Germinie Lacerteux

BY EDMOND AND JULES DE GONCOURT

CHICAGO:
LAIRD & LEE, PUBLISHERS.
1891

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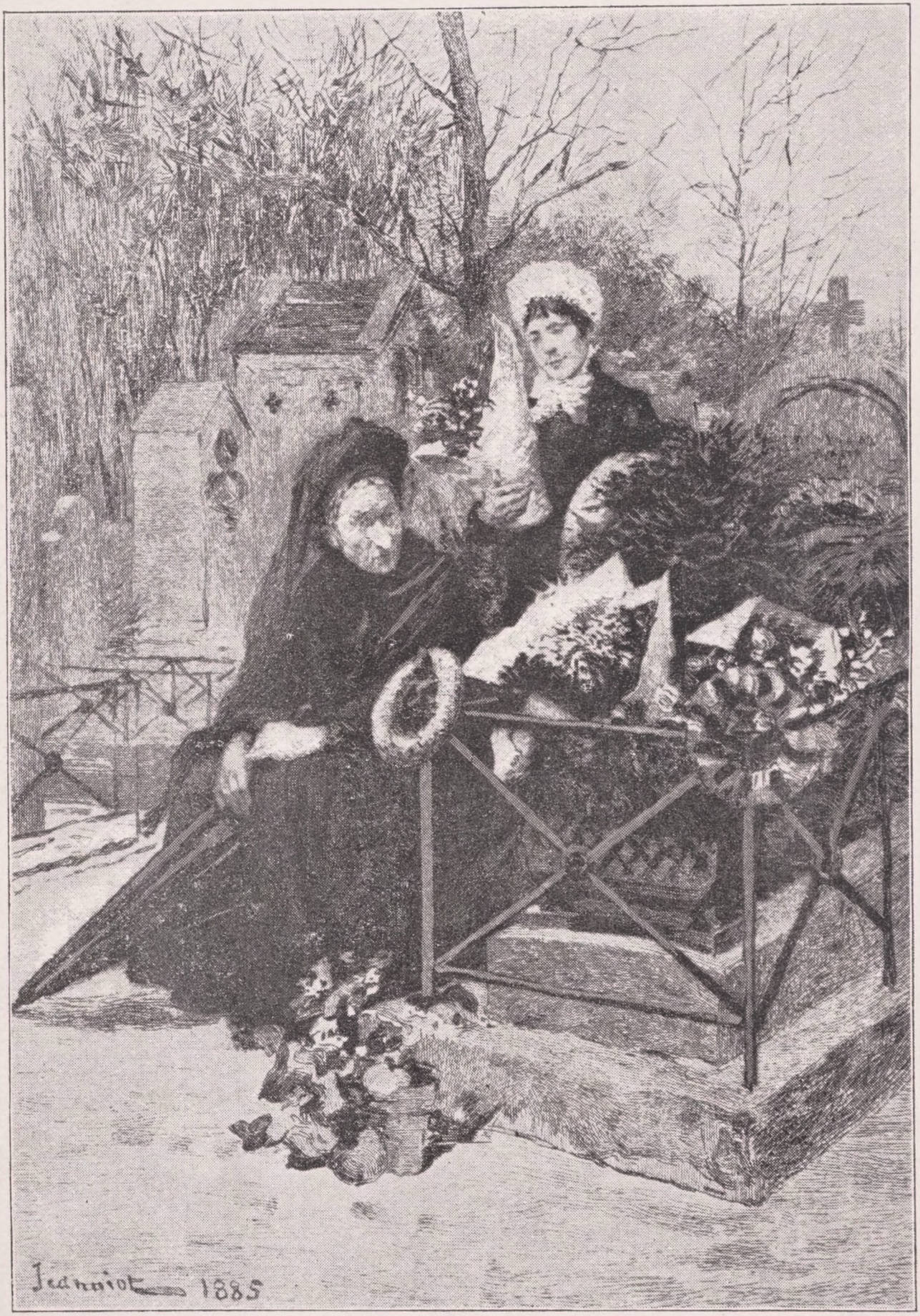
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THE LIBRARY OF CHOICE FICTION

GERMINIE LACERTEUX

BY

Louis Antoine Huot de Goncourt.

EDMOND AND JULES DE GONCOURT

WITH TEN ILLUSTRATIONS BY JEANNIOT

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

H. E. M.

CHICAGO
LAIRD & LEE PUBLISHERS
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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

We must demand the public's pardon for giving them this book and for warning them as to its contents.

The public like fiction; this is fact. They like books which deal with the fashionable world; this is taken from the street. They like wicked stories, confessions, scandals; this is pure and severe—it does not deal with the exposure of pleasure; it is a study of love.

Why, then, did you write it? Simply to shock the public?

No. Living in the nineteenth century, in a time of universal suffrage, of democracy, of liberalism, we questioned if those who were called the "lower classes" had not a claim upon the novel; if that world beneath a world, the people, should rest under a literary interdict, under the disdain of authors who until now have maintained silence as to the minds and hearts which they possess. We were curious to know if the conventional form of forgotten literature, tragedy, was extinct; if in a country without caste, and without lawful aristocracy, the

misfortunes of the poor and lowly appealed to the interest, to the pity, to the sympathies, in as great a degree as the misfortunes of the noble and wealthy; if, in a word, the tears which were shed by plebeians were shed like those of patricians.

These thoughts caused us to venture on the simple romance of "Soeur Philomene" in 1861; they caused us to publish "Germinie Lacerteux" to-day.

Now, will this book be criticized? It matters not. In these days, when the novel is spreading and growing; when it is beginning to take the serious, impassioned, living form of literary study and social inquiry; when it becomes, by analysis and psychological research, contemporary moral history—it can claim liberties and privileges. And if it seeks for art and truth, if it presents misfortune to remind the happier ones of Paris, if it exposes to the world that which Sisters of Mercy are brave enough to witness—human suffering which inspires charity—if this novel teaches that which in past centuries was called by the vast name of Humanity, we shall be satisfied—for that is its aim.

PARIS, October, 1864.

GERMINIE LACERTEUX

I

"You are saved! you are saved, mademoiselle!" joyfully cried the maid, closing the door upon the physician; and rushing toward the bed upon which her mistress lay, she clasped in her embrace the emaciated form.

The old lady silently took the girl's head between her hands, pressed it to her bosom, heaved a sigh, and said:

"So, I must still live?"

This scene occurred in a small room, the window of which looked upon a narrow strip of sky, three smoky chimneys, and several roofs.

On the mantel-piece, in this room, stood a clock with a large dial-plate, and two candlesticks representing three silver swans, their necks pierced by golden quivers. By the fire-place an easy-chair, a la Voltaire, covered with needle-work in chess-board design, such as children and old ladies delight in, extended its empty arms. Two small

Italian landscapes, a water-color with the date below it in red ink, and several miniatures hung upon the walls.

On a mahogany chest of drawers, a bronze figure of Time flying with his scythe served as a watch-stand for a tiny watch with a cipher of diamonds on blue enamel set with pearls. A black and green carpet lay upon the floor. At the window and the bed were Persian hangings—red upon a chocolate ground.

At the head of the bed hung a portrait which seemed to look thoughtfully down upon the invalid. It represented a man whose hard features rose above the high collar of a coat of green satin, while about his head was effeminately knotted a scarf in the prevailing fashion of the early years of the Revolution. The old lady lying in the bed resembled that portrait. She had the same heavy brows, black and imperious, the same aquiline nose—the same marked lines of will, of resolution, of strength. With her, however, the austerity of expression was somewhat mitigated by a ray of kindliness.

"Why! my Germinie is weeping," said the mistress, withdrawing her hands from the maid's caresses.

"Ah, dear lady, I wish I could always weep thus; it is so refreshing; it brings to my mind my poor mother, and all!"

"Come, come," said mademoiselle, closing her eyes and preparing to listen, "tell me your story."

"Ah, my poor mother!" The maid stopped. Then, with a torrent of words mingled with tears, she recommenced:

"Poor woman! I can see her going out for the last time—to take me to mass—on the twenty-first of January it was. Ah, poor mother, she suffered a great deal! She was forty-two when I was born. My father caused her many tears! At the time there was no bread in the house; and withal he was so proud, he would not accept help from the pastor. We never had any butter. But that made no difference to me, for my mother loved me the best of all, and she always found a little dripping or cheese for me to put on my bread. I was only five years old when she died. Her death was a great misfortune. I had a brother who was as fair as a lily, and good—you cannot think how good. Every one was fond of him. By dawn of day he was at his work, for we were weavers. They brought him yarn from all quarters, and always without weighing it. My father was not like him. He worked one hour and then he went into the fields; when he returned, he beat us; he was like a madman; they said it was because he was consumptive. Fortunately, my brother was near by; he kept my second sister from pulling my hair and teasing me, for she

was jealous when he took me to see them play nine-pins. At last it fell to his lot to maintain the family. My happiest days were when we killed the Christmas pigs, and when I helped prop the vines, in the month of June. We had a small vineyard at Saint Hilaire. The frost of 1828 killed everything, and we had a hard time that year; bread had to be made with bran. My father sometimes brought home mushrooms. But our misfortunes did not cease; we were oftener hungry than anything else. When I was in the meadow, I would watch until no one saw me, then creep along until I was near a cow, take off my wooden shoe, and milk her. My eldest sister was in service at the mayor's at Lenclos, and she sent home her wages of twenty-five francs. The second sewed in the village, but she worked from six o'clock until night for eight sous; those she wanted to save for the fete of Saint Remi. There were many who ate two potatoes daily for six months, in order to get a new dress for that day. Disaster came upon us from all sides. My father died. We had to sell our vineyard; then my brother was injured; it happened in this way: He went to the fete at Clefmont; while there he heard it rumored that my sister, who was in service, had been dishonored. He fell upon those who accused her. He was not very strong. His opponents were too many against

one; they threw him down and struck him in the stomach with their wooden shoes. They brought him home for dead. The physician, however, soon helped him, and told us that he was cured. But he could scarcely drag himself about. I knew that he was dying. When he was dead, poor, dear fellow, the mayor and all the villagers attended his funeral. My sister, having left the mayor's employ, was in a situation in Paris; my other sister had followed her. I was alone. My mother's cousin took me with her to Damblin; but I was unhappy there; I cried every night, and when I had an opportunity to escape, I always returned to our home. The kind people who lived there kept me until my relatives came for me. They knew where to find me. At last they wrote to my sister in Paris that she must take charge of me. They put me in the care of the conductor of a coach which ran between Langres and Paris; that was how I came to the city. I was then fourteen years old."

II

The old lady did not speak; she was comparing her life with that of her maid.

Mlle. de Varandeuil was born in 1782, in a mansion on Rue Royale, and ladies of rank held her at the baptismal font. Her father was a friend of the Comte D'Artois, in whose house he held an office. M. de Varandeuil had made one of those marriages common to the time in which he lived: he had married an actress, a singer who, without any great talent, had succeeded by the side of Mme. Todi, Mme. Ponteuil, and Mme. Saint Huberty.

The daughter of this union, born in 1782, was delicate and not at all handsome, for she had inherited her father's ridiculously large nose. There was nothing in her appearance of which her parents had occasion to be vain. Mme. de Varandeuil only saw her child once a day, when she permitted her to kiss her chin, that her lips might not interfere with the rouge on her cheeks. When the Revolution broke out, M. de Varandeuil, thanks to the protection of Comte D'Artois, was paymaster. Mme. de Varandeuil went to Italy under the pre-

text of ill-health, leaving to her husband the care of her daughter and a young son. His manifold duties left the selfish father no leisure to give his children the necessary attention. His affairs, too, became embarrassed. He left Rue Royale for the Hotel du Petil Charalois, belonging to his mother, who permitted him to make his home there. Time glided by. One evening during the first years of the establishment of the guillotine, as he was walking in Rue Saint Antoine behind a newsboy who was crying "Aux voleurs! Aux voleurs!" M. de Varandeuil bought a paper and read a revolutionary notice.

Some time after, his brother was arrested and confined in Hotel Tarlaru. His mother, seized with terror, foolishly sold the house in which he lived for a mere song. Paid in assignats, she died of grief, before the decline in value of the paper currency. The purchasers accorded M. de Varandeuil permission to occupy the rooms formerly used by the stable-boys. He lived, therefore, in the rear of the house, dropped his name, posted on the door, as he was commanded, the family name of Roulot, under which he buried that of de Varandeuil, the friend of Comte d'Artois. There he lived in retirement, hiding his head, rarely going abroad, without a servant, waited upon by his daughter. The Reign of Terror passed for them in

the expectation, the fear of death. Every night the little child listened at a grated dormer-window to the sentences of the day—to the names of the *list of winners in the lottery of Saint Guillotine.* At each rap upon the door she would open it fearing they had come to lead her father to the Place de la Revolution, whither her uncle had already been taken. Then came the moment when money—money, the luxury—would no longer obtain bread. It was carried almost by force from the baker's doors; to get it one had to stand for hours in file, in the cold morning air. The father dared not venture among that crowd of people; he feared recognition; he too disliked the inconvenience of the job. The little boy was too small—he would be crushed; so it fell to the daughter's lot to procure the bread to feed three mouths. Her small, thin form lost in a large knitted jacket belonging to her father, a coarse hat pushed over her eyes, she waited, shivering, in the midst of the bustle and confusion, for the moment when the baker's wife of Rue Francs Bourgeois thrust into her hands the loaf which her tiny fingers could scarcely hold. At last that poor child, who came so regularly, moved the woman's pity. With the kindness of heart peculiar to her class, as soon as the little one appeared in the long line, she sent her the bread she had come to obtain. But one day, when the girl was

about to take it from the boy's hands, a woman in the crowd, jealous of the favor shown her, gave her such a kick with her wooden shoe that she was confined to her bed a month; Mlle. de Varandeuil bore the mark of that blow through life.

During that month the family would have starved had it not been for the supply of rice which one of their acquaintances, Countess d'Auteuil, had been fortunate enough to obtain, and which she gladly shared with the father and his two children.

M. de Varandeuil saved himself from the revolutionary tribunal by his retired mode of life. He also disarmed suspicion by his animosity to the great personages at court. Whenever he had occasion to speak of the unhappy queen, he made use of such bitter, violent words, in a tone so sincere, that he impressed those around him as an enemy of royalty. At a Republican patriotic supper M. de Varandeuil had contrived to render himself perfectly safe. He told two of his companions at the table—ardent patriots, one of whom was leagued with Chaumette—that he was in great perplexity: his daughter had only been baptized, and he would be very happy if Chaumette would enter her on the register of the municipality, and honor her with a name chosen by him from the Republican calendar of Greece or Rome. Chaumette at an early date appointed a meeting with the father. Forthwith

Mlle. de Varandeuil was led into the large hall, and after a metaphorical address, Chaumette christened her Sempronie, a name which always clung to her.

Somewhat reassured by that, the family lived through the terrible days which preceded the fall of Robespierre. The 9th Thermidor and the deliverance arrived. But poverty, dire and pressing, remained. The two children and their father had no means of subsistence but the income from a play which M. de Varandeuil had been inspired to write in 1791, and which proved to be the best effort of those times of woe when each tried to forget death at night, when each wished to laugh to the last. Shortly that income, joined to the recovery of some debts, provided more than bread for the family. They left the Hotel du Petil Charalois, and took apartments in Rue du Chaume.

That was the only change made. The daughter continued to work for the father and brother. M. de Varandeuil had by degrees grown accustomed to see in her the drudge she had become. The parental eyes no longer recognized the daughter in the garb of a servant. She was not of his blood, no one who had the honor of belonging to him: she was a domestic whom he had on his hands. He became so strongly imbued with this idea, and he found the service so convenient and so cheap, that

in the course of time it required a struggle with the man to induce him to replace his child by a maid, and to spare the young girl the humiliating work of a servant.

Mme. de Varandeuil had refused to join her husband in Paris during the first years of the Revolution. Soon they heard that she had remarried in Germany, producing as her husband's certificate of death that of her brother-in-law, by substituting the former's Christian name for the latter's. Therefore the young girl grew to womanhood without care, without love, without a mother. She was separated from her father by his selfishness, his violence of temper: her large, sorrowful heart, longing for affection, had no object to love. She saw that she inspired a kind of pity on account of her sallow complexion, her long nose, her plainness; she was conscious of her ugliness, of the lack of taste in her dress, for which her father grudgingly gave her the money. She never received any allowance from him until she was thirty-five years old.

What sadness, what bitterness, what loneliness, in a life passed with that morose old man, who was amiable only in the presence of strangers, who left her evening after evening to follow his own pleasures! He took her nowhere, except to the "Vaudeville," where he had a box. She dreaded

going out with him: she was in continual fear of an outbreak of his temper. He invariably on such occasions would threaten some one with his cane, and haggle with the cabman.

In her solitude she had not her young brother: he was in the United States.

Marriage was not to be thought of; her father looked upon it as an excuse for abandoning him. He opposed the subject so strongly that, even if an opportunity presented itself, his daughter dared not mention it to him.

In the meantime our victories were robbing Italy. The masterpieces of Rome, Florence, and Venice pressed toward Paris. Italian art was in the ascendant. Collectors prized only works of the Italian school. In this movement M. de Varandeuil believed he had found a means of amassing wealth. He too had been seized with that artistic dilettanteism which was the fashion among the nobility before the Revolution. He had associated with artists; he liked pictures. He thought he would make a collection, and then sell it. Paris was full of objects of art. Every day he bought. Soon his small rooms were filled with old pictures so large that they could not be hung on the walls. These were Raphaels, Vincis, Andrea del Sartos. His daughter, terrified at the ruin staring them in the face, remonstrated with him. M. de Varandeuil became angry,

blushed to find so little appreciation of art in any one of his blood, and insisted that they would prove to be a fortune to him. The sale took place; it was a failure. Overwhelmed not alone by the loss of his money, but by the slight put upon his judgment of the works of the masters, M. de Varandeuil informed his daughter that they were too poor to remain in Paris, and that they would be obliged to live in the country. Vainly did she attempt to change her father's resolution.

M. de Varandeuil rented a house at Isle Adam. There he was in the vicinity of several castles which were commencing to fill with their owners. Since the Revolution a small colony of wealthy merchants had established themselves in that part of the country. The name of de Varandeuil impressed those good people. They bowed low to him; they fought for the honor of his presence; they listened deferentially to his stories of society. In this retreat M. de Varandeuil intended to carry out a project. What he had failed to do for the honor and glory of Italian art by means of his collection, he proposed to accomplish by means of history. He knew something of the Italian language; he would give to the French public Vasari's "Lives of the Painters," would translate it with his daughter's help. The burden of the work fell upon her; leaving her immersed in the volumes, he would

take walks, visit his neighbors, and complain pathetically to them of the enormity of his undertaking. Then he would return home, listen to a translated passage, pass judgment upon it, and return to his amusements. Sempronie was left as much to herself here as she had been in Paris. Her pleasure was never consulted.

To this new abode M. de Varandeuil had brought a servant, who very soon gained great power over his mind. Her child he unfeelingly brought up in the house with his daughter. One day he insisted that the woman should take her seat at the table, and that Sempronie should wait upon her. Mlle. de Varandeuil rebelled against the indignity, and threatened to leave the house did he not dismiss the woman. He finally complied with her demands, surprised at her mutiny. Sempronie after that cared for him more self-sacrificingly, more assiduously than ever. One last proof of her devotion was required of her. The old man was seized with an apoplectic fit, which rendered him a helpless wreck; she bore patiently with his caprices, his selfishness, his reproaches. This lasted ten years, during which time Mlle. de Varandeuil had no other solace than to lavish an almost maternal affection upon a newly married relative whose friendship she had formed while in Paris. Every fortnight she visited that happy home, caressed

the infant slumbering in its cradle, and dined without interruption; for toward the end of her father's life, he would not even permit her to dine—he could not spare her from his side for so long a time. He knew, he would say querulously, that it was not very amusing to tend an infirm old man, but that he would soon be gone. He passed away in 1818; before dying he addressed no other words of farewell to her who had been a devoted daughter to him for forty years, but these: "I know very well that you never loved me!"

Two years after her father's demise, Sempronie's brother returned from America. He brought with him a mulattress who had nursed him through the yellow fever, and whom he had married. Although she entertained a patrician's ideas with regard to negroes, and looked upon the woman, with her peculiar dialect and her ignorance, as a species of monkey, Mlle. de Varandeuil felt that those were the only family ties left her.

M. de Varandeuil, to whom, on the return of the Bourbons, Comte d'Artois had paid arrears, bequeathed ten thousand livres to his children. Her brother had only a pension of fifteen hundred francs from the United States. Mlle. de Varandeuil calculated that five or six thousand livres were not sufficient to maintain a household in which there were two children, so she proposed to add her income to

his. Her brother accepted her offer, and they took modest rooms on Rue de Clichy, where she led a quiet life, dressed simply, practiced economy, occupied the poorest room in the suite, and only spent for herself eighteen hundred or two thousand francs a year. Soon, however, the mulattress grew jealous. She objected to the friendship existing between brother and sister. A sense of inferiority fanned the flame of her hate and rage. She encouraged her children to treat their aunt with insolence. Mlle. de Varandeuil did not notice their first and second offenses, but the third time she punished them severely. Thereupon ensued a scene; the brother interposed, and peace was established for the time being. But insult followed insult, and a separation was decided upon. It was one of the greatest trials of Mlle. de Varandeuil's life to give up her dream of happiness by the side of the happiness of others. She did not move very far away, so that she could care for her brother if he were ill—see him, meet him; still there was a void in her heart and life.

In cases of illness or trouble, she was always on hand; she deprived herself in order to help the poor; her purse was always ready to dispense alms, not in the shape of money, for she feared the tavern, but to buy bread of the baker.

Strange old lady! She to whom naught was left

but the breath of life, had attained a serene philosophy—a haughty, almost ironical, stoicism; although exceedingly kind, one thing was yet lacking to perfect her kindness, and that was forgiveness. Never had she been able to bend her stern nature to that. A wound that reached her heart, she never forgot; time nor death could not blot out its memory.

Religion she had none. She had been reared in a time when there were no churches. Mass had no existence when she was young. Her conscience had always been her faith, her accuser. She was a curious mixture of the two centuries in which she had lived; she did not respect the king, and she hated the people. She advocated equality, but she had a horror of parvenus. She was at once a Republican and an aristocrat.

Meanwhile, the years rolled by, bringing the Restoration and the monarchy of Louis Philippe. She saw her friends, her relatives, borne away one by one, while she remained, sorrowful and surprised that death had passed her by.

Yielding to her infirmities, she sat in her armchair day by day, living over the past. Once a week, however, she went out. Once a week, letting nothing, not even indisposition, interfere with her, she visited the cemetery of Montmartre, where rested her father, her brother—those she had loved

and whose sufferings had ceased before hers. For the dead and death she had an almost ancient reverence. The tomb was sacred to her.

On the same day each week she would set out early with her maid, who gave her the support of her arm and carried her folding-chair. When near the cemetery she entered a florist's whom she had patronized many years. There she would rest a while; then, loading Germinie with wreaths of immortelles, she proceeded to the cemetery and made her pilgrimage from tomb to tomb. She threw aside withered flowers, brushed away the dead leaves, adjusted fresh wreaths, and seated herself dreamily on her chair. Then she arose, turned as if to bid farewell to those she was leaving, walked on a few paces, stopped, muttered under her breath; and, her visit paid, she returned slowly, religiously, in silence, as if she feared to speak.

