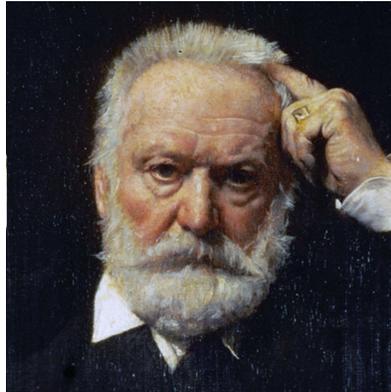


LES MISERABLES

by Victor Hugo



THE AUTHOR

Victor Hugo (1802-1885) was born in Besançon, France, the son of a general in Napoleon's army. His parents' marriage was not a happy one; both pursued extramarital affairs, and Victor's mother left his father soon after the birth of her third child. Hugo joined his mother in Paris at the age of eleven, where they were dependent on the support of his mother's lover, who also was his father's commanding officer. Victor was a good student, publishing poetry and winning writing contests when he was still in his teens. He married a neighbor girl at the age of twenty. She gave him five children, but he eventually abandoned her to live with his mistress, with whom he kept public company for the last fifty years of his life.

Hugo wrote widely and prolifically in many literary genres. He began with poetry, which first gained public attention, and made his reputation and fortune with a series of plays. Today he is best known for his two great novels, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1831) and *Les Misérables* (1862), which mark him as a leader in the French Romantic movement. He developed and exercised a strong social conscience, and his fame opened the door for him to become active in French politics. He received a pension from Louis XVIII in 1822 for his poetry, but increasingly came to support the republican cause (he was in Paris on the day of the revolt that is central to the plot of *Les Misérables*). He was named a Peer of France by Louis Philippe in 1845, and after he was overthrown in the Revolution of 1848, Hugo was elected as a representative in the new Constituent Assembly. He supported the election by the people of Louis Napoleon, but when Bonaparte's nephew declared himself emperor in 1851, Hugo openly opposed him and was forced into exile, most of which was spent in the Channel Islands. Here he continued his writing, much of it directed against the oppressive rule of the man who now called himself Napoleon III. During this time he published *Les Misérables*, which was wildly popular, but was banned by the government. After the defeat and overthrow of Napoleon III in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, Hugo returned to France to a hero's welcome. When he died in 1885, more than two million people followed his funeral cortege through the street of Paris. He was buried in a plain pine coffin in the Pantheon among the tombs of the great writers of France, which now includes Alexandre Dumas and Emile Zola.

Les Misérables ("The Wretched"), Hugo's masterpiece, is one of the longest novels ever written. It has been adapted many times since its publication for the stage, the musical theater,

television, and movies. It is a work of social criticism, speaking out against the oppression of the lower classes and arguing that goodness and poverty can indeed coexist. He consistently blames social conditions for the behavior of the poor, whether the theft of a loaf of bread that marks Jean Valjean throughout his life or the prostitution into which Fantine is forced when she is unjustly fired from her job. On the other hand, the rich are pictured as blind and uncaring, and the law and the system it supports as fundamentally unjust. The novel goes beyond social criticism, however; it is also a deeply religious work. Though the theology is not what one would call orthodox, Hugo clearly pictured a world where a just and loving God was ultimately in control and where redemption was possible, though he does portray human effort as the source of that redemption.

PLOT SUMMARY

PART ONE - FANTINE

BOOK I - AN UPRIGHT MAN

The story begins by introducing Charles Myriel, son of a prominent lawyer, who fled to Italy as an émigré during the French Revolution. His wife died there, and by the time he returned to France he had been ordained to the priesthood. After a brief encounter with Napoleon in 1804, he is elevated to the rank of bishop. He then sets up housekeeping in the episcopal palace with his sister, Mademoiselle Baptistine, and her housemaid, Madame Magloire.

Three days after taking residence in the palace, the new bishop visits the adjacent hospital. Noticing the overcrowded conditions, he insists that the director of the hospital move the patients into the palace while he and his sister occupy the smaller facility. Of his government salary of fifteen thousand livres he kept only a thousand, giving the rest away to various charitable institutions. When Mme. Magloire suggests that he apply to the government for the carriage expenses that normally accompanied his position, he agrees, but then gives the entire three thousand livres to charity. Soon his reputation for integrity and charity is such that the rich fill his coffers with alms, which he promptly disburses to the poor. The people of his diocese loved him so much that they began to call him Monseigneur Bienvenu rather than M. Myriel.

The bishop's diocese is quite mountainous, and he spends much time visiting outlying churches, often traveling in a basket attached to a mule. He speaks gently to his people, exhorting them with examples of neighboring regions where people are working together to help one another. As he travels from town to town, he gently rebukes the proud and selfish while showing compassion for the poor and wayward. He seeks justice for those wrongly arrested and comforts the condemned, bringing them hope of eternal life in the face of death. He is, however, horrified by the guillotine, convinced that God alone has the right to take human life.

The days of the bishop are busy ones, spent on administrative duties, visiting his people, reading, writing, and meditating. He eats simply and sleeps little. He makes his cassock last a long time by wearing a violet doublet over it so no one can see how worn it is. His fidelity to his duties and simplicity of lifestyle make him beloved by his people. After transforming the old hospital building into simple living quarters, the bishop refuses all gifts from his parishioners intended to provide him with more comfort or elegance, instead giving the money to the poor. The only signs of the bishop's past wealth to be seen in the house are six silver plates and two large silver candlesticks inherited from a great-aunt. His sister and housekeeper are careful to keep the house

immaculately neat and clean. The garden blooms with flowers and vegetables, and milk from the bishop's two cows mostly goes to the inmates of the hospital. Over his sister's objections, he insists that no door in his house should be equipped with locks.

One time a bandit named Cravatte hides out with his men in the mountains in the bishop's diocese, carrying on a reign of terror, swooping down from the mountains to steal, even to the point of robbing churches. The bishop, warned by his friends against the danger, determines to travel through the mountains alone to visit a remote community, insisting that they need someone to remind them of the goodness of God; if he meets the brigands, why, they, too, need the same message. He arrives safely, ministers to the small community for fortnight, then plans a special service for the day of his departure despite the fact that they lack suitable furnishings. That very night two horsemen ride up with a large chest containing the magnificent treasures stolen from a nearby cathedral. In the chest is a note: "Cravatte to Monseigneur Bienvenu." The treasures, not surprisingly, find their way to the hospital rather than back to the cathedral.

One evening the bishop is dining with an influential senator who scoffs at faith and has made his way in the world without the inconvenience of conscience. He is an outspoken atheist who ridicules even the philosophe Diderot as a closet believer in God. Jesus' teachings of self-sacrifice he rejects completely, espousing instead the epicurean ideal - "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." Denying immortality, he rightly concludes that good and evil do not exist. He does admit, however, that belief in God is a necessary fiction for the poor and ignorant. When he is done his tirade, the bishop congratulates him for justifying to himself the hedonism pursued by the rich as they oppress the poor, who have nothing but faith on which to live.

In a letter from Mlle. Baptistine to her friend she speaks of finding old frescoes underneath the wallpaper in the old hospital. She then goes on to write about her brother's constant care for the poor and his practice of always having an open door to any who might seek him out. He has no fear, either at home or in his travels, that any might harm him, and his sister has learned to keep silent and pray when he is away from home.

In the bishop's diocese lived a man who had been part of the National Convention during the French Revolution; he had almost been among the regicides who had voted for the death of Louis XVI and was also an atheist. The people in the region consider him a monster and fear to come anywhere near his isolated dwelling. When word comes that the old man is dying, the bishop determines to pay him a visit. The aged revolutionary welcomes him cordially and tells him that he has only hours to live. The bishop is uncomfortable in his presence, but the old man assures him that he did not vote for the death of the king, but only for his downfall; he sought the death of Ignorance and Tyranny, not any one man. He argues that the French Revolution was the greatest advance in human history since the birth of Christ. Even the Reign of Terror was necessary, paling next to the injustices of the Old Regime. The bishop rejects such comparisons, noting that progress apart from God is nothing but destruction. With his final breaths the old man defends the progress attained by the Revolution despite its faults, arguing that he had sought justice, even for his enemies. When he asks the bishop why he has come, Bienvenu tells him that he seeks his benediction, after which the conventionist breathes his last. The bishop returns home deep in thought, convinced that the old atheist had preceded him to heaven after all.

The author then discusses something of the Monseigneur's politics. He notes that the bishop, though appointed by Napoleon, is very uncomfortable with the luxury in which his fellow prelates live, was distressed with the arrest of the pope, and was unwilling to support the emperor in the closing years of his reign. Apart from his royalist tendencies, the bishop is not a political man.

Unlike rich bishops who gathered around them a crowd of ambitious young priests seeking advancement and wealth, Monseigneur Bienvenu has no young priests to assist him in his work, but carries out his ministries on his own because no one imagines that he can assist him on the path to promotion.

The doctrinal position of the Monseigneur is impossible to describe because he is not a man given to theological deliberations. Yet his conscience is clear before God because of his devotion to good works. Rather than a man of dogma, he is a man of faith and love, even toward the animal kingdom; in this sense he can be described as a follower of Francis of Assisi. In the evening hours he makes a habit of sitting and walking in his garden, meditating upon the starry heavens and the God who made them. By 1815, when the main body of this story really begins, he is 76 years old. Lest anyone get the idea that the bishop is a pantheist, the author reminds the reader that he is not a man of the mind, but of the heart. He is neither a philosopher nor a mystic, but a man of the Gospel. He respects mystery too much to delve into it too far.

BOOK II - THE FALL

In late October of 1815, a shabbily-dressed man in his late forties wanders into the town where the bishop lives. His name is Jean Valjean. He has been walking all day, having eaten nothing, and he is hungry and thirsty. He goes to the inn seeking food and shelter, but is turned away. He receives the same treatment at a tavern, and is then turned away from a home where he seeks hospitality. Just as he is about to give up, a kind woman tells him to knock at the door of the bishop.

The bishop has finished his writing for the evening and is preparing for dinner. His sister and her housekeeper are discussing the news that a dangerous vagabond has entered the town and encourage the bishop to bolt his doors, which he never does. Even as they are speaking they hear a loud knock at the door, and the bishop says, "Come in."

Jean Valjean bursts into the room and immediately identifies himself as a convict who spent nineteen years in the galleys and was released four days earlier, has walked for miles, and has been turned away everywhere because of the yellow passport he is required to carry and show in every town. The passport indicates that he served five years for burglary and fourteen for trying to escape four times. He begs for food and shelter, and, thinking he has come to another inn, offers to pay out of his meager earnings from labor in prison. The bishop refuses his money, and Valjean finally realizes the nature of the home into which he has been so kindly received. The housekeeper sets the table with silver plates and candlesticks and they all sit down to a simple dinner.

During dinner the bishop asked Valjean nothing about his past, but spoke of Pontarlier, his destination, noting that there were many dairies in the region in which he might find employment. Then they all went to bed, with Jean Valjean sleeping on a mattress and under sheets for the first time in nineteen years. Monseigneur Bienvenu escorts Jean Valjean to his bedchamber and leaves one of the silver candlesticks there, then goes outside for his nightly meditation in the garden. Soon all in the household are asleep.

The author now relates something of Jean Valjean's history. He was raised in a peasant family and trained for agricultural work. His parents died when he was quite young, and he came under the care of his older sister, who had seven children. After her husband died, Jean supported them all. He earned little, and the children were often hungry, even to the point of begging food from a neighbor, whom Jean then paid surreptitiously. One particularly severe winter he had no work and the family had no food. In desperation he stole a loaf of bread from the local baker. He was caught, and in 1796 was sentenced to five years in the galleys. A few months later he was put into a chain

gang and sent to Toulon, where even his name was effaced; from then on he was known as Number 24601. He heard four years later that his sister had moved to Paris with her youngest child to find work; after that he never heard of them again. At about the same time Valjean made his first escape attempt, which, like the three others that followed, accomplished nothing but to extend his sentence. Finally, in 1815, he was released after nineteen years for stealing a loaf of bread for his starving family.

The author now turns to his experiences in prison. While enduring the torments and privations of the galleys, Valjean carried on an active life of the mind. He realized that he had not been unjustly convicted; he should have been patient, continued to seek work, or even begged for bread rather than stealing. He also came to the conclusion that his punishment was severe in the extreme and that society bore some blame by creating conditions where a strong, healthy man who wanted to work was unable to do so. As a result he fed himself on hatred of the society that had so abused him and determined to get his revenge when he finally got out of prison.

At the age of forty, after many years in the prison, he began to attend a school offered by a group of poor friars. There he learned basic reading, writing, and arithmetic, which he intended to use as tools in carrying out his vengeance on the world. Sadly, he also lost any hope in God, believing that Providence was in part accountable for the injustice he had experienced since childhood. In short, he had lost all hope and, on the basis of normal human observation, he was beyond all hope of redemption. Even his repeated escape attempts showed the depths of his despair, since any reasoning person would have recognized that waiting out his sentence would have been the wiser course. Despite these conditions, Jean Valjean was a man of great strength, able to lift large weights, and unusual coordination, able to climb vertical surfaces with little in the way of handholds. But he spoke little, shed no tears, and lived in a world of eternal blackness where no sun ever shone. The author next compares the condition of Jean Valjean to a man who falls overboard at sea and is left to drown by the captain and crew.

When Jean Valjean was released from the galleys, the idea of freedom filled his mind, but he soon found the limits of freedom for a man who carried a yellow passport. He left prison with 109 francs and fifteen sous, which he had earned in nineteen years of hard labor. He now added robbery the offenses committed against him by the law. Worse yet, he had trouble finding work, and when he did, the supervisors paid him half of what his work was worth because of the passport that he was required to show.

At 2:00 A.M. in the home of Monseigneur Bienvenu, Jean Valjean is awakened by the chiming of the cathedral clock. Unable to get back to sleep, he is preoccupied with the silver plates, worth at least twice the wages he had received for nineteen years' hard labor. After much hesitation, he creeps silently toward the bishop's bedroom. When he enters the bedroom, he finds the bishop sleeping peacefully, the moon casting a radiant glow on his face. After a brief pause, struggling between violence and repentance, he takes the silver, puts it in his knapsack, climbs out the window, and flees over the garden wall.

The next morning Madame Magloire discovers that the silver is missing, as is their houseguest. The bishop calms her by arguing that the silver did not belong to them, but to the poor, and Valjean certainly qualifies as one of the poor. As they eat their breakfast, Madame Magloire complains about the ingratitude of the convict and the folly of the bishop for showing him hospitality. As they complete their simple repast, they hear a knock at the door and three policemen enter with the thief in custody. When the head gendarme addresses the bishop by his title, Valjean is astounded that he is not a simple country priest; he thinks all bishops live in luxury. The bishop

immediately approaches the prisoner and asks him why he did not take the candlesticks he had given him as well, which are more valuable than the plates. Jean Valjean, who had lied to the police, telling them that the priest had given him the plates, is astounded beyond measure. The police release him, the bishop gives him the candlesticks, and after the gendarmes leave, he tells the flabbergasted Valjean that he is now bound to use the silver to make himself an honest man.

