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SUMMARY CHAPTER I.—Anton's visit to the Vulture Mine in Quest of Work—The Vil-lage and the Miners.

CHAPTER II.

Among fields of wheat and beets, the alley of the Two Forty slept under the dark night. One could vaguely distinguish from long rows of little houses back to back, regularly laid out, parallel, as in barracks, or a hospital, which three wide streets separated, dividing into equal plats. On the bleak plain, there was only heard the wall of the wind tearing away the trelliage of the inclosure.

At Mahon's house, number 16 on the last row, no one was moving. The darkest gloom filled the single room on the first floor, as though to overwhelm with its weight the sleep of the human beings resting there, sleeping with open mouths, overcome with fatigue. In spite of the terrible cold outside, the heavy air was sitter, and never had worked inside the quite warm, that stifling heat of badly ventilated rooms, tainted by the occu-

Four was struck by the wooden clock on the first floor, no one moved as yet, heavy breathing was constantly heard, accompanied by two loud snores. And ing, without the strength to completely pillow.

the room, painted a light yellow. This cold was disturbing Estelle. was placed on the table beside a red pan, him growling angrily. What was the used as a wash basin. In the bed on the matter with him? He had slept like a two little children, Lenore and Henry, Alzire, her great eyes open, watched the first six and the other four years of age, were sleeping in each other's arms, while Calharine shared the third bed with her sister, ro small, although nine years of age, that she could scarcely have felt her by her side had it not been for the hump on the little invalid which crowded her ribs inward. The glazed She finished buttoning her vest and door was come, and you could see the three months old.

and neck. Thin for her sixteen years, under the cupboard. her limbs were not exposed below the straight skirt of her chemise; only her by Estelle's continued crying. feet appeared, bluish as if tattoed with opened her rather large mouth, filled which were held above her. with superb teeth in pale sickly gums, igue of her entire person. A growl srote from the landing, the

veice of Mahon stammering out: Good heavens! It is time to get up, Have you a l'ght, Catherine!"

"Yes, father. The clock has just struck down stairs." "Make haste then, drone. If you had

danced less yesterday, you would have awakened us sooner. * * * There's an idle life for you." And he continued to growl, but sleep at last overcame him, and his reproaches, which were taken no notice of, died away it.

in snother snore. awake, lost in the sound sleep of infancy. | the family." Alzire, her eyes open, turned over and

without saying a word, "Get up, Zucharie! and you too, Johnnie, gat up!" said Catherine standing before the two brothers who remained silent, their noses in the pillow. She seized the largest boy by the

shoulder and shook him, then when he became abusive she snatched the coverings off him. That amused her, for she laughed loudly, when she saw the boys self up; struggling with bare legs.

"That's silly; leave me alone!" stammered Zacharie, in a bad humor, when he sat up. 'I don't like that fun, it's enough to say It's time to get up."

He was thin, ill-formed, his face long, covered with an odd-looking beard, and the yellow hair and sallow complexion of all the family. When his shirt was thrown up he pulled it down, not from hame, but because it was cold.

"The clock has struck," said Catherine. 'Get up, lazy! your father will be angry.

Johnnie, who was circled up in a heap, pened his eyes and said: "Go 'way and top your fooling; I'm sleepy."

She laughed again. He was so little with his puny legs and large joints, swollen with scrofuls, that she took him in her arms. He kicked about, his wan, monkey-like face and curly head, with pale with rage, because he was feeble. He said nothing, he knew in his heart she was doing right.

"Bad child!" murmurad she, repressing

a sob and placing him on the floor.