III

As she mused, Mlle. de Varandeuil closed her eyes. The maid did not continue, and the story of her life, which was on her lips that night, was left untold. It was as follows:

When Germinie Lacerteux arrived in Paris, her sisters were anxious to have her earn her own living, and procured her a situation in a cafe as maid-of-all-work. The child, fresh from the country, became homesick. She too felt the first instincts of modesty, and the woman within her revolted at the constant contact with men. Whenever she visited her sisters there were tears, entreaties, scenes. Without complaining of anything in particular, she seemed to dread returning, saying that she could not remain there; that she was dissatisfied; that she would rather be with them. They replied that she had already cost them enough; that it was a caprice; that she was all right where she was, and took her back to the cafe in tears. She dared not tell them all she had to undergo from the debauchees who frequented the place. At all times she was forced to endure the cowardly

pleasantries and malicious tricks of those men who were delighted to find a martyr in the little, unsophisticated country girl, timid and retiring, thinly and wretchedly clad in her rustic dress. They ridiculed her ignorance; they deceived and imposed upon her. Then again they called to her cheeks the blush of shame by the speeches which she did not wholly comprehend.

The girl would have confided in her sisters had she dared. As with proper nourishment she grew plumper, her eyes brighter, and her cheeks more blooming, those men grew bolder. Ill-treated, scolded, brutally used by the proprietor of the establishment, who was in the habit of abusing his maids, and who wished them to have no dignity, the only kindness she received was shown her by this man's wife. In consequence, she loved the woman devotedly, and served her with the fidelity of a dog. She ran all her errands without asking any questions; she carried letters to her lovers, and became quite an adept at the work. She was agile and nimble; she ingeniously evaded the husband's awakened suspicions, and without realizing what she was doing, what she was concealing, she took a mischievous delight in injuring the man who had caused her so much suffering.

Among her comrades there was an old man, named Joseph, who protected her, who circum-

vented the plots against her, and who checked with an almost paternal interest all impure conversation in her presence. However, Germinie's abhorrence of that house increased daily, and her sisters had often to take her back forcibly.

One day there was to be a grand review held on the Champ de Mars, and the waiters were granted leave of absence. Only Germinie and old Joseph were left in the cafe. Joseph was busy in a small, dark room, assorting soiled linen. He called Germinie to help him, and forcibly detained her.

The following day, when Joseph attempted to approach her, she recoiled from him in terror, and for some time thereafter if a man came near her she involuntarily trembled.

In the course of several months, while visiting her sister, the portress, she was taken ill; medical consultation disclosed the cause. At first her sisters were confused; then their confusion turned to anger. They heaped blows and reproaches upon her. She suffered the blows; she did not attempt to defend nor excuse herself: she vaguely hoped they would kill her. They proposed a court of justice, but she shrank from the thought of parading her shame. Once, when her mother's memory was alluded to, there was a light in her eyes which caused the two women qualms of conscience; they remembered that it was they who had placed her

in the cafe, detained her there, exposed her, almost forced her to disgrace.

That evening Germinie's younger sister conducted her to Rue Saint Martin, to the house of the woman with whom she lodged. The two sisters slept upon the same mattress, and Germinie was forced to listen all night to the venomous jealousies which had always been deeply rooted in the other's heart. In the day-time the landlady took possession of her, catechised her, and preached to her. She remained in that house four months, a prisoner; at the end of that time, her trials were over, the child of dishonor dead.

When restored to health, she entered the employ of a hair-dresser in Rue Lafitte. Two or three times she met old Joseph, who desired to marry her, but she escaped from him; the man was ignorant of what had just occurred.

In her new situation Germinie pined. The house in which she lived was what domestics call "a barrack." Her mistress often went off for the day without leaving the maid any dinner. The young girl was almost starved. Her color left her, her eyes were encircled by deep rings, her lips took a purple hue. She grew emaciated and weak from lack of food.

Her sister found her another position, this time in the house of an actor, a retired comedian, liv-

ing on the money he had earned by making all Paris laugh. This kind man was old; he had never had any children. He took pity on the miserable girl, interested himself in her, cared for, nursed her. He took her to the country. He walked with her in the bright sunshine, and saw her animation return. He delighted in her happiness. Often, to amuse her, he would try to reproduce some forgotten role. Jocisse seemed to her like a grandfather. At the end of several months he died, and Germinie, by the sudden death of Mlle. de Varandeuil's maid, entered her service in Rue Toitbout, in the same house in which her sister was portress.

IV

At the time of which we are writing, the Catholic religion sent out powerful roots into the depths of the people. The working-woman of that day saw in the priest who listened to her confessions less the minister of God, the judge of her sins, the arbitrator of her salvation, than the confidant of her sorrows, the friend in distress. He would listen to her and comfort her as readily as he would the lady of fashion.

Germinie on entering Mlle. de Varandeuil's service became very devout. Of her mistress, hardened by her own experiences of life, she could make no confidant, and soon the confessional became the sacred shrine of her most secret thoughts.

The young priest to whom she confessed humored her frequent visits; he did not disdain nor repulse the trust of a servant who confided in him as she would in a mother. The priest was young—he was handsome—he had lived in the world. A great sorrow had caused him to assume the garb of a priest. He felt a melancholy sympathy for the poor soul; but while she believed that the fervor

of her religious zeal was for the sake of the Lord, he perceived that her adoration was for him.

He tried to warn Germinie, to turn from himself that amorous attachment. He became more reserved and distant. One day, without any explanation, he sent her to another confessor. Germinie only confessed once or twice to him, then she ceased coming; of all her religion, there only remained the memory of a certain *douceur*, like the odor of burnt incense.

She was with mademoiselle when she fell ill. During that time Germinie did not go to mass. On the first Sunday that the old lady had no need of her presence, she was surprised to find that her "devotee" remained at home.

"Ah," said she to her, "you do not go to see your pastor any more; what has he done to you?"

"Nothing," Germinie replied.

V

"Here I am, mademoiselle! Look at me," said Germinie.

Several months had passed. She had obtained her mistress' permission to attend a ball that evening in celebration of the marriage of the grocer's sister, who had chosen her as maid of honor, and she had come to show herself in her finery, in her muslin dress.

Mademoiselle raised her head from the old book printed in large type which she was reading, took off her spectacles, laid them between the pages to mark her place, and said:

"You, my bigot, at a ball! Do you know, girl, that seems like a farce! By my faith, you will have no lack of admirers. But you must not marry; I will not keep you; I will not be your children's slave. Come nearer; you are quite coquettish."

"Oh, no, mademoiselle," Germinie began.

"Men are fine creatures," continued Mlle. de Varandeuil; "they will use what you have, without taking into account the blows. Marriage! ah, I

am sure that you will give up all idea of it when you see others. Now turn around, that I may look at you," said mademoiselle in her abrupt voice; and putting her thin hands on the arms of her chair, patting her feet upon the floor, she began to inspect Germinie and her dress.

"What, is it you?" she said, after several moments of silence. "I have never looked at you so closely. Good God, yes! Ah, but—but—" she muttered some indistinct words between her teeth, and resumed her examination of the girl.

Germinie was not handsome. Her hair, of a dark chestnut, which seemed almost black, curled untractably; rebellious locks escaped from their place, in spite of the use of pomade. Her low forehead projected over her small, watchful, scintillating eyes. These were neither brown nor blue; they were of an indefinable and changing gray—a gray which was not a color, but a light. Emotion brightened them with the fire of fever, pleasure with the flash of intoxication, passion with a phosphorescence. The greatest detriment to her appearance was the distance between her mouth and nose, which was short and upturned, with distended nostrils. That disproportion gave an almost sinister character to the lower part of her face, while her large mouth, with its white teeth and full lips, smiled a peculiar and vaguely irritating

smile. Her low bodice disclosed her neck, her bosom, her shoulders, the whiteness of which contrasted with her sun-burnt face. Her arms hung by her side; they were round and smooth, with pretty dimpled elbows; her wrists were delicate, her hands as soft and her nails as shapely as those of a lady.

There was a peculiar charm about this plain woman. Her mouth, her eyes, her very ugliness, was attractive. During Mlle. de Varandeuil's inspection of her, Germinie bent over her and kissed her hand.

"Well, well, that will do," said mademoiselle. "Go along, enjoy yourself, and try not to be very late."

When Mlle. de Varandeuil was left alone, she poked the embers with the tongs, rested her elbows on her knees, and gazed meditatively into the fire.

VI

In speaking of marriage to Germinie, Mlle. de Varandeuil had touched the key-note of her unhappiness. Family troubles, however, snatched her away from her own trials.

Her brother-in-law formed intemperate habits, used up his business profits, and ran into debt. His wife, in order to help him and to free him from debt, applied for and obtained a situation as box-opener at the Theatre Historique. In the course of a few months she contracted a severe cold, and died, leaving a sickly child three years old. The father went into the country to borrow some money; while there he married again, and nothing more was heard of him.

Coming from her sister's funeral, Germinie rode with an old woman who lived by those means which keep so many of the poor of Paris from starvation. Now she cut hair for brushes; now she sold gingerbread. In Lent she rose at four o'clock and secured a chair at Notre Dame, which, when the people began to arrive, she would sell for ten or twelve sous. In order to heat the hole in which

she lived in Rue Saint Victor, she would go at nightfall and pull off the bark from the trees of the Luxembourg. Germinie, who knew her from having given her crusts of bread every week, rented a room in the sixth story of their house, and installed her therein with the little girl.

She acted impulsively; her sister's unkindness to her she no longer remembered. Germinie had only one thought—her niece. She wished her to recover—to be saved from death by care. Whenever she had a spare moment she climbed to the sixth story, fondled the child, gave her some tea, arranged her pillows, and descended out of breath, but radiant with delight. Germinie spared nothing, but procured the little one every luxury; her wages were spent in that way. Finally the child was pronounced out of danger.

One morning, Germinie's other sister, who had married a mechanic, came to bid her farewell: her husband was going to join some comrades about to embark for Africa. She proposed taking her sister's child with her, and bringing it up with her own. They would pay all expenses; Germinie need only furnish the money for the voyage. She ought to agree to the separation on her mistress' account. She too was the orphan's aunt. She brought every argument to bear to persuade Germinie to let her have the child, calculating that, once in

Africa, she could move Germinie's pity, obtain from her her wages—rob both her heart and her purse.

Separation from her niece meant a great deal to the maid; the child had become a part of her existence; she had snatched her from disease—that life was owing to her care.

She knew, on the other hand, that she could never bring her to her own home—that mademoiselle, at her advanced age, could not have a prattling baby around her. Scandalous tongues, too, were busy circulating the report that the little one was Germinie's. The latter asked her mistress' advice; she counseled her to confide her niece to her sister, putting before her all the difficulties as to the charge of her, and giving her money to defray the expense of the journey.

The separation was a great blow to Germinie. Having no longer her niece, her heart yearned for love; in her spirit of loneliness, she turned again to the church for comfort. Three months later she received the intelligence of her sister's death. The husband drew in his letter a pitiful picture of his position; the expense of interment had been large, the fever prevented him from working; he alluded in touching terms to the two small children left motherless. Germinie shed bitter tears on the receipt of that letter. She pitied the poor man,

alone in a strange country; she fancied she could hear the children calling her, but she could not decide to go to them.

Mlle. de Varandeuil, seeing her maid so pensive and sad, questioned her as to the cause, but in vain. Germinie would not tell her. She vacillated between what seemed to her duty on the one hand, and ingratitude on the other—between her sister's children and her mistress. She could not leave mademoiselle. Then, again, she told herself that God would not wish her to desert her family. She glanced around the room and said, "I must go!"

She feared mademoiselle might be taken ill if she left her; the thought if another maid succeeded her, aroused her jealousy. At other times, religion prompted self-sacrifice, and she was ready to devote her life to her brother-in-law. As she called to mind his coarseness, his intemperate habits, his harsh treatment of her sister, she dreaded the position.

At a word, at a gesture, of mademoiselle's, her plans all melted away; she felt bound to her mistress forever; an indescribable terror possessed her at the thought of separating her life from hers.

Two years glided by. One day, by chance, Germinie heard that her niece had died several weeks after her sister; her brother-in-law had kept the

death from her, hoping to influence her and to persuade her to come to him in Africa, in order to gain possession of her few paltry sous.

VII

About this time, a small milk-shop near Mlle. de Varandeuil's apartments changed hands, in consequence of a sale of the contents by the sheriff. The shop was repainted, the front windows decorated with gilt letters; pyramids of chocolate, flowers, and liquor glasses.

The woman who had rented the creamery was a person of about fifty years of age, inclined to stoutness, but still preserving signs of beauty. It was reported in the neighborhood that she had started herself in business with the money left her by an old gentleman whose servant she had been until his death. She was a native of the same place as Germinie—not of the same village, but of a small settlement in its vicinity. The stout woman was complimentary and caressing. She addressed every one as "my dear." She detested vulgarity, blushed at trifles. She delighted in secrets; her life was spent in gossiping and weeping. When she had eaten heartily, she would cry, "I am going to die!" She shed tears when any one died, when the milk turned; she wept over differ-

ent occurrences of the day—she wept for the sake of weeping!

Germinie was very soon moved to pity for that tearful creature. She spent hours in the shop; she felt drawn toward the woman. Their intimacy was knit more closely by all the mysterious bonds of friendship between those women of the people—by the continual gossiping, the daily exchange of the nothings of life, the naps side by side and chair by chair.

VIII

Mme. Jupillon, who claimed to have been married and signed herself "Widow Jupillon," had one son, still a boy. She had sent him to Saint Nicolas, to that religious educational home where, for thirty francs a month, the rudiments of an education and a trade were taught to the children of the lower classes. Germinie always accompanied Mme. Jupillon on Thursdays when she visited Bibi. The visit afforded her distraction, and she was contented to mount to the top of the omnibus with a large basket of provisions, which she took charge of during the ride.

Mother Jupillon met with an accident one day, and was not able to walk for eighteen months; so Germinie went to Saint Nicolas alone, and being always ready to help others, she took as much interest in the boy as if she were related to him. She never missed a Thursday, and always came with her hands full of cakes, fruit, and sweets she had bought. She kissed the urchin, satisfied herself as to his health, looked to see if he had his knitted vest under his blouse, and made him show her the soles of his shoes, to see if they needed

mending. She inquired if they were satisfied with him, if he studied, if he had good marks. She talked to him of his mother, and admonished him to love God. Until the clock struck two, she walked in the court-yard with him: the child offered her his arm, proud to be seen with a lady better dressed than the majority of those who came thither—with a lady in silk.

He was eager to learn to play the flageolet—it would only cost five francs a month, he said. His mother had refused to give him the money. Germinie secretly brought him the hundred sous a month. It, too, was humiliating to him to wear the blouse of his uniform when he came home for his vacation. On his birthday, Germinie placed a large bundle before him: it contained a coat which she had bought for him. There were scarcely twenty of his comrades whose parents could afford to buy them such luxuries.

She spoiled him thus several years, leaving no wish ungratified, encouraging in the boy the pride and caprices of the wealthy, softening for him the privations and hardships of his school-life.

Meanwhile, the boy grew to manhood. Germinie did not realize it; she still looked upon him as a child. As was her habit, she always stooped to kiss him.

One day she was summoned by the abbe who

was at the head of the school. The abbe proposed expelling Jupillon. Forbidden literature had been found in his possession. Germinie, trembling at the thought of the punishment the boy would receive from his mother if he returned home, begged, prayed, implored; she finally obtained pardon for the culprit.

On returning to Jupillon, she was about to take him to task, but at the first word of reprimand Bibi cast upon her a glance and a smile, in which there was none of the innocence of a child. Her eyes fell, and it was she who blushed. Two weeks passed ere she again visited Saint Nicolas.

IX

About the time when young Jupillon had completed his studies, the maid on the floor below Germinie often came with the latter to spend an evening at Mme. Jupillon's. Very soon she came every night. She paid for cakes and wine for all, amused herself with little Jupillon, told him to his face that he was handsome, and treated him like a child. The young man, proud of and pleased at the attention shown him by the first woman who ever noticed him, in a short while showed a decided preference for Adele, as she was called.

Germinie grew passionately jealous. Jealousy was the ground-work of her nature. Those whom she loved she must possess absolutely. She would not permit them to give to others an iota of their affections. In short, her heart was exacting and despotic. Giving all, she required all. Germinie's jealousy turned to rage when she saw the woman establish herself in the shop and make herself familiar with the young man. Her hatred of the shameless creature, who could be seen every Sunday on the boulevards with soldiers, increased. She employed every possible means to have Mme.

Jupillon drive her away; but she had become one of her best customers, and the woman refused to expel her.

Germinie then applied to the son, but he only redoubled his attentions in her presence, if for no other reason than to see Germinie's "nose turn up," as he expressed it, and to enjoy wounding her. Soon Germinie divined the woman's intentions; she knew what she wanted with that "child"—for he was still a child to her, notwithstanding his seventeen years. From that time she followed the couple everywhere. She did not leave them alone a moment; she accompanied them to parties, to the theater, into the country, on all their walks, trying to restrain Adele, and to inspire her with a sense of modesty, by saying in a low voice: "A child! have you no shame?" while the woman replied by a burst of coarse laughter.

She tried to put an end to this infatuation; unwearyingly she separated them, kept them apart. She thrust herself between them; she intercepted their hands when about to touch, their lips when about to meet. She felt upon her cheeks the breath of the kisses she had prevented. Against her will, and possessed with a certain horror, she in her heart secretly participated in those embraces, those desires; while her efforts each day lessened the young man's respect for and reserve toward

her. There came a day when she was less severe with herself than she had been; that day she did not shun his advances so abruptly—she was exhausted with suffering. Love had slowly entered her own heart, and, bruised with jealousy, she made no resistance. But she did not dream of belonging to him. She was lost in the depths of devotion, asking nothing of her lover but a caress.

X

That blissful but unsatisfactory love produced a singular change in Germinie. She was filled with a healthy glow; her blood coursed freely through her veins. She was wonderfully animated; the nervous energy which had sustained her gave place to activity, to mirth. She no longer had any ailments. Contrary to her custom, she awoke in the mornings refreshed; she dressed herself hastily, her fingers moved nimbly, and she was astonished to find herself so full of life, of spirits.

During the day she felt the same happiness, the same gayety; she felt the necessity of walking, of running, of continual action. Her past experiences seemed to have faded away. She went up and down stairs for nothing. When she was seated her feet patted the floor impatiently. She scrubbed, cleaned, set to rights, washed without ceasing—always at work, going in and out!

"My gracious!" said her mistress to her, disturbed by the noise; "are you crazy, Germinie?"

Another day, on entering the kitchen, mademoiselle saw some earth in a cigar-box in the sink.

"What is that?" she asked.

"That is grass which I have sowed," said Germinie. "You like grass, do you not? Your canary-birds shall no longer be without it."

XI

Most of Germinie's time was spent in the creamery. Her duties at mademoiselle's did not tie her down, and left her a great deal of leisure. A cutlet or a whiting was all she had to cook. In the evening, mademoiselle, instead of detaining her at home to keep her company, preferred sending her for a walk, to get the air. All she asked of her was to be in by ten o'clock, to assist her to retire. When Germinie was late, she disrobed alone.

The former devoted all of her leisure to the people in the creamery; she took her coffee there in the morning, remained until nine o'clock, when she returned to prepare mademoiselle's chocolate; from breakfast until dinner she found pretexts for several visits to the shop, stopping and chatting invariably.

"What a magpie you are!" said mademoiselle to her, in a snappish voice, with smiling eyes.

At half-past five, the cloth having been removed, she again found her way to Mme. Jupillon's, remained there until ten o'clock, climbed five flights of stairs, and in five minutes undressed her mis-

tress, who was somewhat surprised to see her in such great haste to retire: she could remember the time when Germinie liked to doze in the arm-chairs, and never could be persuaded to go to her chamber.

The candle was scarcely extinguished in mademoiselle's room when Germinie was again at Mme. Jupillon's, that time to remain until midnight; she often did not leave until the policeman, seeing the light, tapped on the shutters.

In order to be always there—to have the right of being there—never to be out of sight of the man she loved, to watch, to guard him—she had become the servant of the house. She swept the shop; she prepared the meals and the dog's porridge. She waited upon the son; she made his bed, she brushed his clothes, she cleaned his boots, happy and proud to touch that which belonged to him, willing to kiss the very dust from his feet.

She did the work, she kept the shop, she served the customers. Mme. Jupillon depended on her for everything; and while the girl toiled and drudged, the coarse woman, giving herself the airs of a lady, seated in a chair on the sidewalk, inhaling the fresh air, jingled in her pocket beneath her apron the profits of the day.

XII

When spring arrived, Germinie asked Jupillon almost every evening, "Shall we go to the entrance to the fields?" Jupillon would don his black and red checked flannel shirt, his cap of black velvet, and they would set out for the place called by the people of that quarter "the entrance to the fields."

They walked along the Chaussee Clignancourt with a concourse of Parisians, hurrying on to drink in a breath of air. The heat had abated; the setting sun gilded the house-tops and chimneys with its rays. At Chateau Rouge they saw the first tree, the first leaves. At Rue du Chateau the scene burst upon them with dazzling beauty. The country, in the distance, lay before them bathed in a flood of gold. Swallows circled joyously above their heads. The birds twittered gayly. With delight Germinie listened to that music; she saw women at the windows, men in their shirt-sleeves in the gardens, mothers on the door-steps, with their children on their knees.

When the pavement ceased. In its stead was a wide, white, chalky, dusty road, made of debris

of rubbish, of pieces of limestone and brick, furrowed into great ruts made by the large wheels of wagons loaded with stone. People were coming and going; it was an amusing sight. Germinie passed women carrying their husbands' canes, girls hanging upon their brothers' arms, old women walking with folded arms, resting from their labors. Workmen pushed their children in perambulators, boys came with their fishing-tackle. No one hurried; all were enjoying happy idleness. Behind Montmartre they found some herbage ripened by the sun. Germinie liked to see the carders at work, the horses at pasture, the soldiers playing bowls, the children flying their black kites against the clear sky.

At the end of this road they turned to cross the railroad bridge, past the rag-pickers' settlement. They hastened by the hovels, built of stolen materials. Germinie felt vaguely terrified. But at the fortifications her delight returned. She seated herself on the slope with Jupillon. Near by were families in groups, workmen lying full-length upon the ground, gentlemen examining the heavens with a telescope, philosophers in distress, their coats shiny with age, their hats as rusty as their beards.

Before them was an odd panorama: white blouses, blue aprons, cafes, wine-shops, fruit-stands, shooting-galleries, from which arose tri-

colored poles. To their right lay Saint Denis; to their left, beyond a row of houses which eclipsed it, the sun was setting gorgeously above Saint Ouen.

They proceeded on their way through the gate, past the sausage shops of Lorraine, the venders of waffles, public-houses, arbors without foliage, in which a crowd of men, women, and children were eating fried potatoes, mussels, and shrimps. Then they reached the first field, the first green meadow, on the edge of which stood a table filled with ginger-bread, mint pastilles, and hot cocoa.