Valjean promptly flees the bishop's house, feeling at the same time touched, humiliated, and angry, and wanders aimlessly. He feels the rage built up in the years in prison beginning to dissipate, but has no idea with what to replace it. As he meditates while sitting in a thicket by the road, a twelve-year-old boy named Petit Gervais passes by. He is singing and throwing his coins into the air as he walks. As he passes by Valjean, he drops one of the coins, and the old convict puts his foot on it and refuses to give it back. He roars at the boy, who runs away in fear. Soon, however, Valjean realizes what he has done and goes looking for the boy. As he searches, a priest passes by. When Valjean asks him about the boy, he knows nothing of him, but Valjean, full of guilt, gives him twenty francs for the poor in his parish. By nightfall he still has not found the boy, and, viewing himself as the worst of wretches, he sits down on a stone and weeps for the first time in nineteen years. He concludes that henceforth he must either become an angel or a monster. Choosing light rather than darkness, he returns to the town from whence he came and kneels in prayer before the bishop's humble abode.

BOOK III - IN THE YEAR 1817

Hugo begins by describing the trivial events that concerned the people of France two years after the fall of Napoleon, most of which were not remembered in his day, let alone ours. The story then turns to four young men studying in Paris. Each young man has a mistress. Three of the girls are experienced in the ways of the world, but the youngest, Fantine, is an innocent. She is an orphan who never knew her parents and grew up in the streets. Fantine genuinely loves her paramour, Tholomyes, though for him she is no more than a passing fling. He, at thirty, shows his age badly, but wealth makes up for many shortcomings. After long promising the girls a special surprise, the four young men plan a party for them.

That Sunday the eight young people take an excursion into the suburbs of Paris. The girls are all lovely, but Fantine, with her blonde hair and blue eyes, is ravishing in her modesty and innocence. After breakfast, they ride donkeys, frolic in a park where the men push the girls on large swings (all but Fantine), are serenaded by Tholomyes, then return to Paris. At this point the girls wonder where their special surprise is. They then go together to Bombarda's restaurant on the Champs Elysees for dinner. All in Paris is happy and peaceful - so much so that the prefect of police assures the king that he has nothing to fear from the Parisians, who are too small to pose a threat to the monarchy.

As dinner progresses, the men eat and drink their fill while the older girls flatter them; one of the girls even admits that she does not love her paramour, but is in love with a neighbor who is an aspiring actor. Tholomyes counsels restraint and moderation in the midst of the feast. He warns the men against fidelity and the women against marriage. He then demands a kiss from Fantine, but kisses one of the other girls by mistake. The women then argue about their favorite restaurants while the men discuss their favorite philosophers. Outside the restaurant a horse falls, causing a commotion. The girls again demand their surprise, and the men announce that the time has come. Each one kisses his mistress on the forehead and the four then leave the room. The four men go out into the Champs Elysees and soon disappear. The girls impatiently wait for them to return with their surprise. An hour later a waiter appears with a note, headed "This is the surprise." The letter inside

indicates that the men are returning home to their parents and will not return. The three older girls think this a fine joke, but Fantine goes to her room and weeps, not only because she has lost her first love, but also because she has given birth to a child by him.

BOOK IV - TO ENTRUST IS SOMETIMES TO ABANDON

Ten months later Fantine leaves Paris with a two-year-old in her arms. She is impoverished, hungry, and in poor health, having used all her finery to clothe her daughter and nursed the child despite weakness in her chest. She wants to return home to find work, but fears the shame of returning with a child. As she passes through Montfermeil, she sees two happy little girls playing on an old carriage in front of an inn called the Sergeant of Waterloo. The inn is owned by M. and Mme. Thenardier. Cosette soon slips from her mother's arms and begins playing with the two girls. Fantine then begs Mme. Thenardier to keep her child for her, offering to pay six francs a month. M. Thenardier immediately enters the negotiations, demanding seven francs per month, six months in advance, and fifteen francs for first expenses. Fantine agrees despite the fact that this is almost three-quarters of all she possesses, and tearfully leaves her daughter with the Thenardiers, promising to return for her as soon as she can. After she departs, leaving behind Cosette's beautiful wardrobe, Thenardier congratulates his wife for obtaining the money they need to pay an urgent debt that will keep him out of prison.

The author now tells us that the Thenardiers, belonging to the lower middle class and having neither the respectability of the bourgeois nor the generosity of the worker, are monsters. He is a scoundrel and she is a brute, people who seek nothing but to fall further into evil. He had fought at Waterloo, after which he named his inn, and she is a devotee of cheap romance novels. The two girls that had so impressed Fantine are named Eponine and Azelma.

Despite being able to pay his debts with Fantine's fifty-seven francs, Thenardier's inn does not prosper. Mme. Thenardier thus takes Cosette's beautiful wardrobe to Paris and pawns it for sixty francs. They then dress the poor child in rags and feed her on scraps. Fantine, having found work in her hometown, faithfully sends seven francs each month and asks for news of her daughter. When told that she is doing wonderfully well, but that prices have gone up and they now need twelve francs a month for her upkeep, she complies, thankful that Cosette is receiving such generous care. Meanwhile, Mme. Thenardier spoils her daughters and beats Cosette regularly, while Eponine and Azelma mistreat their little playmate as well. By this time Thenardier concludes that Cosette is illegitimate and raises his demands to fifteen francs per month, which Fantine pays. After three years of such brutal treatment, Cosette is wan and gaunt, a mere shadow of the beautiful child who had been left in the care of the Thenardiers by her mother. When Fantine falls behind on her payments, Cosette becomes the family servant at the age of five, washing, cleaning, and fetching while eating the scraps under the table with the dog and cat. Townspeople call her the Lark, though in her misery she never sings.

BOOK V - THE DESCENT

When Fantine returns to her hometown she finds it a very different place. The main occupation of the townsfolk for many years had been the manufacture of jet-work, or black glass trinkets. Business was poor until 1815, when a mysterious man arrived and devised a more efficient way of manufacturing the jet-work, leading to higher production, lower prices, more sales, and

higher wages. In the process he had become rich and made the people of the town rich as well. He had earned the gratitude of the townsfolk on the night of his arrival by saving the two children of the captain of police from a fire. No one knew anything of his background, but he came to be called Father Madeleine.

His fortune allowed Madeleine to build two large factories in town, one for men and one for women, in order to avoid the temptations associated with mixed industrial workforces. The factories were so prosperous that no one lacked for work. He only demanded one thing of his workers - honesty. He also spent more than half of his fortune in assisting the poor, expanding the hospital, building two schools and a free pharmacy, and providing a house of refuge for the elderly and infirm. In 1819 Father Madeleine was appointed mayor of the now-prosperous city, which honor he declined; he did the same when his newest invention led to him winning the Cross of the Legion of Honor. The people of the town don't know what to make of him, but he is loved by his workers and the poor, though some of the more prominent citizens are jealous and spread gossip about the new mayor. When he is again appointed mayor in 1820, his admirers press him to accept.

Despite his wealth, the mayor lives simply and maintains as much isolation from people as possible. He spends much time reading and improving his mind and his speech. He uses the knowledge he gains to help the peasants in the surrounding villages manage their farms more efficiently. The children love him and follow him around everywhere. The only sign of luxury in his humble house are two silver candlesticks. Meanwhile, his fortune, amounting to somewhat more than six hundred thousand francs, is on deposit with a banker named Laffitte.

In 1821, Monseigneur Bienvenu dies at the age of eighty-two. His last two years were spent in blindness, cared for by his faithful and loving sister. When M. Madeleine hears the news, he dresses in black and enters a period of mourning, which only enhances his reputation among the people of his town. Soon he is loved and trusted by all. They seek him out for advice, and call on him to judge disputes and reconcile enemies. Before long his reputation is almost as great as that of the old bishop who transformed his life.

Only one man resists the popular assessment of the mayor - a police inspector named Javert, who nurses his suspicions, convinced that he has seen M. Madeleine somewhere before. He was born in prison to criminal parents, and he grew up thinking himself forever outside the pale of normal human society. His character is like that of a dog born of a wolf, fierce and tenacious, and he is committed to two fundamental principles - respect for authority of any sort and hatred of rebellion, by which he means any crime whatsoever. He is convinced that magistrates are never wrong and that criminals can never be reformed. He covertly watches all that goes on around him, especially M. Madeleine, with the eagle eye of the spy and the informer. Madeleine notices his attentions, but pays him no heed. When Javert attempts to discover information about the mayor's past, he is unsuccessful.

One day an old man named Fauchelevent is trapped under his cart. The mayor, hearing the commotion, rushes to the spot of the accident and offers a large reward for anyone who will try to lift the heavy cart, which will soon crush the poor vendor. No one volunteers because no one is strong enough to make the attempt. Javert, a bystander, remarks that he has only encountered one man who could hope to accomplish the rescue, a convict from the galleys in Toulon. Finally the mayor crawls under the cart, at the risk of being crushed himself, and with a titanic effort raises it and frees the trapped man underneath. Javert looks on with suspicion in his eyes. While recovering in the hospital, Fauchelevent finds a thousand-franc bill on his pillow and a note indicating that the mayor has purchased his (broken) cart and (dead) horse. He then finds the old man work as a gardener at a convent in Paris.

This is the situation that Fantine encounters when she returns to her hometown. She applies for and obtains a place in the factory for women and begins to earn a living wage. She sends money regularly to the Thenardiers for Cosette's upkeep and writes to her often, through a letter-writer because she is illiterate. The town gossips and scandal-mongers soon begin to make much of Fantine's "secrets." They bribe the letter-writer and soon discover that the fair-haired beauty has a child hidden away in Montfermeil. One, Mme. Victurnien, actually goes to Montfermeil, speaks to the Thenardiers, and sees Cosette. When word spreads, Fantine is dismissed from the factory and told to leave town after being given fifty francs' severance pay.

Fantine is now in debt, without employment, and with no way of paying the Thenardiers, who are, as usual, demanding more money. She tries to find work as a servant, but no one will hire her. She is soon reduced to abject poverty, making a few sous by sewing rough clothing for the soldiers but falling farther and farther behind in her finances. In a few months she begins to notice a nagging cough. When winter returns, Fantine cannot afford fuel for a fire and becomes increasingly ill. The Thenardiers demand ten francs for a warm skirt for Cosette, which Fantine obtains by selling her beautiful hair. She buys a skirt and sends it to Montfermeil. The Thenardiers, however, wanted the money, and in a rage give the skirt to Eponine while Cosette continues to shiver. Though the mayor knows nothing of her predicament, she blames M. Madeleine for casting her out of the factory.

Her life existence continues to grow more and more desperate. She takes a lover, but he beats her and leaves her. Then one day she gets a letter saying that Cosette is desperately ill and will die within the week unless she sends forty francs to the Thenardiers immediately. Almost mad with despair, she sells two of her teeth to get the money, though of course Cosette is not really sick at all. Harassed by her creditors and faced with a demand for a hundred francs from the Thenardiers to prevent Cosette from being sent out into the cold on her own, she falls to the lowest of indignities and becomes a woman of the streets, the slave of an unjust society. Only God is a witness to her misery.

The town where Fantine lives contains a group of young idlers who have much in common with Tholomyes and his companions. One evening in 1823 one of these idlers, Bamatabois, is amusing himself by tormenting Fantine as she walks back and forth seeking to attract customers. He sneaks up behind her and throws a handful of snow down her back, and which point she attacks him with fierce blows and fiercer words. A crowd soon gathers to cheer on the combatants. Javert arrives and arrests Fantine while Bamatabois slips away into the darkness. Convinced that she has assaulted an honest citizen, he sentences her to six months in jail. Her pleas for mercy on the basis that the man had initiated the conflict and because of her starving daughter fall on deaf ears. The mayor, however, overhears her cries and intervenes. She, still thinking him responsible for her plight, spits in his face, but Madeleine demands that she be set free at once. Fantine is confused, thinking that Javert has set her at liberty, and rambles on about her life of misery. Javert objects to releasing her, but Madeleine calmly explains the real cause of the incident and repeats his demand, willingly excusing her for the personal insult. The mayor wins the standoff, and in the process Fantine's heart is melted in much the same fashion as Valjean's had been through the generosity of Monseigneur Bienvenu. Madeleine promises to give her a place to stay, all the money she needs, and to care for her and her child, and the poor woman faints for joy.

BOOK VI - JAVERT

While Fantine is recovering in the infirmary, M. Madeleine acquaints himself with her history in its entirety. When she wakes up, he is by her bedside praying and reassures her that she is safe

and is now among the blessed. He sends the Thenardiens three hundred francs (they had claimed that Fantine owed them one hundred and twenty), but the old scoundrel, convinced that he has found a new mark for his extortion, demands five hundred more on the basis of a forged medical bill. Madeleine again sends what is requested and tells them to bring Cosette to him immediately, but they have no intention of letting the girl go until they have milked the situation for all it is worth. Fantine, meanwhile, is getting sicker by the day with what has now been diagnosed as tuberculosis.

Some days later Javert appears in the mayor's office. He turns himself in for the crime of disrespect by a minor official to his superior. He asks Madeleine to dismiss him from his post; resignation is too honorable for one who has behaved so dishonorably. Javert confesses that he reported the mayor to the Prefecture of Police on suspicion of being a convict named Jean Valjean, who after his release had robbed a bishop's palace and stolen a coin from a young boy on the road. The prefect assured him that he was mistaken because the very same Jean Valjean was now in custody. Under the name of Champmathieu, he had been arrested for stealing apples, then identified in prison by a former convict who had served with Valjean in the galleys. The man denied the charge vehemently despite the fact that two lifers from Toulon had confirmed the identification. Because this was a second offense, the man will be condemned to the galleys for life. Javert is to testify at his trial the following day. When Javert again demands to be dismissed, the mayor refuses, instead commending him for his diligence. Javert continues to argue with him, but M. Madeleine simply replies, "We will see."

BOOK VII - THE CHAMPMATHIEU AFFAIR

Meanwhile Fantine is sinking fast. M. Madeleine entrusts her care to a sister in the infirmary and arranges for a horse and carriage, for which he is grossly overcharged. He intends to go to Arras for the trial of Champmathieu. That night he cannot sleep, but paces back and forth in his bedroom, because he is in truth Jean Valjean. His first impulse is to turn himself in and thus secure Champmathieu's release, but his instinct for self-preservation pulls him in the opposite direction. For hours he struggles with his conscience and with God. Had God rewarded his changed life by delivering him once and for all from the hated shadow of Jean Valjean, or did God require that he take the place in the galley reserved for him since he robbed poor Petit Gervais? Is the chance for safety a gift of Providence or a temptation of the devil? But his very hesitation disgusts him. How could he possibly conceive of letting an innocent man suffer in his place? Thinking constantly of Monseigneur Bienvenu, he makes his decision: he can no longer live a lie.

Then the argument within rages anew. What of Fantine, Cosette, and all the other people who depend on him? How can he think only of himself and his conscience when he is the cause of life and happiness to so many? Is this not but another form of selfishness? Why should an entire population suffer for the sake of an admitted thief like Champmathieu? Only by remaining M. Madeleine can he truly be said to be loving his neighbor more than himself. He thus decides to destroy everything that ties him to his former identity. From a secret hiding place he takes out the clothing and walking stick he had brought from the galleys and burns them. The bishop's candlesticks are about to follow them into the flames when a voice cries out, condemning what the mayor is about to do and telling him that the one voice of condemnation will shout louder than all the praises of men for his good deeds. After five hours of struggle, he still does not know what he will do. After a fitful sleep in which he dreams of being among the dead, he descends and takes the carriage for Arras.

