

THE WANDERING JEW.

BY EUGENE SUE.

CHAPTER LI.—CONTINUED.

"Let us still keep in view the speculator from mere interest. 'Here are my workmen,' says he, 'in the best possible condition to do a great deal of work. Now, what is to be done to obtain large profits? Produce cheaply, and sell dear. But there will be no cheapness, without economy in the use of the raw material, perfection of the manufacturing process, and celerity of labor. Now, in spite of all my vigilance, how am I to prevent my workmen from wasting the materials? How am I to induce them, each in his own province, to seek for the most simple and least irksome processes?'"

"True, M. Agricola; how is that to do done?"
 "And that is not all," says our man: "to sell may produce at high prices, it should be irrefragable, excellent. My workmen do pretty well; but that is not enough. I want them to produce masterpieces."—"But, M. Agricola, when they have once performed the task set them, what interest have workmen to give themselves a great deal of trouble to produce masterpieces?"

"There it is, Mdlle. Angela; what interest have they? Therefore, our speculator soon says to himself: 'That my workmen may have an interest to be economical in the use of the materials, an interest to employ their time well, an interest to invent new and better manufacturing processes, an interest to send out of their hands nothing but masterpieces—I must give them an interest in the profits earned by their economy, activity, zeal and skill. The better they manufacture, the better I shall sell, and the larger will be their gain, and mine also.'"

"Oh! now I understand, M. Agricola."
 "And our speculator would make a good speculation. Before he was interested, the workman said: 'What does it matter to me, that I do more or better in the course of the day? What shall I gain by it? Nothing. Well, then, little work for little wages. But now on the contrary (he says), I have an interest in displaying zeal and economy. All is changed. I redouble my activity, and strive to excel the others. If a comrade is lazy, and likely to do harm to the factory, I have the right to say to him: 'Mate, we all suffer more or less from your laziness, and from the injury you are doing the common-wealth.'"

"And then, M. Agricola, with what ardor, courage and hope, you must set to work!"

"That is what our speculator counts on; and he may say to himself, further: 'Treasuries of experience and practical wisdom are often buried in workshops, for want of good-will, opportunity, or encouragement. Excellent workmen, instead of making all the improvements in their power, follow with indifference the old jog-trot. What a pity! for an intelligent man, occupied all his life with some special employment, must discover, in the long run, a thousand ways of doing his work better and quicker. I will form, therefore, a sort of consulting committee; I will summon to it my foremen and my most skillful workmen. Our interest is now the same. Light will necessarily spring from this centre of practical intelligence.' Now, the speculator is not deceived in this, and soon struck with the incredible resources, the thousand new, ingenious, perfect inventions suddenly revealed by his workmen, 'Why,' he exclaims, 'if you knew this, did you not tell it before? What for the last ten years has cost me a hundred francs to make, would have cost me only fifty, without reckoning an enormous saving of time.'—'Sir,' answers the workman, who is not more stupid than others, 'what interest had I, that you should effect a saving of fifty per cent.? None. But now it is different. You give me, besides my wages, a share in your profits; you raise me in my own esteem, by consulting my experience and knowledge. Instead of treating me as an inferior being, you enter into communion with me. It is my interest, it is my duty, to tell you all I know, and to acquire more.' And thus it is, Mdlle. Angela, that the speculator can organize his establishment, so as to shame his oppositionists, and provoke their envy. Now if instead of a cold-hearted calculator, we take a man who unities with the knowledge of these facts the tender and generous sympathies of an evangelical heart, and the elevation of a superior mind, he will extend his ardent solicitude, not only to the material comfort, but to the moral emancipation, of his workmen. Seeking everywhere, every possible means to develop their intelligence, to improve their hearts, and strong in the authority acquired by his beneficence, feeling that he on whom depends the happiness or the misery of three hundred creatures has also the care of souls, he will be the guide of those whom he no longer calls his workmen, but his brothers, in a straightforward and noble path, and will try to create in

them the taste for knowledge and art, which will render them happy and proud of a condition of life, that is often accepted by others with tears and curses of despair. Well, Mdlle. Angela, such a man is—but, see! he could not arrive among us except in the middle of a blessing. There he is—there is M. Hardy."

