

### THE JEAN VALJEANS OF OUR DAY AND COUNTRY.

Jean Valjean's, Victor Hugo's great character in "Les Miserable," belonged to a poor peasant family of La Br.e, France. His parents died while he was very young and he grew up in the family of a sister. On the death of the sister's husband he assumed the duties of a father to the seven helpless children, and gave to the family such support as he could. This continued while work lasted. One hard winter came when "Jean had no work to do, and the family had no bread. No bread, literally none, and seven children!" Confronted by this situation, Jean Valjean stole from a baker a loaf of bread with which to feed the starving children. He was arrested, convicted by the court and sentenced to five years at the galleys. Let Victor Hugo tell in a few words, without detail, the fate of the family:

What became of his sister? What became of the seven children? Who troubles himself about that? What becomes of the spray of leaves when the stem of the young tree has been cut at the foot? It is always the same story. These poor living beings, these creatures of God, henceforth without support, guide, or shelter, went off haphazard, and gradually buried themselves in that cold fog in which solitary destinies are swallowed up, that mournful gloom in which so many unfortunates disappear during the sullen progress of the human race.

In the sentence of Jean Valjean all the hopes of a noble spirit were crushed and the possibilities of a noble life destroyed. In all the after years his life was pursued by a relentless police. As Father Madeleine, the founder of a great manufacturing establishment, at M., his presence was pronounced a providence. He raised wages, improved his manufactures, extended his trade, dispensed blessings everywhere, helped the needy, became honored and respected, was nominated by the king mayor of M., prospered, grew rich and enjoyed the confidence and esteem of all. By his workmen and by the poor he was idolized. He led an unblemished life and was known and honored far and near for his many virtues and benefactions. In the performance of a noble act, the release of an old man from the crushing weight of a loaded cart which had fallen upon him, Father Madeleine was recognized by Javert, the inspector of police, as Jean Valjean, the galley slave; and he again became the convict, the offender against the majesty of the law. And for what? For having years before taken a loaf of bread to keep a woman and seven children from starving. The city of M. had been made prosperous by the work of his hands and brain. Its citizens, who owed their own prosperity to him, forsook him. His own workmen shunned him. He was friendless in the midst of those who were indebted to him for all they had and for all they hoped to become.

How many Jean Valjeans are there in America to-day? How many men are driven to desperation by the pangs of hunger or by the cries for bread of starving children. How many men to-day are languishing in American prisons, separated from wives and

children who were dependent upon them for their daily bread, and who would now be upright and honored citizens but for deeds done in desperation to save loved ones from want? How many others are homeless wanderers, tramps, vagabonds, who, but for the hard conditions imposed upon them by society, would be now engaged in industrial pursuits, living honorable lives, and contributing to the aggregate of our national wealth? Public officials and boards of charity talk of aid to the "worthy" poor. Who are the worthy poor, and who the unworthy? Why is the one worthy and the other unworthy? By what peculiar marks are they to be distinguished? Is it likely that any are poor from choice? You say the one is worthy because he is honest and would work if he could get work to do; while the other will not work when the opportunity is offered. Or the one is simply an honest laboring man out of work while the other is a professional tramp. There may be this distinction. But suppose your honest laboring man, out of a job, starts out to find one and fails. Suppose he continues to go from place to place in search of work and does not find it. His money becomes exhausted and he still goes on seeking employment. How is he to live after his last dime is gone, and what now does he become as he pursues his daily search for work, in vain? What would you call your honest working-man at this stage of the game? Suppose he is unsuccessful in finding either work or food; and in his desperation he robs a bank or a railroad train. He becomes then not only one of the unworthy poor, but he becomes a criminal in the eyes of the law. Who made him a criminal? Is he alone to be blamed because he is not still an honest man?

The New York Herald of December 4, 1893, contained a dispatch from Bessemer, Mich., a town composed of miners, and where five mines had been recently closed. Out of 900 inhabitants, 875 were hungry when visited by the investigating committee. The dispatch says:

Forty men marched to the house of J. W. Bedell, road supervisor. They were all armed, some with rifles, and others with pickaxes and handpicks. "We want work," they growled when Mr. Bedell appeared. "I have no work," he replied. "We want work or food, and we will have it," they answered.

These men evidently belonged to the "worthy poor" up to this stage of the proceedings. They had been thrown out of employment by the closing of the mines, and they were honest men now only seeking work by which to keep their wives and children from starvation. Evidently our boards of charity would consider them worthy of assistance. But the interview with Mr. Bedell continues:

What will you do if you can't get it?

We will break into the company stores here and live off what they have there until that is gone, and then we'll break into Bessemer's stores. We won't starve, and when all get into the penitentiary, they'll have to feed us.

What are these men now? Do they now belong to the worthy or the unworthy poor?