Shortly after leaving his town, M. Madeleine has a collision with a mail wagon that severely damages the wheel of his carriage. When he arrives at the next town, he finds that he cannot get the wheel repaired, have it replaced, or rent or buy another carriage or even a horse to transport him to Arras that day. With relief he views this as a sign from God that he is not intended to attend the trial. But a young boy overhears the conversation and goes to fetch his mistress, who has an ancient conveyance to rent. Madeleine's heart sinks, but he resumes his journey to Arras. On the way he encounters a detour because of road construction and another carriage breakdown. By the time he reaches Arras it is eight o'clock at night.

Meanwhile, Fantine is fading fast. She is nothing but skin and bones, looks old at the age of twenty-five, and coughs constantly. She knows she is dying and waits only for the daily visit of M. Madeleine. When the mayor fails to appear, Fantine becomes distraught. When she is told that he has gone on a trip, she is certain that his intention is to get Cosette from Montfermeil, and the hope of seeing her child after five years' absence revives her spirits.

Madeleine, certain that he has missed the trial, arranges to leave for home with the post-chaise at one in the morning. While waiting he walks aimlessly around the town, but is drawn inevitably to the courthouse, where he finds that the trial of Champmathieu is still in progress. He manages to obtain a seat because he is a visiting dignitary well known throughout the district because of his benevolence. He almost flees at the last minute, but finally gets up the nerve to enter and take his place. The man in the dock immediately reminds him of what he was like when he left the galleys years earlier, both in appearance and attitude. The entire scene brings back memories of his own trial twenty-seven years before, and his whole soul rebels against the thought of ever repeating that horror. Meanwhile, Champmathieu, is thoroughly confused, not understanding the charges against him. The defense attorney convincingly demonstrates that the theft of the apples had not been proved; in fact, the only evidence against the poor wretch is that he is a convict from the galleys of Toulon, and therefore must be guilty, especially since three of his fellow convicts, along with Javert, identified him as Jean Valjean.

When asked to speak in his own defense, Champmathieu rambles on about his miserable life while the crowd laughs at his ignorance. The only witness in his behalf, a former employer, fails to appear. He flatly denies everything - his supposed name and birthplace, spending time in the galleys, and having stolen the apples. The three convicts are questioned again, and again identify the prisoner as Jean Valjean. As sentence is about to be pronounced, M. Madeleine, whose hair had turned from gray to white in a matter of hours, steps into the center of the courtroom and demands the attention of the three convicts. He asks if they know him, and they assure him that they do not. He then turns to the judge and demands that the prisoner be released because he, M. Madeleine, the beloved mayor of a town in the next district, is in fact Jean Valjean. The prosecutor thinks he is mad and calls for a doctor. Valjean admits to having robbed the bishop and Petit Gervais and tells the authorities where to find the forty-sou piece in the fireplace in his room. He then gives personal details about each of the convicts that only a fellow-prisoner would know to prove his identity. Everyone in the courtroom is shocked into silence. Valjean tells them that he is available for arrest at their convenience, but says he has a few things to clear up first. He then quietly leaves the courtroom. An hour later, Champmathieu is acquitted.

BOOK VIII - COUNTER-STROKE

Valjean returns to his home to see Fantine, who is very ill. Thinking that he had gone to fetch her daughter, her first words upon seeing him were about Cosette. The arrival of the doctor

prevents him from having to lie to her, but they assure her that she will see Cosette soon. In the midst of her joy, Javert enters the room. His joy is of a very different type from hers, for he brings with him a warrant for the arrest of M. Madeleine, a.k.a. Jean Valjean. Fantine fears that Javert has come for her, but Valjean calms her, after which Javert arrests him with rough hands and haughty words. Valjean begs for three days to get Cosette, offering to have Javert accompany him, but Javert doesn't believe him and flatly refuses. Unable to deal with the shock, Fantine hits her head on the bedstead and dies. Valjean whispers in her ear, arranges her hands and hair, closes her eyes gently, and leaves the room with Javert, who conducts him to the local prison.

Sadly, the citizens of the town turn against him with the exception of a few. That night, he escapes from the prison by breaking the bar on the window and leaping from the roof. He returns to his home, writes a note indicating the location of the forty-sou piece he had stolen from Petit Gervais, composes a letter to the town clergyman telling him to use the money he is leaving behind to pay for his trial and Fantine's burial, and to give the rest to the poor. Both his housekeeper and the nun who cared for Fantine lie to Javert in order to protect Valjean, who escapes into the night and takes the road to Paris. Shortly thereafter, Fantine is buried in a common grave in the Potter's field.

PART TWO - COSETTE

BOOK I - WATERLOO

Hugo begins by describing the ruins of a chateau on the edge of the Waterloo battlefield as it was in his day, reminiscing about the brutal fighting that occurred there in 1815. He then launches into a flashback to the battle, which took place just before Jean Valjean was released from the galleys. The night before the battle was a rainy one, which caused Napoleon to delay to make sure the ground was firm enough for his artillery, where he had Wellington outnumbered. This delay turned out to be fatal. The first five hours of the battle went well for the French, with the English being driven back on all sides. Only the center held, foiling Napoleon's attempt to divide the coalition forces in two, and that center was the high ground. At this point Wellington surprisingly withdrew and Napoleon, convinced that the field was his for the taking, sent a messenger to Paris to announce the French triumph, then ordered his commander to charge the now-unoccupied plateau. What the French did not realize was that a deep ravine stretched across the front of the plateau, and into that ravine the charging forces plunged. This was the beginning of the French defeat and the final fall of Napoleon. At this point the English artillery, concealed behind trees and bushes, opened fire, decimating the French who managed to pass through the ravine. Other French divisions avoided the ravine and fell upon the English, but it was too little and too late, especially when Wellington called in the cavalry. By the end of the day both armies were exhausted and seriously reduced in number. Then the turning point came with the arrival of Prussian reinforcements, who would have been too late had Napoleon started the battle earlier in the day. The battle soon turned into a rout, which Hugo concluded was the work of Divine Providence bringing an end to the ambitions of Napoleon and ushering in the new age of the nineteenth century with the glories of the Romantic era and the rise of constitutional government.

What has all this to do with the plot of the novel? After the battle was over and night had fallen, camp followers emerged to plunder the bodies of the dead. One of these finds a wounded officer and, thinking him dead, takes his ring, purse, watch, and silver Cross of the Legion of Honor. The officer regains consciousness and thanks him for pulling him from the mass of bodies, not

realizing that he has been robbed. The officer's name is George Pontmercy, and the thief's name is Thenardier.

BOOK II - THE SHIP ORION

Jean Valjean, after escaping the town that has become his home, withdraws his fortune from the bank in Paris and buries it in the woods outside Montfermeil, then is recaptured and sentenced to the galleys for life. Without his leadership, the town and its industry rapidly sink back into poverty and despair. In October 1823, France goes to war to put down a revolution in Spain. A French warship, the *Orion*, is damaged and sails into the port of Toulon for repairs. In the process, a sailor falls from the top of the mast and is hanging onto a rope for dear life. No one dares go to his aid until a convict at work on the repairs climbs the rigging and rescues the man. After having done so, he plunges into the sea and is presumed drowned. The convict's name is Jean Valjean.

BOOK III - FULFILLMENT OF THE PROMISE TO THE DEPARTED

At the time of the story, Montfermeil is a peaceful little village where the only disadvantage is the lack of a convenient water supply. Water could only be obtained from a spring fifteen minutes away in the forest. This was one of Cosette's tasks as she is forced into the role of a servant by the Thenardiers. At night, she sits barefoot by the fire and knits woolen stockings for the Thenardier girls. Daily she is deprived by the greedy and unscrupulous husband and beaten by the brutal wife.

The tavern is busy around Christmastime, and on Christmas night Cosette is sent out into the dark and cold to fetch more water for the guests' horses. Mme. Thenardier also gives her fifteen sous to buy bread. She is terrified of the dark, but even more frightened of her mistress, so she runs into the forest. As she draws water from the spring, the money in her pocket falls into the water. The full bucket is too heavy for her to carry more than a few steps at a time, but she fears being beaten by her mistress if she takes too long on her errand. After one rest period, she feels the hand of a man taking the bucket from her and carrying it along the path. Despite her general state of terror, she is not afraid of him. He strikes up a conversation with her as they travel toward the tavern and soon finds out who she is.

When the stranger enters the tavern, he is treated rudely by the hostess because of his shabby attire, then charged double by the host when he finds out that he is able to pay. As he sits at a table he observes the child, who is clearly starving, freezing, and filled with fear because of the abuse she has suffered. When Mme. Thenardier demands the bread she had asked Cosette to get, the child says the baker was closed, but when the mistress demands her money back, Cosette cannot find it. As the woman is about to whip Cosette, the stranger produces a silver piece that he said fell from the girl's pocket and gives it to Mme. Thenardier. It is worth more than fifteen sous, and thus is enough to silence the brute. As Cosette resumes her sewing, Eponine and Azelma, the Thenardier girls, sit by the fire and begin to play. Cosette is not allowed to join them because she must work for her keep. The stranger then pays five francs - an enormous sum - for the stockings she is knitting and grants her relief from her labors to play. When the Thenardier girls set their doll aside and begin to play with the cat, Cosette picks up the doll. When the girls see her with it, they immediately go to their mother, who screams at the unfortunate waif. The stranger leaves the tavern while Mme. Thenardier gives Cosette a sharp kick, but returns with a beautiful doll from one of the booths along the street and gives it to Cosette. This attracts the attention of the master of the house, whose eyes

light up at the chance of profit. After the guests have retired, the innkeeper guides the stranger to his best room.

Early the next morning Thenardier makes out a bill for the stranger for the outrageous amount of twenty-three francs (for other people the cost would have been twenty sous). Mme. Thenardier, still furious at being shown up by the stranger, intends to kick Cosette out of the house because of the humiliation of her having a nicer doll than her own daughters. When the stranger offers to take Cosette away, Mme. Thenardier is eager to see her go, but her husband, expressing deep attachment for the child, bargains for money in return. He demands fifteen hundred francs, which is the total amount of his indebtedness. The stranger complies, and soon he and Cosette are leaving Montfermeil hand in hand. A few minutes later Thenardier pursues them, hoping to extort more money, but the stranger produces a note from Fantine giving him permission to take the girl and recites the history of her dealings with the Thenardiers. The scoundrel finally gives up and returns home. That evening the stranger, who is of course Jean Valjean, and his young ward reach Paris.

BOOK IV - THE OLD GORBEAU HOUSE

Valjean and Cosette take up residence in the Gorbeau House, a decrepit tenement in a run-down portion of the city. He carries the sleeping Cosette upstairs and puts her to bed. When she wakes, she doesn't know where she is and immediately looks for her broom. Valjean assures her that she need do nothing but play with her doll Catharine, and that Mme. Thenardier will never bother her again. As the days pass, Valjean begins to experience a new emotion - love for the innocent child - and she returns that love with all her heart. Thus the fifty-five-year-old convict and the eight-year-old orphan become like father and daughter, devoted to one another with a bond that neither had ever known before. They are safe in their attic room, with only the landlady aware of their presence, and as the days pass Valjean teaches Cosette to read and to pray and tells her about her mother. He often surreptitiously gives alms to beggars in the neighborhood. One particular beggar, an old beadle, often receives his benevolence, but one day the old man stares at him with a sharp eye. At that moment Valjean recognizes that the beggar is none other than his old adversary, Javert, in disguise. The next day Javert, under an assumed name, takes a room in the Gorbeau House, and that night Valjean and Cosette quietly leave, never to return.

BOOK V - A DARK CHASE NEEDS A SILENT HOUND

Valjean, with Cosette, weaves through the streets of Paris with no idea of where he is going; he knows only that he must evade the dogged pursuit of the inspector. He trusts himself to God as he makes his escape. Before long he perceives four policemen following him, one of whom he recognizes as Javert. They trap him in a cul-de-sac and summon eight soldiers to aid in the arrest, but he scales an eighteen-foot wall and pulls Cosette up after him with a rope. The two then drop into a garden on the other side of the wall. The place seems deserted, but after the police and soldiers leave, Valjean and Cosette hear women's voices singing. While Cosette sleeps, Valjean hears the ringing of a bell and sees someone in the garden. Fearing that Cosette will become ill if she doesn't find warmth and shelter, he rushes to the man and offers him a hundred francs if he will provide for them. Much to his surprise, the man recognizes him as M. Madeleine; it is Fauchelevent, the man whom Valjean had rescued from under the cart, and the garden belongs to the Convent of the Petit Picpus where the mayor had secured employment for him two years before. He is delighted

to see again the man who had saved his life and is even more overjoyed to be able to return the favor. He gladly hides Valjean and Cosette in his little hut at the corner of the convent grounds, and Valjean makes him promise that he will tell no one of their presence there and ask no further questions.

How did Javert catch up with Jean Valjean? After the convict's plunge into the sea, Javert assumed, like everyone else, that he was dead. He then took a job with the Paris police. Soon after he saw a police report about a child kidnaped from an innkeeper and his wife in Montfermeil. The report identified Cosette and her mother Fantine by name, and Javert began to suspect that his nemesis might not be dead after all. He took a trip to Montfermeil, but found the Thenardiers less than cooperative; the last thing the scoundrel wanted was to have the police looking into his affairs, so he told Javert that Cosette had been taken away by her grandfather, a rich farmer. Once again Javert gave Valjean up for dead. But then he heard a story about a beggar who gave alms to other beggars and who lived with an eight-year-old girl who came from Montfermeil. One night he impersonated a beggar and recognized his adversary. When Valjean and Cosette left the rented loft, he followed them, finally trapping them in the cul-de-sac in Petit Picpus, at which point they simply disappeared. Javert, furious with himself for not arresting Valjean as soon as he saw him, searches the entire quarter and leaves a guard to keep watch until morning.

BOOK VI - PETIT PICPUS

The convent belongs to the Bernardines of the Perpetual Adoration. The nuns inside are shut out from the world; even Fauchelevent wears a bell so they can avoid him when he comes near. Their rules are very strict, including a vow of silence. The convent also operates a school for girls from wealthy families, who are subjected to most of the same rules and restrictions that govern the sisters; their only respite is an hour of play in the garden each day. After a lengthy description of the convent's practices and denizens, the author notes that little remains of the order in his own day.

BOOK VII - A PARENTHESIS

Hugo in this book offers a critique of monasticism. Though he says much about the damage it does to society and the tortures it inflicts on those who are not always willing participants, he respects the religious devotion of sincere ascetics and sees the monastery as a true example of equality and fraternity. He values those who seek the Infinite but hates superstition; he compares atheists to blind moles who pity those who see the sun. Atheism, he says, inevitably leads to nihilism.

