

we were obliged to boil our soup in the same kettle; or these wary people would have had their suspicions, and obliged us to taste their meat, as they did at the Quatre Vents, the Baraques du Bois de Chênes, and in several other places.

They then drew their lines closer and closer round the place: upon all the roads which led to the advanced posts they placed guns, and watched by them day and night; they regulated their range and line of fire by day with pickets and with grooves cut in the ground, to enable them to change its direction and sweep the roads and paths, even in the dark nights, in case of an attack.

The snow was then falling in great flakes; all the country was covered with snow, and often at midnight or at one or two in the morning, the musketry opened, and they cried in the street: "A sortie! a sortie!"

And all the villagers, who still kept their cattle at home by order of the new mayor Placiard, were compelled to drive them to a distance, into the fields, to prevent the French, if they reached us, from finding anything in the stables.

Ah! that abominable, good-for-nothing scoundrel Placiard, that famous pillar of the Empire, what abominations he has perpetrated, what toils has he undergone to merit the esteem of the Prussians!

Does it not seem sad that such thieves should sometimes quietly terminate their existence in a good bed?

CHAPTER XII

ABOUT the end of November there happened an extraordinary thing, of which I must give you an account.

On the first fall of snow, our Landwehr had built on the hill, in the rear of their guns, huts of considerable size, covered with earth, open to the south and closed against the north wind. Under these they lighted great fires, and every hour relieved guard.

They had also received from home immense packages of warm clothing, blankets, cloaks, shirts, and woollen stockings; they called these love-gifts. Captain Floegel distributed these to his men, at his discretion.

Now, it happened that one night, when the Landwehr lodging with us were on guard, that I, knowing they would not return before day, had gone down to shut the back door which opens upon the fields. The moon had set, but the snow was shining white, streaked with the dark shadows of the trees; and just as I was going to lock up, what do I see in my orchard behind the large pear-tree on the left? A Turco with his little red cap over his ear, his blue jacket corded and braided all over, his belt

and his gaiters. There he was, leaning in the attitude of attention, the butt-end of his rifle resting on the ground, his eyes glowing like those of a cat.

He heard the door open, and turned abruptly round.

Then, glad to see one of our own men again, I felt my heart beat, and gazing stealthily round for fear of the neighbors, I signed to him to draw near.

All were asleep in the village; no lights were shining at the windows.

He came down in four or five paces, clearing the fences at a bound, and entered the mill.

Immediately I closed the door again, and said: "Good Frenchman?"

He pressed my hand in the dark, and followed me into the back room, where my wife and Grédel were still sitting up.

Imagine their astonishment!

"Here is a man from the town," I said: "he's a real Turco. We shall hear news."

At the same moment we observed that the Turco's bayonet was red, even to the shank, and that the blood had even run down the barrel of his rifle; but we said nothing.

This Turco was a fine man, dark brown, with a little curly beard, black eyes, and white teeth, just as the apostles are painted. I have never seen a finer man.

He was not sorry to feel the warmth of a good fire. Grédel having made room for him, he took a

seat, thanking her with a nod of his head, and repeating: "Good Frenchman!"

I asked him if he was hungry; he said yes; and my wife immediately went to fetch him a large basin of soup, which he enjoyed greatly. She gave him also a good slice of bread and of beef; but instead of eating it he dropped it into his bag, asking us for salt and tobacco.

He spoke as these people all do—thou-ing us. He even wanted to kiss Grédel's hand. She blushed, and asked him, without any ceremony, before our faces, if he knew Jean Baptiste Werner?

"Jean Baptiste!" said he. "Bastion No. 3—formerly African gunner. Yes, I know him. Good man! brave Frenchman!"

"He is not wounded?"

"No."

"Not ill?"

"No."

Then Grédel began to cry in her apron; and mother asked the Turco if he knew Jacob Weber, of the 3d company of Mobiles; but the Turco did not know our Jacob; he could only tell us that the Mobiles had lost very few men, which comforted my wife and me. Then he told us that a captain in the Garde Mobile, a Jew named Cerfber, sent as a flag of truce to Lützelbourg, had taken the opportunity to desert, and that the German general, being disgusted at his baseness, had refused to receive him, upon which the wretch had gone into Ger-

many. I was nowise surprised at this. I knew Cerfber; he was mayor of Niederwillen, at four leagues from us, and more Bonapartist than Bonaparte himself. Unable to surrender the rest, as his master had done at Sedan, he had surrendered himself.

