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The unfortunate and the infamous are associated in the words, *Les Miserables.* There were many such people in France in 1815. One of them was Jean Valjean.
An hour before sunset on an evening in the beginning of October, 1815, a man entered the little town of D...

He went into the mayor's office, came out, and turned his steps toward an inn.

What will monsieur have?

Something to eat, and lodging.

While the newcomer was warming himself, the innkeeper wrote a line or two on a paper and handed it to a child.

Take this to the mayor's office.

When the boy came back with the paper, the host read it, then took a step toward the traveler.

Monsieur, I cannot receive you.

But I am dying with hunger! I have walked since sunrise, I will pay!

No more of that! I know who you are. Go away!
The man bowed his head and went out. He walked at random, sinking near the houses. Then he entered another inn.

There is the fire; supper is cooking in the pot. Come, worm yourself, comrade.

The man seated himself near the fireplace, half dead with fatigue. But a fisherman who had been at the first inn beckoned to the tavern-keeper. They exchanged a few words, and the tavern-keeper returned to the traveler.

You are going to clear out from here! Ah! You know then.

The man took up his stick and knapsack, and went off. He tried several houses and was turned away. Night came on. Exhausted, he lay down on a stone bench.

Just then an old woman came out of the church.

What are you doing there, my friend? You cannot pass the night so.

I have knocked at every door. Everybody has driven me owoy.

The old woman pointed to a little, low house beside the bishop's palace.

Knock there.
The door opened and the traveler entered, a rough, tired, fierce look in his eyes.

See here! My name is Jean Valjean. I am a convict. I have been nineteen years in the galleys. Four days ago I was set free.

Indeed, Madame Magloire?

Yes, monseigneur. This house is not safe at all, and monseigneur has the habit of always saying, "Come in," even at midnight.

At that moment there was a violent knock on the door.

Come in.

When I reached this place I went to an inn and they sent me away on account of my yellow passport which I had shown at the mayor's office, as was necessary. It was the same everywhere. Then a good woman showed me your house. Can I stay?
Monsieur, sit down and warm yourself. We are going to take supper presently, and your bed will be made ready while you sup.

You are good people!

At the bishop's request, his silver plates and candlesticks were placed upon the table. It was the one luxury in his genteel but austere household.

You take me into your house. You light your candles for me, and I haven't hid from you where I came from.

This is not my house, it is the house of Christ. Whatever is here is yours.

After dinner the bishop led Jean Valjean to the alcove where he was to sleep. As they were passing through the bishop's room, Madame Magloire was putting up the silver in the cupboard.

The bishop left his guest before a clean, white bed.

You lodge me in your house, as near to you as this! Who tells you that I am not a murderer?

God will take care of that.
Jean Valjean was not a murderer. He had been a pruner of Faverolles, the sole support of his widowed sister and her seven children. One year there was a very severe winter. Jean had no work, the family had no bread.

What shall we do?

That night, a baker in Faverolles was going to bed when he heard a violent blow against the barred window of his shop. He got down in time to see an arm thrust through the opening. The arm seized a loaf of bread.

The baker pursued the thief and caught him. It was Jean Valjean.

Jean Valjean was brought before the tribunals and found guilty.

Four times he tried to escape, and each time his sentence was extended. He was set at large after nineteen years and, sullen and hardened, had been received by the bishop.

A good night's rest to you.
A few minutes afterward, all in the little house slept. As the cathedral clock struck two, Jean Valjean awoke.

The silver plates in the cupboard in the bishop's chamber would bring at least two hundred francs.

His mind wavered a whole hour. Then he rose to his feet, fumbled in his knapsack for an iron bar, and with stealthy steps moved toward the door of the next room.

He found it unlatched. He advanced to the bishop's bed and stood looking down at him with a strange indecision.

Suddenly he passed quickly to the cupboard. He saw the basket of silver and took it.

He crossed the room with hasty stride, took his stick and knapsack, stepped out of the window, ran across the garden, leaped over the wall like a tiger, and fled.
The next day, three gendarmes brought Jean Valjean back to the bishop's house.

Ah, there you are! I am glad to see you. I gave you the candlesticks, also; why didn't you take them along with your plates?

And he said it had been given him by an old priest?

Yes, if that is true, we can let him go.

The gendarmes released Jean Valjean, who shrank back. The bishop brought the two candlesticks to him.

My friend, before you go away, here are your candlesticks. Take them.