A strange place! where the smell of dripping mingled with the evening air, the bustle round about with the silence of the heavens, the odor of the dry soil with the scent of the corn-fields—immorality with Nature!

Nevertheless, Germinie was content. Nearing the edge of the corn-field, she inhaled its balm.

They returned and reascended the slope. The sun had disappeared; the sky was gray along the horizon, pink above that, and still above that of a bluish tint. Over the verdure were cast the shadows of darkness, the throng looked indistinct; white took the hue of blue. Everything was effaced by the death of day, and when the shadows deepened, began the orgies of the night. On the slope the grass waved in the breeze.

Germinie and Jupillon turned their steps home-

ward; the former seeing everything indistinctly on the way, wearied by the hard road, but content to be weary, almost fainting—she still was happy.

XIII

When Mme. Jupillon saw Germinie, her face beamed with delight; she kissed her with effusion, she addressed her in a caressing tone, she looked at her with fondness. The woman was almost maternal in her tenderness. She gave Germinie an insight into her business affairs, into all her secrets. She seemed to trust in her as in a person of her own blood. When she spoke of the future she always included Germinie as one from whom she could never be separated. Often she would smile mysteriously, as if she saw all that was going on, and was not displeased. Sometimes, too, when her son was seated beside Germinie, turning on them her tender, tearful eyes—the eyes of a mother—she would embrace them both with a look which seemed to bless and unite her children.

Without uttering a word that could compromise her, and repeating that her son was much too young to marry, she encouraged Germinie's hopes and illusions by her attitude toward her, her looks of secret indulgence, by her silence when she seemed to open to her the arms of a mother. Employing


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all her powers of deceit, this woman succeeded in overcoming, by a tacit promise of marriage, Germinie's last scruples.

In all this the wretched woman only aimed at one thing—to attach to herself a servant who would cost her nothing.

XIV

One day, as Germinie was descending the back staircase, she heard a voice call to her over the balusters; it was Adele, who asked her to bring her two sous' worth of butter, and ten of bitters.

"Now, you must rest a moment," said Adele to her when she returned. "We never see you any more; you never come here. Come! you have plenty of time to spend with your old lady. I could not exist with such an antichrist-like creature as she is! Sit down. There is no work to be done to-day. Madame is in bed. When there is no money, madame lies down all day and reads novels. Will you have some?" and she held toward Germinie the bottle of bitters. "No? Ah, I remember now, you do not drink. It is strange not to drink—you make a mistake. Will you, then, write a few words for me to my lover. I have told you about him. Wait, here is madame's pen and some of her perfumed paper."

Germinie was about to begin the letter.

"Say, Germinie, you have not heard of madame's odd fancy, have you? It is indeed an odd fancy

for a woman like her, who can choose associates from among the best; but, my dear, madame is smitten with that Jupillon. We needed nothing but that to die of hunger!"

Germinie, her pen ready upon the paper, stared fixedly at Adele.

Adele's face fairly beamed on perceiving Germinie's discomposure.

"Ah! it is comical; but true, nevertheless," she continued, sipping her bitters. "She noticed the fellow in the shop door the other day, when she was returning from the races. She has been in the shop two or three times, under the pretext of making some purchases. Well, now, my letter! Has what I have said annoyed you? I really believe you do not want any one to come near the little fellow! Absurd!"

And as Germinie made a gesture of denial, Adele cried:

"Such a milk-sop, too! He is not my style; but that is your business. And now, my letter?"

Germinie bent over the sheet of paper; but she was agitated, her nervous fingers could scarcely guide the pen.

"There!" cried she, after the lapse of several minutes, throwing it aside. "I do not know what ails me to-day. I will write for you some other time."

"As you will, my dear. But I shall count upon you. Come to-morrow. I will tell you of madame's goings-on, and we will have a good laugh!"

When the door closed, Adele burst out laughing; her little ruse had disclosed to her Germinie's secret.

XV

Love was only to young Jupillon the gratification of an evil passion, which sought in the possession of woman the right and the pleasure of scorning her. Loving words, caresses, tender thoughts, had no existence for him. In place of those he substituted the heartless instincts of libertinism awakened within him by coarse literature, companions, and conversation. The love of woman seemed to him something forbidden, illicit, gross, cynical, and ludicrous—an excellent thing for irony and disillusion; woman was to him only an object of degradation.

That peculiar type of sneering, impertinent Parisian was embodied in him. Jupillon had a wicked mouth—cruelty lurked in its corners; upon his small, clear-cut, insolent features was stamped a certain air of boastfulness, of energy, of carelessness, of intelligence, of impudence—all sorts of knavish expressions, which at times were tempered by an air of feline cajolery. His trade of glove-cutter—he had fixed upon that after two or three unsuccessful apprenticeships—the habit of working

where he was seen by passers-by, had strengthened his assurance. In his workshop, on the street, with his white shirt, his black cravat a la Colin, his tight trousers, he assumed conscious airs and graces. All those affectations—the hair parted in the middle, the collar thrown back, disclosing the neck—seemed to Germinie marks of distinction.

Thus constituted, incapable of love, of sentiment, Jupillon was very much annoyed and bored by that admiration, which steadily increased. Germinie wearied him. He looked upon her humility, her devotion, as ridiculous. He was tired of it, disgusted with it—it was insupportable. He had enough of her love, enough of herself. It was not long before he cast her off without pity, without charity. He avoided her; he did not keep his appointments; he plead business—the press of work. When she expected him in the evening, he did not come; she thought him busy, while he was at some billiard-hall or ball.

XVI

There was a ball at the "Boule Noire." The hall presented the appearance of a resort of pleasure of the "people." It was bright with sham and paltry luxury. There were to be seen paintings and wine-tables, gilt chandeliers and vari-colored tumblers from which to drink brandy, velvet hangings and wooden benches—the rusticity of a tavern mounted in the scenery of a card-board palace.

Lambrequins of garnet velvet, with gilt fringe, adorned the windows. On the walls, in large white panels, pastorals alternated with the seasons, astonished to find themselves there. Over the windows and doors dropsical cupids sported among roses. Square posts ornamented with arabesques supported the hall, in the center of which an octagonal platform had been built for the orchestra. An oaken railing, breast-high, inclosed the space for dancers; outside that barrier, tables painted green, and wooden seats were packed closely together in two rows, surrounding the ball-room with a cafe. Within the inclosure, in the glaring light of the

gas, were seated all sorts of women, faded and wrinkled—women in black net bonnets, women in black paletots and fur tippets—tradeswomen and shop-keepers. Among this throng not a youthful face—not a vestige of color about those women, sombre even to their boots, all dressed in the colors of distress. That absence of color gave to them the stamp of poverty; to all the faces a sad and dull expression.

The men wore overcoats, caps on the back of their heads, woolen comforters, untied, streaming behind them. Those in hats, redingotes, and colored shirts, looked like insolent servants and stable-boys.

The dancers threw themselves about, twisted and capered, enlivened by the lashes of a brutal joy.

Here it was that Germinie entered at the moment that the quadrille ended to the tune of "La Casquette du Pere Bugeaud," in which the cymbals, post-bells, and drum added their din to the commotion. With one glance she swept the hall—all the men were bringing back their partners to the seats marked by their caps. She had been deceived; *he* was not there—she did not see him. She entered the inclosure and seated herself on the edge of a bench, trying to appear at ease. She judged the women seated near her to be servants like herself; such companions intimidated her less

than those little dancers with their hands in the pockets of their paletots, their bold eyes, and singing lips.

Soon, however, even on her bench, she attracted malevolent attention. Her hat—not more than a dozen women in the room wore hats—the gold brooch in her shawl, aroused hostile curiosity. They cast upon her glances, smiles, which boded her evil. All the women seemed to be inquiring whence the new arrival came, and to be positive that she had come to take away the lovers of others. Those promenading in the hall, as if ready for a waltz—their arms about their partners' waists—passing in front of her, caused her to lower her eyes as they walked away with a shrug of their shoulders. She changed her seat, but she encountered the same smiles, the same hostility, the same whisperings. She walked to the end of the hall; the eyes of every woman followed her. She felt herself to be the object of envious, malicious glances. She blushed. For several moments she feared she would burst into tears. She longed to leave the room, but she lacked the courage to cross the hall alone.

Her eyes mechanically followed an old woman slowly making a tour of the room, with a step as noiseless as the evolutions of a night-hawk. A black hat was perched upon her gray hair; from

her high, square shoulders hung a Scotch tartan in somber colors. Arrived at the door, she cast a last glance at the hall, taking it all in with the eye of a vulture which is in search of but finds no food.

As Germinie turned her head, she espied Jupillon: he was there, seated at a green table between two women, smoking. One was a tall blonde, with curly, flaxen hair, insipid face, and full eyes; she wore a plaited waist of red flannel, and her hands were thrust into the pockets of the black apron which she wore over her red skirt. The other—short, dark, and very rosy—was muffled coquettishly in a white woolen hood with a blue border.

Jupillon had recognized Germinie. When he saw her rise and advance toward him, her eyes fixed upon him, he whispered something to the woman in the hood, and, placing his elbows on the table, he waited.

"Indeed! you here?" said he, when Germinie stopped before him, mute, erect, motionless. "This is a surprise! Waiter, another bowl!" and emptying the sweetened wine into the tumblers before the two women, he continued: "Come, sit down!"

But Germinie did not stir.

"Melie," said she of the hood to her companion, "do you not see? It is monsieur's mother. Make

room for the lady, for she will surely drink with us."

Germinie cast upon the woman an annihilating glance.

"What!" resumed the woman, "did I vex you? Excuse me. I have perhaps made a mistake. How old do you think she is, Melie? My faith, you make youthful selections!"

Jupillon smiled covertly and sneered.

"I have something to say to you—to you—but not here; below," said Germinie to him.

"What charms!" remarked the hooded woman, relighting the cigar Jupillon had forgotten.

"What do you want?" asked Jupillon, moved, in spite of himself, by Germinie's tone.

"Come!" and she preceded him out of the room, through the bustle and the confusion of tongues.

XVII

Jupillon promised Germinie to frequent those haunts no more. But the young man had established a reputation at resorts of that kind; the ball was not alone the ball to him—it was a theater, an audience, popularity, applause, and the flattering murmur of his name among the groups assembled.

Sunday he did not visit the "Boule Noire;" but the following Thursday he turned his steps thither, and Germinie, seeing that she could not restrain him, determined to follow him, and to remain there as long as he remained. Seated at a table in the main but less brilliantly lighted part of the hall, she watched him during the dances; the quadrille ended, if he loitered. she went in search of him, and drew him almost forcibly from the clutches of the wretched women who surrounded him. As soon as these women became accustomed to the sight of her, their insults were no longer whispered as at the first ball. She was attacked, ridiculed to her face. She was forced to bear their mockery, which singled

her out; the words "old maid," which the hussies cast at her over their shoulders as they passed.

Then, again, those invited by Jupillon to drink with him, brought by him to the table at which she was seated, drinking the warm wine for which she paid, leaned their heads upon their hands, rested their elbows on the table, seeming not to notice that another woman was there, not even replying when she addressed them. Germinie could have killed those creatures who treated her with such contempt.

At length her powers of endurance were exhausted; aroused by the humiliations she had been forced to submit to, she resolved to dance too. That was the only means left her of keeping her lover from the others—of gaining her point. An entire month she practiced the figures, the steps, in secret. At the end of that time, she ventured on it; but everything served to put her out, added to her embarrassment and awkwardness—the hostile people among whom she was, the smiles of surprise and pity visible upon their faces when she took her place within the inclosure. She was scoffed at to such an extent that she had not the courage to recommence. She gloomily installed herself in her dark corner, only leaving its shade to seek and bring thither Jupillon, with the mute

force of a wife who snatches her husband from the tavern and leads him away.

A report was soon circulated in the neighborhood to the effect that Germinie frequented those balls—that she did not miss one; the green-grocer sent her son "to see." He returned, saying it was true, and in addition related all the indignities heaped upon Germinie, but which did not prevent her from returning again and again. There was, then, no longer any doubt as to the relations existing between mademoiselle's servant and Jupillon—relations which, however, several charitable souls disputed.

The scandalous rumor spread, and in a week the poor girl, called by all the coarse names in the vocabulary of the streets, fell at one sweep from the highest esteem to the lowest scorn.

Up to that time her pride, which was great, had enjoyed that respect, that consideration, shown her as the servant who honorably served an honorable mistress. She was above her companions. Her irreproachable conduct, her position of trust at mademoiselle's, caused the shopkeepers to treat her on a different footing from that of the other maids. They addressed her cap in hand; they called her "Mademoiselle Germinie;" they hastened to serve her; they gave her the only chair in the shop. Even when she bargained, they were polite. Coarse

jests were not uttered in her presence. She was invited to family celebrations, consulted on various matters of importance.

All was changed when her relations with Jupillon were discovered. The neighbors took their revenge for having respected her. Shameless women approached her as they would an equal. The men accosted her with familiarity; thou'd and thee'd her with look, with tone, with gesture. Even the children on the sidewalk, formerly ready to greet her, escaped from her as from one whom they feared. She could not take a step without encountering contempt, and having her shame cast into her teeth. This was to her a terrible fall. She suffered; but in proportion as she suffered she clung more closely to her lover.

She bore him no ill-will; she did not reproach him; but she could be seen on the street, through which a short while since she had passed proudly, with head erect—hurrying furtively along, her head bent, her eyes cast down, fearing recognition, hastening past the shops, the owners of which had cast reproach upon her.

XVIII

Jupillon complained continually of the tediousness of working for others; of not being "his own master;" of not being able to obtain from his mother fifteen or eighteen hundred francs. It required no larger sum with which to rent two rooms on the ground floor, obtain a small stock and the necessary implements. Then he proceeded to build castles in the air. He would establish himself in the quarter most favorable to the trade; to gloves he would soon add perfumeries, ties; then, with the profits, he would rent a shop on Rue de Richelieu.

Every time he spoke of it, Germinie asked him a thousand questions. She wished to know all that it required to set up a business of that kind; she had him tell her the names of the tools, the accessories, their cost, their dealers. She questioned him at such length, so curiously about his trade, his work, that at last Jupillon said to her impatiently:

"What does all that concern you? The work worries me enough—do not mention it to me."

One Sunday, as they strolled toward Montmartre, instead of going by way of Rue Frochot, Germinie chose Rue Pigalle.

"But this is not the way," objected Jupillon.

"I know it," she replied; "come along."

She took his arm, but turned away her head, that he might not see her face. In Rue Fontaine Saint Georges, she stopped abruptly before two windows on the ground floor, and said:

"See there!" She was trembling with delight.

Jupillon looked. He saw, between the two windows, on a copper plate:

"JUPILLON, GLOVER."

He saw the white curtains at the first window; through the panes of the second, the sets of pigeon-holes and paste-board boxes, and in front of these, the bench of his calling, with the large shears, and the knife for the skins.

"Your key is at the porter's," said she to him.

They entered the first room—the shop. She began to show him everything; she opened the boxes, and laughed. Then, pushing open the other door, she said:

"See! you will not suffocate here, as you do in your mother's attic. Do you like it? Oh, it is not elegant, but it is neat. I wanted mahogany. Ah, the paper! I had almost forgotten it." She slipped into his hand a receipt for the rent. "That

is for six months. You must begin at once to make money. Let me sit down. You look so happy—I am overcome."

And she dropped into a chair. Jupillon bent over her to kiss her.

"Ah, I have none," she said, seeing his eyes searching for her ear-rings. "I have no rings, either—do you see, I have none?" She held up her hands, despoiled of the paltry jewels she had worked so long to obtain.

As Jupillon stood before her, with an embarrassed air, vainly striving to find words of thanks, Germinie said simply:

"How comical you are! What ails you? You are silly! I love you, do I not? Well?"

XIX

Germinie at length made a discovery which at first she doubted, dared not believe. Then, when she was certain, a great joy possessed her. The thought of the scandal of her discovered connection with Jupillon, of the exposure, of her disgrace in the neighborhood, of the dishonor should mademoiselle find it out—nothing could mar her felicity, and she bore her trouble haughtily as she felt the instincts of a mother. She only grieved at having spent all her savings, and having drawn her wages several months in advance. She regretted her poverty bitterly, under the circumstances.

Often, when passing through Rue Saint Lazare, where there was a shop in the windows of which was displayed children's finery, she was seized with a desire to break the windows and steal some of it; behind the goods exposed stood the clerks, accustomed to seeing her stop, who looked at her and laughed.

Then again, at times, with the rapture that pervaded her whole being, would be mingled a feeling of uneasiness. She asked herself how the father

would receive his child. Two or three times she had decided to confide in him, but she had not dared. Finally, one day, seeing in his face a sign of tenderness for which she had waited so long in order to tell him all, she confessed to him with many blushes, as if asking his pardon, that which rendered her so happy.

"It is only a fancy!" replied Jupillon.

When she assured him that it was no fancy, the young man said with an oath:

"What luck! Will you tell me who will feed the sparrow?"

"Make yourself easy on that score. It shall not suffer; that is my concern. Have no fear! I will manage—no one will know of it. See! of late I have walked with head erect. No one will find it out, I tell you. Just think! a sacred bond between you and me!"

"Well, what is, can't be helped, eh?" said the young man.

"Tell me," ventured Germinie timidly, "shall you tell your mother?"

"My mother? No, indeed. Afterward—that will be more impressive, and perhaps then she will forgive us."

XX

The day arrived on which Mlle. de Varandeuil annually gave a large dinner, to which she invited all the children in her family, as well as those of her friends, both large and small. Scarcely would the tiny rooms hold all the guests. Part of the furniture had to be put on the landing, and a table was set in each of the rooms.

For the children this was a treat which they anticipated a week beforehand. They ran up the stairs behind the pastry-cook. At the table they ate without being scolded. In the evening they climbed upon the chairs, and made so much noise that mademoiselle always had a headache the next day. But she did not grudge them their pleasure; she had hers in seeing and hearing them. For nothing in the world would she have missed giving that dinner, which filled the "old maid's" rooms with those little blonde heads, as well as with laughter, mirth, and sunshine, for one day in the year, at least.

Germinie was preparing the dinner. She was whipping cream when she was taken suddenly ill.

She glanced at herself in the broken mirror which hung over her kitchen cupboard; she was pale. She went down-stairs to Adele.

"Give me your mistress' rouge," she said to her, and she put some on her cheeks. Then, reascending, she finished preparing the meal. She also served it.

At dessert she supported herself on the backs of the chairs, hiding her torture under a smile.

"Are you ill?" asked her mistress, looking at her.

"Yes, mademoiselle, somewhat; it is probably the charcoal."

"Come, go to bed; we no longer need you—you can remove the cloth to-morrow."

On being dismissed, Germinie returned to Adele.

"Quick, a cab! Rue de la Huchette, did you not say? Have you a pen and paper?"

She wrote a line to her mistress. She told her that she was very ill; that she was at the hospital; that she would not tell her where, for fear she might exert herself to come to see her; that in a week she would return.

Adele gave her the number of the house.

"Now," said Germinie to her, "not a word to mademoiselle; swear to me, not a word."

She descended the stairs, and met Jupillon on the way.

"Ah, said he, "where are you going?"

She explained to him what had occurred during the dinner, adding: "Why have you come here? I told you never to come; I did not want you to."

"I came to tell you that I must have forty francs. I am in absolute need of the money."

"Forty francs! Why, I have only enough to pay my expenses."

"That is annoying," said he, giving her his arm. He opened the door of the carriage. "Where shall he take you?"

Germinie gave him the address, and slipped the forty francs into his hand, saying:

"I have still seven francs."

The cab rolled away. For a moment Jupillon stood there, motionless; then he ran after the cab, and stopping it, said to Germinie:

"At least let me go with you?"

"No; I would rather be alone," replied Germinie, leaning back on the cushions.

At the end of what seemed a long half-hour, the cab drew up at a house in Rue Porte Royale. The cabman got down from the box, and rang. The portress, assisted by a maid from one of the wards, carried Germinie upstairs, and placed her on a bed. She looked about her; saw many beds side by side, and at the end of the immense room a large fireplace, in which burned a bright fire.

Half an hour later Germinie held in her arms a little daughter. She closed her eyes and ears to what was going on around her, for a terrible epidemic had broken out, carrying off the youngest and strongest in a few hours. Germinie wished to live, and she was strengthened in that desire by the thought of her child, by the remembrance of her mistress.

But the sixth day her courage failed her. She thought she should die; she felt the first symptoms of the epidemic. She had abandoned herself to them when a face bent over her—it was that of the youngest nurse: a fair face it was, with golden hair falling around it, and soft blue eyes looking out from it. On seeing those eyes, women in their delirium had cried: "Behold! the Holy Virgin!"

"My child," said the nurse to Germinie, "you must demand your permit at once; you must leave here. You must dress yourself warmly; you must protect yourself. As soon as you reach home, you must take some tea; you must perspire—then you will be all right. But go! Here, to-night," said she, her eyes wandering toward the other beds, "it will not be good for you. Do not say that it was I who advised you to go, or I shall lose my place."

XXI

Germinie recovered in several days. She regained her strength, and she took more pleasure in life than her mistress had ever noticed before.

Every Sunday, no matter what the weather, she went out at eleven o'clock. Mademoiselle thought she visited a friend in the country, and she was delighted to find that those hours spent in the fresh air benefited her maid so much.

Jupillon allowed Germinie to take him without offering much resistance, and they set out for Pommeuse, where their child was, and where a hearty breakfast awaited them. Once in the railway carriage, Germinie talked no longer. Scarcely had the train stopped when she rushed out, threw her ticket to the collector, and ran along the high road to Pommeuse, leaving Jupillon behind her.

Arrived there, she took her infant from the nurse's arms with jealous hands—the hands of a mother—fondled it, covered it with kisses. They breakfasted. She sat at the table, the little one on her knee, and ate nothing; she tried to discover

some resemblance to both Jupillon and herself in the child. One feature was his, another hers.

"It is your nose; those are my eyes. She will have hair like yours in time; it will curl. Do you see, she has your hands. She is like you."

Jupillon bore all this without showing much impatience, thanks to the cigars which Germinie drew from her pocket, and which she doled out to him one by one.

Then, too, he had found diversion. At the end of the garden ran a stream. Jupillon was a Parisian; he liked to fish; and when spring came they spent the entire day in the garden on the edge of the water, Jupillon on a plank, his line in his hand—Germinie, her child on her lap, seated on the grass under a medlar tree by the river-side.

She felt supremely happy when the little one, who could not yet speak, touched her mouth, her chin, her cheeks, with her tiny hands, and persisted in putting her fingers in her mother's eyes. From time to time she called Jupillon's attention to their child. When she fell asleep at length, Germinie, having her future on her knees, looked about her and recalled her past life. The grass, the trees, the river running through the garden in which she was seated, reminded her of the rustic garden of her childhood.

XXII

The following Wednesday, on coming downstairs, Germinie found a letter awaiting her. In that letter, written on the back of a laundress' receipt, Mme. Remalard informed her that her child had been taken ill almost as soon as she had left. As she had grown worse, she called in a doctor, who said a poisonous insect had stung the baby; he had been again, and she did not know what to do.

