Bax, Ernest Belfort
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A SHORT HISTORY

OF THE

PARIS COMMUNE.

BY

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PREFACE.

The Commune of Paris is the one event which Socialists throughout the world have agreed with single accord to celebrate. Every 18th of March witnesses thousands of gatherings throughout the civilised world to commemorate the (alas! only temporary) victory of organised Socialist aspiration over the forces of property and privilege in 1871.

The Commune, it is said, did little of a distinctively Socialistic character; it made many mistakes; it was infatuated with the idea of decentralisation. All this is true. What constitutes the importance of the Commune in history is not certainly the measures that it enacted, is not even its admirable conduct of the administration of a great metropolis under circumstances of extreme difficulty; it is the fact that the Commune is a landmark as being the first administration manned by the working classes, having for its more or less conscious aim the reorganisation of Social conditions — the transformation of a Civilised Society into a Socialist Society. It is this question of aim as symbolised by the red flag, which is the central one. For, however nebulous may have been the views of some of

those that took part in it that such was the aim of the movement has been recognised by friends and foes alike.

What meant the blood-frenzy of the Versaillese? What meant the tacit or avowed approval of the capitalistic press throughout the civilised world, at the most hideous carnage known to history, but the desperate rage of threatened class-interests? We all recognise that those who died under the red flag in 1871 died for Socialism, and a nobler army of martyrs no cause has ever had.

In dedicating this little book to the Social-Democratic Federation, I should say that its initiation is due to my old friend Harry Quelch, now editor of JUSTICE, in the columns of which journal it originally appeared in serial form.

THE

PARIS COMMUNE.

I.

INTRODUCTION.

In an historical sketch of the events of the movement known as the Paris Commune of 1871 it is desirable to start with the endeavour to fix that movement in its true historical perspective.

Now, the Paris Commune occupies a peculiar position in the history of the proletarian movement. It forms the culmination of the first period of modern Socialism—a period in which the elements of prior movements were still clinging to it. The distinction between Socialism and Anarchism had not as yet fully emerged; the Anarchistic-Individualistic doctrines of Proudhon still had adherents within the Socialist party; while Bakounin was regarded as one of the pillars of the International. The old French Red Republican party, of which the Commune was the outcome and expression, was a very mixed concern. In addition to the elements above referred to, there were archæological survivals of the ideas of '48, and even of the Jacobins of the Great Revolution. This first period of modern Socialism dates from the foundation of the Communist League and the issue of the Communist Manifesto by Marx and Engels in 1847, and closes with the practical extinction of the old International in 1873. After the great

work of the International in the Commune, it did nothing worth speaking of, although much feared by the authorities on the Continent. But apart from the Socialist movement in its proper sense, it is necessary, in order to fully understand the strains which composed the Paris Commune, to note more particularly its relation to the general revolutionary movement of '48 and to the French national revolutionary tradition. The European Revolution of 1848 was the culmination of the bourgeois revolutionary movement which began in the sixteenth century, and which in England partially, though very imperfectly, succeeded in breaking down the monarchical bureaucracy veneered with Feudalism—into which the mediæval political system had become transformed—at the close of the seventeenth century. On the Continent, however, this transitional political order of things, based on the power of the reigning monarch (in Germany, prince or duke) and his functionaries, was not even "scotched," much less killed, before the end of the eighteenth century. In the general reaction which succeeded the French Revolution it was temporarily resuscitated with slight modifications, but it suffered again a partial reverse in 1830-32, and from that time forward the irresistible wave of middle-class ascendancy gathered its forces till it swept all before it in the great revolutionary year. The middle-class was backed by the proletariat, as yet politically undifferentiated from it, and constituting, so to say, the body of the progressive party, which the middle-class leaders claimed to direct as its head.

One of the main features of the popular movement of '48 was "patriotism," by which was understood centralisation —the "United Germany," "United Italy," "Independent Hungary" mania, and the rest. All the united, independent, and patriotic balderdash, over which so much

rhetorical froth and so many gallons of good black ink were expended, has since been realised. They have it now, all for which they strove. And what good has come of all the centralising bureaucratisation that the patriotic "forty-eighter" orated, struggled, gushed, and wept for by turns as the goal of human aspiration? These precious "united" nationalities are now groaning under the united and independent military and administrative budgets of their respective beloved fatherlands. One would think, if one is to risk one's skin at all in a revolutionary enterprise, it were better to save it for something more worth having than the sorry result for which most of the Continentals of '48 were so eager to risk theirs!

In 1848 the present constitutional basis of Europe was established, and since then the middle-class "advanced" movements have become more and more moderate as the class itself has become politically dominant and settled down. The revolt of even the small middle-classes has, since '48, disappeared, its main object having been attained, such changes as the poorer section of the class demand, with few exceptions, having been striven for by peaceful and constitutional methods. In 1848, in short, the bourgeoisie, which had long been economically dominant, put the finishing touch to its political emancipation.

Yet the '48 Revolution, though predominantly a middle-class concern is signalised by the first appearance of the proletariat in conscious opposition to the middle-class—to wit, in the German Communist League and the Paris insurrection of June in that year. The former of these movements was the beginning of Socialism; the latter, though, as above said, a conscious class-movement, was in its form and general character rather a survival of the original revolt of the French proletariat during the great Revolution than the beginning of any new departure on

the part of the French working-classes, notwithstanding that the immediate "plank" was Louis Blanc's scheme. Indeed, at this time and for some years later, "scientific Socialism," as we understand it to-day, was practically unknown in France, the brilliant essays of Proudhon being the nearest approach to anything of the kind.

It remains to say a few words on the revolutionary tradition in France. Amongst the working-classes of the large towns—notably of Paris, of course, but also of Lyons, Marseilles, and other places—the remembrance of the power and position of the then young proletariat during the great years of the Revolution, 1792 to 1794, had lingered on ever since, now and again bursting out in somewhat aimless revolt, and again slumbering for a while, but always there. The party of the people embodying this tradition, which, of course, from time to time absorbed new ideas of a Socialistic nature as they arose, became definitely constituted in 1848, and was known after that year as the Red Republican Party, from the fact that, in the June insurrection, the red flag was adopted by the insurgents (I believe at the suggestion of Louis Blanc, when the national workshops system was the immediate question at issue) and everywhere acclaimed as the banner of the class-conscious proletariat and of Socialistic Republicanism, in opposition to the tricolour, which was that of the middle-classes and of bourgeois or political Republicanism. Such was the origin of the flag which is now, the world over, the great ensign of the modern Socialist movement.

In addition to the active Red Republican Party and its popular leaders, there has always existed in France a class of men who have made the history of the great Revolution their life-study. These men naturally conceive of every revolution as modelling itself on the lines of the French Revolution of 1789-96. Their influence has reacted on

the popular movement and its leaders, and confirmed the natural bias of every Frenchman to try and re-live and re-act the greatest epoch in his national history, the general outlines and prominent names of which he is familiar with from his youth up.

In addition to the foregoing influences, there was, of course, that of the International, and with it, the Marxists, who had been industriously propagandising among the Parisian working-classes for five or six years past, and who made their influence felt at the time we are speaking of.

Such was the amalgam of tendencies and ideas—Proudhonism, neo-Jacobinism reminiscences of '48, with a recent infusion of the modern Socialism of Marx— which in various proportions went to constitute the mental background alike of the leaders and the rank and file of the French Red Republican Party in 1871, at the time when it established the Commune of Paris.

II.

PROLOGUE.

THE shoddy splendour and the all-penetrating corruption of the second French Empire had been overtaken by their Nemesis. After the defeat at Sedan came the Revolution of the 4th of September which gave the Empire its parting kick, and established, provisionally at least, the Republic. The Germans were soon in full march upon Paris, and the incapable and (from the point of view of its mandate) treacherous, "Government of National Defence" just established, was organising, Trochu at its head, the resistance. The members of the Government did not believe in the possibility of defending the capital, and wanted to capitulate, while the working classes, and a large proportion of the smaller middle-classes, were mad for war to the knife. It is difficult as to this point to feel much sympathy with either side. For my own part I am utterly unable to appreciate the enthusiasm of M. Lissagaray for the stupid chauvinistic frenzy of the general population of Paris in wishing to sacrifice untold thousands of lives in a more than doubtful attempt to drive back "les Prussiens" for the sake of rehabilitating the tarnished military glory of "la patrie"; while on the other hand nothing can excuse Trochu and his consorts, the bourgeois political notabilities, for accepting a definite mandate, and then not only not doing their best for success, but distinctly riding for a fall.

On the 20th of September Paris was invested and the four months' siege began. The popular excitement within the city, during the whole time was intense. The population resolutely declined to believe in the possibility of the

city being taken and at every reverse, threatening demonstrations against the impotent Provisional Government were made. Twice a revolution was on the point of being accomplished—on the 31st of October, 1870, and on the 22nd of January, 1871. Of course, resistance to the foreign enemy was what was uppermost in all minds and the demands of the Parisian masses for the establishment of a Commune were largely based on reminiscences of the wonders effected in this connection by the first Paris Commune in 1792-3. On the 31st of October the Hotel de-Ville, the seat of the Government, was invaded by an angry crowd, some demanding a committee of public safety, some the revolutionary Commune. The National Guards, disgusted, refused to come to the Governmental assistance. The members of the Government were made prisoners, and Flourens and Blanqui, the two well-known popular leaders, for a few hours got the upper hand. But it was impossible to effect anything. Anarchical confusion and a babel of tongues reigned throughout the municipal headquarters. Finally, towards evening the reactionists succeeded in stirring up some battalions of the National Guard to release and reinstate the members of the Government. They used the names of Flourens and Blanqui as a bogey to scare the timid and the middle-class. Thus the day ended in a *fiasco* from a revolutionary point of view. The resuscitated Government was compelled, however, to proclaim an amnesty to all who had played a part in the proceedings, but subsequently, in violation of all pledges, Blanqui was arrested, and, after the siege, put on his trial for the share he had taken, and Flourens was arrested and imprisoned within a few days. The result of the 31st of October was to strengthen the hands of the Government of National Defence, which, following the example of the deposed emperor, demanded and obtained a plebiscite of

Parisians in its favour. Hence the old useless sorties continued as before.

Christmas came and the New Year, but the defence got no forwarder. At last, on the 20th of January, Trochu summoned the mayors of the twenty arrondissements of the city, and declared all further holding-out impossible. The chauvinist Parisians were struck dumb with indignation at the idea of surrender, but the next day the mayors were again summoned and informed that the general staff had decided not to make another sortie, and, in short, that it was absolutely essential to open negotiations with the enemy at once. On the night of the 21st the Government, after a heated and lengthy discussion of the situation, replaced Trochu by another General, Vinoy. Early the next morning found Flourens at liberty, his prison having been stormed by a friendly battalion of "Nationals." Meanwhile the authorities were taking every precaution against the threatened proletarian insurrection. But by midday of the 22nd the call-drum was beating in the Batignolles district and elsewhere, and early in the afternoon the Hotel de Ville was surrounded by hostile National Guards and an angry crowd demanding the Commune. The Hotel de Ville was defended by *gardes mobiles*, who were replied to by "Nationals," and a fusillade lasting three-quarters of an hour ensued, involving over thirty killed, after which a body of gendarmes appeared, and the insurgents retreated and dispersed, leaving about a dozen prisoners in the hands of the authorities. A few days later the city was formally surrendered, the terms having been signed, and on the 29th of the month the German flag was hoisted on the forts.

The elections which were now held for the purpose of ratifying the terms of peace were carefully manipulated by the reactionary elements throughout the provinces—although

Paris remained stoutly Republican—and showed an enormous clerical and monarchical majority. This so-called "National Assembly," not content with fulfilling its mandate of settling the terms of peace, at once set about openly scheming for the overthrow of the Republic. The so-called pact of Bordeaux established a concordat between the two rival Royalist factions under the leadership of the old Orleanist minister, Adolphe Thiers, who was immediately constituted chief of the Executive by the Assembly.

The next thing to do was to deal with the armed populace, the workmen and small middle-class, in the shape of the various bodies of National Guards throughout the country, above all the most numerous, most determined, and, owing to its position, most influential of them, the National Guard of Paris. In stipulating the surrender of Paris, Jules Favre, acting for the Government of National Defence, had arranged for the retention of their arms by the Parisian Nationals. This was not done out of any affection for the citizen soldiers, but because the Government well knew that any attempt to disarm this proletarian army would be met by a resistance they had no adequate means of dealing with, and which would not improbably have upset them and all their schemes, especially the terms of surrender, which were regarded by all classes as already humiliating enough. But as soon as the conditions of peace were definitely settled the hostility of the new Assembly to Republican Paris became marked, and the intention of crushing all revolutionary elements, first and foremost the National Guard, was openly shown. The people organised on their side. The city, from the beginning of February to the 18th of March, was, as it were, sullenly standing at bay against the Assembly and the Government which did not as yet dare its great coup—the disarmament.

III.

THE 18TH OF MARCH.

As already stated in the last chapter, the Assembly of reactionary bourgeois riff-raff and aristocratic fossils, hurriedly elected at the beginning of February for the sole purpose of concluding peace, had no sooner met at Bordeaux than it began insulting the deputies for Paris. The terms of peace ratified, it resolved to continue its functions as a legislative body in defiance of the limitations of its mandate. But this was not all. The insults to Paris culminated when the Assembly passed a resolution to decapitalise the Metropolis and transfer itself and the Government to Versailles. This was the last straw, which came on the top of a number of other things. Rumours were confirmed of the projected immediate suppression of the only resource of the workmen, their 1s. 3d. a day as National Guards, of their impending disarmament, and, as if of set purpose to drive them on to starvation and despair, of the undelayed enforcement of all overdue bills and all arrears of rent suspended during the siege.

Throughout February the International and other workmen's and revolutionary associations had been active, and the indignation of the smaller *bourgeoisie* at the conduct of the Government of National Defence, and their irritation at the attitude of the new Assembly as regarded Paris and the Republic, made them lend their passive, where not active, support to the popular movement. Various mass meetings were held and committees formed—the upshot of which was the constitution of the Central Committee of the National Guard, three members being elected for

each arrondissement. There were also some sub-committees, the most important being that of the Montmartre division, having its office in the Rue des Rosiers, and which has sometimes been mistaken for the Central Committee itself. The Central Committee was composed entirely of obscure men, till then utterly unknown to public life, but elected for their integrity and practical capacity by the comrades of their district.

The suppression of Red-Republican journals by General Vinoy, the treacherous condemnation to death of Flourens and Blanqui for the part taken by them in the affair of the 31st of October, coming on the 11th of March, the same day that the resolution to decentralise Paris became known, gave further edge to the popular fury and to the determination to resist. From this time to the 18th the storm was visibly impending; but the Central Committee, backed by the International and the workmen's organisations, declared that the first shot should be fired by the other side.

There were at this stage three distinct elements in the Parisian movement—(1) The element of Municipal patriotism, the desire to see Paris remain paramount in France, possessing a municipal council with extensive local powers; (2) The determination to protect the Republic, as such, from the obvious Monarchical conspiracy being planned against it; and (3) The definitely Socialist Revolutionary element represented mainly, though not exclusively, by the International. The small middle-class, as might be expected, were in general moved by the first two objects; but, as we shall see, as the Revolution proceeded, its Socialistic *telos*, implicit from the first, came more and more to the fore, till in two or three weeks it had completely absorbed the whole movement. It is desirable to point this out, as there is a fatuous

Fabianesque type of quibbler who has occasionally tried to exaggerate the first two elements, which had their share at the inception of the Commune, in order to discount its Socialistic character. It is this same sort of insufferable quidnunc who is always enlightening the public mind on the true significanee of Socialism, explaining that it only means the General Post Office somewhat exaggerated—nothing more whatever !

Thiers and his ministers, members of the old National Defence gang, arrived in Paris on the 15th of March, and at once set about their measures for the great step of the disarmament of the popular force of the Metropolis. The proceeding relied upon the gullibility or imbecility of the Parisians to an incredible extent. The Government had, at the most, 25,000 considerably demoralised and otherwise not very reliable troops, while the National Guard numbered nearly 100,000 men, and although some few batallions might possibly have been gained over to the Assembly, yet they were an insignificant number as against those loyal to the Central Committee. Under these unfavourable conditions, Thiers, prompted, it is said, by the big financial thimble-riggers of the Bourse, decided to begin operations. The first thing to be done was to seize the cannon ; and accordingly the order was secretly given, on the 17th, for 250 pieces of ordnance to be removed from Montmartre. It was all but executed by a surprise at 3 o'clock on the morning of the 18th by a couple of brigades of the regular army, scarcely any resistance being offered.

But though the cannons were seized while the people were asleep, with a fatal want of foresight the Government omitted to provide any means of transport, and while this was under way Montmartre awoke and began to take in the situation. The walls were covered

by a placard, in which the ominous word "order" appeared—a word which, as we all know, generally spells bloodshed. The women were the first to move, it is said, and surrounded the cannon, apostrophising the soldiers, who hesitated. Meanwhile the *rappel* was beaten by a couple of drums throughout the district, and bodies of Guards began to roll up. Stragglers of the "regulars" joined them, and the whole throng penetrated up to the Buttes Montmartre, defended by a brigade under General Lecomte, some of the foremost men of which made signs of fraternisation. Lecomte seeing this, ordered the recalcitrants under arrest, at the same time threatening them with the words, "You shall receive your deserts." A few shots were exchanged between federals and regulars, without doing much harm, when suddenly a body of guards, the butt ends of their muskets up, accompanied by a motley crowd of women and children, debouched from the neighbouring street, the Rue des Rosiers. Lecomte gave the order to fire three times. His men stood immovable. The crowd pushed forward and fraternised with the troops, who immediately afterwards seized the ruffian with his officers. The soldiers whom he had just before arrested wanted to shoot him forthwith, but some Nationals rescued him and took him to the head-quarters of the staff of the National Guard, where they made him sign an order for the evacuation of his positions.

