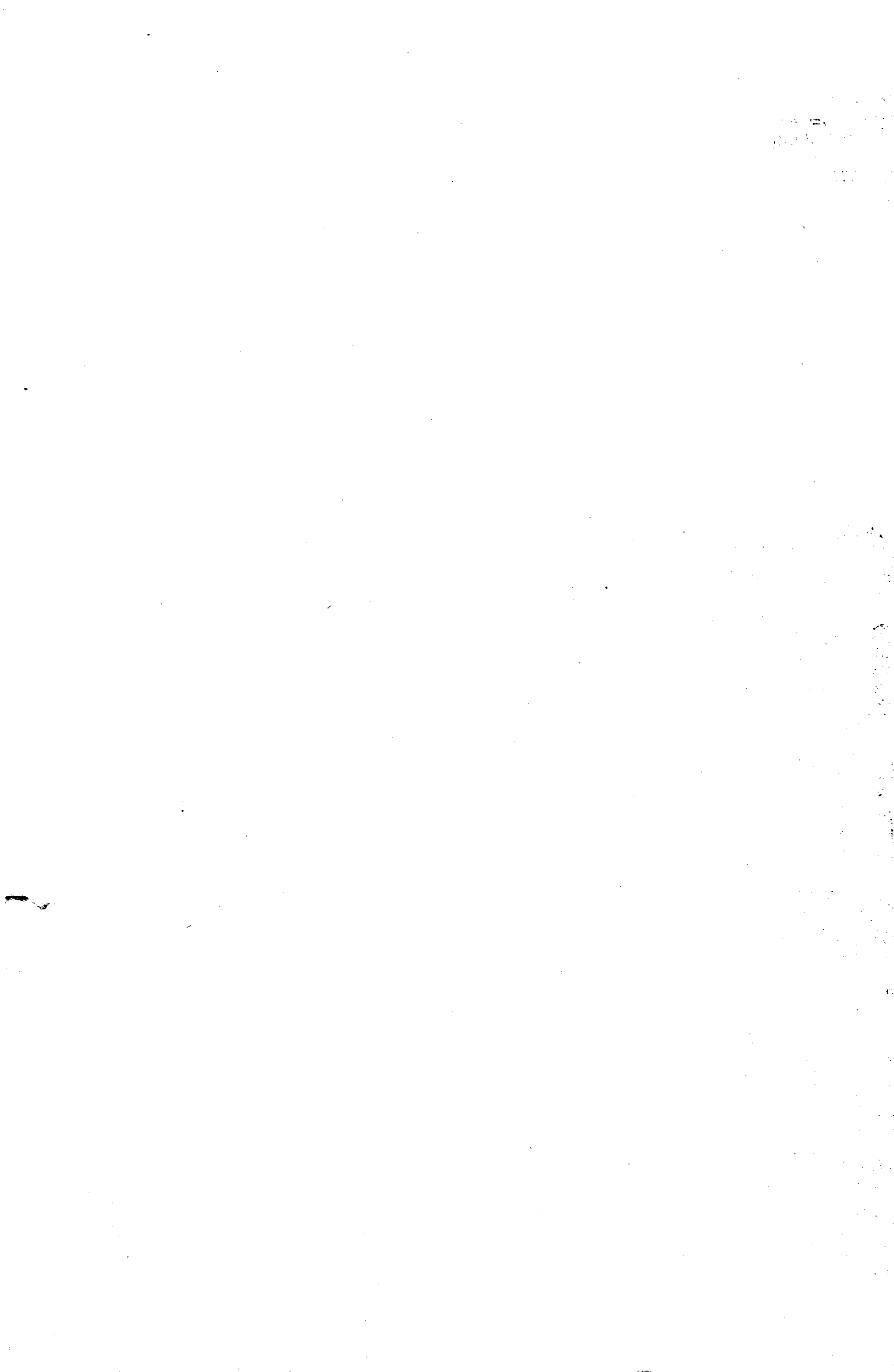
PARIS ON THE BARRICADES

BY

GEORGE MARLEN

SPARTACUS YOUTH LEAGUE OF AMERICA



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Introduction

The great historian, Hippolyte-P.-O. Lissagaray, wrote that the story of the Paris Commune "is due to their children, to all the workingmen of the earth. The child has the right to know the reason of its paternal defeats, the socialist party, the campaign of its flag in all countries. He who tells the people revolutionary legends, who amuses them with sensational stories, is as criminal as the geographer who would draw up false charts for navigation." The pages of this booklet describe the hideous punishment inflicted upon the people of Paris for having dared to take the first faltering steps along the road to freedom. Out of the icy horror that must overwhelm the reader of the narrative, arises the realization that the ruling class never lets the workers evade paying for the errors they make in their noble struggle for the liberation of humankind.

The working class of Paris was still young and inexperienced in the 1870s. It had not yet been hardened and toughened by the many events and battles through which the modern working class has passed. It could not yet undestand that the fight for freedom from oppression, exploitation, misery and war, is a fight between two classes in society, a war in which the masses can win only if they equip themselves as does an army in combat. It had not yet brought forth from its ranks the party of the working class, the revolutionary advance guard which distills the experiences of the past and centralizes the direction of the struggle of the present.

But what the Paris Commune failed or was unable to do, the Russian Commune succeeded in accomplishing forty-seven years later. The battle of the Parisian workers was not merely an endless source of inspiration to the Russian revolutionists. It was also a subject for intense study. Avoiding its errors, the Russian Communards were able to

establish the first successful republic of the workers. When it drove out the parasites and exploiters, and put workers and peasants in their place, the Russian revolution took the first step toward revenging the massacred Communards of 1871. And when the revolution shall have swept tyranny and exploitation from the face of the earth, the vindication of the martyrs of Paris will be complete.

And in the gaining of that lofty goal lies the task that has fallen upon the shoulders of the present generation. The young rebel can not only draw his inspiration from the Commune, but also learn his lessons from it. Yet, he cannot confine himself to the Paris Commune. He must learn why the Russian revolution triumphed in the days of Lenin, and was undermined in the days after his death, in the period of the rise of Stalinism. He must learn why the working class throughout the world has suffered one defeat after another in the last dozen years. He must grasp the essence of the problem today, which is: the old parties are bankrupt, the old movements have collapsed; it is necessary to rebuild upon the basis of the revolutionary teachings of Marx and Lenin. The main work of rebuilding falls to the lot of the youth. There could be no greater responsibility in our time, nor a grander assignment. If the job requires that sleeves be rolled up—and it does—it requires, even before that, a clear head and an exact knowledge. The study of the Paris Commune is a necessary part of the education of the young rebels of today. This booklet will lead them, it may be hoped, to a reading of Lissagaray's absorbing history, of the analyses of the Commune made by Marx and Lenin. The story of the Commune will fire every red-blooded young worker and student with the greatest enthusiasm, imbue him with the deepest conviction in the triumph of the working class, in the nobleness of its cause, and permeate him with respect and admiration for the infinite courage and heroism of its nameless and countless warriors. It will help to make him an abler soldier in the class struggle. And if it does that, the present booklet will have served its purpose in full.

March 24, 1935 M. S.

Paris on the Barricades

I

The Proletariat of Paris Rises

PROFOUND silence reigned in the room. All eyes were fixed on the face of the French comrade. His shabby blue suit was scrupulously brushed, and hung loosely on his short, painfully thin old body. His long gray moustache was slightly yellowed at the ends; the fine dark eyes still glowed with an ardent fire under the shaggy brows.

He cleared his throat.

"First of all, comrades, a few words concerning my family. There were seven of us, and here I include Marianne, my uncle Roger's sweetheart. Although she lived with her mother, she was to marry Roger in June of that year and live with our family.

My father was a mechanic. He was a jolly, dark-skinned Frenchman with a black moustache, a short black beard, and smiling merry eyes. In his attitude towards my mother and to us, children, he was very kind and affectionate. He always viewed things *en couleur de rose*, and if some calamity was imminent, or befell our family, he would, with his cheering and easy manner, help to drive the care away and restore sunshine in our home.

Poor Mother was ill. Vividly I see her pale, lean face, sunken eyes, thin yellowish hands. She had contracted a malady which the doctors ascribed to living in damp houses. She was very amicable and cordial with our neighbors and was beloved by them and particularly by their children.

Grandpa was old and feeble, and just a year before the time of my story had grown totally blind. He was master at telling amusing stories, he taught us, children, many pretty songs and made for us fine toys.

My sister, Juliet, was five. A plump little girl with red cheeks and sharp nails which often left marks on my nose.

And now Roger. Roger was a bookbinder. An athlete he was, tall, slender, powerful, daring. There were many young workers in Paris whose thoughts were directed towards creating a different society, towards removing the parasitic gilded burden which the toilers of France for centuries carried on their broad shoulders.

Roger was one of them. Fired with the ideals disseminated by the First International, Roger worked tirelessly among the proletarians of Paris, bringing to them the understanding of the cause of their misery, and of the happiness of their exploiters. Like many of his comrades he was called the *Grovliereianist*, because the International had its bureau located in Rue Grovilier. He had a warm heart, Roger had, and never in my life did I love any one so ardently as him.

And for this reason, in the beginning, I looked with disfavor upon his heart's choice; but as Marianne and I came closer to know each other, I thought her the loveliest girl in Paris, and as subsequent events proved, entirely worthy of his love. She was employed in a millinery establishment. Many a man was struck by her delicate beauty. Her auburn locks were ever dancing about her rosy cheeks, and from under her bonnet shone a pair of bright and a bit pensive brown eyes. Very soon after she had visited us we had grown accustomed to view her as a member of our family and to the very end we were united to her with ties of tender affection.

Last but not least comes Emile Ducasse, that is myself. Twelve years old was I then, small of stature, gaunt and pale, and hardly looking my age. When I had been an infant my family underwent privations of unemployment and extreme poverty. Lack of food and the resultant sickness that invaded our home caused the death of two children and left me an attenuated little wreck of humanity. Only with adolescence did I recover from the effects of my rough start in life.

And now, comrades, a word or two about the situation in France and in Paris in those days.

At the head of the French society was the adventurer-emperor, Louis Bonaparte, nephew of Napoleon the First, or, as he was popularly called, 'the little nephew of the great uncle.' Having captured power through conspiracy against the Second Republic he filled all positions of government with his followers. The grand bourgeoisie under his protection opened an era of wild speculation, exploitation of labor and of the resources of France. Political corruption, peculation, scandal, manifested themselves outwardly in the ostentatious display of wanton luxury, in gorgeousness of palaces, splendor of dress, brilliancy of balls, in dazzling radiance of wealth. And holding up and giving sustenance to this gilded parasitism, with their backs bent, hands to the machine or to the plow, put to sleep by the priests, befuddled by the political tricksters and demagogues, were the toiling masses of France.

You all know of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Prussia was being prevented by France, who feared a strong neighbor on her frontier, from uniting all the German states into an empire, and the defeat of France, therefore, was an event eagerly sought by the ruling classes of Germany. As to France's reasons: Napoleon had been a military genius. He had covered his vast empire with martial glory. Louis, the 'little nephew,' was a nonentity. He was the farce of Europe and of his own people. Sooner or later, it was generally felt, the adventurer would be cast out and a republic proclaimed. To insure the continuance of the dynasty and the Empire, the ruling clique resolved upon duplicating the feat of the illustrious 'great uncle,' with the hope of pushing the frontier to the limits of the First Empire, at the expense of Prussia.

The contending imperialists unsheathed the sword. Worm-eaten, corrupted, incompetent French command was not a match for the robust, efficient German. A catastrophe was inevitable. In a few weeks the French armies were shattered. Louis Bonaparte was taken prisoner and the Prussian avalanche rolled upon Paris.

Upon the Parisian workingmen this debacle had an electric effect. Paris in danger! Who would defend the city? Who but the working masses! A republic was proclaimed. The arming of the population was demanded; the National Guard was organized to repel the invader.

But the new Government of National Defense was composed of members of the bourgeoisie. They had consented with reluctance to the arming of the proletariat of Paris, and now they stood in awe before the armed toilers. Would this be a repetition of the experience of 1848, when the workers, conscious of their strength, had attempted to wrest from the bourgeoisie the control of the city? Had the bourgeoisie themselves created a new instrument for their undoing?

They quickly set themselves the task of strengthening their position with regular troops from the provinces with the ultimate aim of disarming the Parisian workers and sending them back to the workshops.

The Germans were hammering at the walls of Paris. The Central Committee of the National Guard was organized by the socialist and revolutionary workers of Paris. It immediately presented a demand to the Government of National Defense that it requisition all foodstuffs in the city, issuing receipts to the owners entitling them to secure pay after the war. The Government refused. It would

not interfere with the freedom of the food speculators who seldom met with golden opportunities of the kind the siege offered.

The longer the siege continued the more obvious became the designs of the grand bourgeoisie, the more grim their determination to exorcise the grisly phantom of workers' revolution. It was evident from their negotiations with the Prussians that they were willing to pay Bismarck any price provided he allowed them to remain masters of France.

My father, who had joined the National Guard and was exchanging shots with the Prussians at the outposts, arriving home on one of his furloughs, said to my mother:

'Theresa, I'm telling you our bourgeoisie are playing a cunning game. They are mistaken, though, if they think the workingman can be fooled so easily this time.'

But the bourgeoisie, galled by the increasing strength of the workers and their 'meddlesome' Central Committee, grew impatient and, therefore, less cautious. Their spokesmen openly advocated the disbanding of the battalions composed of laborers and the capitulation of Paris to the Prussians. The smouldering discontent of the masses at length burst forth. The National Guard attempted to capture the Hôtel de Ville, the city hall of Paris, seat of the Government of National Defense,—disperse the officials and set up a people's government pledged to resist the betrayal of the French masses to the invaders by the bourgeoisie. The attempt failed because of the unwillingness of the leaders of the National Guard to precipitate a civil war in the besieged city. The government was frightened, however, and continued its comedy of defense.

Starvation began to grip the hapless families of the poor. One evening I came home from the noisy Parisian streets and asked Mother for food.

'Nothing but a plate of rat soup, Emile,' she told me, her sunken eyes flashing. 'Nom de Dieu, how long will our rulers keep our men idle? We have more men under arms now than the Prussians. A vigorous attack against them and the siege could be raised. France could be saved the burden of the indemnity which we, the poor people, will have to bear. The price of rats has gone up to two francs a piece, Emile. Dog meat is impossible to touch—so dear it is. We shall all die of hunger if this bourgeois Government continues its inactivity.'

