

## THE WANDERING JEW.

BY EUGENE SUE.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## THE DEN.

Rodin's countenance, when he entered Mother Arsene's shop, was expressive of the most simple candor. He leaned his hands on the knob of his umbrella, and said: "I much regret, my good lady, that I roused you so early this morning."

"You do not come often enough, my dear sir, for me to find fault with you."

"How can I help it, my good lady? I live in the country, and only come hither from time to time to settle my little affairs."

"Talking of that, sir, the letter you expected yesterday has arrived this morning. It is large, and comes from far. Here it is," said the greengrocer, drawing it from her pocket, "it cost nothing for postage."

"Thank you, my good lady," said Rodin, taking the letter with apparent indifference, and putting it into the side-pocket of his great coat, which he carefully buttoned over.

"Are you going up to your rooms, sir?"

"Yes, my good lady."

"Then I will get ready your little provisions," said Mother Arsene; "as usual, I suppose, my dear sir?"

"Just as usual."

"It shall be ready in the twinkling of an eye, sir."

So saying, the greengrocer took down an old basket; after throwing into it three or four pieces of turf, a little bundle of wood, and some charcoal, she covered all this fuel with a cabbage leaf; then, going to the further end of the shop, she took from a chest a large round loaf, cut off a slice, and selecting a magnificent radish with the eye of a connoisseur, divided it in two, made a hole in it, which she filled with grey salt, joined the two pieces together again, and placed it carefully by the side of the bread, on the cabbage leaf which separated the eatables from the combustibles. Finally, taking some embers from her stove, she put them into a little earthen pot, containing ashes, which she placed also in the basket.

Then, reascending to her top step, Mother Arsene said to Rodin: "Here is your basket, sir."

"A thousand thanks, my good lady," answered Rodin, and, plunging his hand into the pocket of his trousers, he drew forth eight sous, which he counted out one by one to the greengrocer, and said to her, as he carried off his store: "Presently, when I come down again, I will return your basket as usual."

"Quite at your service, my dear sir, quite at your service," said Mother Arsene.

Rodin tucked his umbrella under his left arm, took up the greengrocer's basket with his right hand, entered the dark passage, crossed the little court, and mounted with light step to the second storey of a dilapidated building; there, drawing a key from his pocket, he opened a door, which he locked carefully after him. The first of the two rooms which he occupied was completely unfurnished; as for the second, it is impossible to imagine a more gloomy and miserable den. Papering so much worn, torn and faded, that no one could recognize its primitive color, bedecked the walls. A wretched flock-bed, covered with a moth-fretted blanket; a stool, and a little table of worm-eaten wood; an earthenware stove, as cracked as old china; a trunk, with a padlock, placed under the bed—such was the furniture of this desolate hole. A narrow window, with dirty panes, hardly gave any light to this room, which was almost deprived of air by the height of the building in front; two old cotton pocket-handkerchiefs, fastened together with pins, and made to slide upon a string, stretched across the window, served for curtains. The plaster of the roof, coming through the broken and disjointed tiles, showed the extreme neglect of the inhabitant of this abode. After locking his door, Rodin threw his hat and umbrella on the bed, placed his basket on the ground, set the radish and bread on the table, and, kneeling down before his stove, stuffed it with fuel, and lighted it by blowing with vigorous lungs on the embers contained in his earthen pot.

When, to use the consecrated expression, the stove began to draw, Rodin spread out the handkerchiefs, which served him for curtains; then, thinking himself quite safe from every eye, he took from the side pocket of his great coat the letter that Mother Arsene had given him. In doing so, he brought out several papers and different articles; one of these papers, folded into a thick and rumpled packet, fell upon the table, and flew open. It contained a silver cross of the Legion of Honor, black with time. The red ribbon of this cross had almost entirely lost its original color. At sight of this cross, which he replaced in his pocket with the medal of which

Faringhea had despoiled Djalma, Rodin shrugged his shoulders with a contemptuous and sardonic air; then, producing his large silver watch, he laid it on the table by the side of the letter from Rome. He looked at this letter with a singular mixture of suspicion and hope, of fear and impatient curiosity. After a moment's reflection, he prepared to unseal the envelope; but suddenly he threw it down again upon the table, as if, by a strange caprice, he had wished to prolong for a few minutes that agony of uncertainty, as poignant and irritating as the emotion of the gambler.