BOOK VIII - CEMETERIES TAKE WHAT IS GIVEN THEM

After a two-book tangent, the author returns to the story of Jean Valjean. He and Cosette are in the convent under the protection of Fauchelevent, the gardener, and there they must stay if they hope to avoid the dogged pursuit of Javert. Fauchelevent, however, knows nothing of what has happened to Valjean since the old man left the village to come to Paris and cannot fathom how Cosette fits into the story. All he knows is that "M. Madeleine" saved his life, and he must return the favor. But how is he to do this? If the nuns discover him he will be turned over to the police. They stay away from Fauchelevent's hut, but the young girls play in the garden and would surely see

the stranger. The old man decides to petition the prioress. He tells her that because of his age and infirmity, he needs an assistant to help him with the garden. He has a younger brother who would be willing to undertake the task, and this brother has a young child whom he wishes to have educated in the convent school.

A further complication arises when one of the nuns dies. She had asked to be buried beneath the altar in the chapel, which is against the health codes. She had been sleeping in a coffin for twenty years and wanted to be buried in it, so the coffin provided by the government is to be filled with dirt and buried so outsiders will have no knowledge of the legal infraction. The prioress agrees to accept Fauchelevent's brother and the little girl and tells him to bring them to the convent on the following day. First, however, he must figure out how to get them out of the convent.

The solution is to hide Cosette in a large basket, which Fauchelevent will carry on his back to the house of a friend. Valjean is to leave in the supposedly dirt-filled coffin, then Fauchelevent will get his old friend the gravedigger drunk and release Valjean from the casket, after which he will get Cosette and return to the convent. Unfortunately, when they arrive at the cemetery they find that the old gravedigger is dead, a new man is on duty, and he does not drink. The coffin containing the living man is lowered into the grave and Valjean hears dirt being shoveled on top of it, covering his air holes. At this point he passes out. Fauchelevent finally convinces the gravedigger to leave the cemetery and quickly climbs into the grave and opens the coffin. Valjean is motionless and the old man thinks he is dead. He soon revives, however, and the two emerge from the grave, fill it in, and leave the cemetery.

They retrieve Cosette, and the next day Valjean enters the convent under the name of Ultimus Fauchelevent and Cosette becomes a charity pupil. She is permitted to spend an hour each day with her beloved "father." As the days pass, Valjean compares his imprisonment in the galleys with that of the nuns in the convent. He concludes that the first are expiating their own sins, while the latter are expiating the sins of others - truly a holy work. Their self-sacrifice makes a deep impression on the former thief and long-time convict, who begins to learn the lesson of humility. In the years that follow, he achieves a deep peace he has never known before.

PART THREE - MARIUS

BOOK I - PARIS ATOMISED

The time is now 1831. Hugo occupies this book describing the street urchins of Paris and pronouncing an encomium over the city that spawns them. At the end of the book the author introduces a gamin named Gavroche. He is not an orphan, but might as well be one because his parents have cast him out. On rare occasions he returns to the tenement where his parents live. They, a father, mother, and two daughters, go by the name of Jondrette; we have met them earlier as the Thenardiers. Next door to them in the tenement lives an impoverished young man named Marius.

BOOK II - THE GRAND BOURGEOIS

In Paris at this time lives a nonagenarian named M. Gillenormand. He is of the bourgeois class and has a comfortable income of fifteen thousand francs. He had lived an active and daring life, but is by this time crotchety and disagreeable. Above all else he despises the French Revolution

and everything associated with it. He still considers himself a ladies' man. Even in his mid-eighties, he had fathered two children by a housemaid named Magnon. Gillenormand had had two wives, each of whom had borne him a daughter. The elder daughter never married and kept house for her father in his old age. The younger daughter married, produced a son, but died at the age of thirty.

BOOK III - THE GRANDFATHER AND THE GRANDSON

M. Gillenormand belonged to a royalist salon and often brought his grandson with him. He loved the child but detested his father, George Pontmercy, who had been cast out of the family because he had fought valiantly for the revolutionary army and under Napoleon. He survived the battle of Waterloo under the worst of circumstances, and it was he who was robbed by Thenardier and left for dead. Pontmercy, called by M. Gillenormand "the brigand of the Loire," lost all of his honors after the fall of Napoleon, his son was seized by M. Gillenormand, who threatened to disinherit the boy otherwise, and he turned to cultivating flowers in his middle age. The son, named Marius, knows nothing of his father other than what his grandfather tells him. He writes dictated letters to him twice a year, and his father's replies are kept from him by M. Gillenormand. Pontmercy secretly observes his son when he goes to church, but dare not contact him. As Marius grows, he studies the law and becomes fervently religious and royalist, honorable and pure of heart.

One day in 1827, when Marius is eighteen years old, his grandfather surprises him by telling him that he must visit his father, who is dying. He has learned from M. Gillenormand to despise his father, and is convinced that his father does not love him because he has abandoned him. By the time he arrives his father is already dead; he died with his son's name upon his lips. Marius feels no grief for the father he never knew, but Pontmercy leaves him a letter, explaining that the title he received from Napoleon at Waterloo is now his, and that his life was saved by an innkeeper named Thenardier, to whom Marius should render service should the opportunity arise.

Marius returns home and thinks no more of his father. One day in church he is approached by the warden, who tells him the true story of his father's love and devotion and the way in which he was kept from knowing him by his grandfather. Marius immediately begins to research the Revolution to find out more about his father, who he discovers was a true hero. His political ideas begin to change and he spends less and less time in the company of his grandfather. Soon his conversion is complete and he admires the Revolution, loves France, and worships Napoleon. He also travels to Montfermeil to seek out his father's savior, Thenardier, but finds the inn closed and the innkeeper nowhere to be found.

Marius is often absent. And his aunt becomes curious about where he is going. One day his cousin Theodule, an army officer, drops in and she convinces him to follow Marius and report on his destination, thinking that he must be meeting some lover. Theodule follows him, but finds that he is not meeting a girl, but placing flowers on his father's grave. Out of respect for the dead, Theodule reports nothing to his aunt, but a few days later M. Gillenormand discovers a locket on a ribbon worn by Marius. In it he finds the letter from his father. The old man explodes and orders Marius to leave his house. In the process the box containing the letter falls to the floor.

BOOK IV - THE FRIENDS OF THE A B C

Hugo now takes time to describe the rise of revolutionary ferment in Paris in 1828. In particular, he is concerned with the Society of the Friends of the A B C, made up mostly of students

with a few workingmen mixed in. The leader of the group is a rich young man named Enjolras, age 22, who cares nothing for romance or beauty, but thinks only of the revolution. The author then characterizes the other leading figures in the society one by one. Despite their differences in talent, background, and interests, they all worshiped Progress.

After Marius is thrown out by his grandfather, he wanders the streets of Paris, not knowing where to go. He encounters two members of the Friends of the A B C, one of whom, Courfeyrac, invites him to his home. They soon become friends, and one day Courfeyrac invites Marius to the Café Musain, where the society meets. He is at first confused by their varying ideas. When he tries to defend Napoleon, his new friends tell him that freedom is more important, and that only comes with the Republic. He finds himself cast out by his family, thought backward by his friends, and without visible means of support. He sells his excess clothing and decides to learn to become a translator. When his aunt sends him an allowance from his grandfather, he returns it.

BOOK V - THE EXCELLENCE OF MISFORTUNE

For a time Marius lives in absolute destitution, but finally passes the bar and becomes a lawyer, though he never pursues work in the field. By means of his translation efforts he makes enough to scrape by for several years, living in a wretched tenement and eating simply, but taking care never to fall into debt. His dearest hope is somehow to locate Thenardier, the brave sergeant who had rescued his father on the battlefield at Waterloo, and do him some service.

Three years pass, and M. Gillenormand misses Marius desperately. Marius, unaware of this, thinks only of his grandfather as that dreadful man who was cruel to his father. He feels that his own suffering is just punishment for his own attitude toward his father for so many years, and is determined to be worthy of the man he had shunned for so long. His suffering has brought him maturity, worthwhile labor, and a thoughtful view of the world around him. Meanwhile he maintains his friendship with Enjolras and his companions, though he avoids their meetings in the café.

The revolution of 1830 comes and goes, and Marius is content with its results. He enjoys his solitude and the contemplation of nature and humanity that it affords him. One day in 1831 his landlady informs him that his neighbors, the Jondrettes, are to be turned out for not paying their rent. He gives the woman the money and orders her not to tell the family where it came from. He does not realize that the Jondrettes are the very Thenardiens for whom he has been seeking for many years. Meanwhile Marius' aunt tries to insert her nephew Theodule in Marius' place in his grandfather's affections, but fails to do so.

BOOK VI - THE CONJUNCTION OF TWO STARS

Marius is ashamed of his poverty and convinced that no girl will ever look at him twice because of his shabby dress, so he isolates himself from society. During his daily walks he always passes an old man and a young girl in convent dress sitting on the same park bench (Jean Valjean and Cosette). The man has the noble bearing of a military officer, while the young girl is rather homely in appearance. He never speaks to them, nor they to him. Marius stops walking in the accustomed place, but upon returning six months later finds the girl much changed; she is now a beautiful young woman. One day their eyes meet, and the next day Marius dresses in his best clothing for his promenade. In the weeks that follow, he becomes increasingly obsessed with the girl, falling in love with one to whom he has never spoken and whose name he does not know. One

day he finds a handkerchief on the bench where the old man and his daughter habitually sit, and believing it to belong to the girl and to have been left for him (the old man had actually dropped it accidentally), he takes it to bed with him every night. Overwhelmed with curiosity, he follows the man and his daughter home one day, but the old man has long ago noticed the unusual behavior of this young gentleman. The two come to the park no more, and when Marius inquires at the building where they live, he is told that they have moved to an unknown location.

BOOK VII - PATRON MINETTE

Hugo here speaks of the substrata of society, dividing it into two kinds: the creative, made up of those who put the self aside in order to seek the good of others but think themselves alone in their quest, and the destructive, those who think of nothing but themselves and seek only evil and chaos. The revolutionaries of Book Four belong to the first; the author now introduces the reader to a quartet of villains who characterize the second. They go by the name of Patron-Minette, and in the early 1830s in Paris they rule the night.

BOOK VIII - THE NOXIOUS POOR

For months Marius looks everywhere for the girl of her dreams, but without success, and soon falls into a deep depression. One day as he goes out for dinner he encounters two young girls, shabbily dressed (Eponine and Azelma Thenardier); they have just escaped from the gendarmes after having stolen something. One of the girls drops a packet, which Marius picks up and tries to return, but they are gone. At home he opens the packet and finds that it contains four letters, all written in the same hand but signed with different names, and all begging for money. The next morning, Eponine appears at Marius' door with a letter from her father asking for money; he has discovered that Marius had paid their rent six months earlier. Marius immediately recognizes that the handwriting and paper are the same as the four letters he has in his possession; he now understands that Jondrette makes his living by begging money from strangers under false pretenses and uses his daughters to help in his extortion plots. Eponine sees Marius' books and tells him that she can read and write. He then returns the packet of letters she had dropped the previous evening. He gives her five francs - almost all he has in the world - and she grabs a stale crust of bread from his dresser and leaves the room.

Marius now realizes that despite his poverty, he has never known the kind of misery he witnessed in the young girl who had come to his room. She and those like her, the dregs of the earth, were *Les Miserables*. In his meditations on such misery, he notices that the partition separating his room from that occupied by the Jondrettes has a hole near the top, and he decides to spy on them to learn what sort of people they are. What he sees through the hole is unimaginable filth, starving children, and a scraggly old man writing letters and smoking a pipe, though he cannot afford food for his family. Soon Eponine returns, excitedly telling her father that one of the recipients of their letters was coming to their apartment and was sure to give them something. She had met him in a church with his daughter. Jondrette immediately puts out the fire, breaks the seat out of their only chair, and shatters the glass in the window to elicit pity from their anticipated benefactor. When the man from the church arrives with his daughter, Marius is astounded to see that she is the girl from the park bench - his beloved at last. What attracts Marius' devotion, however, elicits envy from Eponine. Cosette gives them a package containing new clothes. Jondrette lies at great length about

the misery of his family and tells Valjean that if he does not pay his rent that very night they all will be cast out into the street. Valjean leaves him five francs and his overcoat and promises to return that night with sixty francs for the rent. But Jondrette thinks that he recognizes his generous benefactor from somewhere.

Marius attempts to follow Valjean and Cosette, but quickly loses them because they are in a carriage and he is on foot. Jondrette, meanwhile, is conversing with one of the neighborhood ruffians described in the previous book. When Marius returns to his apartment, Eponine follows him and kindly asks what is troubling him. She offers to help him in any way she can, and he asks her to find out the address of the old gentleman and his daughter. She realizes that he is interested in the daughter, which grieves her, but she promises to help him anyway. He then hears shouting from the room next door; Jondrette tells his wife that he recognized their benefactor, and that his "daughter" was their former ward, Cosette. Jondrette intends to extort money from Valjean with the help of the neighborhood thugs. Marius, who overhears all this, determines to foil the plot and deliver his beloved from the clutches of the villains. He goes to the police and tells them of the intended ambush. The inspector, whose name is Javert, gives Marius two pistols and tells him to fire a shot when the robbery is about to go down.

Later Marius follows Jondrette and sees him purchase a large chisel. He then settles down to wait for the appointed hour. Jondrette soon sends his daughters out barefoot in the snow to keep watch. He then makes a large charcoal fire and begins to heat the chisel; Marius can see ropes on the floor of the flat. When Valjean arrives, he gives Jondrette the money and is invited to sit down. Marius cocks his pistol, preparing to fire a shot when necessary. Jondrette again bewails the misery of his family and tells Valjean that he has only one valuable possession, a painting that he must sell if his family is to live. As he speaks, four bandits slip into the room and block the door. The painting is nothing but an old tavern sign, but Jondrette demands a thousand crowns for it. Three more villains enter, heavily armed.

He quickly ends the charade, identifies himself as Thenardier and tells his benefactor that he knows his real name as well. Marius, on the verge of firing his pistol, is shocked to hear the name of his father's supposed rescuer and is thrown into a dilemma. How could he betray his father's deliverer? How could he fail to save his beloved's father? Thenardier pours out venom on the man he irrationally blames for all his troubles because he took away the child through whom he was working a profitable swindle. As the thugs move toward him, Valjean leaps for the window, but is caught before he can make his escape. The villains are about to beat him, but Thenardier stops them. Valjean then knocks Thenardier down with a single blow and neutralizes two other bandits. He is then set upon by all the others, who finally subdue him and tie him to the bed. They are disappointed to find that he has little money in his purse and carries nothing of value. Thenardier points out that his prisoner has made no attempt to cry for help, and suspects that he has as little desire to see the police as those who have set upon him. He demands two hundred thousand francs and orders Valjean to write a letter to Cosette asking her to come to him, then sends his wife to deliver the letter and fetch the girl. He then tells Valjean that his men will kidnap Cosette. She will be released if Valjean delivers the money, but if not she will be killed. All of this paralyzes Marius, who now dare not summon the police and put his beloved in jeopardy. When M. Thenardier returns, she is in a rage because the address Valjean had given was a false one. At that moment the prisoner, having severed his bonds, springs up and seizes the white-hot chisel from the flames. To convince the bandits that no tortures could make him reveal his secret, he lays the chisel on his bare arm, searing the flesh, then tosses it out the window, telling his captors to do with him as they will. Thenardier grabs a knife and is about to kill his prisoner when Marius picks up the paper on which Eponine had

demonstrated her writing ability that morning; she had written, “The police are here.” He tosses the note through the crack, Thenardier recognizes his daughter’s handwriting, and the villains begin to flee the scene through the window. They start quarreling about who should escape first, and as they do so, Javert comes through the door. He and the police with him, having already apprehended Eponine and Azelma, soon subdue the brigands, but in the confusion Jean Valjean climbs out of the window and escapes. The young Thenardier boy, Gavroche, is now left to live on the streets.

