said to the critic, "that my ideas are not altogether new. They're a little threadbare at the elbow. Before printing them I roared them in all the cafés in Paris; there isn't a waiter who doesn't know them by heart."

"Oh! what do I care for that! You evidently don't know me! Is there anything new in the world—except virtue?"

"There you are," said Rodolphe, when he had finished.

"Thunder and tempest! I still lack two columns.—How am I to fill that chasm?" cried the critic. "While you are about it, pray supply me with a few paradoxes!"

"I haven't any about me," said Rodolphe; "but I can lend you a few; only they're not mine; I bought them for fifty centimes from a friend of mine, who was in want. They've been used very little as yet."

"Good!" said the critic.

"By Jove!" said Rodolphe to himself as he began to write again, "I shall certainly ask him for ten francs; in these days paradoxes come as high as partridges."—And he wrote some thirty lines or more, full of nonsense about pianos, gold fish, the school of common-sense and Rhine wine, which was called a toilet wine.

"That's very nice," said the critic; "just be kind enough to add that the galleys is the place where more honest men are found than anywhere else in the world."

"What's that for?"

"To make two lines more. Good, that's done," said the influential critic, calling his servant to take the *feuilleton* to the printer.

"Now," said Rodolphe to himself, "let us strike home!" And he gravely formulated his request.

"Ah! my dear fellow," said the critic, "I haven't a sou here. Lolette is ruining me in pomade, and just now she stripped me of my last centime to go to Ver-

sailles and see the Nereids and brass monsters vomit liquid streams."

"To Versailles! Bless my soul! is it an epidemic?" said Rodolphe.

"But why do you need money?"

"There's the poem," replied Rodolphe. "I have an appointment at five o'clock this evening with a woman of fashion, a very distinguished person, who never goes out except in an omnibus. I would like to unite my destiny to hers for a few days, and it seems to me that it will be decent to give her a taste of the sweets of life. Dinner, ball, promenades, etc. I absolutely must have five francs; if I do not get them, French literature is dishonored in my person."

"Why don't you borrow the money from the lady herself?" inquired the critic.

"That's hardly possible the first time. Nobody but you can get me out of the scrape."

"By all the mummies in Egypt, I give you my solemn word of honor that I haven't the wherewithal to buy a sou pipe. I have some old books though, that you might sell."

"What, Sunday! Impossible. Mère Mansut, Lebigre, and all the shops on the quays and Rue Saint-Jacques are closed. What are your books? Volumes of poetry with a portrait of the author in spectacles? Why, nobody'll buy those things."

"Unless they're tabooed by the Assize Court," said

the critic. "Stay, here are some ballads and some concert tickets. By going about it shrewdly, you might, perhaps, turn them into cash."

"I should prefer something else, a pair of trousers, for instance."

"Nonsense!" said the critic; "take this Bossuet and the plaster cast of Monsieur Odilon Barrot; on my honor, it's the widow's mite."

"I see that you mean well," said Rodolphe. "I will take the valuables with me, but if I get thirty sous for them, I shall consider that I have performed the thirteenth labor of Hercules."

After travelling about four leagues, Rodolphe, with the aid of an eloquence which he could command on great occasions, succeeded in inducing his laundress to lend him two francs, upon depositing with her the volumes of poetry and ballads and the bust of Monsieur Barrot.

"So much for the sauce," he said as he crossed the bridge; "now I must find the ragout. Suppose I go to see my uncle!"

Half an hour later he was with his Uncle Monetti, who read in his nephew's face the nature of his errand. So he at once stood on his guard, and forestalled any possible request by a series of lamentations like these:

"Times are hard, bread is high, debtors don't pay, rent must be paid, business in a decline," etc., etc.—all the hypocritical formulas of the shopkeeper.

"Would you believe," said the uncle, "that I had to borrow money of my clerk to pay a note?"

"You ought to have sent to me," said Rodolphe. "I would have lent you some money. I received two hundred francs three days ago."

"Thanks, my boy," said the uncle, "but you need all you can get. Ah! while you are here, you write such a fine hand, you might as well copy some invoices I want to send out."

"These five francs will cost me dear," said Rodolphe, setting about the task, which he abridged as much as possible.

"My dear uncle," he said, "I know how fond you are of music, and I have brought you some tickets for a concert."

"You are very good, my boy. Will you dine with me?"

"Thanks, uncle, I am invited to dine in Faubourg Saint-Germain; indeed, I am in rather a fix, for I haven't time to go home and get some money to buy a pair of gloves."

"Haven't you any gloves? Shall I lend you mine?"

"Thanks, we don't wear the same size; but you would oblige me by lending me——"

"Twenty-nine sous to buy a pair? Certainly, my boy; here's the money. When you go into society you should be well dressed. Better to cause envy than pity, your aunt used to say. I see that you're getting on, so much the better. I would have given you more," he added,

"but it's all I have in my drawer; I should have to go upstairs, and I can't leave the shop alone; customers are coming in every minute."

"I thought you said business was bad?"

Uncle Monetti pretended not to hear, and said to his nephew as he pocketed the twenty-nine sous:

"Don't be in a hurry to pay them back."

"What a curmudgeon!" said Rodolphe, as he made his escape. "Ah! I still lack thirty-one sous. Where am I to get them? Now I think of it, I'll go to the Providence crossroads."

Rodolphe gave that name to the most central part of Paris, the Palais Royal. A spot where it is almost impossible to remain ten minutes without meeting ten persons you know, creditors above all. So Rodolphe went and stood sentry on the stoop of the Palais-Royal. Providence was a long time coming on that occasion. But at last Rodolphe caught sight of him. He wore a white hat, a green coat and a gold-headed cane—a very well-dressed Providence.

He was a wealthy and amiable individual, although a phalansterian.

"I am delighted to see you," he said to Rodolphe; "come and walk with me a little, and we will talk."

"Well, well! now I have to undergo the torture of the phalanstery," muttered Rodolphe, allowing himself to be led away by the white hat, who did, in truth, *phalansterize* him without mercy.

As they drew near the Pont des Arts, Rodolphe said to his companion:

"I must leave you, as I haven't anything to pay the toll with."

"Nonsense," said the other, taking Rodolphe's arm and tossing two sous to the veteran.

"The moment has come," thought the editor of *L'Écharpe d'Iris*, as they crossed the bridge; and when they were on the other side, in front of the clock on the Institute, Rodolphe stopped short, pointed to the dial with a desperate gesture and cried:

"*Sacrebleu!* quarter to five! I am lost!"

"What's the matter?" said the other in amazement.

"The matter is," said Rodolphe, "that, thanks to you who have brought me here against my will, I have missed an appointment."

"Important?"

"I should say so; I was to receive some money at five o'clock—at Batignolles! I shall never get there. *Sacrebleu!* What am I to do?"

"*Parbleu!*" said the phalansterian, "it's a very simple matter; come home with me and I will lend you some money."

"Impossible! you live at Montrouge and I have some business to attend to at six—Chaussée d'Antin.—*Sacrebleu!*"

"I have a few sous about me," said Providence timidly—"but very little."

"If I had enough to hire a cab, perhaps I might get to Batignolles in time."

"There's the bottom of my purse, my dear fellow, thirty-one sous."

"Give them to me, quick, quick and let me go!" said Rodolphe, as he heard the clock strike five, and he hurried away to keep his appointment.

"It has been like pulling teeth," he said, counting his money. "A hundred sous, no more, no less. At last I am fitted out, and Laure will see that she has to do with a man who knows how to live. I can't take home a centime to-night. I must rehabilitate literature and prove that it lacks nothing but money to be rich."

Rodolphe found Mademoiselle Laure at the rendezvous.

"Good!" he said to himself. "She's a female Bréguet.

He passed the evening with her and gallantly melted his five francs in the crucible of prodigality. Mademoiselle Laure was delighted with his manners and did not choose to notice that Rodolphe was not escorting her home until just as he ushered her into his own apartment.

"I am doing wrong," she said. "Do not make me repent it by the ingratitude which is the heritage of your sex."

"Madame," said Rodolphe, "I am noted for my constancy. It goes so far that my friends are amazed at it and have dubbed me the General Bertrand of love."

IX

THE VIOLETS FROM THE POLE

In those days Rodolphe was much enamored of his cousin Angèle, who could not endure him, and the optician Chevalier's thermometer marked twelve degrees below zero.

Mademoiselle Angèle was the daughter of Monsieur Monetti, the stove-maker and chimney-builder of whom we have already had occasion to speak. Mademoiselle Angèle was eighteen years old and had recently arrived from Bourgogne, where she had passed five years with a relative who was expected to leave her her property after her death. This relative was an old woman who had never been young or beautiful, but had always been spiteful, although she was very pious, or perhaps because she was so. Angèle, who, when she left Paris, was a charming child and whose girlhood bore the germ of a charming youth, returned at the end of five years, changed into a beautiful, but cold, hard, indifferent young woman. The retired life of the provinces, the constant subjection to the requirements of unreasonable

piety, and the narrow education she had received, had filled her mind with vulgar and absurd prejudices, narrowed her imagination and made of her heart an organ that confined itself to the performance of its functions as balance-wheel. Angèle had holy water instead of blood in her veins, so to speak.

On her return she greeted her cousin with frigid reserve, and he wasted his time whenever he tried to set in motion the tender chord of memory—memories of the time when they had sketched out together the *amourette à la* Paul and Virginie, which is traditional between cousins. Nevertheless, Rodolphe was very much in love with his cousin Angèle, who could not endure him; and having learned one day that she was soon to attend the wedding ball of one of her friends, he had screwed his courage to the point of promising her a bunch of violets for that occasion. And Angèle, having first asked her father's permission, accepted her cousin's courteous offer, but insisted upon having white violets.

Rodolphe, overjoyed by his cousin's condescension, returned prancing and singing to his *Mont Saint-Bernard.* That was the name he gave to his domicile. Why he called it so, we shall soon learn. As he passed through the Palais-Royal, he saw some white violets in the shop-window of Madame Provost, the celebrated florist, and as a matter of curiosity he entered and asked the price. A presentable bunch cost not less than ten francs, and there were some that cost more.

"The devil!" said Rodolphe, "ten francs, and only a beggarly week before me to pick up that million. It will be hard work; but my cousin shall have her bouquet all the same. I have an idea."

This episode took place in the days of Rodolphe's literary genesis. He had no other source of income at that time than an allowance of fifteen francs a month paid him by one of his friends, a great poet, who, after a long residence in Paris, had become master of a school in the provinces through the assistance of patrons. Rodolphe, who had extravagance for a godmother, always spent his allowance in four days; and as he was unwilling to abandon the sacred and unproductive profession of elegiac poet, he lived the rest of the time on that unreliable manna that falls slowly from the baskets of Providence. Lent had no terrors for him: he passed gayly through the season of fasting, thanks to the sobriety of a stoic, and to the treasures of imagination which he expended every day pending the arrival of the first of the month, the joyous Easter that terminated his fast. At that time Rodolphe lived on Rue Contrescarpe-Saint-Marcel, in a large building formerly called the *Hôtel de l'Éminence Grise*, because Père Joseph, Richelieu's bosom friend, was said to have lived there. Rodolphe lodged at the very top of that house, which was one of the highest in Paris. His room, which was like a summer-house in shape, was a delightful abode in summer; but from October to April it was Kamschatka in

miniature. The four cardinal winds which blew in through the four windows, executed wild fandangoes there throughout the stormy season. As if in irony, there was also a fireplace in the room, its immense opening having the appearance of a state entrance reserved for Boreas and all his suite. At the first suggestion of cold, Rodolphe had recourse to a system of heating of his own invention; he cut up piece after piece of such furniture as he possessed, and after a week the supply was considerably abridged: he had nothing left but the bed and two chairs: to be sure, those articles were of iron and therefore naturally safe against fire. Rodolphe called this method of warming himself, moving out by way of the chimney.

It was the month of January, then, and the thermometer, which marked twelve degrees below zero on Quai des Lunettes, would have marked two or three degrees lower if it had been transferred to the summer-house which Rodolphe had named *Mont Saint-Bernard*, *Spitzbergen*, *Siberia*.

On the evening when he promised his cousin the white violets, Rodolphe flew into a violent rage when he entered his apartment: the four cardinal winds, frisking about in every corner, had broken still another pane of glass. It was the third mishap of that description within a fortnight. So Rodolphe exhausted himself in fierce imprecations against Eolus and his whole family of Break-Alls. Having stuffed the latest breach with a portrait of

one of his friends, Rodolphe lay down fully dressed between the two covered boards which he called his mattresses, and dreamed of white violets all night long.

Five days passed and Rodolphe had as yet found nothing to assist him in realizing his dream; on the second day thereafter he was to present his cousin with the bouquet. Meanwhile the thermometer had fallen still lower, and the unhappy poet was in despair at the thought that violets might have gone up in price. At last Providence took pity on him, and this is how it came to his assistance.

One morning Rodolphe determined to go and ask his friend Marcel to invite him to breakfast, and he found the artist conversing with a woman in mourning. She was a widow who lived in the quarter; she had recently lost her husband, and had come to ask how much Marcel would charge to paint on the monument she had erected to the deceased, a *man's hand*, with these words below:

I AWAIT THEE, MY DEAREST WIFE

In order to make a better bargain for the work, she reminded the artist that when God should send her to join her spouse he would have to paint a second hand, her own, embellished with a bracelet, and a new legend to be thus conceived:

AT LAST WE ARE UNITED

"I will put that clause in my will," said the widow, "and provide that the work shall be given to you to do."

"On that understanding, madame," the artist replied, "I accept the price you offer—but I do so with the hope of the *hand-clasp*. Don't forget me in your will."

"I should like to have you give it to me as soon as possible," said the widow; "but don't hurry and don't forget the scar on the thumb. I want a living hand."

"It shall be a speaking one, madame, never fear," said Marcel, as he bowed the widow out.

But she was no sooner outside the door than she returned.

"I have something else I want to ask you, monsieur painter," she said. "I should like to have on my husband's tomb a piece of verse describing his good qualities and telling the last words he spoke on his death-bed. What do you think of that?"

"That would be very fine, very fine! it's what is called an epitaph."

"You don't know anyone, do you, who'd do it for me cheap? There's my neighbor, Monsieur Guérin, the public scrivener, but he charges my eyes out of my head."

At that, Rodolphe glanced at Marcel, who understood at once.

"Madame," said the artist, pointing to Rodolphe, "a

lucky chance brings here at this moment the very man who can be of use to you in this painful emergency. Monsieur is a distinguished poet and you could find no better."

"I am very particular about it's being sad," said the widow, "and to have the spelling good."

"Madame," said Marcel, "my friend has orthography at his fingers' ends; at college he took all the prizes."

"My nephew's had a prize, too," said the widow; "but he's only seven years old."

"He's a very precocious child," said Marcel.

"But," the widow persisted, "can monsieur write really sad poetry?"

"Better than anyone, madame, for he has had much disappointment in his life. My friend excels in sad poetry, the newspapers are always finding fault with him on that account."

"What!" cried the widow, "do the newspapers speak of him? then he knows as much as Monsieur Guérin, the public scrivener."

"Oh! much more! Employ him, madame, you won't be sorry."

After explaining to the poet the gist of the inscription in verse which she wished to have placed on her husband's tomb, the widow agreed to give Rodolphe ten francs if she was satisfied with it; but she wanted the verses very soon. The poet promised to send them to her by his friend the very next day.

"O kindly fairy, Artemisia," cried Rodolphe, when the widow had gone, "I promise that you shall be satisfied; I will give you good measure of funereal lyrism and the orthography shall be better dressed than a duchess. O dear old lady, may Heaven, to reward you, prolong your life to a hundred and seven years, like good eau-de-vie!"

"I object to that!" cried Marcel.

"True," said Rodolphe, "I forgot that you had another hand to paint after her death, and that such longevity would cause you to lose money." And he raised his hands, saying: "O Heaven, do not grant my prayer! —My coming here was a great piece of luck," he added.

"By the way, what did you want of me?" inquired Marcel.

"I am still thinking about it; indeed, being compelled to pass the night writing this poetry, I cannot do without what I came to ask you for: first, dinner; secondly, tobacco and a candle; thirdly, your polar bear costume."

"Are you going to the fancy ball? The first one is to-night, I believe."

"No, but as you see me now, I am frozen as stiff as the Grande Armée during the retreat from Russia. My jacket of green lasting and my Scotch merino trousers are certainly very pretty; but they are too spring-like and fit only for life at the equator; when one lives at the North Pole, as I do, a white bear's costume is most suitable, I may even say that it is absolutely essential."

"Take the Bruin," said Marcel; "there's an idea;

it's as hot as a chafing-dish, and you'll be as comfortable in it as a loaf of bread in an oven."

Rodolphe was already inside of the furry pelt.

"Now," said he, "the thermometer will be sadly annoyed."

"Do you mean to say you're going out like that?" Marcel asked his friend, after they had finished a shadowy sort of dinner served on plate marked five centimes apiece.

"*Parbleu!*" said Rodolphe. "I snap my fingers at public opinion; besides, it's the beginning of the carnival." And he walked across Paris with the gravity of the quadruped whose skin he occupied. As he passed in front of Chevalier's thermometer, Rodolphe made a wry face at it.

Having returned home, not without giving his concierge a great fright, the poet lighted his candle and took great pains to surround it with transparent paper to forestall the malicious attacks of the north wind; then he set about his task. But he soon discovered that, although his body was fairly well protected against the cold, his hands were not; and he had not written two lines of his epitaph when his numbed fingers began to ache furiously, and dropped the pen.

"The bravest man cannot contend with the elements," said Rodolphe, falling back crushed in his chair. "Cæsar crossed the Rubicon, but he could not have crossed the Bérésina."

Suddenly he emitted a joyful shout from the depths of his bear's chest, and rose so suddenly that he overturned a portion of his ink on the white fur; he had an idea borrowed from Chatterton.

He drew from under his bed a considerable quantity of papers, among which were a dozen or more manuscripts of his famous drama of the *Vengeur*. That drama, at which he had worked two years, had been made and unmade and made over so many times that all the copies together weighed seven kilogrammes. Rodolphe laid aside the most recent manuscript and carried all the others to the fireplace.

"I was very sure that I should find a place for them," he cried—"with patience! They certainly make a pretty little bundle of prose fuel. Ah! if I had foreseen what was to happen, I would have written a prologue, and I should have just so much more combustible material to-day. But then, one can't foresee everything." And he lighted a few sheets of his manuscript on the hearth and warmed his hands at the flame. Five minutes later the first act of the *Vengeur* was *played*, and Rodolphe had written three lines of his epitaph.

No words can describe the amazement of the four cardinal winds when they discovered the fire on the hearth.

"It's an optical illusion," whistled the north wind, as he amused himself ruffling Rodolphe's skin.

"Suppose we go and blow down the flue," suggested another wind; "that would make the fire smoke."

Chapter IX

And he lighted a few sheets of his manuscript on the hearth and warmed his hands at the flame. Five minutes later the first act of the Vengeur *was* played, *and Rodolphe had written three lines of his epitaph.*

Chapter IX.

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Montader inv. Courtry sc.

But as they were about to begin to tease poor Rodolphe, the south wind spied Monsieur Arago at a window of the Observatory, shaking his finger threateningly at the antics of the breezes.

Thereupon the south wind cried to his brethren: "Let's be off at once; the almanac says calm weather to-night; we shall find ourselves at loggerheads with the Observatory, and if we're not in bed at midnight, Monsieur Arago will give us into custody."

Meanwhile the second act of the *Vengeur* was burning with great success. And Rodolphe had written ten lines. But he was able to write only two during the progress of the third act.

"I always thought that act was too short," muttered Rodolphe, "but you don't discover defects until the performance. Luckily this next one will last longer; there are twenty-three scenes, among them the throne scene, which was to bring me renown."

The last speech of the throne scene went up in flakes of charred paper when Rodolphe still had six lines to write.

"Now for the fourth act," he said, with a fiery gleam in his eye. "It will last five minutes; it's all soliloquy." It burned away down to the catastrophe, which simply flared up and went out. At that moment Rodolphe was setting, in a magnificent outburst of poesy, the last words of the defunct in whose honor he was working.

"Those will do for a second performance," he said, pushing the other manuscripts under his bed again.

The next evening at eight o'clock, Mademoiselle Angèle entered the ball-room with a superb bunch of white violets, in the centre of which were two full-blown roses, also white. Throughout the night the bouquet called forth compliments from the ladies, and flattering speeches from the men. So that Angèle was more or less grateful to her cousin, to whom she owed all these petty gratifications of her self-esteem, and she might, perhaps, have thought more of him had it not been for the polite persecution of a kinsman of the bride, who had danced several times with her. He was a blond young man, the possessor of a pair of those magnificent curling moustachios, which are the hooks that catch untutored hearts. The young man had already asked Angèle to give him the two white roses which were all that remained of her bouquet, from which everybody had plucked a violet. But Angèle refused, only to leave the two flowers, at the close of the ball, forgotten on a bench, where the blond young man picked them up.

At that moment it was fourteen degrees below zero in Rodolphe's pagoda, and he stood at his window, looking off toward the Barrière du Maine at the lights in the ball-room, where his cousin Angèle, who could not endure him, was dancing.

X

CAPE TEMPEST

There are terrible days in the months that begin each new quarter—usually the 1st and the 15th. Rodolphe, who could not contemplate the approach of either of those dates without alarm, called them *Cape Tempest.* On those days it is not Aurora who opens the gates of the Orient, but creditors, landlords, bailiffs and other *gens de sac—oches.*[5] Those days begin with a shower of bills, statements and notes, and end with a hail-storm of notices of protests; *Dies iræ!*

Now, on the morning of April 15th, Rodolphe was sleeping peacefully, and dreaming that one of his uncles had bequeathed to him by will a whole province in Peru, the Peruvian ladies included.

As he was swimming along in his imaginary Pactolus, the noise of a key turning in the lock interrupted the presumptuous legatee at the most resplendent moment of his golden dream.

Rodolphe sat up in bed, his eyes and his mind still heavy with sleep, and looked about him. At last he

vaguely made out, in the middle of his room, a man who had just come in, and such a man!

The early visitor wore a three-cornered hat, had a wallet on his back, and in his hand a capacious portfolio; he was dressed in a coat cut *à la Française*, gray of hue, and seemed very short of breath from having climbed five flights of stairs. His manner was very affable, and his step as noisy as you would expect that of a money-changer's desk to be, if it should begin to walk.

Rodolphe was alarmed for a moment, thinking from the three-cornered hat and the gray coat that he had to do with a police officer.

But the sight of the wallet, which seemed quite well lined, showed him his error.

"Ah! I understand," thought Rodolphe, "this is a payment on account of my legacy; this man is from the Gulf of Mexico—But in that case, why isn't he a negro?"

He motioned to the man and said, pointing to the wallet:

"I know what it is. Put it down. Thanks."

The man was a messenger from the Bank of France. In response to Rodolphe's invitation, he placed before his eyes a slip of paper covered with hieroglyphics and figures in many colors.

"Do you want a receipt?" said Rodolphe. "Very good. Pass me the pen and ink. There they are on the table."

"No, I have come to collect a note for a hundred and fifty francs," replied the bank messenger. "To-day is the 15th of April."

"Aha!" rejoined Rodolphe, examining the note.—"Order of Birmann. He is my tailor.—Alas!" he added sadly, glancing alternately at the note and at a coat that lay on his bed, "causes disappear but effects[6] return. What! to-day is the 15th of April? Extraordinary!—And I haven't had any strawberries yet!"

The clerk, disgusted with his delay, left the room, saying: "You have until four o'clock to pay."

"Honest men know nothing of time," replied Rodolphe.—The sharper!" he added, looking after the financier in the three-cornered hat, "he has carried away his wallet."

Rodolphe drew his bed curtains close and tried to take up the thread of his inheritance; but he mistook the road, and entered vaingloriously upon a dream, in which the manager of the Théâtre-Français came to him, hat in hand, to solicit a drama for his theatre, and Rodolphe, who knew the customs, demanded a premium. But, just as the manager seemed on the point of complying, the sleeper was awakened anew by the entrance of another person, another creation of the 15th of April.

It was Monsieur Benoît,[7] the ill-named proprietor of the furnished lodging-house in which Rodolphe lived:

Monsieur Benoît was landlord, boot-maker and money-lender to his tenants.

On that particular morning he exhaled a disgusting odor of poor brandy and overdue receipts. He had an empty bag in his hand.

"The devil!" thought Rodolphe, "this can't be the manager of the *Français*—he would have a white cravat—and the bag would be full!"

"Good-day, Monsieur Rodolphe!" said Monsieur Benoît, approaching the bed.

"Monsieur Benoît—why, good morning! To what do I owe the honor of your visit?"

"Why, I came to tell you that this is the 15th of April."

"Already! How time flies! it's most extraordinary; I must buy some nankeen trousers. The 15th of April! Ah! *mon Dieu!* I never should have thought of it except for you, Monsieur Benoît. How much gratitude I owe you!"

"You owe me a hundred and sixty-two francs also," retorted Monsieur Benoît, "and it's high time that little account was settled."

"I am not really in any hurry—you shall not be annoyed, Monsieur Benoît. I will give you time. The little account shall become great."

"But you have already put me off several times," said the landlord.

"In that case, let us settle, let us settle, Monsieur

Benoît, it's a matter of perfect indifference to me; to-day or to-morrow—And then, we are all mortal—Let us settle."

A good-humored smile lighted up the landlord's wrinkles; and there was nothing about him even to his empty bag, that did not swell with hope.

"How much do I owe you?" queried Rodolphe.

"In the first place there are three quarters' rent at twenty-five francs, seventy-five francs."

"Errors excepted," said Rodolphe. "What next?"

"Three pairs of boots at twenty francs."

"One moment, one moment, Monsieur Benoît, let us not confuse matters; I am dealing with the boot-maker now, not with the landlord—I must have a separate bill. Figures are a serious matter; we mustn't mix them up."

"Very good," said Monsieur Benoît, appeased by the hope of putting a receipt at the bottom of his bills at last. "Here's a separate memorandum for the footwear. Three pairs of boots at twenty francs; total, sixty francs."

Rodolphe glanced pityingly at a pair of foundered boots.

"Alas!" he thought, "if the *Wandering Jew* had worn them, they wouldn't be in worse shape. But I have worn them out, running after Marie.—Go on, Monsieur Benoît."

"Sixty francs, I said. Also, money lent, twenty-seven francs."

"Stop there, Monsieur Benoît. We agreed that every saint should have his niche. You lent me the money as a friend. So, if you please, we will leave the domain of footwear and enter the domains of confidence and friendship, which require a separate account. How much does your friendship for me amount to?"

"Twenty-seven francs."

"Twenty-seven francs. You procured a friend cheap, Monsieur Benoît. So we say: seventy-five, sixty and twenty-seven.—How much does all that make?"

"A hundred and sixty-two francs," said Monsieur Benoît, handing him the three statements.

"A hundred and sixty-two francs," said Rodolphe; "it's extraordinary. What a fine thing addition is! Well, Monsieur Benoît, now that the account is settled, we can both be easy in our minds, we know where we stand. Next month, I will ask you for your receipt, and as your confidence in me and your friendship cannot fail to increase during that time, you can grant me further delay in case it should be necessary; meanwhile, if the landlord and bootmaker should press me too hard, I should request the friend to make them listen to reason. It's an extraordinary thing, Monsieur Benoît; but whenever I think of you in your triple character of landlord, bootmaker and friend, I am tempted to believe in the Holy Trinity."

As he listened to Rodolphe, the landlord turned red,

green, yellow and white all at once; and at each fresh jest of his tenant, the colors of that rainbow of wrath grew deeper and deeper on his face.

"Monsieur," he said, "I do not enjoy being laughed at. I have waited long enough. I give you notice to quit, and if you don't give me some money this evening —why, I shall see what comes next."

"Money! money! have I asked you for any?" said Rodolphe; "and even if I had money I wouldn't give it to you; it's Friday and it would bring you bad luck."

Monsieur Benoît's wrath increased to a hurricane; and if the furniture had not belonged to him he would undoubtedly have fractured the limbs of a chair.

He left the room, uttering dire threats.

"You forget your bag!" Rodolphe called after him.

"What a trade!" muttered the unfortunate youth when he was alone. "I should prefer lion-taming.— But I can't stay here," he continued, jumping out of bed and dressing hastily. "The invasion of the allies is sure to continue. I must fly, I must e'en breakfast. I have it—I will go and see Schaunard. I will ask him to invite me to breakfast, and I will borrow a few sous from him. A hundred francs will answer my purposes. —Here goes for Schaunard."

As he went downstairs, Rodolphe met Monsieur Benoît who had undergone fresh rebuffs from his other

tenants, as was evidenced by his still empty bag, an object of art.

"If any one should call for me, you will say that I am in the country,—in the Alps," said Rodolphe. "Or no, say that I no longer live here."

"I shall tell the truth," muttered Monsieur Benoît with very significant emphasis.

Schaunard lived at Montmartre. There was the whole width of Paris to cross. It was one of the most hazardous of journeys for Rodolphe.

"To-day," said he, "the streets are paved with creditors."

However, he did not go by the outer boulevards, as he was tempted to do. On the contrary, a fantastic hope emboldened him to follow the perilous course that led through the centre of Paris. Rodolphe reflected that, on a day when millions were riding about in public on the backs of bank clerks, it might well be that a thousand-franc note had fallen by the wayside and was awaiting its Vincent de Paul.[8] So he walked slowly with his eyes on the ground. But he found nothing but two pins.

After walking about for two hours, he arrived at Schaunard's quarters.

"Ah! it's you, is it?" said that gentleman.

"Yes, I have come to ask you to give me some breakfast."

"You come at a bad time, my dear fellow; my mis-

tress has just arrived, and it's a fortnight since I saw her; if you had only come ten minutes earlier."

"But haven't you a hundred francs to lend me?"

"What! you too," rejoined Schaunard, who seemed amazed beyond measure—"you come and ask me for money! You join my enemies!"

"I'll pay you on Monday."

"Yes, or at Trinity.[9] My dear fellow, do you forget what day it is? I can do nothing for you. But there's no occasion to despair, the day isn't over. You may meet Providence yet, he doesn't rise before noon."

"Oh! Providence has too much to do attending to the little birds," said Rodolphe. "I'll go and see Marcel."

Marcel at this time lived on Rue de Bréda. Rodolphe found him in a very melancholy mood, contemplating his great picture, which was to represent the Passage of the Red Sea.

"What's the matter?" Rodolphe asked, as he entered the room, "you seem very much cast down."

"Alas!" said the painter, resorting to allegory, "for a fortnight I have been in Holy Week."

To Rodolphe, that reply was as limpid as spring water.

"Salt herring and black radishes! Very good. I remember."

In fact Rodolphe's memory was still salted by reminiscences of a time when he was reduced to a diet consisting exclusively of that fish.

"The devil! the devil!" he said, "this is serious! I came to borrow a hundred francs of you."

"A hundred francs!" said Marcel.—"You will never cease to live on your imagination, will you? To come and ask me for that mythological sum at a time when a man is always under the equator of necessity! You have been taking hasheesh—"

"Alas!" said Rodolphe, "I haven't taken anything at all."

And he left his friend on the shores of the Red Sea.

From noon to four o'clock, Rodolphe steered for the houses of all his acquaintances one after another; he scoured the forty-eight quarters and travelled about eight leagues, but without the least success. The influence of the 15th of April made itself felt everywhere with equal severity. Meanwhile the dinner-hour was approaching; but it hardly seemed as if dinner were approaching with the hour, and Rodolphe felt as if he were on the raft of Medusa.

As he was crossing Pont Neuf he suddenly had a happy thought.

"Oho!" he said to himself as he retraced his steps, "the 15th of April, the 15th of April—why, I have an invitation to dinner to-day."

He fumbled in his pocket and produced a printed ticket, on which were these words:

BARRIÈRE DE LA VILLETTE.

AU GRAND VAINQUEUR.

Dining-Hall with 300 Seats.

ANNIVERSARY BANQUET

IN HONOR OF THE BIRTH

OF THE

HUMANITARIAN MESSIAH.

April 15, 184—

Good for one person.

N.B.—Each guest is entitled to only one-half bottle of wine.

"I do not share the opinions of the Messiah's disciples," said Rodolphe to himself,—"but I will gladly share their good cheer." And with the swift flight of a bird, he skimmed through the streets that lay between him and the barrier.

When he appeared in the salons of the *Grand Vainqueur*, there was an enormous crowd. The dining-hall with three hundred seats contained five hundred persons. A boundless horizon of veal with carrots was unrolled before Rodolphe's eyes.

They were just beginning to serve the soup.

As the guests were putting their spoons to their lips, five or six men in citizens' clothes and several officers burst into the room, a commissioner of police at their head.

"Messieurs," said the commissioner, "by order of those in authority, the banquet cannot take place. I call upon you to withdraw."

"Ah, me!" said Rodolphe, as he went out with the crowd; "ah, me! my soup is upset by fatality!"

He walked sadly homeward, and reached his domicile about eleven at night.

Monsieur Benoît was waiting for him.

"Ah! there you are," he said. "Have you thought over what I said to you this morning? Have you brought me any money?"

"I expect to receive some to-night; I will give you some to-morrow morning," said Rodolphe, looking for his key and his candlestick on the shelf. He found neither.

"Monsieur Rodolphe," said Monsieur Benoît, "I am very sorry, but I have let your room, and I have no other at liberty. You must look elsewhere."

Rodolphe had a stout heart, and the prospect of a night under the stars did not alarm him. Furthermore, in case the weather should be bad, he could sleep in a proscenium box at the Odéon, as he had done before. But he demanded *his property* from Monsieur Benoît, which property consisted of a bundle of papers.

"That is fair," said the landlord. "I have no right to detain that stuff, and I left it in the desk. Come up with me; if the person who has taken your room hasn't gone to bed, we can go in."

The room had been let during the day to a girl called Mimi, with whom Rodolphe had once begun a duet of affection.

They knew each other instantly. Rodolphe whispered in Mimi's ear, and gently pressed her hand.

"See how it rains!" he said, calling her attention to the noise made by a storm which had just begun.

Mademoiselle Mimi went straight to Monsieur Benoît, who was waiting in a corner of the room

"Monsieur," she said, pointing to Rodolphe, "Monsieur is the person I expected to-night. I am not at home to anybody now."

"Oho!" exclaimed Monsieur Benoît with a wry face. "Very good!"

While Mademoiselle Mimi was hastily preparing an impromptu supper, the clock struck twelve.

"Ah!" said Rodolphe to himself, "the 15th of April has passed; I have doubled my Cape Tempest. Dear Mimi," he said, taking the pretty girl in his arms and kissing her on the back of the neck, "it wouldn't have been possible for you to let me be turned out of doors. You have the bump of hospitality."

XI

A BOHEMIAN CAFÉ

The following is the chain of circumstances by which Carolus Barbemuche, man of letters and Platonist philosopher, became a Bohemian in the twenty-fourth year of his age.

In those days, Gustave Colline, the great philosopher, Marcel, the great painter, Schaunard, the great musician, and Rodolphe, the great poet, by which titles they were known to one another, frequented regularly the Café *Momus*, where they are known as the *Four Musketeers*, because they were always seen together. In truth, they came and went together, played together, and sometimes failed to pay for their entertainment, always with a unanimity worthy of the orchestra at the Conservatory.

They had chosen for their meetings a room where forty persons could be comfortably accommodated; but they were always found alone, for they had ended by making the place unendurable to the regular habitués.

The transient guest who ventured into that den became, as soon as he showed his face, the victim of the

ferocious four, and, as a general rule, made his escape without finishing his newspaper and his cup of coffee, the cream in which was soured by the hitherto unheard-of aphorisms on art, sentiment and political economy. The conversation of the four cronies was of such a nature that the waiter who attended to their wants became an idiot in the prime of life.

At last, affairs reached such a point of arbitrariness that the master of the café lost patience, and one evening, in all seriousness, drew up the following statement of his grievances:

1st.—Monsieur Rodolphe came to breakfast in the morning and carried all the newspapers of the establishment into *his* room; he even carried his unreasonableness so far as to lose his temper when he found the wrappers removed, the result being that the other regular guests, being deprived of the organs of public opinion, remained until dinner-time as ignorant in matters political as so many carp. The Bosquet Society hardly knew the names of the members of the last cabinet.

Monsieur Rodolphe had even compelled the café to subscribe to *Le Castor*, of which he was the editor-in-chief. The master of the establishment had declined at first; but as Monsieur Rodolphe and his friends kept calling the waiter every fifteen minutes and shouting: "*Le Castor!* bring me *Le Castor!*" some other guests, whose curiosity was aroused by these persistent demands, also called for *Le Castor*. So a subscription was

taken to *Le Castor!*, an organ of the hat trade which appeared monthly, embellished with a vignette and with a philosophical article by Gustave Colline in the *Variétés* column.

2d.—The said Colline and Monsieur Rodolphe sought relaxation after their intellectual labors by playing at backgammon from ten o'clock in the morning until midnight; and as the establishment possessed but one backgammon board, the other guests were aggrieved in their passion for the game by the monopolistic spirit of those gentlemen, who, whenever any one asked them for the board, made no other answer than:

"The backgammon board is in use; call again tomorrow."

The Bosquet Society were thus reduced to the necessity of telling the story of their early love-affairs or playing at piquet.

3d.—Monsieur Marcel, forgetting that a café is a public place, has taken the liberty of bringing thither his easel, his box of paints and all the utensils of his art. He even carries impropriety so far as to bring models of various sexes there. All of which is painful to the moral sense of the Bosquet Society.

4th.—Following his friend's example, Monsieur Schaunard speaks of bringing his piano into the café, and is even bold enough to lead a chorus in singing an air from his symphony: *The Influence of the Blue in Art.* Monsieur Schaunard has gone even farther than that, he

has introduced into the lantern used as a sign, a transparency which reads:

"Gratuitous Course in Vocal and Instrumental Music for both Sexes.

Apply at the desk."

The result of which is, that the said desk is surrounded every evening by persons in slovenly attire asking *how you get to the music-room.*

Moreover, Monsieur Schaunard makes appointments there with a lady named Phémie Teinturière, who always forgets her cap.

Therefore, Monsieur Bosquet junior has declared that he will never again set foot in an establishment where nature is thus outraged.

5th.—Not content with a very moderate consumption of food and drink, these gentlemen have tried to reduce it even more. On the pretext that they have surprised the mocha of the establishment in illicit relations with chicory, they have brought a spirit of wine filter and make their coffee themselves, sweetening it with sugar bought elsewhere at a low price, thus offering an insult to the laboratory.

6th.—Corrupted by the conversation of these gentlemen, the waiter, *Bergami*—so called because of his whiskers—forgetting his humble birth and defying all restraint, has had the effrontery to address the cashier in a

piece of poetry in which he urges her to forget her duties as a wife and mother; by the confused style in which the effusion was written, it is clear that it was done under the pernicious influence of Monsieur Rodolphe and his literary productions.

Wherefore, notwithstanding his regret, the manager of the establishment finds it necessary to request the Colline Society to find another place for its revolutionary conferences.

Colline, who was the Cicero of the clique, took the floor, and demonstrated, *à priori*, to the proprietor of the café, that his complaints were absurd and without foundation; that they did him great honor by selecting his establishment to make of it an abiding place of intellectual knowledge; that the departure of himself and his friends would bring about the ruin of his house, which their presence had raised to the level of the artistic and literary café.

"But," said the proprietor, "you, and those who come to see you, eat and drink so little."

"The sobriety of which you complain is an argument in favor of our morals," retorted Colline. "However, it rests entirely with you whether we spend a more considerable amount here or not; all you have to do is to open an account with us."

"We will furnish the book," said Marcel.

The proprietor pretended not to hear, but asked for some information as to the inflammatory letter Bergami

had written to his wife. Rodolphe, accused of having acted as secretary to that unlawful passion, energetically asserted his innocence.

"In any event," he added, "madame's virtue was a sure safeguard, which—"

"Oh!" said the host with a proud smile, "My wife was brought up at St. Denis."

To make a long story short, Colline succeeded in enveloping him completely in the folds of his insidious eloquence, and everything was satisfactorily adjusted on condition that the four friends would cease to make their own coffee; that the café should thenceforth receive *Le Castor* free, that Phémie Teinturière should wear a cap; that the backgammon board should be surrendered to the Bosquet people every Sunday, from noon until two o'clock, and, above all, that they should not ask for any extension of credit.

Everything went well for a few days.

On Christmas Eve the four friends appeared at the café, accompanied by their sweethearts.

There were Mademoiselle Musette, Mademoiselle Mimi, Rodolphe's new mistress, an adorable creature, whose loud voice had the clang of a pair of cymbals, and Phémie Teinturière, Schaunard's idol. On that occasion Phémie Teinturière wore a cap. As for Mademoiselle Colline, whom no one ever saw, she had as usual remained at home, engaged in inserting commas in the manuscripts of her lover. After the coffee, which was, with un-

usual luxury, escorted by a phalanx of *petits verres*, they ordered punch. The waiter, unaccustomed to such magnificence, made them repeat the order twice. Phémie, who had never been at the café, seemed overjoyed, enchanted to drink from glasses with feet. Marcel engaged in a dispute with Musette on the subject of a new hat, whose source he suspected. Mimi and Rodolphe, who were still in the honeymoon of their union, had a silent conversation together, interrupted by strange resonant sounds. Meanwhile Colline went from lady to lady, with his mouth in the shape of a heart, dropping here and there amorous gewgaws of style culled from the collection of the *Muses' Almanac*.

While this jovial party abandoned themselves thus to laughter and frolicking, a stranger, seated at a table apart from the others, at the end of the room, watched the animated scene being enacted before him with eyes which were lighted up by a curious expression.

For about a fortnight he had come every evening; he was the only one of all the customers who had been able to endure the frightful uproar made by the Bohemians. The wildest tirades had no effect on him; he remained there throughout the evening, smoking his pipe with mathematical regularity, eyes fixed, as if he were keeping guard over a treasure, and ears open to everything that was said in his neighborhood. In other respects he seemed mild-mannered and in easy circumstances, for he

possessed a watch held in bondage in his pocket by a gold chain. And one day when Marcel met him at the desk, he found him paying for his entertainment with a louis d'or. From that moment the four friends spoke of him as the *capitalist.*

Suddenly Schaunard, whose eyesight was excellent, noticed that the glasses were empty.

"*Parbleu!*" said Rodolphe, "this is the Christmas Eve supper; we are all good Christians; we must have something extra."

"Faith, yes," said Marcel; "let us order supernatural things."

"Colline, ring for the waiter," suggested Rodolphe.

Colline pulled the bell-cord with frenzied violence.

"What shall we take?" said Marcel.

Colline bent over like a bow and said, pointing to the women:

"It is the privilege of the ladies to regulate the order and the pace of the refreshments."

"For my part," said Musette, smacking her lips, "I shouldn't be afraid of some champagne."

"Are you mad?" exclaimed Marcel. "In the first place, champagne isn't wine."

"Never mind, I like it; it makes a noise."

"As for me," said Mimi, with a coaxing glance at Rodolphe, "I prefer *Beaune* in a little basket."

"Are you losing your head?" queried Rodolphe.

"No, but I want to lose it," replied Mimi, upon whom

Chapter XI

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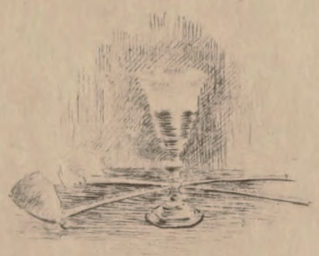

Montader inv.

Courtry sc.

Beaune had a peculiar effect. Her lover was thunderstruck by her reply.

"For my part," said Phémie Teinturière, jumping up and down on the springy couch, "I prefer *Parfait Amour*. It's good for the stomach."

Schaunard uttered in a nasal voice a few words which made Phémie tremble on her foundation.

"Ha! ha!"—it was Marcel who broke the silence that ensued,—"let's spend a hundred thousand francs for once in a way."