Grédel had gone out while the Turco was telling us these news; she returned presently with a large quantity of provisions. She had taken all my tobacco, and begged the Turco to take it to Jean Baptiste and Jacob. She had not quite the face to say before me that it was for Jean Baptiste alone; that would have been going a little too far; but she said, "It is for the two." The Turco promised to perform this commission; then Grédel gave him several things for himself; but he wanted especially salt, and fortunately we possessed enough to fill his bag. My wife stood sentinel in the passage. Thank God there was no stir for a whole hour; during which this Turco answered, as well as he was able, all the questions we asked him.

We understood that there was much sickness in the town; that several articles of consumption were utterly exhausted, among others, meat, salt, and tobacco; and that the inhabitants were weary of being shut in without any news from outside.

About one in the morning, the wind, having risen, was shaking the door, and we fancied we could hear the Landwehr returning. The Turco noticed it, and made signs to us that he would go.



THERE HE WAS, LEANING FORWARD TO LISTEN.

We could have wished to detain him, but the danger was too great. He therefore took up his rifle again, and asked to kiss my wife's hand, just as the gypsies do in our country. Then pointing to his bag, he said: "For Jacob and Jean Baptiste!"

I took him back through the orchard. The weather was frightful; the air was full of snow, whirled into drifts by a stormy wind; but he knew his way, and began by running with his body bending low as far as the tall hedge on the left; a moment after he was out of sight. I listened a long while. The watch-fires of the Landwehr were shining on the hill, above Wechem; their sentinels were challenging and answering each other in the darkness; but not a shot was fired.

I returned. My wife and Grédel seemed happy; and we all went to bed.

Next day we learned that two Landwehr had been found killed—one near the Avenue des Dames, between the town and the Quatre Vents, the other at the end of Fiquet, both fathers of families. The unfortunate men had been surprised at their posts.

What a miserable thing is war! The Germans have lost more men than we have; but we will not be so cruel as to rejoice over this.

And now, if I am asked my opinion about the Turcos, against whom the Germans have raised such an outcry, I answer that they are good men and true! Jacob and Jean Baptiste have received everything

that we sent to them. This Turco's word was worth more than that of the lieutenant and the feld-weibel who had promised to pay me for my wine.

No doubt, amongst the Turcos there are some bad fellows; but the greater part are honest men, with a strong feeling of religion: men who have known them at Phalsbourg and elsewhere acknowledge them to be men of honor. They have stolen nothing, robbed nobody, never insulted a woman. If they had campaigned on the other side of the Rhine, of course they would have twisted the necks of ducks and hens, as all soldiers do in an enemy's country: the Landwehr put no constraint upon themselves in our country. But the idea would never have occurred to the Turcos, as it had to German officers and generals, of sending for packs of Jews to follow them and buy up, wholesale, the linen, furniture, clocks—in a word, anything they found in private individuals' houses. This is simple truth! Monsieur de Bismarck may insult the Turcos as much as he pleases before his German Parliament, which is ready to say "Amen" every time he opens his mouth. He might as well not talk at all. Thieves are bad judges of common honesty! I am aware that Monsieur le Prince de Bismarck thinks himself the first politician in the world, because he has deceived a simpleton; but there is a wide difference between a great man and a great dishonest man. By and by this will be manifest, to the great misfortune of Europe.

But it was a real comfort to have seen this Turco; and for several days, when we were alone, my wife and Grédel talked of nothing else; but sad reflections again got the upper hand.

No one can form an idea of the misery, the feeling of desolation which takes possession of you, when days and weeks pass by in the midst of enemies without the least word reaching you from the interior; then you feel the strength of the hold that your native land has upon you. The Germans think to detach us from it by preventing us from learning what is taking place there; but they are mistaken. The less you speak the more you think; and your indignation, your disgust, your hatred for violence, force, and injustice is ever on the increase. You conceive a horror for those who have been the cause of such sufferings. Time brings no change; on the contrary, it deepens the wound: one curse succeeds another; and the deepest desire left is either for an end of all, or vengeance.