PART FOUR - ST. DENIS

BOOK I - A FEW PAGES OF HISTORY

The time between the fall of Napoleon and the Revolution of 1830 was one of relative peace and quiet, but discontent was simmering beneath the surface of French society. That discontent emerged when Charles X, convinced of his divine right to rule, abrogated the charter granted by Louis XVIII, leading to his overthrow. He was replaced by Louis Philippe, whose eighteen-year “bourgeois monarchy” was nothing more than a temporary interruption in the revolution that had brought him to power. He was a kind, gentle, and moral man, adored by the bourgeoisie, who sadly allowed corruption to spoil his reign. For some, he was a good man whose only fault was that he bore the title of king. Even in the early years of his reign he faced tumult without and within. The Revolution of 1830 had spread to surrounding nations, where monarchs were being overthrown, albeit temporarily in many cases. In France, monarchists wanted the Old Regime back, while democrats wanted no king at all and socialists wanted equal distribution of wealth.

By 1832, revolution is again brewing in the wine shops, back streets and upper rooms of Paris. Small coteries meet in secret, using assumed names and not even knowing who their leaders are. Passwords, special handshakes, and secret signs identify the revolutionaries to one another. And among them all are the spies, planted by the government and the police to discover the plots of the insurrectionists. Meanwhile the revolutionaries are accumulating weapons and making cartridges and bullets. In the midst of this stood Enjolras and his Friends of the A B C, making plans to unify the various cells for a coordinated attack.

BOOK II - EPONINE

After Javert interrupts the attempt to extort money from Jean Valjean in the tenement inhabited by both the Thenardiers and Marius, the latter moves out, leaving no forwarding address, because he has no desire to testify against Thenardier despite the evident malevolence of the man. He even borrows money from his friend Courfeyrac, with whom he is staying, and sends five francs anonymously to Thenardier in prison each week. Meanwhile, his mind is fixated on Cosette, of whom he has again lost track, and on the mystery of the man who appears to be her father. Because he has stopped working, he falls again into poverty and spends his days walking aimlessly around Paris until one day he stumbles upon a lovely place called the Field of the Lark, which seems to him a good omen for his hope of finding Cosette again.

Javert, despite his triumph, is frustrated because some of the villains escaped, but even more so because their prisoner succeeded in getting out through the window. Even while the prisoners are confined in La Force, they are plotting future crimes. Soon Eponine and Azelma are released, and the former carries messages between the prisoners and their co-conspirators on the outside. Eponine

searches for Marius as diligently as he seeks Cosette, and she finally finds him one day in the Field of the Lark. She tells him that she has discovered Cosette's address. He is overjoyed and asks her to take him there immediately, but makes her promise that she will tell no one, especially not her father. He promises her anything she desires and offers her money, but she has something else in mind.

BOOK III - THE HOUSE IN THE RUE PLUMET

After five years in the convent, Jean Valjean decided that, because Cosette's education was completed, she should have some experience of the outside world so she would have a basis for deciding whether or not she had a religious calling. In that same year, 1829, Fauchelevent died, and Valjean found a house that had been built to conceal the mistress of a prominent figure during the years of the French Revolution. Into this house, on the Rue Plumet, he moved himself, Cosette, and an elderly servant named Toussaint. He also rented two other homes in other parts of Paris in order more effectively to avoid the police should they ever again notice his presence. The old convict had also joined the National Guard, in which he served under the name of Ultimus Fauchelevent.

In this house Jean Valjean and Cosette live in safe and isolated bliss. As Cosette matures, casual observers remark on her beauty. To her, who always thought of herself as homely, this comes as a shock, though a confusing and pleasant one; to Jean Valjean, it comes as a source of fear that he may someday soon lose his beloved daughter. She begins to pay much more attention to her dress and asks to go out in public more and more often. At this time, during their walks in the park, she first attracts the attention of young Marius. Unknown to him, she responds to his glance in the same way he does to hers. The two fall in love without even speaking to one another. In the same way that Marius innately fears his beloved's father, so Jean Valjean, for reasons he cannot understand, detests this strange boy who haunts their walks. He deeply regrets having removed Cosette from the convent, and the two, despite their unfailing love for each other, feel a barrier rising between them. One day as they are out walking they encounter seven wagons filled with chained galley slaves; Cosette is horrified. The next day Valjean takes her to the fair to get her mind off the horrors of the previous morning, but several days later she asks him to explain what a galley slave is.

BOOK IV - AID FROM BELOW MAY BE AID FROM ABOVE

As the gap between them silently grows, the only pleasure remaining to Valjean and Cosette is the time they spend together taking food and clothing to the poor. On one of these ventures, they reply to a request in a false name and visit the Jondrettes. After Valjean's escape from their trap, he develops a fever from the self-administered burn and is confined to bed for more than a month. He refuses to call a doctor, and the nursing administered by Cosette is a great joy to him. One night while Valjean is walking alone in the city, he is attacked by a ruffian, whom he quickly overcomes. He tells the young man, who wants nothing more than to be an idler and a robber, to find honest work and spare himself a lifetime of misery, then gives him his purse full of money. Gavroche, who is hiding nearby, picks the young man's pocket and throws the purse over a wall behind which he had been hiding. It falls at the feet of old Mabeuf, the churchwarden who had served Marius' father, who has no money and is about to be thrown out into the street to starve.

BOOK V - THE END OF WHICH IS UNLIKE THE BEGINNING

One night while Valjean is on a journey, Cosette hears footsteps in the garden, but when she looks out the window she sees nothing. The next night she hears them again and goes out to find out what is going on; she sees a shadow, but when she turns it disappears. A week later, she finds a stone on her usual seat at the end of the garden; under the stone is a letter. The letter is unsigned and addressed to no one, but it is a love letter clearly intended for her. As soon as she reads it, she knows it is from the young man in the park. That evening she goes again to her seat, and he is there waiting for her. They embrace, kiss, and sit together on the bench, pouring out their hearts to one another. Finally, as the time for him to leave approaches, they tell one another their names.

BOOK VI - LITTLE GAVROCHE

The Thenardiers actually had five children - Eponine, Azelma, Gavroche, and two younger boys who had been sold by their mother for ten francs a month; they, like Gavroche, wound up on the streets. One day Gavroche meets his little brothers in the street, and though he doesn't know who they are, takes them under his wing, feeds them, and brings them back to his "house," a huge hollow statue of an elephant outside the Bastille inside of which he lives. That night the criminals who had been arrested along with Thenardier escape from La Force, and Gavroche is summoned to help his father escape as well. One of the villains suggests that they hide in a deserted house in the Rue Plumet where Eponine had gone earlier; they have no notion that she had gone there to help Marius find Cosette.

BOOK VII - ARGOT

Hugo here gives a justification for placing street slang in the mouths of his lower-class characters, insisting that it is the language of misery and thus can advance the purpose of his novel.

BOOK VIII - ENCHANTMENTS AND DESOLATIONS

After their first meeting in the garden facilitated by Eponine, Marius and Cosette meet every night. The kiss they exchanged on their first meeting is not followed by another, as Cosette's modesty and Marius' loyalty prevent them from violating the purity of their love. They are so wrapped up in one another and their present experience of devotion that they speak little of their past experiences; Marius doesn't even tell Cosette about the horrible night at the Thenardier flat that he witnessed through the hole in the dividing wall. Their meetings continue for six weeks. Jean Valjean knows nothing of them, nor do Marius' friends, though they are convinced that he must be in love because he goes out for two hours every night. The only one who knows is Eponine, who is ignored by Marius in his rapture about Cosette. She secretly loves him, too, and soon becomes jealous.

One night she follows him and waits outside while he is meeting with Cosette. As she waits, her father and his villainous companions arrive, intent on robbing the house. She stands before the gate and tells them that if they come one step farther, she will cry out and bring the police down on them. After issuing a series of vicious threats, they leave and disperse. In the garden, Marius and Cosette know nothing of any of this. Soon Cosette begins to cry and tells Marius that her father has spoken of going away to England. To the two young lovers, the very thought is intolerable. Cosette suggests that Marius come to England with them, but he has no money. He swears, however, that

if she leaves him he will die. He tells her that he will return two nights hence. She can see that he is formulating a plan, but he refuses to tell her what it is. He does, however, give her his address, which he scratches into the garden wall with a nail.

M. Gillenormand is by the spring of 1832 ninety-one years old. He is still stern and erect, but his hope that his wayward grandson will come crawling back to him after four years apart is fading. In fact, he misses Marius desperately, but is unwilling to take a single step to mend the breach. Then one day Marius appears on his doorstep. The old man is overflowing with love, but he can do nothing but speak harshly. Marius begs his permission to marry. Upon questioning, he admits that both he and the girl are penniless. Gillenormand dismisses him, but as Marius is about to leave, his grandfather pulls him back and questions him further, allowing his love for his grandson to come out at last. When Marius tells his story, his grandfather offers him money and tells him to make Cosette his mistress. This insult to his beloved is more than Marius can tolerate, however, and he storms out with no intention of ever returning.

BOOK IX - WHERE ARE THEY GOING?

Jean Valjean decides to leave Paris for England for two reasons - the rising tide of political unrest, which means that the police are much more active than usual, and the fact that he has seen Thenardier, who knows his true identity, in his neighborhood on several occasions. To make matters worse, he discovers the address scratched into the garden wall and realizes that his sanctuary has been violated. Furthermore, a mysterious note is dropped next to him as he sits on the embankment containing one word - "Remove." He turns to see who dropped the note, but Eponine slips away too quickly.

Marius, meanwhile, leaves his grandfather's house in despair. He goes home and throws himself on the bed. When he awakes, he finds his friends armed and ready to go out. He goes instead to his appointed meeting with Cosette, but find the house empty. As he mourns the loss of his beloved, Eponine comes up behind him and whispers that his friends are waiting for him at the barricade. During this time Mabeuf, the old and faithful servant of Marius' father, is slowly starving to death. When he hears that fighting is going on at the barricades, however, he rushes to take part.

BOOK X - JUNE 5TH, 1832

Hugo begins this section by discussing the difference between good and bad insurrections, then argues that the upheaval that began on the fifth of June, 1832, was a justifiable one (what he gives here is an eyewitness account). It began with the death of General Lamarque, an old hero of the Napoleonic wars and a spokesman for the people. As the funeral procession passes through the city, crowds gather; many are armed, and insurrection is in the air. The National Guard accompanies the cortege, and the government is prepared to respond should violence break out. The Marquis de Lafayette delivers the eulogy, then as the hearse is taken toward its final resting place, three shots ring out, from where no one knows. Soon all Paris is in an uproar and barricades are going up all over the city. The revolutionaries demand a republic, and by late afternoon control a third of Paris. Meanwhile, Louis Philippe sits in his palace, untroubled by all of this.

BOOK XI - THE ATOM FRATERNISES WITH THE HURRICANE

When the first shots ring out, the crowd scatters in all directions. Seeing what is happening, young Gavroche throws down the flowers in his hand and seizes a pistol from a secondhand shop, ready to join the revolution but unaware that his stolen weapon has no hammer. He soon joins the group led by Enjolras, which is growing larger by the minute; among them is old Mabeuf. Before long Javert, in disguise, and Eponine fall in with the expanding crowd of rebels.

BOOK XII - CORINTH

Hugo begins this section by describing the history of the Corinth wine shop, frequented by Enjolras and his companions. On the day of Lamarque's funeral, three of the Friends of the A B C are in the wine shop getting drunk. Enjolras summons them to join the revolt, but they ignore him until he passes beneath their window, at which point they rush into the street to set up a barricade. Soon fifty men gather, including young Gavroche, Eponine, who is so thin she looks like a boy, and Javert. When the barricade is finished, they load their muskets and wait for the inevitable onslaught. Some ask where Marius is, and they conclude that he is overwhelmed with love. When Enjolras sends Gavroche to scout out the position and movements of government troops, the boy warns him that Javert is a spy. Enjolras then gathers four of his men and begins to interrogate Javert, who immediately admits his identity. They bind him and tell him that he will be shot ten minutes before the barricade falls. Gavroche, meanwhile, seizes his musket to replace the broken one he had purchased. One of the men in the party kills a porter who refuses to open his door to them, and Enjolras executes him on the spot.

BOOK XIII - MARIUS ENTERS THE SHADOW

Marius, having lost Cosette, wants nothing more than to die, so he makes his way toward the barricade. The whole idea of civil war revolts him, but he thinks of the bravery of his father, concludes that he has no hope because Cosette, who left without a word or note, no longer loves him, and is determined to face the inevitable. He salves his conscience by convincing himself that the rebellion is a just war.

BOOK XIV - THE GRANDEURS OF DESPAIR

At ten o'clock the following morning Gavroche returns to warn the rebels that the troops have arrived. The forty-three defenders of the barricade face thousands of trained soldiers. The first volley brings down the flag and wounds several of the rebels. When Enjolras asks for a volunteer to raise the flag again, no one responds except the octogenarian Mabeuf, who is cut down as soon as he lifts the flag over his head atop the barricade. While the insurgents carry the body of Mabeuf into the basement of the wine shop, the troops seek to scale the barricade. Gavroche gives warning and the battle is joined, with some falling on each side. Gavroche bravely confronts the Guards, but discovers that the musket he had taken from Javert isn't loaded. He is saved when Marius arrives and shoots his assailant. With his pistols now discharged, Marius is defenseless, and one of the Guards takes aim at him at close range. At this point a ragged youth seizes the musket and leaps in front of Marius, in the process suffering a mortal wound. The youth, recognized by none of the

insurgents, is Eponine. After another volley is exchanged and more on both sides fall, Marius takes a barrel of powder to the top of the barricade and threatens to blow it and everyone in the vicinity to bits unless the soldiers leave. They decide that discretion is the better part of valor and retreat, temporarily saving the barricade and the survivors behind it. One of the insurgents is captured by the Guards, but as Enjolras prepares to exchange Javert for their captive friend, a shot rings out and they know that he is dead.

When Marius goes out to reconnoiter the area, Eponine crawls out of the shadows and identifies herself as the one who had placed her body between him and the Guard's musket. He wants to carry her to the wine shop, but she tells him that it is too late; all she wants is for him to stay with her until the end. As her last breath draws near, she gives him the letter from Cosette that she had concealed from him out of a desire to drive him to despair and thus to death at the barricade, then asks him to kiss her on the forehead after she dies. He does so, then eagerly opens Cosette's note, which tells him that she and her father will be leaving for England in a week and lets him know that they will be staying in the Rue de l'Homme Armé. He is overjoyed to know that Cosette still loves him, but sees no hope for the future. His two desires now are to let Cosette know of his impending death and to protect Eponine's little brother Gavroche. He writes a short letter to Cosette and asks Gavroche to carry it, hoping to spare the boy from further fighting; he also pockets a letter in which he identifies himself and asks the finder to take his body to his grandfather's after he dies. Gavroche, however, has no desire to be left out and decides to carry the letter to Cosette immediately, then return to the barricade.