Jean Valjean, never forget that you have promised me to use this silver to become an honest man. It is your soul I am buying for you. I withdraw it from dark thoughts and I give it to God!
Jean Valjean fled from the city as if he were escaping. He wandered in the country all day, confused by a multitude of new sensations. He was seated behind a thicket when he saw a boy coming along the path.

The boy stopped by the side of the thicket, without seeing Jean Valjean, and tossed up some pieces of money that he had in his hand.

A forty-sous piece escaped him and rolled toward the thicket near Jean Valjean. Jean Valjean put his foot upon it.

Monsieur, my money.

Jean Valjean did not appear to understand. The boy took him by the collar of his blouse and shook him.

I want my money! Will you take away your foot?

Get out!

Jean Valjean rose to his feet, and the boy took to flight. All at once Jean Valjean saw the forty-sous piece.

What is that?

After a few minutes he seized it and began to walk rapidly in the direction in which the child had gone. He saw nothing. Then he fell upon a great stone, his heart swelled, and he burst into tears.
How long did he weep thus? What did he do after weeping? Nobody ever knew. But about that time a stranger entered the little city of M...sur M...on the very day that a great fire broke out in the town-house.

The man rushed into the fire and saved, at the peril of his life, two children who prayed to be those of the captain of the gendarmerie.

What is your name, good sir?

Father Madeleine.

In the hurry and gratitude of the moment, no one thought to ask him for his passport. He established himself in the city and invented a process in the manufacture of jet and black glass ware. In less than three years, he had become rich, and had made all around him rich.

There is Father Madeleine's new factory. And there are the new schools and hospitals he built for the poor.

Five years after his arrival, the services he had rendered to the region were so brilliant that the King appointed him mayor. He refused, but the people begged him to accept.

A good mayor is a good thing. Are you afraid of the good you can do?
So he became Monsieur the Mayor, honored and adored by all. One man alone held himself clear of this admiration. His name was Javert, and he was one of the police.

Who is this man? I am sure I have seen him somewhere.

The whole weight of the cart rested upon the old man's breast.

We have sent for a jack. It will be here in a quarter of an hour.

We cannot wait. Don't you see the wagon is sinking all the while?

Listen, there is room enough under the wagon for a man to crawl in and lift it with his back. Is there nobody here who has the courage and strength?

Nobody stirred. Then Javert came up.

I have known but one man capable of raising a wagon on his back. He was a convict in the galleys at Toulon.

One morning, Monsieur Madeleine was walking along when he heard shouting. He went to the spot.

It is Father Fouchelevent! He has fallen under his cart!
Monsieur Madeleine became pale. Meanwhile, the cart was slowly settling in the mud.

My ribs are breaking! A jack! Anything!

The bystanders held their breaths. All at once the enormous mass rose.

Help me!

They all rushed to the work. The cart was lifted. Old Faucheulevent was safe.

Monsieur Madeleine arose. He was very pale and covered with mud, but he looked with a tranquil eye upon Javert, who was still watching him.
Fauchelevent had injured his knee. When he was well, Monsieur Madeleine got him a place as gardener at a convent in Paris. Another person helped by Monsieur Madeleine was a young woman named Fantine.

I must have work. Come in. Monsieur Madeleine has ordered that any honest person may find work and wages here.

Fontine's life became very miserable. Nobody wanted her.

I do not mind so much for myself. But I have a child who is living with some people named Thenardier, in Montfermeil. I can no longer send them enough money to care for her.

The more off become gloomy around her, the more Fantine worshipped her child.

Oh, to have Cosette with me! But I cannot bring her here to share my misery.

One day, however, the overseer of the workshop told Fantine that she was no longer wanted in the shop.

But what will I do? Where will I go?
One day Fantine was involved in a street fight. She was taken to the Bureau of Police by Javert. Carry this girl to jail. She is in for six months.

Why, you are the cause of all this! You turned me away from your workshop? Then I could not earn enough, and all this wretchedness come.

Javert turned his back, and the soldiers seized her by the arms. Then a man who had entered a few minutes before stepped forward.

Inspector Javert, set this woman at liberty.

I knew nothing of what you have said. Why did you not come to me? But now, I will have your child come to you, and I will give you all the money you need.

But Monsieur the Mayor--

Fantine sprang at Monsieur Madeleine.

You are the mayor? Why, you are the cause of all this! You turned me away from your workshop? Then I could not earn enough, and all this wretchedness come.
Monsieur Madeleine had Fontine taken to the infirmary, for she was very ill. He wrote to the Thenardiers directing them to bring Cosette at once, but they delayed. Meanwhile, a serious matter intervened.