Looking at his watch, Rodin resolved not to open the letter, until the hand should mark half-past nine, of which it still wanted seven minutes. In one of those whims of puerile fatalism, from which great minds have not been exempt, Rodin said to himself: "I burn with impatience to open this letter. If I do not open it till half-past nine, the news, will be favorable." To employ these minutes, Rodin took several turns up and down the room, and stood in admiring contemplation before two old prints, stained with damp and age, and fastened to the wall by rusty nails. The first of these works of art—the only ornaments with which Rodin had decorated this hole—was one of those coarse pictures, illuminated with red, yellow, green, and blue, such as are sold at fairs; an Italian inscription announced that this print had been manufactured at Rome. It represented a woman covered with rags, bearing a wallet, and having a little child upon her knees; a horrible hag of a fortune-teller held in her hands the hand of the little child, and seemed to read their his fortune fate, for these words in large blue letters issued from her mouth. "Sara Papa" (he shall be Pope).

The second of these works of art, which appeared to inspire Rodin with deep meditations, was an excellent etching, whose careful finish and bold, correct drawing, contrasted singularly with the coarse coloring of the other picture. This rare and splendid engraving, which had cost Rodin six louis (an enormous expense for him), represented a young boy dressed in rags. The ugliness of his features was compensated by the intellectual expression of his strongly marked countenance. Seated on a stone, surrounded by a herd of swine, that he seemed employed in keeping, he was seen in front, with his elbow resting on his knee, and his chin in the palm of his hand. The pensive and reflective attitude of this young man, dressed as a beggar, the power expressed in his large forehead, the acuteness of his penetrating glance, and firm lines of the mouth, seemed to reveal indomitable resolution, combined with superior intelligence and ready craft. Beneath this figure, the emblems of the papacy encircled a medallion, in the centre of which was the head of an old man, the lines of which, strongly marked, recalled in a striking manner, notwithstanding their look of advanced age, the features of the young swineherd. This engraving was entitled THE YOUTH OF SIXTUS V.; the colored print was entitled The Prediction.

[According to the tradition, it was predicted to the mother of the Sixtus V. that he would be pope; and, in his youth, he is said to have kept swine.]

In contemplating these prints more and more nearly, with ardent and inquiring eye, as though he had asked for hopes or inspirations from them, Rodin had come so close that, still standing, with his right hand bent behind his head, he rested, as it were, against the wall, whilst, hiding his left hand in the pocket of his black trousers, he thus held back one of the flaps of his olive great coat. For some minutes, he remained in this meditative attitude.

Rodin, as we have said, came seldom to this lodging; according to the rules of his order, he had till now lived with Father d'Aigrigny, whom he was especially charged to watch. No member of the Society, particularly in the subaltern position which Rodin had hitherto held, could either shut himself in, or possess an article of furniture made to lock. By this means nothing interferes with the mutual spy-system, incessantly carried on, which forms one of the most powerful resources of the Company of Jesus. It was on account of certain combinations, purely personal to himself, though connected on some points with the interests of the Order, that Rodin, unknown to all, had taken these rooms in the Rue Clovis. And it was from the depths of this obscure den that the socius corresponded directly with the most eminent and influential personages of the sacred college. On one occasion, when Rodin wrote to Rome, that Father d'Aigrigny, having received orders to quit France without seeing his dying mother, had hesitated to set out, the socius had added, in form of proscriptum, at the bottom of the letter denouncing to the General of the Order the hesitation of Father d'Aigrigny:

"Tell the Prince Cardinal that he may rely upon me, but I hope for his active aid in return."

