

Eve and David

by Honore de Balzac

Translated by Ellen Marriage

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EVE AND DAVID

by HONORE DE BALZAC

Translated By
Ellen Marriage

PREPARER'S NOTE

Eve and David is part three of a trilogy. Eve and David's story begins in part one, Two Poets. Part one also introduces Eve's brother, Lucien. Part two, A Distinguished Provincial at Paris, centers on Lucien's life in Paris. For part 3 the action once more returns to Eve and David in Angouleme. In many references parts 1 and 3 are combined under the title Lost Illusions.

EVE AND DAVID

Lucien had gone to Paris; and David Sechard, with the courage and intelligence of the ox which painters give the Evangelist for accompanying symbol, set himself to make the large fortune for which he had wished that evening down by the Charente, when he sat with Eve by the weir, and she gave him her hand and her heart. He wanted to make the money quickly, and less for himself than for Eve's sake and Lucien's. He would place his wife amid the elegant and comfortable surroundings that were hers by right, and his strong arm should sustain her brother's ambitions--this was the programme that he saw before his eyes in letters of fire.

Journalism and politics, the immense development of the book trade, of literature and of the sciences; the increase of public interest in matters touching the various industries in the country; in fact, the whole social tendency of the epoch following the establishment of the Restoration produced an enormous increase in the demand for paper. The supply required was almost ten times as large as the quantity in which the celebrated Ouvrard speculated at the outset of the Revolution. Then Ouvrard could buy up first the entire stock of paper and then the manufacturers; but in the year 1821 there were so many paper-mills in France, that no one could hope to repeat his success; and David had neither audacity enough nor capital enough for such speculation. Machinery for producing paper in any length was just coming into use in England. It was one of the most urgent needs of the time, therefore, that the paper trade should keep pace with the requirements of the French system of civil government, a system by which the right of discussion was to be extended to every man, and the whole fabric based upon continual expression of individual opinion; a grave misfortune, for the nation that deliberates is but little wont to act.

So, strange coincidence! while Lucien was drawn into the great machinery of journalism, where he was like to leave his honor and his intelligence torn to shreds, David Sechard, at the back of his printing-house, foresaw all the practical consequences of the increased activity of the periodical press. He saw the direction in which the spirit of the age was tending, and sought to find means to the required end. He saw also that there was a fortune awaiting the discoverer of cheap paper, and the event has justified his clear-sightedness. Within the last fifteen years, the Patent Office has received more than a hundred applications from persons claiming to have discovered cheap substances to be employed in the manufacture of paper. David felt more than ever convinced that this would be no brilliant triumph, it is true, but a useful and immensely profitable discovery; and after his brother-in-law went to Paris, he became more and more absorbed in the problem which he had set himself to solve.

The expenses of his marriage and of Lucien's journey to Paris had exhausted all his resources; he confronted the extreme of poverty at the very outset of married life. He had kept one thousand francs for the working expenses of the business, and owed a like sum, for which he had given a bill to Postel the druggist. So here was a double problem for this deep thinker; he must invent a method of making cheap paper, and that quickly; he must make the discovery, in fact, in order to apply the proceeds to the needs of the household and of the business. What words can describe the brain that can forget the cruel preoccupations caused by hidden want, by the daily needs of a family and the daily drudgery of a printer's business, which requires such minute, painstaking care; and soar, with the enthusiasm and intoxication of the man of science, into the regions of the unknown in quest of a secret which daily eludes the most subtle experiment? And the inventor, alas! as will shortly be seen, has plenty of woes to endure, besides the ingratitude of the many; idle folk that can do nothing themselves tell them, "Such a one is a born inventor; he could not do otherwise. He no more deserves credit for his invention than a prince for being born to rule! He is simply exercising his natural faculties, and his work is its own reward," and the people believe them.

Marriage brings profound mental and physical perturbations into a girl's life; and if she marries under the ordinary conditions of lower middle-class life, she must moreover begin to study totally new interests and initiate herself in the intricacies of business. With marriage, therefore, she enters upon a phase of her existence when she is necessarily on the watch before she can act. Unfortunately, David's love for his wife retarded this training; he dared not tell her the real state of affairs on the day after their wedding, nor for some time afterwards. His father's avarice condemned him to the most grinding poverty, but he could not bring himself to spoil the honeymoon by beginning his wife's commercial education and prosaic apprenticeship to his laborious craft. So it came to pass that housekeeping, no less than working expenses, ate up the thousand francs, his whole fortune. For four months David gave no thought to the future, and his wife remained in ignorance. The awakening was terrible! Postel's bill fell due; there was no money to meet it, and Eve knew enough of the debt and its cause to give up her bridal trinkets and silver.