That letter was a great shock to Germinie. She mechanically rushed to the station; she must see her child—she must see her at once. Her hair was uncombed, she had on slippers; but she did not think of that. She remembered that she had not prepared mademoiselle's breakfast. Half-way down the street, she saw a clock. It occurred to her that there was no train at that hour. She retraced her steps, saying that she would hurry through the meal, and then find some pretext for getting off for the rest of the day.

But, breakfast having been served, she found

none; her head was so filled with thoughts of her child that she could not invent a lie—she was dazed; and then, if she had spoken, she would have cried, for she felt it on her lips, "I must go to my child!"

At night she dared not go. Mademoiselle had been somewhat ill the preceding night—she feared she might need her. The next day, when she entered mademoiselle's room with a story invented during the night, ready to ask permission to go away, mademoiselle said to her, as she read the letter the porter had brought her:

"Ah, my old friend, Mme. de Belleuse needs you all day to help her with her preserves. Quick! my eggs, then to the station! Ah, are you vexed? What is it?"

"I vexed? Not at all," Germinie had the strength to reply.

All that day, as she bent over the fire, she was almost distracted at the thought of not being able to go to her loved one who was suffering, and uneasily she pictured to herself that the child was dying without her by her side. Finding no letter awaiting her on her return, and receiving none Friday morning, she felt reassured. Were the child worse, the nurse would have written to her. She must be better; she fancied her saved—cured. Children, she told herself, so often lay at

death's door, and then rapidly recovered—hers, too, was so strong. She resolved to wait—to be patient—until Sunday; for the next forty-eight hours allaying her fears by superstition, persuading herself that her little daughter had recovered, because the first person whom she had met that morning was a man; because she had seen a chestnut horse; because she had guessed that a passer-by would turn down a certain street.

Saturday morning, on entering Mme. Jupillon's, she found her on the point of weeping into a jar of butter which she was covering with a cloth.

"Ah, it is you, is it?" said madame. "That poor coal woman!—I am weeping for her; she is going away, and her child is dying—the little angel, she was just like one of us. My God! yes," and Mme. Jupillon began to sob.

Germinie fled. She was restless all day. Every few moments she ascended the stairs to her room to put in order the things she was going to take with her the following day. That evening, as she was on her way to assist mademoiselle to retire, Adele handed her a letter which she had found below.

XXIII

Mademoiselle had commenced to disrobe when Germinie entered her room, took several steps forward, sank into a chair, and after heaving two or three deep, sorrowful sighs, fell from the chair to the floor in convulsions. Her mistress tried to raise her, but she was in such a condition that the old lady could do nothing for her. In answer to mademoiselle's cries, a maid from another floor ran for a doctor near by, whom, however, she could not find. In the meantime, four women assisted mademoiselle in lifting Germinie and laying her on the bed. The terrible convulsions had ceased, but her bosom still heaved; with averted head, eyes full of pitiful tenderness and anguish, panting, and replying to no questions, Germinie clutched with both hands at her throat, she seemed to wish to tear out the sensation which oppressed her.

In vain did they offer her ether to inhale, orange-flower water to drink. Her frame was repeatedly shaken by waves of grief, and her face wore the same melancholy expression. At the end of an

hour, tears came to her relief; then only occasionally did her form tremble; she succumbed to a feeling of lassitude. They carried her to her room.

The letter which Adele had brought her contained the intelligence of her child's death.

XXIV

As a result of that shock, Germinie for a time became melancholy: she was insensible to everything except to the thought of the little being who was no more. Every evening, when she reached the solitude of her chamber, she would take from a trunk, place dat the foot of her bed, her lost darling's cap and braces; she looked at them, stroked them, laid them on her bed. For hours she remained there, weeping over them, kissing them, talking to them. In mourning her daughter, the unhappy woman mourned for herself. A voice within her whispered to her that the child being alive, she was saved. Her love for her was her salvation; her maternal affection had purified her heart of flesh. In her daughter was something which kept her from the evil influences that pursued her. But the child being dead, she dreaded their power.

When she began to recover somewhat from her first abandonment to grief—when she began to take more interest in the world and people about her—another bitter trial awaited her.

Having grown too stout, too clumsy to attend to the duties of her shop, and finding that she had too much to do, notwithstanding all the responsibilities assumed by Germinie, Mme. Jupillon sent for a niece from the country to help her. The girl, though a woman in years, yet a child in experience, was a typical rustic lass. She was vivacious, with bright black eyes, lips like cherries, full and rosy—the spring-time of life—the glow of health in her veins. Spirited and artless, the girl had met her cousin simply, naturally, as youth meets youth, with frank innocence, and that rustic coquetry, which her cousin's vanity could not resist. The girl's very presence wounded Germinie. The half-confidences with which she intrusted Jupillon, the attention he paid her, his gayety, his jests, his good-temper, all exasperated Germinie.

She dared not speak of this to Mother Jupillon, nor denounce the girl to her, for fear of betraying herself; but whenever she was left alone with Jupillon, she overwhelmed him with accusations and complaints. She would recall a circumstance, a word, something that he had said or done, a trifling remark, forgotten by him, but treasured up by her.

"Are you mad?" Jupillon would ask. "Why, all the men look at her on the street! The other day

I went out with her. I was ashamed. I do not know how she managed, but we were followed the whole time by a gentleman. Well, she is pretty, I suppose, and—"

At the word "pretty" Germinie forthwith attacked the young girl, and ended by saying: "You love her!"

"Well—what then?" replied Jupillon, to whom those quarrels were not displeasing, for he delighted in the sight of the woman's fury.

In consequence of those scenes, which were repeated almost daily, that nature, so extreme, without a medium, changed. Her love turned to hatred.

Germinie began to detest her lover, and to seek more cause for hating him in a greater measure. Her thoughts reverting to her child—to its death—she persuaded herself that it was he who had killed it. She saw in him the assassin. She avoided him as the curse of her life, her evil genius.

XXV

One morning, after having revolved in her mind her trials and her hatred, on entering the shop to obtain her milk, Germinie found several maids in the back room taking a "dram." Seated at a table, they gossiped as they drank.

"Here!" cried Adele, rapping on the table; "is that you already, Mlle. de Varandeuil?"

"What is that?" asked Germinie, taking up Adele's glass. "I would like some too."

"Are you so thirsty this morning? It is brandy and bitters—nothing else; soldiers drink it. It is strong, isn't it, eh?"

"Yes," said Germinie; "but it tastes good. Mme. Jupillon, a bottle here! I will pay for it." She threw the money on the table.

After drinking three glasses, she cried, "I have had enough," and burst out laughing.

Mlle. de Varandeuil had been out that morning. When she returned, at eleven o'clock, she rang once, twice; no one answered her summons.

"Ah," said she, "she must have gone out." The old lady entered her room. The mattress and

bedclothes were on two chairs, and Germinie was stretched across the straw mattress, sleeping heavily. On mademoiselle's entrance, Germinie rose at one bound, rubbing her eyes with her hand.

"Eh?" said she, as if some one had called her.

"What is the matter?" asked Mlle. de Varandeuil in affright. "Did you fall? Are you ill?"

"I? No!" replied Germinie. "I fell asleep. What time is it? It is nothing." And she began to make the bed, turning her back to her mistress, in order to conceal the traces of intoxication visible on her features.

XXVI

Jupillon was making his toilet in the room Germinie had furnished for him. His mother sat by, watching him with pride, with the eyes of a mother of her class, who gazes admiringly upon the son who is to her a "gentleman."

"You are a fine fellow; you will break hearts," said she to him.

Jupillon, who was tying his cravat, did not reply.

His mother continued in a tone of affectionate insinuation:

"I say, Bibi, listen to me. Young women make mistakes; it is unfortunate for them, but it is their concern. You are a man in age, appearance, and all. I cannot always keep you at my apron-strings. At one time I thought 'one just as lief as another.' And Germinie kept you from squandering your money on worthless women. But now stories are being circulated about her in the neighborhood; the vipers connect our name with them. But, notwithstanding that, we are beyond such tales, I know. We have been respectable all our lives,

thank the Lord; and I want justice. What do you say to that, Bibi?"

"Anything you like, mother."

"Ah, I knew you loved your poor mother," exclaimed the stout woman, embracing him. "Very well; invite her to dinner this evening. You may bring up two bottles of Lunel; and to be sure that she will come, you must make eyes at her, that she may think to-day is *the* day."

Germinie came that evening at seven o'clock, very happy, very joyous, very hopeful, her head filled with fancies by the air of mystery with which Jupillon delivered his mother's invitation. They dined, they drank, they laughed. Mme. Jupillon gazed with tearful eyes at the couple before her. When they were sipping their coffee she said, in order to be left alone with Germinie:

"Bibi, you know that you have something to attend to this evening."

Jupillon left the room. For a moment the two women maintained silence, one waiting for the other to speak, Germinie having the cry of her heart on her lips. Suddenly she arose from her chair, and cast herself into the large woman's arms.

"Ah! if you knew all, Mme. Jupillon!" she cried, weeping and kissing her. "You will surely not be angry with me. I love him. I have had a child. I have loved him three years."

At each word Mme. Jupillon's face grew more rigid. She pushed Germinie roughly from her, and in a doleful voice, with an accent of despair, she gasped, as if suffocating:

"Ah, my God! You—to tell me things like that—me—his mother—to my face! Oh! my son, my child—my innocent child! You had the assurance to lead him astray—and to tell me of it, too! No, it is impossible! I had so much confidence in you. Ah, mademoiselle; I should never have believed that of you!"

"Mme. Jupillon! Mme. Jupillon!" implored Germinie, overcome with shame and grief, "I ask your pardon. I could not help myself; and then, I thought—I thought—"

"You thought!—oh, my God! you thought! What did you think?—you were my son's wife, eh? Oh! is it possible! my poor child?" Then she changed to a tone of plaintiveness: "But, my girl, come, be reasonable. What have I always told you?—that that might be, were you ten years younger. You see, you are now in your thirtieth year, my good child. I am sorry to have to speak thus to you. I do not wish to give you pain; but, my dear woman, one needs only to look at you; your hair is getting thin."

"But," said Germinie, her anger aroused, "what

your son owes me—my money—the money I took from my savings—the money I—"

"Money—he owes you money? Ah, yes, the money you loaned him with which to start in business. Do you think you have to deal with thieves? Do you think we want to cheat you out of your money? Why, it was only the other day that the honest boy wanted all arranged in case he should die—and you think we are cheats? Oh, I am punished for having trusted you! Look you, this is what I see clearly: you were politic; you wished to have my son pay you with his life. Excuse me—many thanks; we would rather pay you your money—you, the leavings of a cafe-waiter! My poor, dear child! Heaven preserve him!"

Germinie snatched her hat and shawl from the peg, and rushed out of the house.

XXVII

Mademoiselle was seated in her large arm-chair by the side of the fire-place. Her black dress, accentuating her angles, was scantily plaited, and fell in straight lines from her knees. A small black shawl was crossed over her chest and knotted behind. Her thin hands lay in her lap. From the depths of that funereal garb peered her face, yellow with age, lighted by the fire of her still bright brown eyes.

Germinie was beside her.

The old lady asked, "Are the pads at the door, Germinie?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Do you know, my girl," resumed Mlle. de Varandeuil after a pause—"do you know that when one has been born in the finest mansion on Rue Royale; when one has owned Grand and Petit Charolois; when one has had the castle of Clichy la Garenne for one's country home; when it took two servants to carry the silver platter on which the roast beef was served—do you know that it then requires a great deal of philosophy to end in a place like this—in

a rheumatic den, where, in spite of all the pads in the world, these currents of air blow upon you? Mend the fire a little."

Then, stretching her feet toward Germinie kneeling before the grate, and putting them under her nose with a laugh, she continued:

"Do you know that it then requires a great deal of philosophy to wear torn stockings? Silly girl, I am not scolding you—I know very well you can't do everything; but you might get a woman to do the mending—that would not be a difficult matter. Why not ask that little girl who came here last year? She had a face that I liked."

"She is as black as a mole, mademoiselle."

"You never think any one pretty. Was she not Mme. Jupillon's niece? We might engage her for one or two days a week."

"She shall never set foot here!"

"What! more quarrels? It is surprising how you can adore people, and then cannot bear to see them. What has she done to you?"

"She is a wretched creature, I tell you!"

"What has that to do with my mending?"

"But, mademoiselle—"

"Well, then, find somebody else. I do not insist on having that particular girl."

"I will attend to your mending myself; we do not need any one."

"If we depend on your needle—ah!" gayly said mademoiselle, "can Mme. Jupillon spare you?"

"Mme. Jupillon! I shall never cross her threshold again!"

"What! angry with her too? Well, well! Hurry and form another friendship, or we shall have sorry times."

XXVIII

The winter of that year should have insured Mlle. de Varandeuil a place in Paradise. She had to endure all the consequences of her maid's troubles—the disarrangement of her nerves, and her contrary moods.

Germinie no longer wept, but her eyes showed that she had shed many tears. To all questions she invariably replied, "It is nothing, mademoiselle," in that tone suggestive of a secret suppressed. She assumed a dejected manner. Her face, her eyes, her mouth, the folds of her dress, her appearance, the noise she made at her work—even her silence—involved mademoiselle in despair. At the slightest word she was up in arms.

Her mistress could no longer address a remark to her, ask of her the least thing, express a wish, a desire—she looked upon everything in the light of a reproach. She complained tearfully: "Ah, I am very unhappy; I see that mademoiselle no longer loves me." She grumbled at everybody. "She always comes when it rains," she said of

Mme. de Belleuse, when she found some mud on the carpet.

The week before the fete day, when all who were left of mademoiselle's friends and relatives, from the wealthiest to the poorest, came, without exception, Germinie's ill-humor and impertinent remarks were redoubled. Habit, the dread of changing, the dislike to new faces, render aged people patient and forbearing with old servants. To all Germinie's remarks, her mistress made no reply. She pretended to be reading when her maid entered the room. She bore Germinie no malice, and waited patiently until her mood had changed. Germinie was not a servant to Mlle. de Varandeuil: she was the loved one, who should remain beside her to close her eyes in her last long sleep. She had taken the girl to her heart as an adopted daughter, and she was rendered miserable by the thought of not being permitted to comfort her.

At times, however, Germinie would cast herself at the old lady's feet and weep bitterly. Then mademoiselle would say to her: "Come, my girl, something ails you; tell me," and Germinie would reply: "No, mademoiselle; it is the weather!"

"The weather!" repeated the old lady doubtfully; "the weather!"

XXIX

On a March evening, the Jupillons, mother and son, sat chatting by the stove in the rear of the shop.

Jupillon was in trouble. The money his mother had laid aside had been consumed by six months of dull trade. He had applied for a loan to a former employer; but the perfumer had not forgiven him for leaving him and starting a business for himself, and he refused his request. Mme. Jupillon, disconsolate, was in tears.

"I will sell the shop, Bibi. I will go into service. I will be a cook—a housekeeper—I will do anything! I will get money for you in some way."

Jupillon smiled, and allowed his mother to finish; then he said:

"That will do, mother; all that is only talk. You disturb your digestion—it is not necessary. You need sell nothing; you need not worry. I will keep myself, and it shall not cost you a sou. What will you bet?"

"Lord!" gasped Mme. Jupillon.

"I have an idea!" Then, after a pause, Jupillon

resumed: "I did not wish to cross you with regard to Germinie. You heard those stories; you thought it was time for us to break with her, and you cast her off. That was not my plan; but you thought you were doing right—and perhaps, indeed, you were right. She is pining. I have met her once or twice, and—"

"You know very well she has not a sou!"

"I know she has not, and she will not steal, unless it be from her mistress. Do you think mademoiselle would have her arrested for that? Not she; she would send her off, and that would end it. We would advise her to take the air in another quarter, and we would not be troubled with her any more."

"What are you talking about? After the scene I made, she will never come here."

"You shall see—I will bring her," said Jupillon confidently, rising and rolling a cigarette between his fingers; "and no later than this evening."

XXX

Jupillon was walking to and fro upon the sidewalk in front of the house in which Germinie lived, when she came out.

"Good evening, Germinie," he said to her.

She turned, and instinctively took several steps forward, without replying.

"Germinie!" said Jupillon, without stirring, without following her. She turned toward him like an animal that is pulled by a leading-string.

"What!" she asked; "do you want money again, or have you some abuses to heap upon me?"

"No; I am going away," said Jupillon with a serious air; "I am going away."

"Going away?" she asked wonderingly.

"See here, Germinie," said Jupillon. "I have caused you pain—I have been unkind to you; I know that well. It was my cousin's fault."

"You are going away?" interrupted Germinie, seizing his arm. "Do not lie to me! are you going away?"

"I tell you I am; it is true. I only need my ticket—if I don't get the two thousand francs.

They say there is going to be war, and I shall be a soldier."

As he talked, he led Germinie down the street.

"Whither are you taking me?" she asked.

"To my mother, that you may become reconciled!"

"After what she said to me? never!" And Germinie withdrew her arm from Jupillon's.

"Well, then, adieu;" and Jupillon raised his cap. "Shall I write to you?"

Germinie did not reply. For a moment she hesitated; then saying shortly, "Let us go," and making a sign to Jupillon to walk beside her, they passed up the street.

They walked side by side without speaking until Jupillon asked, "Well, are you reflecting?"

"Let us go on," abruptly replied Germinie; and silently she continued on her way, violently agitated by the tumult in her soul. Suddenly she stopped, and with a gesture of despair she said:

"My God! the last straw. Come!" and she took Jupillon's arm.

"Oh, I know," said Jupillon to her, when they neared the shop, "my mother was unjust to you. You see, she has been respectable all her life; she does not know—she does not understand. Then, too, I was at the bottom of it all; she is so fond

of me that she is jealous of women who love me. Now enter!"

With those words, he pushed her into the arms of Mme. Jupillon, who embraced her, who murmured words of apology, and who forthwith shed tears in order to cover her embarrassment and to render the scene more affecting.

The entire evening Germinie kept her eyes fixed on Jupillon, almost terrifying him by her glance.

"Come," said he, on seeing her home, "do not be downcast. Some philosophy is required in this world. I am going to be a soldier—that is all. It is true, they do not always return; but I wish we could enjoy the fifteen days left me, and if I do not return, I have at least left you a pleasant remembrance of me."

Germinie made no reply.

XXXI

For a week Germinie did not set foot within the shop. The Jupillons began to despair. At last, one evening, about half-past ten, she opened the door, entered, without saying "Good day" or "Good evening," and advanced to the small table at which mother and son were seated, half asleep, holding in her hand an old canvas bag.

"Here!" said she, emptying it of its contents, consisting of bank bills glued together, fastened with pins—old louis green with age—a hundred sous, forty sous, and ten sous—the money of toil, money soiled by dirty hands. For one moment she glanced at the pile, as if to convince herself; then, in a sad, gentle tone, she said to Mme. Jupillon: "There it is—two thousand three hundred francs!"

"Ah, my kind Germinie," said the woman, overcome by emotion, throwing herself upon Germinie's neck. "Now you must take something—a cup of coffee."

"No, thank you," said Germinie; "I am tired; I have had to walk to collect the money. I am going to bed. Another time;" and she left the room.

She had had "to walk," as she had said, to gather together, to realize that sum—to find two thousand three hundred francs, of which she had not the first five sous. She had collected, begged, extorted them, piece by piece, almost sou by sou. She had scraped them here and there—from one, from another—by loans of two louis, one hundred francs, fifty francs, twenty francs. She had borrowed of her porter, her grocer, her green-grocer, her laundress. She had obtained it by inventing stories, begging, praying, lying; she had humbled herself and her pride, as she would not have done to obtain bread. She had the money, but she knew that she was in debt, would always be in debt; that she would have to deprive herself in every way to pay the interest on her debts. She put no faith in the Jupillons; she had a presentiment that the money would be lost with them; she did not even calculate that her sacrifice would touch the young man.

She had acted on impulse. Had she been ordered to die that he might not go, she would have died willingly. The thought of seeing him a soldier—the thought of the battle-field, of the cannon, of the wounded—had determined her to do more—to sell her life for that man, to sign her eternal misery for his sake!

XXXII

The moment arrived when the terrible truth, no longer veiled by lingering illusions, was revealed to Germinie. She saw that she could not win Jupillon by devotion, by self-deprivation, by sacrifices, which involved her in a debt impossible for her to repay. She felt that he reluctantly gave her his love—a love bestowed from a sense of obligation.

When she blushingly for the second time confided to him her secret, he unsympathetically replied:

"Ah, it is indeed amusing!"

She made no complaints; she did not weep, nor reproach him. She struggled to renounce the unfeeling man who abused her love, her devoted passion, with the calm irony of a blackguard. And she prepared with anguish for what? she knew not; perhaps to be cast off!

Broken-hearted and silently she watched Jupillon, persuaded that something was wrong—that what she feared was true—that she had a rival.

One morning, when she came down-stairs somewhat earlier than was her custom, she saw Jupillon several paces in front of her. He was dressed in

his finest clothes. As he walked he admired himself; from time to time, in order to look at the gloss on his boots, he raised the edge of his trousers.

She followed him. He went along, without turning, to Place Breda. In that square, near a cab-stand, a woman was pacing to and fro. Germinie could only see her back. Jupillon went up to her; she turned—it was his cousin. They walked side by side in the direction of Rue de Navarin. There the young girl took Jupillon's arm, at first not leaning upon it; then, by degrees, as they walked on, she bent over his arm, like a branch which had given way. The couple sauntered along slowly, so slowly that at times Germinie was forced to halt so as not to be too close to them. They passed along Rue des Martyrs, crossed Rue de la Tour d'Auvergne, and down Rue Montholon.

Jupillon was talking earnestly; his cousin said nothing. She listened to him, casting around her from time to time timid glances. Arrived at Rue Lamartine, at the Passage des Duex Soeurs, they turned. Germinie had barely time to rush into a doorway. They passed, however, without seeing her. The young girl was grave, and walked with faltering steps. Jupillon was whispering in her ear. They stopped. Jupillon gesticulated; the girl stared fixedly at the pavement. Germinie thought they were about to separate; but they

finally resumed their walk side by side, passing the passage four or five times. At length they entered it. Germinie rushed from her hiding-place and followed in their footsteps.

Through the grating she saw a dress disappear in a doorway; she approached that doorway, looked in, saw nothing more.

Then the blood rushed to her brain, and one thought was repeated by her lips: "Vitriol! vitriol!" In her frenzied fancy she ascended the stairs, the bottle concealed under her shawl. She knocked repeatedly at the door. Some one opened it. She gave no name—she paid no attention to any one. She was prepared for murder. She approached the bed—approached *her*. She seized her arm; she said to her: "Yes, it is I—here to take your life!" And upon her face, her throat, her lovely skin—on all that beauty of which she was so proud—she poured the deadly fluid. The bottle was empty—she laughed.

Dreaming thus madly, she walked on down the passage and the street to a grocer's shop. For ten minutes she stood at the counter, with eyes that saw not—with the blinded eyes of one who is about to commit murder.

"What do you want?" asked the grocer's wife impatiently, almost afraid of the woman standing there, motionless.