Well, what is it, Javert?

Some weeks ago I wrote to the police at Paris and denounced you as a former convict named Jean Valjean. I saw him twenty years ago when I was adjutant of the galleys guard at Toulon. After leaving the galleys this Valjean robbed a little boy.

And what answer did you get to your letter?

That I was crazy. The real Jean Valjean has been found. He is a simple sort of fellow who was arrested for stealing apples.

In the prison, a convict saw him and cried out that he was Jean Valjean, who had been with him in the galleys. Theft, for a convict, is not a few days imprisonment, but the galleys for life.

What did the man say?

He pretends not to understand. The roscol is cunning, but he will be condemned. The case is to be tried tomorrow at Arros.

Your pardon, monsieur, for suspecting you. I ought to be dismissed.

Javert, you are a man of honor. I desire you to keep your place.
Monsieur Modeleine went home and passed the night in a torment of indecision. At five o'clock in the morning he started for Arras. It was nearly eight in the evening when he arrived.

Monsieur, where is the court house?

Do you see those four lighted windows? They are having an evening session.

His eyes went toward a man sitting between two gendarmes.

Yes, he resembles me. Great God! Shall I again come to this?

The time had come for closing the case. It was evident that the man was lost. Monsieur Modeleine rose.

Gentlemen, release the accused. He is not the man whom you seek; it is I. I am Jean Voljean.

I have many things to do. The prosecuting attorney may have me arrested when he chooses.
He went out and returned home. Jovert came for him as he was visiting Fantine, who was now extremely ill.

Hurry along.

Jovert seized him by the collar. Monsieur the Mayor! There is no Monsieur the Mayor here any longer.

Jean Valjean turned to Jovert and spoke rapidly in a low tone.

My child! I won't my child! Monsieur Madeleine!

I tell you there is no Monsieur Madeleine! There is a convict called Jean Valjean, and I have got him!

Give me three days to go for the child of this unhappy woman! You shall accompany me if you like.

Three days! Are you making fun of me? I did not think you so stupid!

Fantine started upright, then sank suddenly back upon the pillow. She was dead. Jean Valjean turned to Jovert.

Now, I am at your disposal.
In October, 1823, he was serving on the ship Orion when an accident occurred. Suddenly a man was discovered clambering up the rigging. It was Jean Valjean.

Then he slid down the rigging and started to run along a lower yard. Suddenly, the throng uttered a thrilling outcry—the convict had fallen into the sea.

In a twinkling he was upon the yard. He was seen to run along it and then let himself down on a rope he had brought with him.

He seized the seaman and hauled him up. Lifting him in his arms, he carried him to the round-tap, where he left him in the hands of his mess-mates.

Javert put Jean Valjean in the city prison, but he broke a bar from a window and escaped. In three or four days he was retaken, but not before he had withdrawn six or seven thousand francs from his bankers, and canceled them. He was tried for robbing the boy’s coin and sentenced to the galleys for life.
He did not rise to the surface, and it was believed he had been caught under the piles of the pier-head and drowned. However, Christmas Day found him in Monfermeit at the Thenardier tavern.

Ah, Cosette! That is the way you work! I'll make you work with a cowhide!

The child is yours, Madame Thenardier?

No, monsieur. She is a little pouper that we have taken in through charity.

Suppose you were relieved of her?

Cosette? Ah, monsieur, take her! We get nothing from her mother. We think she must be dead.

At that moment, Thenardier advanced into the middle of the room.

I must have fifteen hundred francs for that child.

Very well. Bring Cosette.

And a while later, Jean Valjean led the little girl, Fantine's child, along the road to Paris.
They entered Paris at nightfall, and went to an old building in a lonely part of the city.

Must I sweep?

Ploy!

Weeks rolled by. Cosette began to love her kind old friend, and all of Jean Valjean’s affection was attracted toward the child. Then one night he heard someone coming up the stairs.

Go to bed. Lie down very quietly.

He placed his eye to the keyhole and saw a man pass by. It was Javert.

He is still on my trail!

Later, Jean Valjean went to the street door and looked carefully up and down. He went upstairs again.

Come.

They both went out. Jean Valjean began to thread the streets, making as many turns as he could.
As eleven o'clock struck he turned his head and saw four men. He recognized Javert perfectly.

He doubled his pace, carrying Cosette. Finally he turned into an alley. The end of it was a great white wall.

I can scale the wall, but it would be impossible to carry Cosette.