That evening Eve tried to induce David to talk of their affairs, for she had noticed that he was giving less attention to the business and more to the problem of which he had once spoken to her. Since the first few weeks of married life, in fact, David spent most of his time in the shed in the backyard, in the little room where he was wont to mould his ink-rollers. Three months after his return to Angouleme, he had replaced the old fashioned round ink-balls by rollers made of strong glue and treacle, and an ink-table, on which the ink was evenly distributed, an improvement so obvious that Cointet Brothers no sooner saw it than they adopted the plan themselves.

By the partition wall of this kitchen, as it were, David had set up a little furnace with a copper pan, ostensibly to save the cost of fuel

over the recasting of his rollers, though the moulds had not been used twice, and hung there rusting upon the wall. Nor was this all; a solid oak door had been put in by his orders, and the walls were lined with sheet-iron; he even replaced the dirty window sash by panes of ribbed glass, so that no one without could watch him at his work.

When Eve began to speak about the future, he looked uneasily at her, and cut her short at the first word by saying, "I know all that you must think, child, when you see that the workshop is left to itself, and that I am dead, as it were, to all business interests; but see," he continued, bringing her to the window, and pointing to the mysterious shed, "there lies our fortune. For some months yet we must endure our lot, but let us bear it patiently; leave me to solve the problem of which I told you, and all our troubles will be at an end."

David was so good, his devotion was so thoroughly to be taken upon his word, that the poor wife, with a wife's anxiety as to daily expenses, determined to spare her husband the household cares and to take the burden upon herself. So she came down from the pretty blue-and-white room, where she sewed and talked contentedly with her mother, took possession of one of the two dens at the back of the printing-room, and set herself to learn the business routine of typography. Was it not heroism in a wife who expected ere long to be a mother?

During the past few months David's workmen had left him one by one; there was not enough work for them to do. Cointet Brothers, on the other hand, were overwhelmed with orders; they were employing all the workmen of the department; the alluring prospect of high wages even brought them a few from Bordeaux, more especially apprentices, who thought themselves sufficiently expert to cancel their articles and go elsewhere. When Eve came to look into the affairs of Sechard's printing works, she discovered that he employed three persons in all.

First in order stood Cerizet, an apprentice of Didot's, whom David had chosen to train. Most foremen have some one favorite among the great numbers of workers under them, and David had brought Cerizet to Angouleme, where he had been learning more of the business. Marion, as much attached to the house as a watch-dog, was the second; and the third was Kolb, an Alsacien, at one time a porter in the employ of the Messrs. Didot. Kolb had been drawn for military service, chance brought him to Angouleme, and David recognized the man's face at a review just as his time was about to expire. Kolb came to see David, and was smitten forthwith by the charms of the portly Marion; she possessed all the qualities which a man of his class looks for in a wife--the robust health that bronzes the cheeks, the strength of a man (Marion could lift a form of type with ease), the scrupulous honesty on which an Alsacien sets such store, the faithful service which bespeaks a sterling character, and finally, the thrift which had saved a little sum of a thousand francs, besides a stock of clothing and linen, neat and clean, as country linen can be. Marion herself, a big, stout woman of thirty-six, felt sufficiently flattered by the admiration of a cuirassier, who stood five feet seven in his stockings, a well-built warrior, strong as a bastion, and not unnaturally suggested that he should become a printer. So, by the time

Kolb received his full discharge, Marion and David between them had transformed him into a tolerably creditable "bear," though their pupil could neither read nor write.

Job printing, as it is called, was not so abundant at this season but that Cerizet could manage it without help. Cerizet, compositor, clicker, and foreman, realized in his person the "phenomenal triplicity" of Kant; he set up type, read proof, took orders, and made out invoices; but the most part of the time he had nothing to do, and used to read novels in his den at the back of the workshop while he waited for an order for a bill-head or a trade circular. Marion, trained by old Sechard, prepared and wetted down the paper, helped Kolb with the printing, hung the sheets to dry, and cut them to size; yet cooked the dinner, none the less, and did her marketing very early of a morning.