Similar incidents occurred with the other brigades. There was hardly any resistance to the insurrection. The soldiers fraternised on all sides. In three hours, *i.e.*, by 11 o'clock, all was over, almost all the cannon recaptured, almost all the battalions of the National Guard afoot, joined by numbers of regulars—in short, the insurrection master of the field. The Government, in spite of procla

mations and adjurations, could do nothing; a few hundred men were the most that rallied to them.

Thiers, seeing the whole of Paris against him, insisted upon the immediate evacuation of the city, including the forts on the south, by the Government and remaining troops. He escaped by a back door from the Hotel de Ville to Versailles. The insurrection, it will be observed, now that it had come, was a purely spontaneous popular movement. The Central Committee did not meet till comparatively late in the day. This lack of preparation and organisation had its drawbacks, however, in spite of the immediate success, as we shall presently see.

At half-past four in the afternoon, a general who had had a hand in the slaughtering of the insurgents in 1848, Clement Thomas by name, was arrested. There were many who tried to rescue him from a summary execution, crying, "Wait for the Committee!" "Constitute a court martial!" but without avail. The old martinet was thrust against a wall in the Rue des Rosiers, and riddled with bullets from twenty chassepots. Though the scoundrel doubtless deserved his fate, it is to be regretted that the formality of a trial was not observed, as the score against him was an old one. The same observation does not apply to Lecomte, who had been seized *in flagrante delicto* in the morning, ordering a massacre. This cowardly miscreant, when the door of the room where he was confined was burst open by an angry crowd, grovelled on his knees, spoke of his family, and whined for mercy. What had he cared for the fathers of families among his would-be victims to the cause of "order" of a few hours before? He was taken outside, and justice was summarily dealt out to him. Of course, the bourgeois journals everywhere bellowed loudly at the execution of these two rascally bandits of their cause.

The Central Committee and the staff of the National Guard now began to take measures for occupying the Government offices and the chief strategical positions. In the evening Jules Ferry slunk off after Thiers. Jules Favre subsequently made his escape. Late at night Vinoy succeeded in getting off his troops from the various barracks of Paris with their baggage and ammunition. Versailles was, of course, the rallying point of the whole crew. Allowing the Government and troops to slip through their fingers was the first serious mistake made by the Insurrection. This was owing to lack of discipline, organisation, and preparedness. Nothing would have been easier, if the Committee had been active and alert, than to have closed all the gates, arrested all the Governmental authorities, civil and military, to await their trial. The "little man," Thiers, and all the rest would have been then under their thumb. This only proves that though a popular ebullition may indeed *make* a revolution, yet that without organisation it will very soon *make a mess* of it.

IV.

THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND THE REACTION.

THE 19th of March saw the red flag waving over the Hôtel de Ville and all the public buildings of the city. The Revolution had triumphed, but it had made its first mistake: it had allowed the heads of the Government to escape with the elements of an army. The Central Committee was supreme, but stupefied by its sudden accession to absolute power. Two of the members alone had the presence of mind to suggest the only course to retrieve the previous day's mistake, viz., to march at once on Versailles, then virtually at their mercy, disperse the Assembly, and arrest the ringleaders of the Reaction. The others hung on legal technicalities. Meanwhile the clearing of the Government offices and the transference of yet more military to Versailles still went on. But the Committee (to its honour in one sense) was too eager to abdicate its functions and proceed to the elections for the Commune, to think of shutting the gates, or indeed of anything else. In order to legalise the situation and put the Revolution right with the rest of France, the co-operation of the deputies for Paris and of the mayors was resolved to be sought, in concert with whom the Committee wished to proclaim the elections.

The Thiers crew now played out their last card, in the final number which they issued of the *Journal Officiel*, alleging the Committee to have "assassinated" in cold blood the Generals Lecomte and Clément-Thomas, and asking whether the National Guard would take upon itself

the responsibility for these "assassinations." The Committee, to its credit, did not allow itself to be bullied into disavowing these righteous, if too hasty, acts of popular justice; but confined itself to inserting a note in the new number of the *Journal Officiel* (which from this day passed into its hands), explaining its true position with respect to them. The Governmental appeal had little effect on the National Guard, though it was followed by the defection of the Quartier Latin (the students), hitherto to the fore in all revolutions; but the essentially bourgeois character of which, despite its Bohemian veneer, became now clearly apparent.

The delegation of mayors who came to the Hôtel de Ville, after much debating, failed to effect anything. Clemenceau, who was their spokesman, urged the Committee to abdicate its functions to the deputies and mayors, who would use their best offices to obtain satisfaction for Paris from the Assembly. Varlin, one of the Committee, explained that what was wanted was no mere municipality, but a quasi-autonomous Paris, with police and legislative power, united to the rest of France by the bond of federal union alone. Even good Socialists like Milliere and Malon doubted the expediency of the Committee's initiative. It was finally decided that the Committee in its turn should send four delegates to the Radical deputies and mayors assembled in the town hall of the 2nd Arrondissement. This they did; but after several hours' wrangling, in which Louis Blanc, Clémenceau, and other Radicals, to their shame, gibed at the Committee as an insurrectionary body, refusing to treat with it on an equality, no understanding was arrived at, and the delegates left. Next morning the mayors made a final attempt to get possession of the Hôtel de Ville, and sent one of their number to demand it of the Committee. The

latter refused to abdicate until a Commune had been elected, and forthwith issued a proclamation that the elections would be held on the following Wednesday, the 22nd. It was only too obvious that a surrender to the deputies and mayors meant a complete knuckling down to Thiers and his Assembly.

The next thing for the Committee to do was to reorganise the public services, purposely thrown into as much disorder as possible by their late occupants prior to their flight. The Government hoped thereby to render it impossible for their successors to carry on the administration of the great metropolis. The newcomers, however, set bravely to work, and overcame all obstacles of this kind. But meanwhile the Committee, not realising that they were about to enter on a life-and-death struggle, had committed a military blunder which practically sealed the fate of the Revolution. Between Paris and Versailles, on a hill a little to the right, lies the largest and most strategically important of the forts—Mont Valérien. This had been abandoned on an order from Thiers, made during his flight—he, with a civilian's lack of knowledge of fortification, believing it not to be worth holding. As a matter of fact, it was the military key to the whole position. For thirty-six hours it remained empty; but the Committee, instead of at once placing a strong garrison there, regarded it as a matter of subsidiary importance, and contented themselves with some vague and lying assurances (as the event proved) of its having been occupied, together with the other forts, given by a portentous, half-crazed officer named Lullier, who, by his swagger, had imposed upon them and acquired thereby the temporary command. The military staff at Versailles, wiser in their generation, had meanwhile forced an order for its reoccupation from Thiers, and the morning of the 20th found

Mont Valerien well munitioned and occupied by 1,000 Versaillese soldiers.

On the 21st the Central Committee suspended the sale of pledged goods, forbade landlords to evict their tenants till further notice, and prolonged the voucher bills for a month. The same day the Radical deputies and mayors made a protest against the elections announced for the next day, as illegal—falsely alleging, at the same time, that the Assembly had guaranteed the maintenance of the National Guard, the Municipal elections at an early date, and other things. The Press and all the Respectability of the capital joined in a chorus of denunciation of the elections and of the Committee's action. A rabble of swell mobsmen and fancy men paraded the Place de la Bourse, shouting "Down with the Committee!" "Long live the Assembly!" The hostility of a few of the arrondissements was so great that it became necessary to postpone the elections till the following day.

All this time Versailles, its recently-arrived Assembly, and all their hangers-on, were in a state of abject and grovelling panic. News came in of revolts in several towns of the departments, and there was an hourly dread of the approach of the battalions of the National Guard. The subsequently confirmed forger, Jules Favre, delivered an harangue in the Chamber, denouncing the insurrection in choice expletives and bristling with threatenings and slaughter at Paris—an harangue which the cowering crew of terrified reactionists applauded with wild extravagance, almost falling on the forger's neck in their enthusiasm.

The next day the black-coated rabble spoken of above, together with some journalists and others, with Admiral Suisset at their back, again set forth, many of them with arms concealed in their clothes, this time towards the Place Vendôme, the object being to expel the National

Guards from that position under cover of a peaceful demonstration. Spying two sentries of the National Guard, they made for them and nearly murdered them. Seeing this, about 200 Guards promptly took up their position at the top of the Rue de la Paix. They were greeted with savage cries, and sword-sticks were levelled at them. Bergeret, their leader, repeatedly summoned the rioters to retire, without avail. Finally, seeing the "Nationals" indisposed to use force, the rioters took courage and drew their revolvers, killing two of the Guard and wounding seven others The muskets of the "Nationals" then went off, leaving a dozen dead, and a large number of revolvers, swordsticks, and hats in the street. The mob scattered in all directions, yelling. Of course, ever on the alert for a pretext for a howl at the movement, the bourgeois press everywhere made immense capital out of this incident. *Punch's* celebrated special constable—who says to the Chartist, "If I kill you, mind it's nothing; but if you kill me, by George! its murder"—wasn't in it with the journalists on "respectable" middle-class newspapers on this occasion.

V.

THE ELECTION OF THE COMMUNE.

NOTWITHSTANDING the slight rallying of the bourgeois and reactionary arrondissements referred to in the last chapter, it was impossible for "order" to effect any real foothold within the city. In a day or two the "loyal" National Guards who were going to do such wonders for the Assembly melted into nothing. The Committee sent battalions of National Guards into all the reactionary quarters, and quiet if not "order" inside Paris at least, was re-established.

A few days previously two members of the Committee, Varlin and Jourde, had, through Rothschild, obtained a million francs from the Bank of France. This was now exhausted with the initial expenses of organising the public services, and the wages of the National Guard. The Committee again sent Varlin and Jourde to the bank for supplies, but this time they were received with insults, and gentle persuasion in the shape of a couple of battalions of the National Guard had to be forwarded in order to effect a disbursement. This question of the Bank was a crucial one. Its treatment at the hands of the Committee, and a few days later at those of the Commune, who followed in the same steps, showed a childish want of grasp of the situation, and constituted the third fatal blunder of the Revolution. There was enough in specie and in securities in the Bank to have bought up the whole of the Versailles Army. In addition to this there were ninety thousand titles of depositors to serve as hostages for the good behaviour of the Government as representing the middle-

classes throughout France. The Committee, and afterwards the Commune, instead of seizing the whole concern allowed the management to remain, with its entire staff, barring the Chief Governor who had fled, and went cap in hand from time to time to solicit the requisite funds. The sub-governor by a little diplomacy succeeded before long in nobbling an old gentleman named Beslay, who though no more than a Radical bourgeois had had the pluck to stick gallantly to Paris, yet who, in spite of his personal honesty, had all the prejudices of his class when financial matters were concerned. He was nevertheless selected as go-between with the Bank and the Revolution. But to return to the days of March. The mayors now concentrated all their efforts towards trying to further postpone the elections. These had, after two postponements, been definitely fixed by the Committee for Sunday the 26th of March. At last the insults toward Paris, and the general attitude of the Assembly having disgusted many even of the moderate Republicans there was a disposition to compromise on the part of the mayors, and the 30th was proposed. The Committee however stuck to the 26th, and eventually five mayors, including Clémenceau and Floquet, finding resistance hopeless reluctantly signed a manifesto sanctioning the elections. The rest did not protest though they kept steadily aloof. The adhesion of the mayors, such as it was, gave the elections the *cachet* of technical legality.

On the Sunday, 287,000 men accordingly went to the poll, and the Paris Commune was elected and proclaimed amid general rejoicing. On the Monday there was a muster of National Guards (arms piled up in front of them) and civilian electors, in the "place" of the Hotel de Ville to greet the newly installed representatives of Paris. Salutes of cannon, bands playing the Marseillaise, and

enthusiastic shouts made the welkin ring. The spies of Versailles declared the whole of Paris infected. The members of the new Commune appeared again and again on the balcony of the Hotel de Ville in response to the deafening shouts which demanded them. Amongst the elected, although the majority were Revolutionists and, at least up to their lights, Socialists, there were a small number of bourgeois Liberals and Radicals chosen, but these very soon found an excuse for backing out of an enterprise which they saw they could not manipulate as they had hoped. At the first meeting of the Commune, the beforementioned well-meaning bourgeois Beslay was chosen president by virtue of his seniority, and it must be admitted, made a not altogether bad opening speech. The Commune next day proceeded to apportion itself in committees. There was an Executive Committee composed of Lefrancais, Duval, Felix Pyat (the old forty-eighter with a reputation which he owed to the rhetoric he talked and penned), Bergeret, Tridon, Eudes, and Vaillant (the Blanquist, now member of the Chamber). The other committees were Finance, of which Varlin and Jourde were members, Justice, Public Safety, Labour Exchange, Victualling, Foreign Policy, Public Works, and Education.

One of the first acts of the Commune was to grant a complete release from all rent from October, 1870 to July 1871. Thus a vast number of poor people were relieved from a crushing liability which they were utterly unable to meet without ruin. This was all very proper as far as it went, but the Commune omitted to perform two important duties which the situation imperatively demanded, the first was to issue a clear and easily intelligible manifesto explaining its programme and plan of action. The second and if anything still more serious omission was not keeping in touch with the provinces, which immediately after the

18th of March had shown the most favourable signs of sympathetic action with Paris. Lyons, Marseilles, St. Etienne, Narbonne, Toulouse, and other towns started Communes, some of them, notably Marseilles and Narbonne, with considerable chances of success. But they received no support or even communications from the head-centre of the movement. As a consequence, isolated materially and morally, they most of them came to grief in a few days. Marseilles and Narbonne held out the longest, but in a fortnight the whole Communistic movement in the provinces was dead. Thiers and his Versaillese, again wise in their generation, left no stone unturned to detach the provinces from all sympathy with Paris, and issued notices to all the prefects, maligning Paris and the Revolution, misrepresenting every fact and fabricating every lie.

Having succeeded in rooting out the Commune in the provinces Thiers proceeded to stop all goods trains for Paris and to cut off all the postal communications. Rampont, the postmaster received orders to violate the undertaking he had entered into with Thiesz, the postal delegate of the Committee, and to disorganise the postal service. The stupid Committee and Commune, hoping to the last that peace would be preserved, took no further steps for the eventuality of war. The Assembly on its side, proceeded steadily organising the isolation of Paris and consolidation of their army which was now strengthened by several regiments of released prisoners of war from Germany. By the end of March all the "moderate" members of the Commune had resigned with the exception of old Beslay. The international character of the movement was accentuated by the unanimous confirmation of the election of Frankel, the Austrian, in the 13th Arondissement. Meanwhile, the "respectable" population, the friends of "order" were migrating *en masse* to Versailles.

VI.

THE WAR BEGINS WITH DISASTER FOR THE COMMUNE.

On the 1st of April Thiers officially declared war in a circular sent to the Prefects, and the same day, without any warning given to Paris, the Versaillese opened fire upon the town. The Parisians were in consternation at the re-commencement of the siege. No one had thought that matters would really come to this pass. Everywhere within the city was bustle and confusion. The military commission of the Commune placarded the following:—"The Royalist conspirators have attacked—our moderate attitude notwithstanding. Our duty is to defend the city against this wanton aggression." That day but little was done. The Versaillese attacked and drove off an inadequate garrison of Federals at Courbeovie, taking five prisoners, one a lad of fifteen, all of whom they murdered in cold blood. This was the beginning of the series of atrocities perpetrated by those fiends in human shape which culminated in that sublimest tragedy in modern history, the "bloody week."

After much discussion a sortie was decided upon by the military authorities of the Commune for the next day. That night Cluseret was appointed delegate of war, in company with Eudes, one of the military men of the situation. The National Guard, suddenly called upon to act, was in a state of great disorganisation, often without staff officers or any guiding spirit, and much confusion resulted in consequence. At length, at midnight, three columns were got together. The

plan was to make a strong demonstration in the direction of Reuil as a blind for a column under Bergeret and Flourens to operate on the right, while Eudes and Duval, respectively, were to command those on the centre and the left. Unfortunately, these excellent men had never commanded a battalion in the field before, in addition to which the sub-officering, as before said, was hopelessly defective. The elementary requisites of a campaign were neglected; artillery, ambulances, and ammunition-wagons were everywhere else except where they should have been. At about 3 o'clock on the morning of the 3rd of April, Bergeret's column, 10,000 men strong, but with only eight cannon, reached the bridge at Neuilly. They proceeded quite coolly on their way, under the range of Mont Valérien, every National Guard believing it to be in possession of the Commune, when suddenly shells burst from the great fortress, spreading death and destruction in the ranks of the Federals and severing the column into two halves. Panic, confusion, and cries of "treachery," overwhelmed everything.

I well remember my astonishment at the headlong folly of the Federals' confidence in Mont Valérian being safe, since the English papers had days previously published the information of its occupation by the Versaillese. It seemed incredible that what was known to us over here should have been utterly unknown to those on the spot and most immediately interested. The fact was the leaders did know that Mont Valérian was lost to the Commune, but hoped the troops of the line would refuse to fire, and so kept the fact secret. The memory of how the linesmen had fraternised on the 18th of March, and reports as to the untrustworthiness of the Assembly's soldiers, now reinforced by regiments from Germany, had deceived them. They forgot that for this

important fort Thiers' military staff had selected their men, and they forgot, moreover, that insubordination in the interior of a fortess is a very different thing from insubordination in the open street under the moral pressure of a sympathetic crowd ready to protect the insubordinate from the vengeance of their superior officers. This deception, however well-intentioned it may have been, was little less than criminal under the circumstances. Most of the Guards scattered in all directions, and finally found their way back to Paris, only about 1,200 remaining with Bergeret, and pushing on. They were supported by Flourens, who, with only a thousand men (the rest having also straggled off, such was the state of discipline), routed the Versaillese vanguard, and occupied the village of Bougival. A whole Versaillese army corps was directed against this detachment, and the Parisian vanguard had to fall back on Rueil, where a few men had held the position, the object being to cover Bergeret's retreat. Flourens was here surprised with his staff, and this noble-hearted people's hero was killed, his head cleft with a sabre. Poor Flourens was a type of revolutionist of whom we have few nowadays left. Many there are now who undertand the economic question better than Flourens, but none we know who have quite that old-world chivalrous devotion to the Revolution which this remarkable man had, and which so endeared him to the impressionable working-classes of Paris. Of a well-to-do middle-class family, Flouren's impulsive nature led him in his early youth to join an insurrection against the Turks in the Levant. During the latter part of the Second Empire he was, next to Rochefort, the most prominent people's agitator. His untimely death threw a gloom over all Paris, and heightened the effect of the defeat.

