## THE STORY OF A PEASANT (1789.)

## THE BEGINNING OF THE GREAT FRENCH REVOLUTION.

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PART THE FIRST.

1789.

" Well, you are a fool, and this girl is a greater fool than you are to take a fancy to you. What are we in comparison with them?"

She was green with anger. I looked at her very quietly, without replying. My father said

"Let Michel alone—don't call out so loud." But she would listen to nothing, and went

"Did any one ever see such an idiot? For the last six months I have been coaxing that great hag of a Letumier to come here for the sake of that boy; an old miser, who can only talk of her land, her hemp-field, and her cows! I put up with everything, I take patience, and then, when it is all settled, when he has only to close, this beggar refuses! Perhaps he thinks close, this deggar retuses! Perhaps he thinks himself a seigneur, he fancies they ought to run after him. Good heavens! why should I have such people id my family? It makes me shudder!"

I wanted to reply, but she said-

I wanted to reply, but she said—

"Hold your tongue; you will die on a dunghill, and so we shall all."

As I said nothing, she went on—

"Yes, this gentleman refuses. Spend your
life, indeed, in bringing up Nicolases and Michels, vagabonds who get kidnapped here and
there; there is no want of bad girls in the country! Since he refuses probably he likes come. try! Since he refuses, probably he likes some one else better."

She turned round with her broom in her hand, and looked at me over her shoulder. nand, and looked at me over her shoulder. I would hear no more, and looking very pale, I went up the ladder. Since Claude left, Ettenne and I slept above under the thatch. I was in despair; mother called after me—

"So you take yourself off. I see it plain enough, den't I you bad boy? You dare not stay!"

I was choking with shame. I threw myself down in the great box, with my hands over my tace, thinking-

" My God! is this possible?"

And I could hear my mother calling louder and louder-

"The beggar! the idiot!"

My father tried to quiet her. That lasted a long time. My face was wet with tears. About one, everything was at last quiet in the hut, but I could not sleep, I was too unhappy. I thought to myself-

"There! for ten years you have been at work; the others leave home. You stay behind you pay the family debts, you give up your lest liard for the support of the old people, and beliard for the support of the old people, and be-cause you will not marry this girl for the sake of what she has got, because you will not marry the hemp-field, you are no longer good for any-thing—you are only Nicolas, a fool, and a beggar!"

I became more and more indignant. Little I became more and more indignant. Little Etienne slept calmly by my side. I could not close my eyes. From thinking and thinking over these things I was wet with perspiration. I was smothered in this garret. I wanted air. At last, about four, I rose and went down. My father was not asleep; he asked me—

"Is that you, Michel?—are you going out?"

"Yes, father, I am going out."

I wished much to talk to him; he was as good and as honest a man as any. But what

good and as honest a man as any. But what could I say to him? My mother was not asleep either; her eyes shone in the obscurity; she either; her eyes shone in the obscurity; she said nothing, and I went out. Out of doors the fog was rising from the valley. I took the sheep-path under the rocks. The fog soaked through my frock, and cooled my blood. I went straight on. What I was thinking about now, God only knows! I wanted to leave Baraques and go to Saverne, to Quatre-Vents; a journey-man blacksmith never wants work. The idea man blacksmith never wants work. The idea of abandoning my father, Marceline, and little Elienne wrung my heart, but I knew my mother would never get the lands of the Letumiers out of her head, and she would eternally reproach me about them. So many ideas pass through one's brain at such a moment one through one's brain at such a moment, one thinks no more about them, one tries not to do so, and one forgets them.

All I now recollect is, that about five o'clock, after the dew had fallen, there was a beautiful suarise, a spring sun. The coolness did me good; I cried to myself—

" Michel, you must stay and put up with it. You cannot abandon your father, no, nor, Etienne, nor your little sister. It is your duty to support them; let your mother soold, you must stay."

And with these ideas in my head I turned And with these mess in my need I turned back to the village, through the orebards and gardens which lie slong the slope. I screwed up my courage. The sun gave more warmth, the birds were singing, everything was bright, the dew nung at the edges of the leaves. I saw, too, the white smoke from our forge slowly rising against the sky. Valentine was up Valentine was up.

