



LES MISERABLES

悲慘世界

(中)

By Victor Hugo

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前 言

随着英语水平不断提高,我们不再仅仅满足于会写会读,更希望能与世界各国的朋友们无障碍的交谈。

由于种种原因,我们常常会按平常的语言习惯说英语,甚至于把我们的汉语直译成英文来使用,结果往往是词不达意,言语乏味。

为此,我们精心挑选这十几部可以代表西方文学的经典著作,不做任何改动,严格按照原著的风格,原汁原味地奉献给广大读者,让读者去自由地阅读、想象和发挥,从中学习了解西方人的语言思维方式。不知不觉中,你会发现,自己的英语水平已有了大幅度的提高,不仅是词汇语法,更可喜的是您会习惯于以西方人的语言思维写英语、说英语,在交谈中畅所欲言!

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LE PETIT-PICPUS

CHAPTER I


NUMBER 62 RUE PETIT-PICPUS

Nothing, half a century ago, more resembled every other carriage gate than the carriage gate of Number 62 Rue Petit-Picpus. This entrance, which usually stood ajar in the most inviting fashion, permitted a view of two things, neither of which have anything very funereal about them,—a courtyard surrounded by walls hung with vines, and the face of a lounging porter. Above the wall, at the bottom of the court, tall trees were visible. When a ray of sunlight enlivened the courtyard, when a glass of wine cheered up the porter, it was difficult to pass Number 62 Little Picpus Street without carrying away a smiling impression of it. Nevertheless, it was a sombre place of which one had had a glimpse.

The threshold smiled; the house prayed and wept.

If one succeeded in passing the porter, which was not easy,—

which was even nearly impossible for every one, for there was an open sesame! which it was necessary to know,—if, the porter once passed, one entered a little vestibule on the right, on which opened a staircase shut in between two walls and so narrow that only one person could ascend it at a time, if one did not allow one's self to be alarmed by a daubing of canary yellow, with a dado of chocolate which clothed this staircase, if one ventured to ascend it, one crossed a first landing, then a second, and arrived on the first story at a corridor where the yellow wash and the chocolate-hued plinth pursued one with a peaceable persistency.



Staircase and corridor were lighted by two beautiful windows.

The corridor took a turn and became dark. If one doubled this cape, one arrived a few paces further on, in front of a door which was all the more mysterious because it was not fastened. If one opened it, one found one's self in a little chamber about six feet square, tiled, well-scrubbed, clean, cold, and hung with nankin paper with green flowers, at fifteen sous the roll. A white, dull light fell from a large window, with tiny panes, on the left, which usurped the whole width of the room. One gazed about, but saw no one; one listened, one heard neither a footstep nor a human murmur.

The walls were bare, the chamber was not furnished; there was not even a chair.

One looked again, and beheld on the wall facing the door a quadrangular hole, about a foot square, with a grating of interlacing iron bars, black, knotted, solid, which formed squares--

I had almost said meshes--of less than an inch and a half in diagonal length. The little green flowers of the nankin paper ran in a calm and orderly manner to those iron bars, without being startled or thrown into confusion by their funereal contact.

Supposing that a living being had been so wonderfully thin as to essay an entrance or an exit through the square hole, this grating would have prevented it. It did not allow the passage of the body, but it did allow the passage of the eyes; that is to say, of the mind. This seems to have occurred to them, for it had been re-enforced by a sheet of tin inserted in the wall a little in the rear, and pierced with a thousand holes more microscopic than the holes of a strainer. At the bottom of this plate, an aperture had been pierced exactly similar to the orifice of a letter box. A bit of tape attached to a bell-wire hung at the right of the grated opening. If the tape was pulled, a bell rang, and one heard a voice very near at hand, which made one start.

"Who is there?" the voice demanded.

It was a woman's voice, a gentle voice, so gentle that it was mournful. Here, again, there was a magical word which it was necessary to know. If

one did not know it, the voice ceased, the wall became silent once more, as though the terrified obscurity of the sepulchre had been on the other side of it.

If one knew the password, the voice resumed, "Enter on the right." One then perceived on the right, facing the window, a glass door surmounted by a frame glazed and painted gray. On raising the latch and crossing the threshold, one experienced precisely the same impression as when one enters at the theatre into a grated baignoire, before the grating is lowered and the chandelier is lighted.