"And then," added Rodolphe, "they complain at the desk that we don't order enough. We must overwhelm them with amazement."

"Yes," said Colline, "let us have a magnificent banquet; besides, we owe these ladies absolute obedience, love lives by devotion, wine is the juice of pleasure, pleasure is the duty of youth, women are flowers and we must water them. Let us do it! Waiter! waiter!"

And Colline jerked at the bell-rope with feverish excitement.

The waiter arrived with the speed of the north wind.

When he heard the names of Champagne and Beaune and divers liqueurs, his features ran through the whole gamut of surprise.

"I have holes in my stomach," said Mimi, "I could eat some ham."

"Sardines and butter for me," added Musette.

"And radishes for me," said Phémie, "with a little meat around——."

"Why don't you say right out that you want supper, eh?" said Marcel.

"That would suit us," replied the women.

"Waiter! send up whatever we need for supper," said Colline gravely.

The waiter had turned tri-color with surprise.

He went slowly downstairs to the desk and informed the proprietor of the extraordinary things his guests had ordered.

The proprietor supposed that it was a joke, but upon a fresh peal of the bell, he went up himself and addressed himself to Colline, for whom he had a certain amount of esteem. Colline explained to him that they desired to celebrate the midnight Christmas Eve festival under his roof, and that they would thank him to serve what they had ordered.

The host made no reply, but walked backwards from the room, tying knots in his napkin. He consulted with his wife for a quarter of an hour, and, thanks to the liberal education she had received at St. Denis, that lady, who had a weakness for the fine arts and belles-lettres, urged her husband to serve the supper.

"After all," said the proprietor, "they may have some money for once in a way." And he ordered the waiter to carry up everything they had ordered. Then he be-

came absorbed in a game of piquet with an old customer. Fatal imprudence !

From ten o'clock until midnight, the waiter did nothing but go upstairs and downstairs. Every moment they called upon him for supplementary supplies. Musette demanded to be served in the English fashion, and changed her plate at every mouthful; Mimi drank all the kinds of wine from all the glasses; Schaunard had an unquenchable Sahara in his throat; Colline discharged cross-fires with his eyes, and, while he tore his napkin with his teeth, squeezed the leg of the table, which he mistook for Phémie's knees. But Marcel and Rodolphe did not leave the stirrups of cool-headedness, and observed, not without anxiety, the approach of the catastrophe.

The stranger contemplated the scene with grave curiosity; from time to time his mouth opened as if to smile; then there would be a sound like the squeaking of a window being closed. It was the stranger laughing inwardly.

At quarter to twelve the cashier sent up the bill. It attained a dizzy height—25 francs 75 centimes.

"Come," said Marcel, "we must draw lots to see who shall go and negotiate with the proprietor. That is going to be a serious business."

They took a set of dominoes and drew to see who got the largest number.

Unluckily fate selected Schaunard as plenipotentiary.

Schaunard was an excellent musician, but a wretched diplomatist. He reached the desk just as the proprietor lost a game to his old customer. Bowed beneath the disgrace of three *capots*, Momus was in a murderous humor, and flew into a violent rage at Schaunard's first overtures. Schaunard was a good musician, but he had a lamentable disposition. He retorted with double-barreled insolence. The quarrel became more and more bitter, and the proprietor went upstairs to inform the party that they would have to pay or else they could not leave the place. Colline tried to intervene with his chastened eloquence, but when his eye fell upon the napkin that Colline had made into lint, the proprietor's wrath redoubled in fury, and, to secure himself against loss, he ventured to lay a profane hand on the philosopher's nut-brown overcoat and the ladies' cloaks.

There was a constant interchange of volleys of insults between the Bohemians and the master of the establishment.

The three women talked of love-affairs and dresses.

The stranger laid aside his impassive demeanor; he rose slowly to his feet, took one step, then two, and walked like an ordinary mortal; he went up to the proprietor, led him aside and talked to him in an undertone. Rodolphe and Marcel looked after him. At last the host went out, saying to the stranger:

"Of course I consent, Monsieur Barbemuche, of course; arrange it with them."

Monsieur Barbemuche returned to his table for his hat, put it on his head, wheeled to the right, and in three steps reached Rodolphe and Marcel, removed his hat, bowed to the men, waved his hand to the ladies, drew his handkerchief, blew his nose, and began in a hesitating voice :

"Pardon, messieurs, the indiscretion I am about to commit. I have long been burning with the desire to make your acquaintance, but I had not found hitherto a favorable opportunity to enter into communication with you. Will you permit me to take advantage of that which presents itself to-day?"

"Certainly, certainly," said Colline, who saw what the stranger was coming at.

Rodolphe and Marcel bowed without speaking.

Schaunard's over-keen sense of delicacy came near ruining everything.

"Excuse me, monsieur," he said sharply, "you have not the honor of knowing us, and the proprieties forbid our—would you be kind enough to give me a pipe full of tobacco?—In any case, I shall agree with my friends."

"Messieurs," rejoined Barbemuche, "I am, like yourself, a disciple of the fine arts. So far as I have been able to discover from hearing your talk, our tastes are the same. I have a most earnest desire to be counted among your friends and to be able to join you here every evening. The proprietor of this establishment is a brute, but

I have said a few words to him, and you are at liberty to retire. I venture to hope that you will not deny me the privilege of making it possible to find you here as usual, and that you will accept the trifling service which—"

A flush of indignation overspread Schaunard's face.

"He speculates on our plight," he said, "we cannot accept. He has paid our bill. I propose to play him a game of billiards for twenty-five francs and give him points."

Barbemuche accepted the suggestion and had the good sense to lose; that well-judged act won for him the esteem of Bohemia.

They parted, agreeing to meet the next day.

"In that way," said Schaunard to Marcel, "we owe him nothing; our dignity is upheld."

"And we might almost order another supper," said Colline.

XII

A RECEPTION IN BOHEMIA

On the evening when Carolus paid out of his own purse the bill for a supper consumed by the Bohemians, he arranged matters so that he left the café with Gustave Colline. Since he had been present as a spectator at the meetings of the four friends in the establishment where he had rescued them from their embarrassing position, Carolus had been especially attracted by Colline, and had a sort of sympathetic feeling for that Socrates, whose Plato he was destined later to become. That is why he had selected him at the outset to be his sponsor in the club. As they walked, Barbemuche invited Colline to go into a café which was still open, and take something. Not only did Colline refuse, but he quickened his pace as they passed the café aforesaid and carefully pulled a hyperphysical felt hat over his eyes.

"Why don't you want to go in there?" said Barbemuche, insisting with due courtesy.

"I have my reasons," Colline replied; "there's a lady cashier in that establishment, who is much addicted

to the exact sciences, and I could not avoid having a very prolonged discussion with her, which I seek to avert by never passing through this street at midday or at any other hour of daylight. Oh! it's very simple," he continued artlessly, "I once lived in this quarter with Marcel."

"I would have liked very much to drink a glass of punch and have a few moments' conversation with you. Don't you know some place in the neighborhood where you can go, undeterred by—mathematical obstacles?" queried Barbemuche who deemed it advisable to be immensely clever. Colline reflected a moment.

"There's a little place where my standing is less equivocal," he said, pointing to a wine-shop.

Barbemuche made a wry face and seemed to hesitate.

"Is that a suitable place?" he asked. In view of his cool and reserved demeanor, his infrequent speech, his sedate smile, and especially his watch and its chain and charms, Colline had formed the opinion that Barbemuche was employed at some embassy, and he supposed that he feared to compromise himself by entering a cabaret.

"There's no danger of our being seen," he said; "at this time of night the whole diplomatic corps is in bed."

Barbemuche decided to go in; but, in the depth of his soul, he wished that he had a false nose. For greater security he asked for a private room and took pains to pin a napkin over the panes of glass in the

door. Those precautions taken, he seemed less disturbed in his mind and ordered a bowl of punch. Excited somewhat by the warmth of the beverage, Barbemuche became more communicative; and after giving some details concerning himself, he ventured to give utterance to the hope he had conceived of being formally admitted to the Bohemian Society, and solicited Colline's support in his efforts to gratify that ambitious aspiration. Colline answered that, so far as he was concerned, he was entirely at Barbemuche's service, but that he could make no definite promises.

"I promise you my vote," he said, "but I cannot undertake to dispose of the votes of my companions."

"But what reason could they have for refusing to admit me among them?" asked Barbemuche.

Colline placed upon the table the glass he was preparing to put to his lips, and with a very grave air addressed the audacious Carolus in almost these words:

"Do you cultivate the fine arts?"

"I plough in a modest way those noble fields of learning," replied Carolus, determined to hoist the colors of his rhetorical style.

Colline deemed the sentence a well-constructed one and bowed.

"Do you know music?" he continued.

"I have played the bass-viol."

"That is a philosophic instrument, it gives forth solemn sounds. In that case, if you know music, you will

understand that you cannot, without offending the laws of harmony, introduce a fifth performer into a quartette; if you do, it ceases to be a quartette."

"It becomes a quintette," said Carolus.

"I beg your pardon?"

"A quintette."

"Exactly; just as if you add another person to the Trinity, that divine triangle becomes a square, and there's your religion cracked at its foundation!"

"Excuse me," said Carolus, whose mind was beginning to stumble among the thorns of Colline's argument, "I don't quite see—"

"Look and follow me," continued Colline; "do you know astronomy?"

"A little; I have a bachelor's degree."

"There's a ballad on that theme," said Colline, "'Lisette's Bachelor'.—I don't remember the tune.—Then you must know that there are four cardinal points. Well, suppose a fifth cardinal point should appear, the whole harmonious system of nature would be upset. That's what's called a cataclysm. Do you understand?"

"I await your conclusion."

"To be sure, the conclusion is the end of the discourse, just as death is the end of life, and marriage the end of love. Well, my dear monsieur, my friends and I are used to living together, and we are afraid that the introduction of another person may break up the har-

mony that prevails in our concert of morals, opinions, tastes and dispositions. We are bound some day to be the four cardinal points of contemporary art; I tell you this frankly; and, being accustomed to the idea, it would annoy us to see a fifth cardinal point—"

"But, after all, when there are four of you, there might as well be five," suggested Carolus.

"Yes, but then we are no longer four."

"That's a paltry excuse."

"There is nothing paltry in this world, everything is in everything, small brooks make great rivers, small syllables make hexameters, and the mountains are made of grains of sand; that's all in the *Wisdom of Nations;* there's a copy of it on the quay."

"You think, then, that those gentlemen will object to admitting me to the honor of their private circle?"

"I am afraid so," said Colline, who never missed an occasion for jesting.[10]

"I beg your pardon?" rejoined Carolus in amazement.

"Excuse me—that's a flash in the pan!—Tell me, my dear monsieur," said Colline, "which furrow in all the noble fields of knowledge you prefer to plough?"

"The great philosophers and best classic authors are my novels; I feed upon them. *Télémaque* first aroused in me the passion by which I am consumed."

"*Télémaque* is very common on the quay," said Colline. "You can always find it there; I bought it for

five sous because it was a second-hand copy; however, I would consent to dispose of it to oblige you. It's a good book, by the way, and well written for the time."

"Yes, monsieur," Carolus continued, "exalted philosophy and healthy literature are what I aspire to. To my mind, art is a priesthood."

"Yes, yes, yes,"—rejoined Colline, "there's a song about that too."

And he began to sing:

> Yes, art is a priesthood
> And we know how to use it.

"I believe it's in *Robert le Diable*."

"I was saying that, art being a solemn function, writers ought always——"

"Excuse me, monsieur," Colline interrupted him, hearing a clock strike an advanced hour, "it will soon be to-morrow morning, and I am afraid of causing anxiety to a person who is dear to me; besides," he muttered to himself, "I promised her I'd come home—it's her day!"

"In truth, it is late," said Carolus, "let us go."

"Do you live far away?"

"Rue Royale-Saint-Honoré, No. 10."

Colline had once had occasion to go to that house and remembered that it was a magnificent mansion.

"I will speak with those gentlemen about you," he said to Carolus as they parted, "and be sure that I will

use my influence to induce them to look favorably upon you.—By the way, allow me to give you a little advice."

"Speak," said Carolus.

"Be affable and polite to Mesdemoiselles Mimi, Musette and Phémie; those ladies possess great influence over my friends, and if you are able to subject them to pressure from their mistresses, you will succeed more readily in obtaining what you want from Marcel, Schaunard and Rodolphe."

"I will try," said Carolus.

The next morning Colline dropped down in the midst of the Bohemian phalanstery; it was the breakfast hour and the breakfast had arrived with the hour. The three families were at table and indulging in a debauch of artichokes with pepper and vinegar.

"The deuce!" said Colline, "they live well here; it can't last.—I come," he said, "as an ambassador of the generous mortal we met last evening at the café."

"Has he sent already to demand the money he advanced for us?" asked Marcel.

"Oh! I wouldn't have thought it of him," said Mademoiselle Mimi, "he had such a *comme il faut* way about him!"

"That's not my errand," said Colline; "the young man desires to be one of us; he is willing to take some stock in our company, and to share in the profit, of course."

The three Bohemians raised their heads and exchanged glances.

"There you have it," Colline concluded, "and now the question is open for discussion."

"What is the social standing of your protégé?" queried Rodolphe.

"He is not my protégé," Colline retorted; "last night, when I left you, you asked me to follow him; he thereupon asked me to accompany him, which I was very glad to do. So I went with him; he entertained me part of the night with attentions and fine liquor, but I nevertheless retained my independence."

"Very good," said Schaunard.

"Sketch some of the principal points of his character for us," said Marcel.

"Grandeur of soul, austere morals, afraid to go into wine-shops, bachelor of letters, a victim of candor, plays the bass-viol, a nature that sometimes changes five-franc pieces."

"Very good," said Schaunard.

"What are his hopes?"

"I have already told you that his ambition has no limits; he aspires to be on familiar terms with us."

"That is to say, he wants to work us," said Marcel. "He wants to be seen riding in our carriages."

"What is his branch of art?" Rodolphe inquired.

"Yes, what game does he play?" added Marcel.

"His branch of art? what game does he play?" repeated Colline. "Literature and philosophy mixed."

"What is the extent of his philosophic knowledge?"

"He practises a sort of departmental philosophy. He calls art a priesthood."

"A priesthood!" exclaimed Rodolphe in dismay.

"That is what he says."

"And what is his line in literature?"

"He converses with TÉLÉMAQUE."

"Very good," said Schaunard, nibbling at the outer husk of the artichoke.

"What! very good, idiot?" exclaimed Marcel, "look out you don't repeat that in the street."

Schaunard, vexed by that reprimand, kicked Phémie under the table, having surprised her making an attack upon the sauce.

"Once more," said Rodolphe, "what is his position in society? what does he live upon? his name, his abode?"

"His position is an honorable one, he is a professor of all sorts of things in the bosom of a wealthy family. His name is Carolus Barbemuche, he squanders his income in luxurious living, and lodges on Rue Royale in a fine mansion."

"Furnished lodgings?"

"No, there is real furniture there."

"I ask for the floor," said Marcel. "It is perfectly plain to me that Colline is corrupted; he has sold his

vote in advance for a certain number of *petits verres*. Do not interrupt," he added, seeing the philosopher rise to protest, "you can answer directly. Colline, a venal creature, has presented this stranger to you in an aspect too favorable to be the image of truth. As I told you, I see through this stranger's schemes. He intends to speculate upon his connection with us. He said to himself: "There are some young bloods who are getting on in the world; I must stow myself away in their pockets and arrive with them at the landing-stage of renown."

"Very good," said Schaunard, "is there any more sauce?"

"No," replied Rodolphe, "the edition is exhausted."

"On the other hand," continued Marcel, "this insidious mortal whom Colline has taken under his protection, perhaps aspires to the honor of our intimacy, with none but guilty purposes. We are not alone here, messieurs," continued the orator, with an eloquent glance at the ladies; "and Colline's protégé, insinuating himself into our homes under the cloak of literature, may prove to be nothing less than a felonious seducer. Reflect! For myself, I vote against his admission."

"I demand the floor for a correction simply," said Rodolphe. "In his noteworthy extemporaneous remarks, Marcel said that this Carolus designed, with the purpose of bringing dishonor upon us, to insinuate himself among us under the CLOAK OF LITERATURE."

"That was a parliamentary metaphor," said Marcel.

"I rebuke that metaphor; it is very poor. Literature has no cloak."

"As I perform the functions of reporter in this matter," said Colline, rising, "I will uphold the conclusions of my report. The jealousy which consumes him, leads our friend Marcel astray; the great artist is mad—"

"Order!" roared Marcel.

"Mad in that he, being such a clever draughtsman, introduced into his discourse a figure whose incorrectness has been clearly pointed out by the able orator who preceded me in this tribune."

"Colline is an idiot!" cried Marcel, bringing his fist down upon the table with a violence that caused a profound sensation among the plates; "Colline understands nothing at all about sentiment, he is incompetent to deal with the question, he has an old book in place of a heart!"

Prolonged laughter from Schaunard.

Throughout that uproar, Colline gravely shook the torrents of eloquence contained in the folds of his white cravat. When silence was restored, he continued his discourse thus:

"Messieurs, I propose with a single word to banish from your minds the chimerical fears which Marcel's suspicions may have inspired in relation to Carolus."

"Just let's see you try to banish them," said Marcel mockingly.

"It will be no harder than that," retorted Colline, extinguishing with a breath the match with which he had just lighted his pipe.

"Say on! say on!" cried Rodolphe, Schaunard and the women in unison, the debate affording them unbounded amusement.

"Messieurs," said Colline, "although I have been personally and vehemently attacked in this presence, although I have been accused of having sold for spirituous liquors such influence as I may be able to exert among you, having an untroubled conscience, I will not reply to the assaults that have been made on my probity, my loyalty, my morals."—Sensation—"But I propose to enforce respect for one thing." The orator dealt himself two blows on the paunch. "Doubts have been cast upon my prudence which is well known to you all. I am accused of wishing to introduce among you a mortal who entertains hostile designs upon your—sentimental happiness. Such a supposition is an insult to the virtue of these ladies, and, furthermore, an insult to their good taste. Carolus Barbemuche is exceedingly ugly,"—Visible dissent upon Phémie Teinturière's face. Tumult under the table. It is Schaunard chastising with kicks the compromising frankness of his young friend.

"But," continued Colline, "the one fact that will reduce to dust the pitiful argument which my adversary working upon your fears, uses as a weapon against Carolus, is this—the said Carolus is a PLATONIST philoso-

pher ! "—Sensation among the men, uproar among the women.

" Platonist—what does that mean ? " queried Phémie.

" It's the disease men have who don't dare to kiss women," said Mimi ; " I once had a lover like that ; I kept him two hours."

" Stuff and nonsense ! " exclaimed Mademoiselle Musette.

" You are right, my dear," said Marcel, " Platonism in love is like water in wine ! Let's take our wine pure."

" And *vive la jeunesse ! ''* added Musette.

Colline's announcement had caused a revulsion of feeling in Carolus's favor. The philosopher determined to take advantage of the reaction due to his eloquent and adroit defence.

" Now," he continued, " I do not quite see what objections can be raised against this young man, who, say what you will, did us a service. As for myself, who have been accused of acting hastily in seeking to introduce him among us, I consider that opinion offensive to my dignity. I have acted in this matter with the prudence of the serpent ; and if an affirmative vote does not establish that prudence, I offer my resignation."

" Do you wish to submit the question ? " said Marcel.

" I submit it," Colline replied.

The three Bohemians consulted, and unanimously agreed that the philosopher be credited with the exalted

prudence which he claimed. Colline thereupon abandoned the floor to Marcel, who, having conquered his prejudices to some extent, declared that he would perhaps vote to sustain the conclusions of the reporter. But before taking the decisive vote which would throw open to Carolus the doors of Bohemia, Marcel caused this amendment to be voted upon:

"As the admission of a new member to the club is a serious matter, as a stranger, being ignorant of the manners, dispositions and opinions of his comrades, might import elements of discord, each of the present members should pass a day with the aforesaid Carolus, and should devote that time to an inquiry into his life, his tastes, his literary capacity and his wardrobe. The Bohemians should then communicate their individual impressions to one another, and thereafter pass upon the question of admission or rejection: furthermore, before being admitted, Carolus should submit to a novitiate of one month, that is to say, he should not, before the expiration of that time, be entitled to use the familiar form of address to them, or to take their arms in the street. When the day of his final admission arrived, a magnificent fête should be given at the expense of the new member. The bill for the fête should not be less than twelve francs."

This amendment was adopted by three votes against one, the negative vote being cast by Colline, who considered that they did not rely sufficiently upon him, and

that the amendment was a renewed reflection upon his prudence.

That evening Colline went very early to the café, for the purpose of being the first to meet Carolus.

He had not long to wait. Carolus soon arrived, with three enormous bouquets of roses in his hands.

"Well, well!" exclaimed Colline in amazement; "what do you intend to do with that flower-garden?"

"I remembered what you told me yesterday; your friends will come with their lady friends, I doubt not, and I have brought these flowers for them; they are very beautiful."

"Yes, there must be at least fifteen sous' worth."

"Do you think so?" retorted Carolus; "in the month of December you had better say fifteen francs."

"Heavens and earth!" cried Colline; "a trio of five-franc pieces for those simple gifts of Flora—what folly! You must be related to the Cordillières? Well, my dear monsieur, there are fifteen francs that we shall be obliged to toss out of the window."

"What! what do you mean?"

Colline thereupon told him of the jealous suspicions Marcel had planted in the minds of his friends, and described the vehement discussion that had taken place among the Bohemians on the subject of his admission into the club. "I declared that your intentions were unexceptionable," added Colline, "but the opposition was none the less keen for that. Be careful, therefore,

not to revive the jealous suspicions which they have conceived of you by being too gallant to the ladies; and, to begin with, let us put these bouquets out of sight."

He took the roses and concealed them in a cupboard for rubbish.

"But that isn't all," he continued; "those gentlemen desire, before entering into intimate relations with you, to make an investigation, each on his own account, as to your character, your tastes, etc."

Thereupon, in order that Barbemuche might not tread too heavily upon his friends' toes, Colline drew a rapid moral sketch of each of the Bohemians. "Try to agree with them separately," added the philosopher, "and in the end they will all be on your side."

Carolus agreed to everything.

The three friends soon arrived, accompanied by their sweethearts.

Rodolphe was courteous to Carolus, Schaunard familiar, Marcel maintained a cool demeanor. As for Carolus himself, he exerted himself to be jovial and engaging with the men and very indifferent to the women.

When they separated for the night, Barbemuche asked Rodolphe to dinner the next day. But he requested him to come to his house at noon.

The poet accepted.

"Good," he said to himself; "I am the one to begin the investigation."

The next day, at the appointed hour, Rodolphe re-

paired to Barbemuche's abode. He lived in a very handsome mansion on Rue Royale, and occupied a room very comfortably furnished. But Rodolphe was astonished to find the shutters closed, curtains drawn, and two candles lighted on a table, although it was broad day. He asked Barbemuche to explain.

"Study is the daughter of mystery and silence," he replied.

They sat down and talked. After an hour's conversation, Carolus, with infinite patience and oratorical skill, succeeded in leading up to a phrase which, despite its harmless form, was neither more nor less than a demand upon Rodolphe to listen to a little work which was the fruit of the aforesaid Carolus's vigils.

Rodolphe realized that he was caught. And having some curiosity to see the color of Barbemuche's style, he bowed politely, assuring him that he was enchanted to—"

Carolus did not wait for him to finish his sentence. He ran to the door, turned the key and returned to Rodolphe. He then took out a small bundle of papers, whose diminutive size and thinness brought a smile of satisfaction to the poet's face.

"Is that the manuscript of your work?" he asked.

"No," said Carolus, "this is the catalogue of my manuscripts and I am looking for the number of the one you deign to allow me to read to you. Here it is: *Don Lopez, or Fatality*, number 14. It's on the third shelf," he added, and he opened a small closet in which

Rodolphe observed with dismay a great quantity of manuscripts. Carolus selected one, closed the closet and seated himself facing the poet.

Rodolphe cast a glance at one of the four bundles which made up the work, written on sheets of the size of the Champ de Mars.

"It's not in verse," he said to himself, "but it is called DON LOPEZ!"

Carolus took up the first bundle and began thus:

"On a cold night in winter two horsemen, wrapped in the folds of their cloaks and mounted upon slothful mules, were riding side by side along one of the roads that traverse the terrifying solitude of the Sierra Morena."

"Where am I?" thought Rodolphe, aghast at this beginning. Carolus read on to the end of the first chapter, written in the same style throughout.

Rodolphe listened vaguely and thought about finding some means of escape.

"There's the window," he said, "but it's fastened, and we are on the fourth floor, in addition. Ah! I understand all his precautions now."

"What do you say to my first chapter?" Carolus inquired; "don't be sparing of your criticism, I beg."

Rodolphe thought that he remembered hearing snatches of declamatory philosophy concerning suicide, put forward by one Lopez, the hero of the novel, so he took the risk and answered as follows:

"The main figure, Don Lopez, is conscientiously worked out ; it reminds one of the *Savoyard Vicar's Profession of Faith ;* the description of Don Alvar's mule pleases me beyond measure ; one would say it was a sketch by Géricault. The description of the landscape contains some fine lines ; as for your ideas, they are J. J. Rousseau's seed sown in Lesage's soil. But allow me to make one comment. You put in too many commas and you abuse *dorénavant*—henceforth— ; it's a very pretty word that does well enough now and then ; it gives color to the narrative, but it ought not to be abused."

Carolus took up the second bundle and reread the title, *Don Lopez, or Fatality.*

"I once knew a Don Lopez," said Rodolphe ; "he sold cigarettes and Bayonne chocolate, perhaps he was a relation of your man. Go on."

At the end of the second chapter the poet interrupted Carolus.

"Doesn't your throat feel rather lame?" he asked.

"Not in the least," replied Carolus ; "you are about to hear Inésille's story."

"I am very much interested. But if you are tired," said the poet, "you must not think of—"

"CHAPTER III !" said Carolus in a clear voice.

Rodolphe examined him closely and noticed that he had a very short neck and a high color. "I have one hope left," he said to himself after he had made that discovery : "apoplexy."

"We will go on to Chapter IV. You will be kind enough to tell me what you think of the love scene."

And Carolus resumed his reading.

As he glanced at Rodolphe, seeking to read in his face the effect produced by the dialogue, Carolus saw the poet leaning forward in his chair with his head in the attitude of a man listening to distant sounds.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Hush!" said Rodolphe; "don't you hear? It seems to me somebody is crying fire! Suppose we go and see?"

Carolus listened a moment but heard nothing.

"It must have been a ringing in my ears," said Rodolphe: "go on; Don Alvar interests me immensely; he's a noble youth."

Carolus read on and put all the music of his voice into this sentence spoken by the young Don Alvar:

"O Inésille, whoever you may be, angel or demon, and whatever your native land, my life is yours, and I will follow you, whether it be to heaven or to hell!"

At that moment there was a knock at the door and a voice outside called Carolus.

"It's my concierge," he said, partly opening his door.

It was in truth the concierge; he brought a letter; Carolus opened it hurriedly.—"How unfortunate," he exclaimed; "we shall have to postpone the reading to another time; I have received news which requires me to go out at once."

"Ah!" thought Rodolphe, "that letter fell from Heaven; I recognize the seal of Providence."

"If you choose," continued Carolus, "we will take the walk together which this letter compels me to take, and then we will go to dinner."

"I am at your service," said Rodolphe.

That evening, when he appeared at the club, the poet was questioned by his friends on the subject of Barbemuche.

"Are you satisfied with him? Did he treat you well?" said Marcel and Schaunard.

"Yes, but it cost me dear," said Rodolphe.

"How so? Can it be that Carolus made you pay?" demanded Schaunard with growing indignation.

"He read me a novel, in whose insides people are called Don Lopez and Don Alvar and in which the *jeunes premiers* call their mistresses *Angel or Demon.*"

"What a ghastly thing!" exclaimed all the Bohemians in chorus.

"But in other respects," said Colline, "aside from literature, what is your opinion concerning Carolus?"

"He's an excellent young man. However, you can make your observations for yourselves: Carolus expects to entertain us all one after another. Schaunard is invited to breakfast to-morrow. But when you go to Barbemuche's, beware of the closet of manuscripts; it's a dangerous piece of furniture."

Schaunard was on hand promptly at the appointed

time, and devoted himself to a scrutiny worthy of a professional appraiser or of a bailiff making a levy. Consequently he returned at night with his mind filled with memoranda; he had studied Carolus from the standpoint of personal effects.

"Well," he was asked, "what is your opinion?"

"Why, this Barbemuche is moulded of good qualities," Schaunard replied; "he knows the names of all kinds of wines and gave me delicious things to eat, such as I don't get at my aunt's on her birthday. He seems to me to be on reasonably intimate terms with tailors on Rue Vivienne and bootmakers on Les Panoramas. I noticed furthermore, that he was of about the same figure as all four of us, so that at need we can lend him our coats. His morals are less stern than Colline undertook to tell us; he let me take him wherever I chose, and paid for a breakfast in two acts, the second of which took place in a wine-shop at the market, where I am well-known through having taken part in divers orgies there during the Carnival. Carolus went in there like any ordinary mortal. There you are! Marcel is invited for to-morrow."

Carolus knew that Marcel was the one who was most opposed to his admission to the club; and so he treated him with particular attention; but he won the artist's good-will chiefly by giving him reason to hope that he could procure him a chance to paint some portraits in his pupil's family.

When it was Marcel's turn to report, his friends no longer detected that preconceived hostility which he had exhibited against Carolus at first.

On the fourth day Colline informed Barbemuche that he was admitted.

"What! I am admitted?" exclaimed Carolus, delighted beyond measure.

"Yes," replied Colline, "but only on probation."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that you still have a heap of little vulgar ways that you will have to correct."

"I will do my best to copy you," rejoined Carolus.

During the whole period of his novitiate, the Platonist philosopher assiduously sought the society of the Bohemians; and having set about studying their manners more closely than before, he was sometimes tremendously astonished.

One morning Colline called upon Barbemuche with a radiant countenance.

"Well, my dear fellow," he said, "you are one of us now for good and all; it's decided. It only remains now to fix upon the day for the great fête and the place where it is to come off; I have come to talk it over with you."

"Why, it happens as opportunely as possible," replied Carolus; "my pupil's parents are in the country just at this moment; the young viscount whose mentor I am, will lend me the apartments for one evening; in

that way we shall be more at our ease; only we must invite the young viscount."

"That would be most delightful," replied Colline; "we will open vast literary horizons to him; but do you think he will consent?"

"I am sure of it beforehand."

"Then we have only to fix the day."

"We will arrange that this evening at the café," said Barbemuche.

Carolus thereupon sought his pupil and informed him that he had been chosen a member of a first-rate artistic and literary society, and that, to celebrate his reception, he proposed to give a dinner-party followed by a little fête; he proposed to him to be one of the guests:

"And as you cannot be out late and the fête will be prolonged into the night," added Carolus, "we will give the little party here, in the apartments. François, your servant, is close-mouthed, your parents will know nothing about it, and you will have made the acquaintance of the cleverest people in Paris, artists and authors."

"Are their works printed?" queried the young man.

"Printed, certainly; one of them is editor-in-chief of *L'Écharpe d'Iris*, which madame your mother takes. They are very distinguished people, almost famous; I am their intimate friend; they have charming wives."

"Will there be women?" asked Vicomte Paul.

"Fascinating ones," replied Carolus.

"O my dear master, I thank you; certainly we will

give the fête here; we will light all the chandeliers and I will have the covers taken off the furniture."

That evening at the café, Barbemuche announced that the party would be given on the following Saturday.

The Bohemians requested their mistresses to look to their toilets.

"Do not forget," they said, "that we are going into real salons. So make your preparations accordingly; simple costumes, but rich."

From and after that day the whole street was aware that Mesdemoiselles Mimi, Phémie and Musette were going into society.

On the morning of this ceremony, this is what took place: Colline, Schaunard, Marcel and Rodolphe betook themselves in a body to Barbemuche's, who seemed astonished to see them so early.

"Has any accident happened which will necessitate the postponement of the fête?" he asked with some disquietude.

"Yes and no," replied Colline. "This is how it is. Between ourselves, we never stand on ceremony; but when we are to be with strangers, we wish to maintain a certain amount of decorum."

"Well?" said Barbemuche.

"Well," continued Colline, "as we are to meet the young gentleman this evening who throws open these salons to us, out of respect to him, as well as to ourselves, whom our somewhat informal costumes might

compromise, we have come to ask you if you could lend us, just for this evening, a few garments of a becoming cut. It is almost impossible for us, as you must understand, to enter these sumptuous halls in coarse blouses and jackets."

"But I haven't four dress coats," said Carolus.

"Oh! we will make shift with what you have."

"Well, look," said Carolus, opening a well-supplied wardrobe."

"Why, you have a complete arsenal of fine things."

"Three hats!" said Schaunard in rapt admiration; "can a man have three hats when he has only one head?"

"And the boots," said Rodolphe, "look at them!"

"There are stacks of them!" shouted Colline.[11]

In a twinkling, each of them had selected a complete outfit.

"Until this evening," they said as they took their leave of Barbemuche; "the ladies propose to be dazzlingly beautiful."

"But you have left nothing for me," said Barbemuche, glancing into the wardrobe which was completely stripped. "How am I to receive you?"

"Oh! it's different with you," said Rodolphe, "you're the master of the house; you can lay etiquette aside."

"But there's nothing left but a dressing-gown, a pair of drawers with feet, a flannel waistcoat and slippers; you have taken everything."

Chapter XII

The fête began with renewed animation. Schaunard took his seat at the piano and performed with prodigious energy his new symphony, the Young Girl's Death. *The beautiful piece called the* Creditor's March *had the honor of being twice encored. Two of the cords of the piano were broken.*

Chapter XII

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"What does it matter? we excuse you in advance," replied the Bohemians.

At six o'clock a very handsome dinner was served in the dining-room. The Bohemians arrived. Marcel limped a little and was in very bad humor. Young Vicomte Paul rushed to meet the ladies and escorted them to the best seats. Mimi wore a most fantastic costume. Musette was dressed with good taste overflowing with seductiveness. Phémie resembled a window filled with colored glasses; she dared not sit down at the table. The dinner lasted two hours and a half and was delightfully gay.

Young Vicomte Paul trod furiously on Mimi's foot,—she was sitting next him,—and Phémie asked to be helped twice to something in every course. Schaunard was in clover. Rodolphe improvised sonnets and marked time by breaking glasses. Colline was talking with Marcel, who was still sulky.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"My feet hurt me horribly, and it vexes me. That Carolus has a foot like a society woman."

"But all we have to do," said Colline, "is to make him understand that things can't go on so, and that in future he must have his footwear made a few sizes wider; I'll arrange it, never fear. But let us adjourn to the salon, whither the Curaçoa summons us."

The fête began with renewed animation. Schaunard took his seat at the piano and performed with prodigious

energy his new symphony, the *Young Girl's Death.* The beautiful piece called the *Creditor's March* had the honor of being twice encored. Two of the chords of the piano were broken.

Marcel was still sullen, and when Carolus remonstrated with him, the artist replied:

"My dear monsieur, we shall never be intimate friends, for this reason. Physical dissimilarities are an almost certain indication of moral dissimilarity; philosophy and medicine agree in that."

"What then?" said Carolus.

"Why," said Marcel, pointing to his feet, "your boots, which are much too narrow for me, prove to me that our characters are dissimilar: however, your little party has been delightful."

At one in the morning the Bohemians took their leave and returned home, making long détours. Barbemuche was ill and delivered wild harangues to his pupil, who, for his part, dreamed of Mademoiselle Mimi's blue eyes.

XIII

THE HOUSE-WARMING

This took place some time after Rodolphe the poet, and young Mademoiselle Mimi had set up housekeeping together, and for about a week the whole club of Bohemians had been much concerned because of Rodolphe's disappearance, he having suddenly become invisible. They had looked for him in all the places he was in the habit of frequenting, and received the same reply everywhere:

"We haven't seen him for a week."

Gustave Colline, especially, was sorely troubled, and for this reason: Some days before, he had placed in Rodolphe's hands a philosophical article which he was to insert in the *Variétés* columns of the newspaper *Le Castor*, a review devoted to the interests of the fashionable hat trade, of which Rodolphe was editor-in-chief. Had that philosophical article appeared before the eyes of awe-struck Europe? Such was the question that the unfortunate Colline asked himself, and the reader will understand how anxiously he asked it, when he is in-

formed that the philosopher had never yet had the honor of being printed, and that he was consumed by the desire to see what effect would be produced by his prose set in pica. To bestow that gratification upon his self-esteem, he had already expended six francs for reading privileges in all the literary salons of Paris, without falling in with *Le Castor*. Unable to restrain himself longer, Colline swore that he would not take a minute's rest until he had placed his hand upon the vanished editor of that sheet.

Assisted by happy accidents which it would take too long to describe, the philosopher kept his word. Two days later he was acquainted with Rodolphe's domicile, and he called upon him at six o'clock in the morning.

Rodolphe was then living in furnished lodgings on a deserted street in Faubourg Saint-Germain, and he lived on the fifth floor because there was no sixth. When Colline reached the door he found no key. He knocked for ten minutes without obtaining any reply from within; such an uproar so early in the morning at last attracted the attention of the concierge, who came up and requested Colline to be quiet.

"You see that the gentleman's asleep," he said.

"That's why I propose to wake him," replied Colline, knocking with renewed vigor.

"He doesn't propose to answer you, then," rejoined the concierge, depositing at Rodolphe's door a pair of

men's boots and women's shoes which he had just polished.

"Just wait a moment," said Colline, scrutinizing the male and female footwear; "polished boots and new! I must have mistaken the door; I have no business here."

"Whom are you looking for?" the concierge inquired.

"Women's boots!" continued Colline, speaking to himself, and reflecting upon his friend's austere morals; "yes, I certainly have made a mistake. This isn't Rodolphe's room."

"Excuse me, monsieur, but it is."

"Why, then, you have made a mistake, my good man."

"What do you mean?"

"Certainly you have made a mistake," said Colline, pointing to the boots. "What are those?"

"Those are Monsieur Rodolphe's boots; what is there strange about that?"

"And those," continued Colline, pointing to the shoes, "are those Monsieur Rodolphe's, too?"

"Those are his lady's," said the concierge.

"His lady's!" exclaimed Colline, dumfounded. "Ah! the sybarite! that's why he won't open the door."

"Surely," said the concierge, "the young man's his own master; if monsieur will tell me his name, I will tell Monsieur Rodolphe."

"No," said Colline; "now that I know where to find him, I will come again." And he at once went off to tell his friends the great news.

Rodolphe's new boots were generally treated as a fable attributable to the wealth of Colline's imagination, and it was unanimously agreed that his mistress was a paradox.

The paradox was a truth, however, for that same evening Marcel received a letter intended for the whole club. The letter was thus conceived :

"Monsieur and Madame Rodolphe, literati, request the honor of your company to dinner to-morrow evening at five o'clock precisely.

"N. B.—There will be plates."

"Messieurs," said Marcel, going to communicate the contents of the letter to his comrades, "the news is confirmed : Rodolphe really has a mistress ; furthermore, he invites us to dinner, and," continued Marcel, "the postscript promises plates. I tell you frankly that that paragraph seems to me like poetical exaggeration ; however, we shall see."

The next day, at the appointed hour, Marcel, Gustave Colline and Alexandre Schaunard, as hungry as the last day of Lent, repaired to Rodolphe's apartments and found him playing with a yellow cat, while a young woman was setting the table.

"Messieurs," said Rodolphe, pressing the hands of his friends and pointing to the young woman, "allow me to present you to the mistress of this establishment."

"You are the establishment, are you not?" said Colline, who had a sort of leprosy of such jokes.

"Mimi, these are my best friends, and now go and prepare the soup," said Rodolphe.

"O, madame!" said Alexandre Schaunard, rushing at Mimi, "you are as fresh as a wild flower."

Having convinced himself that there really were plates on the table, Schaunard began to make inquiries as to what they were to have to eat. He even carried his curiosity so far as to raise the lids of the saucepans in which the dinner was cooking. The presence of a lobster made a lively impression upon him.

Colline, meanwhile, had taken Rodolphe aside to ask about his philosophical article.

"My dear fellow, it's at the printer's. *Le Castor* appears next Thursday."

We will not undertake to depict the philosopher's joy.

"Messieurs," said Rodolphe to his friends, "I ask your pardon for having left you so long without news of me, but I was enjoying my honeymoon." And he told the story of his marriage to the charming creature who had brought him as her marriage portion her eighteen years and six months, two porcelain cups and a yellow cat, called Mimi, like herself.

"And now, messieurs," said Rodolphe, "we propose to have a house-warming. I warn you, however, that we are going to have a very bourgeois repast; truffles will be replaced by the heartiest cordiality."

In truth, that amiable goddess did not cease for a moment to hold sway among the guests, who agreed, moreover, that the so-called frugal repast did not lack a certain delicacy. Rodolphe had, in fact, gone to some expense. Colline noticed that the plates were changed, and he remarked aloud that Mademoiselle Mimi deserved the azure scarf with which the empresses of the oven are decorated,—a phrase which was perfect Sanscrit to the girl, and which Rodolphe translated by telling her "that she would make an excellent *cordon bleu*."

The entrance of the lobster aroused general admiration. On the pretext that he had studied natural history, Schaunard asked leave to dissect it; he took advantage of the privilege by breaking a knife and allotting to himself the largest share, thereby inciting universal indignation. But Schaunard had no self-esteem, especially where lobsters were concerned, and as there was a piece left over, he had the impudence to put it aside, saying that it would be useful to him as a model for a picture of still nature on which he was at work. His indulgent friends pretended to believe that falsehood, born of immoderate gluttony.

As for Colline, he reserved his sympathies for his dessert, and cruelly persisted in his refusal to exchange his share of *gâteau au rhum* for a ticket of admission to the orangery at Versailles which Schaunard offered him.

About that time the conversation was growing ani-

mated. The three bottles of red seal were succeeded by three bottles of green seal, among which they soon noticed a bottle, which was recognized by the silver cap surmounting its neck, as a soldier in the regiment of Royal-Champenois, a supposititious champagne brewed in the vineyards of Saint Ouen, and sold at Paris for two francs a bottle, because of the winding up of the concern, so the dealer claimed.

But it is not the province that makes the wine, and our Bohemians accepted as genuine Aï the liquor which was served to them in glasses provided therefor; and despite the slight eagerness to escape from its prison displayed by the cork, they went into ecstasies over the delicacy of the flavor when they saw the quantity of foam. Schaunard employed what little self-control he still possessed in making a mistake as to his glass and taking Colline's, while that gentleman was gravely dipping his biscuit in the mustard, as he explained to Mademoiselle Mimi the philosophical article which was to appear in *Le Castor;* suddenly he turned pale and asked leave to go to the window and look at the sunset, although it was ten o'clock and the sun had long been abed and asleep.

"It's a great pity the champagne isn't frozen," said Schaunard, still trying to substitute his empty glass for his neighbor's full one, but without success.

"Madame," said Colline, returning from taking the air, to Mimi, "champagne is frozen with ice, ice is

formed by the condensation of water, in Latin *aqua*. Frozen water is two degrees above zero, and there are four seasons, summer, autumn and winter; that is what caused the retreat from Russia; Rodolphe, give me a distich of champagne."

"What's that your friend says?" Mimi asked Rodolphe, as she was utterly unable to understand Colline.

"That's a joke," he replied; "Colline means half a glass."

Suddenly Colline brought his hand down on Rodolphe's shoulder, and said in a thick voice, as if the syllables were set in paste:

"To-morrow's Thursday, isn't it?"

"No," said Rodolphe, "to-morrow's Sunday."

"No, Thursday."

"No, I tell you once more, to-morrow's Sunday."

"Ah! Sunday," said Colline, wagging his head, "to-morrow's generally Thursday."

And he fell asleep, making a cast of his face in the cream cheese that was on his plate.

"What's he talking about with his Thursday?" said Marcel.