I hurried along, and just as I came to the village, I suddenly heard some one digging on the other side of the hedge which bordered the path. I looked; it was Margaret, behind their house, planting potatoes in a corner of their orchard. I was surprised when I recollected how late she had returned the evening before; I stood against the hedge for some time looking at her; the more I looked at her the more I detained has admired her.

There she was, brave and busy, in a short pettleoat and heavy sabots, thinking of nothing but her work; and I then saw for the first time that her cheeks were brown and round, her forehead small, with beautiful brown hair growforeneed small, with beautiful brown mair grow-ing near her eyebrows and on her temples; the was very like her father; she elenched her-teeth, and her sabot pressed the spade which broke up the roots in the ground. The sun shone through the apple-free in flower upon her with the dickering shadows of the lawyes; shone through the apple-frees in nower upon her, with the flickering shadows of the leaves; the earth steamed, everything shone; one felt already it would be very hot. After leoking at Margaret for a long time, my

mother's words came into my mind—"He loves another;" and I said to myself, "It is true, he does love another! This one possesses neither fields, meadows, nor cows, but she has courage; she shall be my wife! We shall have the rest in time. But I must first win her, and I will work to win her."

From that moment was ideas were changed;
From that moment was ideas were changed;
I respected Margaret new than before; I never for a moment entertained the thought that she could be the wife of another.

Having thus come to a resolution, as people were coming down the path to go to work in the fields, I left the spot, having fully made up my mind, full of courage, and even satisfaction. I came into the street; Valentine had been waiting a moment for me before the forge, his shirt-sleeves tucked up on his long, lean arms, his breast and neck bare.

"What beautiful weather, Michel!" as he saw me coming. "If it was only Sunday we could take a turn in the wood."

"Yed," I answered, taking off my frock;
"but it happens to be Monday, Papa in Ramée.
What have yen got to do this morning?"
"Old Rantsan brought us last evening two

"Old Resilian brought us last evening two dozen axes to be put to rights, for Harberg, and Christopher Besme's cart wants a new nave."
"Well, then, let us begin."
I never felt so fit for work. The iron was in the fire; Valentine took the tongs and the small hammer, I the sledge, and we began.
Each time in my life that I have seen dis-

Each time in my life that I have seen dis tinctly what I wanted, and when, instead of star-gasing and going on day after day as usual, I have fixed on anything difficult, and which required both attention and courage, then my good-humour would return to me. I sang, whistled, and wielded my hammer like an old workman. The greatest trouble is to have no fixed idea; now I had one which pleased me

ixed idea; now I have immensely.

The evening of that day, when about to return to our cotfage, I set off without dread, determined to hear all my mother had to say, and to make no reply. As I came near the house I have a father wery pale and frightened; he to make in reply. As I came near the nouse I met my hither, very pale and frightened; he beckened me into a deep lane between the orchards, where we could not be seen. I followed him, and the poor man said to me, trembling

"Your mother made disturbance enough yesterday, my boy; how dreadful it is! what are you going to do? Are you going

He looked at me, quite pale. I saw he was in a state of great anxiety, and I replied—
"No, father, no! How could I leave you, little Etlenne, an! Marceline? It is not to be

Happiness shope in his face—he seemed to

"That is well," said he. "I knew you would stay, Michel. Yes, yes, I am so giad I spoke to you. She is all in the wrong; she loses her temper too easily. Ah, I have suffered enough in my life-time, but it is all right; you stay here; it is all right."

He held me by the hand, and I felt very much affected.

"Yes," said I, "I will stay, father, and if my mother ories out again—why, she is my mother; I shall listen to her without replying." Then he was reases

"That is right, said he. "But listen one minute; you must wait here an instant or two. I will go home alone, for if your mother saw us together I should have a hard time of it. Do

" Yes, father. Go on."

He then left the lane, and some minutes after I quietly followed him, and went in, My mother was spinning on the hearth, with her mouth shut. She thought, no doubt, that I was going to say something to her—tell her. I was going away. Her eyes followed me about, and she seemed preparing to curse me. Little Mar-celine and Etlenne at her feet were slatting a basket, without daring to look up. My father was chopping firewood, watching me all the while; but I looked as usual, and I only said—
"Good evening, father; good evening mother,"

I am very tired. We have had hard work at the forge to-day."