This familiar manner of corresponding with the most powerful dignitary of the Order, the almost patronizing tone of the recommendation that Rodin addressed to the Prince Cardinal, proved that the socius, notwithstanding his apparently subaltern position, was looked upon, at that epoch, as a very important personage, by many of the princes of the church, who wrote to him at Paris under a false name, making use of a cipher and other customary precautions. After some moments passed in contemplation before the portrait of Sixtus V., Rodin returned slowly to the table, on which lay the letter; which, by a sort of superstitious delay, he had deferred opening, notwithstanding his extreme curiosity. As it still wanted some minutes of half-past nine, Rodin, in order not to lose time, set about making preparations for his frugal breakfast. He placed on the table, by the side of an inkstand, furnished with pens, the slice of bread and the radish; then, seating himself on his stool, with the stove, as it were, between his legs, he drew a horn-handled knife from his pocket and, cutting alternately a morsel of bread and a morsel of radish, with the sharp, well-worn blade, he began his temperate repast with a vigorous appetite, keeping his eye fixed on the hand of his watch. When it reached the momentous hour, he unsealed the envelope with a trembling hand.

It contained two letters. The first appeared to give him little satisfaction; for, after some minutes, he shrugged his shoulders, struck the table impatiently with the handle of his knife, disdainfully pushed aside the letter with the back of his dirty hand, and perused the second epistle, holding his bread in one hand, and with the other mechanically dipping a slice of radish into the grey salt spilt on a corner of the table. Suddenly, Rodin's hand remained motionless. As he progressed in his reading, he appeared more and more interested, surprised and struck. Rising abruptly, he ran to the window, as if to assure himself, by a second examination of the cipher, that he was not deceived. The news announced to him in the letter seemed to be unexpected. No doubt, Rodin found that he had deciphered correctly, for, letting fall his arms, not in dejection, but with the stupor of a satisfaction as unforeseen as extraordinary, he remained for some time with his head down, and his eye fixed—the only mark of joy that he gave being manifested by a loud, frequent, and prolonged respiration. Men who are as audacious in their ambition, as they are patient and obstinate in their mining and countermining, are surprised at their own success, when this latter precedes and surpasses their wise and prudent expectations. Rodin was now in this case. Thanks to prodigies of craft, address, and dissimulation, thanks to mighty promises of corruption, thanks to the singular mixture of admiration, fear and confidence, with which his genius inspired many influential persons, Rodin now learned from members of the pontifical government, that, in case of a possible and probable occurrence, he might, within a given time, aspire, with a good chance of success, to a position which has too often excited the fear, the hate, or the envy of many sovereigns, and which has, in turn, been occupied by great, good men, by abominable scoundrels, and by persons risen from the lowest grades of society. But for Rodin to attain this end with certainty, it was absolutely necessary for him to succeed in that project, which he had undertaken to accomplish without violence, and only by the play and rebound of passions skilfully managed. The project was: To secure for the Society of Jesus the fortune of the Rennepont family.

This possession would thus have double and immense result; for Rodin, acting in accordance with his personal views, intended to make of his Order (whose chief was at his discretion) a stepping-stone and a means of intimidation. When his first impression of surprise had passed away—an impression that was only a sort of modesty of ambition and self-diffidence, not uncommon with men of really superior powers—Rodin looked more coldly and logically on the matter, and almost reproached himself for his surprise. But soon after, by a singular contradiction, yielding to one of those puerile and absurd ideas, by which men are often carried away when they think themselves alone and unobserved, Rodin rose abruptly, took the letter which had caused him such glad surprise, and went to display it, as it were, before the eyes of the young swineherd in the picture; then, shaking his head proudly and triumphantly, casting his reptile glance on the portrait, he muttered between his teeth, as he placed his dirty finger on the pontifical emblem: "Eh, brother? and I also—perhaps!"