"Ah! I understand now," said Rodolphe, beginning to comprehend the persistence of the philosopher, possessed as he was by his fixed idea; it's on account of his article in *Le Castor*—Listen, he's dreaming out loud."

"Good!" said Schaunard, "he can't have any coffee, can he, madame?"

"By the way," said Rodolphe, "serve the coffee, Mimi."

She was about to rise, when Colline, who had recovered his senses to some extent, caught her by the waist and whispered confidentially in her ear:

"Madame, coffee originally came from Arabia, where it was discovered by a goat. In due time it came to be used in Europe. Voltaire used to drink seventy-two cups a day. For my part, I like it without sugar, but I take it very hot."

"Great God! how much that gentleman knows!" thought Mimi, as she brought coffee and pipes.

Meanwhile it was growing late; twelve o'clock had struck long before, and Rodolphe tried to make his friends understand that it was time to retire. Marcel, who had retained perfect control of his faculties, rose to go.

But Schaunard noticed that there was still some eau-de-vie in one bottle, and declared that it would not be twelve o'clock so long as there was any liquor left. Colline was sitting astride his chair and muttering under his breath:

"Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday."

"Deuce take it!" said Rodolphe, sorely perplexed, "I can't keep them here all night; in the old days it was well enough; but now it's a different matter," he added, looking at Mimi, whose glance, slightly inflamed, seemed to demand solitude *à deux*.

"What am I to do? Advise me a little, Marcel. Invent something to get them away."

"No, I will not invent," said Marcel, "but I will copy. I remember a comedy in which a clever valet finds a way to turn out of his master's rooms three rascals as drunk as Silenus."

"I remember that," said Rodolphe, "it's in *Kean*. The situation is really very much the same."

"Well," said Marcel, "we'll see if the stage is nature. Wait a bit, we'll begin with Schaunard. I say! Schaunard!" cried the painter.

"Hallo! what's the matter?" replied Schaunard, who seemed to be swimming in the blue sea of mild intoxication.

"There's nothing more to drink and we're all thirsty."

"Ah! yes," said Schaunard, "those bottles—they're so small!"

"Well," continued Marcel, "Rodolphe has decided that we are to pass the night here; but we must go and get something before the shops are closed."

"My grocer lives at the corner of the street," said Rodolphe. "Just go there, Schaunard, will you? Get two bottles of rum on my account."

"Oh! yes, oh! yes, oh! yes," said Schaunard, making a mistake in the matter of overcoats, and taking that of Colline, who was making squares on the tablecloth with his knife.

"One!" said Marcel, when Schaunard had gone. "And now for Colline; that will be harder. I have an

idea!—I say, I say! Colline!" he exclaimed, shaking the philosopher violently.

"What?—what?—what?"

"Schaunard has gone and has taken your nut-brown coat by mistake."

Colline looked around and saw, in the place where his garment had been, Schaunard's short plaid coat. A sudden thought passed through his brain and filled it with unrest. Colline had been about among the old book-shops that day, as usual, and had purchased for fifteen sous a Finnish grammar and a little novel by Monsieur Nisard, entitled; *The Milkmaid's Funeral.* In addition to those recent acquisitions, there were in his pockets seven or eight volumes of the higher philosophy which he always had about him, in order to have an arsenal from which to provide himself with arguments in case of a philosophical discussion. The thought that that collection was in Schaunard's hands gave him a cold sweat.

"The wretch!" cried Colline, "why did he take my coat?"

"It was a mistake."

"But my books—He may make a bad use of them."

"Don't be afraid, he won't read them," said Rodolphe.

"True, but I know him, you see; he's quite capable of lighting his pipe with them."

"If you are worried about them, you can overtake

him," said Rodolphe; "he has just gone out; you'll find him at the door."

"Certainly I will overtake him," said Colline, putting on his hat, the brim of which was so broad that tea for ten persons could easily have been served upon it.

"Two," said Marcel to Rodolphe; "now you are free, for I am going, and I will tell the concierge not to open the door if any one knocks."

"Good-night," said Rodolphe, "and thanks."

As he showed his friend out, Rodolphe heard on the stairs a prolonged miauling, to which his yellow cat replied by a similar cry, and tried slyly to escape through the half-open door.

"Poor Romeo!" said Rodolphe, "there's his Juliet calling him; off with you!" he said, opening the door for the lovelorn beast who made but one leap from the landing into his sweetheart's arms.

Left alone with his mistress, who was standing before her mirror, curling her hair, in a charmingly seductive attitude, Rodolphe approached her and took her in his arms. Then, as a musician, before beginning his performance, strikes a series of chords to test the condition of his instrument, Rodolphe took the youthful Mimi on his knees, and bestowed upon her shoulder a long, resonant kiss, which imparted a sudden vibration to the budding creature's body.

The instrument was in tune.

XIV

MADEMOISELLE MIMI

O my friend Rodolphe, what has happened, pray, that you are so changed? Must I believe the reports that come to my ears, and has the disaster that has befallen you crushed so completely your robust philosophy? How can I, the historian in ordinary of your Bohemian epic, so full of joyous laughter—how can I command a sufficiently melancholy tone in which to narrate the painful adventure that has forced your never-failing cheerfulness to don mourning garb, and has thus suddenly arrested the tinkling of your paradoxes?

O Rodolphe, my friend! I grant you that it is a sad catastrophe, but, in truth, there is no occasion to go and throw yourself into the water. And so I urge you to cross out the past as speedily as possible. Avoid, above all things, solitude peopled with phantoms, which would make your regrets everlasting. Avoid the silence, where the echoes of memory would still be full of your past joys and sorrows. Bravely throw to all the winds of oblivion the name you have loved so dearly, and with it,

all that you still retain of her who bore it. Locks of hair bitten by the frenzied lips of desire; phial of Venetian glass, wherein still sleeps a breath of perfume which would be more dangerous for you to inhale at this moment than all the poisons on earth; into the fire with the flowers, the flowers of gauze and silk and velvet; the white jasmine; the anemones empurpled by Adonis's blood, the blue myosotis and all the lovely bouquets she fashioned in the far-off days of your short-lived happiness. For, you see, I, too, loved your Mimi, and I saw no danger in your loving her. But follow my advice; into the fire with the ribbons, the pretty pink and blue and yellow ribbons of which she made necklaces to beguile the eye; into the fire with the laces and caps and veils and all the coquettish finery in which she arrayed herself to go and make love mathematically with Monsieur César, Monsieur Jérome, Monsieur Charles or any other gallant in the calendar, when you were waiting for her at your window, shivering in the icy blasts of winter; into the fire pitilessly, Rodolphe, with everything that belonged to her and might still speak to you of her; into the fire with the *love*-letters. See, here is one of them, and you wept over it like a fountain, O my luckless friend!

"As you don't come home, I am going out to my aunt's; I take what money there is here to hire a cab.—

"LUCILE."

And that evening, O Rodolphe, you did not dine, do you remember? and you came to see me and discharged a brilliant collection of witticisms which bore witness to the tranquillity of your mind. For you thought that Lucile was at her aunt's, and if I had told you that she was at Monsieur César's, or with an actor from the Montparnasse, you would certainly have tried to cut my throat. Into the fire, too, with this other note, which has all the laconic sweetness of the first:

"I am going to order some boots, and you absolutely *must* find the money for me to go and get them the day after to-morrow."

Ah! my friend, those boots danced many quadrilles when you were not their vis-à-vis. To the flames with all these souvenirs, and throw their ashes to the winds.

But, first of all, O Rodolphe, for the love of humanity and the good name of *L'Écharpe d'Iris* and *Le Castor*, resume the reins of good taste which you have let fall during your selfish suffering, or else horrible things may happen, for which you will be responsible. We shall return to leg-of-mutton sleeves and trousers with flaps, and some day there will come a fashion in hats which will make the universe weep and call down the wrath of Heaven.

And now the proper moment has arrived to tell the story of our friend Rodolphe's amours with Mademoiselle Lucile, otherwise called Mademoiselle Mimi. It was

just as he was turning his twenty-fourth year that Rodolphe was suddenly stricken to the heart by that passion which had a great influence over his life. At the time he fell in with Mimi, Rodolphe was leading that fantastic hand-to-mouth existence which we have tried to describe in the preceding scenes of this series. He was certainly one of the cheeriest children of misfortune to be found in the land of Bohemia. And when during the day he had had a wretched dinner and made a witty remark, he walked more proudly over the pavement that often was near being his bed, more proudly in his black coat, crying for quarter through all its seams, than an emperor in his purple robe. In the circle in which Rodolphe lived they pretended,—a common affectation among some young men—to treat love as a luxury, a pretext for playing pranks. Gustave Colline, who had long had relations with a maker of waistcoats, whom he had deformed in body and mind by dint of making her copy his philosophical manuscripts night and day, maintained that love was a sort of purgative, a good thing to take every spring to rid himself of humors. Among all those false sceptics, Rodolphe alone dared speak of love with some show of reverence; and when they were unlucky enough to allow him to get started on that strain, he was good for an hour of purring elegiacs concerning the joy of being loved, the azure surface of the tranquil lake, the song of the breeze, the concert of the stars, etc. This mania had caused him to be dubbed the *harmonica*

by Schaunard. Marcel also had made a very pretty quip on that theme, in which, alluding to Rodolphe's sentimental, Germanic tirades, as well as to his premature baldness, he called him the *bald myosotis*. The real truth was this: Rodolphe seriously believed at that time that he had done with youth and love; he boldly chanted the *De Profundis* over his heart, which he believed to be dead, when it was simply resting, but ready to awake, easily moved to enjoyment, and more susceptible than ever to all the cherished sorrows which it no longer hoped for, and which drive it to despair today. You would have it so, O Rodolphe! and we will not pity you, for the disease from which you are suffering is of those which we most eagerly desire, especially if we know that we are cured of it forever.

So Rodolphe met young Mimi, whom he had known previously when she was the mistress of one of his friends, and he made her his mistress. There was a great outcry among Rodolphe's friends when they first learned of his marriage; but as Mademoiselle Mimi was very agreeable and not at all prudish, and as pipe smoke and literary conversations did not make her head ache, they became accustomed to her, and treated her as a comrade. Mimi was a charming creature, whose nature was particularly well adapted to Rodolphe's plastic and poetic tendencies. She was twenty-two years old; small, graceful and roguish. Her face seemed like the rough draft of an aristocratic face: but her features, which were

extremely well-cut and softly lighted up by the gleam of her clear, blue eyes, assumed at certain moments of ennui or ill-humor an expression of almost savage brutality, in which a physiologist might have detected indications of profound selfishness or utter lack of feeling. But most of the time it was a charming face, with a bright, youthful smile, with an expression of melting tenderness or imperious coquetry. The blood of youth coursed hotly and swiftly through her veins, and suffused with ruddy hues the camellia-like whiteness of her transparent skin. That unhealthy beauty fascinated Rodolphe, and he often passed many hours of the night crowning with kisses the pale brow of his slumbering mistress, whose weary, melting eyes, half-closed, glistened beneath the curtain of her glorious brown hair. But what contributed more than anything else to make Rodolphe madly in love with Mademoiselle Mimi was her hands, which, notwithstanding her housekeeping duties, she succeeded in keeping whiter than those of the Goddess of Idleness. And yet those tiny, slender hands, so soft to the touch of the lips, those child's hands in which Rodolphe had placed his heart, blooming anew, those white hands of Mademoiselle Mimi's were destined soon to rend the poet's heart with their pink nails.

After a month, Rodolphe began to discover that he had married a tempest, and that his mistress had one great fault. She *went neighboring*, as they say, and passed a great part of her time with the kept women in

the quarter, whose acquaintance she had made. The result that Rodolphe had feared when he discovered the connections formed by his mistress, soon came to pass. The periodical opulence of some of her new *friends* planted a whole forest of ambition in the mind of Mademoiselle Mimi, who had hitherto displayed only modest tastes, and had been content with the necessaries of life, which Rodolphe procured for her as best he could. Mimi began to dream of silk and velvet and lace. And, despite Rodolphe's commands, she continued to associate with the aforesaid women, all of whom were agreed in trying to persuade her to break with the Bohemian, who could not give her as much as a hundred and fifty francs to buy a cloth dress.

"Pretty as you are," said her advisers, "you can easily find a better chance. All you have to do is to look for one."

And Mademoiselle Mimi began to look. Noticing her frequent goings out, which she explained in a very bungling way, Rodolphe entered upon the painful path of suspicion. But as soon as he felt that he was on the trace of some act of infidelity, he resolutely placed a bandage over his eyes in order to see nothing. Meanwhile, no matter what happened, he adored Mimi. He had for her a jealous, capricious, quarrelsome, strange kind of passion, which the young woman did not understand, because she felt for Rodolphe only the lukewarm attachment which results from habit. Moreover, half of

her heart had been worn out in the days of her first love, and the other half was still full of memories of her first lover.

Eight months passed thus, made up of alternate good days and bad days. During those eight months, Rodolphe was twenty times on the point of separating from Mademoiselle Mimi, who inflicted upon him all the unskilful tortures of the woman who does not love. To speak plainly, their existence had become a hell to both of them. But Rodolphe had become accustomed to the daily quarrels, and dreaded nothing so much as to have that state of things come to an end, for he felt that with it would cease forever the feverish impulses of youth and the keen emotions he had not felt for so long. And then, if the truth must be told, there were times when Mademoiselle Mimi made Rodolphe forget all the suspicions with which his heart was torn. There were moments when she brought to her feet, like a child, under the charm of her blue eyes, the poet whom she had helped to find his lost poetic talent, the young man to whom she had restored his youth, and who, thanks to her, had passed once more under the equator of love. Two or three times a month, in the midst of their fierce quarrels, Rodolphe and Mimi halted by common consent in the cool oasis of a night of love and sweet converse. At such times, Rodolphe would take his mistress's animated, smiling face between his hands, and abandon himself for whole hours to the joy of talking to her in the

absurd, yet charming language which passion improvises in its hours of delirium. Mimi would listen, calm at first, astonished rather than moved, but at last Rodolphe's enthusiastic eloquence, tender, bright and melancholy by turns, would gradually have its effect upon her. At the contact of that passion, she would feel the ice of indifference that benumbed her heart melting within her, the fever of contagion would begin to quicken her pulses, she would throw her arms about Rodolphe's neck and say to him in kisses all that she had been unable to say in words. And the dawn would surprise them thus, wrapped in each other's arms, eye to eye, hand in hand, while their burning lips still murmured the immortal words :

> Which for years five thousand past,
> Have nightly hung on lovers' lips.

But the next day the most trivial pretext would lead to a quarrel, and love, dismayed, would fly away for a long while to come.

At last, Rodolphe realized that if he did not look to himself, Mademoiselle Mimi's white hands would lead him into a pit in which he would leave his future and his youth. For a moment stern reason spoke louder than love within him, and he persuaded himself by logical arguments, supported by proofs, that his mistress did not love him. He went so far as to say to himself that the hours of affection which she vouchsafed to him were sim-

ply a whim of the senses like those which married women feel for their husbands when they have a feverish desire for a cashmere shawl or a new dress, or when their lovers are away. "When one has no white bread, one is content with brown bread," says the proverb. In short, Rodolphe could forgive his mistress everything except her ceasing to love him. He took the heroic course, therefore, and informed Mademoiselle Mimi that she would have to seek another lover. Mimi began to laugh and bluster. At last, seeing that Rodolphe held to his determination and received her with perfect tranquillity when she returned home after a night and a day abroad, she began to be a little anxious in view of such firmness, to which she was by no means accustomed. She was charming in her manner toward him for two or three days. But her lover did not retract what he had said, and contented himself with asking if she had found anyone.

"I simply haven't looked," she replied.

But she had looked, even before Rodolphe advised her so to do. Within a fortnight she had made two attempts. One of her female friends had assisted her and had, in the first place, arranged for her an introduction to a young sprig who had caused a whole world of Indian shawls and violet-wood furniture to gleam before Mimi's eyes. But, as Mimi herself concluded, although the young student might be very strong in algebra, he was not a very accomplished clerk in love; and as she was not fond of teaching, she dropped her lover in em-

bryo, with his cashmeres which were browsing in the plains of Thibet, and his violet-wood furniture still growing in the forests of the New World.

The schoolboy was soon replaced by a Breton nobleman, of whom Mimi soon became dotingly fond, and she did not need to be asked many times to become a countess.

Despite his mistress's protestations, Rodolphe got wind of some intrigue; he determined to find out just how far it had gone, and one morning, after a night which Mademoiselle Mimi passed away from the house, he hurried to the place where he suspected that she was, and was able there to plunge into his heart one of those proofs in which one must believe whether or not. He saw Mademoiselle Mimi, her eyes surrounded by a halo of debauchery, issue from the mansion in which she had been raised to the nobility, hanging on the arm of her new lord and master, who, we are compelled to state, seemed much less proud of his conquest than Paris, the comely Greek shepherd, after the abduction of the fair Helen.

Mademoiselle Mimi seemed a little surprised when she spied her lover. She walked up to him and they conversed very calmly for five minutes. Then they separated to go their respective ways. Their rupture was determined upon.

Rodolphe returned home and passed the day tying up everything that belonged to his mistress.

During the day following his divorce, Rodolphe re-

ceived visits from several of his friends, and told them of what had taken place. Everybody congratulated him thereon as if it were the greatest good fortune.

"We will assist you, O my poet," said one of those who had most frequently witnessed the tortures that Mademoiselle had inflicted on Rodolphe; "we will assist you to withdraw your heart from a wretched creature's hands. And you will soon be cured and ready to wander with another Mimi through the green paths of Aulnay and Fontenay-aux-Roses."

Rodolphe swore that he was done forever with regrets and despair. He even allowed himself to be enticed to the Bal Mabille, where his disordered costume shabbily represented *L'Écharpe d'Iris*, to which he was indebted for his admission to that lovely garden of pleasure and fashion. There Rodolphe met other friends with whom he drank. He described his misfortune to them with an extraordinary wealth of strange eloquence, and for an hour his vehemence and fervor were fairly bewildering.

"Alas! alas!" said Marcel, the painter, as he listened to the shower of sarcasm that fell from his friend Rodolphe's lips. Rodolphe is too gay, much too gay!"

"He is charming!" rejoined a young woman to whom Rodolphe had just offered a bouquet; "and although he is very badly dressed, I would willingly endanger my reputation by dancing with him if he chose to ask me."

Two seconds later, Rodolphe, who had overheard, was

at her feet, enveloping his invitation in a speech perfumed with all the musk and benzoin of gallantry at 80 degrees Richelieu. The lady stood speechless in the face of that language, bespangled with dazzling adjectives and involved phrases, with a Regency flavor calculated to bring a blush to the heels of Rodolphe's shoes; he had never shown himself such an old-Sèvres gentleman. The invitation was accepted.

Rodolphe was as ignorant of the first principles of dancing as of the rule of three. But he was inspired by monumental audacity, so he did not hesitate to begin, and he improvised a dance unknown to all past systems of choregraphy. It was a step called the *step of regrets and sighs*, and it was so unique that it was extraordinarily successful. In vain did the three thousand gas jets put out their tongues as if to mock him. Rodolphe danced on, and threw in his partner's face an endless string of fulsome compliments entirely new and original.

"Alas!" said Marcel, "it's incredible; Rodolphe seems to me like a drunken man stumbling over broken glass."

"Meanwhile he has *caught* a magnificent woman," said another, as he saw Rodolphe making his escape with his partner.

"You haven't said good-night to us," cried Marcel.

Rodolphe returned to the artist and gave him his hand; it was cold and damp, like a wet stone.

Rodolphe's companion was a buxom Norman damsel.

a rich, overflowing nature, whose native rusticity had speedily become imbued with aristocratic manners amid the refinements of Parisian luxury and a life of leisure. Her name was something like Madame Séraphine, and she was at present the mistress of one Rheumatism, a peer of France, who gave her fifty louis a month, which she divided with a certain bookkeeper who gave her only blows. Rodolphe attracted her, she hoped that he would not give her anything, and she took him home with her.

"Lucile," she said to her maid, "I am not at home to any one." And, having passed into her bedroom, she returned in five minutes, clad in a special costume. She found Rodolphe silent and motionless as a statue, for immediately upon entering the room he had, in spite of himself, buried himself in dense gloom filled with silent sobs.

"You don't look at me, you don't speak to me," said Séraphine in amazement.

"Well," said Rodolphe to himself, raising his eyes, "I will look, but for art's sake only."

And what a spectacle then met his eyes! as Raoul says in *Les Huguenots*.

Séraphine was wonderfully lovely. Her fine figure, cunningly shown to the best advantage by the cut of the garment she wore, was outlined most enticingly through the half-transparent stuff. All the imperious fever of desire reawoke in Rodolphe's veins. A hot mist mounted

to his brain. He looked at Séraphine from another point of view than that of love of the æsthetic, and took the lovely creature's hands in his. They were sublime hands; you would have said they had been carved by the chisels of the purest Greek art. Rodolphe felt them tremble in his; and, retaining less and less of the critic of art, he drew Séraphine toward him, her face being already suffused with the rosy flush which is the dawn of voluptuousness.

"This creature is a genuine instrument of pleasure, a true *Stradivarius* of love, on which I will willingly play a tune," thought Rodolphe, hearing very distinctly the fair one's heart hurriedly beating the charge.

At that moment the bell at the door of the apartment rang a loud peal.

"Lucile! Lucile!" Séraphine cried to her maid, "don't open the door; say that I haven't come in."

At the name of Lucile, uttered twice, Rodolphe rose.

"I do not wish to embarrass you in any way, madame," he said. "Besides, I must take my leave; it is late, and I live a long way from here. Good evening."

"What! you are going?" cried Séraphine, and the lightning flashed with renewed energy in her glance. "Why, why do you go? I am at liberty, you can stay."

"Impossible," Rodolphe replied. "I expect one of my relations to-night from the Terra del Fuego, and he would disinherit me if I weren't at home to greet him. Good evening, madame."

He rushed hurriedly from the room. The maid went to light him to the door. Rodolphe absent-mindedly let his eyes rest upon her. She was a slender young woman, slow of movement; her very pale face presented a charming contrast to her black hair, which curled naturally, and her blue eyes looked like two sickly stars.

"O phantom!" cried Rodolphe, recoiling before her who bore his mistress's name and features. "Back! what do you want?" and he hurried downstairs.

"Why, madame," said the maid, returning to her mistress, "that young man is mad."

"Say rather that he's a fool!" retorted Séraphine angrily. "Oh! this will teach me to be kind!" she added. "If that gaby of a Léon only knew enough to come now!"

Léon was the gentleman whose attachment took the form of a whip.

Rodolphe ran home without stopping for breath. As he went upstairs he found his yellow cat uttering plaintive lamentations. For two nights he had called in vain to his faithless sweetheart, an Angora Manon Lescaut, who had set out upon a love-making excursion over the neighboring roofs.

"Poor beast!" said Rodolphe; "you have been betrayed, too; your Mimi has been playing tricks on you just as mine has on me. Basta! let's take courage. My poor fellow, a woman's heart, or a cat's, you see, is an abyss which neither men nor cats can ever fathom."

When he entered his room, Rodolphe fancied that he felt an icy cloak fall over his shoulders, although it was fearfully hot. It was the chill of solitude, the horrible solitude of night, which there was nothing to enliven. He lighted his candle and looked about the devastated room. The furniture opened its empty drawers, and a boundless melancholy filled the room from floor to ceiling, so that it seemed to Rodolphe more immense than a desert. As he walked across the room, he stumbled over the packages that contained Mademoiselle Mimi's goods and chattels, and he was conscious of a thrill of joy when he found that she had not yet come to get them as she had said that she would do in the morning. Struggle against it as he would, Rodolphe felt that the hour of reaction was approaching, and he had a foreboding that a ghastly night was the penalty he would have to pay for all the bitter cheerfulness he had squandered during the evening. He hoped, however, that his body, being thoroughly exhausted, would fall asleep before the suffering, so long confined in his heart, should awake.

As he approached the bed and put aside the curtains, as he looked upon that bed which had not been disturbed for two days, and at the two pillows side by side, under one of which the trimming of a woman's cap was still half visible, Rodolphe felt at his heart the pressure as of a resistless vice, of the dull agony that can find no outlet. He fell at the foot of the bed, buried his face in

his hands after glancing about that desolate room, and cried :

"O little Mimi, joy of my house, is it really true that you have gone, that I have sent you away, and that I shall never see you again? My God !—O pretty brown head, that has slept so many nights in this place, will you never return to sleep here again? O capricious voice, whose caresses drove me to frenzy and whose anger delighted me, shall I never hear you more? O little white, blue-veined hands, to which I had betrothed my lips,—have you received my last kiss?" And Rodolphe, in delirious excitement, buried his face in the pillows, still redolent of the perfume of his mistress's hair. In the depths of the alcove it seemed to him that he saw the spectres of the delicious nights he had passed with his young mistress. He heard Mademoiselle Mimi's hearty laughter ring out, clear and resonant, amid the silence of the night, and his mind recurred to the fascinating, contagious gayety with which she had so often succeeded in making him forget all the annoyances and all the trials of their uncertain existence.

During that night he passed in review the eight months that he had lived with that youthful creature, who had never loved him perhaps, but whose tender falsehood had restored to Rodolphe's heart its youth and early virility.

The dawn surprised him just at the moment when, overcome by fatigue, he had closed his eyes, red with the

tears he had shed during the night. A painful, terrible vigil; even the most sceptical and mocking of men can find more than one such in the dim recesses of the past.

In the morning, when Rodolphe's friends called upon him, they were alarmed at the aspect he presented, his features laid waste by all the anguish he had endured during his vigil on the Mount of Olives of love.

"I was sure it would be so," said Marcel, "his gayety of yesterday reacted on his heart. He can't go on like this."

Thereupon, in concert with two or three comrades, he began to make a succession of indiscreet revelations concerning Mademoiselle Mimi, every word of which pierced Rodolphe's heart like a thorn. His friends *proved* to him that his mistress had always deceived him as if he were a fool, at home and abroad, and that that creature, as pale as the angel of consumption, was a treasure-chest of evil sentiments and savage instincts.

They relieved one another in the task they had undertaken, whose aim was to lead Rodolphe to the point where soured love changes to contempt; but that result was only half attained. The poet's despair changed to indignation. He pounced fiercely on the packages he had made up the day before; and after putting aside all that his mistress had in her possession when she came to him, he kept all that he had given her during their liaison, that is to say the greater part of her belongings, especially those toilet articles to which Mademoiselle Mimi

was attached by every fibre of her coquetry, which had become immeasurable of late.

Mademoiselle Mimi came on the following day to take away her property. Rodolphe was at home and alone. He found it necessary to exert all the power of his self-esteem to avoid throwing himself upon his mistress's neck. His greeting overflowed with unspoken affronts, and Mademoiselle Mimi retorted with cold, biting insults of the sort that sharpen the claws of the weakest and most timid. In face of the contempt with which his mistress scourged him with persistent insolence, Rodolphe's wrath burst forth, fierce and terrifying; for a moment Mimi, white with terror, wondered if she would escape alive from his hands. Several neighbors ran to the spot on hearing her cries, and took her from the room.

Two days later, a female friend of Mimi came and asked Rodolphe if he proposed to give up the articles he had kept.—"No," he replied.

He led the messenger on to talk of his mistress. The woman informed him that Mimi was in a very wretched plight and that she would soon be without a roof to cover her.

"And what about her lover, of whom she's so fond?"

"Why," replied Amélie, the friend in question, "that young man has no idea of taking her for his mistress. He has had one for a long while, and he seems to care

very little for Mimi, who is living on me and is a great burden to me."

"Let her get out of it as she can," said Rodolphe, "it's her own doing; it's no business of mine."—And he began to flatter Mademoiselle Amélie, and persuaded her that she was the loveliest creature in the world.

Amélie described her interview with Rodolphe to Mimi.

"What did he say? what is he doing?" she asked. "Did he mention me?"

"Not once; you are forgotten already, my dear. Rodolphe has a new mistress and has bought a superb trousseau for her, for he has come into a lot of money and is dressed like a prince himself. He's a very pleasant young man, and he said some delightful things to me."

"I will find out what this means," thought Mimi.

Mademoiselle Amélie went to see Rodolphe every day on some pretext or other; and, try as he would, he could not refrain from talking to her about Mimi.

"She's very bright," Amélie would reply, "and doesn't seem at all worried about her position. By the way, she declares that she'll return to you whenever she chooses, without making any advances and simply to annoy your friends."

"Very well," said Rodolphe, "let her come and we'll see."

And he renewed his attentions to Amélie, who went

away and told Mimi everything, assuring her that Rodolphe was over head and ears in love with her.

"He kissed my hand and neck," she said; "see, it's all red. He wants to take me to the ball to-morrow."

"My dear friend," said Mimi, somewhat piqued, "I see what you are coming at—you want to make me think that Rodolphe's in love with you and never thinks of me. But you're wasting your time, both with him and with me."

The fact was that Rodolphe's only purpose in being amiable to Amélie was to induce her to come often to see him, and thus to have an opportunity to talk about his mistress; but Amélie, with a Machiavellianism, which had an object of its own perhaps, and because she saw that Rodolphe still loved Mimi, and that Mimi was not far from being inclined to return to him—Amélie did her utmost, by shrewdly fabricated reports, to turn aside anything that might tend to reconcile the lovers.

On the day on which she was to go to the ball, Amélie went to Rodolphe in the morning to ask if the engagement held good.

"Yes," he replied, "I don't propose to miss the opportunity of acting as the escort of the loveliest person of modern times."

Amélie resumed the coquettish air which she adopted on the occasion of her sole appearance at a theatre in the suburbs, in the rôle of fourth soubrette, and promised that she would be ready when the time came.

"By the way," said Rodolphe, "tell Mademoiselle Mimi that if she chooses to be unfaithful to her lover for my benefit, and will come and pass a night here, I will give her all her property."

Amélie did Rodolphe's errand, but gave to his words an entirely different meaning from that which she had detected in them.

"Your Rodolphe is a low-lived creature," she said to Mimi, "his proposal is an outrage. He wants to induce you to lower yourself, by that step, to the level of the vilest creatures; and if you go to him, he not only won't return your property, but he'll make you serve as a laughing-stock to all his friends; it is a plot concocted among them."

"I won't go," said Mimi; and, seeing that Amélie was preparing to dress, she asked her if she were going to the ball.

"Yes," was the reply.

"With Rodolphe?"

"Yes, he is to wait for me a few steps from the house."

"A good time to you," said Mimi.

When she saw that the time for the meeting was approaching, Mimi ran in hot haste to Amélie's lover, and informed him that she was hatching a little treachery with her, Mimi's, former lover.

The gentleman in question, who was as jealous as a tiger and as brutal as a quarter-staff, called upon Made-

moiselle Amélie and informed her that he thought it would be an excellent plan for her to pass the evening with him.

At eight o'clock Mimi repaired to the place where Rodolphe was to meet Amélie. She spied her lover walking back and forth after the manner of a person who is waiting; twice she passed close to him but dared not accost him. Rodolphe was attired with great elegance that evening, and the violent emotions of which he had been a victim for a week past had imparted a great deal of character to his face. Mimi was deeply moved. At last she decided to speak to him. Rodolphe greeted her without anger and asked about her health, after which he inquired as to her object in coming to him; all this in a mild voice, wherein a melancholy accent was constantly but with difficulty held in check.

"I have come to tell you some bad news: Mademoiselle Amélie can't go to the ball with you, she is kept at home by her lover."

"Then I'll go to the ball alone."

At that point Mademoiselle Mimi pretended to stumble and clung to Rodolphe's shoulder. He took her arm and proposed to escort her home.

"No," said Mimi, "I live with Amélie; and as her lover's with her, I can't go home till he's gone."

"Listen," said the poet, "I made a proposition to you through Mademoiselle Amélie; did she transmit it to you?"

"Yes," said Mimi, "but in words that I could hardly believe came from you, even after all that has happened. No, Rodolphe, I didn't think that, in spite of all you may have a right to blame me for, you would believe that I had so little heart as to stoop to such a bargain."

"You didn't understand me, or else the message was not delivered correctly. What is said is said," added Rodolphe; "it is nine o'clock, you still have three hours to reflect. My key will be in my door till midnight. Bonsoir, adieu or au revoir."

"Adieu," said Mimi in a trembling voice. And they parted.

Rodolphe returned home and threw himself, fully dressed, on the bed. At half-past eleven Mademoiselle Mimi entered his room.

"I have come to ask you to take me in," she said; "Amélie's lover has stayed with her and I can't get in."

They talked until three o'clock in the morning. A conversation of explanations, in which now and then the familiar *thou* succeeded the *you* of formal discussion.

At four o'clock their candle went out. Rodolphe started to light a new one.

"No," said Mimi, "it isn't worth while; it's time to go to sleep."

And five minutes later her pretty brown head had resumed its place on the pillow; and in a voice overflowing with affection, she called Rodolphe's lips to her

little blue-veined white hands, whose pearly pallor rivalled the whiteness of the sheets. Rodolphe did not light the candle.

The next morning Rodolphe was the first to rise; he called Mimi's attention to a number of packages, and said to her very softly:

"There is what belongs to you, you can take it away; I keep my word."

"Oh!" said Mimi, "I'm awfully tired, you know, and I can't carry all those packages at once. I'd rather return."

When she was dressed she took nothing but a collar and a pair of cuffs.

"I will take away what's left—a little at a time," she said with a smile.

"Nonsense," said Rodolphe, "take all or nothing; but let's have done with this."

"On the contrary, let's begin again, and, above all, let it last," said the youthful Mimi, kissing him.

After breakfasting together, they started to go into the country. As they passed through the Luxembourg gardens, they met a great poet who had always greeted Rodolphe with delightful heartiness. From a sense of decency Rodolphe was going to pretend not to see him. But the poet did not give him time; as he passed him, he waved his hand in a most friendly way and, with a gracious smile, bowed to his young companion.

"Who is that gentleman?" inquired Mimi.

Rodolphe mentioned a name which made her blush with pleasure.

"Ah!" said Rodolphe, "this meeting with the poet who has sung so sweetly of love is a good omen and will bring our reconciliation good luck."

"I love you," said Mimi, pressing his hand, although they were surrounded by people.

"Alas!" thought Rodolphe, "which is preferable, to be always deceived because you believe, or never to believe for fear of being deceived?"

XV

DONEC GRATUS—

We have told how the painter Marcel became acquainted with Mademoiselle Musette. United one morning by the ministrations of caprice, who is the mayor of the thirteenth arrondissement, they had supposed, as often happens, that they were married with the understanding that each was to retain his or her own heart. But one evening, after a fierce quarrel in which they had resolved to part on the spot, they discovered that their hands, which had grasped each other in farewell, refused to separate. Almost without their knowledge their caprice had become love. They both admitted the fact, half laughingly.

"This is a very serious thing that has happened to us," said Marcel. "How the devil have we done it?"

"Oh! we're a pair of bunglers," said Musette, "we didn't take precautions enough."

"What's the trouble?" queried Rodolphe, who had recently become Marcel's neighbor and who entered the room at that moment.

"The matter is," Marcel replied, "that mademoiselle," —indicating Musette—"and myself have just made a charming discovery. We are in love. It must have come to us in our sleep."

"Oho! in your sleep—I don't think it," said Rodolphe. "But what is there to prove that you love each other? Perhaps you exaggerate the danger."

"*Parbleu!*" said Marcel, "we can't endure each other."

"And we can't separate," added Musette.

"In that case, my children, your case is very clear. You have both tried to play the sharpest game and you have both lost. It's my experience with Mimi. We shall soon have used up two calendars disputing night and day. That's the system that makes marriages last for ever. Unite a *yes* with a *no* and you have a Philemon and Baucis household. Your establishment is a good match for mine; and if Schaunard and Phémie come and live in the house, as they have threatened, our trio of households will make a very attractive habitation."

At that moment Gustave Colline came in. He was informed of the accident that had happened to Musette and Marcel.

"Well, philosopher," said the latter, "what do you say to that?"

Colline scratched the nap of the hat which served him as a shelter and murmured:

"I was sure of it beforehand. Love is a game of

hazard. Whoever rubs against it get's pricked. It isn't good for man to be alone."

On returning to his own abode that evening, Rodolphe said to Mimi:

"I have some news. Musette's mad over Marcel and won't leave him."

"Poor girl!" replied Mimi. "She has such a good appetite!"

"And Marcel, for his part, is in Musette's clutches. He adores her thirty-six carats fine, as that schemer of a Colline would say."

"Poor boy!" said Mimi. "He's so jealous!"

"True," said Rodolphe, "he and I are both pupils of Othello."

Some time after this, the Schaunard establishment joined forces with the establishments of Rodolphe and Marcel; the musician moved into the house with Phémie Teinturière.

From that day forth all the other tenants slept on a volcano, and at the end of the quarter they gave the landlord notice to a man.

Indeed, few days passed that a storm did not break out in one or other of the households. Sometimes Mimi and Rodolphe, having no strength left for speech, explained their meaning with the aid of such projectiles as came to hand. Most frequently the disturbance was caused by Schaunard making a few observations with the end of a cane to the melancholy Phémie. As for

Marcel and Musette, their discussions were carried on in silence behind closed doors; they took the precaution at least to close their doors and windows.

If by chance peace reigned in all the households, the other tenants were sufferers by that ephemeral harmony none the less. The indiscretions of the partitions allowed all the secrets of the Bohemian households to reach their ears, and initiated them, in spite of themselves, into all their mysteries. Wherefore more than one of the neighbors preferred the *casus belli* to the ratification of the treaties of peace.

It was in very truth a strange existence that they led for six months. The most loyal fraternal spirit reigned without affectation in that little circle, where everything belonged to all and good and evil fortune alike were shared equally.

There were certain days of splendor during the month, when they would not have gone down into the street without gloves, days of joy and gladness, when they dined all day long. There were others when they would almost have gone into the courtyard with bare feet, days of fasting when, after going without breakfast together, they went without dinner together, or else succeeded, by dint of economical expedients, in indulging in one of those repasts in which the plates and knives and forks *had a vacation* as Mademoiselle Mimi said.

But the most extraordinary thing was that, in that association, which included three young and pretty women,

no suspicion of discord ever arose among the men : they often bent the knee to the most absurd whims of their mistresses, but not one of them would have hesitated a moment between the woman and the friend.

Love is above all things spontaneous in its birth ; it is an improvisation. Friendship, on the other hand, is built up, so to speak : it is a sentiment which proceeds with great care and circumspection ; it is selfishness of the mind, while love is selfishness of the heart.

The Bohemians had known one another for six years. That long period passed in daily association had, without changing the well-marked individuality of each, led to a general harmony of ideas between them, a unanimity that would not otherwise have existed. They had ways that were peculiar to themselves, a language of their own to which strangers could not have found the key. Those persons who did not know them very well called their free and easy manner cynicism. But it was nothing more than frankness. Restive under everything that was forced upon them, they hated the false and despised the commonplace. Accused of exaggerated vanity, they replied by setting forth proudly the programme of their ambition ; and, conscious of their worth, they made no mistakes concerning themselves.

Although they had walked together so many years in the same path, often forced into rivalry by the circumstances in which they were placed, they had not dropped one another's hands and had passed over, without notic-

ing them, questions affecting their individual self-esteem, when attempts had been made to sow discord between them by raising such questions. They esteemed one another just according to their respective deserts; and pride, which is the antidote of envy, preserved them from all the petty professional jealousies.

However, after six months of life in common, an epidemic of divorce suddenly descended upon the various households.

Schaunard opened the procession. He discovered one day that Phémie Teinturière had one knee better made than the other; and as he was of the strictest purism in matters of plastic art, he dismissed Phémie, giving her as a souvenir the cane with which he so frequently made remarks to her. Then he went to live with a relation who offered him a lodging gratis.

A fortnight later Mimi left Rodolphe to ride in the carriage of young Vicomte Paul, Carolus Barbemuche's former pupil, who promised her dresses spangled with gold.

After Mimi, Musette took her departure and returned with a great flourish of trumpets to the aristocracy of the gallant world, which she had left to go with Marcel.

The separation took place without a quarrel, without a shock and without premeditation. Born of a caprice which had become love, the liaison was broken off by another caprice.

One evening during the carnival, at the masked ball at the Opéra, whither she had gone with Marcel, Mu-

sette had for her vis-à-vis in a quadrille a young man who had once paid court to her. They recognized each other and exchanged a few words as they danced. Unintentionally perhaps, as she told the young man of her present life, she let fall a word of regret for her past. However that may be, at the end of the quadrille, Musette made a mistake; and instead of giving her hand to Marcel, who was her partner, she took the hand of her vis-à-vis, who hurried her away and disappeared with her in the crowd.

Marcel looked everywhere for her and was considerably disturbed. After an hour's search, he found her on the young man's arm, coming out of the Café de l'Opéra with her mouth full of snatches of song. When she saw Marcel, who was standing in a corner with his arms folded, she waved her hand by way of adieu, saying: "I am coming back."

"That means 'don't wait for me,'" Marcel translated. He was jealous, but he was logical, and he knew Musette; and so he did not wait for her; he returned home with a heavy heart but a light stomach. He looked in a closet to see if there were no scraps to eat; he found a piece of bread as hard as granite and the skeleton of a red herring.

"I couldn't contend with truffles," thought Marcel. "At all events, Musette has had some supper." And having wiped his eyes with a corner of his handkerchief, on the pretext of blowing his nose, he went to bed.

Two days later Musette awoke in a boudoir hung with

pink. A blue coupé was waiting at her door, and all the fairies in the world, being called into service, laid their marvels at her feet. Musette was fascinating, and she seemed to grow even younger amid those elegant surroundings. Thereafter she resumed her former existence, was at all the great functions, and reconquered her celebrity. She was talked about everywhere, in the passages of the Bourse, and even in the parliamentary restaurants. As for her new lover, Monsieur Alexis, he was a delightful young man. He often complained to Musette that he found her a little inattentive and heedless when he talked to her of his love; thereupon Musette would look up at him with a laugh, pat his hand and say:

"What can you expect, my dear man? I lived for six months with a man who fed me on salad and soup, with no butter, who dressed me in cotton gowns and took me often to the Odéon, because he wasn't rich. As love costs nothing and I was mad over the monster, we spent considerable love. I have almost nothing left but the crumbs. Pick them up, I have no objection. At all events, I haven't gulled you; and if ribbons didn't cost so much I should still be with my painter. As for my heart, since I have worn eighty-franc corsets, I don't seem to hear it make much noise and I am afraid I may have forgotten it and left it in one of Marcel's table drawers."

The disappearance of the three Bohemian households was the cause of general rejoicing in the house in which

they had lived. The landlord celebrated the event by a grand dinner-party and the tenants illuminated their windows.

Rodolphe and Marcel had gone to live together; they had each taken an idol of whose name they were not perfectly sure. Sometimes it happened that one of them spoke of Musette or the other of Mimi; then they had food for conversation for a whole evening. They recalled their former life and Musette's songs and Mimi's songs, and the sleepless nights and the lazy mornings and the dinners eaten in dreams. One by one they would review in that duet of memories all the hours that had flown; and they ordinarily ended by saying to themselves that after all they were lucky to be together still, with their feet on the andirons, poking the December log, smoking their pipes, and having each other as an excuse for talking, and for saying aloud what they said to themselves when they were alone; that they had been very fond of those creatures who had disappeared and taken with them a slice of their youth, and that perhaps they still loved them.

One evening, as he was walking along the boulevard, Marcel noticed a young woman a few steps away, who, as she alighted from a carriage, disclosed a bit of white stocking of peculiar symmetry; even the coachman was devouring that fascinating *pourboire* with his eyes.

"*Parbleu!* that's a pretty leg," said Marcel; "I have a strong inclination to offer her my arm; let's

see—how shall I accost her? I have it—it's a novel idea."

"Excuse me, madame," he said, walking up to the unknown, whose face he could not see at first, "but you haven't happened to find my handkerchief?"

"Yes, monsieur," replied the young woman, "here it is." And she placed in Marcel's hand a handkerchief which she held in her own.

The artist fell over a precipice of astonishment.