'They can well afford it, Mamman,' I replied. 'Today I passed Brebant's fashionable café; I saw our "ladies" and "gentlemen" devouring chickens and oysters and caviar, and plenty of wine they

gulped down as they ate. It made me sick watching their lazy jaws moving. A whole hour I spent there at the window just to see.'

'Of course,' she sighed painfully, 'it's all for the rich idlers who accumulated wealth by underpaying their workingmen, and not for honest proletarians who defend the wealth of those very bourgeois.'

At that instant Roger entered with Marianne.

'You see it all before your eyes, Marianne,' continued he the conversation they had begun outside. 'Misery is stalking through Paris; our people are hungry, in rags, while the overfed ladies and gentlemen promenade gaily on the boulevards. If the workers failed to observe all this before, surely now, during this siege and the universal suffering among the poor, it is revealed to them starkly and definitely. Oh, if not now to change it all, when then!'

They sat down at the table and received their plates of rat soup in silence. Suddenly a recollection came into his eyes.

'Theresa,' he said to my mother, 'I met Monsieur Muré early this morning. He told me the Government would soon give them the right to resume the collection of rents. Do you think, dear sister, you can succeed in softening his stony heart at least this time?'

She turned very pale. I knew the reason. Well did I remember how when my father was out of work during the previous Winter, this landlord pressed and pestered us for his rent.

'Oh, Monsieur,' Mother had entreated him, 'we have pawned everything of value. We have not enough money to buy wood to heat our rooms. Don't you feel how cold it is here?'

'But rent, Madame,' he interrupted her impatiently, 'rent must be paid first of all. It *must* be paid!'

Still hoping that she could win his sympathy, she implored:

'You see the condition we are in, Monsieur. We can scarcely scrape enough money to buy stale bread for the little ones. Give us a little time, Monsieur.'

He turned scarlet with anger.

'Madame,' he replied furiously, 'I don't believe a word of what you have just said. You people always have heart-breaking stories on hand. The rent must be paid—it must be paid right now!'

A nervous flush had colored her pale face, and she murmured tearfully:

'Believe me, Monsieur Muré, I have told you the truth. Have pity. I swear we will pay you all we owe, to the last centime—'

'Madame Ducasse,' he cried, losing patience, 'we have laws in France. Either you shall pay at least part of what you owe or—'

And he flung the usual threat of eviction.

Further appeal seemed futile. Mother was forced to give up the few miserable sous which she had borrowed from our neighbor, Genevieve, to buy some vegetables for soup and a little milk for Juliet. He took the money, and his manner changed instantly and remarkably. In very polite and sympathetic terms he expressed his hope that our affairs would take a more favorable turn, so that we could pay him the amount we still owed, without difficulty.

'Ah, Madame,' he spoke somewhat apologetically, to iron out the harshness of his visit, 'Ah, Madame, this money does not go to me, for I am only a poor man working hard for a living. It belongs to Monsieur Lagrange. And you don't know, Madame, how badly Monsieur Lagrange needs the money. He needs it very, very bad.'

And thanking her cordially, a smile lighting his beefy face, he strode off toward the dingy slums of other of his tenants—mostly people clutched by the iron hand of want.

So you will readily understand my mother's alarm when Muré's name was uttered at this most trying period in the history of our family. She spoke not a word, but I saw that her hands trembled.

A wave of pain and bitterness welled in my heart. Overwhelmed with gloom I sat near the kitchen window, looking out at the sordidness of our squalid neighborhood; the grimy snow lighted by a moribund street lamp; the solitary figure of my friend, Felix, an emaciated street urchin, carrying a bundle of fire-wood; the pitiful squall of a child in the house opposite us, and the oppressively black and indifferent sky above.

When would be an end to poverty and suffering! I exclaimed inwardly. Would it always be thus that part of our people lived in idleness and luxury and the rest knew nothing but toil and distress?

Several days afterward Father paid us a visit. He was in high spirits, and placing his musket in a corner and flinging his kepi on a chair, he greeted us cheerfully:

'Well, Theresa! Well, children! How have you fared? Where are Roger and Marianne? How is Grandpa? Is there any news in our arrondissement?'

Falling upon his neck we kissed him; and, unwilling as we were to dampen his spirits by bringing our reduced circumstances to his knowledge, Mother could not help but tell him of our difficulties.

'Patience, Theresa!' he comforted her, rocking Juliet on his foot, and twisting my ear playfully. 'Things won't be gray and dull forever. A turning point in France has been reached. Give us time, Theresa, to drive out the foreign invader; then we shall also fling our domestic enemy, the bourgeoisie, off our backs. You should hear

what is being said in the ranks of the battalions of the National Guard. A republic of labor is seriously being planned. The time is coming when no Frenchman will have to pay out of his hard-earned pittance to an army of healthy drones for the right to live in his native land. Emile, what do the bee-workers do to *their* drones when food gets scarce?'

'Drive them out of the hive,' I replied promptly.

'You are a bright lad, Emile! "Work or you do not eat" will be the maxim of the future society. Children, my life is behind me. Yours is the happy lot to see a different world. Today France produces enough for all; but not all have enough. Tomorrow France will produce more than enough to satisfy the needs of every man, woman and child. Patience, children. Patience, Theresa.'

And although the lead of adversity still weighed dully on our spirits, black cold poverty being the tangible reality while the palmy days of a new world, if they came at all, seemed far away, yet some of his enthusiasm and hopefulness imparted themselves to us.

Roger and Marianne entered with Genevieve's two-year-old Victor on his shoulder, the radiant mother following. She was a seamstress, and having lost her husband a year before was having a hard time of it. Work was scarce; and we shared with her whatever provisions we were fortunate enough to obtain.

On seeing Victor, Father yelled with delight. He loved her child. And who didn't! Even strangers would pause to enjoy his charming prattle and fondle his silky golden ringlets. Monsieur Leon, the artist, had painted a portrait of him which Genevieve hung up in her best room.

The ensuing scuffle for the possession of the child, in which we all, save his mother, participated, was brief and decisive; Father carrying off the prize. He balanced the baby on his galloping knee. The two little chubby hands caught hold of his moustache, and the child's happy silvery laughter gurgled throughout the house.

'This is a fine brat you have, Genevieve,' father beamed at her. 'Take good care of him. His features show that he'll grow up a brave fighter for the poor people.'

Well, back to the outposts he went. Days ran on. The siege continued. But any observer could have gathered that it was not on the defense that the Government of National Defense concentrated its thoughts and attention. The armed laborer guided by the revolutionary Central Committee was its eyesore; the talk of a labor republic, its nightmare. Bismarck with his regiments would sooner or later depart for Germany. Not so the French laborer, should he

become the master of society! The nervousness of the bourgeoisie was growing.

To relieve the tension which increased daily, and to turn the workers' thoughts back to the safe and customary tracks of peaceful, stagnant, every-day slavery, a clumsy ruse was employed: a demonstration to the people of the futility of further resistance to the Prussians, and of the necessity for the capitulation of Paris, upon terms of disarming all French forces, including the National Guard. This, they thought, would be easy of accomplishment, the war having been declared over.

So the Commandant of Paris organized mock sorties which in secret maliciousness he and his colleagues termed 'peppering the National Guard.' When ordered to attack, the French workers would dash themselves against the besiegers and usually captured the positions designated; but would then receive the command to retreat, yielding up the points they had so valiantly won. Nothing could have been more illuminating than these sorties. And in one of them my father fell."

Ducasse paused and drank a glass of water.

"Well," he resumed, "ten days after the last act of this tragicomedy of defense had been played, they surrendered the city, declaring hypocritically that the populace, particularly the workers, was perishing from hunger, thus making further struggle impossible.

But here the bourgeoisie miscalculated. The battalions of the National Guard refused to disarm. And when on the First of March the German regiments entered the city, they found parks and boulevards chained with barricades, behind which entrenched themselves the armed laborers of Paris. Facing the alternative either to fight or to withdraw and demand of Thiers, the chief politician of the bourgeoisie, the fulfillment of the conditions of capitulation, they preferred the latter and retreated to the heights near Paris.

Days passed. The atmosphere became so densely charged with electricity that the detonation was expected at any moment. The time of *words* had passed. The time of *action* arrived. Either we or they. Either a labor republic or a bourgeois one, perhaps with a monarchical roof, to boot, to shut out the sky.

One evening Roger dashed into the house in great excitement. 'It is true,' he cried, 'General Vinoy is closing the newspapers which are friendly to our cause.'

'Mark my word,' Grandpa said drearily, 'they are preparing—they are preparing to disarm us and shoot us down as they did in 1848. Mark my word.'

And then came the Eighteenth of March!

I awoke early that day, sick with hunger. Taking great care not to disturb the sleepers, I stole out of the house. A rosy mist hung over the great city. With a sharp lookout for a crust of bread or a coin, and whistling a tune to cheer myself up, I sallied forth with no special destination in mind. The streets were quiet. The peacefully slumbering hive, the most immense and populous on the continent of Europe, the most magnificent in the world—Paris—little dreamed that momentous events were at hand! that the golden day of deliverance, of rejoicing was dawning.

I sauntered on and on, the vociferous chirping of the sparrows blending with my lively melody, when, of a sudden, I was brought to a pause. There was plainly audible in the sprightly morning air the beating of drums. Something had happened. Presently I perceived a stream of people a short distance off running in the direction of Rue des Abbesses. I darted swiftly onward and soon reached the street where an immense crowd of women, children, workingmen and National Guards and regulars, with some pieces of artillery, were surging upward to Montmartre. In a moment I learned the cause of this tumultuous, and as I observed, triumphant march.

Monsieur Thiers had finally decided to end the oppressive tension and extinguish the threat of revolution. Not daring openly in broad daylight, he commissioned his generals to steal our artillery in the dead of night and thus begin the 'pacification' of the workers whom they could no longer control with the old delusions. His soldiers were caught red-handed, and gave up the guns.

You can easily imagine my indignation, for this artillery was ours, had been paid for with the money collected among the National Guard, and my family too had done without many a supper to contribute its share to the arming and the defense of Paris.

The crowd was swelling. The long-suppressed dissatisfaction and anger were approaching the boiling point. The dynastical war, the ignoble defeat with the prospective burden of indemnity, the feast of the bourgeoisie upon the misery of the poor, all this was too stirring, too vivid for the masses of Paris to remain passive. The crucial hour had arrived.

We were proceeding on our way to replace the cannon where they had originally stood, when the front ranks of our army halted and gave back.

'Scoundrels!' we heard a voice bellowing, 'how dare you interfere with the orders of the Government!'

It was General Lecomte with a detachment of regulars. Our

confusion, however, was but momentary. We pressed forward determinedly to complete our task.

The fury of the general knew no bounds. Foaming at the mouth he shook his fist at us.

'I will show you, you filthy canaille!' Then turning to his soldiers he roared 'Fire!'

There was dead silence. With white faces, a humming in the ears, and our eyes fixed on the chassepots of the soldiers, we stood rooted to the spot.

'Fire!!'

Still dead silence. My heart was beating thickly. The suspense grew unbearable.

'Dogs!' the general, completely out of his senses, yelled at his soldiers, 'Loafers! Rascals! You will obey my orders or—'

He dashed towards them. The soldiers raised their guns, leveling them at the general. Another instant and he was arrested.

'We refuse to shed the blood of the people!' they cried. 'The workers of Paris are our brothers!'

From the houses, from by-streets, from avenues, the people ran like an onrushing, roaring torrent of a Niagara. The great Titan, Labor, had arisen.

'To the Hôtel de Ville! Arrest the band of Judas!'

I was carried by the great press like a splinter on the towering waves of a storm-lashed ocean. On to the City Hall we rushed. Nothing could stop us.

We reached our destination, but too late to find Monsieur Thiers and his colleagues and underlings. He had failed in his night adventure in every part of Paris, and fled to Versailles, with the heads of the various government departments. And with him fled the cream of the bourgeoisie—the landlords, big manufacturers, bankers, and their lackeys and toadies, a few journalists of the big press, together with the bejewelled courtesans of the demi-monde.

The National Guard occupied the City Hall and other administrative buildings.

The drones had abandoned the hive.

And the news of all this was blazoned abroad to the breathless, bewildered world."

2

The Labor Republic

"AND so," resumed Ducasse after a pause, "the revolutionary Central Committee of the National Guard, supported by 300,000 armed laborers, was the provisional government of Paris, and would transfer the power, it announced, to the Commune, a body of representatives elected by the common people of Paris.

Immediately the journals of the bourgeoisie opened a campaign of vilification against the Commune, covering the city with placards in which they called upon the people to ignore the elections. But the moorings which had held the minds of the workers fastened to the bourgeois press had snapped. They heeded not. As to our own journalists, they were perplexed. The official newspaper of the Commune on the 21st of March said:

'Is it possible that the bourgeoisie, the proletariat's older sister, who freed herself three quarters of a century ago, does not understand that the proletariat's turn to gain its freedom has arrived today? Why is she so stubbornly refusing its legitimate lot?'

Eight days after we took possession of the city, however, the elections were held.

Two days later, my mother feeling ill in the morning, I remained at home to minister to her needs. Our good friend, Genevieve, and two other women dropped in at noon and sat exchanging surmises as to the result of the ballot. Suddenly the door flew open and Roger and Marianne stood on the threshold.

Never had I seen them with such radiant faces. A deep flush covered Marianne's delicate cheeks, and her usually pensive brown eyes glowed with joy, while Roger's face was one broad smile.

'Theresa,' he exclaimed, his voice trembling with emotion, 'we bring you the news of our victory!'

The women rose from their seats in excitement, and with one voice they exclaimed:

'Vive la Commune!'

'At last!' Roger cried, 'their rule is over. The sun that has always shone only for the rich will from today on shine for the people who toil.'

'Theresa,' Marianne said, passing her arm about Mother's neck,

'under the Commune, little lads like Emile will never go hungry again.'

My eyes blurred with tears, and I fell upon her neck kissing her, while Mother stealthily wiped her eyes with the sleeve of her blouse. She must have thought at that instant of poor Father who had been so hopeful of seeing the Republic of Labor. But she joined us in our second outburst when all present, including Grandpa and little Juliet, cried:

'Vive la Commune!'

