

'I shall not forget that name,' the officer replied. 'And you must remember mine. My name's Pontmercy.'

Without another word, the robber took the wounded man's watch and purse, and disappeared into the night.

Georges Pontmercy was married with a young son. He survived the Battle of Waterloo but unfortunately, in the same year, his wife died. His father-in-law, M. Gillenormand, was a very wealthy man, but the two men hated each other. M. Gillenormand hated everybody who liked Napoleon. He thought that Pontmercy was no better than a beggar, a penniless adventurer who only wanted his money. Pontmercy thought that M. Gillenormand was an old fool. When his daughter died, M. Gillenormand made Pontmercy an offer which he could not refuse.

'You have no money, and I am rich,' he said. 'If you want to keep your son, Marius, I'll give you no money. But if you give the boy to me, and promise never to see him again, I'll look after him.'

Pontmercy, wanting his son to have a good life, had sadly given him to M. Gillenormand and never saw his son or father-in-law again.

Marius grew up with his grandfather, and never knew his father. M. Gillenormand always told him that his father had been no good – that he was a poor soldier and a drunk who had abandoned him after his mother's death. For many years, Marius believed this, but when he was seventeen years old, he learnt the truth. His father, a brave officer who had fought for Napoleon and nearly died at the Battle of Waterloo, had really loved him and his mother very much. Without telling his grandfather, Marius tried to contact his father and finally discovered where he was living. He went at once to visit him, but he was too late. His father had just died. A poor man, Georges Pontmercy had left his son nothing apart from a letter:

For my son. My life was saved at Waterloo by a sergeant. His name was Thénardier. I believe that he recently managed a small

inn in the village of Montfermeil, not far from Paris. If you ever find this man, I want you to help him in any way you can.

Marius returned to Paris, but continued to visit his father's grave regularly, without telling his grandfather. One day, however, his grandfather discovered what he was doing. They had a big quarrel, and M. Gillenormand ordered Marius to leave his house.



For the next three years, Marius lived in a small room in an old, damp-walled building on the outskirts of Paris – the same room that Valjean and Cosette had lived in eight years earlier. He gave up studying law and earned his living by working in a bookshop and helping to write dictionaries. He did not earn very much money, but it was enough for the rent and simple meals. He rarely bought new clothes, but he was proud of the fact that he had never been in debt. His grandfather often tried to send him money, but Marius always returned it. He hated his grandfather for the unjust, cruel way he had treated his poor father. Life was hard for him, but he never forgot the promise he had made his father: that he would find Thénardier, the man who had saved his father's life, and help him in any way he could.

Marius was a handsome young man, but he was also extremely shy. When girls looked at him and smiled, he thought they were laughing at his old clothes. In fact, they were attracted by his good looks, but he was not confident enough to realize this. As a result, he had no girlfriend, but he was happy with his books.

'You shouldn't stay alone all the time,' his good friend, Enjolras, said to him. 'You should get out more. Give the girls a chance. They'd be good for you, Marius. Otherwise you'll turn into a priest!'

Marius paid little attention to his friend, and continued his quiet life of work, study and daily walks.

While walking around his part of the city, Marius had noticed