Besides, it is perfectly evident the Lorrainers and the Alsacians are a bold, brave nation; and all the fine words in the world will not make them forget the treatment they have suffered, after being surprised defenceless. They would reproach themselves as cowards, did they cease to hope for their revenge. I, Christian Weber, declare this, and no honest man can blame me for it. Abject wretches alone accept injustice as a final dispensation; and we have ever God over us all, who forbids us to believe

that murder, fire, and robbery may and ought to prevail over right and conscience.

Let us return to our story.

Cousin George had seen in the Englishman's newspapers that the circulation of the *Indépendance Belge* and the *Journal de Genève* had doubled and trebled since the commencement of the war, because they filled the place of all the other journals which used to be received from Paris; and without loss of time he had written to Brussels to subscribe.

The first week, having received no answer, he had sent the money in Prussian notes in a second letter; for we had at that time only Prussian thalers in paper, with which the Landwehr paid us for whatever they did not take by force. We had no great confidence in this paper, but it was worth the trial.

The newspaper arrived. It was the first we had seen for four months, and any one may understand the joy with which George came to tell me this good news.

Every evening from that time I went to hear the newspapers read at Cousin George's. We could hardly understand anything at first, for at every line we met with new names. Chanzy had the chief command upon the Loire, Faidherbe in the north. And these two men, without any soldiers besides Mobiles and volunteers, held the open country. They even gained considerable advantages over an enemy that far outnumbered them; whilst the marshals of the Empire had suffered themselves to be

vanquished and annihilated in three weeks, with our best troops.

This shows that, in victories, generals have no more than half the credit.

Of all the old generals, Bourbaki was the only one left.

As for Garibaldi, we knew him, and we could tell by the restless movements of our Landwehr that he was approaching our mountains about Belfort. He was the hope of our country: all our young men were going to join him.

We also learned that the Government was divided between Tours and Paris; that Gambetta was bearing all the burden of the defence of the country, as Minister of War; that he was everywhere at once, to encourage the dispirited; that he had set up the chief place of instruction for our young soldiers at Toulouse, and that the Prussians were pursuing their horrible course in the invaded countries with renewed fury; that a party of francs-tireurs having surprised a few Uhlans at Nemours, a column of Germans had surrounded the town on the next day, and set fire to it to the music of their bands, compelling the members of the committee for the defence to be present at this abominable act; that M. de Bismarck had laid hands upon certain bourgeois of the interior, in reprisal for the captures made by our ships five hundred leagues away in the North Sea; that Ricciotti Garibaldi, having defeated the Prussians at Chatillon-sur-Seine, those atrocious

wretches had delivered the innocent town over to plunder, and laid it under contribution for a million of francs; that respectable persons belonging to the Grand Duchy of Baden, private individuals, were crossing the Rhine with horses and carts to come and pillage Alsace with impunity—all the towns and villages being occupied by their troops. In a word, many other things of the kind; which plainly prove that with the Prussians, war is an honest means of growing rich, and getting possession of the property of the inoffensive inhabitants.

At St. Quentin, one of their chiefs, the Colonel de Kahlden, gave public notice to the inhabitants, that “if a shot was fired upon a German soldier, *six inhabitants should be shot*; and that every individual compromised or *suspected* would be punished with death.”

Everywhere, everywhere these great philosophers plundered and burned without mercy whatever towns or villages dared resist!

George said that these beings were not raised above the beasts of prey, and that education only does for them what spiked collars do for fighting dogs.

We also heard of the capitulation of Thionville, after a terrible bombardment, in which the Prussians had refused to allow the women and children to leave the place! We heard of the first encounters of Faidherbe in the north with Manteuffel; and the battles of Chanzy with Frederick Charles, near Orleans.

In spite of the inferiority of our numbers, and the inexperience of our troops, we often got the upper hand.

These news had restored us to hope. Unhappily, the heaviest blow of all was to come. Phalsbourg, utterly exhausted by famine, was about to surrender, after a resistance of five months.

Oh! my ancient town of Phalsbourg, what affliction sank into our hearts, when, on the evening of the 9th December, we heard your heavy guns fire one after another, as if for a last appeal to France to come to your rescue! Oh! what were then our sufferings, and what tears we shed!

“Now,” said George, “it is all over! They are calling aloud to France, our beloved France, unable to come! It is like a ship in distress, by night, in the open sea, firing her guns for assistance, and no one hears: she must sink in the deep.”