'Out of twenty arrondissements of Paris,' Roger informed us, 'sixteen voted for our candidates and only four for theirs. They defeated Victor Hugo who ran on our ticket, because his arrondissement is thickly populated with the rich.'

'Come,' interrupted Marianne, 'you all must go out to see Paris—the new Paris of the Commune. Do you feel strong enough, Theresa?'

'Oh,' my mother replied, 'this joyful news has made me well. Come—come, Juliet, come with us, Grandpa.'

And we hurriedly set out. The streets were thronged with people streaming towards the Hôtel de Ville to acclaim the Commune. We had started out early and by good fortune succeeded in penetrating the dense crowd and reaching the Place de Grève. A half hour later the streets were filled as far as Boulevard de Sebastopol and thousands failed to see the sight which, once seen, can never be forgotten.

Before the central door of the imposing structure of the City Hall of Paris was raised a large platform on which were assembled the elected members of the Commune; and in front of it, in the huge square, undulated a vast colorful sea of humanity, regulars, battalions of the National Guard, workers and their families, all flushed, singing, shouting and laughing. And from above, out of the turquoise of the sky, the sun beamed upon the smiling city.

Suddenly a breathless hush came over the square, and all eyes were focused on Ranvier, who rose and stood at the edge of the platform. My heart seemed to cease beating. And in my throat I felt a choking sensation.

'Citizens,' came the faint words of Ranvier, 'my heart is too full of joy to make a speech. Permit me only to thank the people of Paris for the great example they have given the world.'

There was a pause. Then, lifting his voice, Ranvier exclaimed, 'In the name of the People, the Commune is proclaimed.'

A great shout burst forth; a thunderous cry of joy that went

pealing far and wide through the balmy air of the Parisian spring, that shook the nearby buildings to their very foundations, and echoed in hundreds of thousands of pulsating hearts—a jubilant outcry such as had never been heard in the city of Paris before:

'VIVE LA COMMUNE!!!'

Then followed a prolonged and deafening roar of artillery, flourish of trumpets and blasts of clarion, the brass of the instruments blinding with the reflection of the sun, and the invigorating rataplan of the drums. From the windows of the surrounding houses a myriad handkerchiefs fluttered like so many pigeons, their owners saluting, and pressing them often to their tearful eyes.

Ah, those sweet tears of joy! How different they are from those caused by misery! And how foolish we appear to one who does not understand! Roger looked positively funny with his red nose and swollen eyelids.

We strolled off to the boulevards which were resplendent with a thousand hues of green in the glory of the golden evening. Flowing with the moving mass we exchanged friendly nods and smiles with strangers—but there were no strangers in those blissful days in Paris! All were brothers, all were citizens of the first Universal Republic. French as well as foreigners, even the Prussians with whom we had just been at war. A new spirit pervaded the air, the spirit of kindness and friendliness. We felt like flinging out our arms and embracing the whole world.

Night fell. Mother suggested going home but I did not feel like leaving the outdoors. The day had been too wonderful and I wished to lengthen it. Roger and Marianne shared my desire. So we separated, Mother, with the rest, going home.

'Come with us, Emile,' said Roger softly, and I followed them to the bank of the river.

We stood there in silence. The night was filled with the humming noises of Paris. A fragrant breeze blew. My eyes strayed across the polished surface of the water covered with many gleaming reflections and tremulous shadows. I glanced overhead at the wide expanse of starry sky, and drew a deep breath—the air of freedom.

'How beautiful our old Seine is!' Marianne said dreamily. 'I never saw it so beautiful before.'

'It is ours now, Marianne; it was never ours before.'

There was a pause.

'A new spring has come,' Roger said, as if speaking to himself, 'different from every other our people have had. For centuries we have seen only autumn and winter, and the winter was bleak and

hard, with leafless trees and freezing winds of grime and ignorance and want, and with sky shrouded with gloom and melancholy from the horizon to the zenith. A new epoch has arrived; and I see in the near future a happy France without blighting poverty and its accompanying horrors, a land which will serve as an example and an inspiration to the workers of the whole world.'

His face was illuminated with a soft light. Glancing at Marianne I saw a tear creeping down her cheek and heard her whisper, 'Oh, dear Roger, I am so happy in having you!'

Marianne loved Roger's beautiful ideal as a flower loves sunshine. In this ravishing moment a genuine beatitude was legibly written on their faces; and my soul vibrated in unison with theirs."

Ducasse grew silent for a time, his head bowed, eyes half closed. Then he continued:

"As my father had predicted, our patience was rewarded. A government representing labor, in the interest of labor, had been installed in Paris. The Commune was for the poor in dead earnest; no empty promises were handed out to the people. Deeds followed words.

When Monsieur Thiers' colleagues at Versailles decreed that all rents be paid within three days and our government issued a different decree remitting the payment of rent, our neighbor, old Madame Marchand, came in, wondering.

'New times, new ways,' she said. 'Never did I hear of such things in all my long life.'

Poor old woman! She revered the emperors and grand bourgeoisie, and her mental eye was dazzled by the sheen of their tinsel.

'Yes, Madame Marchand,' Roger told her. 'New times indeed.'

'Somehow I feel it is against the law,' she ventured.

'Against whose law, Madame?' cried he. 'Laws, you know, are made to serve the ruling class. The law you are speaking of was made by the lawyers serving the bourgeoisie. The power in Paris is now in our hands, in the hands of the poor. The books in which their laws are written will be used in France next winter for fuel, while we shall write new laws which will be respected even by the bourgeoisie. Why did the Assembly at Versailles decree that rents must be paid, eh? Ah, Madame, this is the reason: that government is serving Messrs. Muré and Lagrange, whereas the Commune is serving Ducasse and Marchand. Ha, ha! Simple, is it not?'

And when the Commune prohibited the pawnbrokers from selling the poor people's goods for nonpayment of interest, and ordered articles in the municipal pawning establishment to be returned to

needy persons without pay; when it ordered the employers to immediately cease their practice of fining the workers and thus depriving them of part of their wages; when it pensioned the wounded National Guards to the amount of 1,200 francs, a sum the old government might have paid an officer but never a soldier; when it recovered vast reserves of flour, potatoes, pork and other provisions held by speculators; when it did a thousand and one little everyday things for the poor people, the old woman was inclined to agree with Roger.

'You see now the difference between the government of the poor and that of the rich!' he cried triumphantly.

'I see, I see,' she returned, shaking her head in amazement.

During the first few days Felix and I rambled for hours throughout the city. Once we fringed a meeting where a sweet-faced man with silvery hair—just released from the Imperial prison where he had been incarcerated for preaching Socialism—harangued the gathering. He said that a message of congratulation had been received from London sent by Karl Marx, secretary of the International Workingmen's Association, and greetings from German workers who affirmed that all peoples were brothers and expressed their hope that the Universal Republic would spread over the globe, bringing happiness to entire humanity.

'The Commune will shape the future course of France, of Europe, of Mankind,' he said. 'We shall make it possible for our brothers, the bourgeoisie, if they be willing to perform useful labor, to enjoy equal rights with the rest of the citizens of the Republic of Labor. All children of this republic shall receive an education—'

Ah! Education! How we had envied the bourgeois children in this respect! These words of the speaker were wine to Felix and me.

But brief was the period in which the sky over the head of the Labor Republic remained serene and unobscured. There loomed large on the horizon a sinister cloud presaging a storm.

Within a week after the Commune had been proclaimed, on the Second of April at about two in the afternoon, there came to our ears the sound of distant cannonading.

'What is it?' people asked, turning their startled faces on one another. 'What does that mean?'

It was not long before it had become known to Paris, to the whole world. Monsieur Thiers and the Assembly had sent an army to attack us.

The excitement in the city ran at fever heat.

'What! A *French* army bombarding the capital of *France?* How was it possible! It was a mistake! A misunderstanding, a monstrous error on the part of some subordinate officers. It would cease tomorrow.'

It did not cease 'tomorrow' or the day after and the day after!

Despite all the efforts of the Council of the Commune to settle matters peacefully, the bourgeoisie rejected the proffered olive branch, refused to negotiate, and opened the civil war.

The hapless people of Paris were faced with a second siege—this time by the French landlords, speculators and their politicians and generals.

'Oh,' were heard cries on every hand, 'the name of Thiers will be written in the annals of France in letters of shame.'

There was, however, one thing left for the Commune—defense, with the hope that peace would come soon.

As days rolled into weeks we grew accustomed to the new siege and focused our attention on the work of the Commune which went on building the new society of universal peace and brotherhood under the bursting shells.

On the Sixteenth of May we witnessed a great event: the tearing down of the monument of Napoleon the First which had been made of the cannon captured by him and his imperialist army. It was, the decree of the Commune said, a monument of national vanity and international jealousy.

Away with vandal wars caused by the insatiable ambition of tyrants!

Away with the symbols of militarism and blood!

And the huge bronze statue of Napoleon, for twenty years the supreme butcher of Europe, crashed to the ground. And the Place Vendôme, where it had stood, was named the International Square.

The second immortal act was the burning of the guillotine. We marched to the statue of Voltaire before which the destruction of the instrument of legalized murder took place.

Alas! What good was all this when the enemy was pounding at the gates of the city!

Ah, naive idealists that the leaders of the Commune were! opposed to the bourgeoisie—cold, practical people who permitted themselves no illusions on the score of the possibility of success of our undertaking, who were not concerned with the sublime ideal of regeneration of humanity but with acquisitiveness, rent, interest and profit.

'Reharness the filthy canaille to the chariot of the privileged few!'

'To your kennels, you curs! and leave the business of governing society to your betters!'

3

The Fall

On the Twenty-second of May, as dawn was breaking, I awoke with a strange feeling of uneasiness. A strange and heavy feeling of having been disturbed in my slumber by something unwelcome, mournful. I lay a while with my eyes open, peering into the grayish window, when suddenly I heard a sound that made my heart cease beating. It was the sound of the tocsin.

I sat up and listened. Yes, it was the sound of the tocsin!

And presently I observed that Roger too had awakened, and was straining his ears to the hollow, funereal tolling, slowly and uniformly repeated, with intervals that seemed an age. Then he clasped his head with both hands, and I saw him shaking as if in a fit of ague.

'Emile, my boy,' he muttered, his voice breaking on a sob, 'Emile, it is the tocsin; things are going badly with the Commune.'

My heart beat with a dreadful foreboding. A feeling of impending calamity swept over me. 'The Commune is in danger' was the thought that flashed through my mind.

We both sat as if petrified for long seconds, when Roger sprang up and snatched his clothes. I followed suit, trembling.

'Out with us, Emile; out!' said he in a dull, dreary tone. 'The Commune is calling us.'

He seized his musket, and we bolted out of the house.

The long, monotonous, dreadful strokes, each a pang in our hearts, were clearly audible in the morning air. From every doorway workers issued, musket in hand, anxiety mingled with grim determination etched on their faces, and hurried on in a westerly direction.

Roger accosted a man, 'What's wrong?'

'They have entered!' the other cried, pointing at the fresh placard of the Commune, 'they are within the city. To arms! To the barricades!'

We halted an instant before the placard—the last placard of our government. The defense of Paris, it read, was turned over to the workers of Paris themselves.

'Come, Emile, come!' he faltered, pressing my hand. 'We will defend the Commune—with our lives if necessary!'

Joining the stream of humanity we pressed forward. There was little talk among the workers speeding to battle. A call to a comrade to come into the ranks here, a militant shout there, and the mighty torrent rushed on.

We turned the corner and almost ran into Marianne, who, awakened by the alarm, was on her way to our house. Her face was a picture of distress. Pale, her brow overcast, all quivering with nervous agitation, she flung out her arms.

'Roger!'

'Marianne!'

They embraced, her face buried against his shoulder, and stood a moment in mute grief; while I listened to the distant rumbling of artillery, tears rolling down my cheeks.

'Oh, Roger,' she sobbed, 'they have entered Paris!'

'Marianne,' he replied calmly, 'our life belongs to the Commune.'

He took a step backward and lifted his musket. Suddenly his eyes snapped, and he raised his voice in a clarion call:

'To the defense!

'To the barricades!!

'Vive la Commune!!!'

I gasped for breath. A shock seemed to pass from one row of buildings to another. And a roar from thousands of throats, like the blast of a tropical storm, echoed back, 'Vive la Commune!'

We wasted no time. With thumping hearts we ran along. The streets, so gay and happy only a day before, now swarmed with people who had awakened to the danger and were hastily constructing barricades in preparation for a desperate resistance.

Among the labyrinth of smaller barricades that had sprung up during the wee hours of the morning, we pressed on, and at length found ourselves at Rue St. Honoré, where the front barricades were under the direct fire of the enemy.

We met the first wounded!

'Citizens,' some cried to us, 'we are coming back! Hold the barricades. Don't let the bourgeoisie triumph!'

Whiz! A bullet whistled by my ear. Then another. Panting, fatigued with the strain of the race, we flung ourselves down behind the ramparts of the great barricade near the English Embassy. Roger was recognized and the command was entrusted to him.

A cannon ball raked the barricade. I placed my newly acquired musket in a crack between sandbags, straining my eyes to see the

gunners behind the monsters that periodically vomited fire and death upon us. One of the bags was ripped open by a bullet and my eyes filled with sand. A crash of musketry fire broke upon my ears. This was our reply to the howling dragons of the enemy.

It was growing hot and a trail of smoke hung in the air. The tall and magnificent building to our left had caught fire.

By this time I had completely gotten over my fright and was beginning to feel ashamed of myself, seeing how these plain sturdy laborers beside me, with wives and children left behind, battled bravely, sacrificing their lives unflinchingly for our great cause. I grew accustomed to the booming of guns and cries of command and encouragement. Looking about me I discerned other boys of my age, and even girls, with their mothers, building barricades back of us, under the fire of the enemy. I glanced upward, and grew breathless with pride and astonishment. On the top of our barricade, pierced in many places by the bullets of the attackers, in the mild morning breeze floated the banner of the toiling humanity—the Red Flag!

It grew infernally hot. On either hand were burning houses with a thick pall of smoke overhead. Three or four defenders near me lay motionless. The firing swelled in volume. Bullets whizzed, shells burst.