His despairing gaze encountered the lamp post and the rope which raised and lowered the lamp. He cut it off and tied it around Cosette.

Taking the other end in his teeth, he began to climb. Half a minute had not passed before he was on his knees on the wall.

Before Cosette had time to think, she too was at the top of the wall. Jean Valjean put her on his back, crawled to a building with a sloping roof, slid down the roof, and jumped to the ground.
He found himself in a sort of garden. He took Cosette into a shed and wrapped her in his coat. She fell asleep. Suddenly a noise made him turn.

There is a man walking in the garden!

The moon shone full in Jean Valjean's face.

Why, it is Monsieur Madeleine! How did you come here? Did you fall from the sky?

He touched Cosette's hands. They were icy. He shook her. She did not wake.

I must get her into a bed and before a fire!

Who are you? What is this house?

I am Father Fauchelevent. You lifted the coat off me and you got me a place as gardener at this convent. You saved my life.

Well, you can now do for me what I once did for you.

He walked straight to the man in the garden.

A hundred francs for you if you will give me refuge tonight.
In a half hour Cosette had again become raspy before a good fire. For five years they stayed at the convent. Jean Valjean worked as a gardener and Cosette was educated by the nuns.

Finally they left the convent and went to live in a small house on a deserted street. Often they walked in the Luxembourg, where Cosette, now beautiful, attracted the attention of a poor young lawyer named Marius Pontmercy.

Oh, she is very pretty.

One day Cosette raised her eyes. Their glances met. From that day onward, they adored each other.

Marius followed Cosette home. He spoke to the porter who, in turn, spoke to Jean Valjean. Jean Valjean moved, taking Cosette with him.

He has not left his new address?

No, monsieur.

Marius searched for Cosette continually.

Why did I follow her? I was so happy in seeing her only! She had the appearance of loving me. I was a fool!
Marius lived in a tenement. The only other occupants were the Jondrette family. One night Marius climbed upon a bureau and looked into their room.

Let us see what these people are, and to what they are reduced. Perhaps I can help them.

Wife, put out the fire! Quick, break o pone of glass! Ah, how I hate these charitable men who bring us clothes and bread. I want money!

Marius saw a filthy den in which the father was busy writing to benevolent persons in order to receive their charity. Then the elder daughter appeared.

The philanthropist is coming! I gave him your letter.

In a few minutes there was a light rap at the door. The man rushed forward and opened it.

Please come in, my noble benefactor.

It is she!
Cosette stepped into the room and laid a package on the table.

Monsieur, you will find in this package some new clothes, some stockings and some blankets.

My benefactor! But tomorrow, if I do not pay the rent, we will be driven into the street. I owe for a year. That is sixty francs.

It was eight years ago, but I recognize him! And the young lady—it is that girl!

What! That lady? Cosette?

My fortune is made. He will come this evening. I will get some men, some good ones. You will help us. He will be his own executor.

And if he should not be his own executor.

We will execute him.
Marius got down from the bureau as quietly as he could.

I must put my foot on these wretches.

He found a police inspector and related his adventure.

Take these pistols. Go back home and watch. I will be outside. When you deem it is time to stop the affoirl, fire off a pistol.

Be assured, I will.

Marius placed his hand on the latch of the door to go out.

By the way, if you need me between now and then, come or send here. Ask for Inspector Javert.

Marius returned to his room and resumed his place at his observatory. When six o'clock struck, the door of the Jondrette den opened, and Jean Valjean walked in.

This is for your rent and your pressing wants.

God reward you, my generous benefactor.

A man came into the room noiselessly. Jean Valjean turned.

Who is that? A neighbor. Pay no attention to him.
A struggle commenced. Jean Valjean disappeared under the horrible group of bandits like a wild boar under a howling pack of hounds.

It was you who came to my inn eight years ago and took Fantine's child from my house. Well, the trumps are in my hand today. I must have an immense amount of money, or I will kill you.

Jean Valjean rase, and with one bound was at the window. He was half outside when six strong hands drew him forcibly back into the room.

Thrae more men slipped in. Do not mind them. They are people of the house. But that is not the question! Do you know me?

Jondrette leaned forward like a wild beast just about to bite.

My name is not Jondrette, my name is Thenardier! I am the innkeeper of Montferrand! Now do you know me?

No.
They succeeded in binding him to the bedpost. Thenardier sat down in front of him.

I have noticed that you have not made the least outcry. I will tell you why—because you are no more anxious than we to see police come. You are concealing something.

Now we can come to an understanding. I want two hundred thousand francs.