Eve told Cerizet to draw out a balance-sheet for the last six months, and found that the gross receipts amounted to eight hundred francs. On the other hand, wages at the rate of three francs per day--two francs to Cerizet, and one to Kolb--reached a total of six hundred francs; and as the goods supplied for the work printed and delivered amounted to some hundred odd francs, it was clear to Eve that David had been carrying on business at a loss during the first half-year of their married life. There was nothing to show for rent, nothing for Marion's wages, nor for the interest on capital represented by the plant, the license, and the ink; nothing, finally, by way of allowance for the host of things included in the technical expression "wear and tear," a word which owes its origin to the cloths and silks which are used to moderate the force of the impression, and to save wear to the type; a square of stuff (the blanket) being placed between the platen and the sheet of paper in the press.

Eve made a rough calculation of the resources of the printing office and of the output, and saw how little hope there was for a business drained dry by the all-devouring activity of the brothers Cointet; for by this time the Cointets were not only contract printers to the town and the prefecture, and printers to the Diocese by special appointment--they were paper-makers and proprietors of a newspaper to boot. That newspaper, sold two years ago by the Sechards, father and son, for twenty-two thousand francs, was now bringing in eighteen thousand francs per annum. Eve began to understand the motives lurking beneath the apparent generosity of the brothers Cointet; they were leaving the Sechard establishment just sufficient work to gain a pittance, but not enough to establish a rival house.

When Eve took the management of the business, she began by taking stock. She set Kolb and Marion and Cerizet to work, and the workshop was put to rights, cleaned out, and set in order. Then one evening when David came in from a country excursion, followed by an old woman with a huge bundle tied up in a cloth, Eve asked counsel of him as to the best way of turning to profit the odds and ends left them by old Sechard, promising that she herself would look after the business. Acting upon her husband's advice, Mme. Sechard sorted all the remnants of paper which she found, and printed old popular legends in double

columns upon a single sheet, such as peasants paste on their walls, the histories of The Wandering Jew, Robert the Devil, La Belle Maguelonne and sundry miracles. Eve sent Kolb out as a hawker.

Cerizet had not a moment to spare now; he was composing the naive pages, with the rough cuts that adorned them, from morning to night; Marion was able to manage the taking off; and all domestic cares fell to Mme. Chardon, for Eve was busy coloring the prints. Thanks to Kolb's activity and honesty, Eve sold three thousand broad sheets at a penny apiece, and made three hundred francs in all at a cost of thirty francs.

But when every peasant's hut and every little wine-shop for twenty leagues round was papered with these legends, a fresh speculation must be discovered; the Alsacien could not go beyond the limits of the department. Eve, turning over everything in the whole printing house, had found a collection of figures for printing a "Shepherd's Calendar," a kind of almanac meant for those who cannot read, letterpress being replaced by symbols, signs, and pictures in colored inks, red, black and blue. Old Sechard, who could neither read nor write himself, had made a good deal of money at one time by bringing out an almanac in hieroglyph. It was in book form, a single sheet folded to make one hundred and twenty-eight pages.

Thoroughly satisfied with the success of the broad sheets, a piece of business only undertaken by country printing offices, Mme. Sechard invested all the proceeds in the Shepherd's Calendar, and began it upon a large scale. Millions of copies of this work are sold annually in France. It is printed upon even coarser paper than the Almanac of Liege, a ream (five hundred sheets) costing in the first instance about four francs; while the printed sheets sell at the rate of a halfpenny apiece--twenty-five francs per ream.

Mme. Sechard determined to use one hundred reams for the first impression; fifty thousand copies would bring in two thousand francs. A man so deeply absorbed in his work as David in his researches is seldom observant; yet David, taking a look round his workshop, was astonished to hear the groaning of a press and to see Cerizet always on his feet, setting up type under Mme. Sechard's direction. There was a pretty triumph for Eve on the day when David came in to see what she was doing, and praised the idea, and thought the calendar an excellent stroke of business. Furthermore, David promised to give advice in the matter of colored inks, for an almanac meant to appeal to the eye; and finally, he resolved to recast the ink-rollers himself in his mysterious workshop, so as to help his wife as far as he could in her important little enterprise.