But suddenly a burst of laughter which he received full in the face, brought him to himself; in that hilarious outburst he recognized his former flame.

It was Mademoiselle Musette.

"Aha!" she cried, "so Monsieur Marcel is on the hunt for adventures! How do you find this one, eh? It doesn't lack jollity."

"I find it very endurable," Marcel replied.

"Where are you going so late, in this quarter?" queried Musette.

"I am going to that establishment," said the artist, pointing to one of the small theatres, where he had a general privilege of admission.

"For love of art (*l'art*)?"

"No, for love of Laure.—Ah!" thought Marcel, "there's a pun, I'll sell it to Colline: he's making a collection of 'em."

"Who is Laure?" continued Musette, whose very glances were marks of interrogation.

Marcel pursued his wretched jest.

"She's a chimera that I am following and she plays the *ingénues* in this little sanctuary." And he crumpled with his hand an imaginary shirt-frill.

"You are very bright this evening," said Musette.

"And you are very inquisitive."

"Don't speak so loud, everybody can hear us; they'll take us for two lovers quarrelling."

"It wouldn't be the first time that had happened to us," said Marcel.

Musette detected a challenge in that remark and retorted quickly:

"And perhaps it won't be the last, eh?"

The meaning of the words was unmistakable; they whistled like a bullet past Marcel's ear.

"Twinkling glories of heaven," he said, looking up at the stars, "you will bear witness that I did not fire first. Bring me my cuirass quickly!"

From that moment the battle was on.

It only remained to find a suitable pretext for bringing together those two caprices which had waked to such vigorous life.

As they walked, Musette looked at Marcel and Marcel looked at Musette. They did not speak; but their eyes, those ministers plenipotentiary of the heart, often met. After fifteen minutes of diplomatic negotiations, that congress of glances had tacitly arranged the affair. It only remained to exchange ratifications.

The interrupted conversation was renewed.

"Frankly," said Musette, "where were you going just now?"

"I told you I was going to see Laure."

"Is she pretty?"

"Her mouth is a nest of smiles."

"Nonsense!"

"But how about yourself," said Marcel, "where were you coming from on the wings of yonder cabriolet?"

"I have just driven Alexis to the station; he has gone to make a round of visits among his family."

"What sort of man is this Alexis?"

Musette thereupon drew a fascinating portrait of her present lover. All along the boulevard Musette and Marcel continued to enact the comedy of the return of love. With the same ingenuousness, alternately loving and mocking, they rewrote, strophe by strophe, the immortal ode in which Horace and Lydia vaunt so gracefully the charms of their new loves and end by adding a postscript to their former loves. As they reached the corner of a street, a numerous patrol suddenly appeared.

Musette *concocted* a coy attitude of alarm, and clung to Marcel's arm.

"Ah! *mon Dieu!*" she said, "see that regiment coming, there's going to be another revolution. Let us fly, I'm horribly afraid; take me home!"

"But where are we going?" demanded Marcel.

"To my rooms," said Musette, "you shall see how

pretty they are. I invite you to supper; we will talk politics."

"No," said Marcel, thinking of Monsieur Alexis; "I won't go home with you, notwithstanding your offer of supper. I am not fond of drinking my wine out of other people's glasses."

Musette was dumb in the face of that refusal. Through the mist of her memories she descried the artist's poor home; for Marcel had not become a millionaire. Thereupon Musette had an idea, and taking advantage of the appearance of another patrol, she manifested renewed alarm.

"They are going to fight!" she cried; "I shall never dare to go home. Marcel, my boy, pray take me to one of my friends who, *I think*, lives in your quarter."

As they crossed Pont Neuf, Musette suddenly laughed outright.

"What's the matter?" asked Marcel.

"Nothing," she replied; "it has just occurred to me that my friend has moved; she lives at Batignolles."

Rodolphe was not surprised when he saw Marcel and Musette appear, arm in arm.

"These half-buried love affairs," he said, "always act like that."

XVI

THE PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA

Marcel had been working five or six years at the famous picture which, he asserted, was to represent the Passage of the Red Sea, and, for five or six years that masterpiece of coloring had been obstinately refused by the jury. So it was that, by dint of going and coming from the artist's studio to the museum and from the museum to the studio, the picture was so well acquainted with the road, that, if it had been placed on wheels it would have been quite capable of going to the Louvre all by itself. Marcel, who had repainted and reworked the canvas from top to bottom half a score of times, attributed to the personal enmity of the members of the jury the species of ostracism which annually turned him away from the square salon; and in his leisure moments he had composed a dictionary of insults in honor of the Cerberuses of the Institute, with illustrations of venomous ferocity. This collection, which had become famous, had achieved, in the studios and at the École des Beaux-Arts, the popular success achieved by the immortal

lament of Jean Bélin, painter in ordinary to the great Sultan of the Turks; all the studio slaves of Paris had a copy in their memories.

For a long time Marcel refused to be discouraged by the persistent refusals which fell to his lot at every exhibition. He had settled himself comfortably in the opinion that his picture was, on a smaller scale, the companion piece for which the *Marriage at Cana* was waiting—that gigantic *chef-d'œuvre*, whose dazzling splendor the dust of three centuries has failed to dim. And so every year, in the Salon season, Marcel sent his picture to be passed upon by the jury. But, to lead the examiners astray and to endeavor to defeat the preconceived plan of exclusion which they had evidently adopted in respect to the *Passage of the Red Sea*, Marcel, without disturbing the general scheme of the composition, modified it in some details and changed the title.

For instance, once it went before the jury under the name of the *Passage of the Rubicon;* but Pharaoh, ill-disguised in Cæsar's cloak, was recognized and rejected with all the honors to which he was entitled.

The following year, Marcel daubed a layer of white, representing snow, on one part of his picture, planted a fir-tree in a corner, and dressing an Egyptian in the costume of a grenadier of the Garde Impériale, christened his picture: *Passage of the Beresina.*

The jury, who had wiped their spectacles that day on

the lapels of their coats adorned with green palm-leaves, were not deceived by this new stratagem. They recognized the persistent canvas perfectly, particularly by a great devil of a horse of many colors that was rearing at one end of one of the waves of the Red Sea. That horse's coat was used by Marcel for all his experiments in coloring, and in his familiar language he called it a synoptical table of *fine tones*, because he reproduced there, with all their play of light and shadow, all the most varied combinations of color. But once more the jury, unmoved by that detail, had not enough black balls to reject the *Passage of the Beresina*.

"Very good," said Marcel, "I expected it. Next year I'll send it under the title of the *Passage of the Panoramas.*"

"They shall be taken in, taken in, ta—a—ken in," sang Schaunard the musician to a new air of his own composition—a direful air, noisy as a scale of thunderclaps, the accompaniment to which was dreaded by all the neighboring pianos.

"How can they refuse it without all the vermilion on my Red Sea ascending to their faces and covering them with confusion?" muttered Marcel, gazing at his picture. —"When you think that there's three hundred francs' worth of paint in it and a million in genius, to say nothing of my joyous youth, now bald as my hat! A serious work which opens new horizons to the science of *varnish*. But they shall not have the last word; while my breath

lasts I'll send them my picture. I propose that it shall be engraved on their memories."

"That's the surest way of never engraving it there," said Gustave Colline plaintively; and he added, *sotto voce:* "that's very good—very good—I'll repeat it at the clubs."

Marcel continued his imprecations, which Schaunard continued to set to music.

"Ah! so they won't receive me!" said Marcel. "The government pays them and boards them and gives them the Cross, for the sole purpose of refusing once a year, on the first of March, to accept a canvas of mine stretched on a keyed frame.—I see their idea distinctly, I see it very distinctly; they want to make me break my brushes. They hope perhaps that by refusing my *Red Sea*, they can drive me to throw myself out of the window in despair. But they are ill acquainted with my manly heart, if they expect to take me in by that commonplace trick. After this I won't wait till the time for the Salon. From this day forth my work is the picture of Damocles constantly suspended over their lives. Henceforth I propose to send it once a week to each of them, at their homes, in the bosom of their families, in the sanctity of private life. It shall disturb their domestic joys, it shall cause their wine to taste sour, their roast meat to taste burned and their wives to be a source of bitterness. They shall all go mad and that right soon, and they shall go to the Institute in strait-jackets

on the day of their meeting. That idea smiles upon me."

Some days after this, when Marcel had already forgotten his direful schemes of revenge against his persecutors, he received a call from old Médicis. Such was the name bestowed by the club on a Jew named Solomon, who, at that time, was very well known to all artistic and literary Bohemia, with which he had constant dealings. Père Médicis dealt in all sorts of bric-à-brac. He sold complete outfits of furniture from twelve francs to three thousand. He bought all kinds of things and sold them all again at a profit. Monsieur Proudhon's bank of exchange is a very small affair when compared with the system practised by Médicis, who possessed the genius of traffic to a degree never before reached by the shrewdest of his race. His shop on Place du Carrousel was a magic spot where one could find anything he might desire. All the products of nature, all the creations of art, everything that issues from the bowels of the earth and from the genius of man, was an object of sale or exchange with Médicis. His business included everything, absolutely everything that exists—indeed he dealt in the *ideal*. He purchased IDEAS, to put them in practice himself, or to sell again. Known to all men of letters and all artists, an intimate friend of the palette and familiar with the writing-desk, he was the Asmodeus of the arts. He would sell you cigars for the rough draft of a novel, slippers for a sonnet, fresh fish for paradoxes;

he talked by the hour *at so much the hour* with writers paid to retail society scandal in the newspapers; he would procure tickets for you to the galleries of the chambers of Parliament and invitations to private parties; he let lodgings by the night or week or month to homeless embryo artists, who paid him in copies of the great masters at the Louvre. The wings had no mysteries for him. He could get your plays accepted at the theatres; he could obtain favors for you from the managers. He carried in his head a copy of the Almanach of twenty-five thousand addresses, and knew the names, residences and secrets of all the celebrities, even the most obscure.

A few pages copied from the *waste-book* of his books of account, will afford a better idea than all the general statements in the world of the universality of his business.

"20th March, 184—"

"Sold to M. L——, antiquary, the compass used by Archimedes during the siege of Syracuse, 75 fr."

"Bought of M. V——, journalist, the complete works, uncut, of M. ——, member of the Academy, 10 fr."

"Sold to the same, a critical article on the complete works of M. ——, member of the Academy, 30 fr."

"Sold to M. ——, member of the Academy, a newspaper article of twelve columns on his complete works, 250 fr."

"Bought of M. R——, man of letters, a critical es-

timate of the complete works of M. ——, member of the Academy, 10 fr.; *plus* 50 pounds coal and 2 kilog. coffee."

"Sold to M. ——, a porcelain vase that belonged to Mme. du Barry, 18 fr."

"Bought of little D——, her hair, 15 fr."

"Sold to M. B——, one lot of articles on morals and the last three mistakes in spelling made by M. le préfet de la Seine, 6 fr.; *plus* a pair of Neapolitan shoes."

"Sold to M'lle O——, a light wig, 120 fr."

"Sold to M. M——, historical painter, a series of lively sketches, 25 fr."

"Informed M. Ferdinand the hour at which Madame la Baronne R—— de P—— goes to mass. Let to the same, for one day, the small entresol in Faubourg Montmartre, total 30 fr."

"Sold to M. Isidore, his portrait as Apollo, 30 fr."

"Sold to M'lle R——, one pair of lobsters and six pairs of gloves, 36 fr. (Recd. 2 fr. 75 c.)."

"Procured for the same, credit for six months from Mme. ——, milliner. (Price to be settled hereafter.)"

"Procured for Mme. ——, milliner, the patronage of M'lle R——. (Received for this, three yards of velvet and six ells of lace.)"

"Bought of M. R——, man of letters, a claim of 120 fr. against the —— newspaper, now in course of winding up, 5 fr.; *plus* 2 pounds of Moravian tobacco."

"Sold to M. Ferdinand, 2 love letters, 12 fr."

"Bought of M. J——, painter, portrait of M. Isidore as Apollo, 6 fr."

"Bought of M. ——, 75 kilogrammes of his work entitled *Submarine Revolutions*, 15 fr."

"Let to Madame la Comtesse de G——, a Saxony table service, 20 fr."

"Bought of M. ——, journalist, 52 lines in his *Courrier de Paris*, 100 fr.; *plus* a set of chimney ornaments."

"Sold to MM. O—— and Company, 52 lines in M. ——'s *Courrier de Paris*, 300 fr.; *plus* a set of chimney ornaments."

"Let to M'lle S—— G——, for one day, a bed and a coupé—no charge. (See M'lle S—— G——'s account, ledgers fol. 26 & 27.)"

"Bought of M. Gustave C——, a memorial on the linen industry, 50 fr.; *plus* a rare edition of the works of Flavius Josephus."

"Sold to M'lle S—— G——, a set of modern furniture, 5,000 fr."

"For the same, paid a bill at the druggist's, 75 fr."

"*Id.* Paid a bill at the dairy-woman's, 3 fr. 85 c."

"Etc., etc., etc."

These extracts will serve to show the vast range of the business transacted by the Jew Médicis, who, notwithstanding the slightly illicit details of his eminently eclectic operations, had never been disturbed by any person.

As he entered the apartment of the Bohemians with

the knowing air that distinguished him, the Jew guessed that he arrived at an opportune time. In fact, the four friends were at that moment holding a council, and, under the presidency of a ferocious appetite, were discussing the serious question of *bread and meat.* It was a Sunday! and the end of the month. Fatal day and ominous date.

Médicis' appearance was therefore welcomed by a joyous shout, for they knew that the Jew was too niggardly with his time to squander it in visits of courtesy, so that his presence always announced business to be discussed.

"Good evening, messieurs," said the Jew; "how goes the world with you?"

"Colline," said Rodolphe, who was stretched out on the bed, drowsily enjoying the beauties of the horizontal line, "perform the duties enjoined by hospitality and offer our guest a chair; a guest is sacred. I salute you in Abraham," he added.

Colline seized an armchair, which had the springiness of bronze, and pushed it toward the Jew, saying in a hospitable voice:

"Imagine for a moment that you are Cinna and take this seat."

Médicis dropped into the chair, and was on the point of complaining of its hardness, when he happened to remember that he had himself transferred it to Colline in exchange for a profession of faith, subsequently sold to a

deputy, who had not the knack of extemporaneous speaking. As he took his seat, the Jew's pockets gave forth a silvery ring, and the melody cast the four Bohemians into a delicious reverie.

"Let's hear the song now," said Rodolphe to Marcel in an undertone; "the accompaniment seems very pretty."

"Monsieur Marcel," said Médicis, "I have come here solely to make your fortune. That is to say, I come to offer you a magnificent opportunity of entering the artistic world. Art, you see, Monsieur Marcel, is a barren desert, in which glory is the oasis."

"Père Médicis," said Marcel, on the hot coals of impatience, "in the name of your revered patron, Fifty-per-cent., be brief."

"Yes," said Colline, "brief as King Pépin, who was a circumcised gentleman like yourself; for you ought to be circumcised, O son of Jacob!"

"Oh! oh! oh!" ejaculated the Bohemians, looking to see if the floor would not open to swallow up the philosopher.

But Colline was not swallowed up that time.

"This is how it is," continued Médicis. "A wealthy amateur, who is putting together a gallery destined to make the tour of Europe, has employed me to procure for him a series of noteworthy works. I have come to offer you admission to that museum. In a word, I have come to buy your *Passage of the Red Sea*.

"Cash down?" queried Marcel.

"Cash," replied the Jew, starting up the orchestra in his pockets.

"Are you *content?*"[12] said Colline.

"Certainly," said Rodolphe fiercely. "We must get a choke-pear to stop up that beggar's vent-hole for idiotic remarks.[11] You brigand, don't you know that he's talking about crowns? Is nothing sacred to you, atheist?"

Colline climbed on a table and assumed the pose of Harpocrates, the God of Silence.

"Go on, Médicis," said Marcel, pointing to his picture. "I propose to leave to you the honor of fixing for yourself the price of that work, which is beyond price."

The Jew laid on the table fifty crowns in bright new silver.

"Well?" said Marcel, "there's the advance guard."

"Monsieur Marcel," said Médicis, "you are well aware that my first word is always my last. I shall add nothing to that; reflect: fifty crowns make one hundred and fifty francs. That's a round sum!"

"A paltry sum," rejoined the artist; "there's fifty crowns' worth of cobalt just in Pharaoh's robe. At least pay me for my work, equalize the piles, round out the figure and I'll call you Leo X., Leo X. twice over."

"That's my ultimatum," said Médicis. "I won't give another sou; but I invite you all to dinner, with as many kinds of wine as you want, and I'll pay for the dessert in GOLD."

"Do I hear any more?" shouted Colline, striking the table thrice with his fist. "Gone!"

"All right," said Marcel; "agreed."

"I will send for the picture to-morrow," said the Jew. "Let us go, messieurs; the table is set."

The four friends went downstairs, singing the chorus from *Les Huguenots : À table, à table !*

Médicis entertained the Bohemians in royal fashion. He offered them a multitude of things, all of which had been unpublished before that time so far as they were concerned. At that dinner the lobster ceased to be a myth to Schaunard, and he then and there contracted what might be called a delirious passion for that amphibious creature.

The four friends went forth from that sumptuous banquet as drunk as a day in grape-picking time. Indeed, that drunkenness came near having deplorable results in Marcel's case, for, as he passed his tailor's shop at two o'clock in the morning, he insisted upon waking him to pay him on account the 150 francs he had received. A gleam of reason which still illuminated Colline's mind caught the artist on the edge of the precipice.

A week after that festival, Marcel learned in what gallery his picture had taken its place. As he was passing through Faubourg Saint Honoré, he stopped in the centre of a group of people who seemed to be watching with interest the operation of placing a sign over a shop. That sign was nothing else than Marcel's picture, which

Médicis had sold to a dealer in food products. But the *Passage of the Red Sea* had undergone still another modification, and bore a new title. A steamboat had been added, and the picture was called: *In the Harbor of Marseilles*. A flattering ovation from the bystanders greeted the unveiling of the picture. Wherefore Marcel returned home, overjoyed by his triumph, murmuring, *Vox populi, vox dei.*

XVII

THE TOILET OF THE GRACES

Mademoiselle Mimi, who was accustomed to sleep late, awoke one morning on the stroke of ten, and was greatly surprised not to see Rodolphe by her side or anywhere in the room. She had seen him at his desk the night before, before she went to sleep, preparing to pass the night on an extra literary task which he had been engaged to perform, and in the completion of which Mimi was particularly interested. In fact, the poet had given her reason to hope that he would purchase for her out of the proceeds of his toil, a certain spring dress which she had once seen at *Les Deux Magots*, a famous establishment for novelties, at whose show-windows Mimi's coquetry frequently performed its devotions. So that, since the work had been begun, Mimi had been extremely anxious concerning its progress. She would often go to Rodolphe while he was writing, and would gravely ask, looking over his shoulder:

"Well, is my dress getting on?"

"One sleeve's already made, be calm," Rodolphe would reply.

One night, having heard Rodolphe snap his fingers, which ordinarily indicated that he was satisfied with his work, Mimi suddenly sat up in bed and cried, putting her brown head between the curtains :

" Is my dress done? "

" Look," said Rodolphe, showing her four great pages covered with lines crowded together, " I have just finished the waist."

" What fun! " said Mimi, " now there is only the skirt left ; how many pages like that to make a skirt? "

" That depends ; but as you're not very tall, perhaps we can make a suitable skirt with ten pages of fifty lines of thirty-three letters."

" I'm not tall, that's true," said Mimi in all seriousness ; " but I don't want to look as if I were crying for more material ; dresses are worn very full now, and I'd like to have a long train to make a *frou-frou*."

" Very well," rejoined Rodolphe gravely, " I'll put ten more letters to the line and we'll have the *frou-frou*."

And Mimi went to sleep again in high spirits.

As she had been imprudent enough to speak to her friends, Mesdemoiselles Musette and Phémie, of the beautiful dress Rodolphe was making for her, those two young women did not fail to interview Messieurs Marcel and Schaunard concerning their friend's generous treatment of his mistress ; and their disclosures were followed by unmistakable hints to them to follow the example set by the poet.

"That is to say," added Mademoiselle Musette, pulling Marcel's moustache, "that is to say, if things go on for a week like this, I shall be obliged to borrow a pair of your trousers to wear out of doors."

"There's eleven francs due me from a good concern," replied Marcel; "if I collect that amount, I will devote it to the purchase of a stylish fig-leaf."

"And what about me?" Phémie said to Schaunard. "My *peigne noir*—she could not say *peignoir*—is dropping to pieces."

Schaunard thereupon took three sous from his pocket and gave them to his mistress.

"Here's something to buy a needle and thread," he said. "Mend your blue peignoir; that will afford instruction and amusement at the same time—*utile dulci*."

Nevertheless, in a council held behind closed doors, Marcel and Schaunard agreed with Rodolphe that each of them would do his utmost to gratify the reasonable coquettish instincts of his mistress.

"Poor girls," said Rodolphe, "a mere nothing is enough for them, but they must have that nothing. For some time past, literature and the fine arts have been doing very well; we earn almost as much as porters."

"It is perfectly true that I can't complain," interposed Marcel, "the fine arts are in excellent health; one would think we were living under Leo X."

"I remember," said Rodolphe, "Musette told me that for a week you have been going away in the morn-

ing and not coming home till night. Have you really a job on hand?"

"A fine job, my dear fellow, that Médicis got for me. I am painting portraits at the *Ave Maria* barracks—eighteen grenadiers, who have ordered their pictures at six francs apiece all round, resemblance warranted for a year, like watches. I hope to get the whole regiment. It was my purpose to dress Musette up when Médicis pays me, for I made the bargain with him, not with my subjects."

"As for me," said Schaunard carelessly, "although you wouldn't think it, I have two hundred francs sleeping."

"*Sacrebleu!* let's wake them up," said Rodolphe.

"In two or three days I expect to receipt for them," said Schaunard. "I will not conceal from you that I propose, when I leave the bank, to give free rein to certain of my passions. Above all, there is a nankeen coat at the second-hand shop close by, and a hunting horn, which have been tickling my eye for a long while; I shall certainly pay my respects to them."

"But where do you expect to get this extensive capital?" asked Marcel and Rodolphe at the same time.

"Listen, messieurs," said Schaunard, adopting a solemn demeanor and sitting down between his two friends, "we cannot conceal from one another the fact that, before we become members of the Institute and tax-payers, we still have considerable rye bread to eat, and the daily loaf is hard to knead. On the other hand,

we are not alone; as heaven has endowed us with sensibility, each of us has selected a companion, whom he has invited to share his lot."

"Preceded by a herring," suggested Marcel.

"Now," continued Schaunard, "while living with the strictest economy, it is hard to save when you possess nothing, especially if your appetite is always larger than your plate."

"What are you driving at?" queried Rodolphe.

"At this," replied Schaunard, "that situated as we are, we should all make a mistake to turn up our noses when an opportunity presents itself, even outside our art, to place a figure before the zero which constitutes our joint assets!"

"Very good!" rejoined Marcel; "which one of us can you reproach with turning up his nose? Great painter as I shall be some day, have I not consented to devote my brush to the reproduction of French warriors who pay me with their pocket pieces? It seems to me that I am not afraid to descend the ladder of my future greatness."

"And as for me," added Rodolphe, "don't you know that for the last two weeks I have been composing a didactic medico-surgico-ivory poem for a famous dentist, who subsidizes my inspiration at the rate of fifteen sous per dozen alexandrines—a little dearer than oysters? But I don't blush for it; rather than have my muse sit with her hands folded, I would willingly let her put the

Paris Guide into song. When one has a lyre—deuce take me—it's for use. And then Mimi is thirsty for boots."

"In that case," said Schaunard, "you won't be angry when you know the source of the Pactolus, whose overflowing I await."

The history of Schaunard's two hundred francs was as follows:

About a fortnight before, he had called on a music publisher who had promised to obtain for him, among his customers, pupils for the piano, or employment in the way of tuning.

"*Parbleu!* you come most opportunely," said the publisher when he appeared. "Somebody came here to-day to ask about a pianist. He's an Englishman, and I think he'll pay you well. Are you really a good performer?"

Schaunard thought that a modest manner might injure him in his publisher's estimation. Indeed, a modest musician, especially a pianist, is a very rare thing. So Schaunard replied coolly:

"I am one of the best; if I only had one weak lung, long hair and a black coat, I should be as celebrated as the sun to-day, and instead of charging me eight hundred francs to print the score of my *Young Girl's Death*, you would come and kneel to me and offer me three thousand on a silver salver. It is a fact," he continued, "that my ten fingers, having done ten years of penal servitude

on the five octaves, I handle the flats and sharps very agreeably."

The person to whom Schaunard was directed was an Englishman named Birn'n.[13] The musician was received in the first place by a lackey in blue, who presented him to one in green, who handed him on to one in black, who ushered him into a salon, where he found himself face to face with an islander, curled up in a splenetic attitude, which made him resemble *Hamlet* reflecting on what petty creatures we are. Schaunard was preparing to explain his presence, when he was cut short by a succession of piercing shrieks. This horrible ear-splitting noise proceeded from a parrot swinging on a perch on the balcony of the floor below.

"Oh! that beast! that beast! that beast!" muttered the Englishman, leaping from his chair; "it will kill me."

At the same instant the bird began to go through his repertory, which was much more extensive than that of the ordinary parrot; and Schaunard was dumfounded when he heard the creature, spurred on by a female voice, begin to declaim the first lines of the narrative of *Theramenes*, with the intonations of the Conservatory.

The parrot was the pet of an actress who was very much in vogue in her boudoir. She was one of the women who, no one knows how or why, are quoted at fabulous prices on the turf of gallantry, and whose names are inscribed on the menus of bachelor suppers, where they act as a living dessert. In our day it gives a Christian no-

toriety to be seen with one of those pagan creatures, who often have nothing antique about them except their certificate of birth. When they are pretty, no great harm is done after all; the most that one risks is being brought to the gutter for supplying them with violet wood. But when their beauty is bought by the ounce at the perfumer's, and will not resist three drops of water on a rag, when their understanding is confined to a vaudeville ditty, and their talent lies in the hollow of the hand of a paid *claqueur*, it is difficult to understand how men of distinction, who sometimes have an illustrious name, common sense and a fashionable coat, can allow themselves to be carried so far by love of the commonplace as to raise to the level of the most trivial caprice, creatures whom their Frontin would refuse to take for his Lisette.

The actress in question was one of those ephemeral beauties. She called herself Dolorès, and claimed to be a Spaniard, although she was born in that Parisian Andalusia, which is called Rue Coquenard. Although it is not ten minutes' walk from Rue Coquenard to Rue de Provence, it had taken her seven or eight years to make the journey. Her prosperity had begun, and progressed with the decline of her physical charms. For instance, on the day when her first false tooth was inserted she had one horse, and two horses on the day the second was put in place. At the present time she was living in great style, had rooms in a Louvre on a small scale, kept the middle of the road on Longchamps days, and gave balls

that all Paris attended. The "all Paris" of such ladies as she—that is to say, the collection of idlers who run after all the absurd stories and scandal; the "all Paris" that plays at lansquenet and at making paradoxes, sluggards in brain and arm, who kill their own time and other people's; writers who become men of letters in order to utilize the feathers that nature has placed on their backs; the bravoes of debauchery, gentlemen who play with marked cards, knights of mysterious orders, all of spectre-ridden Bohemia, come from no one knows where, to return to the same place; all the branded and listed creatures; all the daughters of Eve who used to retail the maternal fruit in a basket, and who sell it now in boudoirs; the whole corrupt race, corrupt from swaddling-clothes to shroud, whom you see at first performances with Golconda on their brows and Thibet on their shoulders, and for whom nevertheless the first violets of spring and the first loves of beardless youth bloom and flourish. All this multitude which the chroniclers call "all Paris" was received by Mademoiselle Dolorès, the mistress of the parrot in question.

This bird, whose oratorical talents had made it famous throughout the quarter, had gradually become the terror of its nearest neighbors. Passing its time on the balcony, it made of its perch a tribune from which it delivered interminable harangues from morning till night. Some journalists who were intimate with its mistress, having taught it certain parliamentary formulas, the bird had

become wonderfully well informed on the *sugar question.* It knew the actress's repertory by heart, and repeated it so well that it could have taken her part in case she had been ill. Moreover, as she was a polyglot in her sentiments and received callers from all corners of the earth, the parrot spoke all languages, and sometimes uttered blasphemies in them, all of which would have made even the sailors blush to whom *Vert-Vert* owed his liberal education. The society of the bird, which was entertaining and instructive for ten minutes perhaps, became insufferable torture when it was prolonged. The neighbors had complained several times; but, after hearing their complaints, the actress insolently dismissed them. Two or three tenants, worthy fathers of families, indignant at the loose morals which the parrot's outspokenness revealed to them, went so far as to give notice to the landlord, whom the actress was shrewd enough to attack on his weak side.

The Englishman into whose presence Schaunard was shown had possessed his soul in patience for three months.

One day he dissembled his rage, which was on the point of breaking out, beneath a magnificent court costume, and in such guise as he would have appeared before Queen Victoria at a drawing-room at Windsor, he sent in his card to Mademoiselle Dolorès.

When he entered the room she thought at first that it was Hoffmann in the costume of *Lord Spleen;* and, being

desirous to extend a hearty welcome to a fellow actor, she invited him to breakfast. The Englishman answered her with perfect seriousness in the *French in twenty-five lessons* which a Spanish refugee had taught him.

"I accept your invitation on condition that we eat that—unpleasant bird," and he pointed to the cage occupied by the parrot which, having already scented an islander, had greeted him by humming *God Save the King*.

Dolorès thought that her neighbor the Englishman had come to laugh at her, and she was preparing to lose her temper, when he added:

"As I am very rich I will set a price on the bird."

Dolorès replied that she was attached to her bird and that she did not choose to have it go into another person's hands.

"Oh! I didn't want to take it in my hands," replied the Englishman; "I wanted to put it under my feet!" and he pointed to the heels of his boots.

Dolorès trembled with indignation and was about to fly into a rage, perhaps, when she noticed on the Englishman's finger a ring containing a diamond that represented something like twenty-five hundred francs a year. That discovery acted upon her wrath like a shower-bath. She reflected that it might perhaps be imprudent to lose her temper with a man who had fifty thousand francs on his little finger.

"Well, monsieur," she said, "as poor Coco pesters

you, I'll put him in the back part of the house; then you can't hear him."

The Englishman made a gesture of satisfaction.

"And yet," he said, pointing to his boots, "I should have much preferred— "

"Have no fear," said Dolorès; "where I shall put him, it will be impossible for him to disturb milord."

"Oh! I'm not a lord. I am simply an esquire."

But just as Mr. Birn'n was making ready to retire, after bestowing a very respectful salutation upon her, Dolorès, who never neglected her own interests, took up a small package from a table, and said to the Englishman:

"Monsieur, I am to have a benefit this evening at the Théâtre de ——, and I am to appear in three plays. Would you allow me to offer you a few box tickets? the price is only slightly increased."

And she placed ten tickets or more in the islander's hands.

"After showing such readiness to oblige him," she thought, "if he's a well-bred man, it isn't possible for him to refuse me; and if he sees me act in my pink costume—who knows? between neighbors!—that diamond he wears on his finger is the advance-guard of a million. My word, but he's ugly and glum; but it will give me a chance to go to London without being seasick."

The Englishman, after taking the tickets, asked to be

told once more what use was to be made of them, and then asked the price.

"The boxes are sixty francs—there are ten there. But there's no hurry," Dolorès added, as she saw the Englishman feeling for his wallet; "I hope that, being a neighbor, you will do me the honor to pay me a little visit now and then."

"I don't like to do business on credit," replied Mr. Birn'n; and, having produced a thousand-franc note, he placed it on the table and put the tickets in his wallet.

"I will give you the change," said Dolorès, opening a little chest in which she kept her money.

"Oh, no," said the Englishman, "it's a *pour boire;*" and he went out, leaving Dolorès aghast at the words.

"*Pour boire!*" she cried, when she was alone. "What a boor! I'll send back his money."

But her neighbor's vulgarity had simply irritated the outer coating of her self-esteem; reflection soothed her; she reflected that twenty louis extra would make a very pretty *bank*, and that she had heretofore put up with impertinent remarks at a lower rate of compensation.

"Pshaw!" she said to herself, "I mustn't be so proud. No one saw me and this is my laundress's day. After all, that Englishman handles the language so badly, perhaps he thought he was paying me a compliment." And she gayly pocketed her twenty louis.

But she returned home that evening after the play in

a furious rage. Mr. Birn'n had not used the tickets and the ten boxes were empty. So that, when she went on the stage at half-past twelve, the unfortunate beneficiary read on the faces of her *friends* of the wings the joy they felt when they saw the hall so poorly filled.

She even heard one of the actresses say, pointing to all the best boxes without an occupant:

"Poor Dolorès has only *made* one proscenium box."

"There's hardly anybody in the other boxes."

"The orchestra is empty."

"*Parbleu!*" when people see her name on the placards it has the effect of a pneumatic machine on the house."

"What an absurd idea to increase the price of seats!"

"A fine benefit! I'll bet you could put the receipts in a money-box or the heel of a stocking."

"Ah! she has on her famous dress with red velvet bows."

"She looks like a dish of crawfish."

"How much did you make at your last benefit?" one actress asked a companion.

"A full house, my dear, and it was the day of a first performance; the stools were worth a louis. But I only got six francs; my milliner had the rest. If I weren't so afraid of chilblains, I'd go to St. Petersburg."

"What! you're not thirty years old, and you're already thinking of doing Russia?"

"Why not?" said the other, and added: "Is your benefit to be soon?"

"In a fortnight. Three thousand francs' worth of tickets are sold already, without counting my Saint-Cyr boys."

"Look! everybody in the orchestra is going."

"Dolorès is singing."

It was a fact that Dolorès, red as her costume, was at that moment singing her couplet in a harsh, strident voice. She had hardly finished when two bouquets fell at her feet, thrown by two actresses, her very good friends, who leaned over the rail of their box, crying:

"Bravo, Dolorès!"

Her fury can readily be imagined. Upon returning home, although it was in the middle of the night, she opened her window and woke Coco, who woke excellent Mr. Birn'n, who was sleeping peacefully on the faith of her promise.

From that day, war was declared between the actress and the Englishman, war to the knife without rest or truce, in which the parties engaged were deterred by no question of expense. The parrot, having received instructions to that end, had perfected itself in the language of Albion, and hurled insults at its neighbor all day long in its shrillest falsetto. In very truth it was something intolerable. Dolorès suffered from it herself, but she hoped from one day to another that Mr. Birn'n would give notice: her self-esteem was bent

upon attaining that result. The islander, for his part, invented all sorts of schemes to revenge himself. In the first place, he organized a school for drummers in his salon, but the commissioner of police interfered. Mr. Birn'n, exercising his ingenuity more and more persistently, thereupon established a shooting-gallery; his servants riddled about fifty pasteboard targets per day. Again the commissioner intervened, and called his attention to an article in the Code forbidding the use of fire-arms in houses. Mr. Birn'n stopped the shooting. But a week later Mademoiselle noticed that it rained in her apartments. The landlord paid a visit to Mr. Birn'n, whom he found preparing to take salt-water baths in his salon. The room, which was very large, had been sheathed with zinc on all the walls ; all the doors were closed; and into that improvised basin a hundred streams of water were turned and fifty quintals of salt dissolved therein. It was a veritable reproduction of the ocean. Nothing was lacking, not even the fish. The entrance was through an opening in the upper panel of the middle door, and Mr. Birn'n bathed there daily. In a short time, the odor of dead fish became noticeable in the quarter, and Mademoiselle Dolorès had half an inch of water in her bedroom.

The landlord was furious and threatened Mr. Birn'n with an action for the damage done to his property.

"Haven't I the right to bathe in my own rooms?" asked the Englishman.

"No, monsieur."

"If I haven't the right, very well," said the Englishman, full of respect for the law of the country in which he lived. "It's a pity, for I enjoyed it very much."

That very evening he gave orders to draw off his ocean. It was high time; there was already a bed of oysters on the floor.

However, Mr. Birn'n did not abandon the struggle, but looked about for some legitimate method of continuing this strange war, which furnished entertainment for the whole of idle Paris; for the affair had become known in the theatre green-rooms and other public places. So Dolorès considered it a point of honor to emerge triumphant from the struggle, the result of which was made the subject of wagers.

Then it was that Mr. Birn'n thought of the piano. And it was not such a bad idea: the most disagreeable of instruments was a fitting adversary for the most disagreeable of birds. And so, as soon as that bright idea occurred to him, he lost no time in putting it into execution. He hired a piano and inquired for a pianist. The pianist, it will be remembered, was our friend Schaunard. The Englishman described in familiar language his sufferings on account of his neighbor's parrot, and all that he had already done in his attempts to bring the actress to a settlement.

"But, milord," said Schaunard, "there's one sure way of getting rid of the beast, and that is parsley. All

chemists agree in saying that that product of the kitchen garden is the prussic acid of those creatures; chop up some parsley in your rug and have it shaken out of the window on Coco's cage: he will expire exactly as if he had been invited to dinner by Pope Alexander VI."

"I have thought of that, but the beast is watched," replied the Englishman; "the piano's the surest way."

Schaunard gazed at the Englishman, for at first he did not understand.

"This is what I have thought of," continued the Englishman. "The actress and her pet sleep till noon. Just follow my reasoning—"

"I propose to disturb her slumbers. The laws of this country allow me to have music from morning till night. Do you understand what I expect of you?"

"But," said Schaunard, "it wouldn't be so unpleasant for the actress to hear me play the piano all day, and for nothing too. I am one of the best, and if I only had one weak lung,—"

"Oho!" the Englishman interrupted him. "In that case, I shall not tell you to play good music, but just to hammer on your instrument. Like this," he added, trying a scale; "and always, always the same thing, monsieur le musicien, the scale over and over again without pity. I know a little about medicine, and that drives people mad. It will drive *them* mad, and that is what I count on. Come to work at once, monsieur; I will pay you well."

"And that," said Schaunard, after telling his comrades all the details we have set down, "that is the trade I have been following for a fortnight. One scale, the same thing over and over again, from five in the morning until night. It isn't just what you would call serious art; but what would you have, my children? the Englishman pays me two hundred francs a month for my drumming; one must long to be his own hangman to refuse such a windfall. I accepted, and in two or three days I go to the treasury to draw my first month's salary.

It was after this mutual exchange of confidences that the three friends agreed among themselves to take advantage of the general increase of income to provide their mistresses with the spring outfit that each of them had coveted so long. They agreed, furthermore, that the one who received his money first should wait for the others, so that the purchases might be made at the same time, and that Mesdemoiselles Musette, Mimi and Phémie might enjoy together the pleasure of putting on their *new skins*, as Schaunard expressed it.

Two or three days after this council, Rodolphe had the pole. His dental ivory poem had been paid for and it weighed eighty francs. Two days later, Marcel gave Médicis a receipt for the price of eighteen corporal's portraits at six francs.

Marcel and Rodolphe had the utmost difficulty in concealing their good fortune.

"It seems to me as if I were sweating gold," said the poet.

"The same with me," said Marcel. "If Schaunard delays long it will be impossible for me to keep up my rôle of anonymous Crœsus."

But the very next morning the Bohemians saw Schaunard appear gorgeously attired in a jacket of golden yellow nankeen.

"Ah! *mon Dieu!*" cried Phémie, dazzled at the aspect of her lover so sumptuously bound, "where did you get that coat?"

"I found it among my papers," the musician replied, motioning to his two friends to follow him from the room.

"I have it," he cried, when they were alone. "See the piles!" and he displayed a handful of gold.

"Good," cried Marcel, "let's be off! we'll go and sack the shops! How happy Musette will be!"

"How pleased Mimi will be!" added Rodolphe. "Well, are you coming, Schaunard?"

"Allow me to reflect," replied the musician. "It may be that we are doing a foolish thing to cover these young women with a quantity of fashionable gew-gaws. Think a moment. Aren't you afraid that, when they resemble the plates in *L'Écharpe d'Iris*, such magnificence will exert a baleful influence on their characters? and is it fitting for young men like ourselves to act with women as if we were tottering and wrinkled Mondors? It isn't

that I hesitate to sacrifice fourteen or eighteen francs on Phémie's dress; but I tremble to think that, when she has a new hat, perhaps she won't care to bow to me any more! She is so pretty with a flower in her hair! What do you think about it, philosopher?" he suddenly asked Colline, who had joined them a few moments before.

"Ingratitude is the daughter of kindness," said the philosopher.

"To look at it from another point of view," continued Schaunard, "when your mistresses are well dressed, what sort of figures will you cut in your shabby clothes, with them on your arms? You'll look like their lady's-maids. It isn't on my own account that I say this," added Schaunard, drawing himself up in his nankeen coat; "for I can show myself anywhere now, thank God!"

However, despite the spirit of opposition manifested by Schaunard, it was agreed anew that on the following day they should despoil all the dry-goods shops in the neighborhood for the benefit of the ladies.

And so the next morning, just about the time when we saw Mademoiselle Mimi, at the beginning of this chapter, awake and seem greatly surprised at Rodolphe's absence, the poet and his two friends ascended the stairs of the lodging-house, attended by a clerk from *Les Deux Magots* and by a milliner, both of whom had samples of their wares. Schaunard, who had purchased the famous hunting-horn, marched in front, playing the overture from *La Caravane*.

Musette and Phémie, being summoned by Mimi, who lived on the entresol, hurried downstairs with the rapidity of an avalanche when they heard rumors of hats and dresses. When they saw all those paltry treasures displayed before their eyes, the three women nearly went wild with joy. Mimi was seized with a fever of hilarity and jumped about like a goat, waving a little woollen scarf. Musette threw herself on Marcel's neck, with a little green boot in each hand, striking them against each other like a pair of cymbals. Phémie looked at Schaunard, sobbing; she could say nothing but:

"O my Alexandre! my Alexandre!"

"There's no danger that she'll refuse Artaxerxes' presents," murmured Colline the philosopher.

After the first outburst of jubilation had passed, when the selections were made and the bills paid, Rodolphe informed the three women that they must arrange to try on their new clothes the next day.

"We will go into the country," he said.

"What fun!" cried Musette, "it won't be the first time that I've bought, cut, made and worn a dress the same day. Besides, we have the whole night. We'll be ready, won't we, mesdames?"

"We shall be ready," cried Mimi and Phémie in the same breath.

They set to work on the spot and for sixteen hours did not lay aside their scissors and needles.

The next day was the first of May. The Easter bells

had sounded the resurrection of spring some days before, and it was showing itself on every side, eager and joyous; it came, as the German ballad says, as light of foot as the young *fiancé* going to plant the May-pole under the window of his beloved. It painted the sky blue, the trees green and arrayed all nature in bright colors. It awoke the drowsy sun where he lay sleeping in his bed of mist, his head resting on the dense snow-clouds that served him for a pillow, and it cried to him:

"Ho there! my friend! the time has come and here am I! to work and quickly! Don without delay your fine coat made of bright new beams and show yourself at once on your balcony to announce my arrival."

Whereupon the sun took the field and stalked abroad as proud and haughty as a great lord at court. The swallows, returning from their pilgrimage to the East, filled the air; the hawthorn whitened the hedges; the violet perfumed the grass in the woods, where the birds were all leaving their nests with a sheet of ballads under their wings. It was the springtime in very truth, the springtime of poets and lovers and not the springtime of Matthieu Lænsberg, the almanac-maker, a villainous springtime with a red nose, frost-bitten fingers, when the poor man still shivers in his chimney-corner where the last ashes of his last faggot have long since ceased to glow. Balmy breezes wafted through the clear atmosphere into the city the sweet odors of the surrounding fields. The sun's rays,

bright and warm, knocked at the closed windows. To the sick they said: "Open, we are health!" and at the window of the attic where the maiden stood gazing into her mirror, that innocent first love of the most innocent, they said: "Open, pretty one, and let us light up your beauty! we are the heralds of fine weather; you can now put on your linen dress, your straw hat and your dainty shoes: the groves where you go to dance are all decked out in their lovely new flowers, and the violins will wake for the Sunday ball. Good-morning, pretty one!"