"What do I want?" repeated Germinie. She was so strongly possessed with the one idea that she was on the point of asking for vitriol. "What do I want?" She put her hand to her head. "Ah, indeed, I do not remember," and she left the shop with an unsteady step.

XXXIII

Her trials having caused her suffering equaled only by the agonies of death, Germinie sought oblivion in the glass which she had taken one morning from Adele's hand. From that day her intemperate habits dated. She took her "morning dram" with the other maids. She drank with one, with another; she drank with the men who breakfasted at the shop; she drank with Adele, who took a fiendish delight in seeing her descend as low as herself. At first she drank for the sake of company, for excitement; but soon she drank alone. Then she drank a half-filled glass, brought upstairs under her apron and hidden in some remote corner of the kitchen. Then she drank, in sheer desperation, those mixtures of white wine and brandy, which she swallowed one after another, until they produced that for which she thirsted—sleep.

For what she sought was not a heated brain, the delirium of intoxication, but the oblivion of sleep—that dreamless, leaden sleep falling upon her like the stroke of a bludgeon upon the head of an ox—that sleep which was to her a truce and a deliverance from an existence which she no longer

had the courage to continue or to put an end to. When she was herself—when she examined her conscience—her life seemed to her so abominable—she preferred drowning her cares. There was nothing in the world which would produce that state but sleep—the sleep of inebriation—which lulled like that of death.

In the liquor which she forced herself to drink, and which she madly swallowed, her trials, her sufferings, her miserable present, were blotted out. In half an hour she no longer thought. Her life—nothing—had any existence for her! "I drink to drown my troubles!" she said to a woman who hinted to her that she would injure her health. And when, in the reaction that followed her state of intoxication, there possessed her a feeling of self-pity, of grief at and abhorrence of her faults and misfortunes, she tried stronger liquor. She even drank undiluted bitters, to produce a more inert lethargy.

Finally, she spent the greater part of the day in that condition, from which she issued, dull of intellect and perception, with hands performing their duties from habit, with the appearance of a somnambulist, with a body and mind in which thought, will, and memory seemed to retain the drowsiness and vagueness of the early morning hours.

XXXIV

Shortly after having fancied herself in the act of disfiguring her rival with vitriol, Germinie entered Rue de Laval, carrying a bottle of brandy. For two weeks she had been mistress of the apartments, free to indulge her intemperance. Mlle. de Varandeuil, who as a rule seldom left home, had gone to spend a month with an old friend in the country. She did not take Germinie with her, for fear of exciting the other servants' jealousy at seeing a maid humored as to her duties, and treated on a different footing from them.

Upon entering mademoiselle's room, Germinie only took time to cast her hat and shawl upon the floor. Then she began to drink—the neck of the bottle between her teeth—until everything in the room became indistinct. She arose, and, staggering, tried to reach her mistress' bed, in order to lie down. In doing so she fell against a table, then rolled upon the floor, and lay there, motionless; she breathed heavily. The fall against the table, however, had given her such a shock, that in the night the illness she had anticipated was prematurely brought on. She tried to rise, to call for

help on the landing; she made an effort to stand up; she found it impossible. She felt death slowly approaching. At length, with another mighty effort, she dragged herself to the door; but, arrived there, she could not reach the lock—could not cry out. And she would without doubt have died there if Adele, on hearing a groan as she passed in the morning, had not brought a locksmith to open the door, and then obtained a nurse to care for the sick woman.

When, in the course of a month, mademoiselle returned, she found Germinie up, but so weak that she was forced to sit down most of the time, and so pale that she looked as if she had no blood in her body. They told the old lady that she had been ill; but mademoiselle suspected nothing.

XXXV

Germinie received mademoiselle with tender caresses, floods of tears. Her affection was like that of a sick child. With her hands, on which the blue veins were plainly visible, she tried to touch her mistress. She approached her with a sort of trembling and fervent humility. Seated before her on a tabouret, and looking up at her with the watchful eyes of a dog, she raised herself from time to time to kiss some portion of her dress, reseated herself, the next instant to recommence. There was anguish and supplication in those caresses, those kisses.

When Death had come so near to her, in those hours of weakness, when on her bed alone, she had reviewed her life—the remembrance of her disgrace—of all that she had concealed from Mlle. de Varandeuil. The terror of God's judgment—all the reproaches, all the fears, which fill the ears of the dying—had awakened in her conscience supreme fear and a remorseful feeling which she could not overcome.

Germinie had not one of those happy disposi-

tions which, after doing wrong, and leaving the memory behind, is never troubled by thoughts of the deed. She had not, like Adele, one of those coarse organizations which is only affected by animal impressions. In her case a morbid sensitiveness, a kind of cerebral erethism, a tendency of the brain to dwell upon her wrongs, her anxieties, her discontent—a moral sense, which was awakened within her after her errors—all her powers of delicacy combined in torturing her, and returned daily more cruelly.

Germinie had yielded to the impulse of passion, but no sooner had she done so than she scorned herself. Even under its influence she could not entirely forget. The image of mademoiselle, with her stern yet motherly face, rose before her.

Although Germinie abandoned herself to passions, and fell, she still retained her feelings of modesty. Her degradation did not blind her to a sense of loathing and disgust of self. Her sullied conscience rejected impurity, struggled amidst her disgrace, and did not for a moment allow her the full enjoyment of vice, entire oblivion. When mademoiselle, too, ignoring the fact that she was a servant, addressed her with that brusque familiarity of voice and manner which touched her heart, Germinie, overcame, became mute under the horrible sense of her unworthiness. She fled;

she tore herself away from that affection so odiously deceived, and which, directed toward her, aroused her remorse.

XXXVI

The wonder of that life of dissipation, of shame, was that its secret was not betrayed. Germinie made no outward sign; not a word passed her lips; nothing could be divined from her face or manner, and the horrible depth of her existence was hidden from her mistress. Mlle. de Varandeuil at times vaguely suspected that her maid had a secret—that she was concealing something from her. She had moments of doubt, of instinctive uneasiness—a confused perception of something enveloped in mystery. At times it had seemed to her that her maid's eyes did not express what her lips uttered. Involuntarily, a phrase which Germinie often repeated occurred to her: "A hidden sin, a sin half pardoned." But what surprised her most was to see that, notwithstanding the increase in her wages, the small gifts which she bestowed upon her, Germinie never bought herself anything—had no dresses, no linens. What did she do with her money? She had almost acknowledged having drawn her eighteen hundred francs from the Savings Bank.

Mademoiselle thought it all over, and decided that this was her maid's secret: she had debts, incurred long since for her family, and perhaps more recently for that "rascal of a brother-in-law." She had such a generous heart, and so little command over it! She did not understand the value of money. It was only that, mademoiselle was certain; and as she was aware of her maid's obstinacy, and had no hope of changing her, she said nothing about it. When that explanation did not entirely satisfy the old lady, she ascribed that which was incomprehensible in her maid to the disposition of a woman somewhat fond of mystery, jealous of her small affairs, and given to locking up within herself all pertaining to herself, as the villagers collect their sous in woolen stockings. Or, again, she persuaded herself that it was her illness, her suffering condition, which caused her to be so crotchety; and she fell asleep, reassured.

How could mademoiselle divine Germinie's degradation and the horror of her secret? Amidst her greatest trials, in her intoxicated condition, the unhappy woman guarded it with incredible tact. Never did there escape from her lips a sentence, a word, that could cast any light on her affairs. Sorrow, scorn, grief, sacrifice, the loss of her child, her lover's treason, the agony of her love, were all locked securely within her heart. Those feverish

caresses lavished upon mademoiselle, those sudden effusions, always terminated without a confession in a burst of tears. Even illness, with its weakness and its enervating effects, drew nothing from her. Hysterical attacks drew from her cries, and nothing but cries. She closed her lips firmly when she slept. Fearing that her mistress might perceive by her breath that she drank, she ate garlic, thus destroying the fumes of the liquor.

When in a state of intoxication—when in a stupor—she managed to rouse herself on mademoiselle's approach, and to remain awake while in her presence.

She thus led a double life. She was like two distinct women, and by force of energy, with feminine diplomacy, with a presence of mind which never deserted her, even when under the influence of alcohol, she succeeded in keeping those two existences separate—in living both without confusing the two characters—in retaining when near mademoiselle the semblance of respectability. There was no word, no sign, that could awaken a suspicion of her clandestine life. On setting foot in mademoiselle's room—on approaching her, on finding herself face to face with her—she assumed the attitude of a woman who would ward off even the thought of the approach of a man. She spoke freely of all things as if she had nothing to blush for. She was

bitter against the faults of others, as if she were blameless. She spoke jocularly of love to her mistress, without embarrassment; one might have thought she was talking of an old acquaintance who was lost to sight.

There was about that woman of thirty-five, to all those who only saw her as did Mlle. de Varandeuil, a certain atmosphere of chastity, of strict and unimpeachable respectability, peculiar to old servants and plain women. All this was, however, not hypocrisy in Germinie; it did not arise from perverse duplicity, from corrupt calculation. It was her affectionate consideration for mademoiselle which made her appear, when with her, as she was; she wished at any cost to spare her the sorrow of penetrating her inmost depths. She deceived her solely to preserve her love; in the horrible comedy she was actuated by a holy, almost religious sentiment, similar to that of a daughter deceiving her mother in order not to grieve her.

XXXVII

She could do no more than deceive, Germinie told herself! She could not leave the place—even an attempt to depart would have been vain. She was conquered and cowardly, for she was bound to that man by all manner of low and degrading ties—even by his contempt, which he no longer concealed from her! Sometimes, upon reflection, she was startled. The superstitions of her youth whispered to her that a spell had been cast over her; without that, would she have been as she was? Would she have belonged to him so utterly—have obeyed him as a beast obeys its master?

Long and bitterly did she recall all that she had received in return for her devotion—his disdain, his insults, corrupt demands upon her; while she was forced to own that for him she had spared no sacrifice, no mortification. She tried to pick out the degree of abasement to which her love had refused to descend, and she could not. He could treat her as he would---insult her, beat her—she was his still! She could not fancy herself without him; that man was necessary to her; she lived, she breathed for

him; there did not seem to be a case similar to hers among the women in her station. Not one of her comrades suffered the harshness, the bitterness, the torture, the happiness that she did. To herself, she appeared peculiarly constituted—different from others—with a temperament like that of an animal that is attached to the person who ill-treats it. There were days when she did not know herself—when she questioned if she were the same woman. In reviewing all the base actions into which Jupillon had forced her, she could scarcely believe that it was she who had submitted. She, who had been quick-tempered, impulsive, full of ardent passions, of rebellion, had become docile and submissive. She had restrained her anger, had suppressed the thoughts of murder which had so many times entered her mind; she had always obeyed, always been patient, and bowed her head. At that man's feet she had laid her character, her instincts, her pride, her vanity, and more than that, her jealousy.

In order to watch over him, she had shared him with others—permitted him to have other loves, received him from the hands of others—had sought upon his cheek a spot which his cousin had not kissed! And after all her self-denial, she retained her hold upon him by a more mortifying means. She drew him to her by gifts; she opened her purse

to him, that he might indulge his pleasures, his caprices.

So she lived from day to day, in dread of what the miserable man might ask of her.

XXXVIII

"I must have twenty francs," Germinie repeated mechanically several times; but her thoughts did not go beyond the words she muttered.

Her walk, mounting to the fifth floor, had tired her. She dropped into the greasy easy-chair in her kitchen, bent her head, rested her arm on the table. Her brain was confused. Her only thought was: "I must have twenty francs—twenty francs—twenty francs;" and she glanced around her as if seeking them in the chimney, in the dust-basket, under the stove.

Then she tried to recall the names of those who owed her; she remembered a German maid who had promised to pay her more than a year before. She rose, tied her bonnet-strings. She did not say "I must have twenty francs," but "I will have them."

She went down to Adele: "Have you twenty francs with which to pay this bill that has been brought in? Mademoiselle has gone out."

"Alas, no!" said Adele; "I loaned my last twenty francs to madame last night. Will thirty sous do?"

She went to the grocer's. It was Sunday—three o'clock; the shop was closed.

There were a number of people at the green-grocer's; she asked for four sous' worth of herbs.

"I have no money," said she. She hoped the woman would say, "Do you want some?" But instead she said: "That is fine—as if we were afraid!"

She left the shop without speaking.

"Is there nothing for us?" she asked the porter. "Ah! say, have you twenty francs, Pipelet? That will save me a journey upstairs."

"Forty, if you want them."

She breathed more freely. The porter walked toward a cupboard at the other end of his lodge.

"Ah, my wife has taken the key. How pale you are!"

"It is nothing." And she rushed toward the servants' staircase. As she ascended, these were her thoughts:

"Mademoiselle just paid me five days ago: I cannot ask her. Still, what are twenty francs more or less to her. It is a pity; the grocer would surely have lent them to me."

She had reached her floor. She leaned over the balusters of the front staircase to assure herself that no one was coming, entered, went directly to mademoiselle's room, opened the window, drew a

deep breath. The sparrows came from the chimneys round about, thinking she would throw them crumbs of bread. She closed the window and turned to the chest of drawers upon which stood a small wooden cash-box. This she examined first, then the key—a steel key—left in the lock.

Suddenly she thought she heard a ring. She opened the door; no one was there. She returned, took a duster from the kitchen, and began to rub a mahogany chair, turning her back to the chest of drawers. Still she could see the box; she saw it open; she saw the corner at the right where mademoiselle kept her money—the small packages in which it was rolled—her twenty francs were there. She closed her eyes as if they were dazzled. She felt the tempter in her soul.

Immediately she was disgusted with herself. In that moment her honor lay between her hand and that key. Her past of disinterestedness—of devotion—twenty years of resistance of evil counsel and corruption—twenty years of disdain of theft—twenty years in which her pocket had never held a farthing that was not honestly hers—twenty years of indifference to lucre—twenty years in which temptation had not assailed her, the confidence reposed in her by mademoiselle—all appeared to her in that moment. Her youthful days rose before her; the

memory of her parents' honorable but humble name—and for that moment she was saved.

Then insensibly evil thoughts, one by one, crept into her brain. She sought an excuse for ingratitude to her mistress. She compared her wages with the wages of the other maids in the house. She concluded that mademoiselle had accumulated money since she had been with her. And why, she asked herself suddenly, had she left the key to her cash-box? Then she began to reason that the money which lay there was not money on which to live, but mademoiselle's savings, with which to buy a velvet dress for some god-daughter—money that lay idle, she told herself again.

She hurriedly invented excuses. Then she said:

"It is only for once. She would lend them to me if I asked her—and I will put them back."

She put out her hand and turned the key. She stopped. It seemed to her as if the very silence was watching, listening to her. She raised her eyes; the mirror reflected her face. She was afraid of her own face! She recoiled with fear and shame; she had the head of a thief upon her shoulders! She fled to the corridor. Suddenly she turned upon her heel, went up to the cash-box, turned the key, put her hand under the hair medallions

and trinkets, took a coin at random, shut the box, and rushed into the kitchen. She held the money in her hand, and dared not look at it!

XXXIX

It was from that time that Germinie's abasement, her degradation, became visible in her person—stupefied her, in fact. Her senses grew dull; she was no longer quick of perception. That which she had read, had learned, seemed to have escaped her. Her memory, once so retentive, grew confused; her face, formerly so bright and intelligent, dull and inanimate. One could again see in her the stupid peasant-girl she had been on arriving from the country, when she had asked for gingerbread at a stationer's. She seemed not to understand. Mademoiselle was obliged to explain to her, to repeat two or three times what she desired, before Germinie grasped her meaning. She asked the girl, on seeing her thus, so dull and half asleep, if her maid had not been changed.

"You are getting foolish then," she said to her several times, impatiently. She could remember when Germinie had been so useful to her in recalling a date, an address, keeping account of the day on which they had brought in the wood or tapped

a butt of wine—minor points which escaped her memory. Germinie now remembered nothing.

In the evening, when she made up the accounts with mademoiselle, she could not recollect what she had bought in the morning. She would say, "Wait," with an uncertain gesture; but nothing came to her.

Mademoiselle, to spare her weak eyes, had become accustomed to having her read the newspaper aloud to her; Germinie in a short while read so hesitatingly, with so little intelligence, that the old lady was forced to stop her. Her intellect becoming weakened to such a degree, her body also relaxed. She paid no attention to her toilet—was not even tidy; she wore dresses spotted with grease and torn under the arms, tattered aprons, stockings in holes, worn shoes. Formerly she had been proud of her linen; no one in the house had fresher-looking bonnets; her collars were always so white, and gave her such a neat appearance. Now she had soiled, rumpled bonnets, which looked as if she had slept in them. She wore no cuffs, and her collars were always dirty. An air of misery and dejection pervaded her whole being. Sometimes it was so noticeable that Mlle. de Varandeuil could not resist saying to her:

"Come, my girl, this will not do; you look like a pauper."

On the street she scarcely looked as if she belonged to any one respectable. She had lost the aspect of a servant upon whom was reflected the pride of her mistress. Day by day she sank into that most untidy and abject of creatures—a sloven.

Neglectful of herself, she neglected all around her. She did not set things to rights, she did not clean, she did not scrub. She allowed disorder and dirt to reign in mademoiselle's apartments, that little home the neatness of which had always been her pleasure and pride. The dust accumulated, spiders spun their webs, the windows were dirty, the mahogany furniture grew dull. Moths ate the carpets, which were never touched with brush nor broom. A dozen times mademoiselle had tried to pique Germinie's *amour-propre* (self-respect) with regard to the state of things, and one day the old lady ventured to write Germinie's name on her mirror; her maid did not forgive her for a week, so mademoiselle resigned herself to her fate. When she saw Germinie was good-natured, she would say gently:

"You must confess, my child, that the dust is very thick here!"

Mademoiselle replied with a pitiful accent to the astonishment and observation of the friends who still came to see her, and whom Germinie was forced to admit:

"Yes, it is dirty—I know that very well! But what shall I do? Germinie is ill, and I prefer that she should not kill herself."

Occasionally, when Germinie had gone out, she gave her chest of drawers or a picture-frame a dusting—hurrying through it, fearing a scolding or a scene should her maid enter and see her. Germinie worked scarcely any; she prepared very little food. She reduced her mistress' breakfast and dinner to the simplest fare. She made her bed without turning the mattress.

Never was she the servant she had been, except on those days when mademoiselle gave a dinner, at which a number of covers were laid for the children invited. At such times Germinie, as if by magic, issued from her state of idleness, of apathy, and drawing upon her strength in a kind of fever, she regained her former activity.

Mademoiselle was surprised to see her requiring no aid, prepare a dinner in several hours for ten persons, serve and remove it with the sprightliness of her youth.

XL

"No; this time, no," said Germinie, rising from the foot of Jupillon's bed, upon which she had been seated. "You do not know, then, that I have not a sou—not a sou. You have not seen the stockings I wear!" And, raising her skirt, she showed him her stockings, full of holes, and tied with selvages. "I have nothing. Money? Why, on mademoiselle's fete-day, I bought her a bunch of violets for a sou. Ah, yes, money! Do you know how I obtained the last twenty francs? By taking them from mademoiselle's cash-box! I have replaced them. But to do such a thing again—never in my life! Anything that you wish, but not that—not theft! I will do it no more!"

"Well, have you finished?" asked Jupillon. "If you had told me that, do you think I would have taken them? I did not think you were so hard up; I fancied it would not pinch you to lend me twenty francs, which I would return in a week or two with the rest. You do not reply. Very well; it seems to me, there is no reason for us to get angry." And casting upon Germinie an indefinable

glance, he said, "On Thursday, eh?"

"On Thursday," said Germinie, desperately.

However, she would have liked to throw herself into Jupillon's arms, to tell him, "You see, I cannot!" but instead, she repeated mechanically, "On Thursday!" and left the room.

When, on Thursday, she knocked at Jupillon's door, she fancied she heard a man's footsteps. The door opened. Before her stood Jupillon's cousin, in a red gown and slippers, with the air of one perfectly at home. Here and there lay her effects; Germinie saw them on the furniture for which she had paid.

"Whom does madame wish to see?" the woman inquired impertinently.

"Monsieur Jupillon."

"He is not at home."

"I will await him," said Germinie, trying to enter.

"At the porter's?" asked the cousin, as she barred the way.

"When will he return?"

"When the hens get their teeth," replied the girl, closing the door in Germinie's face.

XLI

Returning that evening from a christening which she could not refuse to attend, mademoiselle heard a voice in her room. She thought some one was with Germinie, and, much surprised, she opened the door. By the light of a smoking candle she at first could distinguish no one; but, on looking more closely, she discovered her maid lying at the foot of her bed.

Germinie was talking in her sleep. Her voice at first was low, and her words breathed like sighs.

"Oh, she loves me a great deal—if she were not dead! But we will be very happy now—will we not? No, no! It is done—so much the worse. I do not want to speak of it!"

Mademoiselle with a shudder bent over that form. She listened to the voice the speaker herself did not hear. A sensation of horror possessed her; she felt as if she were standing beside a corpse reawakening to life. The disconnected words which fell from Germinie's lips were, as far as mademoiselle could understand, reproaches. Her voice was very different from its natural tones. It

changed from accents of tenderness, of anguish, to accents of reproach, of irony, bitter and implacable, ending in a nervous laugh. Mademoiselle was mystified. She listened as if at the theater; never had she heard off the stage such haughty disdain, nor scorn break into such laughter.

At length Germinie awoke and rose from the bed hastily, seeing that her mistress had returned.

"Thank you! Do not inconvenience yourself!" the latter said to her—"spreading yourself upon my bed like this!"

"Oh, mademoiselle, I was not where you lay your head. Pardon me!"

"Will you tell me then of what you were dreaming? There seemed to be a man; you were quarreling."

"I?" asked Germinie. "I do not remember."

And she began in silence to help her mistress to disrobe.

XLII

Soon mademoiselle was surprised by a complete change in her maid's manners and habits. Germinie no longer displayed that sullenness, that ill-temper, that fault-finding disposition. She emerged suddenly from her idleness with renewed vigor. She spent very little time at her marketing; she seemed to shun the streets. At night she did not go out. She scarcely left mademoiselle's side; she hovered around her, watching her from the time she rose until she retired, taking a care of her that was almost irritating—not permitting her to rise, not even to stretch out her hand to reach anything—waiting upon her, watching her like a child. At times annoyed by that attention, mademoiselle was on the point of saying to her:

"Ah, will you ever leave me in peace?"

But Germinie would smile upon her, a smile so sad and tender, that she checked her impatience, and the girl continued to remain near her. All her affection seemed at that moment to be centered in mademoiselle. Her voice, her gestures, her eyes, her silence, her thoughts, all turned to her

mistress with the ardor of an atonement, the contrition of a prayer, the transport of adoration. She loved her with all the tender force of her nature. She wished to lavish upon her all the devotion she had withdrawn from another. Daily her love embraced more closely, more fervently, the old lady, who felt herself revived by the warmth of the attachment encircling her in her old age.

XLIII

But the memory of the past and her debts haunted her as she repeated:

"If mademoiselle knew!"

She lived in fear, in trembling. There was not a ring at the door that she did not say to herself: "There it is!" Letters in a strange handwriting filled her with anxiety. She hid them in her pocket; she hesitated about giving them up, and the moment when mademoiselle opened and glanced through the dreaded paper, was to her as full of emotion as to one awaiting sentence of death.