The centre column under Eudes was not more success-

ful than the others. Duval, through mismanagement, was left unsupported, and had to surrender. He was murdered by order of Vinoy, in spite of pledges given to the contrary. Crowds of Guards returned disheartened in the evening. The only good point, from a military point of view, in the day's proceedings was the supplying of Fort Issy with cannon through the energy and thoughtfulness of Ranvier. The disaster of the 3rd of April, however, notwithstanding all, had the effect of stirring up the whole latent resisting strength of the National Guard. Next day all the forts were manned. The Commune even gained a few points, within a day or two re-occupying Courbevoie, and holding the bridge of Neuilly, but it was not for long. There was no lack of heroism. The Porte Maillot held out for weeks under the fire of Mont Valerien. Yet to the onlooker versed in military lore it was evident that the situation meant a prolonged death agony for Paris. With Mont Valerien lost there was no hope. In a few days the Commune was everywhere on the defensive. Meanwhile strict care was taken by the Versaillese to prevent any tendency favourable to Paris from manifesting itself at Versailles. Officers who merely expressed regret at the fratricical struggle were secretly murdered by order of the villains with whom the whole of the "respectable" classes of Europe sided.

On the 6th of April took place the funeral of those killed in the disastrous sortie of the 3rd, and an imposing sight it was. Two hundred thousand accompanied the catafalque to the Pére la Chaise cemetery. Five members of the Commune, headed by the old hero of '48, Delescluze, followed as chief mourners. At the grave, the aged man, the father of the Revolution, spoke a few words, after which the vast concourse dispersed. From this time forward the

history of the Commune is largely a history of military blunders and incapacity allied with bravery and good intentions. We shall, however, deal very briefly with the purely military side of the movement, as that has mainly a local and temporary interest, and moreover cannot be properly understood without a large map of Paris and its environs.

VII.

CONCERNING VARIOUS MATTTERS.

CLUSERET now entered upon his duties as delegate of war. His name was already known to Englishmen owing to his connection with the Fenian attack on Chester Castle in 1867. He is regarded by many active participators in the Commune as at once insincere and incapable. The latter charge seems to be fairly made out, as to the former I am not prepared to offer any opinion. There were two main plans of defence possible to be adopted, that of the outer *enceinte*, with its forts, redoubts, &c., but which required more men, more means, and more military experience than the Commune had at its disposal, and that of the inner *enceinte*, the ramparts, which if effectively carried out would have made Paris practically impregnable. Cluseret and the Commune adopted neither, but messed about with both, neutralising the one by the other.

The cowardly assassinations of Flourens and Duval had excited everyone. In deference to public opinion the Commune ordered the seizure of hostages in full accordance with the practice recognised by war. Unfortunately the best hostages they could have had had been allowed to escape at the outset of the movement. However, Darboy, the Archbishop of Paris, Lagarde, his grand-vicar, Duguerry, Curé of the Madeleine, Bonjean, Presiding Judge of the Court of Appeal, Jecker, a financial politician responsible for the Mexican expedition, and a few Jesuits were laid by the heels. A decree and a proclamation were then issued threatening reprisals in the event of any further

murders on the part of the Versaillese. But the decree remained a dead letter. The Versaillese continued their cold-blooded assassination of prisoners, and no reprisals were taken. As I propose devoting a separate chapter to the consideration of the whole question of the hostages I shall say no more here.

The fatal incapacity and weakness of the Commune now for the first time became apparent in internal and external policy. Ever since its first sitting, however, it had become increasingly evident that it was below the the level of the situation. Beyond two or three comparatively unimportant decrees a fortnight showed no constructive work done.

Meanwhile immense heroism was displayed at certain points of the outworks by the Federal troops. The Porte-Maillot, a frightful position, exposed to the full fire of Mont Valérien, was held for seven weeks by successive relays of men. It was now that that marvel of self-devoting intrepidity, Dombrowski the Pole, appeared upon the scene. This man by his calm fearlessness and dashing courage performed incredible feats with the slenderest means. He swept the Versaillese from Asnieres, while his equally heroic brother took the Castle of Bécon, and, what was still more, routed the troops of Vinoy when they attempted to recover it. But these isolated flashes of momentary success could not materially affect the situation.

Talk of conciliation went on all the time, and many were the efforts made by well-intentioned persons (*e.g.* the "Union Syndicale," and the "League of the rights of Paris") to bring about an understanding. But Thiers would have none of it. He would hear of no compromise, not even of a truce or armistice, nothing but unconditional surrender.

On the 16th of April the complementary elections for the Commune—necessitated by the vacation of thirty-one

seats through death, double elections, and resignations—were held. The change was very marked from the 26th of March. Instead of the 146,000 who had appeared at the polls in the same arrondissements on the previous occasion only 61,000 voted now. It was felt that all hope of peace was at an end, and that all who voted were voting for war to the knife with Versailles. The inactivity and vacillation of the Commune up to this time had also alienated many sympathisers.

After these elections, on the 19th, it was finally decided to issue a political programme. This programme which was supposed to be drawn up by a commission of five members was mainly the work of a journalist, Pierre Denis, assisted by Delescluze. The former, a writer in Jules Vallés *Cri du Peuple*, was fanatical on the question of federal autonomy, and this he managed to place in the forefront of the new declaration which demanded the recognition of the republic, and the autonomy of the township or commune (irrespective of its size) throughout France. In the first instance, however, it was only the autonomy of Paris which was called for. The rest of France was to follow suit as best it could. The rights of the Commune were defined as including the voting of the budget, of taxation, the organisation and control of the local services, magistracy, police, and education, the administration of communal wealth, &c., in short, to all intents complete autonomy. A central council of delegates from the various communes throughout France was referred to, but its functions were nowhere defined. It was apparently forgotten that without adequate safeguards such a council would have been a hopelessly reactionary body owing to the fact that the large majority of the small rural Communes would have voted under clerical influence. The idea was for the complete autonomy of Paris in all internal

affairs to be forthwith recognised, and that of the other Communes throughout France to follow, apparently as demanded.

As an International Revolutionist I have been always strongly sympathetic with all movements for local autonomy as most directly tending to destroy the modern "nation" or centralised bureaucratic State, and if the movement had been properly organised in co-operation with the other large towns in the earlier days of March a decentralising programme, properly worked out, might have formed the common political basis. Now, however, it was too late. The idea of constituting Paris a solitary island in the midst of the ocean of provincial France in the vague hope that other islands would spring up in time of themselves, and form an archipelago, was little better than a crude absurdity. The manifesto contained some good passages, probably the work of Delescluze, but as it stood it was ill-timed and not to the point. Nevertheless it was accepted almost without discussion by the Commune, so perfunctory had its proceedings become.

There were now two distinct parties within the council of the Commune, the so-called "majority" and "minority." These originated in the first instance over a hot discussion on the question of the verification of the elections of the 16th, and tended, as is the wont of such factions, to become increasingly bitter and personal. The Commune soon became split up into cliques which alternately dominated, and which still further exacerbated the situation by their mutual recriminations and intrigues. In this way the defence was paralysed, and decrees, good or bad, remained more often than not an empty form.

All this time the Versaillese were organising their attack, and getting into military order the reinforcements they were almost daily receiving from Germany, consisting of

troops who after their defeat and detention in German garrison towns were perfectly ready to take part in a successful campaign against anybody, no matter whom. The army of Versailles at the end of April amounted to 130,000 men, and more were coming in. Bismarck and the German military authorities had been only too anxious to offer Thiers and the French bourgeoisie every assistance within their power to crush their common proletarian foe.

VIII.

THE INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY OF THE COMMUNE.

As already observed, the Commune had organised itself at starting into nine commissions or delegations. These consisted of a victualling department, a department of municipal services, of finance, of war, of public safety, of justice, of external affairs, of education, and of labour. The first, the provisioning department, did not offer any special difficulties until the end of April, when Thiers ordered the stoppage of all provision trains for Paris, and even after that it was possible to keep the town supplied through the neutral zone between the German and Versaillese armies. Besides, the city itself contained enough food to have sustained a long siege if necessary. The department of public or municipal services involved the general superintendence of public offices such as the Post Office, the Telegraphs, the Mint, the official printing press, the hospitals, the greater number of the subordinate members of the staff of which had been induced to remain or return. Theisz, a workman, took the direction of the Post Office, which involved the most trouble, owing to its having been intentionally thrown into disorder by its late director. The wages of all employés were at once raised, and the hours shortened. In well-nigh all these services the "superior officials" had made off, thus leaving the work of directing them in the hands of the workmen administrators placed there by the Commune.

Camélinat, bronze worker, took over the Mint, and

admirably carried on the business of coining bullion and of engraving postage-stamps. The hospitals were reorganised and remanned by an old revolutionist named Treilhard. The Commission of Finance was presided over by Jourde, who had been a clerk and accountant. Varlin, a workman agitator, energetic and devoted to the cause, was also an invaluable member of this Commission, which had the task of raising and distributing the requisite funds for the payment of all the services, including the National Guards, and the war-expenses generally. The whole was managed by workmen and small clerks at workmen's wages, and not at the salaries of "boss" middle-class financiers. The department of war, with Cluseret at its head, seems unluckily to have been the worst conducted of any. Here everybody was at cross-purposes. Continual wrangling over the possession of the cannon resulted in a lot of artillery remaining useless. Ammunition of wrong calibre was often distributed. Important posts were left unrelieved. The commissariat was, moreover, hopelessly disorganised. The barricades which it had been decided to construct were made regardless of any intelligible strategical plan. There was a fatal tendency for the several departments to overlap in their functions, which were not precisely enough defined. This was especially noticeable between the war and police (public safety) departments.

The department last mentioned was under the direction of Raoul Rigault, an ardent young Revolutionist, but without experience and unfitted for such an important post. What was worse was that he had with him a lot of flighty young men who exacerbated matters. With such colleagues as these, Ferré, Regnard, the chief secretary of police (whose imposing appearance rests in the memory of some of us who used often to meet him in the British Museum at the end of the seventies), and such more solid men, were hope-

lessly handicapped in their influence. In the matter of the Picpus Convent, where racks, cages with women in a frightful state shut up in them, skulls with hair on, and other evidences of criminal practices were unearthed, nothing was done beyond transferring the nuns to St. Lazare. Decrees of the Commune were not given effect to. Journals suppressed in the morning were allowed to be sold in the evening. The only thing that was not forgotten by this department as by the whole movement was the humanitarian idea and the so-called Christian (?) principle of doing good to those that revile you and persecute you. The Commune through this delegation supported the wives and families of the men who were fighting against it, saying "the Commune has bread for all misery and care for all orphans."

Allied with the Commission of police and public safety was that of Justice. The Commune ordered that every arrest should be at once notified to this department. As regards punctiliousness in the matter of property the department of Justice like the Commune showed itself almost pedantic, returning the cash-box of a gas company (!) seized in a search for hidden arms on the company's premises. It dismissed a commissary for having sequestrated, police-fashion, the money found on Gustave Chaudey when arrested for having ordered the firing from the Hotel de Ville on the 22nd of January.

The delegation of Justice further instituted a rigorous enquiry into the state of the prisons, and the motives for the arrest of all persons detained. This latter led to a conflict between the two departments and to the resignation of Raoul Rigault after having been admonished by Delescluze for his careless conduct of the important functions entrusted to him. With all his faults, however, it cannot be said that this young man erred on the side of harshness.

The delegation of the Exterior was established mainly for the purpose of enlightening the provinces too long neglected and counteracting the influence of Versailles which diligently fed them with lies. By the time it got into working order, however, the important movements which followed the 18th of March had been crushed and it did little or nothing to give direction to, or even to keep alive, the sporadic agitation which broke forth in various places during the ensuing weeks. It dispatched a few emissaries indeed, but for the most part obscure Parisians utterly unknown in the localities where they were sent. Seeing that the sole chance of the Commune lay in creating powerful diversions by means of the armed populace of the large provincial towns, the lukewarmness of the action taken is simply incredible. It must be said nevertheless on behalf of the commission itself that the sum of 100,000 francs (£4,000) allowed it by the Commune was ridiculously inadequate for the work of stirring up the whole of provincial France, which was what it ought to have done.

The Education Department, though it of course at once suppressed religious teaching and emblems in schools, never got beyond the stage of preparation in any constructive programme. It was supposed to be organising a scheme of primary and secondary education, but has left no trace behind it. Elise Réclus and Benoit Gastineau took excellent charge of the *Bibliothéque Nationale*, and Gustave Courbet, the painter, with a committee of artists, superintended the museums and picture-galleries. Some of the arrondissements were more active than the Education Committee itself. One of them, at its own motion, instituted free clothing and feeding for the children. Another, in an excellent memorandum, declared it the mission of the school of the Revolutionary Commune to teach children to love their fellow creatures, to love justice, and to bring home

to them the duty of improving themselves, not for the sake of personal advancement, "but in the interests of all." At the same time teachers were instructed in future to exclusively employ "the experimental and scientific method, that which starts from facts physical, moral, and intellectual."

The delegation which did most work and which succeeded more than any other in giving expression to the Socialistic principles embodied in the revolution of the 18th of March was undoubtedly that of "Labour and Exchange," presided over by our Austrian comrade Léo Frankel. This delegation systematically set to work to collect and arrange information concerning the condition of labour, and the precise relations existing in all trades between employer and workman. It was also entrusted with the revision of the Customs and the transformation of the fiscal system. Its report recommended the return of pledges to all necessitous persons and the suppression of the pawnshops since the Revolution of the Commune implied the speedy establishment "of a social organisation giving serious guarantees of support to workmen out of employment." The Commune, it proclaimed, implied the rescue of workmen from the exploitation of capital.

The Labour department further procured the prohibition of night work for bakers, and made fines and stoppages of wages illegal. At its instigation the Commune decreed the confiscation of factories and workshops not in actual use, and their immediate handing over to trade-syndicates of workmen to be conducted on a co-operative basis. This decree, although defective enough in its details, nevertheless, for the first time in history, affirmed the principle of the expropriation of the capitalist class by the working class, and it is for this reason of epoch-making importance. Unfortunately time and circumstances did not allow of its being carried into effect.

And what was the city of Paris like during the Commune? Quiet, peaceful, and what is more, almost wholly free from crime. The last fact is admitted by friends and foes alike. Middle-class Englishmen with no sympathy for the Commune have been reluctant witnesses to the safety and good order maintained throughout the whole city during the two months that the Revolution was master. Quarters, where at other times when "order" prevails, assaults are of frequent occurence and prostitution is rife, could be traversed without molestation of any kind night or day. While the Versailles organs were daily demanding the wholesale slaughter of Parisians, one looks in vain through all the revolutionary journals for a single bloodthirsty suggestion. The churches, closed for the farce of a Christian worship, no longer seriously believed in, and become solely the instrument for maintaining popular ignorance and subserviency, we find transformed into public halls, in which the pulpits, hung with red, are occupied by preachers of the gospel, not of Christ, but of Revolutionary Socialism. Revolutionary hymns are sung to organ accompaniment. The Tuileries, the late home of the vulgar and ostentatious profligacy of king and emperor, are now used to serve as free concert rooms for the people. Such was the Paris of the Commune!

IX.

THE FREEMASONS, THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC SAFETY, AND ROSSEL.

THE last serious attempt at conciliation between Versailles and Paris was made by the Freemasons on the 21st of April. They were received coldly by Thiers, who assured them that, though Paris were given over to destruction and slaughter, the law should be enforced. And he kept his word. A few days after they decided in a public meeting to plant their banner on the ramparts and throw in their lot with the Commune. On the 29th, accordingly, 10,000 of the brethren met (fifty-five lodges being represented), and marched to the Hôtel de Ville, headed by the Grand Masters in full insignia and the banners of the lodges. Amongst them the new banner of Vincennes was conspicuous, bearing the inscription in red letters on a white ground, "Love one another." A balloon was then sent up, which let fall at intervals, outside Paris, a manifesto of the Freemasons. The procession then wended its way through the boulevards and the Champs Elysées to the Arc de Triomphe, where the banners were planted at various points along the ramparts. On seeing the white flag on the Porte Maillot, the Versaillese ceased firing, and the commander, himself a Freemason, received a deputation of brethren, and suggested a final appeal to Versailles, which was agreed to.

The "chief of the executive," of course, hardly listened to the envoys, and declined to further discuss the question of peace with anyone. They might have known before that such would have been their reception. The little smug bourgeois fiend was already scenting the proletarian blood he so longed to shed. This last formal challenge having been made and rejected, the Freemasons definitely took their stand as combatants for the Commune.