One was, in fact, in a sort of theatre-box, narrow, furnished with two old chairs, and a much-frayed straw matting, sparsely illuminated by the vague light from the glass door; a regular box, with its front just of a height to lean upon, bearing a tablet of black wood. This box was grated, only the grating of it was not of gilded wood, as at the opera; it was a monstrous lattice of iron bars, hideously interlaced and riveted to the wall by enormous fastenings which resembled clenched fists.

The first minutes passed; when one's eyes began to grow used to this cellar-like half-twilight, one tried to pass the grating, but got no further than six inches beyond it. There he encountered a barrier of black shutters, re-enforced and fortified with transverse beams of wood painted a gingerbread yellow. These shutters were divided into long, narrow slats, and they masked the entire length of the grating. They were always closed. At the expiration of a few moments one heard a voice proceeding from behind these shutters, and saying:—

"I am here. What do you wish with me?"

It was a beloved, sometimes an adored, voice. No one was visible. Hardly the sound of a breath was audible. It seemed as though it were a spirit which had been evoked, that was speaking to you across the walls of the tomb.

If one chanced to be within certain prescribed and very rare conditions, the slat of one of the shutters opened opposite you; the evoked spirit became an apparition. Behind the grating, behind the shutter, one per-



ceived so far as the grating permitted sight, a head, of which only the mouth and the chin were visible; the rest was covered with a black veil. One caught a glimpse of a black guimpe, and a form that was barely defined, covered with a black shroud. That head spoke with you, but did not look at you and never smiled at you.

The light which came from behind you was adjusted in such a manner that you saw her in the white, and she saw you in the black.

This light was symbolical.

Nevertheless, your eyes plunged eagerly through that opening which was made in that place shut off from all glances. A profound vagueness enveloped that form clad in mourning. Your eyes searched that vagueness, and sought to make out the surroundings of the apparition.

At the expiration of a very short time you discovered that you could see nothing. What you beheld was night, emptiness, shadows, a wintry mist mingled with a vapor from the tomb, a sort of terrible peace, a silence from which you could gather nothing, not even sighs, a gloom in which you could distinguish nothing, not even phantoms.

What you beheld was the interior of a cloister.

It was the interior of that severe and gloomy edifice which was called the Convent of the Bernardines of the Perpetual Adoration. The box in which you stood was the parlor. The first voice which had addressed you was that of the portress who always sat motionless and silent, on the other side of the wall, near the square opening, screened by the iron grating and the plate with its thousand holes, as by a double visor. The obscurity which bathed the grated box arose from the fact that the parlor, which had a window on the side of the world, had none on the side of the convent. Profane eyes must see nothing of that sacred place.

Nevertheless, there was something beyond that shadow; there was a light; there was life in the midst of that death. Although this was the most strictly walled of all convents, we shall endeavor to make our way into it, and to take the reader in, and to say, without transgressing the proper bounds, things which story-tellers have never seen, and have, therefore,

never described.

CHAPTER II

THE OBEDIENCE OF MARTIN VERGA

This convent, which in 1824 had already existed for many a long year in the Rue Petit-Picpus, was a community of Bernardines of the obedience of Martin Verga.

These Bernardines were attached, in consequence, not to Clairvaux, like the Bernardine monks, but to Citeaux, like the Benedictine monks.

In other words, they were the subjects, not of Saint Bernard, but of Saint Benoit.

Any one who has turned over old folios to any extent knows that Martin Verga founded in 1425 a congregation of Bernardines-Benedictines, with Salamanca for the head of the order, and Alcala as the branch establishment.

This congregation had sent out branches throughout all the Catholic countries of Europe.

There is nothing unusual in the Latin Church in these grafts of one order on another. To mention only a single order of Saint-Benoit, which is here in question: there are attached to this order, without counting the obedience of Martin Verga, four congregations,—

two in Italy, Mont-Cassin and Sainte-Justine of Padua; two in France, Cluny and Saint-Maur; and nine orders,—Vallombrosa, Granson, the Celestins, the Camaldules, the Carthusians, the Humilies, the Olivateurs, the Silvestrins, and lastly, Citeaux; for Citeaux itself, a trunk for other orders, is only an offshoot of Saint-Benoit. Citeaux dates from Saint Robert, Abbe de Molesme, in the diocese of Langres, in 1098. Now it was in 529 that the devil, having retired to the desert of Subiaco—he was old—had he turned hermit?—was chased from the ancient temple of Apollo, where he dwelt, by Saint-Benoit, then aged seventeen.