BOOK XV - THE RUE DE L'HOMME ARMÉ

Jean Valjean and Cosette had fled to the Rue de l'Homme Armé with only the possessions they could carry, including a case containing the rags Cosette had been wearing when he first rescued her. Cosette objected, but her father insisted that they must leave for their own safety. The day after their arrival, Valjean discovers the impression of Cosette's letter to Marius on her blotter. The thought that Cosette is no longer his breaks his heart, and his first reaction is one of hatred for the young man in the park, whom he identifies as Cosette's beloved. He goes outside to clear his head, hears gunfire, and at this point Gavroche arrives with Marius' message. After some interchanges, he gives the letter to Jean Valjean and rushes back to the barricade. Valjean goes inside and surreptitiously reads Marius' letter. At first he rejoices at the inevitable death of the man he has come to consider his rival for Cosette's affections, but then changes his mind, puts on his uniform, and heads for the barricades, intending to save his dear Cosette's beloved. Gavroche, after stealing a cart and escaping an encounter with soldiers, arrives before the fighting recommences.

PART FIVE - JEAN VALJEAN

BOOK I - WAR BETWEEN FOUR WALLS

Hugo begins the final part of the novel by describing two enormous barricades erected during the Revolution of 1848. The barricade supervised by Enjolras in 1832 is puny by comparison, but after the initial assault they spend the night fortifying and enlarging it. The defenders of the barricade have run out of supplies, but they don't care because they expect to be dead by the next afternoon, though of the ultimate success of the revolution they have no doubt. Enjolras leaves to

do reconnaissance; he returns to report that the people have lost interest in the revolt and that they will surely be overwhelmed by the mass of troops even now descending upon them. He argues that only thirty of the fifty still surviving are needed to defend the barricade and tries to persuade those who have dependents to go home. Finally five men agree to leave, wearing uniforms of four dead guardsmen and one donated by a newcomer - Jean Valjean. Enjolras then encourages his band of insurgents by painting a picture of the utopia that will inevitably appear after they give their lives - a world of liberty, equality, fraternity, and happiness and peace for all.

Marius, resigned to death, does not even speak to Jean Valjean, but when the old convict enters the wine shop and sees Javert, the inspector sarcastically remarks that his presence at the barricade is no surprise. While they wait for the attack, the insurgents add to the barricade and close off what had been their only point of egress. Their fortress was now both impregnable and inescapable. When the troops arrive, they bring with them a cannon and aim it squarely at the barricade. Their first shot is stopped by the detritus of which the barricade is constructed, while the insurgents fire and manage to hit nothing. At this point Gavroche rejoins the rebels behind the barricade, much to the delight of the defenders and to the consternation of Marius, who had thought to save him by sending him to deliver his letter to Cosette. The next time the cannon is fired it contains grapeshot, which ricochets behind the barricade and kills several of the defenders. Enjolras, with tears in his eyes, then reluctantly kills the young gunner. Before another barrage can be fired, Jean Valjean rushes into the line of fire and retrieves a mattress, which is then sufficient to stop the grapeshot before it can ricochet.

Meanwhile Cosette wakes from a sound night's sleep, eager for the day that will surely bring a visit from Marius. She knows nothing of the fighting that is tearing Paris apart. At the barricade, the attackers continue to fire cannonballs and grapeshot, hoping to draw the fire of the insurgents and coax them into using up their ammunition, but Enjolras refuses to fall for their gambit. When a soldier mounts a nearby roof overlooking the defenders, Jean Valjean shoots off his helmet and he quickly retreats. The commander of the guard then becomes impatient and orders a frontal assault, which accomplishes nothing except the deaths of many of his men; he himself is killed when his own cannon continues to fire during the assault.

By this time only a few barricades remain in Paris. A second cannon is brought into position, and while cannonballs pound the barricade, grapeshot drives the defenders from its summit. The insurgents are running out of ammunition and the time for the assault is rapidly approaching. Gavroche then runs out in front of the barricade and begins collecting cartridges from the dead guardsmen. As the smoke from the batteries lifts, the guards spot Gavroche and begin to fire at him, but he keeps gathering ammunition and singing as he does so, mocking the soldiers with his capering. Finally one sharpshooter hits the mark, and the brave young warrior falls dead in the street. At the same time his two little brothers wander, lost, abandoned, and hungry in the Luxembourg gardens.

Marius, unafraid of death, leaps in front of the barricade and retrieves the body of Gavroche while one of his companions grabs the basket of ammunition. In the process Marius is wounded. When the assault begins, Enjolras orders his remaining men to fortify the wine shop as the place of their last stand and tells the last survivor to kill the spy bound in the basement. Jean Valjean requests and is granted the privilege of doing so, and Javert decides that his old enemy is finally getting his revenge. After the others leave the room, Valjean takes Javert out the back way and sets him free, even giving him his current address should he survive the coming battle, which the inspector, taken aback as he is by his enemy's behavior, clearly intends to use.

The troops attack the barricade, wave after wave, and many on both sides fall. Marius suffers multiple wounds, and he and Enjolras are the only remaining leaders of the insurgents. At this point the center of the barricade gives way and the guardsmen swarm through the breach. Enjolras shuts himself and a few followers inside the wine shop while Marius, who has passed out, is carried from the scene of carnage by Jean Valjean. Soon all in the wine shop are dead, including Enjolras, who is heroic to the last. Meanwhile, Valjean carries the unconscious Marius into the depths of the sewer system beneath the city of Paris.

BOOK II - THE INTESTINE OF LEVIATHAN

The author bemoans the fact that the greatest fertilizer known to man, human waste, is flushed down the sewers of Paris by the ton rather than being used for the benefit of mankind. He then narrates the history of the Paris sewer system, including the exploration, purification, and renovation of the entire thing by one of Napoleon's engineers between 1805 and 1812. At the time of the writing of the novel, the bowels of the city contained one hundred and forty miles of subterranean passageways, more than ten times the amount in the days of Napoleon.

BOOK III - MIRE, BUT SOUL

In this sewer system Jean Valjean finds safety from the carnage above for himself and Marius, though he knows not whether his heavy burden is dead or alive. However, he cannot see in the darkness and has no idea which way to turn or how to avoid the manifold dangers of the labyrinth. All he knows is that following the tunnels downward will lead him to the river, but he fears that the shortest path will lead him to a densely-populated portion of the city, and thence to certain arrest. After walking for half an hour, he reaches the main sewer, but soon sees light behind him, lanterns borne by eight or ten policemen. Stopping and hearing nothing, they turn in the opposite direction. As Valjean continues down the main sewer, he becomes more and more exhausted, and he rests for a few minutes to bind up Marius' wounds. He resumes his journey, but suddenly finds himself sinking in quicksand, formed by a breach in the floor of the sewer. He struggles forward, at one point nearly submerged, but finally reaches the other side of the quagmire. Soon he sees light in the distance and hurries toward it, only to find that the outlet of the sewer is sealed by a locked iron grate. Unable to budge the grate, he sinks to the floor in despair.

Suddenly he hears a voice and feels a hand on his shoulder. He recognizes the man as Thenardier, but the villain doesn't recognize him. Apparently Thenardier's band of criminals uses the sewers with some frequency, for he has a key, which he allows Valjean to use in exchange for all the money he has in his possession. Assuming that Valjean has killed Marius in order to rob him, he tears off a piece of Marius' coat in order to use it for his advantage in the future. After Thenardier retreats into the bowels of the sewer, Valjean breathes deeply of the night air on the beach, then ascertains that Marius is still alive. As he turns to get water for the wounded man, he senses a presence behind him and sees the imposing figure of Javert, who had been pursuing Thenardier and in whose path the scoundrel had deliberately placed Valjean. Javert does not recognize him, but Valjean identifies himself and surrenders to his captor, asking only that the inspector assist him in carrying Marius to his grandfather's home. Javert agrees, and the two carry Marius to a waiting carriage. After Marius is safely in his grandfather's house and a doctor has been summoned, Javert takes Valjean away, agreeing to stop by his home first. He allows Valjean to go in to see Cosette,

then, much to his prisoner's surprise, walks away. Meanwhile, the doctor discovers that, though Marius has suffered many wounds, none appears fatal, though he is concerned about the possibility of a concussion from the blows to the head he has received. His grandfather, believing him to be dead, is inconsolable, swearing that he was ready to receive him back with open arms if only he had returned home. Then Marius opens his eyes, and his delighted grandfather forgives him everything and faints dead away.

BOOK IV - JAVERT OFF THE TRACK

Valjean's integrity is too much for Javert to handle. The behavior of his lifelong quarry challenges all his assumptions about human nature and the impossibility of change among criminals. How could he not spare the life of a man who had spared his? But how could he ignore his sworn duty and free a man he ought to arrest? In despair, he leaves Valjean's home, walks toward the most dangerous section of the Seine, and after calmly writing a letter to his superiors containing recommended changes in some of the details of the penal system, casts himself into the roiling waters.

BOOK V - THE GRANDSON AND THE GRANDFATHER

Some time after the death of Javert, Valjean returns to the woods outside Montfermeil to retrieve the fortune he had buried there. Meanwhile Marius is slowly recovering under the tender care of his grandfather and his physician. Jean Valjean daily leaves lint for dressings at the house without identifying himself. After four months, Marius is finally out of danger. During two months of further convalescence, the law no longer has any interest in him. He also has no knowledge of who saved him or how his salvation came about. M. Gillenormand can think of nothing but Marius, and Marius can think of nothing but Cosette, whom he is determined to find at all costs. At the same time, he has no confidence in his grandfather's apparent transformation. One day when he is almost fully recovered, he gets up sufficient nerve to tell his grandfather that he wishes to marry Cosette. To his astonishment, M. Gillenormand readily agrees and tells him about the old man who daily delivers dressings made by Cosette herself, then arranges for Marius to see her that very day. During the visit, M. Gillenormand arranges with Jean Valjean for the two to be married, though he mourns the fact that his money is tied up in an annuity that will ultimately be inaccessible to the couple. Jean Valjean, however, announces that Cosette brings six hundred thousand francs with her into the marriage - the fortune he had made as factory owner and mayor and recently recovered from the forest - then opens the box containing the money, after which he puts the bishop's silver candlesticks on the mantelpiece.

In the two months that follow, M. Gillenormand and Jean Valjean do everything necessary to prepare for the wedding. Valjean even has Cosette's name legally changed to Euphrasie Fauchelevent in order to avoid awkward questions about her parentage. The fortune she inherited was said to come from an anonymous donor. Though she is surprised to learn that Valjean is not her real father, she is too wrapped up in her love for Marius to let the revelation bother her. Meanwhile, M. Gillenormand lavishes on her the expensive clothing and jewelry left by his many wives and mistresses, including a wedding gown worn by his grandmother. Marius' aunt also leaves her fortune to the couple, and they decide to live in the grandfather's spacious home after the wedding. Though Valjean brings Cosette to visit Marius every day, he and Marius barely exchange a word,

and Marius has no memory of the old man's role at the barricade or in his safe deliverance from it. He continues to search without success for two men to whom he believes he owes a great deal - Thenardier, for his father's sake, and the unknown man who delivered his unconscious body to his grandfather's house. All he manages to discover is that a strip of cloth had been torn from the coat he had worn when he arrived at the home of M. Gillenormand.

BOOK VI - THE WHITE NIGHT

On February 16, 1833, Marius and Cosette celebrate their wedding at the home of M. Gillenormand. Jean Valjean feigns an injury to his hand that renders him incapable of signing any documents, since no one knows his true identity. Marius and Cosette had prepared a room in the house in which Valjean could live, but he is reluctant to take advantage of their kind offer. The day of the wedding is also Mardi Gras, and as the carriages go from the church to the reception, they pass a wagon of masked celebrants. One of them, Thenardier, recognizes Jean Valjean and demands that his daughter Azelma find out where the wedding party is going. Marius and Cosette are overwhelmed with happiness, but their joy is dampened slightly when they realize that Jean Valjean has slipped away before dinner under the pretext that his hand is bothering him. After the dinner, M. Gillenormand confers his blessing on the couple, a paean to love and the beauty of women. Jean Valjean, meanwhile, returns home, opens the case containing the clothes Cosette was wearing when he found her, and weeps inconsolably. All night he struggles with another dilemma - should he retain the identity of M. Fauchelevent, take the room in the Gillenormand house, and share in the joy of his beloved Cosette, or should he spare them the possible shame and scandal of his true identity being revealed and confine himself to solitude and darkness?

BOOK VII - THE LAST DROP IN THE CHALICE

The next morning, Valjean arrives and asks to speak to Marius in private. Marius immediately begins to talk about all the pleasure that they will have together, insisting that Valjean move in that very day and take his place in the household. He rapturously describes the room that Cosette has furnished for him and the view that it affords. Valjean interrupts him, however, with one sentence: "I am an old convict." He then gives Marius a bare outline of his history and his connection with Cosette and confesses that his conscience will not allow him to gain happiness by living a lie. Cosette interrupts their conversation, but Marius insists that she must leave. Valjean begs that Cosette never be told the truth and asks permission to visit occasionally; Marius tells him that he will be expected each evening.

When Valjean leaves, however, Marius is appalled by the new reality that has entered his life and cannot fathom ongoing contact with a convict from the galleys. Thinking back, he now understands why Valjean fled the Thenardier flat after being held captive there; he also thinks he comprehends why Valjean came to the barricade - to kill Javert, at which task he had succeeded. What he cannot fathom is how such a monster came to cross paths with and lovingly care for Cosette for more than nine years. By the time he is done turning things over in his mind, he is repulsed by the very thought of ever seeing Jean Valjean again or of exposing Cosette to his poisonous presence.

BOOK VIII - THE TWILIGHT WANE

Days later, Jean Valjean visits Cosette, but insists on being received in a dirty basement room. He obviously has had nothing to eat for days, and he calls her Madame and tells her to call him M. Jean. He refuses to kiss her and rejects all entreaties to come upstairs to eat and to live in the room that she has prepared for him. He then leaves abruptly, and she fears that she has done something to upset him. Each day at the same time he returns, exuding the same sadness, and Cosette becomes accustomed to what she views as his latest peculiarity. He stays a little longer each day, and silently weeps when she inadvertently calls him "Father." As the weeks pass, however, Jean Valjean notices that Marius and Cosette are living rather frugally. He suspects that Marius, doubting the origins of Cosette's fortune, has chosen to live on his meager three thousand pounds per year. In addition, Valjean finds that the basement room is every day less hospitable - no fire, chairs taken away, obviously to discourage his visits. Soon he stops coming altogether, though he continues to walk toward the house each day; in time, his walks become shorter and shorter as he deprives himself even of proximity to his beloved Cosette.

BOOK IX - SUPREME SHADOW, SUPREME DAWN

Marius, who was responsible for gradually excluding Jean Valjean from Cosette's company, is also actively engaged in a search for the real owner of the six hundred thousand francs, which he is determined not to use. Meanwhile he leads Cosette to believe that Valjean has gone away on a journey. By early June, Jean Valjean no longer takes his walks, but confines himself to his bed and refuses to eat. When the portress summons a doctor to see him, the doctor tells her that her patient is dying of sorrow. He is now eighty years old and looks every day of it, having aged by decades in the months since Cosette's marriage. One night, too weak to move, he sets out to write a letter to Cosette explaining the source of the six hundred thousand francs so she and Marius know it was honestly obtained and really belongs to her.