As the Angelus was ringing on the church near by, the three hard-working damsels, who had barely had time for a few hours' sleep, were already before their mirrors, casting a last glance at their new costumes.

They were all charming, dressed alike, and on their faces the same glow of satisfaction due to the gratification of a long-cherished desire.

Musette especially was resplendently lovely.

"I have never been so happy," she said to Marcel; "it seems as if the good Lord had packed all the happiness of my life into this moment, and all I fear is that there will be none left! But never mind! even where there's no more, there will still be some. We know the receipt for making it," she added gayly, as she kissed Marcel.

There was one thing that distressed Phémie.

"I like the green grass and the little birds," she said, "but one never meets anybody in the country, and no-

body will see my pretty hat and my beautiful dress. Suppose we go into the country on the boulevard?"

At eight o'clock in the morning the whole street was aroused by the flourishes performed on the bugle by Schaunard, as the signal for departure. All the neighbors ran to their windows to watch the Bohemians pass. Colline, who was of the party, closed the procession, carrying the ladies' umbrellas. An hour later, the whole joyous band was scattered among the fields of Fontenay-aux-Roses.

When they returned to the house very late at night, Colline, who had performed the duties of treasurer during the day, announced that there were six francs which they had neglected to spend, and deposited that balance on the table.

"What are we going to do with it?" asked Marcel.

"Suppose we buy a government bond?" said Schaunard.

XVIII

FRANCINE'S MUFF

I

Among the genuine Bohemians of the genuine Bohemia, I once knew one Jacques D——; he was a sculptor and gave promise of being very talented some day. But poverty did not give him time to fulfil his promise. He died of exhaustion in March 1844, at the Saint-Louis hospital, Sainte-Victoire ward, bed No. 14.

I knew Jacques at the hospital where I was myself detained by a long illness. Jacques possessed, as I have said, the material of which great talents are made, and yet he never showed any signs of self-conceit on that score. During the two months that I saw much of him, when he felt that he was cradled in the arms of death, I never once heard him complain, or indulge in lamentations of the sort that make unappreciated artists ridiculous. He died without *posing*, with the ghastly grimace of the death agony on his face. Speaking of his death, I am reminded of one of the most horrible scenes I ever witnessed in that caravansary of human suffering. His

father, being informed of what had happened, came to claim the body and haggled a long time over the thirty-six francs demanded by the governing board of the hospital. He haggled also over the charge for the service at the church, and so persistently that at last they took off six francs. When the time came to put the body in the coffin, the attendant removed the coarse covering belonging to the hospital, and asked a friend of the deceased who was present, for money with which to buy the winding-sheet. The poor devil, who had not a sou, went to Jacques's father, who flew into a towering rage and asked if they would never cease to annoy him.

The novice who was present at this unnatural discussion, cast a glance at the body and involuntarily uttered these gentle, artless words:

"O monsieur, we can't bury him like that, poor boy; it's so cold; at least give him a shirt, so that he needn't go before the good Lord all naked."

The father gave the friend five francs to buy a shirt, but bade him go to an old-clothes shop on Rue Grange-aux-Belles, where they sold second-hand linen.

"You can get it cheaper there," he said.

This heartless behavior on the part of Jacques's father was explained to me later; he was furious because his son had embraced an artistic career, and his anger did not cool even in presence of a coffin.

But I am a long way from Mademoiselle Francine and

her muff. To return to them: Mademoiselle Francine was Jacques's first and only mistress. He did not live to grow old, for he was only twenty-three when his father proposed to allow him to be put in the ground naked. The story of his love was told me by Jacques himself, when he was No. 14 and I No. 16 in the Sainte-Victoire ward—a wretched place to die.

Stay, reader; before I begin the story, which would be a most interesting one if I could tell it as it was told me by my friend Jacques, let me smoke the old clay pipe he gave me the day the doctor forbade his smoking. But at night, when the attendant was asleep, my friend Jacques would borrow the pipe and ask me for a little tobacco; one gets so tired at night in those great wards, when one is in pain and cannot sleep!

"Only one or two puffs," he would say to me; and I would let him do as he wanted, and Sister Sainte-Geneviève did not seem to smell the smoke when she made her round. Ah! good sister! how gentle you were, and how lovely too when you came and sprinkled holy water over us! We could see you coming in the distance, walking slowly under the dark arches, wrapped in your white veil, which fell in such graceful folds, and which our friend Jacques admired so. Ah! good sister! you were the Beatrice of that hell. Your consolations were so sweet that we always complained in order to be comforted by you. If my friend Jacques had not died one day when the snow was falling, he would have carved

a little Virgin for you to put in your cell, dear Sister Sainte-Geneviève ! "

A READER.—" Well, what about the muff? I don't see where the muff comes in."

ANOTHER READER.—" And Mademoiselle Francine? where is she, pray? "

FIRST READER.—" This story isn't very entertaining ! "

SECOND READER.—" Let's see how it ends."

I ask your pardon, messieurs, my friend Jacques's pipe led me into this digression. But, after all, I did not take an oath to make you laugh. Bohemia is not cheerful every day.

Jacques and Francine met in a house on Rue de la Tour d'Auvergne, where they happened to hire rooms at the same time, on the April quarter-day.

It was a week before the artist and the young woman entered into those neighborly relations which are almost a matter of course when you live on the same floor ; however, before they had exchanged a single word they knew each other. Francine knew that her neighbor was a poor devil of an artist and Jacques had learned that his neighbor was a seamstress who had left her home to escape the unkind treatment of a stepmother. She performed miracles of economy to make both ends meet, as they say ; and, as she had never known what pleasure was, she had no longing for it. This is how they both fell victims to the common law of lodging-house partitions.

One evening in April Jacques returned to his room,

tired out, without food since the morning, and profoundly depressed, with one of those vague fits of depression which have no well-defined cause and which may seize you anywhere at any time; a sort of apoplexy of the heart to which the unfortunate wretches who live alone are peculiarly subject. Jacques, who felt as if he would stifle in his narrow quarters, opened his window for a breath of fresh air. It was a lovely evening and the setting sun was displaying his melancholy panorama of fairyland over the hills of Montmartre. Jacques stood pensively at his window, listening to the winged chorus of the melodies of the springtime in the calm atmosphere of evening, and it increased his depression. As a raven flew croaking by, he remembered the time when the ravens brought bread to Elijah, the devout hermit, and the thought passed through his mind that ravens were no longer so charitable. Then, unable to endure it any longer, he closed his window, drew the curtain, and, as he had no money to buy oil, lighted a pitch candle which he had brought back from a trip to La Grande Chartreuse. More and more depressed, he filled his pipe.

"Luckily I still have tobacco enough to hide the pistol," he muttered, and began to smoke.

My friend Jacques must have been very melancholy that evening, to think of hiding the pistol. That was his last resort in great emergencies and it generally succeeded. The method was as follows: Jacques smoked tobacco on which he sprinkled a few drops of laudanum,

and he smoked until the cloud of smoke from his pipe was dense enough to hide all the objects in his little room, and especially a pistol that hung on the wall. It was a matter of some ten pipefuls. When the pistol was entirely invisible, it almost always happened that the smoke and laudanum combined put Jacques to sleep, and it often happened too that his depression abandoned him on the threshold of his dreams.

But on the evening in question he used up all his tobacco, the pistol was absolutely concealed, and Jacques was still bitterly depressed. On the other hand, Mademoiselle Francine, when she returned home that same evening, was extremely light-hearted, and her gayety was without cause, like Jacques's melancholy; it was one of those bursts of joy which fall from Heaven and which the good Lord sends to gentle hearts. So Mademoiselle Francine was in excellent humor and was singing as she ascended the stairs. But, as she was about to open her door, a gust of wind came in at the open window in the hall and unceremoniously extinguished her light.

"*Mon Dieu!* how annoying!" ejaculated the girl; "now I must go down and up six flights again."

But, noticing the light shining under Jacques's door, the instinct of indolence, coupled with a feeling of curiosity, suggested to her that she should ask the artist for a light. She reflected that it was a service which neighbors render one another every day, and that there could be nothing improper about it. So she knocked gently

twice on Jacques's door, which he opened, a little surprised by that late call. But she had hardly stepped into the room when the smoke with which it was filled suffocated her, and before she had succeeded in uttering a word, she fell fainting on a chair and dropped her candle and her key. It was midnight and everybody in the house was asleep. Jacques did not think it well to call for help, his first thought being that his neighbor might be compromised. He confined himself therefore to opening the window to admit a little air; and, when he had sprinkled a few drops of water on the girl's face, he saw her open her eyes and gradually come to herself. When she had entirely recovered consciousness, after about five minutes, Francine told the artist on what errand she had come, and apologized profusely for what had happened.

"Now that I have recovered," she said, "I can go back to my room."

He had already opened the door, when she noticed that not only had she forgotten to light her candle, but that she had not her key.

"How foolish I am!" she said as she put her candle to the pitch taper, "I came in here to get a light and was going away without one."

But, as she spoke, the current of air caused by the open door and window, suddenly extinguished the taper, and the two young people were left in darkness.

"One would think it was done on purpose," said Francine. "Pray, excuse me, monsieur, for causing you

so much annoyance, and be good enough to strike a light so that I can find my key."

"Certainly, mademoiselle," said Jacques, feeling for the matches.

He soon found them. But a strange thought passed through his mind; he put the matches in his pocket, exclaiming:

"*Mon Dieu!* mademoiselle, here's another difficulty. I haven't a single match; I used the last one when I came home."

"It seems to me that that's a cleverly planned stratagem!" he thought.

"*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed Francine, "I can go to my room well enough without a candle; it's not large enough for me to lose myself in it. But I must have my key; I beg you, monsieur, help me to find it; it must be on the floor."

"Let us look, mademoiselle," said Jacques.

And there they were, both hunting for the lost key in the darkness; but, as if guided by the same instinct, their hands, which were feeling about in the same place, met ten times a minute. And as they were equally awkward, they did not find the key.

"The moon, which is behind the cloud just now, shines full into my chamber," said Jacques. "Let us wait a bit. It may give us some light soon."

As they waited for the moon to appear they began to talk. Conversation in the dark, in a small room, on a

Chapter XVIII

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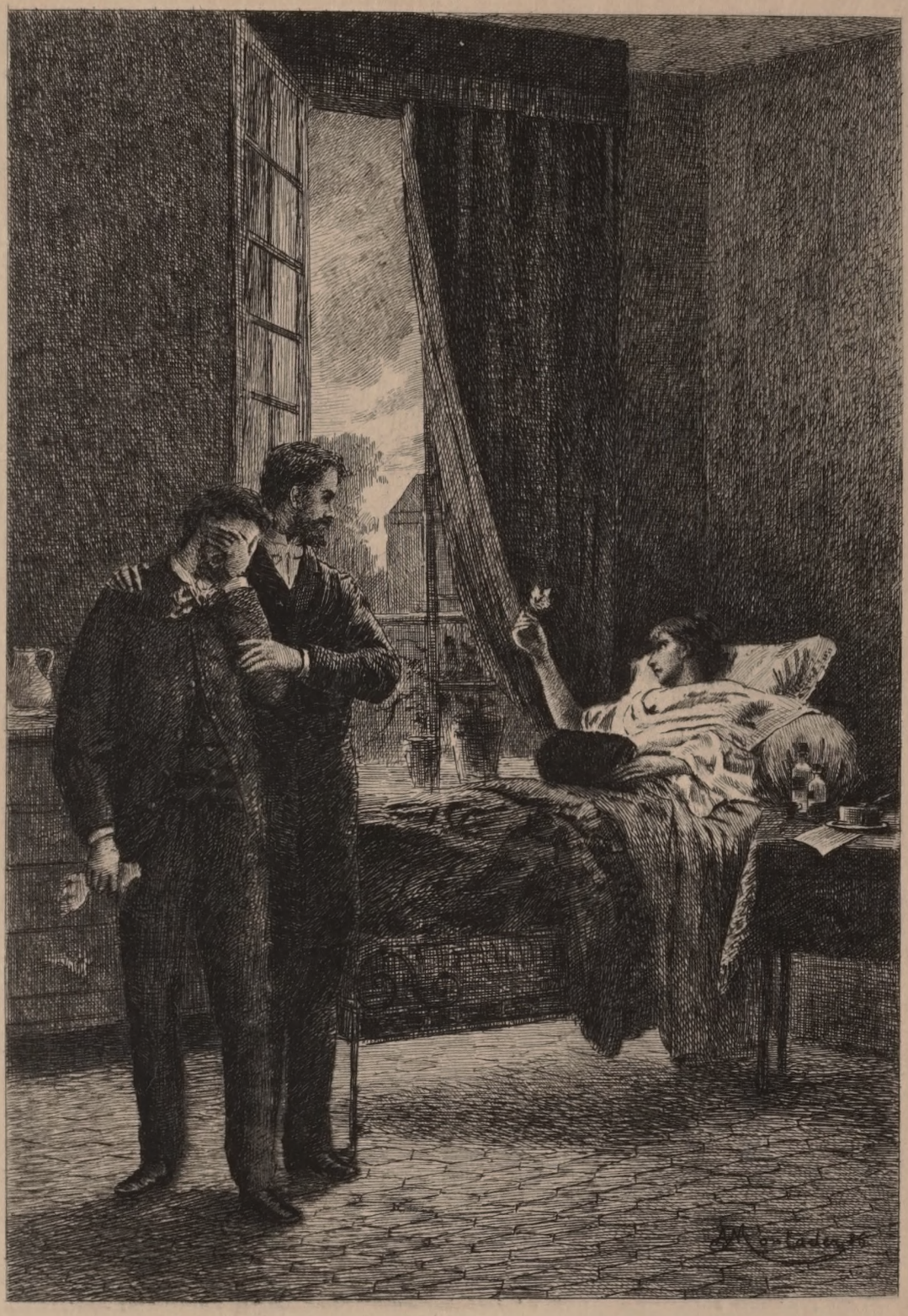

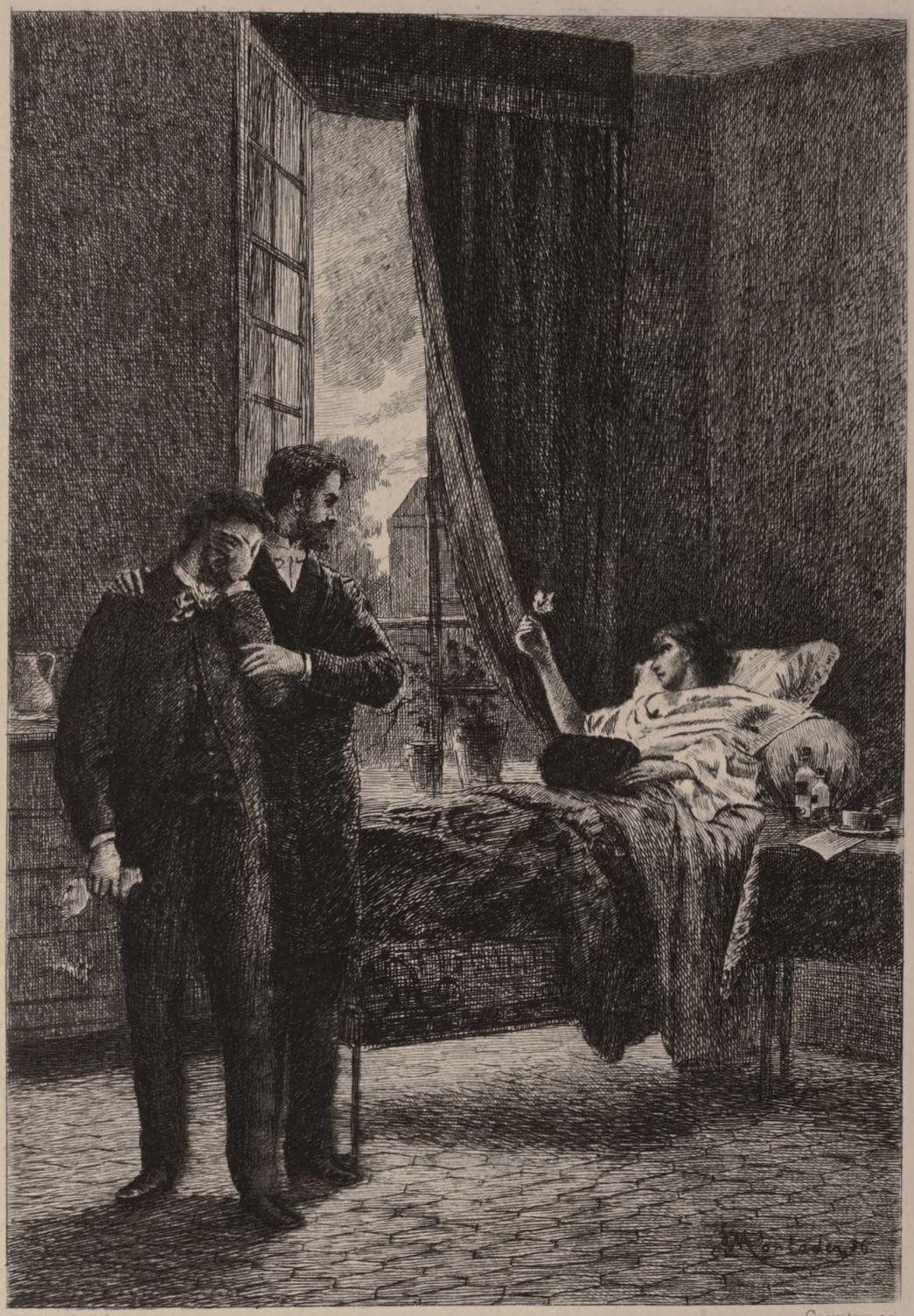

Montader inv. Courtry sc

night in spring; conversation which is frivolous and unmeaning at first, but gradually approaches the chapter of confidences—you know what that leads to. The words become confused, filled with unspoken thoughts; the voice sinks lower, words alternate with sighs. The hands meet and complete the thought that rises from the heart to the lips, and—Search your memories for the conclusion, O youthful couples. Remember, young man, remember, young woman—you who walk hand in hand to-day, and who had never seen each other two days ago.

At last the moon emerged from behind the clouds and its white light filled the room; Mademoiselle Francine started from her reverie with a little shriek.

"What's the matter?" queried Jacques, putting his arm around her waist.

"Nothing," whispered Francine; "I thought I heard someone knock." And, unseen by Jacques, she kicked the key, which she had just discovered, under the table.

She did not choose to find it.

* * * * * *

First Reader.—"I certainly won't let this story fall into my daughter's hands."

Second Reader.—"Thus far I haven't seen a hair of Mademoiselle Francine's muff; and, as for the girl herself, I have no idea what she looks like, whether she's fair or dark."

Patience, O readers, patience ! I promised you a muff and I will give it to you finally, as my friend Jacques did to his poor dear Francine, who had become his mistress as I explained in the above line left blank. She was fair, was Francine, fair and light of heart—an unusual combination. She had known nothing of love until she was twenty ; but a vague foreboding of her approaching end impelled her to delay no longer if she wished to know it.

She met Jacques and loved him. Their liaison lasted six months. They took each other in the spring, they parted in the autumn ; Francine was consumptive ; she knew it and her friend Jacques knew it too ; a fortnight after taking up with her, he learned it from one of his friends who was a doctor. "She will go when the leaves turn," he said.

Francine overheard the conversation and remarked her friend's consequent despair.

"What do we care about the turning leaves?" she said, putting all her love into a smile ; "What do we care for the autumn? it's summer now and the leaves are green, let's make the most of it, my dear. When you see that I am ready to leave the world, you must take me in your arms and kiss me and forbid my going. I am obedient, you know, and I will stay."

And in that spirit the lovely creature endured the privations of life in Bohemia for five months, a song and a smile forever on her lips. Jacques allowed him-

self to be deceived. His medical friend often said to him: "Francine is failing, she needs the best of care." Thereupon Jacques would travel all over Paris to obtain the wherewithal to buy the doctor's prescriptions; but Francine would have nothing to do with them and threw the drugs out of the window. At night, when she had a fit of coughing, she would leave the room and go into the hall so that Jacques should not hear her.

One day, when they had gone into the country together, Jacques noticed a tree on which the leaves were turning yellow. He glanced sorrowfully at Francine, who was walking slowly and seemed to be musing.

She saw Jacques turn pale and guessed the cause of his pallor.

"You're a silly boy!" she said, kissing him, "it's only July; from now to October is three months; by loving each other night and day, as we do, we shall double the time we have to be together. And even then, if I feel worse when the leaves are yellow, we'll go and live in a forest of firs—their leaves are always green."

In October, Francine was obliged to take to her bed. Jacques's friend attended her. The tiny room in which they lived was located at the top of the house and looked on a courtyard in which there was a tree which became barer and barer every day. Jacques had hung a curtain at the window to hide the tree from the

invalid; but Francine insisted that the curtain should be taken away.

"O my dear," she said to Jacques, "I will give you a hundred times more kisses than it has leaves."—And she added: "I am getting much better, too. I shall go out soon; but as it will be cold and I don't want to have red hands, you must buy me a muff." Throughout her illness that muff was her only dream.

On the eve of All Saints' Day, seeing that Jacques was more despairing than ever, she attempted to encourage him; and, to prove that she was getting better, she sat up.

The doctor arrived at that moment and forced her to lie down again.

"Courage, Jacques!" he whispered in his friend's ear, "it's all over, Francine is dying."

Jacques burst into tears.

"You can give her whatever she asks for now," continued the doctor; "there is no hope."

Francine *heard with her eyes* what the doctor said to her lover.

"Don't listen to him," she cried, holding out her arms to Jacques, "don't listen to him, he lies. We will go out together to-morrow—it's All Saints' Day; it will be cold, so go and buy me a muff. I beg you to, for I am afraid of chilblains this winter."

Jacques was going out with his friend, but Francine detained the doctor.

"Go and get my muff," she said to Jacques; "get a fine one, so that it will last a long while."

When she was alone with the doctor she said to him:

"O monsieur, I am dying and I know it. But think of something that will give me strength for one night, I implore you; make me beautiful again for just one night and then let me die, as the good Lord does not choose that I shall live longer."

As the doctor was doing his best to soothe her, a gust of wind blew into the room and left on the sick girl's bed a yellow leaf, torn from the tree in the little courtyard.

Francine drew aside the curtain and saw that the tree was completely bare.

"That is the last," she said, putting the leaf under her pillow.

"You will not die until to-morrow," said the doctor, "you have a night to yourself."

"Ah! what happiness!" said the girl;—"a winter night—it will be a long one."

Jacques returned; he brought a muff.

"It's a very pretty one," said Francine; "I will carry it when I go out."

She passed the night with Jacques.

As the midday Angelus was ringing on the following day, All Saints', she was taken with the death agony, and her whole body began to tremble.

"My hands are cold," she murmured; "give me my muff." And she buried her poor hands in the fur.

"This is the end," the doctor said to Jacques; "go and kiss her."

Jacques put his lips to his mistress's. At the last moment they attempted to take away the muff, but she clung to it.

"No, no," she said; "let me keep it; it's winter; I am cold. O my poor Jacques! O my poor Jacques! what is going to become of you? O my God!"

And the next day Jacques was alone.

First Reader.—"I told you this was not a lively story."

What would you have, reader? one cannot always laugh.

II

It was the morning of All Saints' Day. Francine was dead.

Two men were watching by her pillow: one, who was standing, was the doctor; the other, kneeling by the bed, with his lips glued to the dead woman's hand as if they would imprint themselves there in a last desperate kiss, was Jacques, Francine's lover. For more than six hours he was buried in sorrowful insensibility. A barrel organ passing under the window roused him from it.

The organ was playing an air which Francine was accustomed to sing when she woke in the morning.

One of those mad hopes born only of great despair passed through Jacques's mind. He went back a month into the past, to the time when Francine was only dying; he forgot the present and imagined for a moment that the dead girl was only asleep, and that she would presently awake with her lips parted for her morning song.

But the notes of the organ had not died away before Jacques had returned to reality. Francine's mouth was closed forever to singing, and the smile that her last thought had brought to her lips faded away at the approach of death.

"Courage, Jacques!" said the doctor, who was the sculptor's friend.

Jacques rose and said, looking the doctor in the face:

"It's all over? there's no hope?"

Without answering the pitifully vain questions, the doctor drew the curtains of the bed; then he returned to the sculptor and held out his hand.

"Francine is dead," he said, "we could expect nothing else. God knows that we did all we could do to save her. She was a good girl, Jacques, and loved you dearly, more and better than you loved her; for her love was made of love alone, whereas yours contained some alloy. Francine is dead—but that isn't all; we must think now about taking the necessary steps for her burial.

We will attend to it together, and we'll ask your neighbor to keep watch here while we are away."

Jacques allowed his friend to lead him away. All day long they ran hither and thither; to the mayor's office, the undertaker's, the cemetery. As Jacques had no money, the doctor pawned his watch, his ring and some wearing apparel to pay the expenses of the funeral, which was arranged for the following day.

They returned together very late in the evening; the neighbor forced Jacques to eat a little.

"Yes," he said, "I will; I am cold and I need a little strength, for I have some work to do to-night."

The doctor and the neighbor did not understand him.

Jacques sat down at the table and ate a few mouthfuls so hurriedly that they nearly choked him. Then he asked for drink. But as he put the glass to his mouth, he dropped it on the floor. The glass, which broke when it fell, had awakened in the artist's mind a memory which, in its turn, awakened his grief, benumbed for a moment. On the day when Francine came first to his room, the young woman, who was ill even then, had had an ill turn, and Jacques had given her a little sugar and water to drink in that glass. Later, when they lived together, they had made it a sort of love-token.

In his rare moments of opulence, the artist bought for his mistress one or two bottles of a strengthening wine which was prescribed for her, and it was from that glass

that Francine drank the liquor from which her affection imbibed a winning gayety.

For more than half an hour Jacques sat without speaking, looking at the scattered fragments of that fragile, cherished souvenir, and it seemed to him that his heart too was shattered and that he could feel the pieces tearing his breast. When he had come to himself, he picked up the ruins of the glass and threw them into a drawer. Then he asked the neighbor to go and get two wax candles and to send up a pail of water by the concierge.

"Don't go," he said to the doctor, who had no idea of going, "I shall need you directly."

The water and candles were brought and the two friends were left alone.

"What do you propose to do?" said the doctor, as Jacques, after pouring some of the water into a wooden bowl, threw in fine plaster in measured handfuls.

"Can't you guess what I am going to do?" said the artist. "I am going to take a cast of Francine's head; and as my courage would fail if I were left alone, you must not go."

Jacques then proceeded to draw aside the curtains of the bed and turned back the sheet that had been thrown over the dead girl's face. His hands began to tremble and a stifled sob came to his lips.

"Bring the candles," he cried to his friend, "and come and hold the bowl for me."

One of the candles was placed at the head of the bed,

in such wise as to cast all its light on the dead girl's face; the other was placed at the foot. With the aid of a brush dipped in olive oil, the artist anointed the eyebrows, lashes and hair, which latter he arranged as Francine usually wore it.

"In that way it won't hurt her when we take off the mask," Jacques muttered to himself.

These precautions taken, and the dead girl's head being placed in a favorable position, Jacques began to apply the plaster in successive layers until the mould was of the necessary thickness. In a quarter of an hour the operation was at an end and was perfectly successful.

Strangely enough a change had taken place in Francine's face. The blood which had not had time to congeal entirely, warmed anew doubtless by the heat of the plaster, had ascended toward the upper portion of the body, and a pink flush gradually impinged upon the dead white tones of the forehead and cheeks. The eyelids, which had opened when the mould was removed, revealed the calm blue pupils, whose glance seemed to denote a vague intelligence; and from the lips, half opened by the beginning of a smile, there seemed to come, as if forgotten in the last farewell, that last word which is heard only by the heart.

Who can assert that intelligence ends absolutely when insensibility begins? Who can say that the passions are extinguished and die with the last pulsation of the heart they have moved? May not the mind sometimes vol-

untarily remain a captive in the body already prepared for the grave, and, from the depths of its prison in the flesh, watch for a moment the regrets and tears of those left behind? Those who go have so many reasons for distrusting those who remain!

At the moment when it occurred to Jacques to preserve her features by means of his art, it may be—who knows?—that a thought of the hereafter had aroused Francine from the first sleep of her endless slumber. Perhaps she remembered that he whom she had left was an artist as well as a lover; that he was both, because he could not be one without the other, that to him love was the soul of art, and that, if he had loved her so dearly, it was because she had succeeded in being to him both a woman and a mistress, a sentiment in human form. And thereupon, it may be, Francine, wishing to leave with Jacques the human image which had become to him an incarnate idea, had been able, although rigid in death, to clothe her face once more with all the joyous beams of love and all the charms of youth: she resuscitated the object of art.

And it may be also that the poor girl thought truly; for there are, among genuine artists, anomalous Pygmalions, who, unlike the famous one, would like to be able to change their living Galateas to marble.

Before the serenity of those features, on which there was no trace of the death agony, no one could have believed in the long suffering which had served as a preface

to death. Francine seemed to be still dreaming a dream of love, and, seeing her thus, you would have said that she had died of beauty.

The doctor, thoroughly exhausted, was sleeping in a corner.

As for Jacques, he was swimming anew in a sea of doubt. His distraught mind persisted in believing that she whom he had loved so dearly, would wake again; and, as the immobility of the body was broken at intervals by slight nervous contractions due to the recent process of casting, that appearance of life confirmed Jacques in his pleasing delusion, which lasted until morning, when a commissioner came to establish the fact of the death and authorize the burial.

However, if it needed all the madness of despair, as one looked at that lovely creature, to suspect that she was dead, it was none the less necessary to credit the infallibility of science.

While the neighbor was preparing Francine's body for burial, they led Jacques into another room, where he found some of his friends who had come to attend the funeral. Although they loved Jacques as a brother, the Bohemians abstained from the consolations which serve only to irritate sorrows. One after another they silently pressed their friend's hand, without any of the words that are so hard to speak and so painful to hear.

"Her death is a great misfortune to Jacques," said one of them.

"Yes," replied the painter Lazare, a curious character, who had succeeded early in life in quelling all the rebellious impulses of youth by meeting them with an inflexible, preconceived determination, and in whom the artist had finally stifled the man; "yes, but a misfortune which he wilfully introduced into his life. Jacques has changed greatly since he has known Francine."

"She made him happy," said another.

"Happy!" repeated Lazare, "what do you call happy? how can you call happiness a passion that puts a man in the state Jacques is in at this moment? Just go and show him a genuine masterpiece: he wouldn't turn his eyes to look at it, and, to see his mistress once more, I am sure that he'd walk over a Titian or a Raphael. My mistress is immortal and never deceives me. She lives at the Louvre and her name is *Joconde.*"

As Lazare was about to pursue his theories on art and sentiment, he was told that it was time to start for the church.

After mass had been said, the procession started for the cemetery.—As it was All Souls' Day, the abode of the dead was filled with an immense throng. Many people turned to look at Jacques, who walked bare-headed behind the hearse.

"Poor boy!" said one, "it's his mother, I suppose."

"It's his father," said another.

"It's his sister," suggested some one else.

A poet, who had come there to study the various

manifestations of sorrow in that fête of memories, which is celebrated once a year amid the fogs of November, was the only one who guessed, as he saw Jacques pass, that he was following his mistress's body.

When they reached the allotted grave, the Bohemians bared their heads and stood around in a circle. Jacques stood on the edge of the grave, his friend the doctor holding his arm.

The men at the cemetery were in a hurry and wished to do things quickly.

"There's to be no speech," said one of them. "So much the better! Now, boys! all together!"

The coffin was taken from the hearse, ropes were passed around it, and it was lowered into the grave. The man withdrew the ropes and climbed out of the hole; then, assisted by one of his comrades, he took a shovel and began to throw in dirt. The grave was soon filled. A little wooden cross was placed at the head.

The doctor heard Jacques, in the midst of his sobs, cry aloud in a burst of egoism:

"O my youth! they are burying you in that grave!"

Jacques belonged to a society called the *Water Drinkers*, which seemed to have been founded with a view of copying the famous club on Rue des Quatre-Vents, described in that notable novel, *The Provincial Great Man in Paris*. But there was a great difference between the heroes of the club and the *Water Drinkers*, who, like all imitators, had exaggerated the

system they sought to apply. This difference will be easily understood from the single fact that in Monsieur de Balzac's book the members of the club end by attaining their object and prove that every system that succeeds is a good one: whereas, after an existence of several years, the society of *Water Drinkers* was dissolved naturally, by the death of all its members, nor was the name of a single one of them attached to any work that might bear witness to his existence.

During his liaison with Francine, Jacques's relations with the *Drinkers* became less close. The necessities of existence had forced the artist to violate certain conditions, solemnly signed and sworn to by the Water Drinkers on the day the society was founded.

Forever stalking on the stilts of ridiculous pride, those young men had made it a cardinal principle of their association that they were never to depart from the highest pinnacles of art; that is to say that, no matter how desperately in want they might be, no one of them would make any concession to necessity. For instance, the poet Melchior would never have consented to lay aside what he called his lyre in order to write a commercial prospectus or a profession of faith. It was all very well for the poet Rodolphe, a ne'er-do-well who was ready for anything, and who never let a hundred-sou piece pass before his eyes without firing at it, no matter with what. The painter Lazare, a proud tatterdemalion, would never have been willing to profane his brushes by painting the

portrait of a tailor holding a parrot on his fingers, as our friend Marcel had done in exchange for the famous coat nicknamed *Methuselah*, which the hand of each of his mistresses had embellished with patches. During the whole time that he lived in close communion with the *Water Drinkers*, Jacques the sculptor submitted to the tyranny of the agreement of association; but as soon as he made Francine's acquaintance he refused to subject the poor child, who was already ill, to the diet he had accepted while he lived alone. Jacques was by nature upright and frank. He went to the president of the society, the exclusive Lazare, and informed him that he should thenceforth accept any work that would be profitable to him.

"My dear fellow," Lazare replied, "your declaration of love was your resignation as an artist. We will remain your friends, if you choose, but we shall no longer be your associates. Ply your trade to please yourself; to my mind, you are no longer a sculptor, but a plasterer. To be sure you will be at liberty to drink wine, but we, who continue to drink our water and eat our hard tack, shall remain artists."

Whatever Lazare might choose to say, Jacques remained an artist. But to keep Francine by his side he gave his time to profitable tasks whenever occasion offered. For instance, he worked a long time in the establishment of Romagnési the ornament maker. Ingenious in designing, skilful in execution, Jacques might easily, without turning his back upon serious art, have

acquired a great reputation in *genre* compositions, which have become one of the principal elements in the fancy-goods business. But Jacques was lazy like all true artists, and in love after the fashion of poets. In him youthful impulses awoke late but ardent; and having a presentiment of his early end, he determined to live his whole life in Francine's arms. So it often happened that favorable opportunities for work knocked at his door without eliciting any reply, because he would have been obliged to put himself out a little, and he was altogether too comfortable, dreaming in the light from his mistress's eyes.

When Francine was dead, the sculptor called upon his former friends the *Water Drinkers*. But Lazare's was the dominating mind in that circle, each of whose members was petrified, so to speak, in the egotism of art. Jacques did not find there what he sought. They hardly understood his despair, which they sought to soothe by argument ; and, seeing how little they were in sympathy with him, he preferred to isolate his grief rather than expose it to discussion. He therefore severed his connection with the *Water Drinkers* altogether, and went to live alone.

Five or six days after Francine's funeral, Jacques called upon a marble worker at the Montparnasse cemetery and offered to make the following bargain with him: the marble worker was to furnish a railing for Francine's grave, to be designed by Jacques, and to give the artist

a piece of white marble, in consideration whereof Jacques was to place his services at the marble-worker's disposal for three months, either as stone-cutter or as sculptor. The dealer in gravestones had at that time several large orders on hand, he went to the artist's studio and acquired sufficient proof, from several unfinished works which he saw there, that the chance which had sent Jacques to him was a most fortunate one. A week later Francine's grave was surrounded by an iron fence, in the centre of which was a stone cross, with her name carved thereon in sunken letters, replacing the wooden cross.

Luckily Jacques had to do with an honest man, who realized that a hundred kilogrammes of cast iron and three square feet of Pyrenees marble were inadequate compensation for three months' work by Jacques, whose talent was worth several thousand crowns to him. He offered to give the artist an interest in his business, but Jacques declined. The lack of variety in the subjects to be treated was repugnant to his inventive genius; moreover, he had what he wanted, a great block of marble, from whose bowels he proposed to bring forth a *chef-d'œuvre*, which he intended for Francine's tomb.

In the early spring Jacques's condition improved: his friend, the doctor, procured his introduction to a great foreign nobleman, who had taken up his abode in Paris and was building a magnificent mansion in one of the finest quarters of the city. Several famous artists had been called upon to contribute to the splendors of that

little palace. Jacques received an order for the mantel in the salon. It seems to me that I can see Jacques's sketches now; they were fascinating things: a whole winter poem was written in the marble that was to serve as a framework for the flames. As Jacques's studio was too small, he applied for and obtained the use of a room in the still unoccupied house. They also advanced a considerable sum on the price agreed upon for the work. Jacques began to repay his friend the doctor the money he had lent him when Francine died; then he hastened to the cemetery to give orders that the spot where his mistress lay should be concealed beneath a field of flowers.

But the spring had anticipated Jacques, and thousands of flowers were growing at random among the green grass on the young girl's grave. The artist had not the courage to tear them up, for he thought that the flowers might contain something of his mistress. When the gardener asked him what he should do with the roses and pansies he had brought, Jacques bade him plant them on a neighboring new-made grave, the poor grave of a poor man, unenclosed, and with nothing to identify it save a piece of wood stuck into the ground and surmounted by a wreath of soiled paper flowers, the poor offering of a poor man's grief. Jacques left the cemetery a very different man. He gazed with joyful interest at the lovely spring sun, the same that had so often shed a golden gleam upon Francine's hair as she ran through

the fields, plucking the flowers with her white hands. A whole swarm of kindly thoughts sang in his heart. As he passed a little wine-shop on the outer boulevard, he remembered that he and Francine had gone in there one day, when they were overtaken by a storm, and had dined there. He entered and ate his dinner at the same table. They served his dessert in a painted saucer; he recognized the saucer and remembered that Francine had sat for half an hour trying to guess the rebus that was painted on it; and he also remembered a song Francine had sung, being in high spirits because of a certain little wine made of violets, which is not expensive and contains more gayety than the grape. But that flood of pleasant memories awoke his love without awaking his grief. Prone to superstition, like all dreamy, poetic minds, Jacques imagined that it was Francine who, hearing his step just now close beside her, had sent him that whiff of happy memories from her grave, and he did not wish to moisten them with a tear. So he went from the wine-shop, stepping lightly, with erect head, bright-eyed, heart beating high, with a smile playing about his lips, and murmuring, as he went, the refrain of Francine's song:

> Love is prowling in my quarter,
> I must keep my door ajar.

That refrain in Jacques's mouth was another souvenir, but it was a song as well; and that evening, Jacques, without suspecting it, took the first step in the road that

leads from gloom to melancholy, and thence to oblivion. Alas! whatever we may wish, whatever we may do, the just and everlasting law of change will have it so.

Like the flowers which, born perhaps of Francine's body, had blossomed on her grave, the sap of youth bloomed in Jacques's heart, where the memory of the old love awoke vague aspirations for new loves. Moreover, Jacques was of the race of artists and poets who make of passion an instrument of art and poetry, and whose mind does not act except as it is set in motion by the motive power of the heart. In Jacques, invention was truly the child of feeling, and he put a piece of himself into the most trivial things he did. He perceived that souvenirs were no longer enough for him, and that, like the mill-stone that wears itself out when it has no grain to grind, his heart was wearing out for lack of emotion. Work no longer had any charm for him; invention, once feverish and spontaneous, was no longer possible except by patient effort; Jacques was discontented and almost envied the life of his former friends the *Water Drinkers*.

He tried to divert his mind, held out his hand to dissipation and formed new connections. He saw much of the poet Rodolphe, whom he met at a café, and each of them conceived a most sympathetic liking for the other. Jacques described his troubles to Rodolphe and Rodolphe was not long in discerning their cause.

"My friend," he said, "I know all about it;" and he added, tapping him on the breast over the heart: "we

must light up the fire there again, and quickly too; sketch a little passion without delay, and your ideas will come back to you."

"Ah! I loved Francine too well," said Jacques.

"This won't prevent your loving her still. You can kiss her on another's lips."

"If I could only fall in with a woman who looks like her!" said Jacques. And he left Rodolphe, lost in thought.

Six weeks later Jacques had recovered all his energy, kindled anew in the soft glances of a pretty girl named Marie, whose somewhat unhealthy beauty reminded him a little of poor Francine's. In truth, one can imagine nothing prettier than that pretty Marie, who was six weeks less than eighteen, as she never lost an opportunity to tell. Her love-affair with Jacques was born in the moonlight, in the garden at an outdoor ball, to the music of a squeaking violin, a consumptive bass viol and a clarinet that whistled like a blackbird. Jacques met her there one evening as he was walking gravely around the semi-circle reserved for dancing. As she saw him walk stiffly by, in his everlasting black coat buttoned to the neck, the pretty, loud-voiced damsels who frequented the place, and who knew the artist by sight, said to one another:

"What is that mute doing here? Is there someone to be buried?"

But Jacques stalked on alone, making his heart bleed inwardly with the thorns of a reminiscence, whose painfulness the orchestra augmented by playing a merry contradance which sounded as doleful to the artist's ears as a *De Profundis*. In the midst of his reverie he noticed Marie in a corner, looking at him and laughing uproariously at his glum expression. Jacques raised his eyes and heard that burst of laughter in a pink hat within three steps of him. He walked up to the girl and said a few words to her, to which she replied; he offered her his arm to walk around the garden, and she accepted it. He told her that he considered her as lovely as an angel and she made him repeat it twice; he stole green apples for her from a tree in the garden, and she munched them greedily, laughing the ringing laugh that seemed to be the refrain of her never-failing gayety. Jacques thought of the Bible, and reflected that one should never despair with any woman, especially with one who likes apples. He made another circuit of the garden with the pink hat, and so it was that, although he came to the ball alone, he did not go home in the same plight.

Jacques had not forgotten Francine, however; as Rodolphe said, he kissed her every day on Marie's lips, and worked secretly on the figure he proposed to place on the dead girl's grave.

One day, when he had received some money, Jacques bought a dress for Marie, a black dress. The child was

well pleased; but she did not consider black very cheerful for the summer. But Jacques told her that he was very fond of black, and that she would please him greatly by wearing that dress every day. Marie obeyed.

One Saturday Jacques said to her:

"Come early to-morrow and we will go into the country."

"What fun!" said Marie. "I am preparing a surprise for you, you'll see; it will be pleasant to-morrow."

Marie passed the night at home finishing a new dress she had bought with her savings, a pretty pink dress. And on Sunday she appeared at Jacques's studio, arrayed in her fetching costume.

The artist received her coldly, almost brutally.

"Why, I thought I should please you by making myself a present of this bright-colored gown!" said Marie, unable to understand Jacques's cold manner.

"We won't go to the country," he rejoined; "you can go, but I have to work."

Marie returned home with a heavy heart. On the way she met a young man who knew Jacques's story and who had once paid court to her.

"Ah! Mademoiselle Marie, so you've gone out of mourning?" he said.

"Mourning," said Marie; "for whom?"

"Why, don't you know? It's a well known fact, however; that black dress Jacques gave you—"

"Well?"

"Was a mourning dress; Jacques made you wear mourning for Francine."

From that day Jacques saw Marie no more.

The rupture brought him bad luck. The evil days returned; he had no work and fell into such horrible destitution that, not knowing which way to turn, he begged his friend the doctor to procure his admission to a hospital. The doctor saw at a glance that it would not be a difficult task. Jacques, who had no suspicion of his condition, was on his way to join Francine.

He was admitted to the Saint-Louis hospital.

