

*Jean.*—" Oh ! no. . . She was beautiful ! Her two hands, which never moved, were crossed on her breast, and so white ! Her head was thrown back, almost behind the pillow, so that through the crack of her closed eyes, she seemed to be looking up to heaven."

*Papa Bonin, aside :* " I have envied the rich, I who have all I want to eat and drink. . . And here is one who has died of starvation ! . . . of starvation ! "

*He called the child, took him up on his knee, and said to him gently :* " Little darling, the letter is written and sent and received. Take me to your mother's house."

*Jean.*—" Oh, yes, I will ! But why are you weeping ? ",

*Bouin.*—" I am not weeping. Do men weep ? . . . It is you who are going to weep little Jean, poor dear ! Do know that I love you as if I were your father ? . . . Oh, this is nonsense ! . . . Unless. . . Well ! I too, had a mother. . . it is a long time to be sure ! But I see her again through you on her bed where she said to me on parting : ' Bouin, be an honest man and a good Christian.' The Virgin, hanging on the wall near the bed, a picture worth two sous, which smiled and which I loved, has just entered again into my heart. I have been an honest man, that is true, but as for a good Christian, well. . . "

*He arose up, the child in his arms. Pressing him to his heart he went on as if speaking to some invisible being.*

" See, old mother, here I am ! be satisfied. Let friends mock if they please. Where you are, I want to go, and I will bring to you this little one, poor angel ! He shall never leave me, because his little begging letter, though never written, has struck a double blow. It has given to him a father, and to me a heart."

PAUL FÉVAL.