Meanwhile, Marius receives a visit from Thenardier, who presents himself as a statesman. Marius is ecstatic at finally locating one of the men whom he had sought for so long. The villain appears in disguise, so that Marius does not even recognize him and speaks to him harshly. Thenardier demands money from Marius in exchange for a secret he knows. The secret is that the house of Marius and Cosette is polluted by the presence of one Jean Valjean, a thief and murderer. Marius tells his visitor that he already knows all this, and in addition knows the source of his fortune. He also knows his visitor's real name, and that he is a scoundrel. When Marius throws a five-hundred-franc note at him, he takes off his disguise and settles down to tell his tale. Though Marius recognizes him, he does not identify Marius with the poor young man who once lived in the next apartment.

Before Thenardier can begin his story, Marius tells him the history of M. Madeleine, his reformation and good deeds, and that the convict had stolen his money and discredited him and, more recently, had murdered Javert near the barricade. Thenardier, seeing another opportunity for himself, tells Marius that he is wrong in both cases: Valjean did not rob M. Madeleine because he *was* M. Madeleine, and he did not kill Javert because Javert committed suicide. Thenardier has newspaper articles to support both contentions, and in fact the later one indicates that Javert's life was spared by an insurgent who had been assigned to kill him. A large cloud lifts from Marius' mind as he realizes that Valjean is not a thief and murderer, but a hero and a saint. Thenardier still

insists that Valjean is a thief and assassin. He then tells the story of the convict emerging from the sewer with a corpse on his back, undoubtedly a man he had robbed and murdered. Thenardier then presents the strip of cloth he had cut from the dead man's coat as evidence and claims that his tale is worth a pile of gold, enough to pay for his removal to Peru. Marius rushes to the closet, pulls out the coat in question, and matches the strip to the coat. He then announces to the astounded Thenardier that he is the man in question, and that Valjean was not his murderer, but his rescuer. Marius then showers him with more money and drives him from the house, telling him that he will leave with his daughter for America within days or suffer the consequences. He indeed does leave, but continues his evil ways, becoming a slave trader.

Marius, ashamed of his base ingratitude, quickly rushes to Cosette and the two go to the home of Jean Valjean, intending to bring him home with them no matter what he says. They now see clearly that he has saved both of them, brought them together, and provided for their welfare and happiness, and that along the way many others have been saved as well. When they enter his room and Cosette showers him with kisses, he thanks them for their forgiveness, but Marius stops him, saying that they should be thanking him because they owe their very lives and happiness to his goodness and self-sacrifice. They insist on taking him home with them immediately, but he tells them that such happiness is never to be because he is taking his last breaths. Before he dies he assures Marius that Cosette's fortune is justly earned, then bequeaths to her the bishop's silver candlesticks. He tells Cosette her mother's name and asks to be buried in a simple, unmarked grave. They come near, and he dies with his hands in theirs.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

- Monseigneur Bienvenu - The son of a lawyer who becomes a priest while in exile in Italy during the French Revolution, he is appointed a bishop by Napoleon. He lives in a small mountain town with his sister, Mademoiselle Baptistine, and his housemaid, Madame Magloire. He is a good and generous man whose kindness transforms the life of Jean Valjean.
- Jean Valjean - The protagonist was arrested and sent to prison for stealing a loaf of bread to feed his family. After his release he is doggedly pursued by Inspector Javert, who is convinced that criminals can never be reformed. Valjean becomes an upstanding citizen, a wealthy industrialist, mayor of a town where he is known as M. Madeleine, and later the guardian of Cosette, whom he cares for and protects in fulfillment of a promise to her dying mother.
- Petit Gervais - A young boy who makes his living by traveling and singing, he meets Jean Valjean shortly after the latter leaves the house of the bishop. Jean Valjean steals a forty-sou coin from him and later repents bitterly.
- Felix Tholomyes - A Parisian student who seduces, impregnates, then deserts Fantine.
- Fantine - A young woman who is impregnated by Tholomyes, gives birth to a child, then is forced into prostitution in order to provide for her. On her deathbed she begs Valjean to take care of her daughter.

- Cosette - Fantine's daughter, real name Euphrasie, she is entrusted by her mother, first to the Thenardiers, and then to the care of Jean Valjean.
- Monsieur and Madame Thenardier - A dishonest and brutal innkeeper and his wife, they see a chance for profit when they take in Cosette, but they treat her horribly. They later reappear in Paris under the name of Jondrette, continuing their dishonest ways to the end.
- Eponine - The elder daughter of the Thenardiers, she is the same age as Cosette. She grows up to become tough and street-smart, develops an unrequited love for Marius, and is killed in the revolt of 1832 in an attempt to save him.
- Gavroche - The eldest of three sons of the Thenardiers, he is turned out into the streets when his parents are arrested and is left to live by his wits. He becomes involved with the revolutionaries and is killed at the barricades.
- Inspector Javert - The policeman who pursues and persecutes Valjean for decades. He finally commits suicide when Valjean saves his life and forgives him.
- Fauchelevent - A former enemy of M. Madeleine whose life is saved by the mayor, he eventually becomes a gardener in a Paris convent and hides Valjean and Cosette from Javert.
- Champmathieu - A simple peasant who, after being arrested for stealing apples, is mistaken for Jean Valjean. The real Jean Valjean attends the trial, reveals himself, and saves the man from life in the galleys.
- M. Gillenormand - A ninety-year-old bourgeois who hates the French Revolution, he is the grandfather of Marius, upon whom he doted, but eventually cast out because of his revolutionary sympathies. The two are reconciled at the end.
- George Pontmercy - A brave fighter in the French Revolutionary army and under Napoleon, he barely survives the battle of Waterloo but is cast out by his royalist father-in-law. He is Marius' father.
- Marius Pontmercy - A young revolutionary who falls in love with and eventually marries Cosette. Jean Valjean saves his life during the 1832 revolt.
- M. Mabeuf - A Paris churchwarden and friend of Marius' father, he tells Marius the truth about his father and befriends the young man. He eventually dies a hero's death on the barricade.
- Enjolras - A wealthy young man who is the leader of the Friends of the A B C, the revolutionary coterie that Marius joins.

NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“So long as there shall exist, by reason of law and custom, a social condemnation, which, in the face of civilisation, artificially creates hells on earth, and complicates a destiny that is divine, with human fatality; so long as the three problems of the age - the degradation of man by poverty, the ruin of woman by starvation, and the dwarfing of childhood by physical and spiritual night - are not solved; so long as, in certain regions, social asphyxia shall be possible; in other words, and from a yet more extended point of view, so long as ignorance and misery remain on earth, books like this cannot be useless.” (Victor Hugo, Preface)

“Sire, you behold a good man, and I a great man. Each of us may profit by it.” (Monseigneur Bienvenu, Part One, Book I, ch.1, p.4)

“In default of examples he would invent parables, going straight to his object, with few phrases and many images, which was the very eloquence of Jesus Christ, convincing and persuasive.” (Part One, Book I, ch.3, p.10)

“To be a saint is the exception; to be upright is the rule. Err, falter, sin, but be upright.” (Monseigneur Bienvenu, Part One, Book I, ch.4, p.13)

“If the soul is left in darkness, sins will be committed. The guilty one is not he who commits the sin, but he who causes the darkness.” (Monseigneur Bienvenu, Part One, Book I, ch.4, p.13)

“The most beautiful of altars is the soul of an unhappy man who is comforted and thanks God.” (Monseigneur Bienvenu, Part One, Book I, ch.6, p.19)

“The French revolution is the greatest step in advance taken by mankind since the advent of Christ.” (Conventionist, Part One, Book I, ch.10, p.35)

“The first proof of charity in a priest, and especially a bishop, is poverty.” (Part One, Book I, ch.11, p.41)

“He sentenced it [society] to his hatred.” (Valjean, Part One, Book II, ch.7, p.76)

“Can man, created good by God, be made wicked by man?” (Part One, Book II, p.76)

“Jean Valjean, my brother: you belong no longer to evil, but to good. It is your soul that I am buying for you. I withdraw it from dark thoughts and from the spirit of perdition, and I give it to God!” (Monseigneur Bienvenu, Part One, Book II, ch.12, p.90)

“He felt dimly that the pardon of the priest was the hardest assault, and the most formidable attack which he had yet sustained; that his hardness of heart would be complete, if it resisted this kindness; that if he yielded, he must renounce that hatred with which the acts of other men had for so many years filled his soul, and in which he found satisfaction; that, this time, he must conquer or be conquered, and that the struggle, a gigantic and decisive struggle, had begun between his own wickedness, and the goodness of this man.” (Part One, Book II, ch.13, p.94)

“I have often been severe in my life towards others. It was just. I did right. Now if I were not severe towards myself, all I have justly done would become injustice. Should I spare myself more than others?” (Javert, Part One, Book VI, ch.2, p.177)

“He could only enter into sanctity in the eyes of God, by returning into infamy in the eyes of men!” (Part One, Book VII, ch.3, p.191)

“So struggled beneath its anguish this unhappy soul. Eighteen hundred years before this unfortunate man, the mysterious Being, in whom are aggregated all the sanctities and all the sufferings of humanity, He also, while the olive trees were shivering in the fierce breath of the Infinite, had long put away from his hand the fearful chalice that appeared before him, dripping with shadow and running over with darkness, in the star-filled depths.” (Part One, Book VII, ch.3, p.198-199)

“It was the face of a demon who had again found his victim.” (Part One, Book VIII, ch.3, p.245)

“There are instincts for all the crises of life. The child was not afraid.” (Part Two, Book III, ch.5, p.330)

“The bishop had caused the dawn of virtue on his horizon; Cosette evoked the dawn of love.” (Part Two, Book IV, ch.3, p.370)

“This book is a drama the first character of which is the Infinite. Man is the second.” (Part Two, Book VII, ch.1, p.431)

“Denial of the infinite leads directly to nihilism.” (Part Two, Book VII, ch.6, p.438)

“He said to himself that he really had not suffered enough to deserve such radiant happiness, and he thanked God, in the depths of his soul, for having permitted that he, a miserable man, should be so loved by this innocent being.” (Part Four, Book III, ch.4, p.751)

“Who knows that man is not a prisoner of Divine Justice. Look closely into life. It is so constituted that we feel punishment everywhere.” (Part Four, Book VII, ch.1, p.831)

“The French Revolution, which is nothing more nor less than the ideal armed with the sword, started to its feet, and by the very movement, closed the door of evil and opened the door of good.” (Part Four, Book VII, ch.3, p.840)

“In the future no man shall slay his fellow, the earth shall be radiant, the human race shall love. It will come, citizens, that day when all shall be concord, harmony, light, joy, and life; it will come, and it is that it may come that we are going to die.” (Enjolras, Part Four, Book XII, ch.8, p.939)

“And then, do you know, Monsieur Marius, I believe I was a little in love with you.” (Eponine, Part Four, Book XIV, ch.6, p.961)

“The French Revolution is an act of God.” (Part Five, Book I, ch.20, p.1039)

“The modern ideal has its type in art, and its means in science. It is through science that we shall realize that august vision of the poets: social beauty. We shall reproduce Eden by A+B.” (Part Five, Book I, ch.20, p.1041)

“What should he do now? Give up Jean Valjean, that was wrong; leave Jean Valjean free, that was wrong. In the first case, the man of authority would fall lower than the man of the galley; in the second, a convict rose higher than the law and set his foot upon it. In both cases, dishonor to him, Javert.” (Part Five, Book IV, ch.1, p.1106)

“A beneficent malefactor, a compassionate convict, kind, helpful, clement, returning good for evil, returning pardon for hatred, loving pity rather than vengeance, preferring to destroy himself rather than to destroy his enemy, saving him who had stricken him, kneeling upon the height of virtue, nearer the angels than men. Javert was compelled to acknowledge that this monster existed.” (Part Five, Book IV, ch.1, p.1107)

“Evil does not come from man, who, in reality, is good. All human miseries have for their chief seat and central government Hell, otherwise called the Tuileries of the devil.” (M. Gillenormand, Part Five, Book VI, ch.2, p.1149)

“It is a terrible thing to be happy! How pleased we are with it! How all-sufficient we think it! How, being in possession of the false aim of life, happiness, we forget the true aim, duty!” (Part Five, Book IX, ch.1, p.1194)

“An unparalleled virtue appeared before him, supreme and mild, humble in its immensity. The convict was transfigured into Christ.” (Part Five, Book IX, ch.4, p.1213)

“Cosette, my whole life passed at the feet of this man would be too little. That barricade, that sewer, that furnace, that cloaca, he went through everything for me, for you, Cosette! He bore me through death in every form which he put aside from me, and which he accepted for himself. All courage, all virtue, all heroism, all sanctity, he has it all, Cosette, that man is an angel!” (Marius, Part Five, Book IX, ch.5, p.1215)

“It is nothing to die; it is frightful not to live.” (Valjean, Part Five, Book IX, ch.5, p.1218)

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. Because of the Broadway musical and the many movies based on Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, modern audiences know the basic plot very well but have little insight into the purpose for which the novel was written. The title tells us what that purpose was - to portray the misery of the lower classes, elicit sympathy for them, and promote social change. How would you describe the political stance of the author? Is he a revolutionary, a socialist, or something else? Support your evaluation of his politics with quotations from the novel; you might start by consulting Part Four, Book VII, chapter 4.
2. Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* is a long book, and substantial portions of it are taken up with tangents that have little to do with advancing the plot. Abridged versions of the novel typically cut these sections out. In your opinion, what is lost by excising these expository passages dealing with everything from the battle of Waterloo to a description of a Paris neighborhood to the makeup of a criminal gang to the language of the streets? In what ways do they contribute, if not to the plot, then to the stated purpose of the novel? Choose three of these sections and relate them to the author's overall themes.
3. In Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, the author is very much concerned with the plight of the poor. Whom does he blame for the misery of a large segment of the population? Does he consider the poor responsible for their own condition, or does he blame the rich, the government, or society in general? In assigning blame for the plight of the poor, what does he imply about how their misery might appropriately be addressed?
4. Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* is a novel of the French Romantic era. Using your knowledge of the salient characteristics and leading beliefs of the Romantics, what about this novel fits the thought of the era? Choose three qualities of Romantic literature and show, using specific examples and quotations, how Hugo's masterpiece fits the template of the movement within which he was writing.
5. In Book I of the first part of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, the author describes the life of a humble country bishop, Monseigneur Bienvenu. These opening chapters tell us much about Hugo's conception of Christianity and set the stage for the character development that he later portrays in Jean Valjean. Evaluate the brand of Christianity embodied by the bishop on the basis of Scripture. Be sure to distinguish between the Bible's teachings on salvation and those on sanctification. Use details from the novel and specific Bible references to support your analysis.
6. In chapter 8 of Book I of the first part of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, Monseigneur Bienvenu attends a dinner with an influential senator who proceeds to describe at some length his atheistic philosophy of life. Remembering that the novel was published in 1862, discuss some of the influences, both ancient and contemporary, that appear to have shaped the senator's philosophy. Then evaluate the bishop's response to his arguments on the basis of Scripture.

