

# JEAN VALJEAN REVEALS HIMSELF

A Dramatic Reading

by  
Victor Hugo



**Wetmore Declamation Bureau**

**Box 2695  
Sioux City, IA 51106**

**[www.wetmoredeclamation.com](http://www.wetmoredeclamation.com)  
Email: [speeches@wetmoredeclamation.com](mailto:speeches@wetmoredeclamation.com)**

CAUTION: Wetmore Declamation Bureau material is protected by United States copyright law and conventions. None of our material may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means-electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other-without prior permission. No trademark, copyright or other notice may be removed or changed. All rights reserved. Violators will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

JEAN VALJEAN REVEALS HIMSELF  
A Dramatic Reading

Victor Hugo

From "Les Miserables".

You will remember that in Victor Hugo's novel, "Les Miserables", Jean Valjean had, in his youth, stolen a loaf of bread for his sister's starving children. For this crime, he was imprisoned and spent nineteen long years as a galley slave.

Through the influence of a Bishop, the only man who had ever been kind to him, Jean Valjean had taken a new departure in life. He went to a town where he was not known, worked hard, and soon became a rich man at the head of a large factory. He became so well known and so beloved for his many deeds of kindness that he was elected Mayor of the city.

He held this position for five years, having assumed the name of Monsieur Madeleine. One day he learned that in a neighboring town, an old man was suspected of being the long-lost Jean Valjean, in which case, the punishment would be the galleys for life. The real Jean Valjean would need to reach Arras the next day, if he prevented an innocent man from being convicted. He passed the night in awful conflict with himself. He examined the situation and found it an unheard of one, so unheard of that, in the midst of his reverie, he rose from his chair and bolted his door, fearing somebody might enter. Somebody? Who? Alas! what he wanted to keep out of doors had already entered--his conscience.

"Well, what am I afraid of? Why do I ponder over these things? Have I the right to disarrange what Providence arranges? No, let the matter alone! let us not interfere with God."

But he saw his duty, written in luminous letters which flared out before his eyes. "Go! Avow the name! Denounce thyself."

Denounce himself! Great God! Give himself up! He saw with infinite despair all that he must leave, all that he must resume. He must bid farewell to this existence, so good, so pure, so radiant, to this respect of all, to honor, to liberty! No more would he go out in the fields; never again would he hear the birds singing in the month of May; never more give alms to the little children; no longer would he feel the sweetness of gratitude and love; instead of that, the galley crew, the chain at his foot, fatigue, the dungeon, the plank-bed, all these horrors which he knew so well! At his age, after being what he was! If he were still young! But so old, to be tumbled about by the prison guard, to be struck by the jailer's stick, to endure the curiosity of strangers who would be told, "This is the famous Jean Valjean, who was Mayor of a town."

At that moment, there was a rap at the door of his room.

He shuddered from head to foot. "Who is there?"

Then he recognized the voice of the old woman, his portress.

"The driver says he has come for Monsieur, the Mayor."

There was a long silence.

"Monsieur Mayor, what shall I say?"

"Say that it is right, and that I am coming down."

It was broad day when he arrived at Herdin. He stopped before an inn to let his horse breathe and to give him some oats. The stable boy stooped down suddenly and examined the left wheel:

--- END OF FREE PREVIEW ---