Alzire, silent, the sheet drawn up to ber chin, was not asleep. She followed, some conscious of them. Almost crazy, with the intelligent eyes of an invalid, he selzed the little one from the cradle her slater and two brothers, who were and threw her upon the bed of the now dressing themselves. Another quer- mothe, stammering with rage: rel broke out around the wash-basin, the boys hustled the gir's out of the way, heavens, that child! She don't want because it took too long to wash. Their anything, and yet she makes more fuss night clothes flew off, while, still filled than anyone else." with sleep, they dressed themselves with the tranquil freedom of a litter of young Disappearing under the covers, quieted dogs growing up together. Catherine was ready first. She jumped into her miner's tronsers, slipped on the linen "Didn't the r'ch folks of the Polly tell

"Yes, they met me; they'll give some "Yes, they met me; they'll give some clothing to the poor children. " * * waddling gatt. you, you know.

He spoke of the grandfather, old Bon- only give me a hundred sous!" nemort, who worked at night and slept | Silence was renewed. Mahon was

GERMINAL

during the day. The bed never was cold, it always had some one enoring within it.

Without replying, Catherine was pulling up the coverings and tusking them in. But, at that instant a noise was keep us from starving, it is better to be heard the other side of the wall, in the below at work." ne ghboring house. These brick build ings, economically constructed by the company, were to frail that the least breath traversed them. They lived elbow to elbow as it were, from one end of the row to the other, and nothing of private life remained concealed, even to the children. A heavy step shook the stairs, then there was a sound something like a

light fall, followed by a sigh of relief. "Good!" said Catherine, "Levaque has gone down stairs, and here is Bouteloup, who is coming up again to see Levaque's wife.

Johnnie sneered; the eyes of Alzire shone. Every morning they amused themselves thus, with the intimacy of these three neighbors, a heaver who lodged an outside workman, which gave the woman two men, one for the night and the other for the day. "Philomene is coughing," resumed

Catherine, after listening.
She was speaking of the Levaque's eldest, a large girl of nineteen years, the mistress of Zacharle, to whom she

"Ab, yes, Philomene," replied Zach-rie. "She don't mind that, she's sleep. She's a pig to sleep until six arie. asleep. o'clock.

He was putting on his pants when he opened a window as if a thought had same wood. Hanging on the wall, suddenly Catherine awoke. In her suddenly struck him. Outside, in the weariness she had counted as usual the dark, the alleyway was lit up, lights four strokes of the bell, through the ceil shone out one after another between the cracks of the window blinds. And that awake herself. Then throwing her was the occasion of another dispute with limbs cut of the bed, she grouped around; his sister. He leaned out trying to see at length striking a match, she lit the if the superintendent, whom they accurate. But she remained seated on the cused of visiting Peters' wife, was at her edge of the mattress, her head so heavy house across the way, when his sister told that it fell backward, yielding to an in- him that since the day before the husvincible wish to again drop upon the band had been doing day work at the breaker, and that Dayssert could not Now the candles lit up the room, possibly have slept there that night. The quare, having two windows and filled with air entered in chilling puffs, both were three beds. There was a bureau, a ta | becoming angry maintaining the correctble, two walnut chairs, while a smoky ness of their knowledge, when cries broke appearance hung heavily on the walls of out. They were from the cradle. The

was all; some regs hung on nails, a jug Suddenly Mahon awoke, they heard left, Zacharle, the eldest, a boy of twen-beggar! And he swore so loud that the Johnnie, who had just completed his and Johnnie slowly finished washing eleventh year; in the bed on the right, themselves, they were weary even now.

door was open, and you could see the carried the candle into the chamber, small room where the mother and father leaving her brothers to find their clothing occupied a fourth bid, by the side of from the little light which came through which they were obliged to place the cra- the door. Her father jumped out of dle of the last comer, Estelle, scarcely bed. But she did not stop; she went down states in her coarse woolen stock-Meanwhile Catharine made a desper- ings, and feeling her way she lit another ate effort. She ran both hands through candle in the kitchen to prepare the the rad hair which covered her forehead coffee. All the shoes of the family were "Shut up," said Mahon, exasperated

He was short, like old Bonnemort, and coal, and her thin arms, white as milk, resembled him in stoutness; his head which contrasted with the sallow tint of her face, already spoiled with continual close-cut yellow hair. The infant yelled washing with soft soap. One last yawn louder, frightened by the great bare arms

"Lat her alone; you know very well while her watery grey eyes, striving that she will not be quiet," said the was only Peters' little ydie, who was against sleep with an expression sad and mother, stretching herself out in the weary, seemed to be filled with the fa middle of the bad.