As he could still walk and use his hands, Jacques begged the manager of the hospital to let him have a small room which was not in use and he procured a stool and modelling tools and some clay. During the first fortnight he worked at the figure intended for Francine's tomb. It was a large angel with wings outspread. That figure, whose face was a portrait of Francine, was not entirely finished, for Jacques could no longer go upstairs, and he was soon unable to leave his bed.

One day the book kept by the house doctor fell into his hands, and when he saw what remedies were prescribed for him, Jacques realized that he was lost: he wrote to his family and sent for Sister Sainte-Geneviève, whose kindly attentions to him knew no bounds.

"Sister," said Jacques, "in the room you procured for me upstairs there is a small plaster figure, representing an angel, which was intended for a tomb, but I

haven't time to execute it in marble. But I have a beautiful piece of marble at home, white marble veined with pink. However — sister, I give you my little statuette to put in the chapel of the sisterhood."

Jacques died a few days later. As the funeral took place on the day of the opening of the Salon, the *Water Drinkers* did not attend. "Art before everything," said Lazare.

Jacques's family was not rich and the artist had no specially marked grave.

He was buried somewhere.

XIX

MUSETTE'S WHIMS

It will be remembered perhaps that the painter Marcel had sold the Jew Médicis his famous picture of the *Passage of the Red Sea*, which was destined to serve as a sign for the shop of a dealer in provisions. On the day following that sale, which had been succeeded by a sumptuous dinner proffered the Bohemians by the Jew as an adjunct to the bargain, Marcel, Schaunard, Rodolphe and Colline woke very late in the morning. Still dazed by the fumes of the drunkenness of the preceding night, they could not at first remember what had taken place; and as the noonday *Angelus* was ringing on a church near by, they glanced at one another with a melancholy smile.

"The pious-toned bell summons mankind to the refectory," said Marcel.

"It is in truth," said Rodolphe, "the solemn hour at which honest people pass to the dining hall."

"We must try to find a way to become honest people," murmured Colline, to whom every day was the feast of Saint Appetite.

"O ye milk-boxes of my nurse! O ye four daily meals of my infancy, what has become of you?" added Schaunard; "what has become of you?" he repeated in a tone overflowing with gentle and dreamy melancholy.

"To think that there are more than a hundred thousand cutlets on the gridiron in Paris at this moment!" said Marcel.

"And as many beefsteaks!" added Rodolphe.

While the four friends were thus facing the terrible daily problem of breakfast, the waiters in a restaurant in the building, as if in ironical contrast, were shouting the orders of the customers at the tops of their voices.

"Will those brigands never be quiet?" said Marcel; "every word produces the effect on me of a blow with a pickaxe in my stomach."

"The wind is north," said Colline gravely, pointing to a vane revolving on a roof near by; "we shall not breakfast to-day, the elements say no."

"How so?" Marcel inquired.

"It's an atmospherical peculiarity I have noticed," said the philosopher: "the wind in the north almost always signifies abstinence, just as the south wind usually signifies pleasure and good cheer. That is what philosophy calls warnings from on high."

When fasting, Gustave Colline was a ferocious jester.

At that moment, Schaunard who had plunged one of his arms into the abyss that served him as a pocket, withdrew it with a cry of agony.

"Help! there's some one in my coat!" roared Schaunard, struggling to release his hand, which was caught between the claws of a live lobster.

His cry was answered by another. It came from Marcel who, as he mechanically moved his hand about in his pocket, discovered there an America which he had entirely forgotten, to-wit, the hundred and fifty francs the Jew Médicis had given him the night before in payment for the *Passage of the Red Sea*.

Thereupon memory returned to all of the Bohemians.

"Salute them, messieurs!" said Marcel, spreading out upon the table a handful of coins, among which gleamed five or six new louis.

"One would think they were alive," said Colline.

"What a sweet voice!" said Schaunard, making the gold pieces sing.

"How pretty these medallions are!" added Rodolphe; "one would say they were pieces of sunlight. If I were king, I wouldn't have any other coins and I'd have them struck with my mistress's image."

"To think that there is a country where these are like pebbles," said Schaunard. "The Americans used to sell four of them for two sous. There was one of my former relatives who visited America: he was buried in the stomachs of the Savages. That injured the family very much."

"Look at that!" cried Marcel, pointing to the lobster,

which was walking about the room; "where did that creature come from?"

"I remember," said Schaunard, "that I took a walk around Médicis' kitchen yesterday; I am bound to believe that that reptile fell into my pocket without meaning to, for they're short-sighted beasts. As long as I have it," he added, "I am inclined to keep it, I'll tame it and paint it red, that will make it more cheerful. I am very melancholy since Phémie's departure, and it will be company for me."

"Messieurs," cried Colline, "I beg you to notice that the vane has turned to the south; we shall breakfast."

"I believe you," said Marcel, taking up a gold piece, "we'll have this fellow cooked with a lot of sauce."

They proceeded to discuss the menu at great length and with great gravity. Each dish was debated and put to a vote. The *omelette soufflée* suggested by Schaunard was rejected with regret, and the same is true of white wines, against which Marcel raised his voice in an improvised speech which displayed his knowledge of wines to advantage.

"It is the first duty of wine to be red," cried the artist; "don't talk to me of your white wines!"

"But there's champagne," said Schaunard.

"Bah! Fashionable cider! epileptic cocoa! I would give all the cellars of Épernay and Aï for a cask of Burgundy. Besides we haven't any grisettes to seduce or antics to perform. I vote against champagne."

The programme once adopted, Schaunard and Colline went down to the neighboring restaurant to order the repast.

"Suppose we make a fire," said Marcel.

"Faith, it wouldn't be a bad idea," said Rodolphe: "the thermometer has been suggesting it for a long while; let's have a fire. The chimney will be mightily surprised."

He ran out to the landing and begged Colline to send up some wood.

A few moments later Schaunard and Colline reappeared, followed by a porter carrying a large bundle of firewood.

As Marcel was fumbling in a drawer, trying to find some papers of no value with which to light the fire, he chanced to fall upon a letter in a handwriting that made him start, and he turned his back on his friends and began to read it.

It was a note in pencil, written by Musette at the time she lived with Marcel; it was dated just a year before, day for day. It contained only these few words:

"My Dear Friend,

"Don't be uneasy about me, I shall be at home soon. I have gone out to walk a little way to get warm; it is freezing cold in the room and the coalman has gone to sleep. I broke up the last two pieces of the chair, but they didn't burn long enough to cook an egg. Besides,

the wind comes in through the window just as if it was at home, and whispers a lot of bad advice in my ear that would make you unhappy if I listened to it. I prefer to go out for a while, I'll go and look in the shop-windows. They say that they're selling velvet at ten francs a yard. I can't believe it, I must go and see. I will be at home for dinner.

"MUSETTE."

"Poor girl!" muttered Marcel, putting the letter in his pocket. And he stood for a moment lost in thought, with his face buried in his hands.

At that time the Bohemians had long been widowers, all except Colline, whose sweetheart still remained invisible and anonymous.

Even Phémie, Schaunard's good-natured companion, had fallen in with an innocent creature who had offered her his heart, a set of mahogany furniture and a ring made of his hair—red hair. But, a fortnight after he gave them to her, Phémie's lover wished to take back both his heart and his furniture because he had noticed, as he looked at his mistress's hands, that she wore a hair ring, but that the hair was black; and he ventured to suspect her of treachery.

And yet Phémie had not ceased to be virtuous; but, as several of her friends had joked her because of the red hair in her ring, she had had it *dyed* black. The gentleman was so well satisfied that he bought Phémie a

silk dress, her first one. On the day that she wore it for the first time, the poor child cried:

"Now I am ready to die."

As for Musette, she had become almost an official character once more, and for three or four months Marcel had not met her. And as for Mimi, Rodolphe had never heard her name mentioned, except by himself when he was alone.

"Well, well!" Rodolphe suddenly exclaimed, seeing Marcel crouching pensively in the chimney corner, "how about that fire? won't it light?"

"There it goes, there it goes," said the painter, lighting the wood, which began to crackle and burn.

While his friends were sharpening their appetites by busying themselves over the preparations for the feast, Marcel sat by himself in a corner, and placed on a table the letter he had found by accident, side by side with some few souvenirs Musette had left him. Suddenly he remembered the address of a woman who was his former mistress's intimate friend.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, loud enough to be overheard, "I know where to find her."

"To find whom?" said Rodolphe. "What are you doing there?" he added, as he saw the artist preparing to write.

"Nothing, a very important letter I had forgotten. I am with you in a moment," Marcel replied, and he wrote:

"My dear Child,

"I have *millions* in my desk; I have had an apoplectic stroke of overwhelming good fortune. There's to be a great breakfast in the house—it is cooking now—with plenty of wine; and we have made a fire, my dear, just like good bourgeois. You should see it, as you used to say. Come and pass a few moments with us; you'll find Rodolphe, Colline and Schaunard here, and you shall sing us some songs at dessert: there is dessert! While we are about it, we shall probably stay at table about a week. So don't be afraid of coming too late. It's so long since I heard you laugh! Rodolphe will pay you compliments and we'll drink all sorts of things to our dead and gone love, with no other risk than that of reviving it. Between people like us—the last kiss is never the last. Ah! if it hadn't been so cold last year, perhaps you would not have left me. You betrayed me for a stick of wood, and because you were afraid of having red hands: you did well, and I bear you no more ill-will for doing it that time than for the others; but come and warm yourself while there's a fire.

"I kiss you as many times as you wish.

"Marcel."

When that letter was finished, Marcel wrote another to Madame Sidonie, Musette's friend, and begged her to forward the letter which he enclosed for Musette. Then he went down to the concierge to give him the letters to

deliver. As he paid him his fee in advance, the concierge saw a gold piece gleaming in the painter's hands, and before starting upon his errand, he went up and notified the landlord, to whom Marcel owed some arrears of rent.

"*Mossieu,*" he said breathlessly, "the artist on the sixth has got some money! You know, that tall fellow who laughs in my face when I carry him the receipt."

"Yes," said the landlord, "the one who had the impudence to borrow money from me to pay me something on account. He has notice to quit."

"Yes, monsieur. But he's lined with gold to-day; it burned my eyes just now. He's giving parties. It's the right time to—"

"Very good," said the landlord, "I'll go myself and see him directly."

Madame Sidonie, who was at home when Marcel's letter was brought to her, sent her maid at once to deliver the enclosed note to Mademoiselle Musette.

That young woman was then living in a lovely apartment in the Chaussée d'Antin. At the moment when Marcel's letter was handed to her, she had visitors, and was to give a grand, ceremonious dinner that same evening.

"Here's a miracle!" cried Musette, laughing like a madwoman.

"What's the matter?" queried a handsome youth, as stiff as a statue.

"This is an invitation to dinner," she replied. "Well, well! how nicely it happens!"

"It happens very badly," said the young man.

"Why so?" said Musette.

"What!—do you think of going to this dinner?"

"I should say that I do think of it. Make such arrangements as you choose."

"But my dear, it isn't at all proper.—You can go another time."

"That's very fine, on my word! another time! It's an old friend of mine, Marcel, who invites me to dinner and it's such an extraordinary thing that I must go and see what it means! Another time! why, real dinners in that house are as rare as eclipses!"

"What! you will break your word to us to go and see *that person*," said the young man, "and you dare say it to me!"

"To whom should I say it, pray? To the Grand Turk? It's none of his business."

"But this is most unusual assurance."

"You know very well that I do nothing as other people do," said Musette.

"But what will you think of me if I let you go, knowing where you are going? Just consider, Musette, how improper it is, both on my account and your own: we must send this young man your excuses."

"My dear Monsieur Maurice," said Musette in a very firm voice, "you knew me before you took me; you

knew that I was full of whims, and that no living soul could boast of having ever made me abandon one."

"Ask me anything you choose," said Maurice, "but when it comes to this! There are whims—and whims—"

"Maurice, I shall go to Marcel's: I am going now," she added, putting on her hat. "You can leave me if you choose, but I cannot help it, he's the best fellow in the world and the only one I ever loved. If his heart had been made of gold, he would have had it melted down to make rings for me. Poor boy," she said, holding up the letter, "see, as soon as they have a little fire he invites me to come and warm myself. Ah! if he wasn't so lazy and if there weren't any silks and velvets in the shops!!! I was very happy with him; he had the art of making my heart ache, and it was he who gave me the name of Musette, on account of my singing. You can at least be sure, when I go to him, that I shall return to you—unless you shut the door in my face."

"You could not confess more frankly that you don't love me," said the young man.

"Nonsense, my dear Maurice, you're too sensible a man to force a serious discussion on that topic. You have me just as a man has a fine horse in his stable; I love you—because I love luxury, the excitement of parties, everything that glitters and makes a noise; let us not be sentimental, it would be useless and absurd."

"At all events, let me go with you."

"But you wouldn't enjoy yourself in the least, and

you would interfere with our amusement. Just consider that the boy will necessarily kiss me."

"Musette," said Maurice, "have you often found men as accommodating as I am ?"

"Monsieur le Vicomte," said Musette, "one day when I was driving in the Champs-Elysées with Lord —— I met Marcel and his friend Rodolphe, on foot, both very shabbily dressed, bedraggled as shepherds' dogs, and smoking their pipes. It was three months since I had seen Marcel, and it seemed to me as if my heart would jump out of the carriage door. I told the coachman to stop, and for half an hour I talked with Marcel there in the face of all Paris in its finest turnouts. Marcel offered me some Nanterre buns and a bunch of violets that cost a sou, which I put in my belt. When he left me, Lord —— wanted to call him back and invite him to dine with us, and I kissed him for the thought. And that is my nature, my dear Monsieur Maurice; if it doesn't suit you, say so at once, and I'll go and get my slippers and my nightcap."

"It's a good thing sometimes to be poor, it seems!" said Vicomte Maurice in a tone of envious sadness.

"Why, no!" said Musette: "if Marcel had been rich, I should never have left him."

"Go, if you will," said the young man, pressing her hand. "You have on your new dress," he added, "it's wonderfully becoming."

"It is, really," said Musette; "I had a sort of pre-

sentiment this morning. Marcel will see it when it's new. Adieu! I am going to eat a little of the consecrated bread of gayety."

Musette wore a fascinating costume that day; never had a more seductive binding enveloped the poem of her youth and beauty. Musette had an inborn genius for dressing well. When she came into the world, the first thing she sought with her eyes must have been a mirror, so that she might arrange her swaddling-clothes becomingly; and she had committed the sin of coquetry even before she went to the baptismal font. In the days when her condition was as lowly as could be, when she was reduced to cotton print dresses, little caps with showy ornaments and goat-skin shoes, she was bewitching in that cheap and simple grisette's costume. The pretty girls, half bee, half grasshopper, who worked cheerfully all the week and asked God for nothing but a little sunshine on Sunday, made love in vulgar fashion, with the heart, and sometimes threw themselves out of the window. That race has vanished now, thanks to the present generation of young men—a corrupt and corrupting generation, but above all things, vain, stupid and brutal. For the pleasure of making ill-natured paradoxes, they laughed at the poor girls because of their hands, mutilated by the sacred scars of toil, and before long they ceased to earn enough to buy almond paste. Little by little the men succeeded in inoculating them with their vanity and stupidity, and then it was that the grisette disappeared.

Then it was that the lorette was born. A hybrid race, impertinent creatures, passably pretty, half-flesh, half-cosmetics, whose boudoirs are shops where they retail pieces of their hearts, like so many slices of roast beef. The greater number of these girls, who are a disgrace to pleasure and the shame of modern love-making, have not as much intelligence as the birds whose feathers they wear in their hats. If by chance they happen to have, not a real passion, not even a caprice, but a vulgar flame, it is for some clownish bourgeois, whom the unreasoning multitude surrounds and applauds at public balls, and whom the newspapers, flatterers of whatever is ridiculous, glorify in their columns. Although she was compelled to live among those people, Musette had neither their manners nor their morals; she had none of the greedy servility characteristic of the creatures who can read nothing but Barême and write only in figures. She was a bright, intelligent girl, with some drops of the blood of Mansu in her veins: and, instinctively rebellious under any attempt to drive her, she had never been able or inclined to resist a caprice, whatever its consequences were likely to be.

Marcel was really the only man she had ever loved. At all events, he was the only one for whom she had really suffered, and nothing less than the obstinate instinct that impelled her toward "everything that glitters and makes a noise" would have induced her to leave him. She was twenty years old, and, to her, luxurious living

was almost a question of health. She might do without it for some time but she could not renounce it altogether. Knowing her own fickleness, she had never been willing to consent to padlock her heart with an oath of fidelity. She had been fervently loved by many young men for whom she had herself had a very warm liking; and her behavior toward them was always marked by judicious straightforwardness; the engagements she entered into were as simple and frank and naïve as the declarations of love of Molière's peasants. "You want me and I want you; shake hands, and let's be married." Ten times over if she had chosen, Musette could have arranged for herself a permanent position, what is called a future; but she hardly believed in the future, and was as sceptical as Figaro concerning it.

"To-morrow," she would say sometimes, "is a joke of the calendar; it's a daily pretext men have discovered for not attending to business to-day. To-morrow, there may be an earthquake. No matter, the earth is solid to-day."

One day, a man of pleasure, with whom she had lived nearly six months, and who had fallen madly in love with her, proposed marriage to her in all seriousness. Musette burst out laughing in his face at the suggestion.

"I, imprison my liberty in a marriage contract? Never!" she said.

"But I pass my life trembling with the fear of losing you."

"You would be much more likely to lose me if I was your wife," Musette replied. "Let's say no more about it. Besides, I'm not free," she added, probably thinking of Marcel.

Thus she passed her youth, her mind fluttering at the will of all the winds of the unforeseen, making many others happy, and almost happy herself. Vicomte Maurice, with whom she was living at that moment, had much difficulty in accommodating himself to the whims of the untamable creature, drunk with liberty; and his impatience was heavily charged with jealousy as he awaited Musette's return, after she had started for Marcel's.

"Will she remain there?" the young man asked himself all the evening, burying the interrogation point, like a dagger, in his heart.

"Poor Maurice!" said Musette to herself, "he thinks this is a little too bad. Pshaw! young men must be trained." Then her mind turning suddenly to other things, she thought of Marcel, to whose house she was going; and as she passed in review the memories awakened by the name of her former adorer, she wondered by what miracle he happened to have a table spread in his room. As she walked along, she re-read the letter the artist had written her, and she could not restrain a feeling of sadness. But it lasted only a moment. She reflected, and with reason, that there was less occasion than ever to be sad, and as a high wind arose just then, she cried:

"It's very funny; even if I didn't want to go to Marcel's, the wind would blow me there."

And she walked on, quickening her step, as light-hearted as a bird flying back to its first nest.

Suddenly the snow began to fall heavily. Musette looked about in search of a carriage. She saw none. As she was in the street on which her friend Madame Sidonie lived,—the same who had sent her Marcel's letter—it occurred to her to call at her house and wait until the weather would permit her to go on.

When Musette entered Madame Sidonie's apartments, she found quite a large party there. A game of lansquenet was in progress, which they had begun three days before.

"Don't disturb yourselves," said Musette, "I am going right away again."

"Did you receive Marcel's letter?" whispered Madame Sidonie.

"Yes," replied Musette, "thanks; I am on my way to him; he has invited me to dinner. Don't you want to go? you would enjoy yourself immensely."

"Why, no, I can't," said Sidonie, pointing to the card table, "think of my quarter's rent."

"There are six louis," said the banker, who held the cards.

"I take two of them," cried Madame Sidonie.

"I am not proud, done for two," replied the banker, who had already won several times. "King and ace.

I am done for," he continued, dropping the cards, "all the kings are dead."

"You mustn't talk politics," said a journalist.

"And the ace is the enemy of my family," concluded the banker, turning another king. "*Vive le roi!*" he cried. "Send me two louis, Sidonie, my love."

"Put them in your account," said Sidonie, in a rage at having lost.

"That makes five hundred francs you owe me, little one," said the banker. "It will soon be a thousand. I pass."

Sidonie and Musette talked together in undertones. The game went on.

At about the same time, the Bohemians were taking their places at the table. Throughout the repast Marcel seemed distraught. Whenever there was a footstep on the stairs they saw him start.

"What's the matter with you?" Rodolphe asked him; "one would think you were expecting somebody. Aren't we all here?"

But at a meaning glance that the artist bestowed upon him, the poet understood the cause of his friend's pre-occupation.

"True," he said to himself, "we are not all here."

Marcel's glance meant Musette; Rodolphe's glance meant Mimi.

"We need some women here," Schaunard suddenly remarked.

"*Sacrebleu!*" shouted Colline, "will you never have done with your libertine suggestions? We agreed not to mention love; it curdles the sauces."

The friends began to drink more freely than before, while out of doors the snow was still falling and on the hearth the wood burned brightly, sending forth showers of sparks like fireworks.

As Rodolphe was humming aloud the refrain of a ballad he had found at the bottom of his glass, they heard several knocks at the door.

At that sound Marcel, who was beginning to feel the numbness of intoxication, sprang from his chair, as a diver, striking the bottom with his feet, rises to the surface, and ran to open the door.

It was not Musette.

A man appeared on the threshold. He held a paper in his hand. His exterior was not unpleasant, but his dressing-gown was very badly made.

"I find you in good spirits," he said, glancing at the table, in the centre of which appeared the ruins of a colossal leg of mutton.

"The landlord!" said Rodolphe: "let him receive the honors that are his due."

And he began to drum on his plate with his knife and fork.

Colline offered him his chair, and Marcel cried:

"Come, Schaunard, give monsieur a clean glass.—You came at a most opportune moment," he said to the

landlord. "We were just about drinking a toast to the property. My friend here "—pointing to Colline— "was making some very affecting remarks. As you have come, he will begin again in your honor. Begin again, Colline."

"Excuse me, messieurs," said the landlord, "I do not wish to disturb you." And he unfolded the little paper he had in his hand.

"What is that document?" inquired Marcel.

The landlord, who had cast an inquisitional glance around the room, spied some gold and silver coins that had been left on the mantelpiece.

"It's the receipt," he said quickly; "I have already had the honor of sending it to you."

"In truth," rejoined Marcel, "my trusty memory recalls that detail perfectly! it was on a Friday, October 8th, at quarter to twelve; very good."

"It bears my signature," said the landlord, "and if it's convenient to you——"

"Monsieur," said Marcel, "I was intending to call upon you. I have much to say to you."

"At your service."

"Then do me the honor to take a little refreshment," said Marcel, forcing him to drink a glass of wine.

"Monsieur," he continued, "you sent me recently a little paper—with a cut representing a lady holding a pair of scales. The missive was signed Godard."

"He is my bailiff," said the landlord.

"He writes a vile hand," said Marcel. "My friend, who knows all languages,"—pointing to Colline—"my friend was good enough to translate that communication, the carriage of which cost five francs—"

"It was a notice to quit," said the landlord, "a precautionary measure. It's the custom."

"A notice to quit, exactly," said Marcel. "I wished to see you so that we might have a conference concerning that document, which I am anxious to change into a lease. This house pleases me, the halls are clean, the street is very lively, and then, family reasons, a thousand ties, attach me to these walls."

"But," said the landlord, unfolding his receipt again, "there is the last quarter's rent to be settled."

"We will settle it, monsieur; such is my earnest purpose."

Meanwhile the landlord had not taken his eyes from the mantelpiece where the money was, and the magnetic power of his covetous gaze was such that the coins seemed to move and walk toward him.

"I am very fortunate to arrive at a moment when we can adjust our little account without embarrassing you," he said, handing the receipt to Marcel, who, being unable to parry the attack, dodged it and began once more with his creditor the scene between Don Juan and Monsieur Dimanche.

"You have, I believe, property in the provinces?" he asked.

"Oh! very little," was the reply; "a bit of a house in Bourgogne, a farm, a very small matter and small returns —the farmers don't pay.—And so," he added, still holding out the receipt, "this little windfall comes in very handily.—It is sixty francs, as you know."

"Sixty, yes," said Marcel, walking to the mantelpiece, from which he took three gold pieces. "We call it sixty;" and he placed the three louis on the table at some distance from the landlord.

"At last!" murmured the latter, his face suddenly lighting up; and he laid his receipt on the table.

Schaunard, Colline and Rodolphe anxiously watched the progress of the scene.

"*Parbleu!* monsieur," said Marcel, "as you're a Burgundian, you won't refuse to say a couple of words to a compatriot."

And, drawing the cork from a bottle of old Macon, he filled a glass for the landlord.

"Ah! delicious," he exclaimed; "I never tasted better."

"An uncle of mine who lives down that way sends me a basket from time to time."

The landlord had risen and was putting out his hand toward the money in front of him, when Marcel checked him again.

"You won't refuse to drink with me once more," he said, filling the landlord's glass anew and forcing him to drink with himself and the other Bohemians.

The landlord dared not refuse. He drank again, put down his glass, and essayed once more to take the money, when Marcel cried :

"By the way, monsieur, an idea has just come into my head. I am rather flush just at this moment. My uncle in Burgundy has sent me a little something in addition to my allowance. I am afraid I may squander the money. Youth is wild, you know.—If you don't mind I'll pay you a quarter's rent in advance."

He took sixty francs more in three-franc pieces and added them to the louis already on the table.

"Then I'll give you a receipt for the next quarter," said the landlord. "I have a blank in my pocket," he added, producing his wallet. "I will fill it out and antedate it.—Why this tenant of mine's a delightful fellow," he thought, gloating over the hundred and twenty francs.

The three Bohemians, who utterly failed to understand Marcel's diplomacy, were dumfounded by his last suggestion.

"But this chimney smokes, it's very inconvenient."

"Why haven't you told me? I would have sent for the chimney-builder," said the landlord, who did not propose to be outdone in generous dealing. "To-morrow, I will have the men here to attend to it." And, having finished filling out the second receipt, he placed it beside the first, pushed them both in front of Marcel, and once more put out his hand toward the pile of money. "You wouldn't believe how handily this money will come

in," he said. "I have some bills for repairs to pay, and I was much embarrassed."

"I regret that I have kept you waiting," said Marcel.

"Oh! I was in no hurry—Messieurs, I have the honor—" And his hand went out once more.

"Oh, no! allow me," said Marcel; "we haven't finished yet. You know the proverb: 'When the wine is drawn, etc.'"

And he filled the landlord's glass anew.

"We must drink——"

"That is true," said the landlord, resuming his seat for politeness' sake.

At that point Marcel darted a glance at the Bohemians, from which they divined his purpose.

Meanwhile the landlord's eyes were beginning to roll in strange fashion. He swayed back and forth in his chair, made obscene remarks, and promised to make fabulous improvements in the apartment, when Marcel asked him for some slight repairs.

"Bring up the heavy artillery!" said the artist in an undertone to Rodolphe, pointing to a bottle of rum.

After the first *petit verre*, the landlord sang an indecent song that made even Schaunard blush.

After the second *petit verre*, he narrated his conjugal infelicities; and, as his wife's name was Helen, he compared himself to Menelaus.

After the third *petit verre*, he had an attack of philosophy, and evolved aphorisms like these:

"Life is a river."

"Wealth does not bring happiness."

"Man is an ephemeral creature."

"Ah! how delightful is love!"

And, taking Schaunard for his confidant, he told him of his clandestine intrigue with a young girl whom he had surrounded with mahogany and whose name was Euphémie. And he drew the girl's portrait in such detail, dwelling upon her artless tenderness, that Schaunard began to be agitated by a strange suspicion, which became certainty when the landlord showed him a letter which he took from his wallet.

"Oh! Heaven!" cried Schaunard when he saw the signature. "Cruel girl! you plunge a dagger in my heart!"

"What, then, is the matter?" cried the Bohemians, amazed at that language from him.

"See," said Schaunard, "this letter is from Phémie; see the blot she uses as a signature." And he passed around his former mistress's letter; it began thus:

"My great *louf-louf!*"

"I am her great *louf-louf,*" said the landlord, trying to rise, but without success.

"Good," said Marcel, who was watching him; "he has thrown his anchor over."

"Phémie! cruel Phémie!" murmured Schaunard, "you cause me much suffering."

"I've furnished a little entresol for her on Rue Co-

quenard, number 12," said the landlord. "It's pretty, very pretty—it cost me a lot of money. But true love is beyond price, and then I have twenty thousand francs a year.—She asks me for money," he continued, taking back the letter. "Poor love!—I will give her this, it will please her;" and he put forth his hand toward the money placed on the table by Marcel. "How's this! how's this!" he exclaimed in surprise, feeling about on the table, "Where is it?"

The money had disappeared.

"It is impossible for a man of honor to lend a hand to such shameful proceedings," said Marcel. "My conscience, as well as good morals, forbid me to pour my rent into the hands of this old rake. I will not pay my rent. At all events, my mind will be without remorse. What morals! a man so bald as he!"

Meanwhile the landlord had lost his wits completely and in a loud voice was making absurd speeches to the bottles.

As he had been absent two hours, his wife had become anxious and sent their maidservant in search of him. She made a great outcry when she saw him.

"What have you done to my master?" she asked the Bohemians.

"Nothing," said Marcel; "he came up just now to demand his rent; as we hadn't the money to give him, we asked him for time."

"But he's been and got drunk," said the woman.

"The largest part of that job was already done," said Rodolphe; "when he came here he told us he'd been putting his cellar in order."

"And he had so little idea what he was about," added Colline, "that he wanted to leave us the receipts without the money."

"You can give them to his wife," said the painter, returning the receipts; "we are honest men, and we don't want to take advantage of his condition."

"*O mon Dieu!* what will madame say?" said the servant, dragging away the landlord, who could no longer stand erect.

"At last!" cried Marcel.

"He'll come back to-morrow," said Rodolphe; "he saw the money."

"When he comes again," said the artist, "I'll threaten to tell his wife about his relations with young Phémie, and he'll give us time."

When the landlord had disappeared, the four friends resumed their smoking and drinking. Marcel alone had retained some resemblance of lucidity of mind in his intoxication. Again and again, at the slightest sound of a footfall in the hall, he ran and opened the door. But all those who came upstairs stopped on the lower floors; thereupon the artist would slowly return to his seat in the chimney-corner. The clock struck twelve and Musette had not appeared.

"Perhaps she wasn't at home when my letter was de-

livered," thought Marcel. "She will find it when she goes home to-night, and will come to-morrow; there will still be a fire. It isn't possible that she won't come at all. Until to-morrow." And he fell asleep in his chair.

At the very moment that Marcel fell asleep, thinking of her, Mademoiselle Musette left her friend Madame Sidonie, in whose apartments she had remained until then. She was not alone; a young man accompanied her, a carriage was waiting at the door and they both got in; the horses started off at a gallop.

The game of lansquenet was still in progress at Madame Sidonie's.

"Where's Musette?" someone suddenly asked.

"Where's little Séraphin?" said another.

Madame Sidonie began to laugh.

"They have just run away together," she said. "By the way, it's a curious story. What a strange creature that Musette is! Just imagine—"

And she told the company how Musette, after almost falling out with Vicomte Maurice, after starting to go to Marcel's, had dropped in to see her for a moment by mere chance, and had met young Séraphin there.

"Oh! I suspected something," said Sidonie, breaking off her narrative; "I watched them all the evening; that little fellow's no fool. In a word," she continued, "they went away without so much as a 'by your leave,' and it would take a shrewd man to catch them. Upon

my word, it's very amusing, when you think that Musette is mad over her Marcel."

"If she's mad over him, what does she want of Séraphin, who's almost a child? he's never had a mistress," observed a young man.

"She means to teach him to read," said the journalist, who was very stupid when he had lost.

"True," rejoined Sidonie, "as she loves Marcel, why Séraphin? that's beyond me."

"Alas! why?"

For five days the Bohemians led the most joyous life imaginable, without once leaving the house. They sat at table from morning till night. Admirable confusion reigned in the room, which was filled with a Pantagruelian atmosphere. Upon an almost perfect bed of oyster shells lay an army of bottles of various shapes. The table was laden with débris of every description, and a whole forest was burning on the hearth.

On the sixth day Colline, who was master of ceremonies, prepared, as he did every day, the menu for breakfast, dinner, afternoon luncheon and supper, and submitted it for the approval of his friends, each of whom embellished it with his flourish in token of acquiescence.

But when Colline opened the drawer which did duty as a cash-box, to take therefrom the necessary money to pay for the day's entertainment, he recoiled and turned as pale as Banquo's ghost.

"What's the matter?" the others asked carelessly.

"The matter is that there's only thirty sous left," said the philosopher.

"The devil! the devil!" said the others, "that will require a readjustment of our menu. However, thirty sous well employed!—we shall find it hard work to include truffles, all the same."

A few moments later the breakfast was served. On the table were three dishes, arranged with the utmost symmetry:

A dish of herrings;

A dish of potatoes;

A dish of cheese.

On the fireplace two small sticks about as large as one's fist were smoking.

Out of doors the snow was still falling.

The four Bohemians seated themselves at the table and gravely unfolded their napkins.

"It's a strange thing," said Marcel, "but this herring tastes like a pheasant."

"That's on account of the way I prepared it," retorted Colline; "the herring has never been appreciated."

At that moment a lively song came running upstairs and knocked at the door. Marcel, who could not restrain a start, ran and threw the door open.

Musette leaped on his neck and held him in a close embrace for five minutes. Marcel could feel her tremble in his arms.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"I am cold," said Musette, instinctively drawing near the hearth.

"Ah!" said Marcel, "we have had such a good fire!"

"Yes," said Musette, glancing at the remains of the five days' feasting; "I have come too late."

"Why?" said Marcel.

"Why?" she repeated, blushing a little. She sat on Marcel's knee; she was still trembling and her hands were purple.

"You are not free, are you?" Marcel whispered in her ear.

"I! not free!" cried the lovely girl. "Ah! Marcel, if I were sitting among the stars in the good Lord's paradise, and you should make a sign to me, I would come down to you. I! not free!" She began to tremble anew.

"There are five chairs here," said Rodolphe, "it's an odd number, and, besides that, one of them is of an absurd shape."

He broke the chair against the wall and threw the pieces on the hearth. The fire suddenly came to life and burned with a bright, cheerful flame. The poet thereupon motioned to Colline and Schaunard and took them away with him.

"Where are you going?" Marcel asked them.

"We are going to buy some tobacco," they replied.

"To Havana," added Schaunard, making a sign to Marcel, who thanked him with a glance.

"Why didn't you come sooner?" he asked Musette when they were alone.

"True, I am a little late——"

"Five days to cross Pont Neuf! Did you come by way of the Pyrenees?"

Musette hung her head and did not speak.

"Ah! you bad girl!" continued the artist in a melancholy tone, tapping his mistress's breast with his hand. "What have you under there?"

"You know very well," she replied eagerly.

"But what have you been doing since I wrote you?"

"Don't question me!" rejoined Musette, hastily kissing him again and again; "don't ask me any questions! let me warm myself beside you, while it's cold. You see, I put on my prettiest dress to come to you. Poor Maurice, he couldn't understand what it meant when I started to come here; but I couldn't help it—I started—How good the fire feels!" she added, stretching out her little hands to the flame. "I will stay with you till to-morrow. Do you want me to?"

"It will be very cold here," said Marcel, "and we have nothing for dinner. You came too late," he repeated.

"Pshaw!" said Musette, "it will be all the more like old times."

Rodolphe, Colline, and Schaunard remained away twenty-four hours in their quest for tobacco. When they returned to the house, Marcel was alone.

After six days' absence, Musette returned to Vicomte Maurice.

He did not reproach her, but simply asked her why she seemed sad.

"I have quarrelled with Marcel," she replied, "we parted on bad terms."

"And yet," said Maurice, "who knows? you may go back to him again."

"What do you expect?" said Musette, "I need to go back from time to time and breathe the air of that life. My foolish existence is like a song; each of my love affairs is a stanza, but Marcel is the refrain."

XX

MIMI WEARS FEATHERS

I

"Oh! no, no, no, you are no longer Lisette! Oh! no, no, no, you are no longer Mimi!

"To-day you are Madame la Vicomtesse; the day after to-morrow perhaps you will be Madame la Duchesse, for you have placed your foot on the staircase of grandeur; the door of your dreams is at last wide open before you, and you have gone in thereat, victorious and triumphant. I was very sure that you would end thus some night or other. Indeed it could not be otherwise; your white hands were made for indolence and have long cried for the ring of an aristocratic alliance. At last you have a coat of arms! But we still prefer the blazonry that youth imparted to your beauty which, by reason of your blue eyes and your pale face, seemed to quarter azure on a field of lilies. Noble or plebeian, you are always charming; and I recognized you when you passed me the other evening on the street, walking swiftly on your daintily shod feet,

assisting, with one gloved hand, the wind to raise the folds of your new dress, partly not to soil it, but much more to afford a glimpse of your embroidered petticoats and your transparent stockings. You wore a hat of marvelous construction, and you seemed plunged in deep perplexity on the subject of the rich lace veil that fluttered over that hat. Very grave perplexity, in sooth, for you wished to ascertain whether it would be better and more profitable to your coquetry to wear that veil raised or lowered. If you wore it lowered, you ran the risk of not being recognized by those of your friends whom you might chance to meet, and who would certainly have passed you ten times without suspicion that that ample envelope concealed Mademoiselle Mimi. On the other hand, if you wore it raised, the veil itself ran the risk of not being seen, and in that case, what was the use of having it? You cleverly solved the difficulty, by lowering and raising alternately, every ten steps, that piece of marvelous tissue, woven doubtless in that country of spiders called Flanders, and worth, in itself alone, more than the whole of your former wardrobe. Ah! Mimi—I beg your pardon—Madame la Vicomtesse! I was right, you see, when I said to you: 'Patience, do not despair; the future is pregnant with cashmeres, gleaming jewels, little supper-parties, etc.'— You would not believe me, incredulous creature! Nevertheless, my prophecies are fulfilled and I am on a par, I trust, with your *Ladies' Oracle*, a little sorcerer in 18mo., that you

bought for five sous at a second-hand bookstore on Pont Neuf and have worn out by everlasting questioning. Once more I ask you, was I not right in my prophecies, and would you believe me now if I should tell you that you won't stop where you are? Suppose I should tell you that by pricking up my ears I can already hear vaguely, in the distant recesses of your future, the stamping and neighing of horses, harnessed to a blue-lined coupé, driven by a bepowdered coachman who lowers the step for you, saying: 'Where will madame go?' Would you believe me if I should tell you also that, later on—oh! *Mon Dieu!* at the latest possible moment—attaining the goal of a long-cherished ambition, you will keep a table-d'hôte at Belleville or Batignolles, and will be courted by veteran soldiers and retired gallants, who will come to your house to play lansquenet and baccarat on the sly? But, before that time arrives, when the sun of your youth will already have set, believe me, dear child, you will wear out many a yard of silk and velvet; many patrimonies, I doubt not, will melt away in the crucibles of your whims; many flowers will wither upon your brow and many you will trample under your feet; many times you will change your crest. We shall see gleaming upon your head, one after another, the baroness's fillet, the countess's coronet and the pearl-besprinkled diadem of a marchioness; you will take for your motto: *Inconstancy*, and you will have the art of satisfying, each in his turn, according to the dictates of

caprice or necessity, all the numerous adorers who will stand in line in the antechambers of your heart, as people stand at the door of the theatre where a popular play is being performed. Go on therefore, go your way, with your mind relieved of the weight of memories which ambition has replaced; go on, it is a beautiful road and we pray that it may long be soft to your feet; but we hope above all things that all these luxuries, all these lovely dresses will not too soon become the winding-sheet in which your gayety will be enshrouded."

Thus spake the painter Marcel to young Mademoiselle Mimi, whom he chanced to meet three or four days after her second divorce from the poet Rodolphe. Although he did his best to put a check on the mocking remarks with which her horoscope was studded, Mademoiselle Mimi was not deceived by Marcel's fine words, and understood perfectly that, having little respect for her new title, he was making sport of her pitilessly.

"You are unkind to me, Marcel," said Mimi, "and it isn't fair; I was always good to you when I was Rodolphe's mistress; but, if I did leave him, it was his own fault. He sent me away almost without notice; and how he treated me the last few days I was with him! I was very unhappy, I tell you! You don't know what sort of a man Rodolphe is; a disposition made up of anger and jealousy, that was killing me by inches. He loved me, I know that, but his love was as dangerous as a gun; and what a life I led for fifteen

months. Ah! you see, Marcel, I can't make myself any better than I am, but I suffered terribly with Rodolphe, and you know it too. It wasn't the poverty that made me leave him, no, I assure you it wasn't, I was used to that from the first; and then, I say again, it was he who sent me away. He trod with both feet on my self-esteem; he told me that I had no heart if I stayed with him; he told me that he didn't love me any longer and that I must look for another lover; he even went so far as to mention a young man who was paying court to me, and, by challenging me that way, he formed a sort of connecting link between me and that young man. I went with him as much from spite as from necessity, for I didn't love him; you know well enough yourself that I don't like such young men, they're as tiresome and sentimental as harmonicas. However, what is done is done, and I don't regret it and I would do the same thing again under the same circumstances. Now that he hasn't me with him and knows that I'm happy with someone else, Rodolphe is furious and very miserable; I know someone who met him not long ago; his eyes were red. That doesn't surprise me, I knew it would be so and that he'd run after me; but you can tell him that he's throwing his time away and that this time it's all over in earnest, and for good and all.—Is it long since you saw him, Marcel, and is it true that he's very much changed? asked Mimi in a different tone."

"Very much changed, indeed," replied Marcel. "Tremendously changed."

"He is in despair, that's sure; but what do you want me to do? So much the worse for him! It's his doing; it had to come to an end some time or other. You must console him."

"Oh!" said Marcel coolly, "the hardest part of that task is done. Don't you worry, Mimi."

"You're not telling the truth, my dear man," retorted Mimi with a little sarcastic pout: "Rodolphe would never be comforted so soon as this; if you knew what a state I saw him in the night before I left him! It was Friday; I preferred not to stay that night with my new lover, because I am superstitious, and Friday's an unlucky day."

"You are wrong, Mimi: in love Friday's a lucky day; *Dies Veneris*, the ancients called it."

"I don't know Latin," said Mademoiselle Mimi, and continued: "So I returned from Paul's house; I found Rodolphe waiting for me and pacing the street like a sentinel. It was late, after midnight, and I was hungry, for I had had a wretched dinner. I begged Rodolphe to go and get something for supper. He came back in about half an hour; he had gone a long way and brought little or nothing: bread, wine, sardines, cheese, and an apple tart. I had gone to bed while he was away; he set the table beside the bed; I didn't seem to be looking at him but I watched him closely; he was as pale as

death and shivering, and he wandered round the room like a man who didn't know what he wanted. He spied several bundles of clothes on the floor in a corner. The sight seemed to hurt him and he put the screen in front of them so that he couldn't see them. When everything was ready we began to eat; he tried to make me drink, but I was no longer hungry or thirsty and my heart ached. It was cold, for we had nothing to build a fire with; you could hear the wind blowing down the chimney. It was very melancholy. Rodolphe looked at me; his eyes were fixed; he put his hand in mine and I felt it tremble; it was both burning hot and icy cold.

"'This is the funeral supper of our love,' he said to me in an undertone. I made no reply, but I hadn't the courage to take my hand away from his.

"'I am sleepy,' I said at last; 'it's late, let's go to sleep.' He looked at me; I had put one of his cravats over my head to protect me from the cold; he took it off without speaking.

"'Why do you take that off?' I asked him; 'I am cold.'

"'O Mimi,' he said, 'I beg of you, put on your little striped cap just for to-night; it won't hurt you to do it.'

"It was a brown and white striped cotton nightcap that he meant. Rodolphe loved to see me in it, for it reminded him of some happy nights—that was what we called our happy days. Thinking that it was the last time I should sleep beside him, I didn't dare refuse to

gratify his whim: I got up and went and found my cap, which was at the bottom of one of my bundles; I carelessly forgot to replace the screen; Rodolphe noticed it and put it in front of the bundles as he had done before.

"'Good-night,' said he.—'Good-night,' I answered.