She felt her secret and her deceit to be in the hands of every one. All in the house were aware of this; the neighbors knew of it. About her there was no one but her mistress whose esteem she could steal.

On ascending, on descending the stairs, she felt the porter's eye upon her—an eye which smiled, which seemed to say," I know!" She dared not call him familiarly: "My Pipelet." When she returned from market, she peeped into her basket. "I am very fond of that," the porter's wife would say,

when there was a choice morsel of anything; at night she gave her what remained of the delicacy. She ate nothing herself, but almost maintained the woman and her husband. She feared her neighbors as much as she did the lodge-keeper.

There was in every shop a face which reflected her disgrace, and speculated on her shame. At each step she was forced to purchase silence. If she found anything too expensive, a jeer reminded her that the tradesmen were her masters, and that she must pay if she would not be denounced. A hint, an allusion, caused her to turn pale.

The successor of Mme. Jupillon, who had left to open a grocer's shop at Bar sur Aube, sold her poor milk, and when Germinie told the woman that her mistress found fault with it and scolded her every morning, the woman replied:

"Your mistress scolds you, does she?"

At the green-grocer's, when she asked if a certain fish was fresh, the man said to her:

"Well, why don't you say at once that I have put something in the gills to make it appear fresh!"

Mademoiselle wanted her to get some things at the market; she mentioned the fact before the green-grocer.

"Ah, yes, at the market; I would like to see you go to the market!"

The grocer imposed upon her by selling her coffee

which smelt like snuff, stale biscuits and fruit; when she made so bold as to object, these words were hurled at her:

"Ah, bah! *you* need not find fault with *me!* I tell you, the things are good."

XLIV

It caused Germinie a pang—yet a pang which she courted—as she fetched mademoiselle's daily paper, to pass by on her way a school for young girls. Often she stopped at the gate at the hour for breaking up. From the narrow, dark passage the little ones ran as from an open cage, pell-mell, gamboling in the sunshine. This swarm at first pushed, jostled one another. Then they formed groups. Tiny hands slipped into others as tiny, friend hung upon the arm of friend, while some threw their arms around the necks of companions, sharing with them their bread and butter. Then all strolled up the dirty street; the tallest, who were about ten years old, stopping at gateways to chat like little women. The youngest amused themselves by wetting their boots in the puddles. Some put on their heads cabbage-leaves picked up from the ground, forming a green bonnet, from beneath which laughed their fresh, bright faces.

Germinie watched them—followed them. She could not take her eyes from those little arms carrying their school-bags, those little legs encased in

woolen stockings. There was something divine about those blonde heads. Their numbers decreased. Each street took some of the children. The sound of their footsteps gradually died away. Germinie followed the last remaining ones.

One day, as she recalled her own child, she was suddenly seized with a desire to embrace one of those children; she grasped one by the arm in the manner of a kidnaper.

"Mamma! mamma!" cried the frightened little one, escaping from her.

Germinie fled.

XLV

Day succeeded day—for Germinie all equally desolate and sad. She no longer expected anything of fortune. Her life seemed forever buried in despair; she was doomed to continue her existence in the same groove of unhappiness, straight before her lying the shadowy pathway, at its end—Death. There could be no future for her. Yet from the midst of her despondency, thoughts at times caused her to raise her head and look about her at the present. At times the illusion of a lingering hope smiled upon her.

It seemed to her that she could once more be happy, were certain things to come to pass. Then she pictured those things to herself. She linked impossibilities together. Gradually that delirium of hope vanished. She told herself that it was impossible—that what she had dreamed of could not be, and she sat in her chair, reflecting dejectedly. In a few moments she rose, walked slowly and unsteadily to the cupboard, took down the coffee-pot, resolved to try her fortune.

Her luck, her misfortunes, the future lay in that

fortune-teller of the lower classes—in that plate into which she had emptied the coffee-grounds. She mixed water with them, breathed upon them religiously. Then, leaning forward, her eyes fixed on the plate, she gazed at those small particles, discovering in them forms, letters, signs. She separated the grains with her fingers, in order to be able to see them more clearly. She turned the plate slowly, examining the mystery from all sides, and seeking in it appearances, images, names, the outlines of objects and initials—signs of any shape that would predict her victory.

Under the tension of her gaze the grounds assumed forms. Her trials, her hatred, and faces that she detested appeared by degrees on that magic plate, on the plan of fate. The candle beside her, which she had forgotten to snuff, flickered; the hour grew late; but, as if petrified by anguish, Germinie remained riveted to the spot, alone, and face to face with the future, trying to distinguish among the coffee-grounds her fate, until she fancied she perceived a cross by the side of a woman bearing a resemblance to Jupillon's cousin—a cross, the emblem of approaching dissolution!

XLVI

The love Germinie had lost, and which she had not the power to resist, became thus the torment of her life—an unceasing and abominable torment. She longed for it, she had to struggle against it. For weeks, for months, for years, she was tempted without yielding, without accepting another lover. Fearing herself, she fled from men—from the sight of them. She became unsociable, and a stay-at-home, shut in with mademoiselle, or in her room above. Sundays she did not go out. She had dropped all intercourse with the other maids in the house, and in order to employ her time and forget her troubles, she either sewed or slept.

When strolling musicians entered the court, she closed the windows, that she should not hear them, for the sweet strains of music softened her heart.

Notwithstanding all this, she could not calm herself; the tempter within her could not be quieted; the blood coursed warmly through her veins; she dreaded herself, her lack of strength to withstand the promptings of her passion.

XLVII

The moment arrived when Germinie gave up the contest. Her conscience was quieted, her will bent—she succumbed to her fate. What remained to her of resolution, of energy, of courage, vanished beneath the distressing convictions of her inability to escape from herself. She felt herself in the midst of a constantly flowing tide which it was useless, almost impious, to try to stem.

That great power which causes suffering in the world, Fatality, crushed her, and Germinie bowed her head beneath its iron heel. As she recalled the bitterness of her past life—when she traced from her infancy her miserable existence, that chain of misfortunes which had followed her and grown with years without the hand of that Providence of which she had heard so much being outstretched to her—she concluded that she was one of those unhappy creatures consecrated at birth to eternal misery; one of those for whom happiness was not made, who could only look on at that happiness, so enviable, of others.

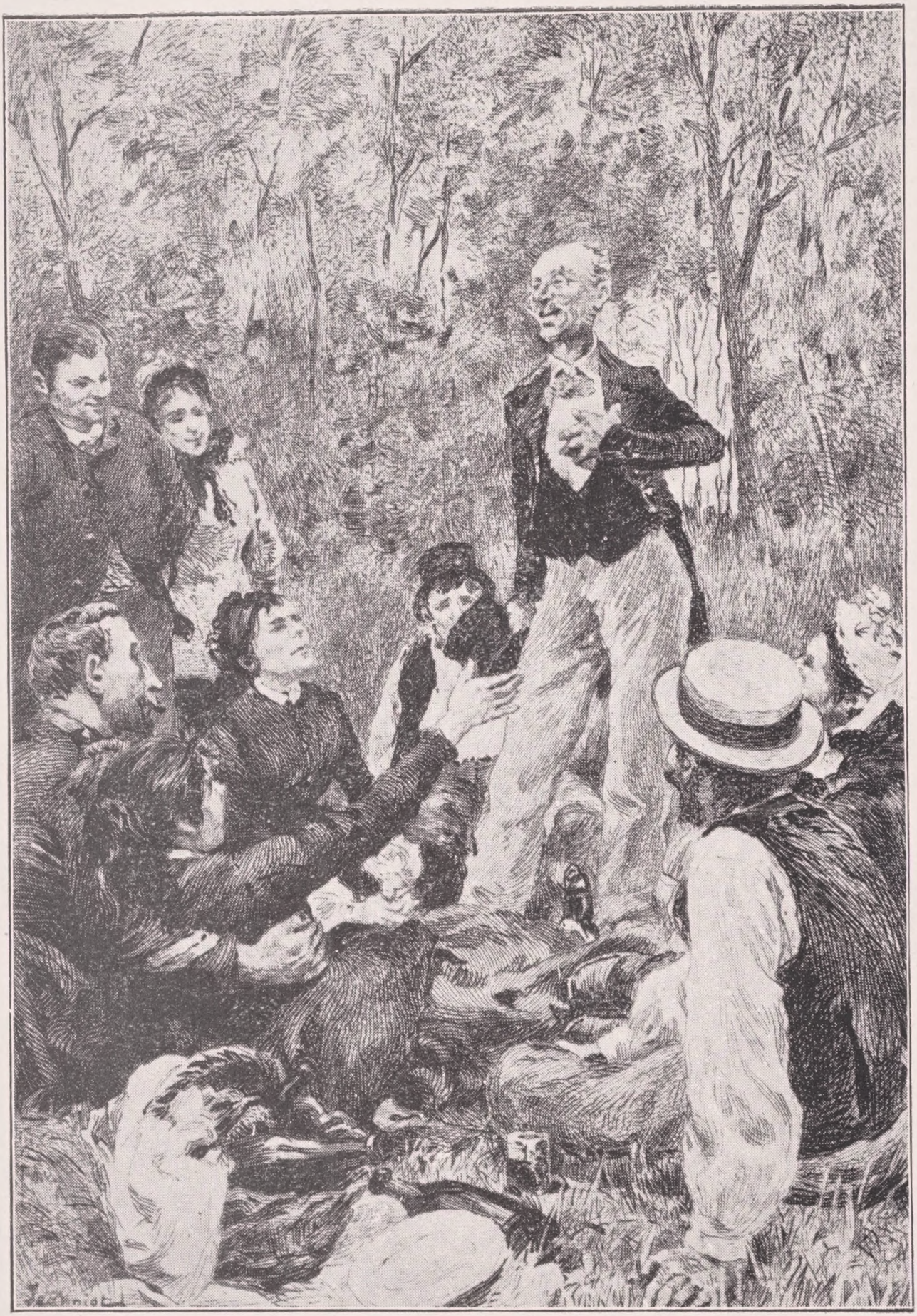
She fed upon that thought, and by dint of repeat-

ing to herself the continuity of her misfortunes, and the rapid succession of her troubles, she began to find ill-luck in the petty trials of life, in her duties.

A small amount of money which she borrowed and could not repay, an errand poorly done, a purchase in which she was cheated—all was not owing to any fault of hers, but to that of Fate, which was conspiring against her, and persecuted her in all things from the greatest to the least, from the death of her child to the groceries that were inferior. There were days on which she broke whatsoever she touched; she made herself believe that she was cursed even to her finger-tips.

"Cursed! almost damned!" She had persuaded herself of that when she interrogated her body, her senses. She had only one sentence on her lips—one sentence which was the refrain of her thoughts: "What do you want? I am unfortunate —I have no luck—I am never successful!" She uttered those words like a woman who had renounced all hope. With the thought each day becoming more fixed of having been born under an unlucky star, Germinie dreaded every common occurrence of her daily life. She lived in a cowardly dread of the unforeseen; a ring at the bell startled her; a letter in an unknown hand inspired her with such fear that she scarcely dared open it; a word addressed to her caused the perspiration to

start from every pore. Finally she attained to that supreme disdain, to that limit of endurance, when the excess of grief resembles irony, when sorrow, passing beyond the bonds of human strength, overreaches its sensibility, and when the broken heart which no longer feels the blows says to the heaven it braves, "Again!"



XLVIII

"Where are you going like that?" said Germinie one Sunday morning to Adele, who passed through the corridor of the sixth story, very gayly dressed.

"I am going to a picnic. There are a lot of us: fat Marie—you know her; Elisa, the big, and little Badiniers; and there are men, too! I am going with my swain, the new one, the fencing-master; then there is one of his friends, a painter. We are going to Vincennes. Each one is to take something. We shall eat on the grass; the men will pay for the liquor. We shall have a jolly time, I assure you!"

"I will go, too," said Germinie.

"You? Very well; there will be plenty of beaux for you."

Half an hour later the two women set out, and met the rest of their party in front of a cafe. After drinking some currant wine, they entered two large wagons and rolled away.

Arrived at Vincennes, they got out of their vehicles at the fort; as they passed along its walls, the fencing-master's friend, the painter, cried to an artillery-man on duty near a cannon:

"Say, old man, wouldn't you rather take a drink than stand guard, eh?"

"Isn't he comical?" said Adele to Germinie, nudging her with her elbow.

Soon they reached the woods of Vincennes. Narrow paths, well-beaten, full of tracks, crossed each other in every direction. Between those paths were squares of grass, but grass trodden down, parched, yellow, dead, entangled with brush-wood. This spot could be easily recognized as one of those rural places which on Sundays is made a retreat for picnicers. The trees were unevenly spaced; there were small elms, with gray trunks stained a leprous yellow, pruned to the height of a man; sickly oaks, eaten by caterpillars, having only the net-work of their leaves. The verdure and foliage presented a sorry appearance; not a bird chirped in the branches, not an insect was to be seen on the ground. Nature seemed to be brought thither from the streets. The noise of the organs silenced the birds. From the trees hung women's hats, fastened in a handkerchief with four pins. An artillery-man's top-knot could be occasionally caught a glimpse of; peanut-venders sprang from the thickets. On the bare lawn children whittled, laborers' families drank in pleasure, boys caught butterflies in their caps.

It was one of those woods in the style of the old

Bois de Boulogne, dusty and burnt—a common promenade — one of those places with little shade.

The heat on this especial day was stifling. The air was heavy; not a leaf stirred. The party of pleasure-seekers proceeded gayly on their way with that joyous activity inspired by the country in people of their class. The men ran, the women caught up to them; some wanted to dance, others to climb trees, while the painter amused himself by throwing pebbles from a distance into the loop-holes of the fortress gate.

Finally, all of the company seated themselves in a kind of glade, at the foot of a group of oaks. The men smoked; the women chatted, laughed, and were very hilarious. Germinie only was silent. She did not hear, she did not see those people. Her eyes, beneath their lowered lashes, were fixed upon the ground. Wrapt in her own thoughts, she was scarcely conscious of being in the midst of so much gayety. Stretched full-length upon the grass, her head somewhat raised by a clod of earth, she made no movement but to rest the palms of her hands flat upon the grass beside her; then, in a short while she turned them over in order to feel the cool earth upon her burning skin.

"Adele," said a woman's voice, "sing something for us."

"Ah," replied Adele, "I cannot sing before eating."

Suddenly a large stone fell close to Germinie, near her head; at the same time she heard the painter's voice cry to her:

"Do not be frightened—that is your seat."

Each one spread a handkerchief on the ground in place of a table-cloth. They took the food from greasy papers. The bottles uncorked, the wine went the rounds. The painter carved and made paper boats to hold the salt. Gradually the company became animated. Hand clasped hand, lips met, arms were twined about waists.

Germinie, however, maintained silence and drank. The painter, who was seated beside her, felt uncomfortable so near that strange woman. Suddenly he began to beat his knife against his glass to drown the noise about him, and rising, he said, in a voice like that of a parrot that has crowed too much:

"Ladies, I am unhappy. I am a widower! I, who revel in love, have no wife! That is a deprivation for a mature man. No wife! And there are so many ladies! I cannot, however, walk about with a sign on me which says: 'A man to let; present address,———.' I say this, ladies, to inform you that if among your friends there is any one who would like to become acquainted—object matrimony—I am her servant—Victor Mederic Gaut-

ruche! This is the prospectus: Forty-nine years of age; a head with no more hair than a billiard-ball; feet as long as—I won't make any comparisons; a person no longer young; you understand I do not require a princess. Well, indeed, here she is!"

Germinie had seized Gautruche's glass, emptied half of its contents, and held toward him the side from which she had drunk.

Night closed in; the picnicers turned their steps homeward. At the fortress, Gautruche carved a large heart on a stone, and each one put his or her name beneath the date cut in it.

That night Gautruche and Germinie passed along the boulevards together, and entered a house over the entrance to which was inscribed in black letters, "Hotel of the Little Blue Hand."

XLIX

Mederic Gautruche was a mechanic who made a holiday of life. Always a trifle intoxicated—drunk in the evening when he was not in the day-time—he saw life through a clouded brain. Ennui, cares had no hold on him; and when by chance a serious or gloomy thought occurred to him, he turned away his head, uttered a sound like "pstt!" which was his manner of saying "zut;" and raising his right arm toward heaven, caricaturing the gesture of a Spanish dancer, he cast his melancholy over his shoulders—to the "deuce," as he expressed it.

He had a fine philosophy—the tipsy serenity of the bottle. He knew neither envy nor covetousness. Satisfied with all, he loved all—found amusement and mirth in everything. Nothing in the world seemed mournful to him—but a glass of water!

To that temperament Gautruche united the cheerfulness of his trade, the good nature and animation of that craft so free from care, at which he amused himself by whistling, perched on a ladder above the passers-by. He was the only painter

in Paris who would attempt a sign without a measure—without an outline in white; he was the only one who at a stroke put in its place each letter. He, too, was famous for fanciful letters—letters shaded, picked out in bronze or gold. He earned from fifteen to twenty francs a day; but as he drank a great deal, he saved nothing, and was always in debt at the public-house.

He was a man of the streets. The street had been his mother, his nurse, his school. The street had cultivated his assurance, his spirit. He had gathered a fund of intelligence from the sidewalks of Paris. His stock was inexhaustible. His speech abounded in happy thoughts and metaphors. He was full of amusing stories. He frequented all the music-halls and wine-cellars, was familiar with all the popular ballads, and sang them unwearyingly. He was a droll fellow, every inch of him. To look at him made one laugh. A man of such spirits, of such a lively nature, fell to Germinie; nor was she such a slave to duty that she had nothing but her work on her mind; she, too, had been fashioned, formed by a Parisian education.

Mlle. de Varandeuil having nothing to do, and being curious, like all old people, to hear the gossip of the neighborhood, had made Germinie relate to her what news she could glean—what she knew about the tenants—all the tittle-tattle of the house

and street; and that habit of narrating, of conversing with her mistress as a sort of companion, of describing people, of outlining silhouettes, had developed in her an ease of expression and a keenness and piquancy of observation very odd, coming from the lips of a servant.

She had often surprised Mlle. de Varandeuil by her quickness of comprehension, her promptness in grasping things only half-told, her readiness and ease in finding the means of expressing herself. She understood pleasantry. She never made a mistake, and when there was any discussion on orthography at the creamery, she always decided it. She had, too, that fund of confused knowledge possessed by the women of her class who have literary tendencies. She had spent many an evening devouring novels; in addition to that she read the papers and clippings from papers, and she had retained a vague idea of many occurrences and of several kings of France. She remembered enough to wish to talk with others on those subjects. She had often been to the theater with a woman in the neighborhood who kept house for an author; on her return she could recall the entire play, as well as the names of the actors she had seen on the programme. She delighted in buying songs, novels for a sou, and reading them. The air of the "Quartier Breda," replete with the spirit of the artist and the workshop, with

art and vice, had whetted Germinie's tastes, and awakened desires within her.

Some time before her troubles she avoided decent society, respectable people of her own class and station; she had shunned those sleep-producing chats over a cup of tea, which were the fashion among the middle-aged servants of the old ladies of mademoiselle's acquaintance. She felt the need of associates whose intelligence equaled her own, and who would be capable of understanding her. And as she issued from her state of stupefaction, as she revived and felt the necessity of amusing herself with those equals within her reach, she wanted about her men who awoke mirth, who were gay and fond of liquor. And it was for that reason she turned to that Bohemian rascal, noisy, boisterous, and a tippler like all Bohemians; therefore she turned to Gautruche.

L

When Germinie returned home one morning at daybreak, she heard a voice call to her from the shadows of the court-yard:

"Who goes there?"

She rushed up the servants' staircase, but she knew she was pursued; soon she was grasped by the arm on a landing-place, and the porter's voice said, as he recognized her:

"Oh, it is you? Excuse me! Do not make yourself uneasy! You are astonished, eh, to see me up so early? It is on account of the theft committed in the cook's room—the cook on the second floor. Well, good-night! You are indeed lucky that I am not a gossip."

Several days after that, Germinie learned from Adele that the cook's husband had said that there would be no need to seek very far for the thief—that she was in that house. Adele added that it was being talked of in the street, and that there were people who repeated, believed it. Germinie, in great indignation, told all to her mistress. Mademoiselle, rendered even more indignant than

Germinie, and personally wounded by the insult offered her maid, wrote at once to the servant's mistress, requesting her to compel her domestic to cease the calumnies directed against a girl who had lived with her twenty years, and for whom she would answer as for herself.

The servant was reprimanded. In his rage he spoke more strongly still. For several days he declared his intention of going to the commissioner of the police to require him to ask Germinie with what money she had furnished apartments for Mme. Jupillon's son; with what money she had bought him a substitute; with what money she had paid the expenses of her friends. For an entire week the terrible threat hung over Germinie's head; finally the thief was discovered, and the threat was not carried out. But it had its effect upon the poor girl; it caused her reason to totter. It upset that mind so ready to take affright; she lost her presence of mind, discretion, neatness, and appreciation of things; she yielded to absurd fancies, to distressing presentiments; was affected by her fears as if they were realities, her only refuge being this thought: "Bah! I will kill myself!"

During that week her fevered brain reviewed all the events that possibly might take place. By day, by night, she saw her disgrace exposed, made public; she saw her secret, her cowardly actions,

her errors—all that she had concealed within her bosom—brought to light, disclosed—**disclosed** to mademoiselle! Her debts for Jupillon, increased by her debts for liquor and food for Gautruche that she had bought on credit—her debts to the porter, to the trades-people—would be exposed, and ruin her!

A shudder crept over her at the thought; she fancied mademoiselle sending her away!

During that week she pictured herself as being brought before the police commissioner. For eight whole days she was ruled by this thought and this word—the law! the law as the fancy of the lower classes paints it, as something terrible, indefinable, inevitable—a power of evil which appears in the black robe of a judge between the policeman and executioner, with the hands of the police and the arms of the guillotine!

She who had all those instincts of fear—she who often declared that she would rather die than go into a court-room—saw herself seated on a bench between the gendarmes, in a tribunal, in the midst of that great unknown of which her ignorance had such a dread. During that week her ears heard upon the stairs footsteps coming to arrest her. The shock was too great for nerves as much shaken as were hers. Her sense of agony aroused in her the thought of suicide. She began to ponder, her head between her hands, on that which spoke to

her of deliverance; for hours she sat at her kitchen window, her eyes fixed upon the pavement below; as the day drew on, she leaned more heavily against the unsteady bar at the window, hoping it would give way, praying for death, yet not strong enough to make that desperate leap into space.

"Why, you will fall!" said mademoiselle to her one day, seizing her skirt in terror. "What are you looking at in the court-yard?"

"I? Nothing—the pavement."

"Are you mad? You frightened me very much!"

"Oh, one could not fall like that," said Germinie with a singular accent. "To fall, one would have to make a bold leap."