Do you imagine that you can make me do what I do not wish to do?

Suddenly Jean Valjean shook off his bonds, which he had managed to cut with a little saw concealed in a large coin.

Kill him!

Marius' finger was on the trigger of his pistol when the door opened and Javert stepped into the room.

Jean Valjean took advantage of the confusion that followed to leap out of the window. Javert looked out. Nobody could be seen.

The devil! That must have been the best one!
After Javert had carried away his prisoners, Marius left the house. He had for a moment seen the young girl he loved, only to have her swept away. Then one day he passed an overgrown garden in a deserted part of Paris and saw her.

She turned her head and raise. She drew back slowly.

Do not be afraid of me. Do you remember the day you looked upon me? It was at the Luxembourg. It is a long time now. I adore you.

Gradually they began to talk. They confided all that was most hidden and most mysterious in themselves. Finally...

My name is Marius. And yours?

My name is Cosette.

She sank down. He caught her in his arms.

You love me, then?

Hush! You know it!
Thereafter, Marius came every evening. Jean Valjean suspected nothing. Yet he felt dangers around him. The police had become very active and suspicious, and he had seen Thenardier, who was out of prison, prowling about.

We must leave here.

Marius left, intent on getting some money from his grandfather. When he returned, forty-eight hours later, Cosette was not there. The house was as silent and empty as a lamb.

Marius was mad with grief. He had but one desire—to die.

I will join my friends at the barricades.

When Marius came that night, he found Cosette had been weeping. My father told me this morning that we will be going away to England. But this is monstrous!
During the two months of joy Marius had had with Cosette, an insurrection against the government had been gathering. That day, it had broken out in open conflict. Barricades were being thrown up. Marius hastened to one defended by some of his friends. When he reached it, the fighting had already begun.

He found a keg of powder, glided along the barricade, put the keg down, and seized a torch.

Begone, or I’ll blow up the barricade!

The soldiers will take the barricade!

Blow up the barricade! And yourself, also!

And myself, also.

He held the torch nearer to the keg of powder. The soldiers fled pell-mell, and the barricade was saved.
Marius' friends flocked around him.

You come in good time! Without you we would have been dead.

One held a letter out to him.

This came far you at your lodging.

Marius took it and found a candle in a basement room.

It is from Cosette. Tonight, she will be at the Rue de l'Homme Arme, No. 7.

Marius found a piece of paper and wrote a few lines.

Our marriage is impossible. I am without fortune. I die. I love you.

He gave it to a messenger to take to Cosette. The messenger, however, gave it to Jean Valjean.

Will you give it to the lady? I must get back to the barricade in the Rue de la Chanvrerie.
Jean Valjean read the letter. It was crushing evidence that Cosette, whom he adored as a daughter, had glided from his hands.

It must be that unknown prowler of the Luxembourg. Well, he is going to die. I have only to let things take their course.

But within himself he became gloomy. About an hour afterward, he went out in the direction of the barricade.

Citizen, you are welcome. You know that we are going to die.

In a basement room behind the barricade, Jean Valjean saw a man bound to a post.

You are a spy.

I am Javert, an officer of the government.

You will be shot ten minutes before the barricade is taken.

Why not immediately?

From the threshold, Jean Valjean gazed at him with singular attention. Javert raised his eyes.

It is very natural for you to be here.
Each man now resumed his post for combat. They did not have long to wait. A piece of artillery appeared.

"Fire!"

The whole barricade flashed fire. An avalanche of smoke covered the gun and the soldiers.

But the gunner began to point his cannon at a break in the barricade with the gravity of an astronomer adjusting a telescope.

Heads down! Keep close to the wall!

The discharge took place with the fearful rattle of grapeshot.

We cannot hold out a quarter of an hour in this storm of grape. We must put a mattress in the break.

The only mattress was outside the barricade. Jean Valjean went out, passed through a storm of balls, picked up the mattress and returned to the barricade.
He put the mattress in the opening. The cannon vomited its package of shot with a roar, but the shot miscarried upon the mattress. The barricade was preserved.

Citizen, the republic thanks you.

But the fire of the soldiers continued. A second cannon was brought up. Then another platoon appeared. The end was near.

The last man to leave will blow out the spy's brains!

Jean Valjean appeared.

I ask a favor. I want to blow out that man's brains myself.

No objection!

Jean Valjean caught up a pistol. Almost at the same moment they heard a flourish of trumpets. The insurgents sprang forward and went out.

Your health is hardly better than mine.
He re-entered the barricade. Suddenly the drum beat the charge. The attack was a hurricane. There was assault after assault.