After the rule of the Carmelites, who go barefoot, wear a bit of willow on their throats, and never sit down, the harshest rule is that of the Bernardines-Benedictines of Martin Verga.

They are clothed in black, with a guimpe, which, in accordance with the express command of Saint-Benoit, mounts to the chin. A robe of serge with large sleeves, a large woollen veil, the guimpe which mounts to the chin cut square on the breast, the band which descends over their brow to their eyes,—this is their dress. All is black except the band, which is white. The novices wear the same habit, but all in white. The professed nuns also wear a rosary at their side.

The Bernardines-Benedictines of Martin Verga practise the Perpetual Adoration, like the Benedictines called Ladies of the Holy Sacrament, who, at the beginning of this century, had two houses in Paris,— one at the Temple, the other in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Genevieve. However, the Bernardines-Benedictines of the Petit-Picpus, of whom we are speaking, were a totally different order from the Ladies of the Holy Sacrament, cloistered in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Genevieve and at the Temple. There were numerous differences in their rule; there were some in their costume. The Bernardines-Benedictines of the Petit-Picpus wore the black guimpe, and the Benedictines of the Holy Sacrament and of the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Genevieve wore a white one, and had, besides, on their breasts, a Holy Sacrament about three inches long, in silver gilt or gilded copper. The nuns of the Petit-Picpus did not wear this Holy Sacrament. The Perpetual Adoration, which was common to the house of the Petit-Picpus and to the house of the Temple, leaves those two orders perfectly distinct. Their only resemblance lies in this practice of the Ladies of the Holy Sacrament and the Bernardines of Martin Verga, just as there existed a similarity in the study and the glorification of all the mysteries relating to the infancy, the life, and death of Jesus Christ and the Virgin, between the two orders, which were, nevertheless, widely separated, and on occasion even hostile. The Oratory of Italy, established at Florence by Philip de Neri, and the Oratory of France, established by Pierre de Berulle. The Oratory of France

claimed the precedence, since Philip de Neri was only a saint, while Berulle was a cardinal.

Let us return to the harsh Spanish rule of Martin Verga.

The Bernardines –Benedictines of this obedience fast all the year round, abstain from meat, fast in Lent and on many other days which are peculiar to them, rise from their first sleep, from one to three o' clock in the morning, to read their breviary and chant matins, sleep in all seasons between serge sheets and on straw, make no use of the bath, never light a fire, scourge themselves every Friday, observe the rule of silence, speak to each other only during the recreation hours, which are very brief, and wear drugget chemises for six months in the year, from September 14th, which is the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, until Easter.

These six months are a modification: the rule says all the year, but this drugget chemise, intolerable in the heat of summer, produced fevers and nervous spasms. The use of it had to be restricted.

Even with this palliation, when the nuns put on this chemise on the 14th of September, they suffer from fever for three or four days. Obedience, poverty, chastity, perseverance in their seclusion,— these are their vows, which the rule greatly aggravates.

The prioress is elected for three years by the mothers, who are called *meres vocales* because they have a voice in the chapter.

A prioress can only be re-elected twice, which fixes the longest possible reign of a prioress at nine years.

They never see the officiating priest, who is always hidden from them by a serge curtain nine feet in height. During the sermon, when the preacher is in the chapel, they drop their veils over their faces.

They must always speak low, walk with their eyes on the ground and their heads bowed. One man only is allowed to enter the convent,— the archbishop of the diocese.

There is really one other,—the gardener. But he is always an old man, and, in order that he may always be alone in the garden, and that the nuns may be warned to avoid him, a bell is attached to his knee.

Their submission to the prioress is absolute and passive.

It is the canonical subjection in the full force of its abnegation.