Milliére, who had worked hard to organise the provincials in Paris ever since the early part of April, induced the "Republican Alliance of the Departments," consisting of provincials residing in Paris, to give a formal adhesion to the Commune, 15,000 men accompanying Milliére to the Hôtel de Ville, after having voted an address to the departments. This was on the 30th of April. The same afternoon news arrived of the evacuation by the Federals of the fort of Issy, which had been the result of a surprise. A few remained behind, however, one of them a lad at the entrance, with gunpowder and a train, prepared to blow himself up rather than surrender the fort. As soon as the news was known reinforcements were sent, and the Versailles driven from the park surrounding the fort and the fort itself was reoccupied. This affair, notwithstanding that it had no immediate military consequences, turned a sudden light on to the way the defence was being conducted, and led to the arrest of Cluseret in the evening. It also led indirectly to the carrying out of a project mooted some days before, of the creation of a "Commitee of Public Safety." Here we see the old revolutionary tradition asserting itself. It was formally expressed by that old votary of the revolutionary tradition, Félix Pyat, who gave as a reason for it that a "Committee of Public Safety" belonged to the period which first produced the "Republic" and the "Commune." This adoration of

phrases and historical shibboleths is so thoroughly French, and has so often been the bane of French popular movements, that it is worth specially noting. However, whatever its name, the general feeling as to the necessity of some centralised power was for the moment paramount. The permanent Executive Commission of the Commune, in spite of its having been reorganised, had proved utterly ineffective in superintending things. In its latest form it consisted of Cluseret, Jourde, Viard, Paschal Grousset, Frankel, Protot, Andrien, Vaillant, and Raoul Rigault. In the end, the establishment of the Committee of Public Safety was voted by forty-five to twenty-three. This question brought to an issue the quarrel between the so-called "majority" and "minority" on the Commune. The majority, led by Félix Pyat, and containing all the archæological reconstructors and mere sentimentalists, as also the Blanquists (with the exception of Tridon), voted for the Committee. The minority, including the most clear-headed Socialists of the Hôtel de Ville, voted against it. When the question came of selecting the men to serve on it, the minority refused to take any part. Ranvier, Arnaud, Meillet, Gérardin, and Pyat were then elected by the "majority" alone. This squabble had the most disastrous effects outside, as it for the first time revealed to the world the dissensions and personal recriminations long brewing in the council-room.

On the same evening that Cluseret was arrested (30th of April) Rossel was appointed Delegate of War in his place. Rossel was a disappointed young officer who had served during the Franco-German war, and thought himself unduly neglected by the military authorities. On the look-out for a job in which he might distinguish himself, and full of bitterness towards his old superiors, he came to

Paris and took service under the Revolution. He neither knew nor cared anything for the cause, and frankly confessed, when interrogated by the Commune, that he did not understand what Socialism meant, but that he hated the Government which had signed away two French provinces to the "Prussians," and was willing to support any movement for its overthrow. In the teeth of Cluseret's incapacity and, as some thought, treachery, a young officer with a certain military reputation, and able to talk with an air of authority on the situation, seemed a godsend to the men of the Hôtel de Ville. Rossel wanted to carry things with a high hand in military martinet style, however, and from the first showed an utter lack of *savoir faire* in his dealings with the citizen-soldiery, the National Guard. In spite of his pretensions the improvement on the Cluseret *regime* was not obvious. Rossel gave orders one day and revoked them the next. He started on a system of barricades, connecting the three chief strategic positions within the city—Montmartre, the Trocadero, and the Pantheon—but never saw to its carrying out. The Versaillese had meanwhile opened new batteries, and the line of fire was slowly but steadily drawing closer round Paris. Matters were complicated by the Central Committee, the *personnel* of which had been almost entirely changed from what it was originally by trying to intermeddle and squabbling with the War Commission. Issy was in a few days reduced to a heap of ruins, and finally evacuated on the 9th of May. Rossel the same evening, with an indiscretion which had all the appearance of being intentional, had placarded all over Paris, as if it had been the news of a victory, the words, "The tri-colour floats over the fort of Issy abandoned by its garrison." He immediately after wrote a letter in which he endeavoured to clear his military reputation by abusing the organisation of the military services. These

were bad enough in all conscience, but Rossel knew the position of affairs when he accepted the responsibility, and there is conclusive evidence that he did not make the best of things, even bad as they were. He wound up by sending in his resignation, and asking for a "cell at Mazas."

X.

THE LAST DAYS OF PARIS.

In addition to their military operations, the Versaillese were not indisposed to rely on the work of spies in endeavouring to affect an entry into the city by means of treachery. These gentlemen, however, quarrelled among themselves, mutually denounced each other to their employers, and, in spite of the big promises which each made in turn, they effected nothing beyond consuming some few hundred thousand francs of governmental money. They were most of them "old soldiers," including one or two naval officers, reactionary National Guards, and *Chevaliers d'Industrie*. Some of them having attempted to corrupt Drombrowski, they were denounced by him to the Committee of Public Safety. This was about the last attempt made by Thiers to gain over Paris by treachery. He saw it was no use.

Meanwhile the discussions in the council-room between the "majority" and "minority" in the Commune were, unhappily, going on more acrimoniously than ever. Rossel, in spite of his demand for a "cell at Mazas," and of his *parole* not to escape, slunk off and hid himself in a safe retreat, whence he was to be fetched out some three weeks later by the Versaillese, by that time masters of Paris. His arrest was decreed, however, almost unani-

mously by the Commune at the opening of its sitting of the 10th of May. The next item on the agenda on this occasion was the reconstruction of the redoubtable Committee of Public Safety, which, after eight days' existence, had been, by general consensus of opinion, voted a failure. The "minority" seized the opportunity for holding out the right hand of fellowship; but the "majority," led by Félix Pyat, who was in the chair, persisted in their attitude of suspicion, and the schism in consequence became more accentuated than ever. The Committee was re-constructed, but again only with members of the "majority." Ranvier, Gambon, Delescluze, Arnaud, and Eudes were the men chosen. Delescluze was afterwards made Chief of the War Office; Billioray, an insignificant member of the "majority," occupying the vacancy thus created on the Committee; Raoul Rigault again went into the Department of "security," this time as Procurator of Police; while Theophile Ferré was made Prefect, Cournet (son of an old Revolutionist of '48, killed in a duel in London), who had originally replaced Rigault in the Prefecture of Police, having resigned.

The new Committee of Public Safety ordered the demolition of Thiers' house in Paris, which was forthwith effected. There was not much use in this, seeing that the Assembly was sure to have it rebuilt at the national expense, and a decree was, of course, immediately passed at Versailles to this effect. The Commune, however, and all belonging to it, seemed to think it bore a charmed life; and hence, without seriously applying themselves to the one serious question of the hour, the defence of Paris, went on passing decrees of a useful and ornamental nature—many of which were excellent in themselves, but few of which were timely.

Among the best of what may be termed the

"symbolical" measures, was a decree passed by the Commune on the 12th of April for the destruction of the Vendôme Column. Although preparations for carrying it out were forthwith set about, owing to various delays these were not completed for more than a month. Accordingly, it was not before the 16th of May that the great emblem of French Jingoism actually kissed the earth. Erected to celebrate the victories of the first Napoleon in his wars of wanton aggression, it was very properly regarded as a standing insult, not only to every other European nationality, but, before all, to a Revolution based on the principles of Internationalism. So the afternoon of May 16th saw a large assemblage of Parisians in the Rue de la Paix and in the Place de la Concorde, the roofs of the houses and the windows being occupied with sightseers, watching anxiously, and not without apprehension, the operations, with the formidable array of ropes leading up to the final tug which should lay prone the emblem of aggressive patriotism. At five o'clock a national guard affixed the tricolour to its proper place, the gallery at the top of this piece of shoddy magnificence, and a few minutes later the national flag, the statue of Napoleon, and the column itself were alike lying in fragments on a vast bed of dung, appropriately prepared for them. The apprehensions proved unfounded, and the overthrow was accomplished without any noteworthy mishap.

On the 15th, the previous day, the dispute between the "minority" and "majority" had reached a climax in the withdrawal of the former under cover of a manifesto anent the "Public Safety," which declared the Commune to have abdicated its functions into the hands of an irresponsible Committee. "As for us," it went on to say, "we, no less than the 'majority,' desire the accomplishment of political

and social reconstruction; but, contrary to its notions, we claim the right to be solely responsible for our acts before our electors without sheltering ourselves behind a supreme dictatorship which our mandate permits us neither to accept nor to recognise." The manifesto further went on to state that the signatories, in order not to give rise to further dissension in the Council room, proposed retiring into their arrondissements there to organise the resistance to the common enemy. The manifesto concluded with a generous expression of the conviction that "we all, majority or minority, notwithstanding our divergences as to policy, pursue the same object, political liberty, and the emancipation of the workers." "Long live the Social Republic! Long live the Commune!"

The manifesto bore the signatures of Beslay, Jourde, Theisz, Lefrancais, Girardin, Vermorel, Clémence, Andrieu, Serrailler, Longuet, Arthur Arnould, Clement Victor, Aurial, Ostyn, Franckel, Pindy, Arnold, Vallés, Tridon, Varlin, and Courbet. Malon subsequently gave in his adhesion.

The conduct of the minority in withdrawing at this critical juncture deserves the severest censure. The reason given was absurd. They had themselves voted for the second committee. This pedantic Parliamentarism and horror of dictatorship moreover was utterly ridiculous in the crisis through which the movement was passing. The composition of the Committee may have been open to objection, and, as a matter of fact, it proved itself sufficiently incapable. But in principle there is no doubt whatever, that a strong dictatorship was just what the situation demanded. The Committee failed, if for no other reason than because it contained no man strong enough to "dictate." There is no gainsaying that this action of the minority in allowing their personal spleen

to get the better of them, even granting that provocation had been given, was a great blow to the influence of the Commune, both internally and externally, and was naturally the occasion of much "crowing" on the part of the friends of "order" at Versailles and elsewhere. Most of the signatories seem to have felt they had committed a blunder almost as soon as the document was issued, and two days later, the 17th, saw the majority of them back at the Hotel de Ville notwithstanding their virtual resignation. The public meetings they had called the previous evening in their arrondissements had by no means endorsed their action. This sitting of the 17th of May was the fullest the Commune ever had, sixty-six members answering to their names. Unhappily it was mainly occupied with personal recriminations between the two factions, till it was abruptly terminated at 7 o'clock in the evening by the blowing up of the powder manufactory in the Avenue Rapp, which shook Paris from end to end. Was this disaster due to an accident or was it the result of treachery? No one knows to this day.

XI.

THE ENTRY OF THE VERSAILLESE.

SUNDAY, the 21st of May, was one of those glorious spring days in which the avenues of the Champs Elysées and the Tuilleries Gardens show up in the clear air a splendour of young foliage, to which hardly another capital in Europe than Paris can offer a parallel. This afternoon a monster open-air concert was being held under the trees in the Tuilleries Gardens by order of the Commune, for the benefit of the widows and orphans of National Guards slain in defence of Paris. Thousands of Parisians in holiday attire thronged the grounds. At the close of the performance a staff-officer of the National Guards announced from the platform another concert at the same time and place for the following Sunday. Alas! What a different scene was that following Sunday destined to present—a murky rainfall, Paris enveloped in thick smoke, blood running in the gutters, corpses and human remains piled-up, encumbering the streets. How many of those workmen and their families then peacefully enjoying themselves were never to see another Sunday! At the very moment the above announcement was made the bandits of "order" were within the city, unknown to those responsible for its safety. This is how it happened. The defence had become more completely disorganised than ever since the defection of Rossel. A large extent of the *enceinte*, including several gates, was completely undefended. The Versaillese on their side had unmasked a formidable array

of breech-batteries on the previous day. The sound of these, hour after hour, on the defences was insufficient to make the Parisians realise that the end was at hand.

The first detachment of Government troops entered at the gate of St. Cloud, one of the undefended points, at about 3 o'clock. Dombrowski, who for the last fortnight had been at the head of the now hopelessly disintegrated defence, was apprised of the state of affairs one hour later by an officer of the National Guard. He at once issued an order to the war office for seven cannon, for the immediate mobilisation of the best batallions, and had the Auteuil Gate occupied. Soon after, other points were occupied by National Guards, and the gate at the Jena bridge was barricaded. Dombrowski, of course, lost no time in communicating with the Committee of Public Safety, which in its turn sent Billioray to inform the Commune. At that moment the Commune was trying Cluseret, on the impeachment of one of its members, Miot, but the charge of treachery being supported only by loose gossip was already falling through before the arrival of Billioray. The message the latter brought was received with consternation, the proceedings in hand were hurridly concluded, and Cluseret acquitted. But instead of at once entering upon a serious discussion of the situation which might have led to a decision as to some definite plan of defence, the council practically broke up into groups of desultory talkers till eight o'clock struck, and the chairman formally proclaimed the proceedings at an end. *It was the last sitting of the Commune of Paris.* Every member to his *arrondissement* was now the fatuous cry. Instead of at once passing a resolution declaring the Commune as sitting in permanence, which was the obvious thing to do—thereby giving a centre and rallying point to the defence—the Commune abandoned the Hotel de Ville, deliberately

committed suicide, and with this act of self-destruction sounded the death-knell of revolutionary Paris. The last hope lay in a strong, well-organised rally of all the forces at the disposal of the Commune within the city, with the construction of a system of barricades connecting the three chief strategic points, Montmartre, the Trocadèro, and the Pantheon. Instead of a concentrated effort, all was confusion at this critical moment. Everyone left the Hotel de Ville for his arrondissement. Energy was not lacking, but it showed itself when too late and was dissipated in isolated disorganised action. The Committeee of Public Safety fairly lost its head, not knowing which way to turn. Delescluze at the War Office remained calm, and quieted the Commune with the assurance that the street-fight would be favourable to the Parisians.

The chief of the general staff, Henri Prudhomme, then sent for the commander of the observatory on the Arc de Triomphe, who declared he could see nothing of the Versaillese, whereupon a placard was issued casting doubt on the fact of the entry. At 11 o'clock at night, however, a member of the Commune riding down one of the outer streets near the *enceinte*, the Rue Beethoven, found the lights out and his horse stumbling in pools of blood. Ominous black figures lay against the wall, which proved to be corpses of murdered National Guards. At midnight General Cissey with a body of men scaled the ramparts at another undefended point and entered without encountering any resistance. They then opened several gates from the inside, and by dawn the Versaillese army was streaming into the city at five distinct apertures. Paris woke to find the fifteenth arrondissement captured, Passy and the Trocadéro occupied by Versaillese, and Versaillese shells even falling in the centre of the city. There was a veriable *suave qui peut* from the outposts yet held. This is a

war of barricades" was the cry, "each man to his own arrondissement." Such little discipline as had survived was now at an end. The anarchic element came everywhere to the front. A suicidal placard was issued by Delescluze (one is sorry to say) full of claptrap about the naked arms of the people being more than a match for all the military strategists in the world, pouring contempt on organisation and "learned manœuverers," and, in short giving official sanction to the scatter-brained idiocy of the impromptu demagogue and the worst elements in the National Guard.

Early in the morning the war office was evacuated, Henri Prudhomme neglecting, by a piece of criminal carelessness, to destroy the official documents, and thereby sending thousands to death and exile. The shopkeepers were beginning to take down their shutters in the inner parts of the city, not even yet fully realising the state of affairs, but soon closed up again, upon reading Delescluze's proclamation and finding that the roar of the cannon came not from outside but from within the fortifications. Barricades were hurriedly thrown up in different quarters without any system, and for the most part only just as the Versaillese were seen to be threatening the position.

At 9 o'clock a few members of the Commune, insufficient to form a quorum, presented themselves at the Hotel de Ville, and separated after a desultory conversation without anyone so much as suggesting any definite scheme of defence. Proclamations abounded on every wall—calls to arms, assurances of victory, demands for barricades. It would be useless without a map of Paris to describe in detail the slow but steady progress of the invaders on this day (Monday, May 22nd). Suffice it to say that the same characteristics were apparent in the street defence, only in an acuter form, that we have recorded as present when the battle was raging round the *enceinte*—the same

limitless bravery, in some cases young boys fighting with desperation, the same impossibility of getting reinforcements, cannon, and ammunition when and where required. The heights of Montmartre were the main stronghold left to the Commune, now that the Trocadéro was gone and the Pantheon threatened. As a position Montmartre was very strong, and, with a properly directed defence, might have held the enemy at bay for many days. But everywhere was the same cry "we must defend our own quarter." Nevertheless, as evening drew near barricades sprang up in every direction. Paris did indeed seem to be rising *en masse*. This deceived many who even still sincerely believed in victory.

Meanwhile the ferocious Assembly was voting by acclamation that the "Chief of the Executive" and the army had merited well of the country, and hilariously exulting in the orgy of carnage promised them by the infamous old man.

XII.

THE BARRICADES.

THE night of Monday-Tuesday was a night of silent preparation (all too late) and of gloom. In all quarters the pickaxe was to be heard removing paving stones and digging the foundations of barricades, which rose by the hundred. Men, women, and children were at work. Now began that enthusiasm, that limitless courage and contempt of death—displayed in defence of an ideal—the colossal proportions of which dwarf everything similar in history, and which alone suffices to redeem the sordidness of the nineteenth century. Here was a heroism in the face of which the much-belauded Christian martyrs cut a very poor figure. The Christian died believing that the moment the tooth or claw of the panther tore open his throat was the moment of his transition to a new and endless personal existence of honour and glory. His steadfastness was purely selfish. The Communist workman believed that the moment the ball of the Versaillese soldier struck his heart his personal existence came to an end for ever. Yet he was willing to surrender himself completely for a future that meant the happiness of his class and a nobler life for humanity, but which he himself would never see. Yes, this unparalleled devotion, this gigantic heroism of the whole working-class of Paris, was indeed magnificent, but, alas! it was not war. Had Cluseret, had Rossel, had the Committee of Public Safety but organised a comparatively simple system of barricades and made due preparations

beforehand, a few well-equipped battalions of National Guards might have saved the situation. But no one had taken the trouble to see to this. Everything had been let run to confusion. Finally, the senseless cry of "Every man to his arrondissement!" when every man ought to have been out of his arrondissement at strategical points, settled matters. An immense number of barricades were thrown up, without system, in each arrondissement, and heroically defended, without method, with the inevitable sequel of capture and massacre, and thus was the Paris of the Revolution annihilated piecemeal. It is useless to go in detail over the sad tale of barricade after barricade, protected for hours, sometimes for two or three days, by a handful of men only at last to be overwhelmed by a whole regiment of "regulars," or maybe taken in flank, as often happened with barricades impregnable to direct attack. So incredible did it appear to the enemy that the defenders of Paris should have made no effective preparations for his reception, that they should have had no organised plan of defence, that up to Tuesday evening it was only with great hesitation the Versaillese pressed forward. They suspected their unresisted entry and capture of important positions to hide a trap for the annihilation of the whole Versaillese army once fairly inside the city—by means of ambuscades, underground mines, or what not. Unfortunately, their fears were utterly groundless and their caution wholly unnecessary.