With a deafening, roaring crash a burning building collapsed, emitting an immense cloud of fire and bitter black smoke. I was suffocating. And just then we perceived that soldiers were firing at us from the roofs of the houses in our rear.

'We must retreat,' rang out the familiar voice of our commander, tears of pain and rage streaming down his face, 'we must retreat.'

We abandoned the debris and retreated. To the next barricade we tore, escaping the hail of bullets sent in pursuit. Roger marshalled the defenders. We reloaded our muskets; and a savage desire gripped us all to stop them, to save our infant republic of labor.

But the destroying forces were advancing upon us. A half dozen shells ravaged our new entrenchment making it utterly untenable. We fell back to a well constructed barricade. Here we must hold them!

A brief pause followed—a breathing space. Coming forward to meet Roger with his hands outstretched, was Lois Mollière, an old revolutionist and a great friend of ours. Roger welcomed him with open arms.

'Mollière,' he cried, 'we will surely come out victorious. More munitions, more self-confidence and we will drive them back.'

'Ah,' said the elderly man, 'I'm afraid, my good Roger—' and making a gesture of despair, he continued, 'Our leaders are romanticists, not men of reality. *They don't know the bourgeoisie.* History has taught them nothing. They forgot the June Days of 1848. Only a few of them are wide awake. Raoul Rigault is one. "You are trying to be lenient with them," he said to the comrades in the Council of the Commune, "you will see how they will reward you if they come out victorious." No, my dear Roger. From the very day that we frustrated Monsieur Thiers' attempt to disarm us, the siege of Paris by the bourgeoisie and their final entry into the city was a foregone conclusion. Our leaders have forgotten that the best form of defense is attack. They should have sent a few battalions of the National Guard to Versailles to arrest or disperse the Judases. Instead, Thiers was allowed time to organize an army. The bourgeois journals in Paris were permitted to spread lies and confusion. Their spies even now are skulking behind our backs. Ha, ha! They called the bourgeoisie brothers and sisters,' he laughed bitterly. 'We shall pay for that dearly.'

Then he told us of the situation. With the assistance of their agents within the city, who had opened the gate of St. Cloud for them, the troops of the bourgeoisie had entered. They poured in. Thousands upon thousands. They had taken Passy, and later in the morning had advanced down the Boulevard Hausmann. At noon they had reached the Place de l'Europe near the western railway. Already a considerable portion of Paris was in their hands. To deliver the death-blow to the Commune they had brought into Paris the scourings of France recruited from the royalist rurals, the peasants of the South, and the Choans of Vandee. Besides, they employed the gendarmes, sailors, marines, and the armies that had been captured and held prisoners in Germany but which now, at the special request of Monsieur Thiers, were turned over to him. Everybody was here! Everybody lent a hand to crush the Commune! And behind this heavily armed brutal host, watching the spectacle in safety from the heights, holding their breaths with suspense, were Monsieur Thiers and the grand bourgeoisie.

A worker freshly arrived brought us new disappointing tidings. The Ecole Militaire had been abandoned by its defenders. The forces of the bourgeoisie were pushing on into the Rue Grenelle, St. Germain, brushing aside all resistance. At the Esplanade des Invalides, despite all the efforts of the workers, they swept on, scattering the barricades. They rolled through the arteries of the city towards its heart, the Hôtel de Ville. At one point, however, they

were held up. At Rue Cardinet, where the defense consisted almost entirely of working-class women and children. A bloody battle took place there. These women and children knew that for them the victory of the rich idlers meant starvation, ignorance and slavery. They stemmed with their bodies the onrush of the troops.

'Hold the barricades! Defend the Commune!'

Again we were pelted with bullets and shells. Our pile of barrels, boxes, mattresses and omnibuses was a poor shield against the artillery of the marines. Splinters flew. Huge breaches appeared in the barricade and the defenders had to face the fire without shelter. Our force grew smaller; and Roger was obliged to fall back. Faint and despairing he ordered us to retreat.

When we had taken up our new position, the firing began to slacken. The first day of the desperate struggle in the streets of the city was coming to a close.

Direct attacks had ceased and the night was quieter, although the raucous howl of artillery continued. The sky was black as ink, black as the despondency that brooded in our hearts. Gleaming cannon-balls, like so many meteors, were hurtling through the darkness. In different parts of the vault we could see red-shot clouds of smoke with gruesome tongues of flame licking the blackness of the firmament.

Women brought food to us. Their indomitable spirit revived our hope. We swore to one another to save the Commune; to defend it to the death.

Reeling with exhaustion, his face streaked with perspiration and gun powder, Roger snatched a morsel of food and ran off into the night. Soon he returned with a dozen or more people equipped with wheel-barrows, spades and picks. While our sentinels scanned the darkness anxiously, we fell to strengthening our defenses. Paving stones were turned up, sacks were filled with earth and placed between barrels, tables, beds and other lumber. We were ready for the next day's battle.

A few shots rang out. The enemy was firing at random. But they got no reply from us—we had to spend our munitions with a sparing hand—and all fell silent again. Moving through the dense shadows we glided off to other barricades to exchange a word of comfort with their defenders. In all quarters we found confidence, self-reliance and a spirit of animation. A dogged resolve to cling to the Labor Republic—for decades a dream in the minds of the few, almost realized by the awakened proletariat of Paris—was present everywhere. It stirred the hearts of the despairing. And

strangely enough, almost all shared Mollière's opinion of the naiveté of our leaders.

'Have no illusions,' one worker said, 'this is *the* war, the war between masters and slaves. When, during the first siege, soldiers fled before the attack of the Prussians, the officers would not as much as censure them. Now the soldiers who run away from our bullets are shot down by their officers without hesitation. And the Germans did not ravage Paris with shells as the French bourgeoisie does.'

'Oh,' a young student said, 'have you heard of the eloquent speech made today by Monsieur Thiers in the Assembly at Versailles? You have not? Well, he said: "The cause of justice, order, humanity and civilization has triumphed," and added: "The expiation will be complete. It will take the place in the name of the law, by the law, with the law!"'

The workers laughed bitterly at the bourgeois 'Justice,' 'Humanity,' 'Civilization,' and 'Law.'

We returned to our barricade and slept on the paving stones. Only Roger and Mollière, both calm and thoughtful, would not rest and remained vigilant, together with our sentries.

And with the first rays of the sun the crack of the muskets and thundering of artillery recommenced.

'Awaken, citizens,' was heard Roger's clear voice, 'awaken. The enemy is upon us!'

Ah, what a day this was! the second day of the mightiest combat in history between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The huge sun burned in the ruddy canopy of the heavens like an immense fiery furnace. The ground resounded with terrific gallop of thousands of feet, with the rattle of gun carriages, confused clamor of human voices and the detonation of shells.

Like a colossal avalanche the army sent by Thiers and the bourgeoisie crashed upon the sorely tried workingmen of Paris, scattering to the winds all barriers, leaving destruction in its path, sealing the doom of the Commune.

Our barricade was soon in flames. 'Retreat,' cried Roger. His face was covered with blood, his hair singed, his soul in agony.

We fell back again.

Scores of men lay behind the ramparts of the barricade we reached, ready to check the enemy. Disconcerting news greeted us. The foe was advancing all along the line. The strong defenses in Rue Noblet were torn to pieces, as well as those of La Condamine and the lower Avenue of Clichy. A few women survivors had just

passed from the Place Blanche. For hours they had held out against the furious attacks of the soldiery. The heroic proletarian women of Paris!

But the roaring torrents of the troops were still advancing. We reloaded our muskets. Rat-a-tat, and we were engaged.

Of a sudden the enemy's firing broke off and—behold! Could it be possible? We rubbed our eyes in amazement. A company of marines was approaching with the butt ends of their chassepots towards us. A breathless silence ensued.

'Don't shoot, brothers,' they cried. 'We too are workers. We are going over to the side of the proletariat. We will fight for the Commune.'

Oh, joy! We could hardly believe our senses. Electrified, stirred to the very bottom of our hearts we cried out, 'Vive la Commune!' Mollière and a number of workers rushed out to meet them with open arms.

But oh, what a horrible thing then took place! The marines quickly turned their guns and fired point-blank at our comrades. I saw the old revolutionist go down, pierced by a score of bullets.

'Oh, Mollière,' groaned Roger, 'how little you knew them yourself!'

He fired madly at the treacherous assassins. We rushed at them bayonet in hand and drove them off.

A sharp struggle followed, and an hour afterwards we were forced to withdraw farther to the rear.

Here my vision fell upon a tiny figure lying beside me. To my intense amazement and joy I recognized my friend Felix, the miserable little street urchin. He greeted me gleefully, loading his musket.

'Roger,' I cried, pointing at the child.

Roger's face grew white, his parched lips trembled. I saw tears welling into his eyes.

'Felix, you brave little fellow!' he cried with deep emotion, while a sharp spasm of pain gripped my heart. He stooped and shook the child's bony hand. 'Fight them, Felix, fight! They come to enslave you; to make of you a stupid, obedient hand in their factories to produce riches for them, to enable them to live a life of luxury and idleness. Fight, Felix! Help to drive them out of Paris, out of France; to drive them off the face of the earth! Fight, Felix!'

And Felix fought. His musket was three times his length but he handled it admirably. Incessantly he fired upon the soldiers and the marines.

Night descended upon Paris. The entire sky was red—red with the conflagration which was devouring the great city, contested for by the two antagonists of modern society. With a strident, crackling noise a thousand buildings burned. And against the crimson curtain of the night the blazing Ministry of Finance and the Palace of the Tuileries stood out brilliantly like monstrous funeral torches of the impending burial of the Commune.

Roger, swaying and tottering with fatigue, his lids drooping from exhaustion, submitted to Marianne's care. A bullet had cut through his left arm and another had grazed his temple. She bathed his face and laved the wounds. I looked at her and turned away to hide my streaming tears. She was drooping like a sad, faded rose.

Roger spoke to me. He was deceiving himself no longer. He fully understood, now, the true extent of our misery.

'Emile, my boy,' he said, and every word of his burned like acid into my jaded brain, 'Emile, the end is drawing near. If you should remain alive, tell Mother and Grandpa that Marianne and Roger have done their duty—'

'Oh, Roger,' I cried, my heart sinking into black despair.

'Go, Emile,' he muttered, 'go find out what is happening. What are the generals of the Commune doing?'

Ah, what was there to find out! It was already known that many leaders of the Commune, naive men though they were, had met their death heroically on the barricades. Among the generals killed were Dombrowski and Delescluze, the chief and most able officers of our proletarian army.

The situation augured fatal consequences for the Commune. The enemy had occupied the heights of Montmartre, the birthplace of the Commune. The Prussians had opened the gate of St. Ouen for Monsieur Thiers, and we were being attacked from the rear. Our gunboats on the Seine had been disabled and silenced. The iron ring grew narrower.

A low groan broke from Roger's lips.

'Monsieur Thiers has become a great friend of Bismarck's. Everything is forgotten when the slaves threaten to revolt—. Ah, Delescluze! You permitted the bourgeois officers to go scot free on the promise they would never again fight the Commune. You trusted these assassins—'

For a brief second he lifted his eyes to the lurid heavens and then slowly shut them and fell into a stupor.

I stumbled over to Felix, who was lying on a blood-soaked mattress. A feeble smile lighted his puny face. He had been struck by

a ball, but his wound was not dangerous. I swore to save him, to keep him with us—if I lived.

I lay down beside him. What a long and dreary night! It seemed as if it would never end. But it passed, and the third day of the great war broke.

The third day!

Pandemonium was raging in the streets of Paris! Under the livid sky, shot with smoke and fire, obscuring daylight, the atmosphere was thick with the insane hatred the two classes held for each other. Cries and curses rang through the air:

'Down with Thiers and the bourgeoisie who war upon the people of Paris! Vive la Commune!'

'Death to the canaille! Death to the Commune!'

And the Titanic battle of the barricades unfolded with a violent fury.

On St. Jacques Square, behind the barricade which was to protect the Hôtel de Ville, we made our last stand. Historians and newspaper correspondents of London, New York and other cities recorded this fight that the workers under Roger's command put up for the City Hall of Paris.

'NO MORE RETREATS! HOLD THE BARRICADES!'

It was a mad, swirling maelstrom. The roar of the cannon tingled in my brain. Marines, gendarmes, Guard Mobile dashed upon us like a wild ocean of fire. Yelling demons, they leaped to the assault. We fired at close quarters. Men were tumbling, rolling, rising again. They pierced each other's entrails with bayonets. They were bleeding, howling, shrieking, sobbing with rage.

Through the din of the formidable conflict I heard a roaring voice vibrating with passion.

'Courage, Citizens! Courage, Marianne! Courage, Emile! Courage, Felix!—Courage!'

And I saw him there in the middle of the barricade, his tall form towering over his antagonists who swarmed upon him. The bandages on his brow were red with blood and black with smoke. Through a haze of red I saw him swinging his musket like a club, dealing ferocious blows to his assailants. 'Courage, Roger,' I cried and ran towards him. Zip! Zip! Zip! the bullets whistled. A bulldog-looking gendarme fell upon Roger from the rear. I stooped and sank my teeth deep into his calf. With a mad swing of his leg he shook me off and turned once more to Roger. I rose, but something struck me on the head and I went down again.

My eyes grew dim and I had to struggle hard to prevent my wits

leaving me. Panting for breath, I summoned all my remaining energy and tottered to my knees. Dizzied and stunned as I was, I discerned that the enemy had again drawn back in dismay. A fresh company of National Guards had reached us. Scores of wounded dragged themselves back to the barricades. The proletariat of Paris had resolved to fight for its cause to the last drop of blood!

Three more attacks followed. Our little garrison appeared to be melting away; the number of our foes increasing hourly.

Back of us the Hôtel de Ville was in flames. The uniforms of the enemy scurried to and from the great building. We were lost!

They soon surrounded us. What matter! only a few of us remained; and soon we would be without another round of ammunition.

Presently my attention was drawn to our barricade; Roger had lifted his voice.