"I thought he was going to kiss me, and I shouldn't have prevented him, but he simply took my hand and put it to his lips. You know, Marcel, what a fellow he was for kissing one's hands. I heard his teeth chatter and I felt that his body was as cold as marble. He continued to hold my hand and he put his head on my shoulder, which was soon all wet. Rodolphe was in a horrible condition. He bit the sheets to keep from crying out; but I could hear the smothered sobs, and I could feel the tears running down over my shoulder, which they burned at first and then froze. I needed all my courage at that moment; and it came near failing me, I tell you. I had only to say a word, I had only to turn my head, and my mouth would have met Rodolphe's and we should have been reconciled once more. Ah! for a moment I really thought he would die in my arms, or that he would go mad, at the very least, as he nearly did once before, do you remember? I was on the point of yielding, I felt it; I was on the point of taking the first step, of throwing my arms round him, for really one must have no heart at all to be untouched by such grief. But I remembered the words he had said to me the

night before: 'You have no heart if you stay with me, for I no longer love you.' Ah! when I remembered those harsh words, if I had seen Rodolphe at the point of death, and I could have saved him by one kiss, by simply moving my lips, I would have let him die. At last, being thoroughly tired out, I fell into a doze. I could still hear him sobbing, and I give you my word, Marcel, that sobbing lasted all night long; and when the morning came and I looked at the lover I was leaving to go to another's arms, lying in the bed I had slept in for the last time, I was horribly frightened when I saw the ravages grief had made on his face.

"He rose, as I did, without a word, and almost fell on the floor the first step he took, he was so weak and crushed. However, he dressed very quickly and simply asked me how I stood and when I was going away. I told him that I had no idea. He went away without saying good-bye, without shaking hands. That is how we parted. What a blow in the heart it must have given him not to find me there when he came home, eh?"

"I was there when he came home," said Marcel to Mimi, who was out of breath from having talked so long. "As he took his key from the landlady, she said:

"'The little one has gone.'

"'Oh! I'm not surprised,' said Rodolphe, 'I expected it.' And he went up to his room. I followed him, fearing some outburst; but there was nothing of the sort.

"'As it's too late to go and hire another room to-

night, we'll do it to-morrow,' he said; 'we'll go together. Now let's go to dinner.'

"I thought that he meant to get tipsy; but I was mistaken. We had a very quiet dinner at a restaurant where you and he used to go sometimes. I ordered some Beaune to make him forget himself a little.

"'That was Mimi's favorite wine,' he said; 'we have often drunk it together at this very table where we are now. I remember she said to me one day, holding out her glass, which she had already emptied several times: "Give me some more, it pours balm (*baume*) into my heart."—That was a poor pun, wasn't it? worthy of the mistress of a vaudeville-writer, at best. Ah! she was a good drinker, was Mimi.'

"Seeing that he was inclined to lose his way in the winding paths of reminiscence, I spoke of something else, and you weren't mentioned again. He passed the whole evening with me and seemed as calm as the Mediterranean. What astonished me most was that there was no affectation about his calmness. It was genuine indifference. We returned home at midnight.

"'You seem surprised at my tranquillity in my present position,' he said; 'just let me draw a comparison, my dear fellow, and, although it may be commonplace, it has the merit of being fair at all events. My heart is like a fountain, whose stopcock has been left open all night; in the morning not a single drop of water is left. The same is literally true of my heart; I wept last night

all the tears I had left. It is a strange thing; but I fancied that I had a greater store of grief, and, after a single night of suffering, here I am ruined, completely run dry, on my honor! it's just as I tell you; and in that same bed where I nearly gave up the ghost last night, beside a woman who was no more moved than a stone, I propose to sleep to-night like a porter who has done a hard day's work, now that that woman's head is resting on somebody else's pillow.'

"'Acting,' I said to myself; 'I shall no sooner be out of the room than he'll bang his head against the wall.' However, I left him alone and went up to my own room, but I did not go to bed. At three o'clock in the morning I thought I heard a noise in Rodolphe's room, and I ran down in hot haste, expecting to find him in the midst of some desperate paroxysm—"

"Well?" said Mimi.

"Well, my dear girl, Rodolphe was asleep, the bed was not tossed up, and everything went to prove that his sleep had been peaceful, and that he had not been slow about going to sleep."

"That's very possible," said Mimi; "he was so tired out from the night before,—but what about the next day?"

"The next day Rodolphe waked me in good season, and we went out and hired rooms in another house, and moved into them the same evening."

"And what did he do when he left the room we

occupied together?" queried Mimi; "what did he say when he turned his back on the room where he had loved me so dearly?"

"He quietly packed up his clothes," said Marcel; "and as he found in a drawer a pair of thread gloves that you had forgotten, and some letters, also belonging to you——"

"I know," said Mimi, in a tone that seemed to imply: I forgot them on purpose so that he might have something to remember me by. "What did he do with them?" she added.

"I think I remember," said Marcel, "that he threw the letters into the fireplace and the gloves out of the window; but without any posing or theatrical business, in a perfectly natural way, just as anyone does when he gets rid of something that's of no use."

"My dear Monsieur Marcel, I assure you that I hope with all my heart that this indifference will last. But once more I tell you frankly that I don't believe in such a rapid cure, and, in spite of all you tell me, I am persuaded that my poet's heart is broken."

"That may be," replied Marcel, as he left her; "but, unless I am much mistaken, the pieces are still in good order."

During this colloquy on the public highway, Monsieur le Vicomte Paul was awaiting his new mistress, who was late and made herself extremely disagreeable to monsieur le vicomte. He lay at her feet and cooed his

favorite song, to wit: that she was charming, as pale as the moon, as gentle as a lamb; but that he loved her above all things because of the beauties of her mind.

"Ah!" thought Mimi as she loosened the brown waves of her hair, which fell over her snow-white shoulders, "my lover Rodolphe was not so particular."

II.

As Marcel had said, Rodolphe seemed to be radically cured of his love for Mademoiselle Mimi, and three or four days after their separation the poet reappeared in the world completely metamorphosed. He was dressed with an elegance which must have made him unrecognizable even to his mirror. Nor was there anything about him calculated to arouse the fear that he anticipated hurling himself into the abyss of self-destruction, as Mademoiselle Mimi reported with all sorts of hypocritical expressions of sorrow. Rodolphe was perfectly calm; he listened without the slightest change of feature to the stories that were told him of the magnificence of the new life led by his mistress, who took pleasure in causing information concerning herself to be imparted to him by a young woman who was still in her confidence, and who had occasion to see Rodolphe almost every evening.

"Mimi is very happy with Vicomte Paul," she said to the poet; "she seems to be fairly *crazed* over him;

the only thing that troubles her is the fear that you will disturb her tranquillity by persecution, which might prove dangerous to you, by the way, for the viscount adores his mistress, and has had fencing lessons for two years."

"Oh! she can sleep in peace," Rodolphe replied; "I have no desire to pour vinegar on the delights of her honeymoon. As for her young lover, he can safely leave his dagger hanging on the nail, like *Gastibelza*, the man with the carbine. I have no designs on the life of a gentleman who still has the good fortune to be nursed by illusions."

As they did not fail to report to Mimi the attitude in which her former lover received all these particulars, she did not forget to reply, with a shrug:

"That's all right, that's all right; we'll see what will come of it all a few days hence."

Meanwhile Rodolphe himself was greatly astonished—more so than anybody else—at this sudden indifference, which succeeded the violent tempests that had stirred his soul a few days before, without the usual transition by way of depression and melancholy. Forgetfulness, which is so slow in coming, especially for the disappointed in love—the forgetfulness which they call to their assistance with a great outcry and as loudly repulse when they feel that it is approaching them,—that pitiless comforter had suddenly, without giving him time to defend himself, invaded Rodolphe's heart, and the name of the woman he had loved so well fell upon it thenceforth without

arousing an echo. Strangely enough, Rodolphe, whose memory was powerful enough to recall to his mind things that had happened in the most distant past, and the people who had figured in his earliest days, or exerted any influence thereon—Rodolphe, try as hard as he would, could not, after four days of separation, recall distinctly the features of the mistress who had nearly shattered his existence in her slender hands. He could no longer recall the gentle expression of the eyes in whose beams he had so often fallen asleep. He could no longer recall the tones of that voice, whose angry inflections and tender caresses drove him to frenzy. A friend of his, a poet, who had not seen him since his divorce, met him one evening; Rodolphe seemed very busy and thoughtful; he was walking rapidly along the street, swinging his cane.

"Well, here you are at last!" said the poet, extending his hand; and he examined Rodolphe with interest.

Seeing that his face was a little long, he thought best to adopt a sympathetic tone.

"Come, cheer up, my dear fellow; I know it's hard, but it would have had to come at last; better now than later; in three months you will be completely cured."

"What's this song you're singing?" said Rodolphe, "I am not sick, my dear man."

"Oh! don't try to bluff," said the other; "*parbleu!* I know the story, and even if I didn't know it I could read it on your face."

"Look out, you're going astray," said Rodolphe. "I am much annoyed to-night, it is true; but, when it comes to the cause of my annoyance, you haven't exactly put your finger on it."

"Nonsense! what's the use of protesting? it's natural enough; a liaison that has lasted two years isn't to be broken off quietly like that."

"They all sing the same song," said Rodolphe impatiently. "Upon my honor, you are mistaken, you and all the rest. I am very much depressed and I show it, that is possible; but this is the reason: I expected my tailor, who was to bring me a new coat to-day, and he didn't come; that is why I am annoyed."

"Very bad, very bad," said the other with a laugh.

"Not by any means; very good, on the contrary, very good, excellent. Follow my reasoning and you will see."

"Go on," said the poet, "I am listening; just show me how a man can in reason have such a melancholy air because a tailor breaks his word. Go on, go on, I am waiting."

"Why, you are well aware," said Rodolphe, "that small causes produce the greatest effects. I was to make a very important call this evening, and I can't do it because I haven't my new coat. Do you understand?"

"No. That's no sufficient reason for such despair as yours. You are in despair, because—because—You are very foolish to pose with me. That's my opinion."

"My friend," said Rodolphe, "you are very obstinate; there is always cause for despair when one misses a stroke of good fortune or at the least a pleasure, because it is almost always so much lost, and one is very wrong to say, apropos of either: 'I shall find it again some day.' I resume: I had an appointment for this evening with a young woman; I was to meet her at a house from which I might perhaps have taken her home with me, if that had been shorter than to go to her own home, or even if it had been longer. In that house there was to be a party; one cannot attend a party except in a dress coat; I have no dress coat and my tailor was to bring me one; he does not bring it, I do not go to the party, I do not meet the young woman, whom somebody else does meet perhaps; I do not take her to my house nor to her own, whither, perhaps, she is escorted by another. Thus, as I was telling you, I have missed either good fortune or pleasure; therefore I am in despair, therefore I have that appearance, and it is perfectly natural."

"Very good," said his friend; "and so, with one foot hardly out of one hell, you put the other foot in another; but, my good friend, when I met you here just now, you looked to me as if you were waiting for some one."

"That is just what I was doing."

"And we are in the very quarter where your former mistress lives; how do I know that you were not waiting for her?"

"Although separated from her, private reasons have

compelled me to remain in this quarter; but, although neighbors, we are as far apart as if she were at one pole and I at the other. Moreover, at the present moment, my former mistress is sitting in her chimney corner, taking lessons in French grammar from Monsieur le Vicomte Paul, who proposes to lead her back to virtue by the path of syntax. Great God! how he will spoil her! However, that's his business, now that he's editor-in-chief of her happiness. So you see, your remarks are absurd, and instead of being on the vanished scent of my former passion, I am, on the other hand, on the scent of my new passion who is already my neighbor to a certain extent, and who will soon become more so; for I am willing to take whatever steps are necessary, and if she will do the rest we shall not be long in coming to an understanding."

"Really?" said the poet, "you are in love already?"

"This is the condition I am in," said Rodolphe: "my heart resembles a lodging which is offered for hire as soon as one tenant moves out. When one love takes leave of my heart I put out a sign to attract another one. The rooms are very accessible and in perfect repair."

"And who is the new idol? where did you meet her? and when?"

"Let us proceed in order," said Rodolphe. "When Mimi went away, I imagined that I should never be in love again in my life, and I imagined that my heart was dead of fatigue, of exhaustion, of whatever you choose.

It had beaten so quickly, too quickly, for so long a time, that that result was not incredible. In short, I believed it was dead, quite dead, dead as a stone, and I was thinking of burying it, like Monsieur Marlborough. On that pretext I gave a little funeral supper, to which I invited some of my friends. The guests were expected to wear a sorrowful expression, and the bottles had crêpe tied around their necks."

"You didn't invite me!"

"I beg your pardon, but I didn't know the address of the cloud in which you live."

"One of the guests brought a woman, a young woman, who had been deserted by a lover within a short time. One of my friends, a fellow who plays very skilfully on the violoncello of sentiment, told her my story. He dilated to the young widow on the qualities of my heart, the poor corpse that we were to bury,—and asked her to drink to its everlasting repose. 'Nonsense,' she said, raising her glass, 'on the contrary, I drink to its very good health'; and she shot a glance at me, a glance to wake the dead, as they say; and then, or never, was an appropriate occasion for saying it, for she had not finished her toast when I felt that my heart was beginning to sing the *O Filii* of the Resurrection. What would you have done in my place?"

"A pretty question!—what's her name?"

"I don't know, I shan't ask her name until we sign our contract. I know that I haven't waited long enough

from the standpoint of some people; but, you see, I apply to myself for dispensation, and grant it to myself. I am sure that my future spouse will bring me as her marriage portion gayety, which is mental health, and health, which is physical gayety."

"Is she pretty?"

"Very pretty, especially in her coloring; you would say that she washes her face in the morning with Watteau's palette.

> "'She is most fair, my friend, and her victorious gaze
> In heart's remotest corner stirs a blaze.'

Witness my heart."

"A blonde? you astonish me."

"Yes, I've had enough ivory and ebony, and I propose to try a blonde;" and Rodolphe began to caper and sing:

> And we will sing a roundelay,
> If you deem meet,
> Unto my love, who's fair I say
> As golden wheat.

"Poor Mimi," said his friend, "so soon forgotten!"

That name, uttered in the midst of Rodolphe's gayety, suddenly gave a different turn to the conversation. Rodolphe took his friend's arm and told him at length the causes of his rupture with Mademoiselle Mimi; the terrors that had assailed him when she had gone; how he had been desperate because he thought that she had

taken with her all that remained to him of youth and passion; and how, two days later, he had found that he was mistaken, when he felt the gunpowder of his heart, drenched by the tears he had shed, become heated, take fire and explode under the first glance of youth and passion cast at him by the first woman he had met. He described the sudden and resistless attack made upon him by forgetfulness before he could call for help for his grief, and how that grief had died and was buried in that forgetfulness.

"Isn't it a miracle?" he said to the poet, who knowing by heart and from experience all the painful chapters in the fate of broken hearts, replied:

"Why, no, my friend, it's no more of a miracle in your case than in other cases. What has happened to you I have passed through myself. The women we love, when they become our mistresses, cease to be to us what they really are. We don't see them with the eyes of the lover simply, but with the eyes of the poet as well. As a painter throws over a lay figure the imperial purple or the star-bespangled veil of a consecrated virgin, we always have storehouses of gorgeous cloaks and robes of pure white, which we throw over the shoulders of stupid, ill-humored or evil-minded creatures; and when they have donned the costume in which our ideal sweethearts were dressed in the azure of our reveries, we allow ourselves to be taken in by the disguise; we incarnate our dream in the first woman who comes to hand, and

talk to her in our language, which she does not understand.

"And when this creature, at whose feet we lie prostrate, tears away with her own hands the divine envelope beneath which we have hidden her, so that we see more clearly her evil nature and her evil instincts; when she puts her hand where her heart ought to be, but where nothing beats, where perhaps nothing ever has beaten; when she puts aside her veil and shows us her dull eyes and her colorless lips and her withered features, we replace the veil and cry: 'You lie! you lie! I love you and you love me, too! That white breast is the envelope of a heart that retains all its youthfulness; I love you and you love me! You are young, you are lovely! Behind all your vices there is love. I love you and you love me!'

"And then, at last—oh! it always comes at last—when, after having worn triple bandages over our eyes to no purpose, we discover that we are ourselves the dupes of our own errors, we spurn the wretched creature who was our idol yesterday; we take from her the golden veils of our poetic imagination, to throw them anew tomorrow over the shoulders of a stranger, who is immediately raised to the position of a haloed idol; and that is what we all are, unnatural egotists, who love love for love's sake; you understand me, do you not?—and we drink the divine liquor in the first glass that our hand falls upon."

"'What boots the cup, if one the drunkenness obtains.'

"What you say is as true as that two and two make four," said Rodolphe.

"Yes," was the reply, "it is true and sad like most truths. Good-night."

Two days later, Mademoiselle Mimi learned that Rodolphe had a new mistress. She expressed curiosity on one subject only,—whether he kissed her hands as often as he used to kiss hers.

"Quite as often," replied Marcel. "And what's more, he is kissing the hairs on her head one after another, and they are to stay together until he has kissed them all."

"Ah!" said Mimi, running her hands through her hair, "it's very lucky that it didn't occur to him to do that with me, or we should have stayed together all our lives. Tell me, do you think it's really true that he doesn't care for me at all any more?"

"Bah! Do you still love him?"

"I never loved him in my life."

"Yes, Mimi, yes, you did love him at those times when a woman's heart changes its place. You loved him, so don't say you didn't, for it's your only justification."

"Pshaw!" said Mimi, "he loves someone else now."

"Very true," said Marcel, "but that doesn't matter. Later, your memory will be to him like the flowers one places, all fresh and sweet, between the leaves of a

book, and finds, a long while after, dead and faded and withered, but with a sort of vague perfume, a shadow of their pristine sweetness, floating about them still."

One evening, when she was flitting about, humming softly, Monsieur le Vicomte Paul said to Mimi:

"What's that you're singing, my dear?"

"The funeral chant of our love, which Rodolphe, my former lover, has lately composed." And she began to sing:

I've not a sou, in such a plight the Code,
My love, prescribes a blank in memory;
And tearless you, as for some antique mode,
Will soon forget me, will you not, Mimi?

But never mind, we've spent, dear, as you know,
Not counting nights, more than one happy day.
What if they've not endured, why is't not so?
Those are the best that swiftest glide away.

XXI

ROMEO AND JULIET

Dressed like a fashion-plate from his journal, *L'Écharpe d'Iris*, gloved, polished, shaven, curled, with his moustache turned up at the ends, a stick in his hand, a monocle in his eye, blooming, rejuvenated, altogether bewitching: such was our friend the poet Rodolphe as he might have been seen one evening in the month of November, as he stood on the boulevard waiting for a carriage to take him home.

Rodolphe waiting for a carriage? What cataclysm had suddenly taken place in his private life?

At the same hour when the poet, thus metamorphosed, was twisting his moustache, chewing a huge regalia, and fascinating the glances of the fair sex, a friend of his was also walking along the same boulevard. It was Gustave Colline, the philosopher. Rodolphe saw him coming and recognized him at once; and who, among those who had seen him once, would not have recognized him? Colline was laden, as always, with ten or twelve old books. Dressed in the immortal nut-brown

coat whose durability led one to think that it was built by the Romans, and with the famous broad-brimmed hat on his head—a beaver dome, beneath which buzzed the swarm of hyperphysical dreams, and which had been dubbed the Mambrino's helmet of modern philosophy—Gustave Colline walked slowly along, meditating over the preface of a work which had been three months in press—in his imagination. As he approached the spot where Rodolphe was standing, Colline thought for a moment that he recognized him; but the extraordinary elegance displayed by the poet plunged the philosopher in doubt and uncertainty.

"Rodolphe with gloves, and a cane! Chimera! Utopia! what a delusion! Rodolphe with his hair curled! when he has fewer hairs than Opportunity. Where was my brain? Besides, in these days my unfortunate friend is indulging in lamentations and composing melancholy verses upon the departure of young Mademoiselle Mimi, who jilted him, so I have heard. On my word, I miss the young woman, for my part; she had a very distinguished method of preparing coffee, which is the beverage for serious minds. But I like to think that Rodolphe will be consoled, and that he will soon take a new *cafetière*."

Colline was so delighted with his wretched pun that he would gladly have shouted *encore*—if the solemn voice of philosophy had not spoken within him and energetically called a halt to that debauch of the mind.

Meanwhile, as he had stopped beside Rodolphe, Colline was compelled to surrender to the evidence ; it was Rodolphe himself, curled and gloved, and with a cane ; it was impossible, but it was true.

"Well ! well !" said Colline, "*parbleu !* I am not mistaken, it is really you ; I am sure of it."

"And so am I," said Rodolphe.

Colline began to examine his friend, giving to his face the expression used by Monsieur Lebrun, the king's painter, to express surprise. But suddenly he observed two strange objects in Rodolphe's possession ! first, a rope ladder ; second, a cage containing some sort of a bird. At sight of those objects, Gustave Colline's face expressed a sentiment which Monsieur Lebrun, the king's painter, forgot to include in his picture of the Passions.

"I distinctly perceive the curiosity of your mind, which is looking out through the window of your eyes," said Rodolphe to his friend, "and I will gratify it ; but let us leave the public street, for it is cold enough to freeze your questions and my replies."

They both went into a café.

Colline did not take his eyes from the rope-ladder nor from the cage in which the little bird, warmed by the atmosphere of the café, began to sing in a tongue unfamiliar to Colline, polyglot though he was.

"Well, what is that thing ?" said Colline, pointing to the ladder.

"That is a bond of union between my friend and myself," replied Rodolphe, with the accent of a mandolin.

"And that?" said Colline, pointing to the bird.

"That," said the poet, whose voice became as soft as the song of the breeze, "is a clock."

"Speak without parables, in humble prose, but comprehensibly."

"Very good. Have you read Shakespeare?"

"Have I read him! *To be or not to be.* He was a great philosopher. Yes, I have read him."

"Do you remember Romeo and Juliet?"

"Do I remember it!" said Colline.

And he began to recite:

> "'Wilt thou be gone? it is not yet near day:
> It was the nightingale and not the lark
> That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear;—'

Parbleu! yes, I remember it. What then?"

"What," said Rodolphe, pointing to the ladder and the bird, "don't you understand? This is the poem: I am in love, my dear boy, in love with a woman named Juliet."

"Well, what then?" said Colline impatiently.

"My new idol being called Juliet, I conceived the plan of working over Shakespeare's drama with her. In the first place, my name is no longer Rodolphe, but Romeo Montague, and you will oblige me by calling me

by no other name. Furthermore, in order that every one may know it, I have had some new visiting cards engraved. But that is not all : I propose to take advantage of the fact that this is not carnival time to dress in a velvet doublet and carry a sword."

"To kill Tybalt?" said Colline.

"Precisely. And this ladder that you see is for use in gaining access to my mistress, who happens to have a balcony."

"But the bird, the bird?" said the obstinate Colline.

"*Parbleu!* this bird, which is a pigeon, is to play the part of the nightingale, and to indicate every morning the precise moment when, as I am preparing to leave her adored arms, my mistress will kiss me on the neck and say in her sweet voice, exactly as in the balcony scene : 'It is not yet near day ; it was the nightingale and not the lark'—that is to say, it isn't eleven o'clock, the streets are muddy, don't go, we are so comfortable here. To make the imitation complete I shall try to procure a nurse to be placed at the disposal of my beloved ; and I hope that the almanac will be obliging enough to grant me from time to time a little ray of moonlight, when I scale my Juliet's balcony. What do you say to my scheme, philosopher?"

"It's as pretty as can be," said Colline ; "but could you explain to me also the mystery of the superb envelope which makes you unrecognizable? Have you become wealthy?"

Rodolphe did not reply, but motioned to a waiter and carelessly tossed him a louis, saying:

"Take your pay out of that!"

Then he tapped his pocket, which began to sing.

"Have you a bell in your pocket, to ring like that?"

"Only a few louis."

"Louis d'or?" said Colline in a voice choked by amazement: "just show me how you do it."

Whereupon the friends separated, Colline to spread the story of Rodolphe's affluence and new love-affair; Rodolphe to return home.

This took place in the week following the second rupture of Rodolphe's liaison with Mademoiselle Mimi. When he had broken with his mistress, the poet felt the need of a change of air and surroundings, and, accompanied by his friend Marcel, he left the dark, furnished lodging-house, the proprietor of which saw him depart, as well as Marcel, with no great regret. Both of them, as we have already said, went in quest of other lodgings and hired two rooms in the same house and on the same floor. The room selected by Rodolphe was immeasurably more comfortable than any of those he had previously occupied. It contained some furniture almost worthy of the name, especially a couch covered with red material in imitation of velvet—material which in no sense complied with the proverb: "Do your duty, let come what come may."

There were also on the mantelpiece, two vases of

flowered china, and between them an alabaster clock with hideous ornaments. Rodolphe put the vases in a closet, and when the landlord came to set the clock, which had stopped, he begged him to do nothing of the kind.

"I consent to leave the clock on the mantel," he said, "but simply as an object of art; it points to midnight, that is a witching hour, let it stay there! The day it points to five minutes past twelve, I move out.—A clock!" mused Rodolphe, who could never bring himself to submit to the imperious tyranny of the dial, "why, it's an enemy in your own household who tells off your life implacably hour by hour, minute by minute, and says to you every moment of the day: 'There's a part of your life gone!' No, I could not sleep peacefully in a room where there was one of those instruments of torture, in whose neighborhood reverie and freedom from care are impossible.—A clock whose hands reach as far as your bed and prick you in the morning when you are still buried in the sweet delights of the first awakening. A clock that shrieks at you: '*ding, ding, ding!* It's time for business, leave your delicious dream, tear yourself from the caresses of your visions—and sometimes of those of reality. Put on your hat and boots, it's cold, it rains, be off about your business, it's high time, *ding, ding!*'—It's quite enough to have the almanac.—So let my clock remain paralyzed, if not—"

As he soliloquized thus, he examined his new abode,

and was disturbed by the secret feeling of disquietude that almost always assails one upon taking possession of a new lodging.

"I have noticed," he said to himself, "that the places we live in exert a mysterious influence on our thoughts and consequently on our actions. This room is as cold and silent as a tomb. If there is ever a spark of animation here, it must be brought from without; and even then it will not last long, for bursts of laughter would die without an echo beneath this low ceiling, as cold and white as a snowy sky. Alas! what will my life be within these four walls?"

A few days later, however, that gloomy chamber was filled with light and resounded with joyous shouts and laughter; the house-warming was in progress, and numerous bottles explained the gay humor of the guests. Rodolphe himself was infected by the contagious joviality of those about him. Sitting apart in a corner, with a young woman who had come there by chance and of whom he had taken possession, the poet was pouring flattery upon her with his lips and his hands. Toward the close of the festivity he obtained an appointment with her for the next day.

"Well," he said to himself when he was alone, "the party wasn't so very bad, and it was a good send-off for my sojourn here."

The next day, at the appointed hour, Mademoiselle

Juliet appeared. The evening was passed in arriving at an understanding. Juliet had learned of Rodolphe's recent rupture with the blue-eyed damsel he had loved so well; she knew that Rodolphe had taken her back after leaving her once, and she was afraid that she might be the victim of a second return of love.

"The point is, you see," she said with a sweet little pout, "that I haven't the slightest desire to play an absurd part. I give you warning that I have a very high temper; once *mistress* here,"—and she emphasized by a look the meaning she gave to the word,—"I stay here and do not give up my place."

Rodolphe summoned all his eloquence to his aid to convince her that her fears were ill-founded, and, as the young woman was anxious to be convinced, they ended by coming to an understanding. But their understanding was at an end when the clock struck twelve, for Rodolphe wanted Juliet to stay and she said that she was going.

"No," she said, as he insisted. "Why are you in such a hurry? we shall reach our destination all the same, unless you stop on the way; I will come again to-morrow."

And she came every evening for a week, and went away when the clock struck twelve.

The slow progress of the affair did not annoy Rodolphe overmuch. In love, or even in caprice, he was of that school of travellers who lengthen out a journey and

make it picturesque. That little sentimental preface resulted in carrying Rodolphe farther at first than he intended to go. And Mademoiselle Juliet's purpose in resorting to that stratagem doubtless was to lead him to that point where caprice, strengthened by the resistance offered to it, begins to resemble love.

At each succeeding visit that she paid to Rodolphe, Juliet noticed a more pronounced tone of sincerity in what he said to her. When she was late in coming, he manifested a symptomatic impatience which enchanted the girl; and he wrote her letters too, whose language gave her ground for hope that she would soon become his *lawful mistress*.

When Marcel, who was his confidant, happened to glance at one of Rodolphe's epistles, he said, laughingly:

"Is that a trick of style, or do you really think what you say?"

"Yes, I really do think it," Rodolphe replied; "and I am a little surprised at myself; but so it is. I was in a very melancholy frame of mind a week ago. That solitude and that silence, coming so suddenly upon the heels of the tempests of my former establishment, frightened me terribly, but Juliet suddenly appeared on the scene. I heard in my ears the fanfares of the spontaneous gayety of twenty years. I had before me a fresh young face, eyes full of smiles, a mouth overflowing with kisses, and I allowed myself to be drawn gently on by

the caprice which may perhaps lead me to love. I love to love."

But Rodolphe was not long in discovering that it lay with him to bring that little romance to a conclusion; and then it was that it occurred to him to copy from Shakespeare the stage-setting for the intrigue of Romeo and Juliet. His future mistress thought it an amusing idea and consented to do her part toward carrying out the jest.

It was the evening fixed for the performance, on which Rodolphe fell in with Colline the philosopher, just as he had purchased the silken rope-ladder which he was to use to scale Juliet's balcony. The dealer in birds to whom he had applied having no nightingale, Rodolphe substituted a pigeon, which sang every morning at daybreak, so he was assured.

As he returned home, Rodolphe reflected that an ascent by a rope-ladder was not a very simple matter, and that it would be a good plan to have a little rehearsal of the balcony scene, if he did not wish, in addition to the chances of a fall, to run the risk of making an absurd and bungling exhibition in the eyes of her who was to await his coming. Having fastened his ladder to two nails driven firmly into the wall, Rodolphe employed the two hours that remained in practising gymnastics; and, after a countless number of attempts, he succeeded after a fashion in ascending ten or twelve rounds.

"It's all right," he said, "I am sure of myself now,

and even if I should get stuck half-way up, *love would give me wings.*"

Armed with his ladder and his pigeon cage, he repaired to Juliet's house, which was near at hand. Her room was at the end of a small garden and actually boasted a sort of balcony. But the room was on the ground floor, and it was the easiest matter in the world to straddle the balcony.

Rodolphe was thunderstruck when he saw the lay of the land, which utterly annihilated his poetic escalading project.

"Never mind," he said to Juliet, "we can perform the balcony scene all the same. Here's a bird that will wake us to-morrow with his melodious note and will let us know the precise moment at which we must part from each other in despair." And Rodolphe hung the cage in a corner of the room.

The next morning, at five o'clock, the pigeon was prompt to the minute and filled the room with a prolonged cooing which would have waked the two lovers if they had been asleep.

"Well," said Juliet, "this is the time to go out on the balcony and exchange a despairing farewell. What do you think about it?"

The pigeon's ahead of time," said Rodolphe; "this is November and the sun doesn't rise till noon."

"Never mind," said Juliet, "I am going to get up."

"The deuce! what for?"

"My stomach is hollow, and I will not conceal the fact that I could eat a little something."

"It is extraordinary how our feelings harmonize; I too am atrociously hungry," said Rodolphe, rising also and dressing in haste.

Juliet had already lighted a fire and was looking to see if there was anything in her sideboard. Rodolphe assisted her in her search.

"Look," said he, "onions!"

"And bacon," said Juliet.

"And butter."

"And bread."

Alas! that was all.

During these investigations the heedless and optimistic pigeon was singing on his perch.

Romeo looked at Juliet, Juliet looked at Romeo; they both looked at the pigeon.

They said nothing more. The fate of the pigeon-clock was decided; even if he had appealed, it would have been time thrown away, hunger is such a cruel judge.

Rodolphe had lighted some charcoal and was frying bacon in the sizzling butter; he had a grave and solemn air.

Juliet was picking onions in a melancholy attitude.

The pigeon sang on; it was his *Willow Song*.

The song of the butter in the frying-pan echoed his lament.

Five minutes later the butter was still singing, but the pigeon, like the *Templars*, had ceased to sing.

Romeo and Juliet had cooked their clock on the gridiron.

"He had a sweet voice," said Juliet as they took their seats at the table.

"He was very tender," said Romeo, dissecting his alarm-clock, deliciously browned.

The lovers glanced at each other and each surprised the other with a tear in his eye.

Hypocrites! it was the onions that made them weep!

XXII

EPILOGUE OF THE LOVE AFFAIRS OF RODOLPHE AND MADEMOISELLE MIMI

I

During the days immediately following his definitive rupture with Mademoiselle Mimi, who had left him, as the reader will remember, to ride in Vicomte Paul's carriage, Rodolphe the poet had tried to forget his grief by taking a new mistress, she who was a blonde, and for whose benefit we have seen him array himself in the costume of Romeo on a day of frivolity and paradox.

But that liaison, which was on his part only a matter of spite and on hers only a matter of caprice, was certain not to last long; the girl was, after all, only a foolish creature, a most accomplished performer of the chromatic scale of trickery; clever enough to notice cleverness in others and to make use of it on occasion, and with just heart enough to feel uncomfortable there when she had eaten too much. Add to all this, unbridled self-conceit and a ferocious coquetry which would have led

her to prefer that her lover should break his leg rather than that she should have a ruffle less to her dress or a faded ribbon on her hat. An ordinary creature, of questionable beauty, endowed by nature with every evil instinct, and yet most seductive in certain directions and at certain times. She was not slow to discover that Rodolphe had taken her for the sole purpose of helping him to forget the absent, and that on the contrary she made him regret her, for his former mistress had never spoken so loudly or been so alive in his heart.

One day Juliet, his new mistress, was talking about her poet-lover with a medical student who was paying court to her.

"My dear child," said the student, "that fellow is using you as we use nitrate of silver to cauterize wounds; he is trying to cauterize his own heart; so you are very foolish to lose any sleep over it or to be faithful to him."

"Ha! ha!" cried the girl, with a burst of laughter, "do you really suppose I trouble myself about him?" And that same evening she gave the student convincing proof of the contrary.

Thanks to the indiscretion of one of those officious friends who are never able to leave untried a new possibility of causing annoyance, Rodolphe had wind of the affair and used it as a pretext for breaking with his *ad interim* mistress.

He then took refuge in absolute solitude, where all the black bats of ennui speedily built their nests, and he

summoned work to his assistance, but in vain. Every evening, after perspiring as many drops of water as he had used drops of ink, he wrote a score of lines in which an old idea, as exhausted as the Wandering Jew, and shabbily dressed in rags borrowed from the old-clothes shops of literature, danced heavily on the tight rope of paradox. As he read the lines over, Rodolphe was as horrified as the man who sees nettles grow where he supposed he had sown roses. He tore up the sheet on which he had told those beads of idiocy, and trampled upon it in a rage.

"Alas!" he said, striking his breast where his heart was supposed to be, "the chord is broken, I may as well be resigned to my fate." And as a similar discovery had followed all his attempts at work for a long time, he was seized with one of those attacks of discouraged lassitude, which cause the staunchest pride to falter, and deaden the keenest intellect. Indeed, nothing can be more terrible than the solitary conflicts which sometimes take place between the stubborn artist and rebellious art; nothing can be more touching than the bursts of passion alternating with invocations, supplicating and imperious by turns, addressed to the disdainful or fleeting Muse.

The keenest human anguish, the deepest wounds that cut the heart to the quick, do not cause suffering that approaches in intensity that which one feels in the hours of impatience and doubt so frequent in the lives of all those

who devote themselves to the hazardous profession of imagination.

These violent paroxysms were succeeded by periods of lamentable prostration; Rodolphe would then remain for hours as if petrified, in dazed immobility. With his elbows resting on his table, his eyes staring vacantly at the luminous space described by the lamp's rays on the sheet of paper—the "battlefield" whereon his mind was conquered day after day and his pen disabled by pursuit of the intangible idea—he saw pass slowly by, like the figures in the magic chambers with which children are entertained, fantastic pictures forming a panorama of his past. First there were the toilsome days when every passing hour called him to the performance of some duty, the nights of study tête-à-tête with the Muse who embellished with her fairy art his lonely, patient poverty. And he recalled with longing the pride that once intoxicated him when he had finished the task imposed upon him by his own will. "Oh!" he would exclaim, "there is nothing that can be compared with you, delicious fatigues of toil, that make the mattress of the *dolce far niente* seem so soft. Neither the gratification of self-esteem, nor the feverish excitement stifled behind the heavy curtains of mysterious alcoves, nothing, in fact, is equal to the tranquil, honest joy, the legitimate self-content which labor gives to the laborious as his first recompense." And with his eyes still fixed upon the visions which continued to place before him the scenes of bygone days, he

climbed again the six flights leading to all the attics where his chequered existence had halted, and whither the Muse, his only love in those days, a loyal and persevering friend, had always accompanied him, living cheerfully in want, and never interrupting his song of hope. But lo, amid that regular and peaceful existence, a woman's face suddenly appeared; and when she saw her enter that abode where she had hitherto been sole queen and mistress, the poet's Muse sadly rose and gave place to the newcomer, in whom she divined a rival. Rodolphe hesitated a moment between the Muse to whom his glance seemed to say, "remain," while a beguiling gesture addressed to the stranger said to her, "come." Indeed, how could he repulse that fascinating creature, who came to him armed with all the seductiveness of beauty at its dawn? Tiny mouth and red lips, speaking a bold but artless language, full of cajoling promises; how refuse to take in his that small, white, blue-veined hand, which was held out to him, filled with caresses? How bid that blooming child of eighteen years begone—that child whose presence already filled the house with the sweet perfume of youth and gayety? And then she sang the cavatina of temptation so sweetly in her soft, melting voice! With her bright, sparkling eyes she said so plainly: "I am love;" with her lips whereon a kiss was ever waiting: "I am pleasure;" and with her whole person: "I am happiness," that Rodolphe was enthralled. And after all, was not the young woman real, living poetry, did he not owe

to her his freshest inspirations? had she not often aroused within him enthusiastic impulses which carried him so far aloft in the ether of reverie that he lost sight of earthly things? If he had suffered much because of her, was not that suffering the expiation of the boundless happiness he had known through her? was it not the customary revenge of human destiny which forbids unalloyed happiness as an impiety? If the law of Christianity forgives those who have loved dearly, it is because they are certain to have suffered much, and earthly love becomes a divine passion only on condition that it purifies itself with tears. Just as one becomes intoxicated by breathing the odor of withered roses, so Rodolphe intoxicated himself by living again in memory that earlier life of his, when every day brought with it a new lament, a terrible drama or an amusing comedy. He passed through all the phases of his strange passion for the dear absent one, from their honeymoon down to the domestic storms which had occasioned their last rupture; he recalled his former mistress's whole repertory of wiles, he repeated all her bright sayings. He saw her dancing about him in their little home, humming her favorite ballad, *Ma Mie Annette*, and welcoming good and evil days alike with the same heedless gayety. And, at last, he reached a point where he said to himself that reason was always wrong in love. In very truth, what had he gained by the rupture? When he lived with Mimi she deceived him, it is true; but, if he knew it, it was his own fault after all, because he took

an infinite amount of trouble to find it out, because he passed his time on the watch for proofs, and because he himself sharpened the daggers which he buried in his heart. Moreover, was not Mimi clever enough to prove to him at times that he deceived himself? And then, too, with whom was she unfaithful to him? Generally with a shawl, a hat, with things and not with men. Had he found after his mistress's departure the peace and tranquillity he had hoped to obtain by separating from her? Alas! no. Formerly, at least, she was in the house. Then his grief could find a vent, he could pour out his feelings in insults, in protestations, he could show all that he suffered, and move to pity the woman who caused his suffering. And now his grief was solitary, his jealousy had become frenzy; for formerly he could at least, when he was suspicious, prevent Mimi from going out, keep her at his side, in his custody; and now he met her on the street, holding her new lover's arm, and he had to turn aside to let her pass, happy of course, and on her way to some new pleasure.

This wretched life lasted three or four months. Gradually he became calm once more. Marcel, who had taken a long journey to seek distraction for the loss of Musette, returned to Paris and took up his quarters once more with Rodolphe. They consoled each other.

One day, as he was passing through the Luxembourg garden—it was a Sunday—Rodolphe met Mimi in a grand costume. She was going to a ball. She nodded

to him and he replied with a bow. The meeting struck him to the heart, but the emotion was less painful than usual. He walked some time longer in the Luxembourg, and then went home. When Marcel returned at night, he found him at work.

"Oho!" said Marcel, leaning over his shoulder, "you're working, are you?—poetry?"

"Yes," said Rodolphe joyfully. "I believe the little beast isn't quite dead yet. In the four hours I have been sitting here I seem to have recovered the inspiration of the old days; I met Mimi to-day."

"The deuce!" said Marcel uneasily; "how do you stand with her?"

"Don't be afraid," said Rodolphe, "we only bowed; it went no farther than that."

"Really?" said Marcel.

"Really. It's all over between us, I feel it; but I can succeed in working again, I forgive her."

"If it's ended so completely as all that," said Marcel, "why are you writing poetry to her?"

"Alas!" the poet replied, "I take my poetry where I find it."

For a week he worked at his little poem. When it was finished he read it to Marcel, who declared that he was satisfied with it, and urged Rodolphe to utilize in another direction the vein that seemed to have returned to him.

"For," he observed, "it wasn't worth while to leave

Mimi, if you propose still to live with her ghost. As far as that goes," he added with a smile, "I should do better to preach to myself instead of preaching to others, for my heart is still full of Musette. However, perhaps we shall not always dote on creatures of the devil."

"Alas!" replied Rodolphe, "there is no need to bid youth begone."

"True," said Marcel, "but there are days when I would like to be a respectable old man, a member of the Institute, decorated with several orders, and done forever with the Musettes of this world. Deuce take me if I would return to them! And how about yourself," added the artist with a laugh, "would you like to be sixty years old?"

"To-day," replied Rodolphe, "I would prefer to have sixty francs."

A few days later, Mademoiselle Mimi, being in a café with young Vicomte Paul, opened a review in which the verses Rodolphe had written for her were printed.

"Well, well!" she cried, laughing at first, "my lover Rodolphe is saying bad things about me in the newspapers."

But when she had finished the poem, she was silent and thoughtful. Vicomte Paul, guessing that she was thinking of Rodolphe, tried to divert her mind.

"I'll buy you some earrings," he said.

"Oh, yes!" said Mimi, "*you* have money!"

"And an Italian straw hat," continued Vicomte Paul.

"No," said Mimi, "if you want to please me, buy me this."

And she pointed to the pamphlet in which she had just read Rodolphe's poem.

"No, I won't do that," said the viscount, in an offended tone.

"Very well," retorted Mimi coldly. "I'll buy it myself with money that I earn myself. Indeed, I prefer not to buy it with your money."

Mimi returned to the florist who formerly employed her, and worked two days, until she earned the amount necessary to purchase the magazine. She learned Rodolphe's poetry by heart, and repeated it every day to her friends, in order to annoy Vicomte Paul. The verses were as follows:

When I in quest of mistress fair was bent, in truth,
  We met one day, our steps by Chance's favor led,
My heart I gave to you, and with it all my youth,
  "Do with them what you list," such were the words I said.

You exercised your will, 'twas harsh, my dear, alas!
  Of my poor shattered youth you have the sad remains,
And crushed my heart like atoms of too-fragile glass,
    While as a graveyard, lonely, drear,
  My chamber now, what's left, contains
    Of him you lately held so dear.

Between us now, nay, nay,—the happy dream is o'er,
  I'm but a wretched sprite, and you a phantom scant,
And o'er our buried love that wakens nevermore
  Let's sing, if you but wish it so, the parting chant.