At one time on the Monday a few well-directed shells from Montmartre and the Pantheon might have annihilated two of the main columns of the Versaillese army, which had met each other and got entangled with their artillery on the Place de Trocadero. But Montmartre remained silent. At 10 o'clock on the Monday night the Ministry of Finance behind the Tuilleries blazed up, the first of the great con-

flagrations. It took fire from the Versaillese shells directed against the Federal entrenchments on the terrace of the Tuilleries, the vast masses of documents in the upper storeys supplying combustible material which effectually spread the flames. Early on the Tuesday morning Bismarck surrendered the neutral ground and the Porte St. Ouen to another division of the Verseillese army which poured into Paris—a proof, if such were needed, of the hollowness of the sham sentiment called "patriotism" as against the solidarity of real class interest. The "patriotic" French bourgeois was ready to lick the boots while imploring the aid of the hated "Prussien" against the French proletaire. Meanwhile, before the common danger the men of the Commune rose above the petty squabbles and personalities of the council-room, the public meeting, and the street. Members of the "majority" and "minority" met in generous rivalry who could do the most. But how little there was to be done! Cluseret was powerless; La Cécilia, an old general of Garibaldi's and a man of some military capacity, was not obeyed, and could not get artillery or ammunition for important positions. Montmartre, the almost impregnable fortress, was defended by a few hundred disorganised Federals. The few pieces of artillery on the height had been allowed to get into disorder, and were little better than useless. Before mid-day on Tuesday Montmartre was captured in a mere walk-over, scarcely one effective blow having been struck in its defence. The Batignolles had been already occupied earlier in the morning. On Montmartre took place the first of the wholesale massacres of the "bloody week." Forty-two men, women, and children were taken to the Rue des Rosieres, and butchered as a holocaust to the manes of the scoundrels Lecomte and Clément-Thomas. The soldiers tried to force them all to kneel;

but one woman with a child in her arms refused to kneel, shouting to her companions, "Show these wretches that you know how to die upright!"

On the south side of the Seine the forces of the Commune made a rather better show. A Polish exile named Wroblewski who knew something of military matters extemporised a rough system of defences which served to keep the enemy at bay for a while over a considerable area. Wroblewski's ultimate idea was to concentrate the whole defence on this left bank under cover of the forts, the gun boats of the Seine and the Pantheon, and he proposed this plan to Delescluze. But it was impossible to rally matters in accordance with any tactical scheme extending beyond the material immediately at hand and the exigencies of the moment, so complete was the disintegration of the defence. Lisbonne, the member of the Commune, commanded a body of Federals in the Pantheon quarter. He achieved wonders with small means, defending the approaches to the Luxembourg for two whole days. The Committee of Public Safety issued a placard calling upon the Versaillese soldiery to refuse to fire on their brothers of Paris. The "Central Committee" did the same. But it was of no avail. By the Tuesday night scarcely the half of Paris remained to the Commune. The Versaillese, no longer apprehensive of snares, were pushing boldly forward in every direction.

In the course of the evening Raoul Rigault, maddened by the horrors he saw perpetrated on all sides by the friends of "order," but acting on his own responsibility alone, went to St. Pelagie and ordered Gustave Chaudey, accused of having instigated the firing from the Hotel de Ville in January, to be taken out into the prison yard and shot, together with three gendarmes. They had all been taken as hostages,

and their lives had been forfeited a thousand times, but the Commune had spared them with its usual criminal good nature in such matters. Things were now going from bad to worse with the defenders of the Commune. To absence of superintendence insufficiency of ammunition was now added, in many cases want of food. Conflagrations now broke forth in all quarters of Paris, lighting up the midnight sky, some caused by the shells of the Versaillese, some caused by the action of the Communards to defend themselves from unseen enemies on the roofs and upper storeys of houses whence they were fired upon.

XIII.

THE "COMMUNE OR DEATH."

THE horror of these nights cannot be described. The glare of a hundred conflagrations reflected in pools of blood; corpses and human remains wherever the eye lighted; the half of Paris one vast, hideous, dreamlike hell, against the reality of which Dante's imagination seems feeble! Such a scene of horror was barely known to history before; the proscriptions of Sylla, the destruction of Jerusalem, the Sicilian Vespers, St. Bartholomew, the sacking of Magdeburg—all pale before this blood orgie of the propertied class of France, which had the approval, tacit or avowed, of the same class throughout the world—a class that, while it could day after day witness unmoved the indiscriminate torture and butchery of countless hecatombs of human beings whom it imagined were hostile to its class-interests—could, nevertheless, with a refinement of cynicism, pretend to snivel and caterwaul over a single archbishop!!

One corpse lay that night of Tuesday-Wednesday in the Hotel de Ville on a bed of blue satin, a solitary taper at its head, before which the hurry and scurry of the head-quarters was stilled; before which all involuntarily bowed their heads. It was the body of Dombrowski, who had been mortally wounded during the afternoon. Towards morning the corpse was transferred to the Pére Lachaise Cemetery. As it passed the barricades all Federals presented arms. At the July column a halt was made, and hundreds of National Guards crowded round to get a last sight of their

devoted commander. Thus did this valiant soldier of the people pass into history.

The Tuilleries were blazing all this night, as also the "Legion of Honour," the "Council of State," and other public buildings. From early morning of the Wednesday desperate battles were fought at the Palais Royal, the Bank, the Bourse, and the Church of St. Eustache. At 9 o'clock a.m., while a few members of the Commune, who had assembled at the Hotel de Ville, were discussing the situation and contemplating the abandonment of the Municipal Palace, flames shot forth from the roof—how and by whom kindled nobody knew. In an hour the whole place was one vast furnace. The Hotel de Ville destroyed, everything was now transferred to the Mairie of the 11th Arrondissement. This day (Wednesday, the 24th), the official journal of the Commune appeared for the last time.

All surviving semblance of organisation, discipline, or plan was thenceforward practically at an end. Frenzied despair, panic, and anarchy reigned supreme. What remained of the defence was now further hampered and obstructed by the sham-equality craze so congenial to ignorant minds of an anarchist turn. Officers going with important messages which brooked not a moment's delay were seized and compelled to carry hods for barricades, with the words, "There are no more epaulettes to-day," and "Why shouldn't you help to make barricades as well as we?" and the like foolery. To argue that such a thing as "division of functions" was necessary to the success of any social undertaking would, of course, have been useless. So one more nail was hammered into the coffin of the Parisian defence. The shooting of spies, real and supposed, occurred now and then; for at last the good-natured and long-suffering Paris workman had been driven mad with rage

and suspicion as the accounts poured in of the fiendish orgy of blood which for four whole days had been carried on in the occupied quarters with the applause of the miscreants at Versailles, who, through their spokesman Thiers, dared to say of this horde of cowardly assasins, "Our valiant soldiers conduct themselves in a manner to inspire the highest esteem" (!). In order to give a plausible colour to the inclusion of women in the massacres, the myth of the *Pétrolêuses* was now invented. Relationship to a National Guard, a mere expression of horror, a tear shed for a friend, was an excuse for instant butchery. The murderers, officers and men, developed a collective bloodlust which seems almost incredible, and before which the possibly mythical figure of the notorious Whitechapel murderer dwindles into insignificance. To compare these wretches with any members of the animal kingdom, let alone with human savages, would be more than unjust to the beast or the savage. They were incarnations of the criminal instinct in civilised man. At last, what was left of the National Guards of Paris, who for well nigh two months past had been turning the other cheek to the smiter, pulled themselves together. They bethought them of the three hundred hostages, taken as a guarantee that the laws of war should be observed but not a hair of whose heads had been touched, notwithstanding that prisoners had been murdered without intermission at Versailles during the whole time, and that now, to crown all, for four days every quarter of Paris occupied by the Versailles army had been converted into a shambles, with its thousands of victims —men, women and children—whose mutilated corpses lay heaped up pell-mell in the streets. These three hundred hostages were under lock and key at the prison of La Roquette, whither they had been removed the previous

day from Mazas. As a last resort Theophile Ferré, the head of the Public Security Department, decided to try and stem the tide of butchery by a reprisal. But did he follow the example of the assassins of "order" and command the whole three hundred hostages to be shot out of hand? Certainly not! He selected only six of the most prominent of the bulwarks of "order." These he indicated to be led out and executed. When the question arose as to who should form a platoon, dozens crowded round, each with a dear relation or friend to avenge—one a father, another a brother, a third a wife. Finally, a firing party of thirty was selected. The six hostages, the Archbishop Darboy, Bonjean, the presiding judge of the Court of Appeal, Daguerry, curé of the Madeleine, and three Jesuits were led out into the Quadrangle. That distinguished father-in-god, "Monseigneur" Darboy, rather collapsed under the weight of the crown of martyrdom (as presumably he regarded it) about to be bestowed upon him. He did not show any special eagerness to enter the heavenly kingdom. Bonjean, the High Court judge, fainted and had to be carried out. Before giving the order to fire Ferré pointed out to them that it was not the Commune which was responsible for their deaths, but their friends of Versailles, who were deliberately playing the part of fiends.

Meanwhile the conflagrations increased wholesale. Theatres and churches were alike involved. One whole bank of the Seine showed up like a wall of flame. But the quarters where the red flag was displayed became fewer and fewer. Everywhere was the tricolour. Immediately a barricade was taken the tricolour was hoisted. The defence was now mainly in the hands of Wroblewski, who did his utmost to piece together the shattered fragments, but, of course, in vain. A Versaillaise officer was caught spying round the Bastille and was shot, an event announced

by the arch-villain Thiers at Versailles with brazen impudence as "without respect to the laws of war." On Friday evening, the 26th, at sunset, poor Delescluze, half dead with illness and fatigue, seeing all was hopeless, walked out of the Mairie of the 11th Arrondissement with his scarf round his waist and a cane in his hand, and mounted the barricade at the Château d'Eau, only a moment afterwards to fall under the hail of bullets directed against it. He could not survive another defeat, he had said a few hours before, referring to the June days of '48. Thus this noble old Revolutionist died, in death, as in life, true to his faith. Delescluze perhaps never quite intellectually grasped the meaning of modern Socialism. But his true instincts throughout his disinterested public career more than made up for any lack of intellectual clearness. Let us hope that one day the Place du Château d'Eau, where he died, may bear his statue—the day when Paris is one of the centres of a Socialist Europe.

XIV.

THE COMMUNE IS DEAD!

As the defence receded, the tide of massacre rose higher and higher. Denunciations poured in on all sides. Organised hunts were made in the occupied quarters, and every available building was choked with prisoners, who were taken out in batches and shot, in some cases being mowed down with the Mitrailleuse, and buried half-dead. Through the night was heard the agonised cries of the wounded and mangled. From the Friday evening the whole defence centred in Belleville. Saturday showed a murky fog and rainfall, brought on by the firing. The heroism grew with the hopelessness of the situation. Barricades were defended to the last man. Asked by an English journalist what he was dying for, one of the defenders promptly replied, "For Human Solidarity" On this day Milliére was taken and shot on the steps of the Pantheon by order of General Cissey. They tried to force him on his knees as a homage to the Capitalistic Civilisation he had attacked. His last cry was "long live Humanity." Milliére had taken no part in the Commune, but had been untiring in his endeavours to bring about an understanding. He had, however, exposed the misdeeds of the villain Jules Favre, and that was a sufficient ground for his murder.

The Bastille was captured at 2 o'clock on the Friday.

Scarcely more than Belleville and La Villette now remained. The 11th arrondissement had been evacuated at midnight on Thursday. By the terms of a Convention arranged between the Duke of Saxony and the Versaillese, the Germans now cut off the Federal retreat on the North and East. Thus did the heads of the French Government conspire with their official enemy to destroy Paris. Ranvier was now the soul of the defence, by word and deed encouraging all. The news every minute arriving of the blood-lust of the Versaillese vampires which spared neither the doctors nor nurses, and promises of immunity on surrender being treacherously violated, lashed the defenders to a frenzy of suspicion and rage. In the evening forty-eight of the hostages, ecclesiastics and gendarmes, imprisoned at La Roquette, were removed along the Rue Haxo to the Cité Vincennes. The crowd insisted upon their summary execution, even threatening some members of the Commune who tried to at least obtain a respite for them. They were accordingly shot in the quardrangle.

It must be remembered that these men represented the corruption and oppression of the Empire in their worst forms. All this time it may be mentioned, too, the Versaillese prisoners taken were simply interned in churches and other places, not a hair of their heads being touched. Many of the supposed members and officers of the Commune were shot by the wretches of Versailles in the persons of passers-by who happened to bear a slight resemblance to them, sometimes several times over. Poor Raoul Rigault unfortunately was not to escape. He was recognised in the Rue Gay-Lussac entering a house, was dragged out, and taken to a Versaillese officer who interrogated him. Rigault's only reply was, "Long live the Commune! Down with the assassins." He was imme-

diately thrust against a wall and shot. In spite of his faults he was as brave and devoted to the Revolution as any, and his heroic death will doubtless be remembered to him in ages to come.

Perhaps the most pathetic of all the deaths of prominent men in the Commune was that of Varlin, who was seized in the Rue Lafayette and dragged to the Buttes Montmartre, his hands tied behind his back, and subjected to a hail of blows, insults, and sabre-cuts, for a whole hour. Long before arriving at his destination one side of his face was a mass of blood, the eye torn from the socket. The last part of the way he was carried, unable to walk. Arrived at the Rue des Rosiers the wretches dashed his brains out with the butt ends of their muskets. Varlin was a young workman who had devoted all his leisure time to study, a clever organiser, and one of the best and most active members of the Commune.

By Saturday night only a portion of Belleville remained to the defence. The murky rainfall and dense clouds of smoke of the Sunday morning disclosed but a few streets still holding out. In London that Sunday morning was bright, the commons on the south side showing in their early summer green. Firing still went on from behind a few barricades in the early hours of Sunday, and it was not in fact till near midday that the last barricade, that of the Rue de Paris, was taken. This street will be memorable as the last entrenchment of the partisans of the Commune. It was defended by a single man for a quarter of an hour, all his companions having fallen. Wonderful to relate, this last combatant escaped with his life. The fort of Vincennes alone remained now—a solitary outpost—and that surrendered at discretion on the following day, Monday the 29th of May.

The Commune was now dead. Order reigned in Paris. Smoking ruins, corpses, and desolation were all that met the eye. One side of the Seine ran red with blood. The gutters ran blood. The roads were red with blood, as though the soil had been London clay. Clouds of flesh-flies rose from the heaps of corpses; flocks of crows hovered over the charnel-house. Paris now subjugated, the assassins could organise the slaughter at their leisure. It has been proved that these massacres were arranged at Versailles before the entry of the troops, and, indeed, the utterances of Thiers were of themselves quite sufficient to show this. Strange it is that to an extent unparalleled in any other movement the vilifiers of the Commune succeeded immediately in travestying the situation and giving currency to the grotesque notion among the unthinking of the Commune as responsible for the horrors of its own suppression! Never before has a murderer been so successful in casting the obloquy of his own foul crime upon his innocent victim whose mouth he has closed in death. It began immediately even on the spot. Paschal Grousset has related to me how, passing through a courtyard, he heard a woman with a child in her arms saying in a tone of indignation, "*Oui, oui, mon petit, nous nous rappelerons la Commune, n'est ce pas?*" ("Yes, yes, my child, we shall remember the Commune, shan't we?"). This was within sound of the mitrailleuses as they were slaughtering the hapless partisans of the Commune wholesale. To think that the Commune, whose chief crime was its ill-judged mildness and humanity, should ever have become regarded as the agent of bloodshed by anyone!

The city was now divided into four military districts, under the commands respectively of Generals Vinoy, Ladmirault, Cissey, and Douai. In each numerous pre-

votal courts were established which worked all day organising the butcheries. The property of the murdered men was plundered by the soldiery. It sufficed to wear a blouse, to have deplored the carnage, let alone to have ever spoken or written a word in favour of the rights of workmen, to be drafted into one of these murder dens and instantly dispatched. Everywhere might be seen columns of prisoners being led to the shambles. Foremost among the wretches who took a delight in the fiendish work was the debauched Bonapartist scoundrel Gallifet. The description by the *Daily News* correspondent of this monster's deeds of blood as witnessed by him has been often quoted. He ordered some hundreds of old men, women and children out of a column of which he was in charge, and had them shot down. This dastardly ruffian now occupies a high position in the French army. At last all prisoners were taken to one or two specially appointed places to be mowed down. These wholesale massacres went on till the 3rd of June, when they were stopped mainly from fear of pestilence through the accumulation of corpses, which it was impossible to dispose of. The executions of those condemned by the permanent tribunal, which took place on the plain of Satory, outside Paris, continued till the end of the year. Meanwhile, with 30,000 proletarians butchered in cold blood crying for vengeance, the Assembly assisted in a solemn thanksgiving service for the restoration of "order."

XV.

THE CIVILISED WORLD AND ITS "THRILL OF HORROR."

WE have seen that the Commune had one special fault, that of a fatuous moderation in all its doings; we have seen that probably never since history began have any body of men allowed themselves and theirs to be treated as lambs in the slaughterhouse with more lamblike forbearance and absence of retaliation than the Commune and its adherents; we have seen this illustrated by the incredible fact that up to the last, amid all the slaughterings of Communists, the vast majority of the hostages and prisoners in its hands remained unscathed. We have seen on the other hand the Versaillese, under Thiers, organising with a cold-blooded deliberation and ferocity an orgy of blood for weeks in advance, keeping their hands in the while by isolated murders of prisoners of daily occurrence, in short, deliberately planning and carrying out a crime unexampled in history, compared to which the worst Anarchist "outrage" of our days is but as the pressure of a suckling's gums is to the rending of a tiger's maw. Having seen this, it remains to consider, in view of the facts, the attitude of the "civilised world" as expressed in its accredited organs, in other words the public opinion of bourgeois society. Now this public opinion, judging by its indignant eloquence over the infantile attempts of silly

youths and others to feebly emulate the exploits of Thiers and the miscreants of Versailles in the line of cold-blooded murder (*e.g.*. at the Liceo theatre and the Café Terminus) we might have imagined would have been animated at the very least to some energetic remonstrances. Such an expectation would have shown an ingenuous ignorance of the ways and the manners of a class public opinion, and its hired press lackeys. Not only was there no remonstrance, but as if by a concerted action, "Society" and its press began, not in France alone, but equally throughout the "civilised world," to pour forth abuse, not on the murdering Versaillese, but on the murdered Communards.