After this ridiculous interpolation, Rodin returned to his seat, and, as if the happy news he had just received had increased his appetite, he placed the letter before him, to read it once more, whilst he exercised his teeth, with a sort of joy-

ous fury, on his hard bread and radish, chanting an old Litany.

There was something strange, great, and, above all, frightful, in the contrast afforded by this immense ambition, already almost justified by events, and contained, as it were, in so miserable an abode. Father d'Aigrigny (who, if not a very superior man, had at least some real value, was a person of high birth, very haughty, and placed in the best society) would never have ventured to aspire to what Rodin thus looked to from the first. The only aim of Father d'Aigrigny, and even this he thought presumptuous, was to be one day elected General of his Order—that Order which embraced the world. The difference of the ambitious aptitudes of these two personages is conceivable. When a man of eminent abilities, of a healthy and vivacious nature, concentrates all the strength of his mind and body upon a single point, remaining, like Rodin, obstinately chaste and frugal, and renouncing every gratification of the heart and the senses—the man, who revolts against the sacred designs of his Creator, does so almost almost always in favor of some monstrous and devouring passion—some infernal divinity, which, by a sacrilegious pact, asks of him, in return for the bestowal of formidable power, the destruction of every noble sentiment, and of all those ineffable attractions and tender instincts with which the Maker, in His eternal wisdom and inexhaustible munificence, has so paternally endowed His creatures.

During the scene that we have just described, Rodin had not perceived that the curtain of a window on the third story of the building opposite had been partially drawn aside, and had half-revealed the sprightly face of Rose-Pompon, and the Silenus-like countenance of Ninny Moulin. It ensued that Rodin, notwithstanding his barricade of cotton handkerchiefs, had not been completely sheltered from the indiscreet and curious examination of the two dangers of the Storm-blown Tulip.

## CHAPTER XXX.

## AN UNEEXPECTED VISIT.

Though Rodin had experienced much surprise on reading the second letter from Rome, he did not choose that his answer should betray any such amazement. Having finished his frugal breakfast, he took a sheet of paper, and rapidly wrote in cipher the following note, in the short, abrupt style that was natural to him when not obliged to restrain himself:

"The information does not surprise me. I had foreseen it all. Indecision and cowardice always bear such fruit. This is not enough. Heretical Qussia murders Catholic Poland. Rome blesses the murderers, and curses the victims."

[On page 110 of Lamennais' *Affaires de Rome*, will be seen the following admirable scathing of Rome by the most truly evangelical spirit of our age: "So long as the issue of the conflict between Poland and her oppressors remained in the balances, the papal official organ contained not one word to offend the so long victorious nation; but hardly had she gone down under the Czar's atrocious vengeance, and the long torture of a whole land doomed to rack, exile, and servitude began, than this same journal found no language black enough to stain those whom fortune had fled. Yet it is wrong to charge this unworthy insult to papal power; it only cringes to the law which Russia lays down to it, when it says:

"If you want to keep your own bones unbroken, bide where you are, beside the scaffold, and, as the victims pass, hoot at them!"

"Let it pass."

"In return, Russia guarantees to Rome, by Austria, the bloody suppression of the patriots of Romagna."

"That, too, is well."

"The cut-throat band of good Cardinal Albani is not sufficient for the massacre of the impious liberals. The are weary of the task."

"Not so well. They must go on."

When Rodin had written these last words, his attention was suddenly attracted by the clear and sonorous voice of Rose-Pompon, who, knowing her Beranger by heart, had opened Philemon's window, and, seated on the sill, sang with much grace and prettiness this verse of the immortal song-writer:

"How wrong you are! Is't you dare say  
That heaven ever scowls on earth?  
The earth that laughs up to its blue,  
The earth that owes its joy and birth?  
Oh, may the wine from vines it warms,  
May holy love thence flut'ring down,  
Lend my philosophy their charms,  
To drive away care's direful frown!  
So, firm let's stand,  
Full glass in hand,  
And all evoke  
The God of honest folk!"

This song, in its divine gentleness, contrasted so strangely with the cold cruelty of the few lines