Ah! my old town of Phalsbourg, where we used to go to market; where we used to see our own soldiers—our red-trousered soldiery, our merry Frenchmen! We shall never more see behind our ramparts any but heavy Germans and rough Prussians! And so it is over! The earth bears no longer the same children; and men whom we never knew tell us, “You are in our custody: we are your masters!”

Can it be possible? No! ancient fortress of Vauban, you shall be French again: “Nursery of brave men,” as the first Bonaparte called you. Let our

sons come to manhood, and they shall drive from thy walls these lumpish fellows who dare to talk of Germanizing you!

But how our hearts bled on that day! Every one went to hide himself as far back in his house as he could, murmuring, "Oh! my poor Phalsbourg, we cannot help thee; but if our life could deliver thee, we would give it."

Yes! I have lived to behold this, and it is the most terrible sensation I have ever experienced: the thought of meeting Jacob again was no comfort; Grédel herself was listening with pale cheeks, and counting the reports from second to second; and then the tears fell and she cried: "It is over!"

Next day, all the roads were covered with German and Prussian officers galloping rapidly to the *place*; the report ran that the entry would take place the same evening; every one was preparing a small stock of provisions for his son, his relations, his friends, whom he dreaded never more to see alive.

On the morning of the 11th of December, leave was given to start for the town; the sentinels posted at Wechem had orders to allow foot-passengers to pass.

Phalsbourg, with its fifteen hundred Mobs and its sixty gunners, disdained to capitulate; it surrendered no rifles, no guns, no military stores, no eagles, as Bazaine had done at Metz! The Commander Taillant had not said to his men: "Let us, above all, for the reputation of our army, avoid all acts of

indiscipline, such as the destruction of arms and material of war; since, according to military usage, strong places and arms will return to France when peace is signed." No! quite the contrary; he had ordered the destruction of whatever might prove useful to the enemy: to drown the gunpowder, smash rifles, spike the guns, burn up the bedding in the casemates; and when all this was done, he had sent a message to the German general: "We have nothing left to eat! To-morrow I will open the gates! Do what you please with me!"

Here was a man, indeed!

And the Germans ran, some laughing, others astonished, gazing at the walls which they had won without a fight: for they have taken almost every place without fighting; they have shelled the poor inhabitants instead of storming the walls; they have starved the people. They may boast of having burnt more towns and villages, and killed more women and children in this one campaign, than all the other nations in all the wars of Europe since the Revolution.

But, to be sure, they were a religious people, much attached to the doctrines of the Gospel, and who sing hymns with much feeling. Their Emperor especially, after every successive bombardment, and every massacre—whilst women, children, and old men are weeping around their houses destroyed by the enemy's shells, and from the battle-fields strewn with heaps of dead are rising the groans and cries of

thousands and thousands of sufferers whose lives are crushed, whose flesh is torn, whose bodies are rent and bleeding!—their Emperor, the venerable man, lifts his blood-stained hands to heaven and thanks God for having permitted him to commit these abominable deeds! Does he look upon God as his accomplice in crime?

Barbarian! one day thou shalt know that in the sight of the Eternal, hypocrisy is an aggravation of crime.

On the 11th of December, then, early in the morning, my wife, Grédel, Cousin George, Marie Anne and myself, having locked up our houses, started, each carrying a little parcel under our arms, to go and embrace our children and our friends—if they yet survived.

The snow was melting, a thick fog was covering the face of the country, and we walked along in single file and in silence, gazing intently upon the German batteries which we saw for the first time, in front of Wechem, by Gerbershoff farm, and at the *Arbre Vert*.

Such desolation! Everything was cut down around the town; no more summer-arbors, no more gardens or orchards, only the vast, naked surface of snow-covered ground, with its hollows all bare; the bullet marks on the ramparts, the embrasures all destroyed.

A great crowd of other village people preceded and followed us; poor old men, women, and a few

children; they were walking straight on without paying any attention to each other: all thought of the fate of those they loved, which they would learn within an hour.

Thus we arrived at the gate of France; it stood open and unguarded. The moment we entered, the ruins were seen; houses tottering, streets demolished, here a window left alone, there up in the air a chimney scarcely supported; farther on some door-steps and no door. In every direction the bombshells had left their tracks.

God of heaven! did we indeed behold such devastation? we did in truth. We all saw it: it was no dream!