'Workers, brothers,' I heard him say, 'death is the end of life of every human being. Death is inevitable. Perhaps we might have lived a few more years, or months, or days. It is possible that our death today is premature. But when I look at Paris at this hour; when I behold the barricades covered with corpses of workers who have fought and died bravely; when I see with my mind's eye not far behind this ignorant soldiery the crowd that is returning to hang upon the limbs of the toilers like a curse; when I gaze back of us, in the faubourgs, the slums, where our wretched people drag out their existence; when I think of our aged fathers and mothers stooped with toil and care; when I think of our brothers exploited in factories, sisters enslaved in shops and driven by unemployment and hunger to earn their living in the streets; when I think of all humanity, hapless, suffering, I must say that it is for a great cause that we are giving our lives today. It is the greatest cause in the history of the human race. It is the cause—'

He ceased abruptly. No one had listened to him save myself. The Grim Reaper reigned supreme on the barricade. The handful of defenders, left without a cartridge, held their bayonets in readiness against further onslaught. Our only cannon was being loaded by one of the National Guards for the last shot.

Looking on with unutterable anguish, Roger bowed his head and moved his lips convulsively, immersed in grief.

Suddenly he beckoned to me.

'Come here, Emile,' he said; and when I approached he laid his hand on my shoulder. 'Look, Emile,' spreading his hands with the palms upwards and pointing at the woeful scene around us, 'you

see what's happening in Paris today? Listen, Emile. It was an attempt to better the lives of unhappy little fellows like you. This attempt was called the Commune. Understand? Will you remember this—the Paris Commune—?'

My heart was bursting with agony, my eyes bathed in tears. Dismal memories crowded upon me. I saw my father, I thought of Mollière, of the thousands of wretched working men and women of our hapless city, and I whispered back, 'I will remember.'

'You see these men and women,' he went on, and I gazed through dim eyes at the bodies lying pell-mell on the barricade, 'they fell defending the Commune. You saw them die, Emile.'

I nodded.

'I want you, Emile, to remember how they died so that if you grow up to be a man you may be able to tell the future generation how true revolutionists die. Will you remember?'

'I will remember!' I shrieked, blood rushing in torrents to my heart. 'I will remember!'

He paused and surveyed the grim surroundings, a world of pain in his eyes. At length he spoke again, his face aglow.

'A time will come, Emile, when the new society for which they died will be realized. No group of men will then coin their happiness out of the misery of the people. Ah, it will be a happy world, Emile—'

He was interrupted. An officer with soldiers rushed up to the barricade.

'Surrender, you rabble! Thieves, scoundrels, surrender!'

'Never!' roared Roger. In a flash he was at the cannon: 'Never! Vive la Commune! Vive la Revolution! Vive l'Humanité!'

He fired the last shot.

But the assailants were already on the barricade.

'Surrender!' cried the officer in a cracked, dry voice, aiming his pistol at Roger.

'Marianne,' exclaimed Roger, throwing away his empty musket and baring his breast, 'they command us to surrender. Marianne, what good is life under the domination of the bourgeoisie! We are brutally treated, shamelessly exploited, starved when out of work. Marianne, the Commune is dying! Let us die with the Commune!'

'Vive la Commune!' she cried, and clasping the flag to her she threw herself in front of her lover.

The officer discharged his pistol. Marianne clutched hard at her breast; and her hand filled with blood which gushed through her fingers. Roger staggered....

Roger and Marianne. They were to have been married in June of that year. They were united by death six weeks before their wedding day. There they lay, side by side, covered with the Red Flag."

Ducasse paused.

Someone sobbed in the room. Jack rose and went to the window, dashing the tears from his eyes. Eugene blew his nose violently. Vera was weeping silently.

"Ah, comrades," resumed Ducasse at length, "it is easy now, alas! for me to speak. It was infernal to see, to live through. That shot, comrades, still rings in my ears. It finds a throbbing echo in the remote recesses of my brain which store the never-fading memory of those terrible moments of my life.

When they had sunk to the ground, I stood a brief second transfixed with pain and horror. A dark film passed over my eyes. There seemed a black impenetrable night about me, and I felt as though a fissure, an abyss had opened beneath my feet. A hoarse cry broke from my lips.

Then I sprang forward and fell on my knees beside them.

'Oh, Roger,' I wailed in helpless agony of grief, and I touched his outflung arm, 'It is I, Roger—Emile! Oh, Roger! Marianne!—'

Ah, but they did not answer. Their brave voices had been silenced forever. I found his hand and hers and pressed them to my bosom. Unable to bear the sight of their lifeless forms shrouded with the flag now drenched in their blood, I averted my face.

My eyes fell upon the soldiers of our 'brothers.' Like ferocious, wild beasts they prowled through the barricade, dispatching the wounded. And then I witnessed a scene that instantly brought me to my feet, that aroused in me an insane impulse to combat them all.

The dwarfish figure of Felix quivering with excitement was visible within fifteen yards from me. He was defying the mighty enemy—fighting! Snatching up a stone, he flung it at them. Felix fought. And then I saw the terribly white face of his heaving in sight as the soldiers lifted him on their bayonets. Blood spurted from his puny body. They dashed him on the paving stones. They pounced upon him and with their heavy boots they smashed his head into a mass of brains and blood.

I raved in a fit of madness and fled aghast from this scene of woe and horror. They roared out horrid curses and fired at me. Some followed a few paces in pursuit, shooting as they ran. One big fellow was overtaking me. Like an infuriated bull, his enormous

eyes burning red and ominous, he ran at me, but I dodged and he missed me with his terrible 'horn,' the bayonet, which was reeking with blood.

Now running, now mousing along the walls of houses, I came in view of the Hôtel de Ville. The great building was a flaring pyre of fire. The air was filled with the wails and groans of our expiring wounded who lifted a chorus of plaintive voices in a mournful dirge for the Commune.

I was in a cold sweat. Wiping the tears with my fists, I turned toward the Place de la Bastile, passing smoldering ruins of houses riddled with cannon balls, shell-torn trees and lamp posts. Wherever my eyes fell I saw broken muskets, knapsacks, kepis, damaged omnibuses, debris of barricades, dead horses, and bleeding corpses of men.

I trudged forward, heedless of the fate that might befall me should I be detected by the prowling soldiers. As I progressed I met with an old man; his gray head drooping, he wept like a child.

'The Commune,' he muttered, pointing somewhere with his trembling, shrunken hand. 'Ah, again they are victorious. As in 1830—in 1848—as always—always! Oh, my poor people! Oh, humanity! You are destined to suffer forever—'

I passed him quickly. Blinded by tears I stumbled and fell, but rose and kept on my way. Reaching a square I found a turmoil of noise and hurry. Although exhausted, the men and women of the proletariat persisted in clinging to their expiring republic with the courage of desperation. They were feverishly erecting barricades.

A revolutionist was haranguing a crowd of National Guards. Scores of upturned pale faces with straining brilliant eyes. In a great voice, vibrant with fire, he was telling them that the Universal Republic, this new society of peace and brotherhood of men, must be saved; that victory of the bourgeoisie and the reestablishment of the rule of the few would mean the return to militarism and new wars. That it was far better to sacrifice a few hundred more men now than to suffer losses of hundreds of thousands in the future. The Commune must be saved, for another opportunity to establish the new society might not come in decades.

A terrific stirring of voices acclaimed these words. The tension was reaching a high pitch. Faces were flushed. An electric storm swept over the crowding jostling men, ending in a thunderclap:

'Save the Commune!'

Suddenly the enemy presented itself from a by-street, executing a flank movement. The workers rushed madly into battle. The

soldiers retreated before them. Soon, however, they returned with artillery and mitrailleuses. Bullets began to fall like hail. Shells exploded. Yet the workers did not waver. Sheltered in the doorways of houses, behind lamp posts, or entirely unsheltered in the middle of the street, they made a gallant effort to save the new order of things. But they were falling, falling, falling. They were mowed down. They were no more.

I fled at random amidst a veritable tornado of bullets, and presently, to my bewilderment, I discovered that I had been making a detour and was now within a short distance from the barricade I had left an hour ago. Munition wagons, estafettes, ambulances scurried at top speed in various directions. The defense was not yet abandoned.

I came upon a group of two women and a youth, and recognized in him the student who had repeated Monsieur Thiers' speech to us. He sat on the curb, moaning, his clothes soaked with blood.

'Citizen, you are wounded,' one woman said. 'We are going to help you.'

He clenched his teeth with pain and shook his head. Pointing at the burning Hôtel de Ville in the distance, he moaned:

'Ah, the Commune—it has fallen—our beautiful society—happiness—all vanished—all dead—'

Of a sudden a group of about fifty men appeared, brandishing sabers and muskets. They dashed past us like a blast of wind, their faces burning, their eyes on fire.

'Citizens,' they roared, tearing in the direction of Rue de Rivoli, 'Citizens, the Commune is not dead! To the barricades! Vive la Commune!'

The youth lifted his head as if awakening from a dream. Thrusting the women aside he leaped to his feet.

'To the barricades!' he cried, taking several unsteady steps. 'To the barricades—Vive la—'

He collapsed on the pavement. The women ran up to him, their faces convulsed with grief.

On to the barricade, where I had left the bodies of my dear ones, I ran, in the wake of the men who had just rushed by. But upon reaching the spot I scarcely recognized it. It was littered with fresh corpses, and the bodies of Roger and Marianne were buried beneath this grisly pile. On the top of the barricade, saturated with the blood of its defenders, the Red Flag still clung.

The daring enthusiasts! In their heroic onrush they had retaken

the barricade, but were now falling under the heavy fire like leaves in a November gale.

My worn nerves were about to give way. I began to lose my senses, yet consciousness lingered until I had reached a cellar partly concealed by a large overhanging shed. Whether I myself rolled down the stairs or was shoved by some passing soldier, I never knew. But when my senses rushed back to me, I found myself lying at the cellar door, high above me a cloud of sparks and flame against the blackness of the night sky.

Fatigued to the utmost, I could not pull myself to my feet. I pushed the door open and crawled inside the cellar. Impenetrable darkness there. My hand slipped on a slab of stone which was thickly covered with some sort of slime. The smell of it sickened me, but I was so weakened that I could not tear myself away and remained prostrate, falling instantly into a heavy sleep.

I was awakened by a sharp pain in my hand. Before I could guess the cause of my pain, a huge rat ran across my body. And then suddenly I became aware that the cellar was swarming with them. It was their domain, their pleasure-ground, their battlefield. Large, powerful pests, they darted about, screaming and whistling. There seemed whole armies of them. Filled with horror and disgust, I was forced to ward off their attacks, weary though I was.

As my thoughts fly back to the three days I lived in that cellar, I cannot suppress the memory of the feeling of nausea that possessed me then. The cellar contained about fifteen bodies of dead Communards, which accounted largely for the presence of these swarms of vermin. The slime that I had slipped on when I crept into that burial place was a pool of clotted blood.

During these days, although the hours of the Commune were numbered and further resistance was madness, the proletarians continued the struggle. The din of battle, as hours went, came to me fainter and fainter. The enemy's attacks were fierce. Their artillerists fired without interruption. Street by street, building by building, barricade by barricade, were being wrested from the bleeding proletarians by the infuriated troops of the bourgeoisie.

I lived in constant peril of discovery by the soldiers. During the day I did not venture to leave my ghastly cellar. I could not run the gantlet of the lynx-eyed patrols. Hunger forced me to this risk at night and I haunted the nearby ruins of barricades. I was fortunate to find a basket of food which I carried back, stealing along the walls.

It was on the second morning that I grew somewhat bolder and ascended the stairs while it was still twilight. It was raining.

A strange sight! A rain of blood was descending upon Paris. Large red drops out of a lead-colored sky were falling into the street, and, forming streamlets and rivulets, were running into the sewers. The rain increased. It dashed against the ground, churning the torn-up pavements into a red quagmire. And through the drifting veil I saw tramping soldiers and mounted patrols convoying a crowd of our men and women.

I remained on the stairs, taking precaution not to come into view of the roving patrols. As I was making my observations, my attention fell on a dog within a dozen paces from the cellar. The large, shaggy, black animal was bustling over something I could not quite make out. Then it moved a bit sideways, and I shrieked out in horror. My hair stood erect on my head.

It was the dead body of a worker in whose torn throat the dog had buried its muzzle devouring with ravenous appetite the hideous flesh. When I had shrieked, the beast lifted its head and glared fiercely at me with its wild, red eyes, its muzzle dripping with blood. I fumbled for a rock. But in spite of my pelting the brute with a hail of stones, it persisted, marking each of my scores with a furious growl. I leaped out, and snatching from the pavement a fragment of a bayonet, flung the missile. It hit the mark; and the beast, with a half howl, half yelp, loped off into the sad and dismal street and was out of sight.

On the morning of the fourth day I mounted the steps stealthily to make my reconnaissance. A boisterous concourse of people was filing past my hiding place. I listened.

'God, how good it feels to get back to our old Paris!' a voice was exulting.

'Good-morning, monsieur, good-morning!' was heard another.

'Well, thank heaven, the thing is about finished.'

'Of course! They are surrounded in the cemetery of Père la Chaise. It will soon be over.'

I cocked my ear. Indeed, the low rumble of the cannonade was coming now from the direction of the cemetery of Père la Chaise. There, beleaguered on all sides by the troops of the bourgeoisie, were bleeding the last defenders of the Paris Commune.

The returning bourgeoisie kept up a lively conversation.

'Ah, monsieur, but I never felt so happy in all my life as when I saw the red flag, the symbol of arson and murder, torn down from the old windmill of La Galette!'

'That was a wonderful sight,' a voice returned.

'Ah, but why don't you mention the more glorious spectacle,' another protested. 'Why don't you speak of the moment when our tricolor, the symbol of liberty, equality, and fraternity, was hoisted in its place!'

With difficulty I restrained myself from crying out, 'The symbol of rent, interest, and profit, you hypocrites!'

And so their flag floated victoriously in the breeze, while ours, insulted and degraded, had been torn down and stamped into a bloody mire.

And presently I heard the rapid clapper-clop of a horse. A mounted officer appeared, riding from the direction of Belleville. He was at once surrounded by the elegant crowd, who cried:

'The news, Monsieur Capitain, the news!'

'It's over, it's over!' the officer replied, rearing a bit on his mount. 'It is all over.'

And then he added a sentence which smote my heart like the stab of a dagger. The mob greeted it with an enthusiastic, exultant, victorious whoop. This cry of triumph brought to my mind another, on that beautiful sunny day of the 28th of March when I had stood in the Place La Grève listening to Ranvier exclaiming 'Citizens, in the name of the people, the Commune is proclaimed!'

The sentence the officer had added to his first assurance was:

'The Commune is DEAD!'