When Jean Valjean was alone with Javert, he untied the rope that held the prisoner and led him into a little street.

"Take your revenge."

Jean Valjean cut the remaining cords.

"You are free. Go."

Javert stood aghast and motionless. Then he turned and walked off. Jean Valjean fired the pistol in the air.

In the thick cloud of combat, Jean Valjean did not take his eyes from Marius. When a shot struck Marius, Jean Valjean bounded with the agility of a tiger and carried him away.
The attack was at that instant so fierce that no one saw Jean Valjean disappear behind the corner of a house and stop in a little sheltered place.

How can we escape this massacre?

He perceived an iron grating laid flat and level with the ground. To lift it, descend with Marius on his back, and find a foothold on the flagged surface ten feet below the ground, required but a few moments.

He found himself, with Marius still senseless, in a long, underground passage.

It is the sewer.

He resolutely entered into the darkness. He went forward seeing nothing, knowing nothing, plunged into chance.

Shall I find an outlet? Shall I find it in time?

He had been walking for about half an hour, when all at once he saw his shadow before him. In amazement he turned around.
Behind him flamed a sort of horrible star.
Behind the star were eight or ten black forms, straight, indistinct, terrible.

*resumed its march, leaving Jean Valjean behind.

Jean Valjean resumed his advance, which became more and more laborious. He felt that he was entering the water, and that he had under his feet no longer pavement, but mud.

He soon had the mire half-knee deep, and water above his knees.

He sank in deeper and deeper. The water came up to his waist, to his armpits. He now had only his head out of water, and his arms supporting Marius.
He sank still deeper. He made a desperate effort and thrust his foot forward. His foot struck something solid.

He ascended on inclined plane and reached the other side of the quagmire. He rose, all dripping with slime, his soul filled with a strange light.

He resumed his route once more. His exhaustion was great. Then he reached an angle of the sewer and saw the light of day.

An outlet!

He reached the outlet. The arch was closed by a strong grating held by a stout lock.
Jean Valjean clenched the bars and shook them. The grating did not stir. He dropped upon the pavement. His head sank between his knees.

Then a hand was laid upon his shoulder.

Go halves?

Jean Valjean thought he was dreaming. He raised his eyes and saw Thenardier.

What do you mean?

You haven't killed that man without looking to see what he had in his pockets. Give me half. I will open the door for you.

Jean Valjean turned out his pocket and displayed his money. Thenardier took all of it. Then he opened the door.
Jean Valjean found himself outside. Suddenly he felt an indescribable uneasiness. He turned around.

Voisine had been following Thenardier.

Jean Valjean showed Javert a note on which Marius had written his grandfather’s address. Javert called a carriage, Marius was laid on the back seat, and it moved rapidly off.

The carriage arrived at the house, and Marius was carried in. Javert and Jean Valjean returned to the carriage.

Inspector Javert, grant me one thing more. Let me go home a moment. Then you shall do with me what you will.

Very well.
They arrived at the street where Jean Valjean lived. Javert dismissed the carriage.

Go up. I will wait here for you.

Jean Valjean mounted the stairs. On reaching the first story he paused and looked out of the window. Javert was gone.

Javert made his way with slow steps to the Seine, where he leaned on the parapet and reflected. He was suffering frightfully.

I owe my life to a convict and I have set him free. Can there be a mysterious justice according to God which goes against justice according to man?

Authority was dead in Javert. He had no further reason for existence. He bent his head and looked at the water.

Then he sprang up on the parapet, fell straight into the darkness and disappeared under the water.
Four months passed before Marius was put out of danger. Then Cosette came to see him.

It is you! How happy I am!

Marius had one preoccupation—to find the man who had brought him to his grandfather’s house.

He must have snatched me out of the combat and carried me for more than four miles through the sewer.

Marius and Cosette were married. The day after the wedding, Jean Valjean went to see Marius.

Monsieur, I have one thing to tell you. I am an old convict. I have been in the galleys.

Why do you tell me this?

I do not wish to burden the happiness of others with my own misery. What if one day the police spring out of the shadow and tear off my mask?

I entreat you, monsieur, do not tell this to Cosette. It would appall her.

Be calm. I will keep your secret.

Now that you know this, I will try to see Cosette as seldom as possible.

I think that would be best.
Jean Valjean’s confession left Marius completely unhinged. He felt a certain horror for the former convict.

Someone in his building called the doctor.

What is the matter with him?