The cold was piercing. The townspeople, haggard and pale, stared at us arriving; recognitions took place, men and women approached and took each other by the hand.

“Well?” “Well,” was the reply in a hollow whisper, in the midst of the street encumbered with blackened beams of wood. “Have you suffered much?” “Ah! yes.”

This was enough: no need for another word; and then we would proceed farther. At every street corner a new scene of horror began.

Catherine and I were seeking Jacob; no doubt Grédel was looking for Jean Baptiste.

We saw our poor Mobiles passing by, scarcely recognizable after those five months. All through the fearful cold these unhappy men had had noth-

ing on but their summer blouses and linen trousers. Many of them might have escaped and gained their villages, for the gates had stood open since the evening before; but not a man thought of doing so; it was not supposed that Mobiles would be treated like regular soldiers.

On the *place*, in front of the fallen church filled with its own ruins, we heard, for the first time, that the garrison were prisoners of war.

The cafés Vacheron, Meyer, and Hoffmann, riddled with balls, were swarming with officers.

We were gazing, not knowing whom to ask after Jacob, when a cry behind us made us turn round; and there was Grédel in the arms of Jean Baptiste Werner! Then I kept silence; my wife also. Since she would have it so, well, so let it be; this matter concerned her much more than it did us.

Jean Baptiste, after the first moment, looked embarrassed at seeing us; he approached us with a pale face, and as we spoke not a word to him, George shook him by the hand, and cried: "Jean Baptiste, I know that you have behaved well during this siege; we have learned it all with pleasure: didn't we, Christian? didn't we, Catherine?"

What answer could we make? I said "yes"—and mother, with tears in her eyes, cried: "Jean Baptiste, is Jacob not wounded?"

"No, Madame Weber; we have always been very comfortable together. There is nothing the matter. I'll fetch him: only come in somewhere."

"We are going to the Café Hoffmann," said she. "Try to find him, Jean Baptiste." And as he was turning in the direction of the mayoralty-house:

"There," said he, "there he is coming round the corner by the chemist Rêbe's shop." And we began to cry "Jacob!"

And our lad ran, crossing the *place*.

A minute after, we were in each other's arms.

He had on a coarse soldier's cloak, and canvas trousers; his cheeks were hollow; he stared at us, and stammered: "Oh, is it you? You are not all dead?"

He looked stupefied; and his mother, holding him, murmured: "It is he!"

She would not relinquish her hold upon him, and wiped her eyes with her apron.

Grédel and Jean Baptiste followed arm-in-arm, with George and Marie Anne. We entered the Café Hoffmann together; we sat round a table in the room at the left, and George ordered some coffee, for we all felt the need of a little warmth.

None of us wished to speak; we were downcast, and held each other by the hand, gazing in each other's faces.

The young officers of the Mobiles were talking together in the next room; we could hear them saying that not one would sign the engagement not to serve again during the campaign; that they would all go as prisoners of war, and would accept no other lot than that of their men.

This idea of seeing our Jacob go off as a prisoner of war, almost broke our hearts, and my wife began to sob bitterly, with her head upon the table.

Jacob would have wished to come back to the mill along with us; I could see this by his countenance; but he was not an officer, and his *parole* was not asked for. And, in spite of all, hearing those spirited young men, who were sacrificing their liberty to discharge a duty, I should myself have said "No: a man must be a man!"

Werner was talking with my cousin: they spoke in whispers; having, no doubt, secret matters to discuss. I saw George slip something into his hand. What could it be? I cannot say; but all at once Jean Baptiste rising from his seat and kissing Grédel without any ceremony before our faces, said that he was on service; that he would not see us again very soon, as after the muster their march would begin, so that we should have to say good-by at once.

He held out both his hands to my wife and then to Marie Anne, after which he went out with George and Grédel, leaving us much astonished.

Jacob and Marie Anne remained with us; in a couple of minutes Grédel and my cousin returned; Grédel, whose eyes were red, sat by the side of Marie Anne without speaking, and we saw that her basket of provisions was gone.

The stir upon the *place* became greater and greater. The drums beat the assembly, the officers

of the Mobs were coming out. I then thought I would ask Jacob what had become of Mathias Heitz; he told us that the wretched coward had been trembling with fright the whole time of the siege, and that at last he had fallen ill of fear. Grédel did not turn her head to listen; she would have nothing to do with him! And, in truth, on hearing this, I felt I should prefer giving our daughter to our ragman's son than to this fellow Mathias.