"Oh, M. Agricola!" said Angela, deeply moved, and drying her tears; "we should receive him with our hands clasped in gratitude."

"Look if that mild and noble countenance is not the image of his admirable soul!"

A carriage with post-horses, in which was M. Hardy, with M. de Blessac, the unworthy friend who was betraying him in so infamous a manner, entered at this moment the courtyard of the factory.

A little while after, a humble hackney-coach was seen advancing also towards the factory, from the direction of Paris. In this coach was Rodin.

CHAPTER LII.

REVELATIONS.

During the visit of Angela and Agricola to the Common Dwelling-house, the band of Wolves, joined upon the road by many of the haunters of taverns, continued to march towards the factory, which the hackney-coach, that brought Rodin from Paris, was also fast approaching. M. Hardy, on getting out of the carriage with his friend M. de Blessac, had entered the parlor of the house that he occupied next the factory. M. Hardy was of middle size, with an elegant and slight figure, which announced a nature essentially nervous and impressionable. His forehead was broad and open, his complexion pale, his eyes black, full at once of mildness and penetration, his countenance honest, intelligent and attractive.

One word will paint the character of M. Hardy. His mother had called him her Sensitive Plant. His was indeed one of those fine and exquisitely delicate organizations, which are trusting, loving, noble, generous, but so susceptible, that the least touch makes them shrink into themselves. If we join to this excessive sensibility a passionate love for art, a first-rate intellect, tastes essentially refined, and then think of the thousand deceptions and numberless infamies of which M. Hardy must have been the victim in his career as a manufacturer, we shall wonder how this heart, so delicate and tender, had not been broken a thousand times, in its incessant struggle with merciless self-interest. M. Hardy had indeed suffered much. Forced to follow the career of productive industry, to honor the engagements of his father, a model of uprightness and probity, who had yet left his affairs somewhat embarrassed, in consequence of the events of 1815, he had succeeded, by perseverance and capacity, in attaining one of the most honorable positions in the commercial world. But, to arrive at this point, what ignoble annoyances had he to bear with, what perfidious opposition to combat, what hateful rivalries to tire out!

Sensitive as he was, M. Hardy would a thousand times have fallen a victim to his emotions of painful indignation against baseness, of bitter disgust at dishonesty, but for the wise and firm support of his mother. When he returned to her, after a day of painful struggles with odious deceptions, he found himself suddenly transported into an atmosphere of such beneficent purity, of such radiant serenity, that he lost almost on the instant the remembrance of the base things by which he had been so cruelly tortured during the day; the pangs of his heart were appeased at the mere contact of her great and lofty soul; and therefore his love for her resembled idolatry. When he lost her, he experienced one of those calm, deep sorrows, which have no end—which become, as it were, part of life, and have even sometimes their days of melancholy sweetness. A little while after this great misfortune, M. Hardy became more closely connected with his workmen. He had always been a just and good master; but, although the place that his mother left in his heart would ever remain void, he felt as it were a redoubled overflowing of the affections, and the more he suffered, the more he sought, the more he craved to see happy faces around him. The wonderful ameliorations, which he now produced in the physical and moral condition of all about him, served, not to divert, but to occupy his grief. Little by little, he withdrew from the world, and concentrated his life in three affections; a tender and devoted friendship, which seemed to include all past friendships—a love ardent and sincere, like a last passion—and a paternal attachment to his workmen. His days therefore passed in the heart of that little world, so full of respect and gratitude towards him—a world, which he had, as it were, created after the image of his mind, that he might find there a refuge from the painful realities he dreaded, surrounded with good, intelligent, happy beings, capable of responding to the noble thoughts which had become more

and more necessary to his existence. Thus, after any sorrows, M. Hardy, arrived at the maturity of age, possessing a sincere friend, a mistress worthy of his love, and knowing himself certain of the passionate devotion of his workmen, had attained, at the period of this history, all the happiness he could hope for since his mother's death.