As at the voice of Christ, ut voci Christi, at a gesture, at the first sign, ad nutum, ad primum signum, immediately, with cheerfulness, with perseverance, with a certain blind obedience, prompte, hilariter, perseveranter et caeca quadam obedientia, as the file in the hand of the workman, quasi limam in manibus fabri, without power to read or to write without express permission, legere vel scribere non addiscerit sine expressa superioris licentia.

Each one of them in turn makes what they call reparation.

The reparation is the prayer for all the sins, for all the faults, for all the dissensions, for all the violations, for all the iniquities, for all the crimes committed on earth. For the space of twelve consecutive hours, from four o' clock in the afternoon till four o' clock in the morning, or from four o' clock in the morning until four o' clock in the afternoon, the sister who is making reparation remains on her knees on the stone before the Holy Sacrament, with hands clasped, a rope around her neck. When her fatigue becomes unendurable, she prostrates herself flat on her face against the earth, with her arms outstretched in the form of a cross; this is her only relief.

In this attitude she prays for all the guilty in the universe.

This is great to sublimity.

As this act is performed in front of a post on which burns a candle, it is called without distinction, to make reparation or to be at the post. The nuns even prefer, out of humility, this last expression, which contains an idea of torture and abasement.

To make reparation is a function in which the whole soul is absorbed. The sister at the post would not turn round were a thunderbolt to fall directly behind her.

Besides this, there is always a sister kneeling before the Holy Sacrament. This station lasts an hour. They relieve each other like soldiers on guard. This is the Perpetual Adoration. The prioresses and the mothers al-

most always bear names stamped with peculiar solemnity, recalling, not the saints and martyrs, but moments in the life of Jesus Christ: as Mother Nativity, Mother Conception, Mother Presentation, Mother Passion. But the names of saints are not interdicted.

When one sees them, one never sees anything but their mouths.

All their teeth are yellow. No tooth-brush ever entered that convent.


Brushing one's teeth is at the top of a ladder at whose bottom is the loss of one's soul.

They never say my. They possess nothing of their own, and they must not attach themselves to anything. They call everything our; thus: our veil, our chaplet; if they were speaking of their chemise, they would say our chemise. Sometimes they grow attached to some petty object,— to a book of hours, a relic, a medal that has been blessed. As soon as they become aware that they are growing attached to this object, they must give it up. They recall the words of Saint Therese, to whom a great lady said, as she was on the point of entering her order, "Permit me, mother, to send for a Bible to which I am greatly attached." "Ah, you are attached to something! In that case, do not enter our order! "

Every person whatever is forbidden to shut herself up, to have a place of her own, a chamber. They live with their cells open. When they meet, one says, "Blessed and adored be the most Holy Sacrament of the altar! " The other responds, "Forever." The same ceremony when one taps at the other's door. Hardly has she touched the door when a soft voice on the other side is heard to say hastily, "Forever! " Like all practices, this becomes mechanical by force of habit; and one sometimes says forever before the other has had time to say the rather long sentence, "Praised and adored be the most Holy Sacrament of the altar."

Among the Visitandines the one who enters says: "Ave Maria," and the one whose cell is entered says, "Gratia plena." It is their way of saying good day, which is in fact full of grace.

At each hour of the day three supplementary strokes sound from the church bell of the convent. At this signal prioress, vocal mothers, professed



nuns, lay-sisters, novices, postulants, interrupt what they are saying, what they are doing, or what they are thinking, and all say in unison if it is five o'clock, for instance, "At five o'clock and at all hours praised and adored be the most Holy Sacrament of the altar! " If it is eight o'clock, "At eight o'clock and at all hours! " and so on, according to the hour. This custom, the object of which is to break the thread of thought and to lead it back constantly to God, exists in many communities; the formula alone varies. Thus at The Infant Jesus they say, "At this hour and at every hour may the love of Jesus kindle my heart! "

The Bernardines-Benedictines of Martin Verga, cloistered fifty years ago at Petit-Picpus, chant the offices to a solemn psalmody, a pure Gregorian chant, and always with full voice during the whole course of the office. Everywhere in the missal where an asterisk occurs they pause, and say in a low voice, "Jesus-Marie-Joseph." For the office of the dead they adopt a tone so low that the voices of women can hardly descend to such a depth. The effect produced is striking and tragic.