The review was then commencing under the tall trees on the *place*, and Jacob appeared with his comrades. No sadder spectacle will ever be seen than that of our poor lads, about half a hundred Turcos and a few Zouaves, the remnants of Froeschwiller, all haggard and pale, and their clothes falling to pieces. They were unarmed, having destroyed their arms before opening the gates.

Presently Jacob ran to us, crying that they were ordered to their barracks, and that they would have to start next day before twelve.

Then his eyes filled with tears. His mother and I handed him our parcels, in which we had enclosed three good linen shirts, a pair of shoes almost new, woollen stockings, and a strong pair of trousers.

I was wearing upon my shoulders my travelling cape; I placed it upon his. Then I slipped into his pocket a small roll of thalers, and George gave him two louis. After this, the tears and lamentations

of the women recommenced; we were obliged to promise to return on the morrow.

The garrison was defiling down the street; Jacob ran to fall in, and disappeared with the rest, near the barracks.

As for Jean Baptiste Werner, we saw him no more.

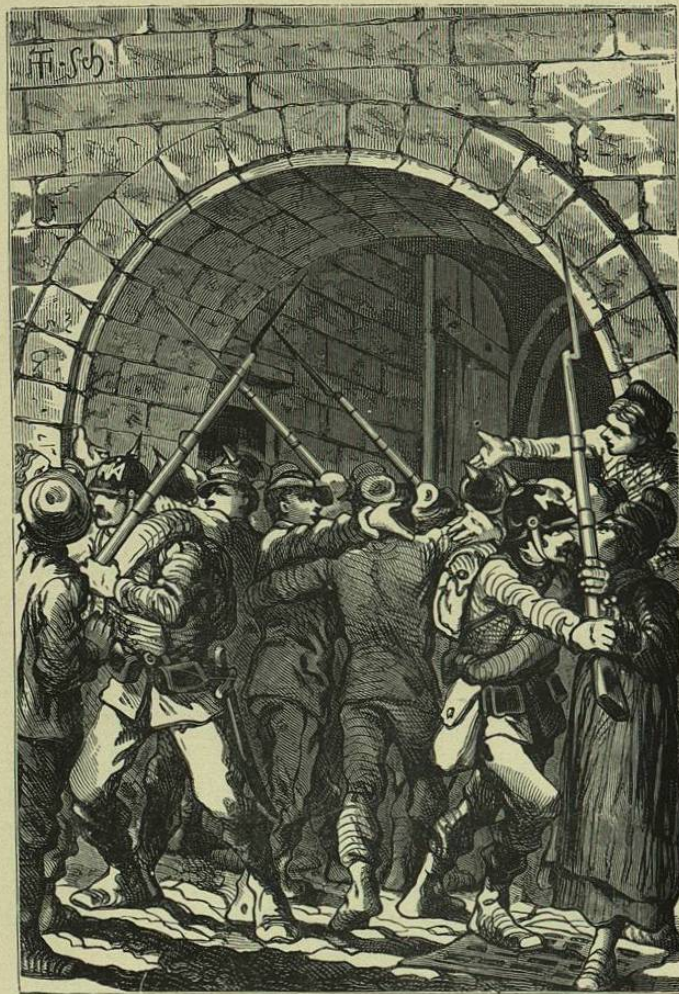
The German officers were coming and going up and down the town to distribute their troops amongst the townspeople. It was twelve o'clock, and we returned to our village, sadder and more distressed than ever.

And now we knew that Jacob was safe; but we knew also that he was going to be carried, we could not tell where, to the farthest depths of Germany.

My wife arrived home quite ill; the damp weather, her anxiety, her anguish of mind, had cast her down utterly. She went to bed with a shivering fit, and could not return next day to town, nor Grédel, who was taking care of her, so I went alone.

Orders had come to take the prisoners to Lützelbourg. On reaching the square, near the chemist Rêbe's shop, I saw them all in their ranks, moving by twos down the road. The inhabitants had closed their shutters, not to witness this humiliation; for Hessian soldiers, with arms shouldered, were escorting them: our poor boys were advancing between them, their heads hanging sorrowfully down.

I stopped at the chemist's corner, and waited,



“GOOD-BY, MY FATHER! GOOD-BY, MY MOTHER!”