7. In chapter 10 of Book I of the first part of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, Monseigneur Bienvenu visits an old conventionist from the French Revolution who is dying. They debate the merits of the Revolution, giving special attention to the Reign of Terror. Evaluate the arguments used by the two men. What does the conclusion drawn by the bishop at the end of the chapter indicate about the author's understanding of the essence of Christianity? On what basis did he conclude that the old man had preceded him to heaven?
8. Chapter 13 of Book II of the first part of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* records the conversion of Jean Valjean. Discuss this conversion experience in the light of Scripture. Does Hugo give a biblical picture of salvation here? Why or why not? Be sure to use quotations from the novel and verses from the Bible to support your arguments.
9. In chapter 3 of Book VII of the first part of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, Jean Valjean struggles with his conscience about whether he should reveal his true identity in order to save a thief named Champmathieu or do nothing and continue to provide help for the thousands who have benefitted from his benevolence. Evaluate the arguments he uses to support both sides. Be sure to use quotations from the chapter and passages of Scripture to support your analysis.
10. In Book VIII of the second part of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, the author critiques monasticism and atheism alike, scorning superstition and nihilism to which he sees these inevitably tied. Evaluate the religious stance of Victor Hugo as he describes it in this section of the novel. Is he a Christian? a Deist? Support your conclusions with specific quotations from the section as well as from Scripture.
11. In Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, Marius and Cosette literally fall in love at first sight, long before they even speak to one another. Evaluate the credibility of the beginning of this romance. Is this a fiction of the Romantic Era, or can people really fall in love in this way? Is this a sound foundation for a lasting relationship? Why or why not?
12. In Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, the author defends and justifies the revolutionary outbreak of 1832 that is the focus of the latter part of the novel. What are his arguments in support of such a rebellion? Evaluate them on the basis of Scripture.
13. In Part Five, Book I, chapter 20 of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, the narrator says, "The modern ideal has its type in art, and its means in science. It is through science that we shall realize that august vision of the poets: social beauty. We shall reproduce Eden by A+B." Here the author demonstrates great confidence in science as the means by which a utopian society may be achieved. Why does he believe this? Is his hope a legitimate one? How have the years since the writing of the novel both supported and contradicted Hugo's optimistic view of science and its impact on society?

14. In Part Five, Book IV of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, Inspector Javert undergoes a mighty internal struggle between conscience and duty, law and grace, and divine and human authority. Describe his struggle using biblical concepts, and while doing so evaluate the thought process he undergoes. How does his lack of understanding of the Gospel lead to the conclusion he reaches?
15. The primacy of duty is a major theme in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, but it affects Jean Valjean and Inspector Javert in very different ways. Compare and contrast their concepts of duty and the impact it has on their lives, then critique their understandings of it from a biblical perspective.
16. Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* was published in 1862, during the Civil War, where it was especially popular among Confederate soldiers, some of whom took to calling themselves "Lee's Misérables." What about the novel would have caused the soldiers of the Confederacy to identify so strongly with its themes despite the fact that Hugo was an outspoken abolitionist? Choose three major themes of the novel and relate them to the conditions faced by soldiers during the War Between the States.
17. In Part Five, Book IX, chapter 4 of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, the narrator says of Jean Valjean, "An unparalleled virtue appeared before him, supreme and mild, humble in its immensity. The convict was transfigured into Christ." The author clearly intended his protagonist to be a Christ-figure. In what ways is this true? What aspects of Jean Valjean's character and actions make him a picture of Jesus?
18. Part Five, Book II of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* takes place in the sewer system beneath the city of Paris. The author draws an analogy between those sewers and the belly of the whale in which Jonah found himself. How valid is this comparison? In what ways does the experience of Jean Valjean parallel that of the wayward prophet?
19. In Matthew 16:24-26, Jesus says, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?" To what extent is the experience of the protagonist of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* an exposition of Jesus' words? Give specific illustrations to show how Jean Valjean came to understand the truth enunciated by Jesus to His disciples.
20. In Romans 12:19-21, Paul writes, "beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' To the contrary, 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." In what ways does the behavior of Jean Valjean in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* illustrate the truth of this passage? Use specifics from the novel to show how Valjean learned the truth of Paul's exhortation to the church at Rome.

21. Two great French Romantic novels, Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* and Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, have much to say about the subject of revenge. Compare and contrast the treatment of revenge in the two novels and evaluate each on the basis of Scripture. Be sure to use specifics to support your arguments.
22. Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* and Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* both deal with themes of social injustice. Though much of the action in the two novels takes place in France, both Hugo and Dickens thought their works applicable to England as well, and in fact to any nation where social injustice was a problem (i.e., all of them). Compare and contrast the two works with regard to the authors' understanding of the causes and cures of social injustice. Be sure to consider the problem of the rich oppressing the poor as well as moral and immoral responses on the part of those who suffer. Incorporate details from both novels in your analysis.
23. Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* and John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* both deal with themes of social injustice and the oppression of the poor. In the former, the injustice is rooted in the law and the social system it supports, while in the latter the injustice is largely tied to economic conditions. Compare and contrast the two authors' ideas concerning the causes and cures of social injustice, incorporating details from both works in your analysis.
24. Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* both portray the legal oppression of the poor in an unjust society. Compare and contrast the treatments of the problem in the two books, giving special attention to the ways in which the protagonists are portrayed. Both authors intend their protagonists to be Christ-figures. Do they fulfill this role in the same ways? What are the most important differences between the two? Which author has a more biblical picture of who Christ was and what He came to do?
25. Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* and Herman Melville's *Billy Budd* both picture protagonists who suffer injustice at the hands of others, and both are portrayed as Christ-figures. Compare and contrast the ways in which the authors present their protagonists. In what ways are they like Christ? In what ways are they similar to and different from one another?
26. In Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, Jean Valjean and Inspector Javert serve as foils for one another, with the contrasts between their characters bringing each into bold relief. Some critics have argued that the contrast between the two illustrates the difference between law and grace. To what extent is this true? In your analysis be sure to incorporate both passages and incidents from the novel and the teachings from Scripture on these subjects.
27. In Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, to what extent may Cosette and Eponine be considered foils? Consider their similarities and differences in background, circumstances, attitudes, and relationships as you answer the question.

28. On a number of occasions in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, principled characters - the bishop, Fantine's doctor, a nun, and often Jean Valjean himself - tell lies in order to achieve the greater good. Choose three such incidents and discuss the morality of their choices. Were they justified in lying? Does this suggest that the end sometimes justifies the means? Be sure to support your analysis from Scripture.
29. Victor Hugo's writing career bridged the gap between two great literary movements, Romanticism and Realism. To what extent does *Les Misérables* show qualities of both movements? Into which does it more easily fit? Why do you think so?
30. The action in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* is sometimes pictured as a chain reaction of people helping people. Trace this chain throughout the narrative. To what extent does this illustrate Jesus' second great commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself," and show that unselfish choices are better for the individual and society than selfish ones? Be specific.
31. Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* is a story of redemption. The protagonist, Jean Valjean, seeks redemption for his dishonest deeds early in life, and eventually finds it. Of what does his redemption consist? How closely does it fit the biblical teaching on the subject?
32. Near the end of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, Inspector Javert commits suicide. Why does he do so? What are the contradictions with which he is unable to live? How does his view of the world contribute to these contradictions? What about Javert's worldview does Hugo intend to criticize?
33. In Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, does the author consider Jean Valjean culpable for his theft of a loaf of bread? Is Fantine responsible for her descent into prostitution? Why or why not? What does this tell you about the author's view of the causes of crime among the members of the lower classes? Does he excuse all such crimes, or only those committed by certain people?
34. In Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, the character of Inspector Javert serves to illustrate the author's conviction that what is legal and what is right do not always coincide. How does the dogged policeman illustrate this idea? What does the distinction between the two say about the validity of man-made laws in relation to the law of God? What are the dangers of refusing to recognize that the legal and the right are not always the same?
35. The two young lovers in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, Marius and Cosette, are both innocents in their own ways. Compare and contrast the nature of the innocence of the two. Which is more out of touch with the realities of life, and why? What are the consequences of this naivety? Support your conclusion with details from the novel.
36. Discuss the author's view of the poor and their culpability for their circumstances in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. In your analysis give special attention to Fantine and the Thénardiens, both of whom belong to the lower class but are very different from one another. What distinguishes the two in the author's mind, making the one innocent and the others deserving of every misfortune that comes their way?

37. Discuss the critique of the French justice system in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. What does the author think is wrong with the system? How do the events of the book illustrate the injustice that he intends to critique? How does he believe the problem can be fixed?
38. The theme of resurrection is a prevalent one in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, especially in the development of the protagonist. Choose three incidents in which Jean Valjean in some sense rises from death to new life and describe the changes these produce in his character as he moves from hardened criminal to saintly, self-sacrificing hero.
39. One of the great differences between the protagonist and the antagonist in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* is that Inspector Javert believes that people can never change, while Jean Valjean experiences in his own life what Javert insists is impossible. How does Jean Valjean's ability to change lead to his salvation, while Javert's inability to change leads to his destruction?
40. The great length and broad scope of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* allows the reader to observe significant changes in many of the central figures, usually for the better, as Hugo emphasizes the capacity of human beings to change their lives and characters. In fact, the characters who are unable to change are the ones portrayed in negative terms. Choose three such characters and discuss why they are unable to change, and how the consequences of this inability contribute to the main themes the author is seeking to bring out.
41. Some critics have noted the similarities between the experience of Cosette in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* and that of the protagonist in the fairy tale *Cinderella*. What similarities do you see between the two stories? How does this connection help Hugo develop some of the important themes of the novel?
42. In writing *Les Misérables*, Victor Hugo created many memorable characters, among whom are the members of the Thenardier family. Though all belong to the same household, they play very different roles in the narrative and show significantly different characteristics. Focusing on three members of the clan - Thenardier, Eponine, and Gavroche - outline their salient qualities and contributions to the novel. How can three people who live together under the same roof be so different? What does this suggest about the impact of the parents on their children?
43. Compare and contrast the pictures of the Industrial Revolution found in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* (in the person of M. Madeleine) and Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*. Why does Hugo, who reflexively sides with the poor in any conflict, portray the wealthiest man in town as also the best while painting a negative picture of the workers? How do the two authors picture the positive aspects of the Industrial Revolution differently?
44. Compare and contrast the pictures of the Industrial Revolution found in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* (in the person of M. Madeleine) and Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*. Why does Hugo, who reflexively sides with the poor in any conflict, portray the wealthiest man in town as also the best while painting a negative picture of the workers? How do the two authors picture the positive aspects of the Industrial Revolution differently?

45. In Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, the author is highly critical of the French justice system. What are some aspects of the system that he finds unjust? Be sure to consider such factors as the law, the prisons, the courts, and the police in your analysis.
46. In Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, the protagonist takes on a series of identities in his efforts to hide from the pursuit of Javert. In what ways do these successive identities correspond with changes and growth in his character? How is this process completed with his resumption of his true identity at the end of the novel?
47. Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* has often been criticized because of the author's reliance on coincidences to drive the plot. What are some of the coincidences to which the critics may be referring? How improbable are they? Do they detract from the ability of the reader to immerse himself in the plot, or may they be ignored through willing suspension of disbelief?
48. In Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, the author values Christianity greatly while at the same time being very critical of the church. Why is this the case? Does he dislike the church because it has deviated from Christian principles or because he himself has misunderstood the essence of Christianity? As you answer the question using details from the novel, keep in mind that the Catholic Church in the middle of the nineteenth century was largely identified with the monarchy and opposed to the agitation for greater freedoms of the common people.
49. Would you consider Inspector Javert, the policeman who pursues Jean Valjean for decades in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, a good man? Why or why not? Support your conclusion with specifics from the novel.
50. To what extent does Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* reflect a utopian sensibility on the part of the author? Consider both the expository tangents in the book and the philosophy expressed by characters such as Enjolras in answering the question.
51. Would you consider Cosette, the heroine of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, an admirable character, or even a realistic one? Why or why not? Support your conclusion with specifics from the novel.
52. Victor Hugo, the author of *Les Misérables*, had strong convictions about the innocence of children. How do these beliefs appear in the novel? Consider both characters and expository tangents in answering the question and evaluate his attitude toward children from a biblical perspective.
53. In Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, to what extent is forgiveness a key aspect of the protagonist's redemption? Whom must he learn to forgive, and how do these acts of forgiveness result in his spiritual growth? Do not neglect his need to forgive himself in your analysis.

54. Discuss the theme of repayment of debt in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. Choose three characters who owe a debt of one kind or another to another character, describe how they seek to repay that debt, and discuss how that act of repayment contributes to the plot of the novel.
55. Both Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* and Gaston Leroux's *The Phantom of the Opera* contain key scenes that take place in the sewer system beneath the streets of Paris. Compare and contrast these scenes in terms of their contributions to the plots of the novels, the ways in which they illustrate key themes, and the symbolism associated with the sewers used by the authors.
56. The narrator in Victor Hugo's masterpiece *Les Misérables* said, "This book is a drama the first character of which is the Infinite. Man is the second." What do you think he meant by these words? Is God, or at least Hugo's conception of God, the central character in the story? Why or why not? Support your conclusion with details and quotations from the novel.
57. In Part One, Book I, chapter 4 of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, the narrator says, "If the soul is left in darkness, sins will be committed. The guilty one is not he who commits the sin, but he who causes the darkness." Modern psychology often seeks to place the blame on society for the crimes committed by individuals, especially those in the lower classes. To what extent does the novel show that Hugo believes this to be true? Are all crimes the fault of society, or does individual responsibility enter into the picture as well?
58. In Part Two, Book VII, chapter 6 of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, the narrator says, "Denial of the infinite leads directly to nihilism." Why is this the case? Must nihilism always be the consequence of atheism? To what extent does the novel support this conclusion? Use details from the book to support your analysis.
59. Victor Hugo's tried to write a preface to *Les Misérables*, but was unable to do so. The only words that have survived from his abortive effort are these: "So long as there shall exist, by reason of law and custom, a social condemnation, which, in the face of civilisation, artificially creates hells on earth, and complicates a destiny that is divine, with human fatality; so long as the three problems of the age - the degradation of man by poverty, the ruin of woman by starvation, and the dwarfing of childhood by physical and spiritual night - are not solved; so long as, in certain regions, social asphyxia shall be possible; in other words, and from a yet more extended point of view, so long as ignorance and misery remain on earth, books like this cannot be useless." What he calls "the three problems of the age" are graphically pictured in the central characters of the novel. Which characters illustrate what characteristics? Has he succeeded in convincing the reader that these are society's greatest problems?

60. In Part Five, Book IX, chapter 1 of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, the narrator says, "It is a terrible thing to be happy! How pleased we are with it! How all-sufficient we think it! How, being in possession of the false aim of life, happiness, we forget the true aim, duty!" This assertion occurs near the end of the book, when Jean Valjean is once again sacrificing himself for the sake of those he loves. Do you agree with the narrator's conclusion? Is duty more important than happiness? What are the consequences of placing happiness above duty? How does the novel support the narrator's assertion? Be sure to include specifics from the book in your analysis.
61. Compare and contrast the plight of Antonia when she becomes pregnant out of wedlock in Willa Cather's *My Antonia* and that of Fantine under similar circumstances in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. Consider the reasons for the girls' actions, the reactions of those around them, the ways in which the girls respond to their circumstances, and the impact on their future lives in your analysis.