He is a man, it would appear, who has lost some dear friend. People die of that.

Then one day Marius had a caller. It was Thenardier.

Monsieur, a man has glided into your family under a false name. He is Jean Valjean, an old convict. I have an extraordinary secret about him. It is for sale.

Marius threw him a bank note.

About a year ago, on the day of the uprising, I was in the sewer of Paris. There I saw Jean Valjean carrying on his shoulders the corpse of someone he had assassinated.
Marius rose up, quivering.
You are a wretch! You come to accuse this man, but you have justified him. I was the man upon his back! It was he who saved my life!

Marius and Casette hastened to Jean Valjean's room.
You are here? I thought I would never see you again. Oh, I was very miserable.

We are going to take you back with us. We will have but one thought henceforth—your happiness.

It would be charming. Only, I shall die in a few minutes.

Come closer, both of you. I love you dearly. Oh! It is good to die so!

Cosette and Marius fell on their knees, each grasping one of Jean Valjean's hands. They covered his hands with kisses. He was dead.

Now that you have read the Classics Illustrated Edition, don't miss the added enjoyment of reading the original, obtainable at your school or public library.
VICTOR HUGO

VICTOR Marie Hugo was a giant among the literary figures of nineteenth-century France. Few writers of any country or period have enjoyed such popularity as he did.

Born in 1802, Hugo won honorable mention in a national poetry contest at the age of fifteen. At twenty, he married a childhood sweetheart, Adele Foucher. A year later, he published his first novel, *Han d’Islande*.

By the time he was twenty-five, Victor Hugo had published plays, poems and novels that won him recognition as the leader of the romantic movement in French literature.

During the early 1800’s, writers of many countries were caught up in this movement. It stressed highly emotional scenes and unusual events, rather than the quiet flow of everyday life. Leading romantic writers were Sir Walter Scott, Lord Byron and Alexander Dumas.

Hugo’s first play, *Cromwell*, was written in 1827. *Hernani*, another play, was written in one month in 1830. It became an immediate success.

In 1831, Hugo published *Notre-Dame de Paris*, popularly known as *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. It established him as an important novelist as well as dramatist.

Ten years later, Hugo was elected to the French Academy, one of the highest honors a French writer can receive. He continued to write plays and poetry, in time producing more poems than any other French writer before or after him. Today, he is generally considered France’s greatest poet.

In 1851, when Napoleon III abolished the French constitution and had himself declared emperor, Hugo spoke out strongly against him. As a result, Hugo had to flee the country. In exile, he wrote several pamphlets ridiculing Napoleon III. In one of them, he called the French ruler “the little Napoleon.”

Vowing not to return to France until Napoleon III no longer reigned, Hugo went to live in the Channel Islands, a British possession lying off the coast of France. There, on the island of Guernsey, he wrote three major novels.

The first was *Les Misérables* (1862), which means the unfortunates. It is a huge, sprawling novel in which Hugo sought to portray the evils of social injustice against the poor and the oppressed. The hero, Jean Valjean, is an escaped convict who devotes his life to doing good.

*Toilers of the Sea* (1866) soon followed. In this novel, set in the Channel Islands, Hugo dealt with man’s struggle against the hostile forces of nature. A lone man, Gilliatt, battles storm and an octopus while saving the engine of a wrecked steamboat from the rocks upon which the ship had crashed.

*The Man Who Laughs* (1869) was the last of the novels Hugo wrote in Guernsey. The main character, Gwynplaine, who is disfigured, is a victim of man’s cruelty to his fellow man. The setting is England, where Gwynplaine discovers one day that he is a lord.

When the empire of Napoleon III fell in 1870, Victor Hugo returned to France. Hugo was sixty-eight years old. His exile had lasted nineteen years. Fame, honor and a seat in the French senate were his until his death in 1885. His funeral was one of the largest of the century in Paris.
ONE MORNING in 1715, a French merchant called at his friend's lodgings. The man was not at home. He had not been there in three days, nor had he left any messages. Later in the week, the merchant called again. His friend was still not at home.

Worried, the merchant began asking questions. All he could learn was that sometime after supper, six days before, his friend had disappeared. The merchant went to the prefect of police. At last his friend was located. The man had been seized under a lettre de cachet and imprisoned. For what? The officer could not say and did not know. How long would he be detained? There was no answer. Both the merchant and the prefect knew that a man imprisoned under a lettre de cachet had no way of gaining his release. He might stay shut away for the rest of his life without ever learning why he had been imprisoned.