I went up the ladder. No one replied. I lay down, satisfied with what I had done. I slept

The nex day on going to work early I found the Three Pigeons full of people already; they were soming all along the road, some in carts, the others on foot. The news was soon spread that the memorial of our complaints and grievatics was nearly finished, and it was to be conveyed to Nancy to be incorporated with those of the other balliwicks.

Since the election-day many of the deputies to the balliwick had sent for their wives and children to Lixheim; they were now on their road home, well satisfied to get back to their neste.

They called out as they went by-

"It is finished. The rest are coming this evening; it is all settled."

Valentine and I were well pleased at soon valentine and I were well pleased at soon seeing Maître Jean back at the forge. After working ten years together, it is very dull to remain three weeks alone, and not to see the good-natured fat iace which called out from

"Now, boys, get on!" or, "Stop, let us have a minute to breathe!"

Yes, there is something wanting; one is quite bewildered

So we hung up our jackets, and talked of the good news, while looking at the crowd which had stopped at the inn, Nicole, and Dame Catherine, who went out with chairs to help the women loget down from their sarts, and then compilments and greetings, for all these women were acquainances, and since their bursted. were acquain; ances, and since their husbands had been named deputies; they were much more ceremonious and called one another madame.

Valutine laughed heartily.

"Look here, Michel," said he, "here is the Countess Gros-Jacques, or the Baroness Jarni-que! Look, this is just the time to learn good manners."

He was not descient in wit when he ridiculed those who were not noble; on the contrary, when he saw the bows they made, he laughed

till he cried, and always ended by saying—
"That is as becoming to them as lace to Finance, Father Benedict's donkey! Ob, the Finance, Father Benedict's donkey! Oh, the beggers! To think that this sort should dare to revoit against his majesty, the queen, and the highest authorities! Fancy their asking for their rights! I would give you your rights—that I would—I would send you packing, and if you were not satisfied I would double my Swiss guards and my gendarmorie."

you were not satisfied I would double my swise guards and my gendarmerie."

He discoursed in this way in a low tone, while he blew the bellows and held the iron in the tongs. I knew all his thoughts, for he was shilled to talk cloud to understand himself: it obliged to talk aloud to understand himself; it did me good.

We had begun to work again. The anvil had been heard for three hours, sparks flew, and we were busy with our work, when a shadow was thrown oh the little door; I turned round; it was Margaret! She had something in her apron, and said to me....

"I bring you some work; I have broken my spade; could you mend it for me by this even-

space; occupation mend it for me by sain even-ing or to-morrow morning?"

Valentine took the space, which was all notehed, and the socket broken. I wus delight-ed. Margaret looked at me, and I smiled at her as much as to say

as much as to say—
"Be easy; I will do it for you properly; you shall see how I work."

She smiled in return, seeing how pleased I was to do her this little service.

"By this evening or to-morrow morning it is not possible," said Valentine, "but if you could come to-u orrow evening..." come to-a orrow evening...."

"Nonsense," cried I, it is nothing to do. 'Tis

true we are very busy, but Margaret's spade must be done first."

"You are very welcome to it." said he; only it will take more time than you think, and we are very busy. Margaret laughed.

So I may reckon on its being done, Michel?" "Yes, yes, Margaret, you shall have it this evening.

She went away, and I fitted the small anvil she went away, and I need the small anvil on its block directly, I put the old fron part in the fire, and I took hold of the bellows-handle. Valentine looked at me with surprise; my eagerness astonished him; he said nothing, but I feit my ears were getting red as well as my cheeks. So I began to sing. And he as usual followed me

manner of the old journeymen smiths. Our hammers struck in time, and while thinking I was working for Margaret, my heart overflowed with satisfaction. I do not think I ever worked better in my life; my hammer left the anvil quicker than it fell; the iron was spread out as sily as pasts.

easily as paste.

I hammered my spade first hot, shen cold: I made it square, nather lang the rib well in the middle, the blade limited tail of a swallow, the neck so round said well wolded, that Valentine stopped from time to time to admire my work, and I heard him mutter to himself-

"Every man has his own line. Mattre Tean has no equal for making horseshoes, I am best at fellicated tires. Yes, it's agift from Heaven, at fellicated tires. Yes, it's agift from Heaven, the can deny it. He is best at spades, pickates, and ploughshares; in that he excels; it is the gift of the Lord."