4

The Bourgeoisie

THE Commune was dead.

The whole feudal-capitalist world of slave-drivers and parasites, from the coal districts of Wales to the fisheries of Japan, from the sweat-irrigated fields of India to the skeleton-strewn rubber forests of Brazil, the whole dark, monarchical, slavery-loving world gave a sigh of relief. The 'terrible' Commune, which had haunted them in their sleep, with her 'impossible' ideal was no more. Her throat cut, a bleeding corpse, she lay prostrate on the barricades of Paris.

Only a few isolated voices of intelligence and sympathy were heard in the universal wild shower of calumny and vilification poured upon the fallen republic of labor. Marx read his famous address to the General Council of the International, for which he

was attacked by the whole London press and barely escaped court proceedings. The few enlightened proletarians in various countries held meetings at which they glorified the Star of Hope that had beaconed to them from Paris, the immortal flame that could not be extinguished by the exploiters. When the French bourgeoisie had finally signed a peace with Bismarck, ceding to him Alsace and Lorraine and binding their war-torn country to pay an enormous indemnity, the Prussian army returned to Germany. In pompous parade it marched through Berlin, acclaimed by the élite of Prussian society and by the multitude of ignorant people. Yet there were crowds of workers, several thousand strong, who, instead of extolling the victorious army, met it with cries, 'Hoch der Commune!'

The Commune was dead.

But the revolutionary proletariat of Paris was still alive. The bourgeoisie knew that and resolved to dispatch it to its grave—to bury it together with its Commune.

And now, comrades, I must tell you of things that no words can fully depict. I approach with dread this portion of my story. Already I begin to feel an unspeakable horror creeping into my heart. Oh, the frightful days that followed!

That I was on the verge of lunacy I never doubt. And I still wonder that my heart did not burst and I remained alive after all the horrors that followed.

None of you, comrades, has known mortal terror. None of you has experienced a wild piercing anguish that was tearing your living heart apart. I have lived through both. The usual escape from both is in madness or in death; and yet I did not die and have retained my reason. Oh, those horrible days!"

Ducasse shuddered and buried his face in his hands.

"Well," he continued, lifting his head, "I was arrested on the afternoon of the day when the last combatants were crushed. Together with thousands of others taken in cellars, in garrets, in houses, in hotels, I was led along the streets. I trudged with the rest, a calmness of despair in my heart. What were they going to do with us? I wondered, although it mattered little—the Commune was dead. But soon enough all my doubts as to the fate that awaited me were dispelled.

At a wall of a building I saw a crowd of about a hundred people facing a squad of soldiers. A volley, and the massacre commenced. Several more volleys, and it was concluded. And presently I grew aware that there were reports of musketry from every direction. Twice our crowd was stopped by a court-martial that detained about

fifty of our number. When we went on, we heard shooting in our rear and knew that our comrades were being slaughtered. Then suddenly the cause of the bloody rain of two days ago became clear to me.

As we tramped along, wrapped in bleak unhappiness yet with no wails of fear or complaint, we took our last view of Paris—Paris after the conquest by our bourgeoisie. And presently we came upon sights so appalling that an icy terror swept over me. Was the world gone mad! Could all this be reality or was I going through a gory nightmare!

On either hand were heaps of black ashes, houses torn by shells, with smut-streaked walls and staring black windows like the eye-holes of a skull. Shattered shutters. And along these desolate streets, as far as the eye could reach, were enormous piles of corpses white with chloride of lime.

The street was littered with dead bodies of the National Guard. They stared at us with their wide-open glassy eyes. With trembling steps we stumbled over them, our feet slipping in their blood.

Paris was transformed into an immense death chamber. The great city was shrouded as with a vast black sheet, through an opening of which, high overhead, peered the fierce red eye of the sun.

We turned into a wide avenue. A wild howl greeted us from the elegantly attired mob thronging the sidewalks. They poured a torrent of stinging contumely and abuse upon us.

'Mon Dieu!' one bellowed, 'what hangdog countenances these creatures have!'

'Vile faces, monsieur,' another cried. 'The devil must look more human than these do.'

'Criminals, monsieur, born criminals.'

'Thieves! Cowards! Unspeakable villains!'

Suddenly they turned their attention in a different direction, and thunderous applause shook the air.

'Our savior!' they cried, 'our savior!'

We too turned our heads and beheld a heavy traffic of vehicles: beautiful cabriolets, regal coaches, gleaming phaetons, drawn by magnificent white or bay horses at a lively canter, sparks flying from under their hoofs. Around this gorgeous stream were shining cavalcades of officers in gold-laced uniforms, sitting upright and disdainfully on their prancing steeds. It was Monsieur Thiers, the first president-to-be of the Republic which still lives today, amid the cream of the grand bourgeoisie which was returning from Versailles, Rueil, and St. Germain.

What exultant, beaming faces! They were all festively adorned. Men in fashionable suits, with monocles, canes, silk hats. Their women exquisitely gowned after the late fashions, in shining silks and dainty white laces. In their white-gloved hands some held fine sunshades, bouquets of beautiful flowers, others white and yellow fans that swayed like butterflies. The older women gleamed in their blue velvets. They were adorned with gold bracelets and breast-pins and watches, and on their necks, in their ears, on their fingers, sparkled precious stones.

I glanced at my own crowd. I could have died of heartbreak seeing these miserable working people, in tatters and rags, faces darkened with sorrow and long suffering, stumbling along to their death.

The spokes of the carriages, in which the idlers, who lived on the toil of labor, reclined leisurely, blinded us with their glitter. The coachmen, crackling their whips in a theatrical manner, brought them down not on the backs of their splendid horses but on ours. The dainty ladies replied with charming smiles and kisses of their finger-tips to the greetings of those on the sidewalks, while the men shouted:

'Order! Order! Law and order! Civilization is safe!'

They glowered at us with dogged hatred as we marched by. Some of the ladies stood up and struck us with their sunshades. Men hailed blows upon us with their canes, to the accompaniment of wild hoots and yells.

We were driven into another avenue. A batch of prisoners was added to ours, and I gasped hoarsely when my eyes fell upon a wounded Communard who, unable to walk, was being dragged by the hair by two gendarmes, leaving upon the stones yet another long streak of red. I stared with bated breath; and then my eyes fell upon a woman close beside me and I felt my whole being convulse with agony.

'Mamma!' I shrieked, in unspeakable torment. 'Oh, Mamma!'

Her withered hands were tied behind her back, and the rope cut into her flesh when she made a movement to free them in order to embrace me.

'Emile, my child,' she murmured, a twinge of pain on her lips. 'My little boy, I thought you were dead.'

A gendarme with a diabolical grin on his face addressed her in tones of assurance.

'He will be dead, madame. Much sooner than you expect, he, he!'

I flung my arms about her neck.

And then I observed that my little sister, Juliet, was with her. Barefooted, in her little torn dress, frightened by the beastly yells of our convoyers, she wept and clung to Mother's shackled hands. And here, dragging his old legs, tied to another aged worker, was Grandpa.

Mother turned her sorrowful eyes upon mine.

'What of Roger and Marianne?' she asked.

I broke into sobs, and she understood the truth.

'Do not weep, Emile. Dry your tears, my child. They have died for the Commune.'

I ceased crying and felt pride swelling up in my bosom when I thought of the terrible heroic days on the barricades with Roger and Marianne.

At a square filled with a bourgeois mob and swaggering vainglorious officers we were brought to a pause. As if by common agreement they all raised a fiendish outcry at the sight of us. Above the general tumult we could distinguish isolated foul and vicious aspersions.

'This scum of Paris has always been a menace to society!' roared a fat bourgeois, shaking his plump fist at us. His white vest with a heavy golden chain across it remain indelibly in my memory. 'We must exterminate every one of them,' he raved. 'It is now or never—! We'll get a new laboring population for Paris from the provinces. They will be loyal and good citizens—'

'To the guillotine!' screamed another. He looked to me like a bourgeois journalist. 'Their heads are poisoned with the pernicious ideas of that infamous scoundrel, Karl Marx! They all belong to that association of thieves and assassins called the International—an organization of bandits and cut-throats! Finish them, General!'

The general's gaze roved over our ranks.

'Get all the gray-haired men out of the crowd,' he ordered. The mob lashed their fury while the officers executed the order.

I experienced a grateful feeling as I looked at the general. So he was humane enough to spare the wretched aged men! I was happy for Grandpa when I watched him trudge away together with those selected. They were all drawn up before the general who addressed them.

'You, old scoundrels,' he bellowed, 'are the real instigators of the Commune, for surely every one of you participated in the June Days of 1848. You are a menace to order, to law, to society. You shall be executed.'

A shrill scream broke from the women in our crowd, blended

with the sobbing wails of children; and clapping of hands. His mob of friends was applauding the general.

With my heart in my throat, I stared at him. In his red, flashing eyes I detected a gleam of odious joy. The old men were led aside to a building grimed with fire. They stood up against the wall facing the chassepots of the soldiers with grim, sphinx-like unconcern. A volley resounded through the air. Some of the men remained standing, and the soldiers fired again.

The general turned towards us, and sticking out his chest like a turkey-cock he grinned and introduced himself.

'My name is Gallifet. Your journals in Paris sullied me enough. I take my revenge.'

He chuckled and gave orders, and we proceeded. The mob raised their voices in horrid yells and curses. We winced under their blows. One, trembling with insane hatred, shouted:

'To the wall! You rascals! You dogs!'—he wheeled to the convoying officers—'every one of them! The women and children too! They can breed thieves only, and their children will grow up thieves and assassins! To the wall!'

Among these people who were spluttering with fury I recognized a familiar face. It was Monsieur Muré. He saw us too. In an instant he was near my mother, and holding her up by the arm he spat into her face. Another woman wiped the foul fluid with the sleeve of her blouse. But he sprang up and emptied his mouth into her face once more.

Oh, to what more infernal torment were they to put us before they put an end to our lives!

And then, as if to fill to the brim the cup of my misery, a dainty lady rushed up to my mother.

'Prostitute!' she screamed, and with all her might she struck her full in the face.

Ah, black was the world around me in those black hours of torment. With what insensate cruelty they mauled the unresisting prisoners! With what singular ferocity they trampled the bodies of their victims underfoot! With what infinite disgust they spat upon the corpses! Oh, the torture was incessant.

The blood-red sun beat down upon us with its fiery rays. The air was filled with a queer, sombre, crimson light that pained the eyes, causing a whir in the brain. Everything in that lurid light was red—blood-red. The trunks of trees, the leaves upon them, horses, men, signs over cafés and wine-shops, the sordid forms of the prisoners on the pavement—everything seemed coated with a layer

of blood. And no other sound was heard except that of tramping feet, yells of soldiers and volleys in the distance.

A piece of hypocrisy was added to insults and injury. We were ordered to halt before a church.

'On your knees, you cowardly murderers, and pray for your damnable souls! You will soon pass into the gates of hell where you belong, you canaille!'

After a brief rest, with kicks of their boots and pricks of their bayonets they made us resume our march to Calvary.

Then another batch of prisoners was added to ours. Another scene clutched at my heart. A wounded Communard had been tied to a horse's tail and was dragged along, the rider, a chasseur, grinned at his own ingenuity which was praised by his comrades.

Passing a café, we saw a crowd of ladies and gentlemen making merry. They poured out into the street raising their glasses aloft, giving toasts to the soldiers. A lady ran up to the officer riding at my side and exclaimed:

'You are doing a noble work, monsieur. Here, refresh yourself with a glass of wine.'

And so we moved on. At an intersection of a boulevard we met with a long stream of vans, omnibuses, gun carriages and every other sort of vehicle, all loaded with dead bodies, with arms, legs and heads dangling. I looked sharply at the dead. Perhaps I would see *his* or *her* face. But oh, how could I distinguish anyone in such a mass of corpses. Other things I discerned well enough. To the bodies of the dead proletarians were pinned large pieces of paper with inscriptions, 'Thief,' 'Prostitute,' 'Drunkard,' and in the mouths of some of the heroic revolutionists, in the mouths of the murdered defenders of the Commune were shoved in necks of broken wine bottles, cigarette stumps—

At length we came to the end of our excruciating journey. We arrived at La Roquette.

At the gate officers were examining the prisoners, crying out in strident voices:

'Show your hands, you canaille!'

The callous hands of the laborer were the unmistakable evidence of guilt.

'You have powder stains on your hands, you dog! To the left! You have a watch on you—you must have been a functionary of the Commune—to the left!'

Those who could show papers that they had been in service of the old Imperial government or of the government of National

Defense, or prove that they were of high station in life and did not assist the Commune, were sent to the right.

We, of the left side, were told to march inside the gate.

Horror of horrors!

I was glued to the spot by a paralysis of terror. My marrow was iced in my bones, my hair stood upon my head like needles, and a scale of ice crept over my heart. Death? Death, comrades, is a trivial matter. There are things worse than death—oh! infinitely worse than *any* death.

There hung a thick mist of scarlet vapor in that appalling place. The air shook with loud, shrill screams and heart-rending cries broken by the reports of musketry fire. On the floor lay heaps of steaming corpses, the blood from them ran down, bubbling and gurgling, into the gutters of the prison. Wounded crawled on their bellies, struggling on the ground and choking with blood, or ran along the wall, blood streaming from them, insanity in their eyes. Soldiers, their uniforms bespattered, their eyes bloodshot and bulging, faces dank with sweat and blood, teeth showing like tigers, panted and gasped, scampered heavily after the wounded, digging their bayonets into their victims' bodies, stabbing them again and again, butchering, butchering, butchering!

Oh, it was the fury of a legion of demons. It was the splitting of heavens and the thunderous crashing of all the monstrous spirits of the universe down upon the head of the proletariat of Paris. It was the yawning of the earth's mouth and the blazing up of all the fires from within its bowels to destroy the revolutionary workers of the great city. It was the venting of the wrath of the bourgeoisie.

On the warm, slippery floor of the prison, before a group of officers, a woman knelt, her hands extended to them in supplication. It was Genevieve. Little Victor was holding on to her shoulder with his tiny fingers.

'Look, Emile,' my mother cried. Poor Mother. She had endured everything without a murmur, concealing all her misery in her proud bosom, but now her voice broke on a sob. 'Emile, it is Genevieve. She is pleading for her child—'

'Messieurs,' Genevieve was screaming in hysterical, incoherent phrases, 'messieurs—kill me—oh, murder me—but spare my baby —spare—'

Tears of fire were streaming from my mother's eyes. Genevieve's words seared into my brain like acid. The officers regarded her with soulless eyes.