LI

Germinie could not persuade Gautruche to give her a key to his room. When he had not returned she was compelled to await him below—outside, in the street, the darkness, the cold. At first she walked to and fro before the house. She passed and repassed, took twenty paces, returned. Then she would go farther—as far as the end of the boulevard. She walked thus for hours, often, under the blazing sun. She passed public-houses, wine-cellars, leafless arbors, low hovels, dismal hotels where one could obtain lodging for the night. She passed shops, closed—sealed, bankrupt—dark passages with iron barriers. Still Germinie walked on over that ground which was covered by an hospital, a slaughter-house, and a cemetery—Lariboisiere, l'Abattoir, and Montmartre! The laborer on his way to Paris, the working-woman returning, her day's work done, her hands under her armpits to keep them warm, shameless women in black hoods, strolling along, passed her by, and stared at her. Those strangers seemed to recognize her; the light made her timid. She crossed the boulevard to

avoid their glances; she scolded herself, she called herself a coward; she declared that this would be her last trip—that she would walk as far as a certain arbor once more, and then, that would be all, for if he had not returned, she would go away. But she did not go; she continued her walk; she awaited him, and in proportion as he delayed, her desire to see him increased. At length the boulevard was cleared of pedestrians. Germinie, exhausted, worn out with fatigue, drew near the houses. She crept from shop to shop—she mechanically sought those places where the gas still burned. She tried to conquer her impatience. The steaming windows of the wine-shops attracted her attention. She read the lists of lottery winners placarded in a public-house, the inscriptions bearing in yellow letters these words: "New wines, the very best brands, seventy centimes." For fifteen minutes she gazed into a back room, in which she saw a man in a blouse seated on a stool before a table on which were a slate and two trays. She stood rooted to the spot, almost fainting, seeing everything as in a dream, hearing only indistinctly the dull rumble of the cabs along the boulevards, ready to drop, and forced to support herself by leaning against the wall. In her disturbed, morbid condition, on those evenings when it rained, her fainting-spells almost assumed the form of a nightmare. A

puddle seemed to her to swell into a deluge; water surrounded her, water inclosed her on all sides: she closed her eyes, she dared not stir, fearing lest her feet might slip. She burst into tears and wept until some compassionate fellow-creature gave her his arm as far as the "Hotel of the Little Blue Hand."

LII

Arrived there she entered; it was her last refuge. She there escaped from the rain, the snow, cold, fear, despair, and fatigue. She ascended the staircase, and seated herself on a landing-place near Gautruche's closed door, drew her shawl and skirts closely about her, to allow comers and goers to pass, and shrank into a corner to hide her shame.

From open doors issued the impure air of close rooms—where perhaps in a single one families were crowded together—the stench of dirty rags, greasy fumes from kitchens, the damp odor of drying linens. The window, with its broken panes, behind Germinie, sent forth the fetidness of a sink into which the occupants of the house emptied their refuse. At every whiff her heart sank. She drew from her pocket a bottle which she always carried about her, and took a swallow.

The staircase too had its passers-by; the respectable wives of laborers ascended with bushels of coal or eatables. They almost stumbled over Germinie's feet, and she felt glances of contempt cast upon her.

Children, little girls who passed up the dark staircase—girls, who brought to her mind her own child—stopped and stared at her with wondering eyes; then they ran away, and when they reached the top, leaning over the balusters, they addressed to her rude, vulgar remarks—remarks so common among children of their order. Insults hurled at her from those rosy lips wounded Germinie deeply. She partly rose; then, overcome, she sank back, and pulling her tartan over her head in order to hide her face, she lay there like a corpse—inert, insensible—like a package thrown there for every one to tread upon—having no feeling, awake to nothing but the sound of a footstep, for which she listened in vain.

At length, after the lapse of several hours, she heard an unsteady step in the street below; then a tipsy voice stammered on its way upstairs:

"Rascal—rascal of a wine-merchant! You have sold me wine that intoxicates!"

It was he; almost every night there was the same scene.

"Ah, you are here, Germinie!" said he, recognizing her. "This is what it is, I tell you—I am somewhat tipsy," putting the key in the lock. "I tell you, it was not my fault." He entered, spurning with his foot a dove with clipped wings which was hopping about, and shutting the door, he made his

usual explanation, attributing the blame to somebody else.

Germinie, during his explanation, had lighted the candle, stuck in a copper candlestick. By this flickering light one could see the dirty paper on the walls, covered with caricatures cut from the "Charivari" and from other papers, and pasted on the wall.

"Well, you are a love!" said Gautruche, seeing Germinie place on the table a cold chicken and three bottles of wine. "For I must tell you, that all I have in my stomach is a wretched broth—that is all." And he began to eat the viands set before him.

Germinie tasted no food; but she drank, her elbows resting upon the table, her eyes fastened upon him with a sinister glance.

Between those two beings there existed a terrible love, desperate and mournful; their caresses were brutalized by the fumes of wine, and seemed to seek the very blood beneath the skin, like the tongue of a wild beast; their passions engulfed them—left them mere shadows of their former selves.

Germinie seemed possessed with a kind of supreme frenzy. In this paroxysm of excitement, the unhappy creature's nerves, brain, fancy, became fraught with madness. At every moment the word "Death" escaped from her lips, as if she were in-

voking it, and sought to clasp it in the agonies of love!

Sometimes at night, suddenly sitting up on the side of the bed, she put her bare feet on the cold floor, and remained there, wildly gazing upon him who was sleeping in that silent chamber. Gradually the silence of the hour enveloped her. Her power of thought became confused: all manner of dark objects having wings and voices seemed to beat against her temples. Somber tempters held before her eyes a red light, the light of crime; and there were at her back unseen hands, which impelled her toward the table on which lay the knives. She closed her eyes, did not stir a step; then, in her fear, she clung to the sheets; finally, she turned, and creeping into bed, fell asleep by the side of the man she had wished to assassinate—why, she did not know; for no reason but to kill!

And thus until daybreak, in that miserably furnished room, raged and struggled those mortal passions, while the poor, lame dove, that maimed pet of Venus, nestled in an old boot belonging to Gautruche, and from time to time awaking, cooed.

LIII

About this time Gautruche became somewhat disgusted with drink. He felt the first symptoms of a liver complaint which for many months had been lurking in his heated blood. The terrible suffering he endured for a week had given him food for reflection. He was inspired with brave resolutions—with thoughts, almost sentimental, of the future. He told himself that he must drink more water if he would live to old age. As he tossed from side to side upon his bed, he glanced around his hovel, upon the four walls within which he spent his nights, to which he returned intoxicated, often without a light, and he planned another home for himself.

He pictured to himself a room in which there was a woman—a woman who would prepare him a good dish of soup, would care for him when he was ill, would patch his clothes and keep his linens in order, would prevent him from running an account at the wine-cellar—a woman, in short, who would keep house for him, and who, in addition to that, would not be stupid, would understand his jokes and laugh with him.

That woman he had found—Germinie! She ought to have some money—a few sous laid by while in her old mistress' service—and with what he could earn they would live comfortably. He did not doubt but that she would consent; he was positive she would accept his proposition. Moreover, her scruples, if she had any, would not withstand the hope of marriage, which he would hold out to her. When on Monday she entered his room, he began thus:

"Say, Germinie, what do you say to this, eh? A fine room, not like this hole—a real one, with a closet—at Montmartre, with two windows; Rue de l'Empereur, with a view that an Englishman would pay five thousand francs for! In fact, something enlivening and gay, where one can spend the entire day without being bored. As for myself, I tell you, I am beginning to get enough of this hole. And that is not all. I am tired of living alone. Friends are no companions. They swarm around you like flies when you treat them, and then they are gone. Now, first of all, I am not going to drink any more; upon my honor, I am not—you shall see! I do not wish to die, you understand. Well, to pass from one subject to another, this is what I have decided upon—I make this proposition to Germinie: We will furnish rooms together; you have something saved that

will help us, I suppose. One does not always want to work for others. We will settle ourselves nicely, and some fine day will be married by the magistrate. That is not so bad, is it, eh? But you will have to leave your dear old lady for your dear old love of a Gautruche."

Germinie, who had listened to Gautruche, her head bent forward, her chin resting in the palm of her hand, threw herself back, and burst into a loud laugh:

"Ha, ha, ha! You thought that, did you? You propose that, eh? You thought I would leave her—mademoiselle? Indeed! did you think so? You are foolish—do you know that? Not if you had hundreds of thousands—not if you were laden with gold—do you hear? You are joking, eh? Mademoiselle! You do not know—I have never told you—I would not have her die, and not be beside her to close her eyes with these hands! Did you really think I would do it?"

"Why, I fancied—I fancied you thought more of me than that—in fact, that you loved me," said the painter, somewhat confused by the keen sarcasm of Germinie's reply.

"Ah, you thought that, did you? that—I loved you?" Then, as if suddenly touched by remorse, she said: "Well, yes—I love you! I love you as you love me—there! just as much! That is all!

I love you as something that is at hand, of which one makes use because it is there! I am used to you as I am to an old dress which I wear all the time. That is how I love you! What is there to attach me to you—you or any one else! What have you done for me more than any other? Yes, you have taken me up; and then what? Is that enough to merit my love? What have you done to win it? Will you tell me? Have you ever sacrificed a glass of wine for me? Have you ever felt any pity for me when I waited about in the mud, in the snow, at the risk of my life? For a long time I have wanted to tell you this. Do you think," said she, with a malicious smile, "that I was enchanted with your appearance, your bald head? Not much! I accepted you—I would have taken any one; at that time some one was necessary to me." She paused.

"Go on," said Guatruche, "pitch into me—do not spare me while you are here."

"Eh," resumed Germinie, "you imagined I would be delighted to come to you? You said to yourself, 'That stupid woman will be satisfied; I will only have to promise to marry her! She will leave her place at once; she will desert her mistress—mademoiselle. Mademoiselle! who has only me. Ah, you do not know anything about it. If you did, you would not comprehend. Mademoiselle,

who is so kind to me! Since my mother's death I have had no one but her to treat me kindly! With the exception of her, who has said to me when I was sad, 'Are you sad'—and when I was ill, 'Are you ill'—no one—no one but her—has cared for me, taken an interest in me! *You*, to talk of love in our relations toward each other! Ah, there is one who has loved me! mademoiselle—yes, loved me! And I am dying from this, from having become the wretch I am; the—" She uttered a word beneath her breath. "And I have deceived her, robbed her of her love, allowed her to love me as a daughter. Me! Ah, if she should hear anything, I would not live long afterward; I would leap from the fifth story as sure as there is a Heaven above me! Fancy what you will, but you have not my heart nor my life in your keeping. There was a man once—I do not know if I loved him! I endured torture for him, and said nothing. But, look you, as much as I sacrificed myself for him, though I would not have breathed had he objected, though I was mad, and allowed him to rule me, I should have let him go at any moment had mademoiselle been taken ill—had she as much as signed to me. Yes, for her I would have left him; I repeat, I would have left him!"

"Then, since you love that old woman so much,

my dear, I can only vouchsafe this advice: You must not leave her again."

"Am I dismissed?" asked Germinie, rising.

"By my faith! it seems so to me!"

"Very well. Adieu; that suits me." And walking to the door, she left the room without a word.

LIV

After that rupture, Germinie proceeded from bad to worse. The miserable creature, a prey to passion, degraded to the level of the streets, lost even that self-contempt which had formerly been inspired by her misdeeds. She cared neither for youth nor beauty in man; she was blind to all personal attractions. What attracted her was the man himself, be he what he may.

She walked the streets with the stealthy tread of a beast whose appetite is not sated. The midnight passer-by saw her by the lamplight, creeping along, cowering, her shoulders bent, hovering about in the shadows with that air of frenzy, of madness, which furnishes the mind of the student and the physician food for thought.

LV

One evening, when she was strolling along Rue du Rocher, as she passed a public-house at the corner of Rue de Laborde, she saw a man drinking at the counter. That man was Jupillon. She stopped short, turned back, and leaned against the railing in front of the window, awaiting him. The light from the shop fell upon her back; as she stood there, motionless, her shoulders against the iron bars, one hand holding up her skirt, the other falling at her side, she looked like a shadowy statue of Retribution. She was possessed with the determination of waiting there patiently, if necessary, forever.

She saw the pedestrians, the vehicles, the street, vaguely, indistinctly. The extra horse used to help the omnibus up-hill—a white horse—was directly in front of her, immovable, jaded, asleep standing up, his head and two fore legs in the full glare of the light from the door; but she did not see him.

It was drizzling. It was one of those days when

the water that falls seems to turn to mud almost before reaching the ground.

Germinie remained at her post half an hour, a pitiful sight—threatening, desperate, like a figure of Fate at the door of an inn. At length Jupillon came out. She stood before him, her arms crossed.

"My money?" she said to him.

She looked like a woman who had no conscience, for whom there was no God, no law, no scaffold—nothing! Jupillon felt the lie he tried to utter stick in his throat.

"Your money?" said he; "your money—it is not lost. But I must have time. Just now, I can tell you, work is not very plentiful. But in three months, I promise it to you. And how are you?"

"Rascal! I will stick fast to you, though you want to be off! It is you who have made me what I am—brigand, thief, cheat! It is you!"

Germinie cast those words in his face, thrusting her own close to his. She seemed to try to provoke him to blows; she called out:

"Strike me! Why don't you strike me for what I have said?"

She was beside herself; she did not know what she did; she seemed only to long for him to strike her. She thirsted for brutal treatment, for suffering through the flesh. Blows were all she could think of that would put the finishing-touch to his

treatment of her. Then she fancied the arrival of the police commissioner—the commissioner before whom she would have to confess all: her story, her degradation—all that she had endured for that man, all that he had cost her!

"Strike me!" she repeated, pressing closer to Jupillon, who tried to draw back as he did so, addressing caressing words to her, as one does to a beast who does not know one, and is ready to make a spring.

A crowd gathered around them.

"Go along, old pickpocket; don't annoy the gentleman," said a police officer, bringing Germinie to her senses by seizing her roughly by the arm. Under the brutal grasp of that rude hand, Germinie's knees knocked together; she thought she should faint. Then, in affright, she fled down the street.

LVI

Passion has mad, inexplicable caprices. That accursed love which Germinie thought destroyed by the wounds inflicted by Jupillon, revived. She was startled when she made the discovery. The sight alone of that man, that short meeting, the sound of his voice, the inhalation of the air he breathed, had sufficed to cause a revulsion of feeling on her part, and to render the miserable past forgotten.

Notwithstanding all, she had never been successful in entirely rooting her affection for Jupillon from her heart. He had been her first love; she clung to him in spite of herself. Between her and him were all the bonds which knit a woman insolubly to a man—self-sacrifice, suffering, abasement. She was his, for he had violated her honor, trodden upon her illusions, inflicted martyrdom upon her. She was his, his eternally, by virtue of her trials. And that scene, which should have made her dread another meeting, had only served to rekindle a mad desire to be near, to see him! All her passion was renewed. Thoughts of Jupil-

lon helped to redeem her; she ceased her vagabondish life; she wanted no lover, for to have none was her sole hope of winning him back.

She began to watch for him—to study his hours for going out, the streets through which he passed, the places he frequented. She followed him to Batignolles, to his new lodgings, walking behind him, contented to set her feet where he had set his, to see him; that was all, however. She dared not address him; she remained at a distance, like a dog that is perfectly satisfied if he be not repulsed by a kick. Thus for weeks she became that man's shadow—an humble, timid shadow, dreading discovery.

Sometimes she awaited him near the door of the house he entered, followed him when he left it, accompanied him home, always at a distance, without a word, with the air of a beggar who asks for crusts, and is thankful to be accorded permission to collect them. Then, through the shutters of the room on the ground floor in which he lived, she watched to see if he were alone, if any one was there. When a woman leaned upon his arm, although she inflicted cruel suffering on herself, she was determined to follow them; she went wherever the couple went. She entered public gardens and ball-rooms behind them. She walked in their smiles, in their words, agonized by the sight of his attentions, racked by jealousy.


VINS
ABSINTHE
Jeanniot

LVII

For several days after the night spent in the rain Germinie's face was the color of marble; her eyes glowed. She said nothing, however; made no complaint, and performed her duties as usual.

"Come, let me look at you a moment," said mademoiselle, drawing her toward the light; "what does this mean—this corpse-like face? Tell me, are you ill? have you a fever?"

She seized her maid's wrist; then, pushing her away, she said:

"You have a high fever, and you are keeping it to yourself!"

"No, mademoiselle," Germinie stammered; "I think I have a severe cold. I fell asleep the other evening, and left my window open."

"Ah, indeed," replied mademoiselle. "Oh! wait a minute." And putting on her spectacles, she rolled her arm-chair to a small table near the fire-place, and wrote several lines in a bold hand.

"Now," said she, as she folded the letter, "you will be kind enough to hand that to your friend Adele to give to the porter, and then to bed!"

But Germinie would not go to bed; she was not

tired. She sat up all day. Besides, she persisted, the worst of her illness was over; she was already better.

The physician summoned by mademoiselle came that evening. He examined Germinie, and prescribed for her. The difficulty was with her lungs, and such that he could not tell positively what it might develop into. They must await the effect of the remedies. He came again in the course of a few days, ordered Germinie to bed, and examined her by means of a stethoscope.

"It is wonderful," said he to mademoiselle when he came down-stairs; "she has had the pleurisy, and has not kept her bed at all. She must be made of iron. Oh, the strength of these women! How old is she?"

"Forty-one."

"Forty-one? It is impossible! Are you sure? She looks as if she were fifty."

"What can you expect? She is always out of health, always ill, always in trouble—with a disposition that causes her to worry."

"Forty-one! It is astonishing!" repeated the physician. He resumed, after a moment's reflection: "Has there ever been, to your knowledge, any lung disease in her family? Are her parents dead?"

"She lost a sister with pleurisy. But she was older; she was forty-eight, I believe."

The doctor looked grave.

"She will get better," he said in a reassuring tone. "But it is highly essential that she should rest. Let her come to me once a week, and be careful that you select a fine day—a sunny day."

LVIII

Mademoiselle talked, besought, commanded, scolded—in vain she could not persuade nor force Germinie to discontinue her duties even for a few days. She would not listen to the proposition of having some one to help her do the work; she declared to mademoiselle that it could not be; that she could never reconcile herself to the thought of another woman approaching, serving, caring for her; that the very idea of such a thing made her feverish; that she was not dead yet, and that as long as she could put one foot before the other, she begged her mistress to let her wait upon her. In uttering those words, she took such a tender tone, her eyes looked so supplicating, her manner was so humble, yet so passionate, that mademoiselle did not have the courage to oppose her. She considered and called her a "blockhead," who thought, like all country people, that she would die if she remained in bed a few days.

Keeping up under the doctor's treatment, Germinie continued to make mademoiselle's bed, though the latter assisted her in turning the mattress. She, too, continued to prepare the food,

which was for her the hardest task. When she cooked the breakfasts and dinners she almost gave out, for her kitchen was one of those miserable, small kitchens, so common in Paris, which are the cause of much of the consumption among women. The embers which she lighted, and from which arose slowly a cloud of smoke, made her feel faint. Then the charcoal fumes enveloped her in their sickening odor. She was stifled; she felt the blood rush to her face; her head whirled as she staggered to the window to inhale a breath of fresh air.

She had a horror of being confined to her bed—of seeing another care for mademoiselle. She feared the information that might be brought by a new servant. She must remain near her mistress, and prevent any one else from stepping in.

She too must show herself, that her neighbors might see her, that her creditors should not think she was dying. She must appear to be as strong and gay as ever, in order to inspire those about her with confidence by the promise of a speedy recovery. She must keep up, in order to reassure those to whom she was in debt, to prevent stories of her embarrassment from mounting the stairs and reaching mademoiselle's ears. In this she was almost heroic. As she passed those shops the proprietors of which were watching her, she straightened her

feeble frame, quickened her lagging step, and rubbed her cheeks with a coarse napkin before descending the stairs, to call up the color in place of that death-like pallor which overspread her face.

All winter she wrestled with her malady, notwithstanding the distressing cough which broke her rest—notwithstanding the fact that her stomach rejected all nourishment.

Each time that he came the physician told mademoiselle that he did not find any of her maid's organs affected seriously; the lungs, it was true, were somewhat weak, but that would be overcome.

"Yet her body is worn out—worn out," he repeated with a grave accent, with an air almost of embarrassment, which struck mademoiselle.

LIX

In August the doctor could find nothing more to prescribe but the country. In spite of the inconvenience it caused her to travel, to change her dwelling-place, her habits—notwithstanding her domesticity and the pang it cost her to leave her home—mademoiselle decided to take Germinie to the country.

She wrote to a daughter of one of her former *protegees*, who lived with her family on a small but pretty estate in the village of La Brie, and who for many years had wanted her old friend to visit her. She asked her hospitality for a month or six weeks for herself and her maid, who was in delicate health.

They set out. Germinie was delighted. Upon her arrival she felt better. But the spring of that year was rainy; there were sudden changes and high winds. Germinie caught cold, and mademoiselle soon heard that frightful cough recommence, which had been so insupportable and so distressing to her in Paris. Yet from those nights of suffering Germinie arose with an energy, an activity, which surprised and for the moment reassured mademoi-

selle. She was up as early as the rest of the family. One morning, at five o'clock, she went with one of the servants to a place three leagues distant, to obtain fish; another time she went to a ball with the other maids, and did not return until day-break. She also helped the servants with their work; seated in a chair in a corner of the kitchen, she was always busy.

Mademoiselle had to compel her to go into the garden; Germinie would seat herself on a green bench, forgetting everything in breathing the light and warmth in a sort of passionate aspiration and feverish joy. Although she was fatigued by evening, nothing would induce her to retire before her mistress—she must be with her to assist her in making her toilet for the night. Seated near by, she rose from time to time to render what assistance she could—perhaps to help take off a skirt; then she resumed her seat, collected her strength, rose again and tried to perform some other office. It finally became necessary for mademoiselle to oblige her forcibly to remain seated.

At such times she would repeat the same tiresome stories about the servants in the house.

"Do you know, mademoiselle, you have no idea what eyes they make when they think no one sees them—the cook and the man. They behave, however, when I am there; but the other day I sur-

prised them in the bake-house; they were kissing—just fancy that! It is fortunate that madame suspects nothing."

"There you are again, with your tales! Great heavens," said the old lady, "what does it concern you if they kiss each other or not? They are kind to you, are they not? That is all that is necessary."

"Ah, very kind, mademoiselle; I have nothing to complain of. Marie got up one night to give me a drink, and when there is any dessert left, *he* always saves it for me. Oh, he is very kind to me! Marie does not like it very well that he is so attentive to me; you understand, mademoiselle?"

"Come, go to bed and stop your nonsense," brusquely replied her mistress, out of patience at seeing a person as ill as her maid then was, interfering with the love of another.

LX

On their return from the country, the doctor, after making an examination of Germinie, said to mademoiselle:

"This has been very rapid—very rapid. The left lung is entirely gone, the right affected; I fear she is a doomed woman. She may live six weeks—two months at the most."

"Ah, sir," said Mlle. de Varandeuil, "all that I love pass away before me! I shall go last!"

"Have you thought of some place to which to send her?" asked the doctor after a pause. "You cannot keep her here. It would distress you to see her sufferings."