But just as the work began with strenuous industry, there came letters from Lucien in Paris, heart-sinking letters that told his mother and sister and brother-in-law of his failure and distress; and when Eve, Mme. Chardon, and David each secretly sent money to their poet, it must be plain to the reader that the three hundred francs they sent were like their very blood. The overwhelming news, the disheartening sense that work as bravely as she might, she made so little, left Eve

looking forward with a certain dread to an event which fills the cup of happiness to the full. The time was coming very near now, and to herself she said, "If my dear David has not reached the end of his researches before my confinement, what will become of us? And who will look after our poor printing office and the business that is growing up?"

The Shepherd's Calendar ought by rights to have been ready before the 1st of January, but Cerizet was working unaccountably slowly; all the work of composing fell to him; and Mme. Sechard, knowing so little, could not find fault, and was fain to content herself with watching the young Parisian.

Cerizet came from the great Foundling Hospital in Paris. He had been apprenticed to the MM. Didot, and between the ages of fourteen and seventeen he was David Sechard's fanatical worshiper. David put him under one of the cleverest workmen, and took him for his copy-holder, his page. Cerizet's intelligence naturally interested David; he won the lad's affection by procuring amusements now and again for him, and comforts from which he was cut off by poverty. Nature had endowed Cerizet with an insignificant, rather pretty little countenance, red hair, and a pair of dull blue eyes; he had come to Angouleme and brought the manners of the Parisian street-boy with him. He was formidable by reason of a quick, sarcastic turn and a spiteful disposition. Perhaps David looked less strictly after him in Angouleme; or, perhaps, as the lad grew older, his mentor put more trust in him, or in the sobering influences of a country town; but be that as it may, Cerizet (all unknown to his sponsor) was going completely to the bad, and the printer's apprentice was acting the part of a Don Juan among little work girls. His morality, learned in Paris drinking-saloons, laid down the law of self-interest as the sole rule of guidance; he knew, moreover, that next year he would be "drawn for a soldier," to use the popular expression, saw that he had no prospects, and ran into debt, thinking that soon he should be in the army, and none of his creditors would run after him. David still possessed some ascendancy over the young fellow, due not to his position as master, nor yet to the interest that he had taken in his pupil, but to the great intellectual power which the sometime street-boy fully recognized.

Before long Cerizet began to fraternize with the Cointets' workpeople, drawn to them by the mutual attraction of blouse and jacket, and the class feeling, which is, perhaps, strongest of all in the lowest ranks of society. In their company Cerizet forgot the little good doctrine which David had managed to instil into him; but, nevertheless, when the others joked the boy about the presses in his workshop ("old sabots," as the "bears" contemptuously called them), and showed him the magnificent machines, twelve in number, now at work in the Cointets' great printing office, where the single wooden press was only used for experiments, Cerizet would stand up for David and fling out at the braggarts.

"My gaffer will go farther with his 'sabots' than yours with their cast-iron contrivances that turn out mass books all day long," he

would boast. "He is trying to find out a secret that will lick all the printing offices in France and Navarre."

"And meantime you take your orders from a washer-woman, you snip of a foreman, on two francs a day."

"She is pretty though," retorted Cerizet; "it is better to have her to look at than the phizes of your gaffers."

"And do you live by looking at his wife?"

From the region of the wineshop, or from the door of the printing office, where these bickerings took place, a dim light began to break in upon the brothers Cointet as to the real state of things in the Sechard establishment. They came to hear of Eve's experiment, and held it expedient to stop these flights at once, lest the business should begin to prosper under the poor young wife's management.

"Let us give her a rap over the knuckles, and disgust her with the business," said the brothers Cointet.

One of the pair, the practical printer, spoke to Cerizet, and asked him to do the proof-reading for them by piecework, to relieve their reader, who had more than he could manage. So it came to pass that Cerizet earned more by a few hours' work of an evening for the brothers Cointet than by a whole day's work for David Sechard. Other transactions followed; the Cointets seeing no small aptitude in Cerizet, he was told that it was a pity that he should be in a position so little favorable to his interests.