She also, having just awakened, began to complain. It was too bad never to get a good night's rest. Couldn's they leave quietly? Burled in the covering she only showed her long figure and traces of a lifeless kind of beauty, already destroyed at the age of thirtynine years by her life of misery, and the seven children which she had borne. With her eyes on the ceiling, she began to speak slowly, while her husband dressed himself. The infant was still crying, neither paying any attention to

"Well, I've told you I haven't a sou The young girl, still in her chem'se, left, and this is Monday—still six days moved about the room in her bare feet; to wait for the fifteenth. This can't go pausing before the bed of Henry and on any longer. All of you only earn Lenore, she laid over them the covers nine france a day, and how do you exwhich trey had thrown off; they did not pect me to get along? We have ten in

"Oh! nine franca," growled Mahon. took the warm place of her large sister, "Zicharle and I three, that makes six. Catharine and the father, that makes four; four and six, ten, and Johnnie one, that makes eleven.'

"Yes, eleven; but there are the Sundays and the days you knock off. Never more than nine, do you see." He did not reply at once, being engaged in looking on the floor for his

leather belt. Then he said, raising him-"You shouldn't grumble. I'm healthy, anyhow. There are very few at the age of forty-two who haven't been through

some stckness." "True, old man, but that doesn't give us bread. What am I going to do? You have nothing."

"I have two sous." "Keep them for a drink. My God! what am I going to do; six days, they will never end. We owe sixty france to Maigrat, who turned me from his door the day before yesterday. He refused to give us a loaf of bread. That will not prevent me from going to him again to

day. But if be keeps on refusing -

And the woman continued in a plain tive tone, her head motionless, closing her eyes for an instant to shut out the light of the candle. She said the cupboard was empty, the children wanted bread, even coffee was needed, for water his sharp eyes and large ears, turning gave them the colic; the long days must pass in trying to satisfy their hunger with boiled cabbage leaves. Little by little she had been obliged to raise her voice, for the screams of Estelle drowned her words. There or er became unbearable. Mahon seemed all at once to be

"Take her, or I'll choke her. Great

Estelle had at last began to nurse.

"Didn's the rich folks of the Polly tell vest, knotted the blue scarf around her head, and in this week-lay garb she had the appearance of a little men; nothing the mother puckered up her mouth remained of her sex except the alightly

Zac aris spitefully, 'he'll be glid to find At any rate I'll take Lenore and Henry the bed tosted up. "I'll tell him 'twas to them this morning. If they would

"That's so," responded the wife. "Blow out the candle, I don't want to see the color of my thoughts."

He blew out the candle, Zacharie and Johnnie had already gone down; he followed them, and the wooden staircase creaked under their heavy feet clothed in wool. Behind them, in the passage and chamber, it was dark again. The little ones were sleeping, even Alzire's eyelids were closed. But the mother now re malacd with her eyes open in the darkness, while pulling upon her weary breast, Estelle purred like a little kitten.

Down stairs, Catherine was at first busy at the stove which had an iron flue, an oven on each side and a grate in the centre, in which a coal fire was constantly burning. The company gave monthly to each family eight bushels of screenings, hard coal picked up on the tracks. It lit with difficulty, and the young girl who covered the fire every night was obliged to rake it in the morning and add some tittle pieces of soft coal, sorted out with care. Then she placed a kettle full of water upon the grate and knelt down before the cupboard.

