

Les Misérables (Macmillan Collector's Library)

By Victor Hugo

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Les Misérables (Macmillan Collector's Library) By Victor Hugo

Les Misérables is a magnificent, sweeping story of revolution, love and the fight for justice set amidst the poverty stricken streets of 19th century Paris.

Escaped convict Jean Valjean turns his back on his criminal past to build his fortunes as an honest man. He takes in abandoned orphan Cosette and raises her as his own daughter. But Jean Valjean is unable to free himself from his previous life and is pursued to the end by ruthless policeman Javert. As Cosette grows up, young idealist Marius catches a glimpse of her and falls desperately in love. The fates of all the characters await them during the violent turmoil of the June Rebellion in 1832.

This abridged version of Victor Hugo’s masterpiece was published in 1915 with the aim to provide “a unified story of the life and soul-struggles of Jean Valjean”.

With a new introduction by Paul Bailey.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Hugo's genius was for the creation of simple and recognizable myth. The huge success of "Les Miserables "as a didactic work on behalf of the poor and oppressed is due to his poetic and myth-enlarged view of human nature." V. S. Pritchett

"It was Tolstoy who vindicated [Hugo's] early ambition by judging "Les Miserables "one of the world's great novels, if not the greatest [His] ability to present the extremes of experience 'as they are' is, in the end, Hugo's great gift." From the Introduction by Peter Washington"

About the Author
Victor-Marie Hugo, the pivotal figure of the Romantic movement in France, involved equal mixtures of literature and politics. He was born in Besançon, France, in 1802. He began writing precociously in adolescence, and in 1819, at the tender age of 17, began a literary magazine, *Conservateur Littéraire*, The publication in 1831 of his novel *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* secured his widespread popularity. With the accession to the throne of Louis-Philippe, Hugo turned his hand to political verse, producing several books of poetry, and political drama; among his several plays of this period was *The King's Fool* (1832), which despite being initially banned was later adapted by Verdi to be the libretto for *Rigoletto* (1851). In 1848, following the revolution of that year, Hugo was elected to the Constituent Assembly as a deputy for Paris, and his politics moved steadily leftward. The establishment of the Second Empire under Napoleon III saw him flee into exile, first in Brussels (until 1852), then on the island of Jersey (until expelled in 1855) and finally on Guernsey, where he remained until 1871 despite the declaration in France of an amnesty in 1859. He completed *Les Misérables* (1872), an instant success not only in his native land but also, through immediate translations, on an international scale. The declaration of the Third Republic inspired Hugo to return to Paris, and he served briefly in 1871 as a deputy in National Assembly. But the deaths of his wife (1868) and two sons (1871, 1873) drained his energies and, although a national hero, he wrote little more of note. In 1883 Juliette Drouet, his mistress since the early 1830s, died, and two years later, in 1885, he followed her.

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