The nuns of the Petit-Picpus had made a vault under their grand altar for the burial of their community. The Government, as they say, does not permit this vault to receive coffins so they leave the convent when they die. This is an affliction to them, and causes them consternation as an infraction of the rules. They had obtained a mediocre consolation at best,—permission to be interred at a special hour and in a special corner in the ancient Vaugirard cemetery, which was made of land which had formerly belonged to their community.

On Fridays the nuns hear high mass, vespers, and all the offices, as on Sunday. They scrupulously observe in addition all the little festivals unknown to people of the world, of which the Church of France was so prodigal in the olden days, and of which it is still prodigal in Spain and Italy. Their stations in the chapel are interminable.

As for the number and duration of their prayers we can convey no better idea of them than by quoting the ingenuous remark of one of them: "The prayers of the postulants are frightful, the prayers of the novices are still

worse, and the prayers of the professed nuns are still worse."

Once a week the chapter assembles: the prioress presides; the vocal mothers assist. Each sister kneels in turn on the stones, and confesses aloud, in the presence of all, the faults and sins which she has committed during the week. The vocal mothers consult after each confession and inflict the penance aloud. Besides this confession in a loud tone, for which all faults in the least serious are reserved, they have for their venial offences what they call the *coulpe*. To make one's *coulpe* means to prostrate one's self flat on one's face during the office in front of the prioress until the latter, who is never called anything but our mother, notifies the culprit by a slight tap of her foot against the wood of her stall that she can rise.

The *coulpe* or *peccavi*, is made for a very small matter—a broken glass, a torn veil, an involuntary delay of a few seconds at an office, a false note in church, etc.; this suffices, and the *coulpe* is made. The *coulpe* is entirely spontaneous; it is the culpable person herself (the word is etymologically in its place here) who judges herself and inflicts it on herself. On festival days and Sundays four mother precentors intone the offices before a large reading-desk with four places. One day one of the mother precentors intoned a psalm beginning with *Ecce*, and instead of *Ecce* she uttered aloud the three notes *do si sol*; for this piece of absent-mindedness she underwent a *coulpe* which lasted during the whole service: what rendered the fault enormous was the fact that the chapter had laughed.

When a nun is summoned to the parlor, even were it the prioress herself, she drops her veil, as will be remembered, so that only her mouth is visible.

The prioress alone can hold communication with strangers.

The others can see only their immediate family, and that very rarely.

If, by chance, an outsider presents herself to see a nun, or one whom she has known and loved in the outer world, a regular series of negotiations is required. If it is a woman, the authorization may sometimes be granted; the nun comes, and they talk to her through the shutters, which are opened only for a mother or sister. It is unnecessary to say that permission is al-

ways refused to men. Such is the rule of Saint-Benoit, aggravated by Martin Verga. These nuns are not gay, rosy, and fresh, as the daughters of other orders often are. They are pale and grave. Between 1825 and 1830 three of them went mad.

CHAPTER III

AUSTERITIES

One is a postulant for two years at least, often for four; a novice for four. It is rare that the definitive vows can be pronounced earlier than the age of twenty-three or twenty-four years.

The Bernardines-Benedictines of Martin Verga do not admit widows to their order.

In their cells, they deliver themselves up to many unknown macerations, of which they must never speak.

On the day when a novice makes her profession, she is dressed in her handsomest attire, she is crowned with white roses, her hair is brushed until it shines, and curled. Then she prostrates herself; a great black veil is thrown over her, and the office for the dead is sung. Then the nuns separate into two files; one file passes close to her, saying in plaintive accents, "Our sister is dead"; and the other file responds in a voice of ecstasy, "Our sister is alive in Jesus Christ! "

At the epoch when this story takes place, a boarding-school was attached to the convent—a boarding-school for young girls of noble and mostly wealthy families, among whom could be remarked Mademoiselle de Saint-Aulaire and de Belissen, and an English girl bearing the illustrious Catholic name of Talbot. These young girls, reared by these nuns between four walls, grew up with a horror of the world and of the age. One of them said to us one day, "The sight of the street pavement made me shudder from head to foot."

They were dressed in blue, with a white cap and a Holy Spirit of silver