He came and he went, came again, and sometimes asked me if he should help me.

"No," cried I, proud and pleased to see my work get on so well.

work get on so well.

Then I began singing again.

At last, about five, my spade was finished. It shone like a silver plate, and sounded like a bell. Valentine took it, weighed it in his hand for a long time, and then looking at me, said—

"Old Rebstock, of Ribeauplerre, who sells scythes, spades, and ploughshares, even down to the farthest part of Saitzerland, old Rebstock himself would but his hig R on this spade, and say, 'I made this.' Yes, Michel, the Chauvels may be proud of having a good spade, which will last, maybe, as long as they will. This is your masterpiece."

You may believe I was satisfied, for Valentine was a good judge, but the satisfaction arising from his praise was nothing to the pleasure I should have in carrying the spade back to Marsnould have in carrying the spade back to Margaret, but it wanted a handle, and I wanted a new one of ash. Without delay I ran to our neighbour, the old turner, Rigaud. who set to work and made me such a handle as I required, light and strong at the same time. I paid him for it at once, and I went back and put the spade behind the door till the day's work was

At seven, while washing my face, neck and hands at the pump in front of the forge, and chancing to look up the street, I saw Margaret sitting on the bench at their door, peeling pota-I showed her the spade from a distance, and I walked up to her quite content saying-" Here it is; what do you think of that Mar-

She took the spade, and looked at it in admiration. I could hardly breathe.

"Ab," said she, looking at me, "Valentine

I answered her, quite red in the face-

"So you think I cannot make anything?"

"Oh no! but this is so well made. Do you know, Michel, you will make a good workman She smiled, and I was very happy again when she said-

"But this will cost dear; what do I owe you

When I heard that I came down from the clouds, and said to her almost angrily

"Margaret, you want to vex me. What! I work for you; I make you a present of a spade; What! I I am happy to do you a service, and you ask me what it costs !"

Seeing my piteous face, she said-" But you are unreasonable, Michel; all work

is worth its pay; and then there is Mattre Jean's coke, and your time, which you owe him." She was right, and I felt it; but it did not

prevent my saying, "No, no, it is not that!" and even to lose my temper, when suddenly the father Chauvel in his grey frock, with his stick in his hand, took me by the arm and

"What is all this? what is it, Michei? what are you two disputing about?"

He had just come back from Lixheim, and

looked at me good humouredly; as for me, I could hardly speak; I was terriby embarrass-

"Why," said Margaret, "he has mended my spade, and now he won't be paid for doing it."
"Nonsense," said Chauvel; "why?"

A happy idea just came into my head, and I

answered—
"No, you must not make me take a denier,
"No, you must blave you not lent me books Monsteur Change ke have you not lent me books often? did you not get my sister Lisbeth a place whole country to recover its rights? When I work for you it is for friendship sake, in gratitune; I should think myself a beggar if I said to you, 'That costs so and so much." It is con-trary to my nature."

He looked at me a moment with his little

quick eyes, and said—
"That is all very well, but I do not do these things either that I may not pay people. If I had done so from such a motive I also should think myself a begger. Do you see Michel?"

Then, as I did not know what to say, I was

ready to cry, and I said-"Ah, Monsieur Chauvel, you give me pain."

And he, no doubt touched by that, replied-No, Michel, I have no such intent look on you as a brave and honest boy, and to prove it to you I accept your present. We both

of us accept it, don't we Margaret?"
"Yes," said she, "since it gives him so much pleasure, we cannot refuse it."

Chauvel then looked at the spade, and praised Usauvei then looked at the spade, and praised it, saying I was a good workman, at that later be hoped to see me a master, and doing a good fusiness. I had become tranquil; and when he went into his house, and when Margaret had said, "Good night, Michel, and thanks," all was forgetten.

I was pleased at having answered so well, for Chavel's glance, while I was speaking, had disturbed me, and if my reasons had not been so good he might well have suspected something. took this as a warning to be prudent, and to conceal my projects about Margaret till the time came for asking her in marriage.

(To be continued.)