"You might be foreman some day in a big printing office, making six francs a day," said one of the Cointets one day, "and with your intelligence you might come to have a share in the business."

"Where is the use of my being a good foreman?" returned Cerizet. "I am an orphan, I shall be drawn for the army next year, and if I get a bad number who is there to pay some one else to take my place?"

"If you make yourself useful," said the well-to-do printer, "why should not somebody advance the money?"

"It won't be my gaffer in any case!" said Cerizet.

"Pooh! Perhaps by that time he will have found out the secret."

The words were spoken in a way that could not but rouse the worst thoughts in the listener; and Cerizet gave the papermaker and printer a very searching look.

"I do not know what he is busy about," he began prudently, as the master said nothing, "but he is not the kind of man to look for capitals in the lower case!"

"Look here, my friend," said the printer, taking up half-a-dozen

sheets of the diocesan prayer-book and holding them out to Cerizet, "if you can correct these for us by to-morrow, you shall have eighteen francs to-morrow for them. We are not shabby here; we put our competitor's foreman in the way of making money. As a matter of fact, we might let Mme. Sechard go too far to draw back with her Shepherd's Calendar, and ruin her; very well, we give you permission to tell her that we are bringing out a Shepherd's Calendar of our own, and to call her attention too to the fact that she will not be the first in the field."

Cerizet's motive for working so slowly on the composition of the almanac should be clear enough by this time.

When Eve heard that the Cointets meant to spoil her poor little speculation, dread seized upon her; at first she tried to see a proof of attachment in Cerizet's hypocritical warning of competition; but before long she saw signs of an over-keen curiosity in her sole compositor--the curiosity of youth, she tried to think.

"Cerizet," she said one morning, "you stand about on the threshold, and wait for M. Sechard in the passage, to pry into his private affairs; when he comes out into the yard to melt down the rollers, you are there looking at him, instead of getting on with the almanac. These things are not right, especially when you see that I, his wife, respect his secrets, and take so much trouble on myself to leave him free to give himself up to his work. If you had not wasted time, the almanac would be finished by now, and Kolb would be selling it, and the Cointets could have done us no harm."

"Eh! madame," answered Cerizet. "Here am I doing five francs' worth of composing for two francs a day, and don't you think that that is enough? Why, if I did not read proofs of an evening for the Cointets, I might feed myself on husks."

"You are turning ungrateful early," said Eve, deeply hurt, not so much by Cerizet's grumbling as by his coarse tone, threatening attitude, and aggressive stare; "you will get on in life."

"Not with a woman to order me about though, for it is not often that the month has thirty days in it then."

Feeling wounded in her womanly dignity, Eve gave Cerizet a withering look and went upstairs again. At dinner-time she spoke to David.

"Are you sure, dear, of that little rogue Cerizet?"

"Cerizet!" said David. "Why, he was my youngster; I trained him, I took him on as my copy-holder. I put him to composing; anything that he is he owes to me, in fact! You might as well ask a father if he is sure of his child."

Upon this, Eve told her husband that Cerizet was reading proofs for the Cointets.

"Poor fellow! he must live," said David, humbled by the consciousness that he had not done his duty as a master.

"Yes, but there is a difference, dear, between Kolb and Cerizet--Kolb tramps about twenty leagues every day, spends fifteen or twenty sous, and brings us back seven and eight and sometimes nine francs of sales; and when his expenses are paid, he never asks for more than his wages. Kolb would sooner cut off his hand than work a lever for the Cointets; Kolb would not peer among the things that you throw out into the yard if people offered him a thousand crowns to do it; but Cerizet picks them up and looks at them."

It is hard for noble natures to think evil, to believe in ingratitude; only through rough experience do they learn the extent of human corruption; and even when there is nothing left them to learn in this kind, they rise to an indulgence which is the last degree of contempt.

"Pooh! pure Paris street-boy's curiosity," cried David.

"Very well, dear, do me the pleasure to step downstairs and look at the work done by this boy of yours, and tell me then whether he ought not to have finished our almanac this month."