The orgy of carnage perpetrated by the Versailles troops was everywhere hailed as a glorious victory of "order." The "Commune" was at once stamped as a bye-word of breath-baiting unutterable horror. The execution of a handful of hostages out of some hundreds, the single act of retributive justice exercised by the adherents of the Commune was a godsend to the bourgeois classes, as they wanted something to hang their vituperation upon, and otherwise they would have had to go on ranting anent the execution of their sainted heroes Lecomte and Clément Thomas, or else on the wickedness of the National Guards in the Rue de la Paix in daring to resent being prodded with sword-sticks, and riddled with the revolvers of the "respectable" mob which attacked them, both of which incidents were getting rather worn. It is true it did not much matter, as the "respectable" world was prepared to swallow anything against the Commune, and with or without the hostage business the villany of the Commune would have been equally great in its eyes. But still, the death of the hostages came as a good "stalking horse" for the sham "horror" and bogus "indignation" so extensively

manufactured in Fleet Street and other places where they print on occasions when the voice of threatened class-interests makes itself heard. An Archbishop was slain! Not merely a man, or a priest, or even a bishop, but actually an Archbishop!! If that does not "thrill" us what would? What mattered it that he was a hostage for the lives of tens of thousands of innocent persons previously murdered in cold blood, including many children, at whose massacre the "Civilised world" did not experience any symptom of that "thrill of horror and indignation" which invariably afflicts it when a representative of its own class-interests is killed!

It is a noteworthy circumstance how this "thrill of horror" accompanied by "indignation," "detestation,' "abhorrence," and the rest of the vocabulary of penny-a lining Telegraphese, symptoms invariably following the assassination of some head of a State, never show themselves on the murder of a common domestic man through the official agency of the said State. For example, the "civilised world" duly thrilled over the knife in the late M. Carnot's liver, but we failed to observe any "thrill" after the recent fiendish murder by the cavalry officer of the Italian soldier Evangelista. Yet had the attempt on Signor Crispi's life been successful the "horror and indignation" tap would doubtless have been turned on as usual. Again, we did not notice any special symptoms of a "thrill of horror" over the deliberate shooting of a harmless passer-by by a Prussian sentry last year, for which the said sentry was specially rewarded by his sovereign! Had, instead, the sovereign had the misfortune to be shot at and killed by a political malcontent, we imagine the "civilised world" would have "thrilled" properly, with all the recognised accessory symptoms. If the prognosis

and diagnosis of these "thrills of horror" be studied it will be seen that they regulate themselves in a singularly accurate manner in accordance with the danger to the existing order of society which the bourgeois thinks he sees in the nature of the act supposed to cause them. The murder of soldiers by their officers, and on occasion the shooting of harmless passers-by by sentries, are simply regrettable incidents of "military discipline," a thing necessary to the existence of the modern bureaucratic state. Besides, no matter what the acts they commit it would be subversion of all "order" to thrill with horror at anything done by "heads of states" or even inferior Government functionaries in their official capacity.

At the time of the Commune I was not up to all this. Accordingly my innocent surprise at the number of mere domestic human lives it must take to equal that of an archbishop was considerable.

It was not for some time that I saw the full meaning of all the crocodile tears and caterwauling over the handful of hostages—not only that it was meant to drown the silent appeal for vengeance of the thousands of slaughtered workmen whose murder had led up to the retributive execution in question, but that this wholesale brew of horrific emotion (?) formed part of a tacitly understood, though none the less definite policy of the bourgeois world according to which moral judgments are to be dictated solely by political expediency, and the requisite sentiment pumped up to order.

The present Anarchist madness, of course, gives plenty of scope for the well-calculated fabrication of these newspaper and platform hysterics. The facts of the case are simply that the Anarchists in their foolish attempts to overthrow, by individual acts of violence, the existing order

of society can be as cruel and unscrupulous as the governing classes can in their efforts to maintain it. The firing into unarmed crowds by which non-combatants are as likely to be killed as anyone else is certainly unjustifiable, yet it is universally recognised as a legitimate act of the Executive. We, as Social-Democrats, condemn the acts of the Anarchists, and we also condemn many of the acts of existing Governments for instance capital punishment and panic-made laws. We believe the "potting" of the "heads" of states to be a foolish and reprehensible policy, but the matter does not concern us as Socialists. We have our own quarrel with the Anarchists, both as to principles and tactics, but that is no reason why, as certain persons seem to think, we should put on sackcloth and ashes and dissolve ourselves in tears because, say, M. Carnot or the head of any other state has been assassinated by Anarchists. What is Carnot to us or we to Carnot that we should weep for him? We do not specially desire the death of political personages, while we often regret their slaying on grounds of expediency if on no others. But at the same time, Socialists have no sentimental tears to waste over the heads of states and their misfortunes. To the Socialist the head of a state, as such, is simply a figure-head to whose fate he is indifferent—a ninepin representing the current political and social order. If one of these skittles is bowled over, another will be put up in its place. To talk about the "head of the state" when alive as merely the representative of an impersonal political entity, to talk of him when executing some cruel function in the name of "law and order" as a mere mechanical figure "doing his duty," and, when assassinated, as "the man, the brother and the father of his family" over whose fate we are supposed to weep our eyes out, is a little

too thin. Every sphere of life has its dangers, the chief danger attending the headship of a Government being assassination. The aspirant to this lucrative and "honourable" office and his friends should recognise this fact beforehand, and discount the risk in the general average, just as the soldier or the sailor discounts the risks attending his calling. As it is, the heads of States cannot be congratulated on the courage, either moral or physical, with which they face this comparatively slight danger.

The foregoing remarks are necessary as the "thrill of horror" in its varied forms is one of the stock properties of Reaction, by which it seeks to thimblerig public opinion, and hitherto unfortunately with only too much success. People are told by their papers that they are feeling "thrills of horror" till they really think they are, the journalist who pens the gasping leaders meanwhile laughing up his sleeve, knowing it is all "business." These observations are specially appropriate to the subject in hand, as never was there a more barefaced or more successful attempt made by the governing classes of the world to bluff their own hideous crime by trumping up a sham horror at their victims than in the "civilised world's" verdict on the Commune of Paris.

XVI.

THE HOSTAGES.

THAT there was never, throughout all history, an execution more completely justified than that of the hostages by the despairing adherents of the Commune must be apparent to every unbiassed mind. This the purveyors of public sentiment cooked-up at the cheapest rate knew perfectly well, but their master, bourgeois class-interest, demanded, as we have seen, that they and all true bourgeois should pretend to regard this simple and, judged by their own standard, even grossly inadequate, act of judicial retribution as an unspeakable atrocity. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ!* As for the argument that the hostages in their personal capacity were technically innocent, the bourgeois should have bethought himself of this when the practice of seizing hostages for the good behaviour of the enemy was revived by the German military authorities during the war. The idea of innocent French citizens being killed for the misdeeds of those who wore the national uniform, never evoked any special protest that I am aware of, from the sensitive middle-class conscience or from that of its press. For the rest, I altogether fail to see where the injustice comes in, when *in a state of war*, the *official* representatives of the enemy are regarded and treated as identified

with the policy and acts of the party they represent. That is surely a logical consequence of the position held by them. That this was the view ostensibly taken by the German military authorities, the pious King of Prussia, afterwards Emperor William, at their head, and tacitly acquiesced in by the middle class conscience throughout the world bars criticism of the hostage incident on grounds of principle. Most of the hostages, *e.g.*, Darboy the Archbishop, Bonjean, the judge of the Court of Cassation, Jecker, the high financier, and the gendarmes, were fair "representatives" of the "enemy," of church, state, police and capitalism in their most aggressive forms. However this point is not worth discussing. Those who howled loudest knew that the action of the Commune was justified, but as with the wolf and the lamb, the typical bourgeois is bound by his traditions and class interests to make out the Commune and all connected with it as having been in the wrong, and he will continue to do so, despite all facts and arguments to the contrary. After all, the best advice to give the authorities of the modern state is "kill not that ye be not killed." The, in this respect, criminally fatuous Commune allowed the Versaillese a free butcher's bill of thousands of its supporters. It was only when, not content with this, they ran it up to tens of thousands, that some of the Commune's adherents were wicked enough to attempt, as they hoped, to check the slaughter by a reprisal consisting of a few tens. The middle-class apparently thinks that its own governing bodies ought to have the uninterrupted enjoyment of an *unlimited*, and exclusive, monopoly of killing, as regards its opponents. This demand is surely a little bit strong even for a dominant class.

The facts, however, tend to show not merely that the

Versaillese were absolutely indifferent to the fate of these precious hostages, respecting whose death the "civilised world" (*read* dominant class-interest) raised so hideous a catawauling, but that some of them rather wished such a consummation than otherwise. Thus Barthelemy St. Hilaire, Thiers' secretary, when their danger was pointed out to him, cynically replied, "We can do nothing! So much the worse for them!"

Thiers deliberately rejected an offer to exchange five of the hostages, including the sainted Archbishop, for the single person of Blanqui! This was refused, partly, perhaps, at the instigation of the Ultramontane Catholics, who were strong in the Assembly, and to whom Darboy, who was a Gallican, *i.e.*, who favoured an independent attitude of the French clergy towards the papal pretensions, was by no means a *persona grata*. By his death they would kill two birds with one stone; get a Christian martyr on the cheap, and probably obtain for one of their own men the wealthy diocese of Paris. The negociation was conducted on the side of the hostages by a fellow named Lagarde, the Vicar-General of Darboy. This perjured poltroon and worthless wretch, after having given his *parole d'honneur*, swearing by all he professed to hold sacred, that he would return "even though it were to be shot," when he found the negociations fall through, caring only for his own safety, resolved to leave his colleagues to their fate. He refused to come back. Darboy himself, when apprised of the resolution of his Vicar-General refused to believe it. "It is impossible," said he, "M. Lagarde has sworn to me himself that he would return without fail." The prayers and entreaties of the old prelate were of no avail, Lagarde persisted in his refusal. That at the very last the Versaillese thought the

execution of the hostages would be advantageous as a stalking horse to cover their bloodthirsty designs, and hence purposely refrained from rescue is strongly evidenced by the fact, that although masters of nearly all the approaches to the prison of La Roquette for twelve hours before the execution took place, they made no attempt to penetrate into the building.

The Versaillese vengeance, as already stated, lasted, uninterruptedly, till the end of the year. Ferré, abused, bespattered, and caluminated by the press-lackeys of Capitalism, died on the 28th of November like a Communist, an Atheist, and a hero. Rossel, beslavered by the same press-lackeys, who recognised in him one of themselves, a hopeful middle-class young man on the make, was shot together with him, after having first betrayed and then calumniated the Commune in the hope of favour from high quarters. He died like a Bourgeois, a Christian, and a poltroon. But though the constant stream of judicial murders slacked off at the end of 1871, it must not be supposed that they ceased. There were several "executions" on the plain of Satory during the year 1872, the last three persons shot for participation in the Commune having met their deaths so late as the 22nd of January, 1873. All these unhappy victims perished after a farcical trial on "evidence" which would be laughed out of any English court, in most cases convicted of participation in events which they had no more to do with than the readers of this history. The statements of suborned witnesses, every calumny, however absurd on the face of it, was eagerly accepted and gloated over by the courts martial and the press. Not content with murder the vile French bourgeoisie had the dastardly meanness in more than one case to

blacken their victims' character with foul insinuations which they did not even pretend to prove. A board of assassins was established composed of the greatest reactionists in the chamber called the "Commission of Pardons" whose function it was to confirm the sentences of the courts martial. These murders, be it remembered, were not done in the heat of combat or even immediately after the victory, but were carried on continuously for more than six months, and sporadically for a year longer. And the same people who applauded or, at least, acquiesced in these horrors without protest, pretend to stand aghast at the depravity of a Vaillant or a Caserio!

XVII.

THE LESSONS OF THE COMMUNE.

THE great general lesson taught us by the failure of the Commune of 1871 is the supreme necessity of an organisation comprising a solid body of class-conscious proletarians and other Socialists well acquainted with each other, whose views are clearly defined, who know what they want, and who have, at all events, some notion of the course to pursue on an emergency. Had there been such a body of men in Paris in February and March, 1871, the subsequent course of events might have been very different. As a consequence of the heterogeneous nature of the elements comprising the Central Committee, divided councils prevailed, and any dishonest or incapable person (as, for instance, Lullier) who only made himself sufficiently busy could obtain a momentary ascendancy which at a critical juncture may be fatal.

The importance of not taking men on their own estimation alone, was, moreover, never realised, either by the Committee or the Commune. Had the Committee not trusted Lullier, but seen to the occupation of Mont Valèrien itself, one of the greatest military blunders would have been avoided. Had there been a leading body of men to have given a head to the insurrection of the 18th of March, the

gates of Paris would have been immediately closed, and the already disaffected troops would never have been suffered to slip through the fingers of the insurrection and form the nucleus of a hostile army at Versailles. The ministers, the officers, in short all the civil and military functionaries of the Government would have been simultaneously arrested and preparations made for trying the guilty.

The Assembly and the Government had been collectively guilty of a crime, even from the ordinary point of view. They had violated the conditions under which they were elected, their mandate being solely to ratify the forms of peace, and then to appeal to the country on the constitutional issue. Instead of this they had virtually usurped the powers of a constitutent assembly with the avowed intention of crushing all Republican, Democratic, and Socialistic aspirations throughout France, and especially of striking a blow at Paris, which they regarded as the head-centre of such aspirations—in other words, they were traitors to the country.

They had chosen as their leader, the "head of the Executive," Louis Adolphe Thiers, probably the cleverest, most hypocritical, and most unscrupulous villain that ever defiled the page of history. As stated in chapter III., owing to the remissness of the Central Committee, the chief of the monarchical conspiracy at Versailles was allowed to escape with the other ministers from Paris instead of his having been arrested on the 18th of March. Had he, with the rest, been taken and tried, they might have been condemned and the execution of their sentence held over pending events. The Commune would then have had effective hostages. For the Versaillese would have thought twice of massacring prisoners if they had felt convinced that the first instance of the kind would have been answered by

the peremptory execution of (say) Adolphe Thiers. The Commune wished the war to be carried out on decently humane principles. This was excellent in intention, but would not work without the bargain being endorsed by both belligerents. It was a criminal weakness on the part of the Commune not to shape its conduct by the fact that the Versaillese were determined to conduct the war upon wild-beast principles. But the best hostage of all, for the Commune, was the Bank of France. As M. Lissagaray well says, the bank, the civil register, the domains, and the suitors' fund, were the tender points on which to hold the Bourgeoisie. Had the Committee or the Commune seized the bank with its millions, and the registers of 90,000 depositors throughout France, Versailles must have capitulated. Instead of doing this they allowed themselves to be bamboozled by a well-intentioned old fool like Beslay, who in his turn was made a tool of by De Plœuc, the sub-governor of the bank, the result being that the vast financial resources at the disposal of the Commune remained virtually untouched.

No one among those engaged in the Revolution we have been describing seemed to appreciate the French maxim *a la guerre, comme a la guerre* (in war; as in war), and the scrupulosity of all concerned as to laying hands on the property or persons of their adversaries allowed the cause no chance. No one seemed even to appreciate adequately the ethics of insurrection—that an insurrectionary administration which has succeeded in establishing itself, becomes by that very fact (from the point of view of the insurrection) the sole rightful repository of power for the time being, and that the Government, against which the insurrection was directed, becomes in its turn

the rebel power, to be crushed in the most expeditious manner possible. The Assembly and the ministers were rebels not to be parleyed with but suppressed. The committee instead of negociating should have at once thrown the whole force of the National Guard upon Versailles, then weak in resources, and dispersed the Assembly. This was the only reasonable tactics after having made the initial blunder of letting the ministers escape, followed by the elements of an army. Instead, they allowed a whole fortnight to be frittered away in abortive attempts at negociations which the Versaillese gladly protracted till they had organised their military forces, and made their arrangements with the German authorities for the rapid delivery of the prisoners of war. Of the later blunders we have already said enough in describing the course of the defence.

One of the most unfortunate characteristics of the leaders of the Commune was their sensitiveness to bourgeois public opinion. The first thing for the leader of a revolutionary movement to learn is a healthy contempt for the official public opinion of the "civilised world." He must resolutely harden his heart against its "thrills of horror," its "indignation," its "abomination," and its "detestation," and he must learn to smile at all the names it will liberally shower upon him and his cause.

To aid in breaking the force of the representatives of the established order in press and on platform, it is necessary to have a vigorous party press which will place matters in their true light before that mixed and nebulous section of public opinion possessed of wavering or of no definite principles, but which, in default of thinking and examining into facts for itself, takes the impress of any

statement that it finds repeated a few times without very decisive and publicly-made contradiction. The deliberate perversion of facts and the distorted judgments of the bourgeois journals anent the Commune were too impudently flagrant to have passed muster as they did, even with the ordinary mind, had there been a Socialist press to expose them, such as we now have, for example, in Germany.