It was a large enough room, taking up the whole ground floor, painted apple green, of a Flemish neatness, with its flagatones well washed and sprinkled with white sand. Beside the cupboard of varnished pine, the furniture consisted of a table and some chairs of the gaudily colored, were the portraits of the emperor and empress given by the company, some soldiers and saints, a mixture of gilt, harmonizing strangely with the plain nakedness of the room, and for other ornaments, there was only a box of red paste-board upon the cupboard and a wooden clock with a glass front, whose loud tic-tac seemed to fill the emptiness of the place. Near the door of the stairs, another door led to the cellar. In spite of the great cleanliness an cdor of cooked ontone, shut in since the day before, polsoned the warm air which was already heavily charged with coal gas. Meanwhile, before the open cupboard,

Catherine was reflecting. There was left only one loaf of bread, with cheere in sufficiency, but with scarcely a parti cle of butter, and it was a question how to make sandwiches for all four. At last she decided, cutting the slices as thin as ty-one years, was lying with his brother child beside him held its breath, Zacharie possible, and covering one with cheese and another with butter, she laid them together, and the lunch which was carried each morning to the mine was ready. Soon the four portions were in a row on the table, dealt out with a severe justice, from the great one for the father to the little one for Johnnie.

But the water had commenced to sing in the kettle. Catherine, who appeared to be a good housekeeper, could not, however, help musing over the thirgs which Zacharle had told her, about the superintendent and the wife of Peters, fer she opened the street door and glanced outside with an instinctive movement, in spite of the certainty that where she stood there was nothing out of the way to be seen, that morning. The wind was still blowing, numerous lights fell upon the long projective fronts of the alley, from which went up the low hum of awakening. Doors were already opening, and dark files of workmen were moving off in the gloom. She was foolish to freeze herself there when the feeder at the breaker was still sleeping, before go-ing to work at six o'clock! Yet she remained there watching the house before her, in the flat across the way. The door opened, her cariosity was excited. But it

starting for the mine. The bissing sound Catharine start. She shut the door and ran in, the water was boiling over, putting out the fire. There was no more coffee, she must be contented with pouring the water upon the old grounds, then she sweetened it with brown augar. Just then her father and two brothers came

down. "Plague take it," said Zacharle, when he had put his lips to the cup, "this won't weaken our heads." Mahon shrugged his shoulders with a

resigned air. "Bab! it's hot all the same, it's

Johnnie picked up the bits of bread and butter and put them in his cup. Catharine after drinking, finished by draining the coffee pot into tin palls. All four remained standing, badly lit up by the smoking candle, drinking in haste, "Well, we're finished," said the father. "One would think we were rich."

But a voice came from the staircase, the door of which they had left open. It was the mother, who cried:
"Take all the bread, I have a little

vermicelli for the children. "Yes, yes!" responded Catharine. She had again covered the fire leaving upon one corner of the grate the re maining cup of coffee, which the grandfather would find hot when he returned atsix o'clock. Each took their pair of

shoes from under cupboard, laced the string of the tin pale over their shoulders and stuffing the sandwich between the shirt and the vest at their back they went out, the men first, the girl behind, who blew out the candle and turned the rey. The house sgain became dark. "Hold on! we'll go together," said

man who had shut the door of the next house. It was Levsque, with his son Robert. boy of twelve years, a great friend of

Catherine, surprised, was laughing behind Zicharie. What? Bouteloup does not even wait for the husband to leave!

Now, in the alley, the lights are going out. A last door shut; all slept again; the wives and the little ones returned to their naps in the middle of the less crowded beds. And from the silent vil-age to the Vulture, under the heavy blasts, a slow file of shadows went on; it was the departure of the coal men for work, shrugging their shoulders, folding their arms across their breasts, while the sandwiches made a hump on each back. Clothed in light linen, they shivered with cold, without hurrying, marching along the road like an army.

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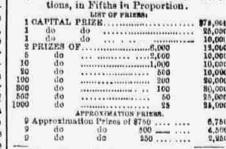
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