The Kansas City Journal of December 23, 1893, had the following local:

Charles Hall, who claims Danville, Ky., at his home, was arrested last night by Sergeant Miller, who discovered him in the act of stealing an overcoat from the doorway of a clothing store at Ninth and Maine streets.

When taken to the Central police station, Hall told the police that he saw Sergeant Miller and a squad of policemen coming up the street, and that he took the coat just when he did, so that they would see him. He said he did not want to escape from the officers, and is glad that he was caught. He told Captain Flahive that he hoped he would get six months in the county jail as a punishment for stealing the coat, and that he would much rather be in jail than out in the world with no money or friends.

Where would our boards of charity class this man—with the worthy or unworthy poor?

A few days ago seventeen men found lodging in one of the station houses in the city of Philadelphia. In the morning they delegated one of their number to ask that they all be committed to the house of correction.

"Why are you so anxious to go to the house of correction?" asked the magistrate.

"Well," replied Weunder, and he wiped a tear from his cheek, "my companions and myself are weary of several months of a compulsory nomadic life, and they have delegated me to appeal to you to imprison all of us until the cold weather has passed."

The magistrate sentenced each of them for four months.

Lieutenant Wolf's record showed that all the applicants but four were mechanics, and they had none of the air of professional loungers.

Were these men of the worthy or the unworthy poor? The city could do nothing for them, society could do nothing for them, our boasted civilization could afford them no relief, except by sentencing them to the house of correction. O, shame upon such a civilization! Shame upon a governmental system that can exercise no care for its citizens unless they first become criminals. O, for another Victor Hugo to picture the shame of our American civilization as that inimitable writer has pictured the like evils in France!

Ah, these be good times! Green cow skins are selling at 30 cents each in Texas. Wheat, 22 to 26 cents a bushel in the state of Washington. Good colts one year old are selling in Missouri at \$5 and \$6 a head. Fat sheep—sold recently in the Kansas City market at \$1 a head. In Missouri mules that sold one year ago for \$60 cannot bring more than \$30. Pennsylvania farmers are feeding their 1892 crop of wheat—held for a higher price—to their hogs. In Milwaukee, Wis., cows were sold recently at \$2.50 a head. Ah, these be grand times!

We desire to repeat a question we asked some time ago to which no answer has yet been given. Suppose the farmers of Kansas should combine together and decline to pay the taxes levied upon their property by the assessors, as the railroads have done, what would republican papers call them? If the Capital will condescend to answer the question, perhaps the me-too papers will copy the answer.

### CONCLUSIVE.

The McPherson Republican has been looking up one of the great hobbies of flat agitators, and gives it the following notice:

"The Populist papers are resurrecting the old stories about the Bank of Venice. It is described as a wonderfully beneficial institution, surrounding itself with a halo of good deeds to the public. The real fact is that the Bank of Venice was a first-class out-throat. It got a monopoly of certain transactions, and then worked the monopoly for all it was worth. It skinned its own neighbors unmercifully, and swallowed a stranger whole when it could get at him. For people who are not rich enough to be worth skimming it had no earthly use. It would neither do business with them or for them."—Capital, January 10.

Now, that's conclusive, isn't it? The historical citations are so authoritative and exhaustive in support of the statement of this McPherson county statesman, that fair minded men will at once accept his conclusions, especially since they have the unqualified endorsement of the Capital.

POPULISM either means socialism or it means nothing. And the fact that it does mean socialism and makes everyone who adheres to the party a socialist is what makes the party not only dangerous to the individual but to the government as well.—Lawrence Journal, January 6.

The above is a very positive but a very indefinite statement. Will the Journal now be kind enough to specify the particular tenets of socialistic faith that are so dangerous to the individual and to the government, and then show its readers just why they are dangerous? The time has come when such general statements as the above fail to satisfy fair minded people.

CHAUNCEY DEPEW is joining in the wail. Chauncey draws a salary of \$75,000 as president of the Vanderbilts' roads, but turns away from his duties to join in a high tenor in the calamity chorus. He says there are 2,000,000 men unemployed in this country, which means 10,000,000 of people without a bread winner, or the possibility of winning bread. Bradstreet says there are 3,000,000 of idle men in this country, and according to Mr. Depew's estimate of an average of five persons dependent upon each man, we have 15,000,000 of people without a bread winner.

It is clearly the policy of the administration to issue more bonds if congress can be induced to do so. Carlisle's recommendation in his report was evidently intended as a feeler for the country, but it remains to be seen whether congress will be as tractable in this matter as it was in the matter of the repeal of the Sherman law. As Wall street is in the saddle the country may be prepared for anything.

HAVE you noticed how very little the old party papers have said, editorially, about R. G. Dun & Co.'s review of business for 1893? That is a document entirely too strong for old party stomachs, and they are letting it severely alone. It is certain that Dun's report or review of the business of last year will form no part of any campaign document the old parties may issue this or any other year.