But let us not attack too high a key, howe'er,
For both, perhaps, could not control the faltering voice;
An air in simple minor key should be our choice;
I'll take the deep-toned bass, and you soprano bear.

Mi, ré, mi, do, ré, la.—No, sweet, let's not try that!
My heart, e'en though its pulse all silent seems, once more,
To hear your old-time air revived, would go pit-pat,
That *De Profundis* would its vanished life restore.

Do, mi, fa, sol, mi, do.—This taunting group evokes
A two-step dance that made me very ill, I know,
Wherein the fife with squeaking laugh the viol provokes
That weeps its crystal notes beneath the busy bow.

Sol, do, do, si, si, la.—Not that I must demand,
For that we trilled in chorus just a year ago
With merry German folks who sung their fatherland
In Meudon's joyous woods, in summer's evening glow.

Well! no, we will not sing, let's stop at once, Dearie;
And that we neither think nor e'er recur to it,
Let's take a final glance, from hate and anger free,
O'er our dead loves, but all in smiling, as seems fit.

What happy hours we spent ensconced in your small room,
Nor cared we for the hissing rain or shrieking wind;
And in your chair I sat in dull December's gloom,
While in the light of your fair eyes dreams filled my mind.

The crackling coal was gay; and o'er the ashes bright,
The kettle sang its merry tune in measured time,
An orchestra befitting salamanders' flight
As there upon the hearth they danced to kettle's chime.

Or, when in lazy, chilly mood with reading tired,
While you, fatigued, your drowsy eyelids closely drew,
The burning glow of youthful love my senses fired,
I kissed your hands and pledged my heart again to you.

Scarce could one cross the portal of our little room,
Ere all the scent of love and joy was manifest
That never left our room from morn till evening's gloom,
For pleasure clearly showed itself our constant guest.

Then winter took its flight; and spring's rays lightly crept
One morning through the open sash and bade us rise,
Away we sped, and o'er the green earth joyous leapt,
And ran to greet the sun, with gladdened heart and eyes.

The Friday 'twas in Holy Week, my mind retains,
And thwarting nature's rule, 'twould seem, a glorious day,
From vale to hill, through forest dense and over plains,
Lightly we ran, and happy, passed long hours away.

Outworn we were at last by pleasure's eager chase,
When lo! a natural couch we saw, disclosed by chance,
The distant landscape lent its charm to that choice place,
And there we sat and viewed the glorious heaven's expanse.

Each hand the other's grasped, our shoulders closely set,
Unconscious too, each with oppressive feeling stirred,
We oped our lips, when they in natural union met,
And so we kissed, nor broke the silence with a word.

The waxen hyacinth and violet pure, close by,
Their subtle odors blent and charmed the vernal air,
And both of us saw, as we sat and looked toward the sky,
God from His azure palace smiling on us there.

"Love then!" His glances seemed to say, "for you I've made
The way so soft, wherein you'll march with timid feet,
For you the yielding, velvet moss I've softly laid,
Kiss then again! nor fear my watchful glance to meet.

"Love then, each other love! in breath of softest breeze,
In limpid, babbling stream, in green woods newly-clad,
In star and flower, and song-filled nests that deck the trees,
For you My nature wakes its song in voices glad.

"Love on, each other love! and for My golden sun,
My spring that wakes the earth whereon its blessings pour,
If you are happy, then instead of prayer saintly done
To voice your welling gratitude—why kiss once more."

A short month passed, the roses were in rarest bloom
Within the little garden, offspring of our care,
When I loved you the best, and all unknown my doom,
Your love was harshly turned from me fore'er.

And whither went it? Here a part, some there, I think,
Now one, then other hue extols by fits and starts,
Your errant love in flight finds no enduring link,
From gloomy knave of spades to brilliant knave of hearts.

But now I see you happy; your capricious vein
O'er court of amorous youth now sovereign sways;
And every step you take, you find beneath your train
A bed bedecked with perfumed, laudatory lays.

At out-door terpsichorean fêtes your presence draws
To you a sycophantic crowd of lovelorn swains,
And just the rustling of your silken gown will cause
The amorous pack to chant their complimentary strains.

And choicely shod in shapely boot of supple skin
That would have pinched the foot of Cinderella fair,
Your tiny foot could barely be divined therein
As round about you whirled to music's stirring air.

In bath anointed with the oil of idleness,
Your hands, erstwhile so brown, gleam now, all brilliant white,
An ivory tint, or rather, lily's kissed by light caress
Of moonbeam's rays that flood the earth with argent light.

Upon your fair and rounded arm a rich pearl gleams,
In beauteous bracelet set, of Froment's chaste design,
Your well-shaped back an Oriental shawl beseems
That graceful falls in many an undulating line.

Old Flemish lace and English point in beauty vie
With Gothic guipure of a dull and creamy white,
The master art so finely spun in days gone by,
To give your toilette now a splendor passing bright.

I much preferred you when in cotton gown attired,
In muslin fair or simple organdie bedight,
Attractive, fresh, with hat that never veil required,
And boots of gray or black. and collar gleaming white.

For though thy wealth of beauty makes thee wondrous fair,
My vanished love it cannot call, or joy impart,
And you are dead the more, and deeper buried there
Beneath the silken shroud that stills your beating heart.

When I essayed to write this epitaphial work,—
But one long sigh for buried joys its lament bears,—
I clothed myself in fitting black, like notary's clerk,
Without the gold-rimmed glass and pleated frill he wears.

About my pen the emblematic crape was wound,
The sheet that bore my verse was edged with border black,—
Meet frame for lines in which exhumed is only found
The last remembrance of my passion's last attack.

My poem done, as in some gulf, therein I fling
My heart, and with the mirth of undertaker's man
Who might entomb his own poor corpse, frail, mortal thing,
I laughed with ghoulish glee as only madman can.

But oh! what bitter mock'ry in that laughter vain
For while I wrote, my pen but trembling letters traced,
And when I smiled, my burning tears that fell like rain
Each word the paper bore, alas! had soon effaced.

II

It was the 24th of December, and on that evening the Latin Quarter wore an aspect peculiar to the season.

From four o'clock in the afternoon, the agencies of the Mont-de-Piété, the shops of the dealers in old clothes and old books were filled to overflowing with a noisy crowd that took by assault during the evening the sausage-shops, cook-shops and corner groceries. The clerks, though they had had a hundred arms like Briareus, would have been unequal to the task of waiting upon the customers who helped themselves to what they wanted. People stood in line at the bakers' doors as in times of famine. The wine-dealers disposed of the product of three harvests, and a practised statistician would have had difficulty in computing the number of hams and sausages sold by the famous Borel on Rue Dauphine. In that one evening Père Cretaine, called *Petit-Pain*, exhausted eighteen editions of his buttered cakes. Throughout the night there was a great uproar in the furnished lodging-houses, whose windows blazed with light, and the quarter was filled with a holiday atmosphere.

The time-honored Christmas Eve festival was being celebrated.

That evening, about ten o'clock, Marcel and Rodolphe were returning to their rooms in melancholy mood. As they walked up Rue Dauphine they noticed a great crowd in the shop of a provision dealer, and they stopped for a moment at the window, tantalized by the spectacle of savory products of the kitchen; the two Bohemians in their rapt contemplation resembled the

character in a Spanish novel who made hams grow thin simply by looking at them.

"That is what is called a truffled turkey," said Marcel, pointing to a magnificent fowl, through whose transparent pink epidermis could be seen the Perigord tubercles with which it was stuffed. "I have seen impious people eat such a bird without falling on their knees before it," added the painter with a *roasting* glance at the turkey.

"What do you think of that leg of salt-marsh mutton?" said Rodolphe. "What a beautiful color it is! you would say it was fresh from that meat-stall in one of Jordaëns's pictures. Mutton fed on salt-hay is the favorite dish of the gods and of my godmother, Madame Chandelier."

"Just look at those fish," rejoined Marcel, pointing to a dish of trout, "they are the finest swimmers of the whole fish tribe. The little creatures, who put on no airs at all, could if they chose earn a large income by giving exhibitions of feats of strength; just imagine that they swim up against the current of a perpendicular mountain stream, as readily as we would accept an invitation or two to supper. I have come near eating them."

"And those great golden fruits over there, with leaves that resemble a stand of barbarian sabres; those are called pineapples, they are the pippins of the tropics."

"So far as I am concerned," said Marcel, "the fruit

I prefer is that joint of beef, or that large ham, or yonder little fellow sheathed in transparent, amber-colored jelly."

"You are right," rejoined Rodolphe; "the ham is the friend of man when he has any. However, I would not spurn that pheasant."

"I should think not, it's a dish for crowned heads."

As they walked on they met merry processions on their way to celebrate the feast of Momus, Bacchus, Comus and all the other gluttonous divinities in *us*, and they asked each other who this Seigneur Gamache might be whose wedding every one was celebrating with such an abundant supply of food.

Marcel was the first to remember the date and the festival.

"This is Christmas Eve," he said.

"Do you remember our Christmas Eve last year?" asked Rodolphe.

"Yes, at *Momus*," replied Marcel. "Barbemuche paid for it. I never imagined that a woman as delicate as Phémie could hold so much sausage."

"What a pity that *Momus* has closed his doors on us," said Rodolphe.

"Alas!" rejoined Marcel, "the calendars succeed one another, but no two are alike."

"Wouldn't you like to celebrate Christmas Eve?" inquired Rodolphe.

"With whom and with what?" asked the painter.

"With me, of course."

"And the money?"

"Just wait a moment," said Rodolphe; "I will go into yonder café where there are some people I know who play for high stakes. I will borrow a few sesterces from some favorite of chance and bring back the wherewithal to wash down a sardine or some pettitoes."

"Go," said Marcel, "I am as hungry as a dog. I will wait for you here."

Rodolphe entered the café, where there were some acquaintances of his. A gentleman who had just won three hundred francs in ten hands of *bouillotte* took great pleasure in lending the poet a forty-sou piece, which he offered him wrapped in the ill-humor caused by the gambling fever. At any other time and elsewhere than about a green cloth, he would probably have lent him forty francs.

"Well?" said Marcel inquiringly, as Rodolphe joined him.

"Here are the receipts," said the poet, showing him the money.

"A crust and a drop," said Marcel.

But even with that modest sum they succeeded in obtaining bread and wine, sausage, tobacco, light and firewood.

They returned to the lodging-house in which they occupied separate rooms. Marcel's, which he used as a studio, being the larger, was selected for the banquet

hall, and the friends made preparations there for their private feast.

But, at the little table at which they sat, beside the hearth on which a few damp pieces of wretched drift-wood burned without flame and without heat, the ghost of the vanished past, a melancholy guest, took his seat with them.

For at least an hour they sat silent and lost in thought, both engrossed, doubtless, by the same thought and struggling to conceal it. Marcel was the first to break the silence.

"Come, come," he said to Rodolphe, "this isn't what we looked forward to."

"What do you mean?" said Rodolphe.

"Oh! *mon Dieu!*" rejoined Marcel, "don't pretend with me now! You are thinking of what we must forget, and so am I, *parbleu!* I don't deny it."

"Well, even so——"

"This must be the last time. To the devil with memories that make the wine taste bad and make us sad when the whole world is enjoying itself!" cried Marcel, alluding to the merry shouts that came from the rooms near their own. "Come, let us think of something else, and let this be the last time."

"That's what we always say, and yet—" said Rodolphe, relapsing into his fit of musing.

"And yet we are forever going back to it again," rejoined Marcel. "That is because, instead of striving

honestly to forget, we make of the most futile things pretexts for recalling the past; above all things, it is because we persist in living in the same surroundings in which the creatures lived who tormented us so long. We are the slaves of a habit rather than of a passion. This slavery is what we must put an end to, or we shall wear ourselves out in ridiculous and disgraceful captivity. The past is past, and we must break the bonds that still connect us with it; the time has come to go forward without looking back; we have had our day of youth, heedlessness, and paradox. All that is very fine, it would make a pretty novel; but this comedy of amorous nonsense, this squandering of days and weeks with the lavishness of people who think they have an eternity to throw away—all this must come to an end. Unless we choose to justify the contempt that people feel for us, and to despise ourselves, it is not possible for us to continue to live on the edge of society, almost on the edge of life. For is this really life that we are leading? and this independence, this moral freedom of which we boast so loudly—are they not very slight advantages? True liberty is the power to do without the assistance of others and to exist by ourselves; have we reached that point? No! the first scamp that comes along, whose name we wouldn't bear for five minutes, has his revenge for our mockery, and becomes our lord and master from the day we borrow a hundred sous of him, which he doesn't lend us until he has made us expend

more than a hundred crowns' worth of ruses or of humility. For my part I have had enough of it. Poetry does not consist simply in irregularity of life, in improvised flashes of happiness, in love-affairs which last while a candle burns, in rebellion, more or less out of the beaten track, against the prejudices which will always reign over society; a dynasty is more easily overthrown than a custom, no matter how absurd a custom it may be. To wear a summer coat in December is not enough to give a man talent; one may be a real poet or artist, even though he does keep his feet warm and eat his three meals a day. Whatever you may say or do, if you want to get anywhere, you must always travel by way of the commonplace. This harangue may astonish you, Rodolphe, my friend; you will say that I am shattering my idols, you will call me corrupted, but what I have said to you is none the less the expression of my sincere purpose. A gradual and salutary metamorphosis has taken place in me, without my knowledge; common sense has found its way into my mind, by violence, if you choose, and perhaps against my will; but it is there at all events, and it has proved to me that I was on a bad road, and that it would be both absurd and dangerous to persevere in it. After all, what will happen if we continue this monotonous, purposeless vagabond life? We shall approach our thirtieth year unknown, isolated, disgusted with ourselves and everything else, overflowing with envy of all those whom we see reach their goal, whatever it

may be, compelled, in order to live, to resort to the shameful expedients of sycophancy;—do not imagine that I am drawing a fanciful picture for the express purpose of terrifying you. I do not make a business of looking at the dark side of the future, but, on the other hand, I do not see only its rose-colored side; I look at it fairly. Thus far the life we have led has been forced upon us; we have had the excuse of necessity. Henceforth we shall have no excuse; and if we do not live as other people do, it will be by our own choice, for the obstacles we have had to struggle against no longer exist."

"What's that?" said Rodolphe, "what are you driving at? What called forth this sermon and what's the object of it?"

"You understand me perfectly," said Marcel in the same serious tone; "a moment since, I saw that you, like myself, were assailed by memories that made you sigh for the days that are past; you were thinking of Mimi, as I was thinking of Musette; you would have liked, as I would, to have your mistress beside you. Very good; I say that neither of us ought to think any more of those creatures; that we were not made and brought into the world for the sole purpose of sacrificing ourselves to those commonplace Manons, and that the Chevalier Desgrieux, who is so handsome, so poetic, so true to life, is saved from absurdity only by his youth and by the illusions he was able to retain. At twenty

years of age he can follow his mistress to the Antilles without ceasing to be interesting; but at twenty-five he would have turned Manon out of doors, and he would have been quite right. It's of no use to talk, we are old, you see, my dear fellow; we have lived too much and too fast; our hearts are cracked, and give forth none but false notes; one cannot be in love for three years with a Musette or a Mimi with impunity. For my part, I am done with it; and, as I propose to effect an absolute divorce between myself and her memory, I am going to throw into the fire a few small articles which she left with me on her various visits, and which compel me to think of her when I happen upon them."

Marcel left his seat and took from the drawer of a commode a small pasteboard box containing his souvenirs of Musette—a withered bouquet, a belt, a bit of ribbon and some letters.

"Come, follow my example, Rodolphe, my friend," he said.

"Very well, so be it!" cried Rodolphe, with an effort, "you are right. I too propose to have done with that girl with the white hands."

Springing suddenly to his feet, he went to his room, and returned with a small package containing souvenirs of Mimi, of almost the same nature as those of which Marcel was silently making an inventory.

"This happens opportunely," muttered the painter.

"These gewgaws will serve to kindle the fire, which is going out."

"Upon my word," said Rodolphe, "the temperature here is well adapted to the cultivation of white bears."

"Come," said Marcel, "let us have a burning duet. Look, Musette's prose flares up like blazing punch; she was very fond of punch. Come, friend Rodolphe, attention!"

For some time they alternately threw the relics of their past affections into the fire, which blazed brightly and noisily.

"Poor Musette!" said Marcel, as he glanced at the last thing that remained in his hands.

It was a little withered bouquet, made of wild flowers.

"Poor Musette! she was very pretty all the same, and she loved me dearly, didn't she, little nosegay? her heart told you so the day you were at her belt. Poor little nosegay, you look as if you would ask for mercy; I will spare you, but only on condition that you will never speak to me again of her, never! never!"

He took advantage of a moment when he thought Rodolphe was not looking, to slip the bouquet into his breast.

"After all I can't help it. I am cheating," thought the painter.

Glancing furtively at Rodolphe, he saw him, as he arrived at the end of his auto-da-fé, slyly slip into his

pocket, after bestowing a fond kiss upon it, a little night-cap that had belonged to Mimi.

"Well, he's as cowardly as I am," muttered Marcel.

Just as Rodolphe was about to go back to his own room to go to bed, there were two light taps at Marcel's door.

"Who the devil can it be at this time of night?" said the painter, going to open the door.

A cry of amazement escaped him when the door was open.

It was Mimi.

As the room was very dark Rodolphe did not recognize his mistress at first; he simply saw that it was a woman, and, supposing that it was some passing fancy of his friend, discreetly prepared to retire.

"I disturb you," said Mimi, still in the doorway.

At that voice Rodolphe fell back upon his chair as if struck by lightning.

"Good-evening," said Mimi, walking up to him and pressing his hand, which he mechanically allowed her to take.

"What the devil brings you here," Marcel asked her, "and at this hour?"

"I am very cold," Mimi replied, shivering from head to foot; "I saw a light in your room as I walked along the street, and so I came up, although it is very late."

She trembled still; her voice had a crystalline resonance that rang in Rodolphe's heart like a funeral knell,

and filled it with vague terror; he looked stealthily at her, and examined her more closely. It was not Mimi, it was her ghost.

Marcel gave her a chair by the fireplace.

Mimi smiled as she saw the bright flame dancing merrily on the hearth.

"That is very nice," she said, holding out her poor purple hands to the fire. "By the way, Monsieur Marcel, you don't know why I have come here, do you?"

"Faith, no, I don't," was the reply.

"Well," Mimi continued, "I came simply to ask you if you couldn't get me a room in your house. I have just been turned out of my furnished lodgings because I owe a month's rent, and I don't know where to go."

"The devil," said Marcel, shaking his head, "we're not in very good odor with our landlord, and our recommendation wouldn't amount to much, my poor child."

"What am I to do then?" said Mimi; "it's a fact that I don't know where to go."

"Oho!" said Marcel, "then you're no longer a viscountess?"

"Ah! *mon Dieu!* no, not at all."

"Since when, pray?"

"Not for two months."

"I suppose you played tricks on the young viscount?"

"No," she said, with a stealthy glance at Rodolphe, who had stationed himself in the darkest corner of the room, "the viscount made a scene on account of some

poetry someone wrote about me. We had a dispute and I told him he could go to the devil; he's a skinflint."

"He must have supplied your wardrobe pretty well, however, judging from what I saw the day I met you."

"Well," said Mimi, "just fancy! he took it all away from me when I left him, and I have been told that he raffled all my effects at a wretched table d'hôte, where he used to take me to dine. And yet the fellow is rich, but with all his money he's as miserly as economical logs, and as stupid as a goose; he didn't want me to drink straight wine and made me go without meat on Fridays. Would you believe that he insisted on my wearing black cotton stockings because they don't soil as easily as white! did any one ever hear of such a thing? He bored me to death, I tell you, I can fairly say that I had my share of purgatory with him."

"Does he know of your present position?" Marcel asked.

"I haven't seen him since, and I don't want to see him," replied Mimi; "he makes me seasick when I think of him! I would rather starve to death than ask him for a sou."

"But you haven't been alone ever since you left him?" continued Marcel.

"I assure you that I have, Monsieur Marcel," cried Mimi eagerly: "I have worked for my living; but as the florist's business was not very good, I have taken up

something else: I pose for painters. If you have any employment for me—" she added laughingly.

As she noticed an instinctive movement on the part of Rodolphe, from whom she had not removed her eyes while she was talking to his friend, Mimi continued:

"But I pose only for the head and hands. I have a great deal to do, and there's money owing me in two or three places; I shall receive it in two days and I want to find a place to sleep just from now till then. When I have some money I shall go back to my old lodgings. Ah!" she said, glancing at the table which still bore the elements of the modest repast which the friends had hardly touched, "you are going to have supper?"

"No," said Marcel, "we are not hungry."

"You are very lucky," said Mimi ingenuously.

At that remark Rodolphe had a horrible feeling of oppression at his heart. He made Marcel a sign which he understood.

"At all events, Mimi," said the artist, "as long as you are here, you shall take potluck with us. Rodolphe and I had intended to have a Christmas Eve supper, and then—faith, we thought of something else."

"Then I came in good time," said Mimi, with an almost famished glare at the table on which the food was. "I haven't dined, my dear," she whispered to the artist, too low to be overheard by Rodolphe, who was biting his handkerchief to avoid bursting into sobs.

"Come here, Rodolphe," said Marcel, "we will all have supper together."

"No," said the poet, remaining in his corner.

"Has it made you angry to have me come here, Rodolphe?" said Mimi gently; "where do you want me to go?"

"No, Mimi," was his reply, "but it saddens me to see you in this condition."

"It is my own fault, Rodolphe; I don't complain; what is past is past; think no more about it than I do. Can't you be my friend, just because you used to be something else? of course you can, can't you? Well, then, don't make wry faces at me, but come and sit down at the table with us."

She rose to go and take his hand, but she was so weak that she could not walk and fell back upon her chair.

"The heat makes me dizzy," she said, "I can't stand up."

"Come," said Marcel to Rodolphe, "come and keep us company."

The poet went to the table and began to eat with them. Mimi was very lively.

When the frugal supper was at an end, Marcel said to Mimi:

"My dear child, it isn't possible for us to get a room in the house for you."

"Then I must go," she said, trying to rise.

"Why no! why no!" cried Marcel, "I have thought

of another way of arranging matters; you shall stay in my room, and I'll go and sleep with Rodolphe."

"That will be a nuisance to you, I know," said Mimi, "but it won't last long, only two days."

"In that way it won't put us out at all," replied Marcel; "so it's understood that you are at home here, and that we are going to sleep in Rodolphe's room. Good-night, Mimi, pleasant dreams."

"Thanks," she said, giving her hand to Marcel and Rodolphe, who thereupon walked away.

"Do you want to lock yourself in?" asked Marcel, when he was at the door.

"Why should I?" she answered, glancing at Rodolphe, "I am not afraid!"

When the two friends were in Rodolphe's room, which was on the same floor, Marcel suddenly said:

"Well, what are you going to do now?"

"Why, I don't know," faltered Rodolphe.

"Nonsense, no trifling, go back to Mimi! if you do it, I predict that you will take up with each other again to-morrow."

"If it were Musette who had come back, what would you do?" queried Rodolphe.

"If Musette were in the next room," replied Marcel, "I tell you frankly that I think I should have ceased to be in this one a quarter of an hour ago."

"Well, I will be braver than you," said Rodolphe, "I will stay here."

"*Parbleu!* we shall see," said Marcel, who was already in bed: "are you coming to bed?"

"Why yes, to be sure," Rodolphe replied.

But Marcel awoke in the middle of the night and found that Rodolphe had left him.

In the morning he took the precaution to knock at the door of Mimi's room.

"Come in," she said; and when she saw who it was, she motioned to him to speak low and not awaken Rodolphe, who was still asleep. He was sitting in a chair which he had moved to the bedside, and his head was beside Mimi's on the pillow.

"Is that the way you passed the night?" inquired Marcel, greatly surprised.

"Yes," replied the young woman.

Rodolphe suddenly woke up, and, after kissing Mimi, offered his hand to Marcel, who seemed sorely puzzled.

"I am going out to find some money to buy breakfast," he said to the painter; "you must keep Mimi company."

"Well," Marcel asked the young woman when they were alone, "what happened last night?"

"Something very sad," said Mimi, "Rodolphe still loves me."

"I am well aware of it."

"Yes, you tried to keep him away from me; I don't blame you for it, Marcel, you were right; I did the poor boy a deal of harm."

"And how about you," queried Marcel; "do you still love him?"

"Ah! do I love him!" she said, clasping her hands, "that is just what torments me. I am very much changed, my dear friend, and it has taken very little time to change me."

"Very well, as he loves you and you love him and you can't get along without each other, come together again and try to stay together for good and all."

"It is impossible," said Mimi.

"Why so?" asked Marcel, "it certainly would be more sensible for you to separate; but you would have to be a thousand leagues apart in order not to see each other."

"Before long, I shall be farther away than that."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Don't mention it to Rodolphe, he would take it too much to heart, but I am going away forever."

"Going where, pray?"

"Look at this, my dear Marcel," said Mimi, sobbing; "Look." She raised the sheet a little and showed the artist her neck and shoulders and arms.

"Great God!" cried Marcel sorrowfully, "poor girl!"

"Am I not right, my friend, shall I not die soon?"

"But how did you come to be like that in so short a time?"

"Oh! it's not surprising, with the life I have led for

two months past: the nights passed in weeping and the days in unheated studios, and with it all, wretched food and unhappiness. And you don't know all: I tried to poison myself with Javel water: my life was saved, but not for long, you see. Indeed I have never been well; but, it's my own fault; if I had stayed quietly with Rodolphe I shouldn't have come to this. Poor fellow! here I have fallen back on his hands, but it won't be for long; the last dress he will give me will be all white, my poor Marcel, and I shall be buried in it. Ah! if you knew how I suffer to know that I am going to die! Rodolphe knows that I am sick; he sat for more than an hour last night without speaking, when he saw how thin my arms and shoulders were; he did not recognize his Mimi, alas!—even my mirror doesn't know me now. Never mind, I was pretty once, and he loved me dearly. Oh! *mon Dieu!*" she cried, hiding her face in Marcel's hands, "my poor friend, I am going to leave you and Rodolphe too. Oh! *mon Dieu!*" and her sobs choked her.

"Nonsense, Mimi," said Marcel, "don't despair, you will get well; you simply need perfect quiet and the best of care."

"Oh! no," said Mimi, "it's all over, I can feel it. I haven't any strength, and when I came here last night it took me more than an hour to come upstairs. If I had found a woman here, I would simply have gone down by way of the window. Of course he was free, as we were

no longer together; but you see, Marcel, I was very sure that he still loved me. That," she said, bursting into tears, "that is why I would like not to die right away: but it's all over. Think, Marcel, what a kind heart the poor fellow must have to take me in after all I have done to him. Ah! the good Lord isn't fair, not to leave me just time enough to make Rodolphe forget the sorrow I have caused him. He doesn't suspect the state I am in. I wasn't willing that he should lie beside me, you see, for it seems to me that I already have earth-worms after my body. We passed the night crying and talking about old times. Ah! how sad it is, my friend, to see behind you the happiness you once passed by without seeing it! I have a scorching fire in my chest; and when I move my limbs it seems as if they would break.—Just give me my dress," she said to Marcel, "I am going to consult the cards to see if Rodolphe will bring back any money. I would like to have one good breakfast with you, as in the old days; it wouldn't do me any harm. God can't make me any sicker than I am. Look," she said, pointing to the pack of cards she had cut, "it's a spade. That's the color of death. And there's a club," she added more cheerfully. "Yes, we shall have some money."

Marcel did not know what to say in face of the lucid raving of the poor creature, who had, as she said, the worms of the tomb after her!

An hour later, Rodolphe returned. He was accompanied by Schaunard and Gustave Colline. The

musician wore a thin summer coat. He had sold his thick clothes in order to lend Rodolphe money, when he learned that Mimi was ill. Colline, for his part, had been selling some books. If they had asked him to sell an arm or a leg he would have consented to do it rather than dispose of any of his dear books. But Schaunard had reminded him that they could make no use of his arm or his leg.

Mimi strove hard to welcome her old friends cheerfully.

"I am not wicked any more," she said, "and Rodolphe has forgiven me. If he chooses to keep me with him I'll wear wooden shoes and a cap; it's all one to me. Silk certainly isn't good for my health," she added with a ghastly smile.

At Marcel's suggestion, Rodolphe sent for a friend of his who had just taken his degree in medicine. It was the same man who had attended little Francine. When he arrived, they left him alone with Mimi.

Rodolphe, who had previously been warned by Marcel, was aware of his mistress's dangerous condition. When the doctor had examined Mimi, he said to Rodolphe:

"You cannot keep her. Unless a miracle happens, she is lost. We must send her to the hospital. I will give you a letter to an intern whom I know at the hospital of La Pitié; he will take good care of her. If she lives till spring, perhaps we can pull her through; but if she stays here, she won't be alive a week from now."

"I shall never dare suggest it to her," said Rodolphe.

"I have already done so," said the doctor, "and she consents. To-morrow I will send you the card of admission to La Pitié."

"My dear," Mimi said to Rodolphe, "the doctor is right, you couldn't take care of me here. At the hospital they will cure me perhaps; you must take me there. Ah! I long so to live now, you see, that I would consent to pass the rest of my life with one hand in the fire and the other in yours. Besides, you will come to see me. You mustn't be unhappy; I shall be well taken care of, that young man told me so. They give you chicken at the hospital, and they have a fire. While I am getting well, you will work and earn money, and when I am cured I will come back and live with you. I am very hopeful now. I will come back to you as pretty as I used to be. I was sick once long ago, before I knew you, and they saved me. And yet I wasn't happy in those days, and I would have liked to die. Now that I have you again, and we can be happy together, they will save me, for I'll fight hard against the disease. I will drink all the vile things they give me, and if death gets me it will be by force. Give me the mirror, it seems to me that I have some color. Yes," she said, looking at herself in the glass, "my bright color is coming back already; and my hands, they are still very pretty, you see. Kiss them once more, it won't be the last time, my poor dear," she said, throwing her arms about Rodolphe's neck and covering his face with her flowing hair.

She insisted that her friends the Bohemians should remain and pass the evening with her before she went to the hospital. "Make me laugh," she said, "gayety is health to me. That croaker of a viscount was what made me sick. Fancy, he wanted to teach me to spell! What do you suppose I care for spelling? And his friends, such a lot! a genuine barnyard, where the viscount was the peacock. He marked his linen himself. If he ever marries, I'm sure he'll be the one to have the children."

Nothing more heartrending can be imagined than the unfortunate girl's quasi-posthumous cheerfulness. All the Bohemians struggled manfully to restrain their tears and carry on the conversation in the jesting strain adopted by the poor child, for whom destiny was weaving so rapidly the material for her last garment.

The next morning Rodolphe received the card of admission to the hospital. Mimi could not stand upon her legs; she had to be carried down to the carriage. On the way to the hospital she suffered terribly from the jolting of the vehicle. Coquetry, the last thing to die in a woman, survived through all her suffering; two or three times she asked to have the carriage stopped in front of milliners' shops, so that she might look at the window displays.

When she entered the ward designated by the card, Mimi's heart sank; something told her that her life would end within those leprous, desolate walls. She

exerted all the strength of will she possessed to conceal the painful impression that had sent a chill through her whole being.

When she was in bed, she kissed Rodolphe for the last time and said adieu to him, urging him to come and see her on the following Sunday, which was visitors' day.

"It doesn't smell nice here," she said; "bring me some flowers, some violets; there still are some."

"I will," said Rodolphe, "adieu till Sunday."

He drew the bed-curtains about her. As she heard her lover's receding footsteps on the floor, Mimi was suddenly seized with a paroxysm of something like delirium. She threw aside the curtains and, leaning out of bed, cried in a voice broken by tears:

"Rodolphe, take me away! I want to go away!"

The nun in attendance came running in at the outcry, and tried to soothe her.

"Oh! I shall die here," said Mimi.

On Sunday morning—the day he was to go and see Mimi—Rodolphe remembered that he had promised her some violets. With the superstition of a poet and a lover, he went on foot, in terrible weather, to look for the flowers his mistress craved, in the woods of Aulnay and Fontenay, where he had been so many times with her. The landscape that was so bright and joyous in the sunshine of the fine days of June and August, was cold and depressing. For two hours he hunted among the snow-

covered thickets, raised the bushes and heather with a little stick and at last found a few poor blossoms in that portion of the woods that borders the pond of Plessis, a favorite haunt of theirs when they went into the country.

As he walked through the village of Châtillon on his way back to Paris, Rodolphe met, on the square in front of the Church, a baptismal procession, in which he recognized one of his friends, who was acting as sponsor, with a singer from the Opéra.

"What the devil are you doing here?" asked the friend, greatly surprised to see Rodolphe in those parts.

The poet told him what had happened.

The young man, who had known Mimi, was deeply moved by the tale; he felt in his pocket and took out a bag of baptismal bonbons, which he handed to Rodolphe.

"Poor Mimi! give her those from me, and tell her I'll go to see her."

"Come quickly then, if you want to get there in time," said Rodolphe, as he left him.

When Rodolphe arrived at the hospital, Mimi, who could not move hand or foot, leaped upon his neck with a glance.

"Ah! there are my flowers!" she cried, with the smile of gratified longing.

Rodolphe told her of his pilgrimage to the countryside that had been the paradise of their love.

"Dear flowers," said the poor girl, kissing the violets. The bonbons made her very happy too. "So I am not altogether forgotten! You are very kind, you young men. Ah! I love them all, all your friends," she said to Rodolphe.

Their interview was almost cheerful. Schaunard and Colline had joined Rodolphe. The attendants had to send them away, for they stayed beyond the hour allowed for visits.

"Adieu," said Mimi, "until Thursday; don't fail me, and come early."

The next evening, when he returned to his room, Rodolphe received a letter from a medical student, an intern at the hospital, to whose care he had commended the invalid. The letter contained only these words:

"My friend, I have bad news for you: No. 8 is dead. This morning, when I went into the ward, I found her bed empty."

Rodolphe fell upon a chair and did not shed a tear. When Marcel came home in the evening he found him in the same dazed attitude; the poet pointed to the letter.

"Poor girl!" said Marcel.

"It's very strange," said Rodolphe, "but I feel nothing at all. Did my love die when I learned that Mimi was dead?"

"Who knows?" murmured the painter.

Mimi's death caused profound sorrow in the club of the Bohemians.

A week later, Rodolphe met on the street the intern who had written to tell him of his mistress's death.

"O my dear Rodolphe," he exclaimed, running to meet the poet, "forgive me the pain I caused you with my carelessness."

"What do you mean?" inquired Rodolphe in amazement.

"What, don't you know, haven't you seen her?"

"Seen whom?" cried Rodolphe.

"Why, Mimi."

"What?" said the poet, turning as pale as death.

"I made a mistake. When I wrote you the sad news, I was the victim of a misunderstanding; this is how it happened. I was away from the hospital two days. When I returned, on the day following your visit, I found your friend's bed empty. I asked the sister where the patient was, and she told me that she died during the night. This is what had happened. During my absence Mimi had been transferred to a different ward. Another woman had been put in the number 8 that she left, and that woman died the same night. That will explain the error I fell into. Some days after I wrote you, I found Mimi in an adjoining ward. Your absence had put her in a horrible condition; she gave me a letter for you. I carried it to your lodging-house instantly."

"My God!" cried Rodolphe, "since I have believed Mimi to be dead I haven't been at home. I have been lodging with my friends here and there. Mimi alive!

O my God! what must she think of my absence! Poor girl! poor girl! how is she? when did you see her?"

"Day before yesterday; she was neither better nor worse; she is very anxious and thinks you are ill."

"Take me to La Pitié at once," said Rodolphe, "and let me see her."

"Wait here a moment," said the intern, when they were at the door of the hospital; "I will go and ask the superintendent for a permit for you."

Rodolphe waited a quarter of an hour in the vestibule. When the intern came back, he took his hand and said:

"My friend, imagine that the letter I wrote you a week ago was true."

"What!" said Rodolphe, leaning against a pillar. "Mimi—"

"At four o'clock this morning."

"Take me to the amphitheatre and let me see her," said Rodolphe.

"She is not there," said the intern. He pointed to a large van that stood in the courtyard in front of an ell, over the door of which was the word: *Amphitheatre.* "She is in that van," he added.

It was the vehicle in which unclaimed bodies are taken to the common grave.

"Adieu," said Rodolphe to the intern.

"Shall I go with you?" the latter asked.

"No," said Rodolphe, as he walked away, "I need to be alone."

XXIII

THERE IS BUT ONE YOUTH

A year after Mimi's death, Rodolphe and Marcel, who had not parted, celebrated with a banquet their entrance into society. Marcel, who had at last forced his way into the Salon, had exhibited two pictures there, one of which had been purchased by a rich Englishman who was once Musette's lover. With the proceeds of that sale and of an order from the government, Marcel had partly paid off his past debts. He had furnished a decent lodging and had a real studio. At about the same time, Schaunard and Rodolphe made their bows to the public, which makes renown and fortune,—the former with a collection of melodies which were sung at all the concerts and laid the foundation of his reputation; the latter with a book which occupied the attention of the critics for a month. As for Barbemuche, he had long since renounced Bohemia, and Gustave Colline had inherited some money and made an advantageous marriage; he gave evening parties, with music and cake.

One evening Rodolphe was sitting in *his* easy-chair,

with his feet on *his* rug, when Marcel entered the room in a state of intense excitement.

"You can't guess what has happened to me," he said.

"No," said Rodolphe. "I know that I went to your room, that you were certainly in, and that you didn't choose to open the door."

"I heard you. Guess whom I was with."

"How do I know?"

"With Musette, who burst in upon me last night dressed like a waterman."

"Musette! you have found Musette again!" said Rodolphe in a regretful tone.

"Don't be alarmed, there's to be no resumption of hostilities; Musette came to me to pass her last night in Bohemia."

"What?"

"She is going to be married."

"The devil!" cried Rodolphe. "To whom, O Lord?"

"To a postmaster, who was the guardian of her last lover, a queer genius, I should judge. Said Musette to him: 'My dear monsieur, before giving you my hand for good and all and going to the mayor's office with you, I must have a week to myself. I have some business matters to settle, and I want to drink my last glass of champagne, dance my last quadrille, and kiss my old lover Marcel, who is as good as any other man, so far as

I can see.' And the dear creature hunted for me for a week. That is how she came to drop in on me last evening, just at the very moment I was thinking of her. Ah! my friend, we passed a melancholy night, take it all in all; it wasn't what it used to be, no, not at all. We were like a wretched copy of an artistic masterpiece. I have written, à propos of this last separation, a little lament which I propose to moan to you, if you'll allow me," and Marcel began to sing the following lines:

I spied a swallow yesterday,
Sweet herald of the springtime fair,
Then flew my thoughts to her straightway
Who loved me when she'd time to spare.
And all that day I stood anear,
And viewed in contemplation blest,
The calendar of that dead year
When we each other's love possessed.

Think not my youth has vanished yet,
Or your remembrance sweet effaced;
And did you seek my door, Musette,
My heart would ope to you in haste,
For at your name its tremblings wake,—
Muse of inconstancy are you,—
Come back again, with me partake
The blessed bread of mirth anew.

The things that filled our little nook,
Dear friends of love's sweet days of yore,
Resume their bright and festal look
At hope of seeing you once more.
Come, then, my love, you'll recognize
All that your leaving made despair,
The little bed, the glass of ample size
Wherein you often quaffed my share.

Your white dress you shall don again,
The one in which you looked so fair,
And as of old, on Sunday then,
We'll seek the woods and ramble there.
And 'neath the arbor rest, and sip
The limpid wine again at e'en
Wherein your lay its wing would dip
Ere mounting in the air serene.

Musette, her wandering fancy o'er,
The joyous carnival at rest,
One lovely morning sought once more,
Light-hearted bird, her former nest;
But while I kissed the faithless pet,
My heart was to emotion dead,
No longer was she my Musette,
While I was not myself, she said.

Adieu! then, go, my cherished one,
With our last love, you're truly dead;
And 'neath the calendar, our youth outrun
Lies buried, all its pleasures sped.
But if we rake the ashes o'er
Of happy days its columns show,
Perchance they would the key restore
Of our lost Paradise below.

"Well," said Marcel, when he had finished, "your mind is at rest now; my love for Musette is dead and gone, for the *worms*[14] have taken hold of it," he added ironically, pointing to the manuscript of his song.

"Poor boy," said Rodolphe, "your mind is fighting a duel with your heart; take care it doesn't kill it."

"That's already done," replied the painter; "it is all over with us, old man, we are dead and buried. There's but one youth! Where do you dine to-night?"

"If you choose," said Rodolphe, "we'll go and dine for twelve sous at our old restaurant on Rue du Four, where they have plates of village pottery, and where we used to be so hungry when we had finished eating."

"Faith, no," replied Marcel. "I am willing to look at the past, but it must be through a bottle of real wine, and sitting in a comfortable chair. What do you expect, I am corrupted. I care only for what is good now-a-days."

NOTES

1. Page 31.—See *Confession de Sylvius*, by Champfleury.

2. Page 75.—That is to say, under the stars.

3. Page 79.—Cicero's "maxim" is *Nascuntur poetæ* (poets are born). *Poêliers* means *stove-makers*.

4. Page 84.—The reference is to the Commander's ghost in Molière's *Don Juan*.

5. Page 155.—This play upon words is untranslatable. *Gens de sac*, more properly *gens de sac et de corde*, means *villains* or *miscreants; gens de sacoches* means *people with money-bags*.

6. Page 157—The French word *effets*—effects—means also promissory notes.

7. Page 157.—*Benoît*, literally *blessed*.

8. Page 162.—The allusion is to a celebrated French priest who died in 1660, and whose charitable deeds were typical of the Samaritan.

9. Page 163.—A term implying an unlimited postponement.

10. Page 187.—It is absolutely impossible to convey any idea of the joke in translation. Colline said: "Je le *crains, de cheval*," the joke consisting in the similarity of sound between *crains*, and *crins* meaning *mane* (of a horse).

11. Page 208.—Another untranslatable play upon words:

Rodolphe says: "Et les *bottes!*" and Colline shouts: "Il y en a des *bottes!*" the words being used in two different senses.

12. Page 275.—Rodolph's excitement is caused by Colline's pun. The French word for cash is *comptant*, the pronunciation of which is almost identical with that of *content*, with which Colline offends.

13. Page 285.—The name was probably Birne, which the phonetics of the French language would render almost as in the text—Birn'n.

14. Page 456.—*Vers*. This word means also verses or poetry.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	PREFACE	v
I	How the Bohemian Club was Organized	5
II	A Messenger from Providence	51
III	Lenten Amours	63
IV	Ali-Rodolphe; or, the Turk from Necessity	75
V	Charlemagne's Crown	87
VI	Mademoiselle Musette	101
VII	The Sands of Pactolus	113
VIII	What a Five-Franc Piece Costs	129
IX	The Violets from the Pole	143
X	Cape Tempest	155
XI	A Bohemian Café	169
XII	A Reception in Bohemia	183
XIII	The House-warming	211
XIV	Mademoiselle Mimi	223
XV	Donec Gratus ——	251
XVI	The Passage of the Red Sea	265
XVII	The Toilet of the Graces	279
XVIII	Francine's Muff	305
XIX	Musette's Whims	339
XX	Mimi wears Feathers	373
XXI	Romeo and Juliet	397
XXII	Epilogue of the Love-Affairs of Rodolphe and Mademoiselle Mimi	411
XXIII	There is but One Youth	453

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

BOHEMIAN LIFE

	PAGE
PORTRAIT OF HENRI MURGER	*Fronts.*
MARCEL RECOGNIZES HIS PICTURE	2
MARCEL HIRING A ROOM	24
SCHAUNARD FINDS HIS ROOM TENANTED	40
RODOLPHE VISITS MADEMOISELLE SIDONIE	80
MUSETTE'S LOVE STRATEGY	104
RODOLPHE MAKES A FIRE WITH HIS MANUSCRIPTS	152
THE BOHEMIANS AT THE CAFÉ MOMUS	176
THE BOHEMIANS ENTERTAINED	208
FRANCINE'S DEATHBED	312

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