M. de Blessac, his bosom friend, had long been worthy of his touching and fraternal affection, but we have seen by what diabolical means Father d'Aigrigny and Rodin had succeeded in making M. de Blessac, until then upright and sincere, the instrument of their machinations. The two friends, who had felt on their journey a little of the sharp influence of the north wind, were warming themselves at a good fire lighted in M. Hardy's parlor.

"Oh! my dear Marcel, I begin really to get old," said M. Hardy, with a smile, addressing M. de Blessac; "I feel more the want of being at home. To depart from my usual habits has become painful to me, and I execrate whatever obliges me to leave this happy little sport of ground."

"And when I think," answered M. de Blessac, unable to forbear blushing, "when I think, my friend, that you undertook this long journey only for my sake!"

"Well, my dear Marcel! have you not just accompanied me in your turn, in an excursion which, without you, would have been as tiresome as it has been charming?"

"What a difference, my friend! I have contracted towards you a debt that I can never repay."

"Nonsense, my dear Marcel! Between us, there are no distinctions of meum and tuum. Besides, in matters of friendship, it is as sweet to give as to receive."

"Noble heart! noble heart!"

"Say, happy heart!—most happy, in the last affections for which it beats."

"And who, gracious heaven! could deserve happiness on earth, if it be not you, my friend?"

"And to what do I owe that happiness? To the affections which I found here, ready to sustain me, when, deprived of the support of my mother, who was all my strength, I felt myself (I confess my weakness) almost incapable of standing up against adversity."

"You, my friend—with so firm and resolute a character in doing good—you, that I have seen struggle with so much energy and courage, to secure the triumph of some great and noble idea?"

"Yes; but the farther I advance in my career, the more am I disgusted with all base and shameful actions, and the less strength I feel to encounter them."—"Were it necessary, you would have the courage, my friend."

"My dear Marcel," replied M. Hardy, with a mild and restrained emotion, "I have often said to you: My courage was my mother. You see, my friend, when I went to her, with my heart torn by some horrible ingratitude, or disgusted by some base deceit, she, taking my hands between her own venerable palms, would say to me in her grave and tender voice: 'My dear child, it is for the ungrateful and dishonest to suffer; let us pity the wicked, let us forget evil, and only think of good.' Then, my friend, this heart, painfully contracted, expanded beneath the sacred influence of the maternal words, and every day I gathered strength from her, to recommence on the morrow a cruel struggle with the sad necessities of my condition. Happily, it has pleased God, that, after losing that beloved mother, I have been able to bind up my life with affections, deprived of which, I confess, I should find myself feeble and disarmed—for you cannot tell, Marcel, the support, the strength that I have found in your friendship."

"Do not speak of me, my dear friend," replied M. de Blessac, dissembling his embarrassment. "Let us talk of another affection, almost as sweet and tender as that of a mother."

"I understand you, my good Marcel," replied M. Hardy: "I have concealed nothing from you, since, under such serious circumstances, I had recourse to the counsels of your friendship. Well! yes; I think that every day I live augments my adoration for this woman, the only one that I shall now ever love. And then I must tell you, that my mother, not knowing what Margaret was to me, was often loud in her praise, and that circumstance renders this love almost sacred in my eyes."

"And then there are such strange resemblances between Mme. de Noisy's character and yours, my friend; above all, in her worship of her mother."

"It is true, Marcel; that affection has often caused me both admiration and torment. How often she has said to me, with her habitual frankness: 'I have sacrificed all for you, but I would sacrifice you for my mother.'"

"Thank heaven, my friend, you will never see Mme. de Noisy exposed to that cruel choice.