'Madame,' one spoke at length, expostulating with her in the

most polite manner, 'madame, your child's features indicate beyond any doubt that he'll grow up an awful scoundrel. Believe me, madame—'

Then one of the younger officers went up to the general, our old acquaintance, General Gallifet, seeming to plead with him.

'Mon ami,' cried the other irritably, 'we cannot spare their children. They'll grow up nursing revenge, and will become a menace to law and order. Do away with this proletarian rubbish as soon as possible. There is much more to be done before the day is out.'

Genevieve sprang to her feet, ran up to Gallifet and fell prostrate before him.

'Have pity, monsieur,' she whimpered, wringing her hands, 'oh, have pity—'

Poor Genevieve. She was appealing for mercy to the merciless General. He contemplated her for some moments and then a fiendish smile curled his lips. He twisted his moustache.

'Madame,' he said, bowing slightly, 'I have visited every theatre in Paris and have seen their best talents. Your acting can have no effect upon me.'

A strange laugh broke from Genevieve's lips. She rose and with a happy smile flitted around her child. My mother bent and whispered into my ear:

'Sch, Emile. She has gone mad—'

I was transfixed by the horror of this scene. My tongue was glued to the roof of my mouth.

The suspense became unbearable.

Oh, if they would only hurry! Oh, death! Death! Death—to free us from seeing and hearing and thinking. Ah, at last! At last!

'To the wall!' rasped the officers, and soldiers rushed upon us with bayonets to drive us to the wall. We were lined up. A priest, with one hand holding up his skirts, in the other a cross, splashed up to us through the black pool.

'May the Father of Mercies sustain you in this most bitter trial,' he sang out solemnly.

Never during those trying days was the shadow of the eternal night so welcomed by me as now.

'Children, close your eyes,' said my mother to me and Juliet. 'Dry your tears, Emile. We will prove to these assassins that we are not afraid to die.'

'Fire!' roared the officer. But his command and the subsequent report of the musketry were drowned in our defiant, last cry:

'Vive la Commune!'

5

Remember, Comrades

When I opened my eyes and looked up at the ceiling where flickered the bright amber beams of the sun, I reproved myself for having slept so late. Yet I felt so weary in my limbs that I deemed it wiser to keep my bed a while longer. Why did I feel fatigued and, as I soon discovered when attempting to lift my arm, utterly powerless, incapable of motion? How to account for the soreness I felt all over?

But the flickering light on the ceiling arrested my attention. Mysterious shadows, huge and minute, of various degrees of darkness, flitted across the hewn logs above me in rapid succession. I could not think quite coherently about this strange phenomenon. No cloud —and I had watched often and often these sails in the sky—no cloud scudded with such swiftness or let fall so dark a shadow. Slowly, slowly I turned my head to the left from where the light in fitful flashes entered. After many moments of blankly gazing into the sky, I began to distinguish multitudes of birds, large black birds, in speedy flight.

For uncounted time I lay watching them, flock after flock, winging their way past the line of my vision. Then a film passed over my tired eyes and I let my lids close.

Hours must have passed, when my ear caught a sound of someone moving about me, a sound of shuffling feet. Who could that be? Unable to guess, I tried to recall the events of the previous evening, before I had retired. And here, to my great perplexity, I became aware that I remembered nothing of the night before and indeed of any time previous to this fine morning, with clouds of birds in the sky. The thread that connected my mind with the past had been severed. I was conscious, however, of the present. A man's voice spoke.

'So many hours and still he is unconscious. Is it possible, Adriane, that he will die?'

'He had his eyes open this morning,' replied a woman's voice. 'I think—I hope he will recover, Pierre.'

They were speaking of someone who was dangerously ill, I gathered. But what the woman said next made me strain my ears and listen.

'Such an immense number of crows and vultures. Where do so many death-birds come from, Pierre? How did they find out?'

'Ha, from the forests and caves of the mountains, from the deserts, from everywhere. The odor of blood and of putrified flesh attracts them. Never did they witness such a carnage and never did they have so much food.'

These words had a soothing effect upon me. I knew now that my senses had not deceived me and that I really had seen birds in the heavens. I listened further.

'Adriane, I looked at our good old river this morning and saw—'

'Saw what, Pierre?'

'I saw blood, Adriane. Our Seine is full of it. Blood and blood and blood. Blood everywhere, Adriane.'

'Saints! Pierre! When will they stop killing? When?'

'I don't know, Adriane. I don't know. Once again I warn you, Adriane: not a word of your opinions to the neighbors. Not one word. You don't realize what's going on. You don't seem to understand. Terror, Adriane. Terror compared with which 1793 was child's play, the massacre of St. Bartholomew a pale affair. *Terror*, Adriane!'

'*Terror*, Pierre,' the woman echoed faintly.

I pondered painfully over these dark sayings. Terror? What did they mean? Harassed by conjectures, my brain gradually became tired, everything blurred and the voices grew distant as I sank into a placid sleep.

That I slept long I knew, because when I awoke it was night. Upon the left hand a wall of darkest blue through the chinks of which there looked at me a myriad of golden eyes; upon the right a faint glow of a lamp or a candle. There were people in the room and their flitting shadows raised in my head the question of how many persons passed between me and the light within a given period of time. This for awhile engrossed my thoughts. But my mental labors were cut short by a shadow which remained fixed, obliterating all others. And then I became aware of someone bending over me—an old woman's face with infinite sympathy in her watery eyes. She took my hand.

'Do you see me, little boy?' she asked.

I wanted to say 'Yes,' my lips parted to whisper 'Yes,' my brain cried out 'Yes,' and yet I remained silent.

'It is too difficult for him to speak,' she said, and smiled on me. 'It is all right. Do not speak. Rest. Rest.'

The shadows resumed their flitting to and fro. Someone took a deep breath.

'And so, Adriane,' I heard the voice which I remembered as Pierre's, 'I came to the bridge. There was quite an excitement there. Surrounded by a crowd of well-dressed people, stood two gentlemen in a great argument. 'Ah, but be faithful to your word, monsieur,' one cried. 'You must pay. You owe it to your honor rather than to me.'—'Upon my word, messieurs,' said the other addressing the crowd, 'upon my word the one that he counted the twentieth was a bundle of rags.' 'No, no, messieurs,' the first insisted, 'I swear to you it was an infant.'

'And then I understood what this was all about,' Pierre went on. 'The two had wagered upon the number of corpses of the "canaille" that would float under the bridge in so many minutes. Having had no witnesses they were adjudged by the crowd to cancel the bet and start the game all over again. They finally agreed, and pulling out their watches, leaned over the parapet and began to cry out together, "One!" "Two!"—"Six!" "Seven!" Everybody seemed in ecstasy over the discovery of so extraordinary a sport, and the crowd passed a delightful afternoon.'

Pierre's voice droned away into silence.

I heard a clasp of hands; and the woman's voice cried out:

'Pierre! Pierre, they are not human. They are beasts! Beasts!'

'Silence, Adriane,' the man hissed. 'You are out of your senses! The bourgeoisie still have carloads of munitions and they are using them quite liberally upon us. Silence, Adriane!'

'They are beasts! Beasts!'

Then a death-like silence fell. A sorrowful, sepulchral stillness; and I began to feel that somewhere something horrible was occurring. 'Terror,' I whispered to myself, and found that my lips were capable of sound. I gathered my strength and said hoarsely, 'Drink.'

In an instant they both were at my side, with a jug of water. After I had drunk, she placed my head carefully back upon the pillow, and her beaming face came quite close to my ear.

'What is your name, my child?' she asked.

My name? Did she ask me my name? I was puzzled. Surely I had a name, but what was it then? Who was I? I turned this over in my head a dozen times, but in vain.

The woman repeated the question.

'I don't know,' I whispered.

A cloud of sorrow, almost of pain, passed over their brows. I pitied this old couple. Their faces were so gentle and sweet, and

they had so rejoiced when they found that I was conscious, that in my thoughts I had already made friends with them. For some moments they stood hesitating, then she made a sign to him and they withdrew.

I lay a long while, cogitating deeply about this astounding enigma. My name. Was it Paul? No. Was it Jean? I was certain that it was not. Gaston? No. Oh—my name? I began to recollect now. Yes, of course, of course I knew my name! It was Emile. Oh, how glad, how happy I was. At last I knew my name. Emile—Emile—

Tears of joy gathered in my eyes and I marveled at my forgetfulness. Then I cast my glance at the old couple sitting at a small table with a lamp between them. 'Who are they?' I thought. 'And where am I?' And thus I lay and toiled and my mind was still in the dark. They were not my parents. My parents— Why, I nearly cried aloud! 'I am Emile Ducasse! My father is a mechanic and is now serving in the National Guard defending Paris against the Prussians. My mother? She is speaking at this minute to Monsieur Muré. She is telling him of the deplorable condition we are in, that we are starving. Her husband is risking his life for Paris, she says, for his, Muré's home. But that heartless man—he does not believe her. My father—' Suddenly I opened my eyes wide with remembrance and pain. 'Why, my father is dead. Killed in a sortie. How pitiful. He might have seen how our government opened the factories and organized committees of unemployed to immediately proceed with production; our Red Flag floating over the Hôtel de Ville. But he cannot see all this. He is dead.

'Then Roger. How he must rejoice that the Commune is realized, that it has come into existence almost without bloodshed. Isn't that wonderful! And Marianne—'

Of a sudden a picture flashed in my mind. A picture of horror, death and desolation. I saw it all. The second siege; the war of the barricades; the death of Roger and Marianne; the gloating faces of the bourgeoisie as we were led through the streets; the great slaughter-house with mutilated bodies lying in black, seething pools —I saw it all, broke out into a long, wild shriek of madness, and lost consciousness.

The next morning I could converse intelligently with my hosts. My wound was very slight, I was told by the old woman, but I had lost much blood and must stay in bed for some time. I told them of my family and myself. She informed me that Pierre was a laborer and a Socialist, but no one must know this. Too old to join the National Guard, who drew their 30 sous, he was out of work

much of the time. Under the Commune they had enjoyed a temporary relief, but the Commune had to fight for its life and could not concentrate its energies on the improvement of the conditions of the working people. He was now employed by the new government to gather up and bury the dead. As to the way I came to be saved from death, she remained silent, and I did not press her.

In the evening Grandpa Pierre, as I called him now, returned from his ghastly work, and having spoken a word of cheer to me, he sat down at the table to eat his soup. Between spoonfuls he talked, but in a much lower tone than in the days before.

'They are searching houses, Adriane. Police are hunting Communards all over the city. Gendarmes with bloodhounds and lighted torches are scouring the catacombs. Many doctors are delivering up the wounded National Guards. In the forests around Paris the generals have organized a man-hunt. Denunciations are pouring in. Already over a quarter of a million people have been denounced as sympathizers of the Commune. Hold your tongue, Adriane; hold your tongue. They are killing, killing, killing.'

'I'll be silent as the grave, Pierre. I will not breathe a word.'

'We work hard, Adriane, but the soldiers work harder. There will never be an end of the dead. The cemeteries are full. We are now using the trenches dug by the Prussians just outside of Paris.'

'Pierre,' she said in an anxious, fearful tone, 'are they going to kill off the entire laboring population of Paris? Aren't they going to leave any workers alive?'

'I don't know, Adriane. I don't know. They seem determined to extirpate all who had in mind the building of a society without masters and servants. They want to blot out the name and all the memory of the Commune. Revenge and apprehension for the future is what is moving them. They are still killing, Adriane.'

The old man was sobbing. A melancholy set in, as he pushed away his plate of unfinished soup.

In the morning when he had gone, I once again asked Grandma Adriane to tell me of my rescue. She refused at first, but being, as it seemed, unable to bear the burden of this secret any longer, she made me promise solemnly not to tell Pierre, and at once proceeded with the story:

'It was two days after the Commune had perished by fire and sword when this mad carnival began. Pierre came home in the evening and told me of the terrible slaughter in La Roquette. 'Oh, Adriane,' he said, holding his head between his hands and weeping bitterly, 'it is awful, awful.'

I sat down beside him and wept, too, for indeed it was awful.

There was dead silence for a time, and then he whispered through tears:

'Adriane, among those buried today many were—'

He broke off. It seemed as if it were too difficult for him to continue.

'Many were what, Pierre?'

A painful feeling crept over me as the silence remained unbroken. A sick feeling of expecting to hear of something dreadful, unbelievable.

'Many were what, Pierre?'

He was long in making the reply. He lifted his head finally and whispered into my ear a word that made my blood run cold.

'Many were buried alive, Adriane. Alive!'

'ALIVE! Pierre!' I screamed in a terrified voice. I was shaken with convulsions and clasped his hands in mine. He continued in a murmur:

'This afternoon we buried two thousand shot in La Roquette. The soldiers were so overwhelmed with "work" they had no time to finish all whom they had shot. I threw a little boy into a trench and he moaned. That boy is alive, Adriane.'

'Oh, Pierre,' I whimpered. And then, 'But he was unconscious, Pierre. And he is dead now.'

'Unconscious, yes,' he replied, 'but not dead. I prevented much earth from being thrown upon him. I marked the place, Adriane.'

'You marked the place?' I looked at him with wild eyes.

'Yes,' he said hoarsely, 'I marked the place and—tonight—'

'Pierre!' I cried, 'what do you mean? Oh, you are mad.'

He said not a word and went to his bed. At midnight I saw him rise stealthily.

'Pierre,' I called in a muffled voice, as he placed his hand on the knob of the door, 'Pierre, where are you going?'

He turned his face toward me. His face! I shall never forget his face on that night.

'Lie quietly in your bed, Adriane. I shall return very soon.'

'Pierre, where are you going?'

'Silence, Adriane. I am going where I must go. There is no use in holding me back, Adriane.'

'Pierre!' I cried in despair, my endurance at the breaking point.

'Adriane,' he spoke in a softer tone, 'I must do it or I'll have no rest as long as I live. That little boy,' his voice trembled, 'that bony starved child is alive. Surely he has a mother who will cry her

eyes out for him. He resembles our little Philippe so much— It must be done, Adriane.'

'But you will be killed.'