But the dominant classes, though they may succeed, by aid of their wealth and power, in perverting the truth for the time, can do no more. The proletariat once conscious of its class-interests, and knowing what these interests imply, will not forget the pioneers in the struggle for liberty. Already the 18th of March has become throughout the civilised world the greatest day in the Socialist calendar. The wonder is, indeed, not so much that the great capitalist class, possessing the monopoly of every organ of public opinion, of the whole press, and of every hall and meeting place, were able to drown the voice of truth and justice by their noisy bluff and bullying, but rather that despite all the clamour, and without any Socialist press at the time worth speaking of, the true meaning and facts of the Commune should have come to light as much as they did. But so it was. There were a few honest middle-class men to be found who, though caring nothing for the Commune, and with no sympathy for its aims, yet refused to join in the great class-conspiracy of vilification, and who, at all events up to their lights, spoke the truth as to what they had seen and heard in Paris under the red flag, who bore witness to the noble disinterestedness of the defenders of the Cause, and to the foulness of their persecutors.

For the rest, if there is one lesson which the Commune has been the indirect means of teaching all who are willing

to learn, and for which alone all Socialists should owe it a debt of gratitude, it is this :—It has taught us all that the opinion of the "civilised world," as voiced by the leader-writers of its great organs of the press, and the speakers on the platforms of its great party meetings, alike in its moral judgments, its political judgments, and its social judgments has, in spite of all seeming diversity, one thing only as its final measure and standard—the interests, real or imagined, of the dominant capitalist class.

APPENDIX.

THE following are reprints of two pamphlets which were issued by the General Council of the International Working-Men's Association during the progress of the War of 1870 and on the Communal rising in the spring of 1871.

THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING-MEN'S ASSOCIATION ON THE WAR.

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING-MEN'S ASSOCIATION IN EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES.

IN the inaugural Address of the INTERNATIONAL WORKING-MEN'S ASSOCIATION, of November, 1864, we said :—" If the emancipation of the working-classes requires their fraternal concurrence, how are they to fulfil that great mission with a foreign policy in pursuit of criminal designs, playing upon national prejudices and squandering in piratical wars the people's blood and treasure ?" We defined the foreign policy aimed at by the International in these words :—" Vindicate the simple laws of morals and justice, which ought to govern the relations of private individuals, as the laws paramount of the intercourse of nations."

No wonder that Louis Bonaparte, who usurped his power by exploiting the war of classes in France, and perpetuated it by periodical wars abroad, should from the first have treated the International as a dangerous foe. On the eve of the plebiscite he

ordered a raid on the members of the Administrative Committees of the International Working-men's Association throughout France, at Paris, Lyons, Rouen, Marseilles, Brest, &c., on the pretext that the International was a secret society dabbling in a complot for his assassination, a pretext soon after exposed in its full absurdity by his own judges. What was the real crime of the French branches of the International? They told the French people publicly and emphatically that voting the plebiscite was voting despotism at home and war abroad. It has been, in fact, their work that in all the great towns, in all the industrial centres of France, the working-class rose like one man to reject the plebiscite. Unfortunately the balance was turned by the heavy ignorance of the rural districts. The Stock Exchanges, the Cabinets, the ruling classes and the press of Europe celebrated the plebiscite as a signal victory of the French Emperor over the French working-class; and it was the signal for the assassination, not of an individual, but of nations.

The war plot of July, 1870, is but an amended edition of the *coup d'état* of December, 1851. At first view the thing seemed so absurd that France would not believe in its real good earnest. It rather believed the deputy denouncing the ministerial war talk as a mere stock-jobbing trick. When, on July 15th, war was at last officially announced to the *Corps Legislatif*, the whole Opposition refused to vote the preliminary subsidies—even Thiers branded it as "detestable"; all the independent journals of Paris condemned it, and, wonderful to relate, the provincial press joined in almost unanimously.

Meanwhile, the Paris members of the International had again set to work. In the *Reveil* of July 12th, they published their manifesto "to the Workmen of all Nations," from which we extract the following few passages:—

"Once more," they say, "on the pretext of European equilibrium, of national honour, the peace of the world is menaced by political ambitions. French, German, Spanish Workmen! let our voices unite in one cry of reprobation against war! . . . War for a question of preponderance or a dynasty, can, in the eyes of workmen, be nothing but a criminal absurdity. In answer to the war-like proclamations of those who exempt themselves from the blood-tax, and find in public misfortunes a source of fresh speculations, we protest, we who want peace, labour, and liberty! . . . . Brothers of Germany! Our division would only result in the complete triumph of despotism on both sides of the Rhine. . . . Workmen of all countries! Whatever may for the present become of our common efforts, we, the members of the International Working-men's Association, who know of no frontiers, we send you, as a pledge of indissoluble solidarity, the good wishes and the salutations of the workmen of France."

This manifesto of our Paris section was followed by numerous

similar French addresses, of which we can here only quote the declaration of Neuilly-sur-Seine, published in the *Marseillaise* of July 22nd:—"The war, is it just? No! The war, is it national? No! It is merely Dynastic. In the name of humanity, of democracy, and the true interests of France, we adhere completely and energetically to the protestation of the International against the war."

These protestations expressed the true sentiments of the French working-people, as was soon shown by a curious incident. *The band of the 10th of December*, first organised under the presidency of Louis Bonaparte, having been masqueraded into *blouses* and let loose on the streets of Paris, there to perform the contortions of war fever, the real workmen of the Faubourgs came forward with public peace demonstrations so overwhelming that Pietri, the Prefect of Police, thought it prudent to at once stop all further street politics, on the plea that the feal Paris people had given sufficient vent to their pent-up patriotism and exuberant war enthusiasm.

Whatever may be the incidents of Louis Bonaparte's war with Prussia, the death-knell of the Second Empire has already sounded at Paris. It will end, as it began, by a parody. But let us not forget that it is the Governments and the ruling classes of Europe who enabled Louis Bonaparte to play during eighteen years the ferocious farce of the *Restored Empire*.

On the German side, the war is a war of defence; but who put Germany to the necessity of defending herself? Who enabled Louis Bonaparte to wage war upon her? *Prussia!* It was Bismarck who conspired with that very same Louis Bonaparte for the purpose of crushing popular opposition at home, and annexing Germany to the Hohenzollern dynasty. If the battle of Sadowa had been lost instead of being won, French battalions would have overrun Germany as the allies of Prussia. After her victory did Prussia dream one moment of opposing a free Germany to an enslaved France? Just the contrary. While carefully preserving all the native beauties of her old system, she superadded all the tricks of the Second Empire, its real despotism and its mock democratism, its political shams and its financial jobs, its high-flown talk and its low legerdemains. The Bonapartist regime, which till then only flourished on one side of the Rhine, had now got its counterfeit on the other. From such a state of things, what else could result but *war*?

If the German working class allow the present war to lose its strictly defensive character and to degenerate into a war against the French people, victory or defeat will prove alike disastrous. All the miseries that befell Germany after her war of independence will revive with accumulated intensity.

The principles of the International are, however, too widely

spread and too firmly rooted amongst the German working class to apprehend such a sad consummation. The voices of the French workmen have re-echoed from Germany. A mass meeting of workmen, held at Brunswick on July 16th, expressed its full concurrence with the Paris manifesto, spurned the idea of national antagonism to France, and wound up its resolutions with these words :—"We are enemies of all wars, but above all of dynastic wars. . . . With deep sorrow and grief we are forced to undergo a defensive war as an unavoidable evil; but we call, at the same time, upon the whole German working-class to render the recurrence of such an immense social misfortune impossible by vindicating for the peoples themselves the power to decide on peace and war, and making them masters of their own destinies."

At Chemnitz, a meeting of delegates, representing 50,000 Saxon workmen, adopted unanimously a resolution to this effect :—"In the name of the German Democracy, and especially of the workmen forming the Democratic Socialist party, we declare the present war to be exclusively dynastic. . . . . We are happy to grasp the fraternal hand stretched out to us by the workmen of France. . . . Mindful of the watchward of the International Working-men's Associations : *Proletarians of all countries unite*, we shall never forget that the workmen of *all* countries are our *friends* and the despots of *all* countries our *enemies*."

The Berlin branch of the International has also replied to the Paris manifesto :—"We," they say, "join with heart and hand your protestation. . . . Solemnly we promise that neither the sound of the trumpet, nor the roar of the cannon, neither victory nor defeat, shall divert us from our common work for the union of the children of toil of all countries."

Be it so !

In the background of this suicidal strife looms the dark figure of Russia. It is an ominous sign that the signal for the present war should have been given at the moment when the Moscovite Government had just finished its strategic lines of railway and was already massing troops in the direction of the Pruth. Whatever sympathy the Germans may justly claim in a war of defence against Bonapartist aggression, they would forfeit at once by allowing the Prussian Government to call for, or accept the help of, the Cossack. Let them remember that, after their war of independence against the first Napoleon, Germany lay for generations prostrate at the feet of the Czar.

The English working-class stretch the hand of fellowship to the French and German working-people. They feel deeply convinced that whatever turn the impending horrid war may take the alliance of the working-classes of all countries will ultimately kill war. The very fact that while official France and Germany are rushing into a fratricidal feud, the workmen of France and Germany

send each other messages of peace and goodwill; this great fact, unparalleled in the history of the past, opens the vista of a brighter future. It proves that in contrast to old society, with its economical miseries, and its political delirium, a new society is springing up, whose International rule will be *Peace*, because its national ruler will be everywhere the same—*Labour!* The Pioneer of that new society is the International Working Men's Association.

July 23rd, 1870.

SECOND ADDRESS.

In our first manifesto of the 23rd of July we said:—

"The death-knell of the Second Empire has already sounded at Paris. It will end, as it began, by a parody. But let us not forget that it is the Governments and the ruling classes of Europe who enabled Louis Napoleon to play during eighteen years the ferocious farce of the *Restored Empire.*"

Thus, even before war operations had actually set in, we treated the Bonapartist bubble as a thing of the past.

If we were not mistaken as to the vitality of the Second Empire, we were not wrong in our apprehension lest the German war should "lose its strictly defensive character and degenerate into a war against the French people." The war of defence ended, in point of fact, with the surrender of Louis Bonaparte, the Sedan capitulation, and the proclamation of the Republic at Paris. But long before these events, the very moment that the utter rottenness of the Imperialist arms became evident, the Prussian military camarilla had resolved upon conquest. There lay an ugly obstacle in their way—*King William's own proclamations at the commencement of the war.* In his speech from the throne to the North German Diet, he had solemnly declared to make war upon the Emperor of the French, and not upon the French people. On the 11th of August he had isssued a manifesto to the French nation, where he said: "The Emperor Napoleon having made, by land and sea, an attack on the German nation which desired and still desires to live in peace with the French people, I have assumed the command of the German armies *to repel his aggression*, and I have been led by *military events to cross the frontiers of France.*" Not content to assert the defensive character of the war by the statement that he only assumed the command of

the German armies "*to repel aggression*," he added that he was only "led by military events" to cross the frontiers of France. A defensive war does, of course, not exclude offensive operations, dictated by "military events."

Thus this pious king stood pledged before France and the world to a strictly defensive war. How to release him from his solemn pledge? The stage managers had to exhibit him as reluctantly yielding to the irresistible behest of the German nation. They at once gave the cue to the liberal German middle class, with its professors, its capitalists, its aldermen, and its penmen. That middle class, which, in its struggles for civil liberty, had, from 1846 to 1870, been exhibiting an unexampled spectacle of irresolution, incapacity, and cowardice, felt, of course, highly delighted to bestride the European scene as the roaring lion of German patriotism. It re-vindicated its civic independence by affecting to force upon the Prussian Government the secret designs of that same Government. It does penance for its long-continued and almost religious faith in Louis Bonaparte's infallibility, by shouting for the dismemberment of the French Republic. Let us for a moment listen to the special pleadings of those stout-hearted patriots!

They dare not pretend that the people of Alsace and Lorraine pant for the German embrace; quite the contrary. To punish their French patriotism, Strasburg, a town with an independent citadel commanding it, has for six days been wantonly and fiendishly bombarded by "German" explosive shells, setting it on fire, and killing great numbers of its defenceless inhabitants! Yet, the soil of those provinces once upon a time belonged to the whilom German Empire. Hence, it seems, the soil and the human beings grown on it must be confiscated as imprescriptible German property. If the map of Europe is to be re-made in the antiquary's vein, let us by no means forget that the Elector of Brandenburg, for his Prussian dominions, was the vassal of the Polish Republic.

The more knowing patriots, however, require Alsace and the German speaking part of Lorraine as a "material guarantee" against French aggression. As this contemptible plea has bewildered many weak-minded people, we are bound to enter more fully upon it.

There is no doubt that the general configuration of Alsace, as compared with the opposite bank of the Rhine, and the presence of a large fortified town like Strasburg, about halfway between Basle and Germersheim, very much favour a French invasion of South Germany, while they offer peculiar difficulties to an invasion of France from South Germany. There is, further, no doubt that the addition of Alsace and German-speaking Lorraine would give South Germany a much stronger frontier, inasmuch as she would then be master of the crest of the Vosges mountains in its whole

length, and of the fortresses which cover its northern passes. If Metz were annexed as well, France would certainly for the moment be deprived of her two principal bases of operation against Germany, but that would not prevent her from constructing a fresh one at Nancy or Verdun. While Germany owns Coblentz, Mainz, Germersheim, Rastadt, and Ulm, all bases of operation against France, and plentifully made use of in this war, with what show of fair play can she begrudge France Strasburg and Metz, the only two fortresses of any importance she has on that side? Moreover, Strasburg endangers South Germany only while South Germany is a separate power from North Germany. From 1792 to 1795 South Germany was never invaded from that direction, because Prussia was a party to the war against the French Revolution; but as soon as Prussia made a peace of her own in 1795, and left the South to shift for itself, the invasions of South Germany, with Strasburg for a base began, and continued till 1809. The fact is, a *united* Germany can always render Strasburg and any French army in Alsace innocuous by concentrating all her troops, as was done in the present war, between Saarlouis and Landau, and advancing, or accepting battle, on the line of road between Mainz and Metz. While the mass of the German troops is stationed there, any French army advancing from Strasburg into South Germany would be outflanked, and have its communications threatened. If the present campaign has proved anything, it is the facility of invading France from Germany.

But, in good faith, is it not altogether an absurdity and an anachronism to make military considerations the principle by which the boundaries of nations are to be fixed? If this rule were to prevail, Austria would still be entitled to Venetia and the line of the Mincio, and France to the line of the Rhine, in order to protect Paris, which lies certainly more open to an attack from the North East than Berlin does from the South West. If limits are to be fixed by military interests, there will be no end to claims, because every military line is necessarily faulty, and may be improved by annexing some more outlying territory; and, moreover, they can never be fixed finally and fairly, because they always must be imposed by the conqueror upon the conquered, and consequently carry within them the seed of fresh wars.

Such is the lesson of all history. Thus with nations as with individuals. To deprive them of the power of offence, you must deprive them of the means of defence. You must not only garrot, but murder. If ever conqueror took "material guarantees" for breaking the sinews of a nation, the first Napoleon did so by the Tilsit treaty, and the way he executed it against Prussia and the rest of Germany. Yet, a few years later, his gigantic power split like a rotten reed upon the German people. What are the "material guarantees" Prussia, in her wildest dreams, can, or

dare impose upon France, compared to the "material guarantees" the first Napoleon had wrenched from herself? The result will not prove the less disastrous. History will measure its retribution, not by the extent of the square miles conquered from France, but by the intensity of the crime of reviving, in the second half of the 19th century, *the policy of conquest!*

But, say the mouth-pieces of Teutonic patriotism, you must not confound Germans with Frenchmen. What *we* want is not glory, but safety. The Germans are an essentially peaceful people. In their sober guardianship, conquest itself changes from a condition of future war into a pledge of perpetual peace. Of course, it is not Germans that invaded France in 1792, for the sublime purpose of bayonetting the revolution of the 18th century. It is not Germans that befouled their hands by the subjugation of Italy, the oppression of Hungary, and the dismemberment of Poland. Their present military system, which divides the whole able-bodied male population into two parts—one standing army on service, and another standing army on furlough, both equally bound in passive obedience to rulers by divine right—such a military system is, of course, "a material guarantee" for keeping the peace, and the ultimate goal of civilising tendencies! In Germany, as everywhere else, the sycophants of the powers that be poison the popular mind by the incense of mendacious self-praise.

Indignant as they pretend to be at the sight of French fortresses in Metz and Strasburg, those German patriots see no harm in the vast system of Moscovite fortifications at Warsaw, Modlin, and Ivangorod. While gloating at the terrors of Imperialist invasion, they blink the infamy of Autocratic tutelage.

As in 1865 promises were exchanged between Louis Bonaparte and Bismarck, so in 1870 promises have been exchanged between Gortschakoff and Bismarck. As Louis Bonaparte flattered himself that the war of 1866, resulting in the common exhaustion of Austria and Prussia, would make him the supreme arbiter of Germany, so Alexander flattered himself that the war of 1870, resulting in the common exhaustion of Germany and France, would make him the supreme arbiter of the Western Continent. As the second Empire thought the North German Confederation incompatible with its existence, so autocratic Russia must think herself endangered by a German empire under Prussian leadership. Such is the law of the old political system. Within its pale the gain of one State is the loss of the other. The Czar's paramount influence over Europe roots in his traditional hold on Germany. At a moment when in Russia herself volcanic social agencies threaten to shake the very base of autocracy, could the Czar afford to bear with such a loss of foreign prestige? Already the Moscovite journals repeat the language of the Bonapartist journals after the war of 1866. Do the Teuton patriots really believe that liberty

and peace will be guaranteed to Germany by forcing France into the arms of Russia? If the fortune of her arms, the arrogance of success, and dynastic intrigue lead Germany to a spoliation of French territory, there will then only remain two courses open to her. She must at all risks become the *avowed* tool of Russian aggrandisement, or, after some short respite, make again ready for another "defensive" war, not one of those new-fangled "localised" wars, but a *war of races*—a war with the combined Sclavonian and Roman races.