Her mother, you say, has long renounced her intention of returning to America, where M. de Noisy perfectly careless of his wife, appears to have settled himself permanently. Thanks to the discreet devotion of the excellent woman by whom Margaret was brought up, your love is concealed in the deepest mystery. What could disturb it now?"

"Nothing—oh! nothing," cried M. Hardy. "I have almost security for its duration."

"What do you mean, my friend?"—"I do not know if I ought to tell you."

"Have you ever found me indiscreet, my friend?"—"You, good Marcel! how can you suppose such a thing?" said M. Hardy, in a tone of friendly reproach, "no! but I do not like to tell you of my happiness, till it is complete; and I am not yet quite certain—"

A servant entered at this moment and said to M. Hardy: "Sir, there is an old gentleman who wishes to speak to you on very pressing business."

"So soon!" said M. Hardy, with a slight movement of impatience. "With your permission, my friend." Then, as M. de Blessac seemed about to withdraw into the next room, M. Hardy added with a smile: "No, no; do not stir. Your presence will shorten the interview."

"But if it be a matter of business, my friend?" "I do everything openly, as you know." Then, addressing the servant, M. Hardy bade him: "Ask the gentleman to walk in."

"The postilion wishes to know if he is to wait?"—"Certainly; he will take M. de Blessac back to Paris."

The servant withdrew, and presently returned, introducing Rodin with whom M. de Blessac was not acquainted, his treacherous bargain having been negotiated through another agent.

"M. Hardy?" said Rodin, bowing respectfully to the two friends, and looking from one to the other with an air of inquiry.

"That is my name, sir; what can I do to serve you?" answered the manufacturer, kindly; for, at first sight of the humble and ill-dressed old man, he expected an application for assistance.

"M. Francois Hardy," repeated Rodin, as if he wished to make sure of the identity of the person.—"I have had the honor to tell you, that I am he."

"I have a private communication to make to you, sir," said Rodin.

"You may speak, sir. This gentleman is my friend," said M. Hardy, pointing to M. de Blessac.

"But I wish to speak to you alone, sir," resumed Rodin.

M. de Blessac was again about to withdraw, when M. Hardy retained him with a glance, and said to Rodin kindly for he thought his feelings might be hurt by asking a favor in presence of a third party: "Permit me to inquire if it is on your account or on mine, that you wish this interview to be secret?"

"On your account entirely, sir," answered Rodin.

"Then, sir," said M. Hardy, with some surprise, "you may speak out. I have no secrets from this gentleman."

After a moment's silence, Rodin resumed, addressing himself to M. Hardy: "Sir, you deserve, I know, all the good that is said of you; and you therefore command the sympathy of every honest man."

"I hope so, sir."

"To reveal to you an infamous piece of treachery, of which you have been the victim."

"I think, sir, you must be deceived."

"I have the proofs of what I assert."

"Proofs?"

"The written proofs of the treachery that I come to reveal: I have them here," answered Rodin. "In a word, a man whom you believed your friend, has shamefully deceived you, sir."

"And the name of this man?"

"M. Marcel de Blessac," replied Rodin.

On these words, M. de Blessac started, and became pale as death. He could hardly murmur: "Sir—"

But, without looking at his friend, or perceiving his agitation, M. Hardy seized his hand, and exclaimed hastily: "Silence, my friend!" Then, whilst his eye flashed with indignation, he turned towards Rodin, who had not ceased to look him full in the face, and said to him, with an air of lofty disdain: "What! do you accuse M. de Blessac?"—"Yes, I accuse him," replied Rodin, briefly.

"Do you know him?"

"I have never seen him."

"Of what do you accuse him? And how dare you say that he has betrayed me?"

"Two words, if you please," said Rodin, with an emotion which he appeared hardly able to restrain. "If one man of honor sees another about to be slain by an assassin, ought he not give the alarm of murder?"

"Yes, sir; but what has that to do—"