'Yes,' he agreed, 'I may be killed!'

And before I could stop him he was off on his dangerous errand, dangerous even in ordinary times, let alone these days of terror.

I sat up peering into the darkness of the street. There was no light save a faint gleam of smoldering buildings. The street was deserted.

Mentally I followed him to the cemetery of Père la Chaise. Now, said I to myself, he is passing Rue St. Lazare and is hurrying towards Rue de Lafayette. He has reached Rue St. Martin. Now he must be at Square du Temple. And surely now he has reached the Boulevard Voltaire. But I soon realized that he could not walk as fast as I could think. And perhaps he had taken a different route—less dangerous. I had to smile at this thought; less dangerous! Every route was dangerous. But it was possible that he had gone by way of Boulevard de la Villette.

I grew ten years older during those long hours of waiting. And the longer his absence continued the firmer grew my certainty that he had been arrested and shot. For hours I paced our room—then on a sudden, strange impulse, I staggered downstairs and into the street.

The street was dark; dark, too, was the sky above me, but in the east I perceived the pale light of the breaking day. I looked about me longingly, hopelessly. A man was drawing near. Were he even a gendarme I had no fear of him, for at that moment life meant little to me since Pierre was lost. But a strange thing happened. The man disappeared. Not even his shadow could be seen lingering in the growing light. Terror began to creep upon me. Were my nerves giving way?

I walked up to the corner wine-shop and paused there, seized by the thought that I was going insane. These horrible days were more than any woman could stand. I looked about me. A dark mass, crawling slowly along a wall, claimed my attention. With bated breath I followed it with my eyes and saw it straighten and transform into a man carrying a load on his shoulder. I recognized him, and called softly.

'Pierre!'

He halted and lowered his burden. Trembling with joy I ran toward him. He appeared to me as fierce as a savage.

'Don't stand like that,' he said. 'Take the child and carry him up to the house.'

Then I turned to see the thing he had brought. A corpse of a little boy—a cold and lifeless corpse.

'He is dead, Pierre. He is dead.'

Too exhausted to speak, he made no answer. He sat down on the ground and muttered.

'Take him up, Adriane. Make haste.'

I carried up the child and laid him on the bed; then I returned and assisted Pierre up the stairs. 'Fetch Madame Sorelle,' he said.

She is a midwife, and is used to night calls. I got her to come, and also Monsieur Auguste, a medical student who lives across the way. They examined the child's wounds, Pierre and I watching them.

'Well?' Pierre said at length, in a trembling voice.

Monsieur Auguste bent his ear to the boy's heart. Some seconds passed.

'Well?' said Pierre.

'He is alive,' returned Monsieur Auguste. Pierre gave a sigh of relief, and at once fell back on a chair into deep sleep. Madame Sorelle and Monsieur Auguste performed the operation, extracted the bullet, and the little boy remained living.'

When Grandma Adriane had finished, tears welled into my eyes and I caught her hand and kissed it. Then I asked her to give me a mirror that I might see my face. I gazed into a little hand-glass she gave me, and suddenly broke into hysterical laughter. My hair had turned gray.

Later in the day Grandma Adriane went out, and I remained alone with my gloomy thoughts. At night Grandpa Pierre came home and she served him his plate of soup.

'The trenches are full, Adriane,' he said dully. 'We now gather corpses, saturate them with petroleum and burn them. Mountains of dead are being burned at Buttes Chaumont. There is fear of pestilence which might make away with the bourgeoisie themselves. Yet they are still killing, Adriane.'

'Sebastian told me he heard a strange rattling noise coming from the direction of Bois de Boulogne. A strange noise, Pierre.'

'Aye, it *is* from Bois de Boulogne. They are killing there with mitrailleuses.'

'But why with mitrailleuses, Pierre? Why with mitrailleuses?'

'Ha, ha! The mitrailleuses kill more and faster. They kill more and faster, Adriane.'

'Horrors, Pierre! When will there be an end to this! Oh, Pierre, oh!'

The old woman hid her face in her hands and gave a low moan of despair which clutched my heart like a vise. Then she lifted her head, and bravely turning the conversation away from all these horrors, murmured with a shuddering breath:

'Why did you bring with you this broken sunshade, Pierre? Of what use can it be to us?'

Her voice betrayed the terror that still pervaded her soul. So I experienced a relief when she spoke of the sunshade. The old man answered her.

'It was thrown away by a bourgeois lady, Adriane. She had no need of it any longer.'

'Oh, I see blood on it, Pierre. Horrors, she must have struck the poor prisoners with it.'

'Aye, it *is* blood, Adriane. It is the blood of a wounded Communard.'

'Poor man! He sought mercy in the heart of that lady. He seized her sunshade with his blood-stained hands—'

'Not so, Adriane. It was not so. The wretch lay wounded, Adriane—'

'He lay wounded, Pierre—' she echoed.

'Aye, and the dainty lady gouged his eyes out with the ferrule of this sunshade. The eyes came right out of the sockets, Adriane.'

'Pierre! Oh, I'm going mad, Pierre; I'm going mad—'

'It was an amusing sight, Adriane. Ha, so funny. While she poked playfully in his ghastly wounds, he was writhing in convulsions—ha, ha! like a worm, Adriane. Like an eel.'

'TAKE AWAY THIS SUNSHADE, PIERRE! SAINTS! TAKE AWAY THIS SUNSHADE!'

'We will keep this sunshade,' he said in a grave, severe voice. 'It is a memento, Adriane. In the years to come we shall more vividly see these days when we look at the stains on this sunshade. We will remember the bourgeois women as well as the men. After they bleed us sufficiently they will wash and perfume their hands, they will manicure their nails and adorn their fingers with precious stones. This sunshade, Adriane, will remind us of the blood on their hands, of the stains upon them which no soap can remove. We will keep this sunshade, Adriane.'

'No, Pierre; no!'

An awful silence fell. Then I, lifting myself on my elbow, raised my voice:

'Please, Madame Adriane, *keep* that sunshade.'

At this both turned. Having evidently forgotten me momentarily, they gazed at me an instant, and then flew into each other's arms, weeping, their faces twisted with pain. Then they came over to my bed and seated themselves beside me. They threw their arms about my neck and we all three wept together."

Ducasse emptied the contents of his brief-case and unwrapped the packet he had brought with him. The first contained a number of newspaper copies, French, American and British. The latter, the frightful sunshade. Everybody gazed in speechless horror at this tarnished article of women's apparel with rusty brown spots near the ferrule.

"I have brought these things to show you, comrades. This parasol —you already know its story. As to the newspapers, I gathered them and look them over occasionally.

Let me read you a few headlines, comrades. Here is *The New York Times* of the 22nd of May, 1871. The day we rushed to the defense of the Commune. The headline referring to the entry of Monsieur Thiers' army into Paris says, "AT LAST." And this is in *The New York Tribune* a day after, "PARIS NEARLY WON." And two days later in the same paper, "THE REDS STILL RESISTING." Three days after, in the same paper, "LAST EFFORT OF THE REDS." But here is a headline in *The New York Times:* "DESPERATE FIGHT FOR THE HOTEL DE VILLE." I have described to you that fight. Following this comes a daily column in the *Times,* "THE CARNAGE OF PARIS." In this copy dated May 28, that was the time I was still living in my cellar, you see the following headline: "FIFTY THOUSAND DEAD BODIES IN THE HOMES AND CELLARS." In *The New York Tribune* for May 31st you read: "INHUMAN TREATMENT OF COMMUNIST PRISONERS." And on June 1st, in the same newspaper: "THE BUTCHERY OF COMMUNISTS STILL GOING ON."

Let me translate to you a few extracts from the French bourgeois papers. Here is *Figaro.* It yells 'Come, honest people, an effort to make an end of this democratic international vermin.' Then it praises the butchers: 'What an admirable attitude is that of our officers and soldiers.' And *Moniteur Universal* deplores that the Commune destroyed the guillotine. It says: 'Not one of the malefactors in whose hands Paris has been for two months will be considered as a political man. They will be treated like the brigands they are, like the most frightful monsters ever seen in the history of humanity. Many journals speak of re-erecting the scaffold de-

stroyed by them, in order not even to do them the honor of shooting them.'

So spoke the journalists of the bourgeoisie. Some of them, to whom from the glazed eyes of the dead, the pools of blood, and the feasts in the cafés, was mirrored back their own, hitherto concealed, truculent nature, were appalled. The *Journal de Paris* says: 'Paris has now a fête-day appearance, which is sadly out of place.' Then he cites a passage from the Roman historian, Tacitus:—'Yet on the morrow of that horrible struggle, even before it was completely over, Rome—degraded and corrupt—began once more to wallow in the voluptuous slough which was destroying its body and polluting its soul—here fights and wounds, there baths and restaurants.' Later I read *Civil War in France* in which Marx also compared the bourgeosie with the Roman masters. He says: 'There is but this difference, that the Romans had no mitrailleuses for the dispatch, in the lump, of the proscribed, and that they had not "the law in their hands," nor on their lips the cry of "civilization!" '

Well, comrades, there are a few more details I can add, and that will conclude my story.

One evening Grandpa Pierre failed to return home. It made us feel very uneasy and we did not sleep that night. Grandma Adriane wept as though she had a presentiment that some evil had befallen her old, faithful mate. In the morning she went off in search for him and all day I remained alone, wondering what had become of them both. Staggering into the room with a loud sob early next morning, Grandma Adriane fell on my neck; and in a few moments I learned that Grandpa Pierre had been denounced and arrested.

Thousands of the proletarians of Paris who survived the fearful mass executions were thus torn away from their fathers and mothers, from their wives and little ones, and shipped off into exile to New Caledonia. Exile for life. To this rocky island scorched by the tropical sun, thousands of miles from Paris and from us, in the far, far Pacific, was sent good old Grandpa Pierre—condemned for life—

Days went by. Then weeks and months. Then years. Slowly our hope waned and finally died away. We understood that he would never return to us. The bourgeoisie was mad. For over five years after they had crushed the Commune, their courts continued venting their rage upon the revolutionary workers of Paris. 'Law,' 'Order,' 'Civilization,' and 'Justice' reigned supreme. Of this Marx says in his *Civil War in France:* 'The civilization and justice of bourgeois order comes out in its lurid light whenever the slaves and

drudges of that order rise against their masters. Then this civilization and justice stand forth as undisguised savagery and lawless revenge.'

Grandma Adriane and I found some consolation in the few letters we received from Grandpa Pierre. In the first, which reached us about a year after his exile, he described the voyage. Many prisoners died on the ship and were thrown overboard—food for the sharks. In another letter he said a word about the tortures the wretches were subjected to on the island. Some attempted to escape but were hunted down and murdered. Many went insane. Others committed suicide.

Although an old man, he was able to drag out four dreary, despairing, tormentful years in the hell of New Caledonia. Four years! And then Grandpa Pierre was no more—"

Ducasse's voice suddenly broke. Tears rolled down the cheeks of the old Frenchman. He made a strong effort and said in a trembling voice:

"The secrets of the great human slaughter-houses which the bourgeoisie established in the days after the last barricade had fallen, —the secrets of La Roquette, Lobau Barracks, Ecole Militaire, Park Monceaux, Bois de Boulogne, cemetery of Père la Chaise, will never be known. Of the number who were brutally murdered, who were buried or burned alive, who perished in the catacombs, expired in the marshes in the tropics, one can form no idea. The truth has been concealed.

The memory of those days, comrades, weighs heavily on my heart. My life has been convulsed, broken. I have always declined to speak of the Commune and you can now understand why. It was not easy to pry into the painful past, to reopen the cruel wound. But that past, comrades, I can never forget. Often in the darkness of night I awaken with cold perspiration streaming upon my pillow and my heart pounding like a hammer. And a mill of woeful, hideous scenes runs vividly through my brain. And suddenly there comes a vision of a forest of chiding skeletons, sad and fearful to behold, wading through a vast sea of clotted blood, and then I hear a swelling hum as of thousands of muffled, pitiful human voices, and among them one voice calling to me distinctly but mournfully, 'Remember, Emile.' And then I sit up in my bed, all trembling, and whisper back, 'I remember, Roger. I will remember to the last minute of my life.'

Comrades, Karl Marx said, 'Workingmen's Paris, with its Commune, will be forever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new

society. Its martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class.' You, comrades, children of the working class, remember the Paris Commune. Remember what it stood for, what it sought to accomplish for the toilers of France, for the toilers of all countries. Remember its heroic defenders. Remember, comrades—

Ah—as long as the bourgeoisie rules France, I have no country. The French bourgeoisie are happy for the time being. Rolling in wealth they rejoice at the expense of the toil of the proletariat. The blood of their victims does not cause them pangs of compunction. They drown in wine all memory of the Commune. But—the day of reckoning will come. Marx said, 'After Whitsunday, 1871, there can be neither peace nor truce possible between the workingmen of France and the appropriators of their produce.' Yes, comrades, the day of retribution, of delivery, *must* come!

Many years after the Commune the bourgeoisie threw a sop to the class-conscious proletarians of France. When their administration of Paris decided to have the old stone wall around the cemetery of Père la Chaise replaced by a brick one, they granted the request of the sculptor, Moreau Vauthier, to leave intact about five yards of the old wall. On this material, full of holes from the bullets fired by soldiers at their victims in 1871, he performed his noble work. He produced a life-like group of Communards courageously facing the guns of their assassins. There it stands now, this monument, called *The Wall of the Communards.*

Thousands of American tourists, sons of the rich, go to Paris yearly. They live a gay life there. They visit theatres, restaurants de luxe, cabarets, houses of ill fame. You, comrades, if you ever happen to be in Paris, visit the cemetery of Père la Chaise. Visit the cemetery, bare your heads before the wall, and think of the men, the women, the children on whose blood and bones the French bourgeoisie has built its prosperity and happiness. Think of the martyrs of the Commune!

And, comrades, it is possible no one will be there just then, and you will only hear the monotonous droning of insects and the joyful warbling of birds. But perchance you will come upon some aged, white-haired man or woman, drooping under the weight of years, standing there before the wall, a dull ache in their dim, haggard eyes. And perhaps, while gazing wistfully at that silent monument of stone, they will be moving their lips, whispering inaudibly of their never-dying sorrow and pain known only to themselves. Do not pass these people in silence. Walk up to them, comrades, shake hands with them, and tell them that you know the story."

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