

VICTOR HUGO



THE TWINS

ENGLISH

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THE TWINS

PREFACE

The drama contained in the following pages, which was written in 1839, between *Ruy Blas* and the *Burgraves*, unfortunately, was never completed. The author wrote but two complete acts; the third is unfinished.

Indeed it may well be said that the first two acts as well are unfinished. The first act, which contains nearly nine hundred lines, would necessarily have been abridged and condensed by the poet. Victor Hugo had a habit of beginning one of his works by giving a free rein to his inexhaustible imagination; the result was a superabundance of minute details and of minor developments of the plot, which he would afterward revise, simplifying, rectifying, modifying. We have here only the first sketch, something analogous to the "first proof" of one of Rembrandt's *eaux-fortes*, which many a connoisseur prefers to the final impression; in them we surprise genius at work, and look on at the creation of a *chef-d'oeuvre*.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THE KING

THE MASK

COMTE JEAN DE CRÉQUI

CARDINAL MAZARIN

GUILLOT-GORJU

TAGUS

COMTE DE BUSSY

DUC DE CHAULNE

COMTE DE BRÉZÉ

VICOMTE D'EMBRUN

MASTER BENOIT TREVOUX, Lieutenant of Police

M. DE LA FERTÉ-IRLAN

CHANDENIER

A CITIZEN

A CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD

A JAILER

THE QUEEN MOTHER

ALIX DE PONTHEU

DAME CLAUDE

Citizens, Peasants, Soldiers, Police

ACT FIRST

A small deserted square near the Porte Bussy. Two or three narrow streets lead into the square. In the background, above the roofs, can be seen the three spires of Saint-Germain-des-Prés.

As the curtain rises two men are standing near the front of the stage; one of them, Guillot-Gorju, is just completing the task of dressing the other in a costume like his own; that is to say in the fantastic, ragged costume of the comedians of Callot. The other has already donned the yellow stockings, shoes of exaggerated proportions, doublet and short-clothes of old black silk. The costumes and accessories of the two men are exactly alike, so much so that they might easily be mistaken for each other. On the ground are the clothes taken off by the one assuming the disguise—clothes of sober hue, but of rich material.

A few steps away another man, also dressed as a Merry-Andrew, is putting the finishing touches to a juggler's booth, constructed of poles set up in the interstices of the pavement, covered with pieces of straw mattings and odds and ends of damask and other old cloths; outside the booth is a platform upon trestles, and inside, a table with glasses, a card-table, a large drum, two dilapidated chairs, and a valise filled with drugs and phials.

At one side is a small hand-cart. During the first three scenes citizens pass back and forth across the stage at the rear.

SCENE I

GUILLOT-GORJU, THE MAN, TAGUS, at work on the booth.

GUILLOT-GORJU.

Agreed. And now you are transformed.

(He examines with satisfaction the man whom he is assisting to disguise himself.) In sooth you do resemble me! 't is marvelous.

THE MAN.

Dost think so? When will the lady come?

GUILLOT-GORJU.

Toward twilight.

THE MAN.

Is she young?

GUILLOT-GORJU.

Oh, yes! You 'll think yourself in luck.

(Mysteriously.)

When all is quiet, about eight o'clock at night, (He points to the farthest corner of the square.) you'll hear three blows in yon dark corner.

(He strikes the palm of his hand three times.)

Thus.—Then you must say aloud: GOD ALONE IS MASTER. COMPIÈGNE AND PIERREFONDS. With that she will appear.

THE MAN.

Above all, keep my secret!

GUILLOT-GORJU (protesting with a gesture).

Ah! my friend, rely on me!

THE MAN.

Thou dost not know her name?

GUILLOT-GORJU (continuing to perform the functions of a valet-de-chambre).

I know it not.

(He points to a hovel at the right.)

In front of yonder hovel once, at night, and with no light,
I saw her.

THE MAN.

'T is a daring scheme!

GUILLOT-GORJU.

The lady's of high rank

THE MAN.

What motive has she?

GUILLOT-GORJU.

At that age? Mon Dieu! wherever God may lead us, we do seek occasion to display the generous impulses with which our hearts are filled; we long to show our zeal in every way, and so we seize on any pretext in default of motives. The first passing breeze removes our thin disguise. Do not alarm her, do not raise her veil.

THE MAN.

Knows she the prisoner's name?

GUILLOT-GORJU.

Oh, no! Beside the queen and cardinal that awe-inspiring name is known to no one.

THE MAN.

Friend, how came she to apply to you for this affair?

GUILLOT-GORJU.

We are renowned for managing escapes. For us, high walls and bolts and bars are but child's play. Schomberg I set free from the Bastile, the Admiral of Castile from Vincennes, Gif from the temple, and Lescur from the old château of Amiens. We never lack accomplices! Thieves, gipsies, we have friends even among the Jesuits.

THE MAN.

I may employ thee if aught comes of the affair. And so, the lady unsuspectingly will tell me all her plans, believing that she speaks with thee?

GUILLOT-GORJU.

I think so.