David went into the workshop after dinner, and saw that the calendar should have been set up in a week. Then, when he heard that the Cointets were bringing out a similar almanac, he came to the rescue. He took command of the printing office, Kolb helped at home instead of selling broadsheets. Kolb and Marion pulled off the impressions from one form while David worked another press with Cerizet, and superintended the printing in various inks. Every sheet must be printed four separate times, for which reason none but small houses will attempt to produce a Shepherd's calendar, and that only in the country where labor is cheap, and the amount of capital employed in the business is so small that the interest amounts to little. Wherefore, a press which turns out beautiful work cannot compete in the printing of such sheets, coarse though they may be.

So, for the first time since old Sechard retired, two presses were at work in the old house. The calendar was, in its way, a masterpiece; but Eve was obliged to sell it for less than a halfpenny, for the Cointets were supplying hawkers at the rate of three centimes per copy. Eve made no loss on the copies sold to hawkers; on Kolb's sales, made directly, she gained; but her little speculation was spoiled. Cerizet saw that his fair employer distrusted him; in his own conscience he posed as the accuser, and said to himself, "You suspect me, do you? I will have my revenge," for the Paris street-boy is made on this wise. Cerizet accordingly took pay out of all proportion to the work of proof-reading done for the Cointets, going to their office every evening for the sheets, and returning them in the morning. He came to be on familiar terms with them through the daily chat, and at length saw a chance of escaping the military service, a bait held out to him by the brothers. So far from requiring prompting from the Cointets, he was the first to propose the espionage and exploitation of David's researches.

Eve saw how little she could depend upon Cerizet, and to find another Kolb was simply impossible; she made up her mind to dismiss her one compositor, for the insight of a woman who loves told her that Cerizet was a traitor; but as this meant a deathblow to the business, she took a man's resolution. She wrote to M. Metivier, with whom David and the Cointets and almost every papermaker in the department had business relations, and asked him to put the following advertisement into a trade paper:

"FOR SALE, as a going concern, a Printing Office, with License and Plant; situated at Angouleme. Apply for particulars to M. Metivier, Rue Serpente."

The Cointets saw the advertisement. "That little woman has a head on her shoulders," they said. "It is time that we took her business under our own control, by giving her enough work to live upon; we might find a real competitor in David's successor; it is in our interest to keep an eye upon that workshop."

The Cointets went to speak to David Sechard, moved thereto by this thought. Eve saw them, knew that her stratagem had succeeded at once, and felt a thrill of the keenest joy. They stated their proposal. They had more work than they could undertake, their presses could not keep pace with the work, would M. Sechard print for them? They had sent to Bordeaux for workmen, and could find enough to give full employment to David's three presses.

"Gentlemen," said Eve, while Cerizet went across to David's workshop to announce the two printers, "while my husband was with the MM. Didot he came to know of excellent workers, honest and industrious men; he will choose his successor, no doubt, from among the best of them. If he sold his business outright for some twenty thousand francs, it might bring us in a thousand francs per annum; that would be better than losing a thousand yearly over such trade as you leave us. Why did you envy us the poor little almanac speculation, especially as we have always brought it out?"

"Oh, why did you not give us notice, madame? We would not have interfered with you," one of the brothers answered blandly (he was known as the "tall Cointet").

"Oh, come gentlemen! you only began your almanac after Cerizet told you that I was bringing out mine."

She spoke briskly, looking full at "the tall Cointet" as she spoke. He lowered his eyes; Cerizet's treachery was proven to her.

This brother managed the business and the paper-mill; he was by far the cleverer man of business of the two. Jean showed no small ability in the conduct of the printing establishment, but in intellectual capacity he might be said to take colonel's rank, while Boniface was a general. Jean left the command to Boniface. This latter was thin and spare in person; his face, sallow as an altar candle, was mottled with