"No, sir, no; I have thought of no place! Must I send her away? Sir, she is not a maid, not a servant to me—she is like one of my family. What! would you have me say to her, 'Begone, at once!' Ah, this is the first time I ever longed for wealth, and felt the inconvenience of having rooms such as I now have. To tell her that would be out of the question! And where would she go? To Dubois? Ah, yes—to Dubois! She has been there to see

the maid I had before her, who died there. As well kill her."

"The hospital, then?"

"No, not there; I do not want her to pass away in such a place!"

"But, mademoiselle, she would be a hundred times better off than here. I will procure her admission to Lariboisiere, under the care of a doctor who is a friend of mine. I will recommend her to the house-surgeon. She will have a good nurse in the ward to which I will have her taken. In case of need, she could have a room to herself. But I am sure she would prefer to be in the common hall. It must be done, mademoiselle; it is absolutely necessary. She could not rest in that room upstairs. You know what those servants' rooms are—they are cold and draughty, they have no fireplaces; she has surprising courage, wonderful nervous vitality; but notwithstanding that, she will be confined to her bed in the course of several days—she will rise from that bed no more. Come, be reasonable, mademoiselle; let me speak to her, will you?"

"No, not yet. I must compose myself, and then look about me. I do not think she will die as quickly as that; we shall have time. Later on, we will see—yes, later on."

"Pardon me, mademoiselle, but permit me to

suggest that in caring for her, you may make yourself ill."

"I? Oh, I!" And Mlle. de Varandeuil, as she uttered those words, accompanied them by a gesture which expressed more plainly than any words could have done, the small value she set upon her life.

LXI

Mingled with the feeling of uneasiness which the illness of her maid caused mademoiselle, was a singular sensation, a certain fear of the new being, strange and mysterious, which disease had called forth from the depths of Germinie's soul. Mademoiselle felt uncomfortable when gazing upon that face veiled in an implacable sternness, lighted only occasionally by a faint smile. The old lady had seen death approach a great many times; she could recall the faces of the dying, but none within her recollection had assumed so somber a character—an expression, as it were, so locked within itself; it was incomprehensible. Germinie was as immobile as bronze. Mademoiselle puzzled her brain as to what the woman was secreting; was it a horror of death, or a secret fraught with remorse? No external influences seemed to touch her. She became indifferent to all things—no longer desired to be relieved or cured. She made no complaints, took no interest in what was going on around her. Her thirst for affection even had left her. She seemed to be petrifying; she would gaze fixedly

into space, and utter no sound for hours. When mademoiselle returned from the house of a friend with whom she had dined, she found Germinie in darkness, without a light, seated in an easy-chair, her feet upon another, her head bent upon her breast, so deeply absorbed in her thoughts that she had not even heard the door open and shut. Upon advancing into the room, mademoiselle felt as if she were disturbing a tete-a-tete between disease and darkness, in which Germinie was already courting the obscurity of the tomb and the shadow of death!

LXII

During the month of October, Germinie refused to remain in bed. Daily, however, she grew more feeble; scarcely was she able to mount the stairs leading to her room. One day she grew dizzy and fell; the servants picked her up and carried her to her room. But she did not stay there; the following morning she came down as usual. She prepared mademoiselle's breakfast; she made a pretense of working; she tottered around the room, supporting herself on the furniture.

Mademoiselle, observing this, made her lie down on her own bed. Germinie lay there half an hour —an hour—sleepless, uttering no sound—her eyes open, vague and staring. Finally, one morning, she did not come down-stairs. Mademoiselle climbed to the servants' quarters, and stopped at Germinie's door, No. 21. Germinie begged her pardon for causing her so much trouble; it had been impossible for her to rise; she had severe pains in her stomach, which was swollen. She asked mademoiselle to be seated, and removed a candlestick from the only chair in the room. Mademoiselle sat

down, and for several moments looked around that miserable room—one of those in which the doctor is forced to lay his hat on the bed—in which there is barely space to *die!* It was a mansard, several feet square, without a fire-place. Old trunks, carpet-bags, a bath-tub, and the small iron bed which Germinie had bought for her niece, were piled together in a corner. A bed, a chair, a small jug, and a broken basin, comprised the furniture. Over the bed, in a rosewood frame, hung a daguerreotype of a man.

The doctor came that day.

"Ah, peritonitis!" said he, when mademoiselle had informed him of Germinie's condition. He went upstairs to see the patient.

"I fear," said he on coming down, "that there is an abscess in her stomach. It is serious, very serious. It must be impressed upon her that she is not to move about much in her bed, and that she must turn cautiously. She might die suddenly, in the greatest agony. I proposed that she go to Lariboisiere; she consented at once—she made no objection; she has no horror of it. But I do not know how she will stand the removal. Still, she has so much energy—such a strong will; I have never seen her equal. To-morrow morning you shall receive the order for admission."

When mademoiselle entered Germinie's chamber,

to her surprise she found her smiling, delighted at the thought of going away.

"You see, mademoiselle, it is only a matter of about six weeks," she said to her mistress.

LXIIII

At two o'clock the following day the doctor brought the order. His patient was ready to go. Mademoiselle proposed having her carried on a litter brought from the hospital.

"Oh, no!" said Germinie hastily; "folks would think I was dying!"

She remembered her debts; she wanted to be seen by her creditors in the neighborhood, alive and erect to the last!

She rose from her bed. Mlle. de Varandeuil assisted her in putting on her skirts and dress; then Germinie went down-stairs and seated herself in an arm-chair in the dining-room, near a window. In the meantime the char-woman put up a package containing some changes of linen, a glass, a cup, and a pewter plate that she wanted to take with her. When the woman had finished, she left the room, and Germinie, fixing her eyes upon the door through which she had passed, said to mademoiselle:

"At least I leave you some one honest."

Then she rose, and supported, almost carried by

Mlle. de Varandeuil, she descended the five flights; at each landing she stopped to rest. In the vestibule she saw the porter, who brought her a chair. She sank into it. The man, with a smile, asked if she would be back again in six weeks. She hurriedly replied, "Yes, yes !"

She entered the cab; her mistress seated herself beside her. She watched the houses as they passed them, but did not speak; the cab was uncomfortable, and jolted her as it rumbled along.

Arrived at the hospital gate, she refused to allow them to carry her.

"Can you walk so far?" asked the lodge-keeper, pointing to the house, about twenty feet distant.

She made a sign in the affirmative, and walked on. At length they reached the large hall—lofty, cold, neat, but terrible. Mlle. de Varandeuil found Germinie a seat near a window, which was opened by an employe, who asked the mistress her maid's name and age, which he put down upon a document, at the head of which was a religious symbol. That done, Mlle. de Varandeuil turned and embraced her; a boy took her by the arm—she passed along the hall and disappeared. Mademoiselle turned and rushed toward her cab; throwing herself upon the cushions, she gave vent to the anguish pent up within her bosom, in sobs and tears. The coachman on his box was surprised to hear such violent grief.

LXIV

Visiting day—Thursday—arrived. Mlle. de Varandeuil set out at half-past twelve for the hospital; she wished to be at Germinie's side as soon as the doors opened. Passing through the same streets they had passed through four days before, she recalled her terrible trip. It almost seemed to her that in the carriage in which she was seated was a suffering form, and she involuntarily shrank into a corner, as if to make room for Germinie.

How would she find her? Would she be there? What if her bed should be empty! The cab rolled along a narrow street, in which stood wagons loaded with oranges, while women seated on the sidewalks sold biscuits and cakes from baskets. There was something mournful about those fruit and cake stalls, from which horny hands in passing bought dainty morsels to carry to the dying. Children carried them gravely, tenderly, almost piously, as if they understood.

The cab drew up at the court-yard gate. It lacked five minutes of the hour; at the gate stood a file of women in working-dress—sad, gloomy, and

silent. Mlle. de Varandeuil took her place in the line, advanced with the others—entered. She asked for the Saint Josephine ward; she was directed thither, and found the bed, No. 14, as they had told her, one of the last to the right. Had she not been directed, she would have been drawn toward the place at the end of the room by Germinie's smile—that smile of the hospital patient, which says to the unexpected visitor on entering, "I am here!"

She bent over the bed; Germinie tried to push her away with a gesture of humility and the respect of a servant; but Mlle. de Varandeuil kissed her.

"Ah," said Germinie to her, "the time seemed so long yesterday. I imagined it was Thursday, and I longed to see you."

"My poor girl! How are you?"

"Oh, very comfortable just now. The swelling is reduced. I have three weeks to remain here, you see, mademoiselle. They said I would have a month—six weeks—but I understand myself best; and then I am very well; I sleep now at night. I am thirsty though, but they will give me wine and water."

"What do they give you to drink?"

"There it is—will you pour me some out, mademoiselle; their pewter jugs are so heavy." And raising herself by means of a small *baton* suspended over her bed, and extending her emaciated arm

toward the glass which Mlle. de Varandeuil held toward her, she feverishly drained the contents.

"There!" said she, when her thirst had been slaked, placing her arms outside the coverlet upon the bed. Then she resumed: "My poor mademoiselle, does my illness inconvenience you? I suppose the dirt at home is worse than ever?"

"Do not worry about that."

A pause ensued. A faint smile played about Germinie's mouth as she said to mademoiselle:

"I have been pretending—I have said I felt well." Then, bending forward, she whispered: "There are histories here! I have a queer neighbor over there"—she motioned toward the sick woman to whom her back was turned. "There is a man who comes here to see her. He talked to her yesterday for an hour. I overheard that they had a child; she has left her husband. He was like a madman—that fellow—when talking to her."

Germinie grew quite animated as she recalled the scene that had taken place the previous day—she, so near death, to have listened to the love beside her!

Suddenly her face changed. A woman approached her bed; she seemed embarrassed on seeing Mlle. de Varandeuil. She bent over Germinie and kissed her, and as another woman advanced, she hastily took leave of her; the new-comer did the same—

kissed Germinie, and soon left her. This woman was followed by a man, while after him came a woman. All bent over the invalid to kiss her, and each time Mlle. de Varandeuil heard indistinctly some murmured words from those who embraced, and a hurried reply from her who was embraced.

"Well," said she to Germinie, "I see they take good care of you!"

"Ah, yes," replied Germinie in a peculiar tone; "they care for me!"

But she did not appear as cheerful as she had been on mademoiselle's arrival. Her face was set; it was cold and impenetrable. Her features were overspread by a veil of infinite and mute suffering. There was no longer that tender, caressing expression in her eyes; in its place was a fixed stare. Those visitors she had just received were the grocer, the green-grocer, the laundress, and the woman who had succeeded Mme. Jupillon. Those kisses were given by her creditors simply as a means of conveying to her in an undertone a reminder of her debts to them.

LXV

Saturday morning mademoiselle was about to prepare a small basket filled with dainties to carry to Germinie the following day, when she heard the sound of voices in the hall—the voices of the char-woman and the porter.

Almost immediately the door opened, and the latter entered the room.

"Sad news, mademoiselle," said he. And he held toward her a letter. It bore the stamp of the hospital of Lariboisiere.

Germinie had died that morning at seven o'clock. Mademoiselle stared at the paper. Dead! dead! She could not believe it! Dead! She should see her no more! There was no longer a Germinie in the world! Dead! she was dead! And she should not hear her at work in the kitchen any more! She would not open the door for her again; she would not enter her room again in the morning—some one else would take her place.

"Germinie!" she cried at length; then, recalling what had happened, she exclaimed:

"Machine! thing—what is your name?" she said

harshly to the char-woman—"my dress, that I may go out."

That sudden death was such a shock to her that she could scarcely grasp the truth contained in that letter.

Was Germinie really dead? Mademoiselle asked herself that question with the feeling of doubt inspired in people who have lost dear ones at a distance, and not having seen them die, cannot realize that they are dead.

Had she not seen her alive the last time? How had it happened? Mademoiselle was anxious as to her last hours—was anxious to hear about what she had not seen; she must find out if Germinie had said anything before her death—if she had expressed any wish, any desire.

Arrived at Lariboisiere, she passed the porter, walked through the corridors in which the convalescents were taking some exercise, and knocked at a door veiled with white curtains, at the end of the building.

It was opened. She entered a parlor, lighted by two windows, in which a Holy Virgin in plaster was placed upon a pedestal between two views of Vesuvius. Behind her, through an open door, came the sound of voices—of youthful voices and fresh laughter. Mademoiselle asked to speak with the matron of the Saint Josephine ward. She entered

the room—a small woman, slightly deformed, with a plain but kindly face. Germinie had died in her arms.

"She suffered very little," said the nurse to mademoiselle. "She was cheerful, hopeful! In the morning, toward seven o'clock, when her bed was being made, suddenly, without knowing that she was dying, she was taken with a hemorrhage, in which she passed away." The woman added that she had said nothing, expressed no last wishes.

Mademoiselle rose, relieved. Germinie, then, had been spared the suffering she had pictured to herself. Mademoiselle was grateful for the sudden death. As she was leaving the room a boy approached her, saying:

"Would you like to see the body?"

The body! The word startled mademoiselle. Without awaiting a reply, the boy preceded her to a large yellow door upon which was inscribed, "Amphitheater." He knocked; a man in his shirt-sleeves partly opened the door and bade him wait a moment. Mademoiselle waited too. She was frightened; her thoughts were on the other side of that dreadful door. Confused, her terror awakened, she trembled at the idea of entering—of seeing in the midst of others that disfigured face which perchance she could not recognize. Yet she could not tear herself away. She told herself she should

never see her more! The man opened the door. Mademoiselle saw nothing but a bier, the lid of which disclosed Germinie's face, her eyes wide and staring, her hair standing, as it were, on end.

LXVI

Overcome by her emotions at that last sight of Germinie, Mlle. de Varandeuil, upon returning home, went to bed, after giving the porter money to pay the expenses of the funeral and a lot. As she lay in bed, what she had seen rose before her. She had constantly before her that face within the bier—Germinie's face, so changed! with eyes that seemed to have receded; with distorted mouth, from which the last breath had passed; with hair standing on end! Mademoiselle was haunted by the sight. She involuntarily recalled all the superstition that she had heard, when a child, relative to corpses. She had heard, she remembered, that corpses which had such hair took with them to the grave a crime. At times she saw Germinie's head with the hair of guilt, straight with fear and horror, before the justice of Heaven, like the hair of the condemned at the scaffold.

Sunday mademoiselle was too ill to leave her bed. Monday she tried to rise to attend the funeral; but she was so weak that she was compelled to return to her couch.

LXVII

"Well, is it over?" asked mademoiselle when, at eleven o'clock, the porter entered, having returned from the cemetery with a subdued expression upon his face.

"Yes, mademoiselle; thank God, the poor girl will suffer no more!"

"Stop! I am not in a fit condition to-day. Put the receipts and the remainder of the money on my table; we will count it some other time."

The porter did not stir. In the course of a few minutes he said:

"A funeral is expensive; there is first—"

"Who told you to count the cost?" asked mademoiselle proudly.

The porter continued, not heeding the interruption:

"And then a lot, such as you spoke to me about, is not to be had. You are very kind-hearted, mademoiselle, but you are not very rich; we knew that, and said: 'It will be hard for mademoiselle to pay, and, we know her—she will pay; now, we might spare her that. The girl will be just as well

off—and what would give her more pleasure, did she know about it—to feel that she had wronged no one, the good soul!' "

"Pay!—what?" demanded Mlle. de Varandeuil, impatient at the porter's circumlocution.

"Oh, it is nothing," replied the porter; "she was very fond of you, all the same—and then, when she was very ill, would not have been the time. But you need not inconvenience yourself—there is no hurry; it is the money she has owed for some time—that is it. See!"

And he drew from his pocket a stamped document.

"I did not require a bond, but she—"

Mlle. de Varandeuil seized the paper and glanced at the end of it. It was an acknowledgment, signed by Germinie, of the receipt of three hundred francs, payable in monthly installments.

"It is a mere trifle, you see," said the porter.

Mademoiselle took off her spectacles. "I will pay it," said she.

The porter bowed, but did not leave the room.

She glanced at him. "That is all, I hope," she said shortly.

The porter stared fixedly at the floor. "That is all, if you wish."

Mademoiselle was as terrified as she had been

when she passed into that room where lay all that remained of her maid.

"But how does she owe all this?" she exclaimed. "I paid her liberal wages; I almost clothed her. For what did her money go, eh?"

"Ah, that is it, mademoiselle; I do not care to tell you, but as well to-day as to-morrow. And, too, it is better for you to be prepared; if one knows, one can arrange. There is an account at the poulterer's; the poor girl owes a little everywhere. The last time, the laundress let her have money—quite a good deal—I do not know how much. It seems she owes the grocer, too, an old note, that has increased with years; he will bring you his reckoning."

"How much is it?"

"In the two hundred and fifties."

All those revelations falling upon Mlle. de Varandeuil, blow upon blow, shocked her greatly. So far she uttered no word of reproach against the girl, the veil of whose secret life was being torn away piece by piece.

"Yes, in the two hundred and fifties. There was a great deal of wine."

"I have always had it in the cellar."

"This was at the shop—at Mme. Jupillon's successor's; oh, not much—seventy-five francs—for bitters and brandy."

"She drank?" exclaimed mademoiselle, who at those words guessed all.

The porter did not seem to hear her.

"Ah, you see, it was her ruin to know those Jupillons; that young man—it was not for herself that she contracted those debts. And then the trouble—she began to drink. She expected to marry him, I must tell you; she furnished him a suite of rooms—she ruined herself. I often told her not to drink so much. When she came home at six o'clock in the morning, I did not tell you; I thought: 'She is like her child.' Ah!" continued the porter, "it is fortunate that she is dead. She has cost you enough, mademoiselle, and you can let her remain where she is, with all the rest."

"Ah, that was it! She stole from me—she incurred debts—she has done well to die! And I must pay! My child—no! no child of mine! A degraded wretch! she may rot where she is. You have done right, Monsieur Henri. To steal!—she stole from me! I gave her all my keys—I never counted my money. My God! I had confidence in her! Very well, I will pay—it is not for her sake, but mine. And I gave my best pair of sheets to wrap her in. Ah! if I had known, I would have given you an old dust-sheet, mademoiselle!"

The old lady continued to rail until the torrent of invectives she hurled at the dead Germinie almost choked her into silence.

LXVIII

As a result of that scene, Mlle. de Varandeuil was confined to her bed a week, her heart filled with indignation which overflowed from her lips, drawing from her gross epithets which she hurled at the tarnished memory of her maid.

Night and day, even in her dreams, she gave utterance to those maledictions.

Was it possible? Germinie—her Germinie! She would never return! Debts!—her child!—all manner of disgrace! The wretch! she abhorred, she detested her! Had she lived, she would have denounced her to the police! A girl who had served her twenty years, intemperate!—she had descended as low as that! The horror one conceives after a bad dream possessed mademoiselle. How she had deceived her! How she had pretended to love her, the miserable woman! And to make her appear more ungrateful and debauched, mademoiselle recalled her affection, her care, her jealousy, her air of adoration. She saw her bending over her when she was ill—she thought of her caresses! All that was false!—her devotion a sham! her kisses, her

love, a lie! Mademoiselle assured herself of that—repeated it, persuaded herself that it was so. And then from those feelings of bitterness there arose within her the first sensation of pity, of mercy. She remembered facts which she had not paid much attention to when Germinie was alive, but which the tomb recalled and which death exposed. She had a vague recollection of certain peculiarities in the girl—of feverish effusions, of troubled embraces, of times when she seemed about to make a confession—when upon her lips a secret seemed to tremble. She recalled Germinie's gestures, her attitudes, her distressed appearance. Beneath those she now perceived remorse, suppressed suffering, a passion for which she could only ask pardon by silence. Then, again, she took herself to task for having been so lenient in her thoughts. Her rigid sense of right and wrong—those feelings which a respectable woman would condemn in a daughter, and which to a person as pure as Mlle. de Varandeuil would be execrable—revolted against a pardon. Within her, a sense of justice cried: "Never! Never!" And she cast aside Germinie's infamous image; she even calumniated it, overwhelmed it with reproach. At the same moment, during her blackest thoughts a vision appeared to her, advanced toward her in the form of her dead maid. She saw that face which she had seen in the amphi-

theater, which, in proportion as it rose before her, rose with less repugnance; the face seemed to bear traces of suffering only, the suffering of expiation.

Insensibly indulgence crept into mademoiselle's heart—excuses which surprised herself. She questioned if the poor girl had been as guilty as others; if her life, circumstances, had not made of her the creature she became—a creature of passion and of woe. Suddenly she stopped—she was about to pardon her. One morning she leaped from her bed.

"Here! you—you other one!" cried she to her housekeeper—"what is your name? I always forget it. Quick! my clothes! I am going out."

"Why, mademoiselle—the roofs—look out; they are white."

"Yes, it snows—that is all."

Ten minutes later, Mlle. de Varandeuil said to the cabman, for whom she had sent:

"To the cemetery—Montmartre!"

LXIX

Far in the distance extended a wall; a line of snow lay upon its coping To the left, in a corner, three trees, divested of foliage, stretched their bare branches toward the sky. Beyond this wall was a large piece of ground on which were ranged two rows of crosses, crowded together, some broken off, overthrown. All of them were hung with wreaths of immortelles, of white and gold paper, of white and black. All the crosses had names upon them; but there were names which were not even cut on a piece of wood; a branch broken from a tree stuck in the ground, with an envelope attached to it with the name upon it, was a tomb very commonly seen. Across a trench there was a third row of crosses. Everything was covered with snow; an old priest in a black stole was trying to warm himself by stamping on the ground. This was the common burying-ground; that spot, those crosses, that priest, seemed to say, "Here sleep the dead of the people!"

Oh, Paris! you are the center of civilization; you are a great city, charitable and fraternal. The

pauper is your citizen, as well as the rich man. Your church preaches Jesus Christ, your laws equality, your papers progression; and this is where you throw those who die serving you; those who work to create your luxury; those who perish from the evil of your industries; those who have spent their lives in toiling for you, in contributing to your welfare, your pleasures, your splendor; those who form the crowds upon your streets—the people of your grandeur.

Each of your cemeteries has a shameful corner, hidden behind a wall, where you hasten to bury them. They say that your charity ceases with their last breath; that your only free gift is the bed upon which they suffer, and that after the hospital—so large, so fine—you have no more room for those people! You bury them, you crowd them, you confuse them in death, in a place from which in the spring the breezes carry hence an unhealthy miasma.

Mademoiselle arrived at this place. Directed by a keeper, she passed between the first row of crosses and the newly dug trench; and walking over the fallen wreaths, she bent over each cross, reading the dates, seeking out the name with her weak eyes. She reached the cross with the date of the 8th of November upon it—that was the day before the death of her maid—Germinie must lie near by. There were five crosses for the 9th of November—

five crosses crowded together. Germinie was not amongst those. Mlle. de Varandeuil ventured a little farther on, to those of the 10th, then to those of the 11th and 12th; she returned to the 8th, and looked about her again. There was no sign—absolutely none. Germinie had been buried without a cross; they had not even placed over her resting-place a piece of wood.

At last the old lady sank upon her knees in the snow between two crosses, one of which bore the date of the 9th of November, the other the 10th; all that remained of Germinie should be near those, but her grave was not marked—to pray for her, one would have had to pray between two dates. It seemed as though the poor woman was fated to have no more space allotted to her body than to her heart.

THE END

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