In France, until a few years before the revolution of 1789, there were no guarantees of the safety of a citizen's life or property. There were few laws limiting the punishments for different crimes. A person could be put to death for stealing a penny's worth of bread. All power of life and death lay in the hands of the judge. But there was no way of insuring that the judge would be fair, because he got his position by paying for it. If a person was convicted of a serious crime, his property was taken away from him or his heirs and returned to the local lord. If, as often happened, the local judge was also the local lord, he could gain great profits by convicting merchants or farmers of some crime and then taking away their property.

Criminal procedure was primitive and brutal. In a preliminary investigation the judge decided whether or not a crime had actually been committed. Since there were few laws explaining what a crime was, the judge had a great deal of freedom in making up his mind. If an accused person protested that he was innocent, he was subjected to torture to persuade him to confess. If he broke down under torture and admitted the crime, he was at the mercy of the court. If he insisted on his innocence, he still had to face his trial.

The trial itself was secret. The accused man might never learn who testified against him, or what was said about him. Evidence used by the public prosecutor was not necessarily shown to the defendant.

If the man was convicted, the punishment was harsh. The death sentence was often given. If a judge was merciful, he might instead send the convicted man to the galleys for life. Along with either of these punishments, the convicted man lost all, or a large part, of his property. Milder sentences included a term of years in the galleys, maiming, branding, flogging, or the payment of heavy fines.

In the eighteenth century, public opinion against such injustice was roused by men like Voltaire. They spoke out against the punishment of people who were later proved to be innocent. They showed how horrible and useless torture was in bringing about justice.

During the early years of the French Revolution, laws were passed to make criminal procedure simpler and more merciful. But the laws were confusing. Many things were left unexplained, and some strict procedures were not corrected at all. Not until 1804 did France get a humane, practical criminal code.
THE BOY WHO HATED WASHING

Around the beginning of the nineteenth century, young boys in American villages and towns were expected to help with the family wash. It was a dreary business. You had to bang away at dirty clothes which were soaking in hot, soapy water. One boy, in Peekskill, New York, grew tired of the weekly chore. He decided to do something about it. He invented a sort of washing machine which made his own work easier, and got the clothes cleaner in less time than it took to wash them by hand.

When he was older, the boy, Peter Cooper, was apprenticed to a coachmaker. Cooper had little formal education, but he was talented at working with machines. He was always tinkering with things, trying to get them to work better. Some of his schemes were wild ideas that never amounted to anything. But others were very clever. His employer, the coachmaker, actually bought one which improved the attachment of wheel hubs to carriages.

Young Peter Cooper tried a number of trades. He worked as a machinist, a cabinet maker, and a grocer. In 1821, he bought his own business—a glue factory. He went about improving the manufacture of glue in a very practical manner, and within a few years he was earning $100,000 a year.

Luck and his own cleverness combined to make Cooper's business grow. In 1828, he bought land in the city of Baltimore because he thought that the railroad that was going to be built there would make the city wealthy. But progress on the road came to a standstill. George Stephenson, the English railroad expert, told the line's directors that no steam locomotive would ever work on the Baltimore and Ohio. Along the road there was a curve so sharp that no locomotive could get around it without jumping the track.

Cooper, to protect his investments, announced to the president of the railroad that he himself would build a small locomotive which could take the curve. And he did. The General Tom Thumb, Cooper's invention, was the first American locomotive to run on an American railroad. To build it, Cooper used spare wheels, a steam engine he invented himself, a special boiler, and when he could find no other iron pipes, the barrels of two muskets.

At first, the little locomotive was beset with difficulties. Parts broke or were stolen, and in a famous speed race, the Tom Thumb took second place behind a fast gray horse. But it did run, and the success of the railroad was secured.

By these and other ventures, Cooper became a millionaire. He helped to develop the American iron industry and played an important part in the laying of the Atlantic cable.

But in addition to making a great deal of money for himself, Cooper wanted to do something for other people. He supported compulsory public school education, headed a committee to improve New York City's water supply and advocated the founding of a free milk dispensary for children. In 1859, he opened Cooper Union, a night school in New York City where people who had to work but wished to study might come to learn without having to pay any tuition. He helped to design the building, which has a cylindrical elevator that is still in use.

When Cooper was eighty-five years old, he ran for President of the United States on a ticket supporting government regulation of the railroads, a civil service and government program to give work to the unemployed. He received only one per cent of the vote, but the platform he proposed has since been accepted as part of the laws of the United States.

Peter Cooper died on April 4, 1883, at the age of ninety-one.
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