reddish patches; his lips were pinched; there was something in his eyes that reminded you of a cat's eyes. Boniface Cointet never excited himself; he would listen to the grossest insults with the serenity of a bigot, and reply in a smooth voice. He went to mass, he went to confession, he took the sacrament. Beneath his caressing manners, beneath an almost spiritless look, lurked the tenacity and ambition of the priest, and the greed of the man of business consumed with a thirst for riches and honors. In the year 1820 "tall Cointet" wanted all that the bourgeoisie finally obtained by the Revolution of 1830. In his heart he hated the aristocrats, and in religion he was indifferent; he was as much or as little of a bigot as Bonaparte was a member of the Mountain; yet his vertebral column bent with a flexibility wonderful to behold before the noblesse and the official hierarchy; for the powers that be, he humbled himself, he was meek and obsequious. One final characteristic will describe him for those who are accustomed to dealings with all kinds of men, and can appreciate its value--Cointet concealed the expression of his eyes by wearing colored glasses, ostensibly to preserve his sight from the reflection of the sunlight on the white buildings in the streets; for Angouleme, being set upon a hill, is exposed to the full glare of the sun. Tall Cointet was really scarcely above middle height; he looked much taller than he actually was by reason of the thinness, which told of overwork and a brain in continual ferment. His lank, sleek gray hair, cut in somewhat ecclesiastical fashion; the black trousers, black stockings, black waistcoat, and long puce-colored greatcoat (styled a levite in the south), all completed his resemblance to a Jesuit.

Boniface was called "tall Cointet" to distinguish him from his brother, "fat Cointet," and the nicknames expressed a difference in character as well as a physical difference between a pair of equally redoubtable personages. As for Jean Cointet, a jolly, stout fellow, with a face from a Flemish interior, colored by the southern sun of Angouleme, thick-set, short and paunchy as Sancho Panza; with a smile on his lips and a pair of sturdy shoulders, he was a striking contrast to his older brother. Nor was the difference only physical and intellectual. Jean might almost be called Liberal in politics; he belonged to the Left Centre, only went to mass on Sundays, and lived on a remarkably good understanding with the Liberal men of business. There were those in L'Houmeau who said that this divergence between the brothers was more apparent than real. Tall Cointet turned his brother's seeming good nature to advantage very skilfully. Jean was his bludgeon. It was Jean who gave all the hard words; it was Jean who conducted the executions which little beseemed the elder brother's benevolence. Jean took the storms department; he would fly into a rage, and propose terms that nobody would think of accepting, to pave the way for his brother's less unreasonable propositions. And by such policy the pair attained their ends, sooner or later.

Eve, with a woman's tact, had soon divined the characters of the two brothers; she was on her guard with foes so formidable. David, informed beforehand of everything by his wife, lent a profoundly inattentive mind to his enemies' proposals.

"Come to an understanding with my wife," he said, as he left the

Cointets in the office and went back to his laboratory. "Mme. Sechard knows more about the business than I do myself. I am interested in something that will pay better than this poor place; I hope to find a way to retrieve the losses that I have made through you----"

"And how?" asked the fat Cointet, chuckling.

Eve gave her husband a look that meant, "Be careful!"

"You will be my tributaries," said David, "and all other consumers of papers besides."

"Then what are you investigating?" asked the hypocritical Boniface Cointet.

Boniface's question slipped out smoothly and insinuatingly, and again Eve's eyes implored her husband to give an answer that was no answer, or to say nothing at all.

"I am trying to produce paper at fifty per cent less than the present cost price," and he went. He did not see the glances exchanged between the brothers. "That is an inventor, a man of his build cannot sit with his hands before him.--Let us exploit him," said Boniface's eyes. "How can we do it?" said Jean's.

Mme. Sechard spoke. "David treats me just in the same way," she said. "If I show any curiosity, he feels suspicious of my name, no doubt, and out comes that remark of his; it is only a formula, after all."

"If your husband can work out the formula, he will certainly make a fortune more quickly than by printing; I am not surprised that he leaves the business to itself," said Boniface, looking across the empty workshop, where Kolb, seated upon a wetting-board, was rubbing his bread with a clove of garlic; "but it would not suit our views to see this place in the hands of an energetic, pushing, ambitious competitor," he continued, "and perhaps it might be possible to arrive at an understanding. Suppose, for instance, that you consented for a consideration to allow us to put in one of our own men to work your presses for our benefit, but nominally for you; the thing is sometimes done in Paris. We would find the fellow work enough to enable him to rent your place and pay you well, and yet make a profit for himself."

"It depends on the amount," said Eve Sechard. "What is your offer?" she added, looking at Boniface to let him see that she understood his scheme perfectly well.

"What is your own idea?" Jean Cointet put in briskly.

"Three thousand francs for six months," said she.

"Why, my dear young lady, you were proposing to sell the place outright for twenty thousand francs," said Boniface with much suavity. "The interest on twenty thousand francs is only twelve hundred francs per annum at six per cent."

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