The German working-class have resolutely supported the war, which it was not in their power to prevent, as a war for German independence and the liberation of France and Europe from that pestilential incubus, the Second Empire. It was the German workmen who, together with the rural labourers, furnished the sinews and muscles of heroic hosts, leaving behind their half-starved families. Decimated by the battles abroad, they will be once more decimated by misery at home. In their turn they are now coming forward to ask for "guarantees,"—guarantees that their immense sacrifices have not been brought in vain, that they have conquered liberty, that the victory over the Imperialist armies will not, as in 1815, be turned into the defeat of the German people; and, as the first of these guarantees, they claim an *honourable peace for France*, and the *recognition of the French Republic.*

The Central Committee of the German Socialist Democratic Workmen's Party issued, on the 5th of September, a manifesto, energetically insisting upon these guarantees. "We," they say, "we protest against the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine. And we are conscious of speaking in the name of the German working-class. In the common interest of France and Germany, in the interest of peace and liberty, in the interest of Western civilisation against Eastern barbarism, the German workmen will not patiently tolerate the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine. . . .We shall faithfully stand by our fellow-workmen in all countries for the common International cause of the Proletariat!"

Unfortunately, we cannot feel sanguine of their immediate success. If the French workmen amidst peace failed to stop the aggressor, are the German workmen more likely to stop the victor amidst the clangour of arms? The German workmen's manifesto demands the extradition of Louis Bonaparte as a common felon to the French Republic. Their rulers are, on the contrary, already trying hard to restore him to the Tuileries as the best man to ruin France. However that may be, history will prove that the German working class are not made of the same malleable stuff as the German middle class. They will do their duty.

Like them, we hail the advent of the Republic in France, but at the same time we labour under misgivings which we hope will

prove groundless. That Republic has not subverted the throne, but only taken its place become vacant. It has been proclaimed, not as a social conquest, but as a national measure of defence. It is in the hands of a Provisional Government composed partly of notorious Orleanists, partly of middle-class Republicans, upon some of whom the insurrection of June, 1848, has left its indelible stigma. The division of labour amongst the members of that Government looks awkward. The Orleanists have seized the strongholds of the army and the police, while to the professed Republicans have fallen the talking departments. Some of their first acts go far to show that they have inherited from the Empire, not only ruins, but also its dread of the working-class. If eventual impossibilities are in wild phraseology promised in the name of the Republic, is it not with a view to prepare the cry for a 'possible' government? Is the Republic, by some of its middle-class undertakers, not intended to serve as a mere stop-gap and bridge over an Orleanist Restoration?

The French working-class moves, therefore, under circumstances of extreme difficulty. Any attempt at upsetting the new Government in the present crisis, when the enemy is almost knocking at the doors of Paris, would be a desperate folly. The French workmen must perform their duties as citizens; but, at the same time, they must not allow themselves to be swayed by the national *souvenirs* of 1792, as the French peasants allowed themselves to be deluded by the national *souvenirs* of the First Empire. They have not to recapitulate the past, but to build up the future. Let them calmly and resolutely improve the opportunities of Republican liberty, for the work of their own class organisation. It will gift them with fresh Herculean powers for the regeneration of France, and our common task—the emancipation of labour. Upon their energies and wisdom hinges the fate of the Republic.

The English workmen have already taken measures to overcome, by a wholesome pressure from without, the reluctance of their Government to recognise the French Republic. The present dilatoriness of the British Government is probably intended to atone for the Anti-Jacobin war and the former indecent haste in sanctioning the *coup d'etat*. The English workmen call also upon their Government to oppose by all its power the dismemberment of France, which a part of the English press is shameless enough to howl for. It is the same press that for twenty years deified Louis Bonaparte as the providence of Europe, that frantically cheered on the slaveholders to rebellion. Now, as then, it drudges for the slaveholder.

Let the sections of the *International Working Men's Association* in every country stir the working classes to action. If they forsake

their duty, if they remain passive, the present tremendous war will be but the harbinger of still deadlier international feuds, and lead in every nation to a renewed triumph over the workman by the lords of the sword, of the soil, and of capital.

Vive la République!

THE GENERAL COUNCIL.

Robert Applegarth; Martin J. Boon; Fred. Bradnick; Caihil; John Hales; William Hales; George Harris; Fred. Lessner; Laysatine; B. Lucraft; George Milner; Thomas Mottershead; Charles Murray; George Odger; James Parnell; Pfänder: Rühl; Joseph Shepherd; Cowell Stepney; Stoll; Schmitz.

CORRESPONDING SECRETARIES.

Eugene Dupont	... ...	*For France.*
Karl Marx	... ...	,, *Germany and Russia*
A. Serrailler	... ...	,, *Belgium, Holland, and Spain.*
Hermann Iung	... ...	,, *Switzerland.*
Giovanni Bora	...	,, *Italy.*
Zeny Maurice	... ...	,, *Hungary.*
Anton Zabiki	... ...	,, *Poland.*
James Cohen	... ...	,, *Denmark.*
J. G. Eccarius	... ...	,, *The United States.*

WILLIAM TOWNSEND, Chairman.
JOHN WESTON, Treasurer.
J. GEORGE ECCARIUS, General Secretary.

Offices—256, High Holborn, London W.C., *September 9th*, 1870.

THE

CIVIL WAR IN FRANCE.

ADDRESS OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

OF THE

INTERNATIONAL WORKING-MEN'S ASSOCIATION.

TO ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION IN EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES.

I.

On the 4th of September, 1870, when the working men of Paris proclaimed the Republic, which was almost instantaneously acclaimed throughout France, without a single voice of dissent, a cabal of place-hunting barristers, with Thiers for their statesman and Trochu for their general, took hold of the Hotel de Ville. At that time they were imbued with so fanatical a faith in the mission of Paris to represent France in all epochs of historical crises, that, to legitimatise their usurped titles as Governors of France, they thought it quite sufficient to produce their lapsed mandates as representatives of Paris. In our second address on the late war, five days after the rise of these men, we told you who they were. Yet, in the turmoil of surprise, with the real leaders of the working class still shut up in Bonapartist prisons and the Prussians already marching upon Paris, Paris bore with their assumption of power, on the express condition that it was to be wielded for the single purpose of national defence. Paris, however, was not to be defended without arming its working class, organising them into an effective force, and training their ranks by the war itself. But Paris armed was the Revolution armed. A victory of Paris over the Prussian aggressor would have been a victory of the French workman over the French capitalist and his State

parasites. In this conflict between national duty and class interest, the Government of National Defence did not hesitate one moment to turn into a Government of National Defection.

The first step they took was to send Thiers on a roving tour to all the Courts of Europe there to beg mediation by offering the barter of the Republic for a king. Four months after the commencement of the siege, when they thought the opportune moment come for breaking the first word of capitulation, Trochu, in the presence of Jules Favre and others of his colleagues, addressed the assembled mayors of Paris in these terms :—

"The first question put to me by my colleagues on the very evening of the 4th of September was this: Paris, can it, with any chance of success stand a siege by the Prussian army? I did not hesitate to answer in the negative. Some of my colleagues here present will warrant the truth of my words and the persistence of my opinion. I told them, in these very terms, that, under the existing state of things, the attempt of Paris to hold out a siege by the Prussian army would be a folly. Without doubt, I added, it would be an heroic folly; but that would be all. . . . . The events (managed by himself) have not given the lie to my prevision." This nice little speech of Trochu was afterwards published by M. Corbon, one of the mayors present.

Thus, on the very evening of the proclamation of the Republic, Trochu's "plan" was known to his colleagues to be the capitulation of Paris. If national defence had been more than a pretext for the personal government of Thiers, Favre and Co., the upstarts of the 4th of September would have abdicated on the 5th—would have initiated the Paris people into Trochu's "plan," and called upon them to surrender at once, or to take their own fate into their own hands. Instead of this, the infamous impostors resolved upon curing the heroic folly of Paris by a regimen of famine and broken heads, and to dupe her in the meanwhile by ranting manifestoes, holding forth that Trochu, "the Governor of Paris, will never capitulate," and Jules Favre, the Foreign Minister, will "not cede an inch of our territory, nor a stone of our fortresses." In a letter to Gambetta, that very same Jules Favre avows that what they were "defending" against were not the Prussian soldiers, but the working men of Paris. During the whole continuance of the siege the Bonapartist cut-throats, whom Trochu had wisely intrusted with the command of the Paris army, exchanged, in their intimate correspondence, ribald jokes at the well-understood mockery of defence (see, for instance, the correspondence of Alphonse Simon Guiod, supreme commander of the artillery of the Army of Defence of Paris and Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour, to Suzanne, general of division of artillery, a correspondence published by the *Journal Officiel* of the Commune). The mask of imposture was at last dropped on the 28th of January,

1871. With the true heroism of utter self-debasement, the Government of National Defence, in their capitulation, came out as the Government of France by Bismarck's permission—a part so base that Louis Bonaparte himself had, at Sedan, shrunk from accepting it. After the events of the 18th of March, on their wild flight to Versailles, the *capitulards* left in the hands of Paris the documentary evidence of their treason, to destroy which, as the Commune says in its manifesto to the provinces, "those men would not recoil from battering Paris into a heap of ruins washed by a sea of blood."

To be eagerly bent upon such a consummation, some of the leading members of the Government of Defence had, besides, most peculiar reasons of their own.

Shortly after the conclusion of the armistice, M. Milliere, one of the representatives of Paris to the National Assembly, now shot by express order of Jules Favre, published a series of authentic legal documents in proof that Jules Favre, living in concubinage with the wife of a drunkard resident at Algiers, had, by a most daring concoction of forgeries, spread over many years, contrived to grasp, in the name of the children of his adultery, a large succession, which made him a rich man, and that, in a lawsuit undertaken by the legitimate heirs, he only escaped exposure by the connivance of the Bonapartist tribunals. As these dry legal documents were not to be got rid of by any amount of rhetorical horsepower, Jules Favre, for the first time in his life, held his tongue, quietly awaiting the outbreak of the civil war, in order, then, frantically to denounce the people of Paris as a band of escaped convicts in utter revolt against family, religion, order, and property. This same forger had hardly got into power, after the 4th of September, when he sympathetically let loose upon society Pic and Taillefer, convicted, even under the Empire, of forgery, in the scandalous affair of the "Etendard." One of these men, Taillefer, having dared to return to Paris under the Commune, was at once reinstated in prison; and then Jules Favre exclaimed, from the tribune of the National Assembly, that Paris was setting free all her jailbirds!

Ernest Picard, the Joe Miller of the Government of National Defence, who appointed himself Home Minister of the Republic after having in vain striven to become the Home Minister of the Empire, is the brother of one Arthur Picard, an individual expelled from the Paris Bourse as a blackleg (see report of the Prefecture of Police, dated 13th July, 1867), and convicted, on his own confession, of a theft of 300,000 francs, while manager of one of the branches of the *Societe Generale*, rue Palestro, No. 5 (see report of the Prefecture of Police, 11th December, 1868). This Arthur Picard was made by Ernest Picard the editor of his paper, *l'Electeur Libre*. While the common run of stockjobbers were led astray by

the official lies of the Home Office paper, Arthur was running backwards and forwards between the Home Office and the Bourse, there to discount the disasters of the French army. The whole financial correspondence of that worthy pair of brothers fell into the hands of the Commune.

Jules Ferry, a penniless barrister before the 4th of September, contrived, as Mayor of Paris during the siege, to job a fortune out of famine. The day on which he would have to give an account of his maladministration would be the day of his conviction.

These men, then, could find, in the ruins of Paris only, their tickets-of-leave: they were the very men Bismarck wanted. With the help of some shuffling of cards, Thiers, hitherto the secret prompter of the Government, now appeared at its head, with the ticket-of-leave men for his Ministers.

Thiers, that monstrous gnome, has charmed the French bourgeoisie for almost half a century, because he is the most consummate intellectual expression of their own class-corruption. Before he became a statesman he had already proved his lying powers as an historian. The chronicle of his public life is the record of the misfortunes of France. Banded, before 1830, with the Republicans, he slipped into office under Louis Phillippe by betraying his protector Lafitte, ingratiating himself with the king by exciting mobriots against the clergy, during which the church of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois and the Archbishop's palace were plundered, and by acting the minister-spy upon, and the jail-accoucheur of, the Duchess de Berri. The massacre of the Republicans in the Rue Transnonain, and the subsequent infamous laws of September against the press and the right of association, were his work. Reappearing as the chief of the Cabinet in March, 1840, he astonished France with his plan of fortifying Paris. To the Republicans, who denounced this plan as a sinister plot against the liberty of Paris, he replied from the tribune of the Chamber of Deputies:—

"What! to fancy that any works of fortification could ever endanger liberty! And first of all you calumniate any possible Government in supposing that it could some day attempt to maintain itself by bombarding the capital . . . . but that Government would be a hundred times more impossible after its victory than before." Indeed, no Government would ever have dared to bombard Paris from the forts, but that Government which had previously surrendered these forts to the Prussians.

When King Bomba tried his hand at Palermo, in January, 1848, Thiers, then long since out of office, again rose in the Chamber of Deputies: "You know, gentlemen, what is happening at Palermo. You, all of you, shake with horror (in the parliamentary sense) on hearing that during forty-eight hours a large town has been bombarded—by whom? Was it by a foreign enemy exercising the rights of war? No, gentlemen, it was by its own Government. And

why? Because that unfortunate town demanded its rights. Well, then, for the demand of its rights it has got forty-eight hours of bombardment. . . . . Allow me to appeal to the opinion of Europe. It is doing a service to mankind to arise, and to make reverberate, from what is perhaps the greatest tribune in Europe, some words (indeed words) of indignation against such acts. . . . . When the Regent Espartero, who had rendered services to his country (which M. Thiers never did) intended bombarding Barcelona, in order to suppress its insurrection, there arose from all parts of the world a general outcry of indignation."

Eighteen months afterwards, M. Thiers was amongst the fiercest defenders of the bombardment of Rome by a French army. In fact, the fault of King Bomba seems to have consisted in this only, that he limited his bombardment to forty-eight hours.

A few days before the Revolution of February, fretting at the long exile from place and pelf to which Guizot had condemned him, and sniffing in the air the scent of an approaching popular commotion, Thiers, in that pseudo-heroic style which won him the nickname of *Mirabeau-mouche*, declared to the Chamber of Deputies: "I am of the party of Revolution, not only in France, but in Europe. I wish the Government of the Revolution to remain in the hands of moderate men . . . . but if that Government should fall into the hands of ardent minds, even into those of Radicals, I shall, for all that, not desert my cause. I shall always be of the party of the Revolution." The Revolution of February came. Instead of displacing the Guizot Cabinet by the Thiers Cabinet, as the little man had dreamt, it superseded Louis Phillippe by the Republic. On the first day of the popular victory he carefully hid himself, forgetting that the contempt of the working men screened him from their hatred. Still, with his legendary courage, he continued to shy the public stage, until the June massacres had cleared it for his sort of action. Then he became the leading mind of the "Party of Order" and its Parliamentary Republic, that anonymous interregnum, in which all the rival factions of the ruling class conspired together to crush the people, and conspired against each other to restore each of them its own monarchy. Then, as now, Thiers denounced the Republicans as the only obstacle to the consolidation of the Republic; then, as now, he spoke to the Republic as the hangman spoke to Don Carlos:—"I shall assassinate thee, but for thy own good." Now, as then, he will have to exclaim on the day after his victory: *L'Empire est fait*—the Empire is consummated. Despite his hypocritical homilies about necessary liberties and his personal grudge against Louis Bonaparte, who had made a dupe of him, and kicked out parliamentarism—and outside of its factitious atmosphere the little man is conscious of withering into nothingness—he had a hand in all the infamies of the Second Empire, from the occupation of Rome by French troops to the war with Prussia,

which he incited by his fierce invective against German unity—not as a cloak of Prussian despotism, but as an encroachment upon the vested right of France in German disunion. Fond of brandishing, with his dwarfish arms, in the face of Europe the sword of the first Napoleon, whose historical shoe-black he had become, his foreign policy always culminated in the utter humiliation of France, from the London convention of 1841 to the Paris capitulation of 1871, and the present civil war, where he hounds on the prisoners of Sedan and Metz against Paris by special permission of Bismarck. Despite his versatility of talent and shiftiness of purpose, this man has his whole lifetime been wedded to the most fossil routine. It is self-evident that to him the deeper undercurrents of modern society remained for ever hidden; but even the most palpable changes on its surface were abhorrent to a brain all the vitality of which had fled to the tongue. Thus he never tired of denouncing as a sacrilege any deviation from the old French protective system. When a minister of Louis Philippe, he railed at railways as a wild chimera; and when in opposition under Louis Bonaparte, he branded as a profanation every attompt to reform the rotten French army system. Never in his long political career has he been guilty of a single—even the smallest—measure of any practical use. Thiers was consistent only in his greed for wealth and his hatred of the men that produce it. Having entered his first ministry under Louis Philippe poor as Job, he left it a millionaire. His last ministry under the same king (of the 1st of March, 1840) exposed him to public taunts of peculation in the Chamber of Deputies, to which he was content to reply by tears—a commodity he deals in as freely as Jules Favre, or any other crocodile. At Bordeaux his first measure for saving France from impending financial ruin was to endow himself with three millions a year, the first and the last word of the "Economical Republic," the vista of which he had opened to his Paris electors in 1869. One of his former colleagues of the Chamber of Deputies of 1830, himself a capitalist and, nevertheless, a devoted member of the Paris Commune, M. Beslay, lately addressed Thiers thus in a public placard:—"The enslavement of labour by capital has always been the corner-stone of your policy, and from the very day you saw the Republic of Labour installed at the Hotel de Ville, you have never ceased to cry out to France: 'These are criminals!'" A master in small state roguery, a virtuoso in perjury and treason, a craftsman in all the petty stratagems, cunning devices, and base perfidies of Parliamentary party-warfare; never scrupling, when out of office, to fan a revolution, and to stifle it in blood when at the helm of the State; with class prejudices standing him in the place of ideas, and vanity in the place of a heart; his private life as infamous as his public life is odious—even now, when playing the part of a French Sulla, he cannot help setting off the abomination of his deeds by the ridicule of his ostentation.

The capitulation of Paris, by surrendering to Prussia not only Paris, but all France, closed the long-continued intrigues of treason with the enemy, which the usurpers of the 4th September had begun, as Trochu himself said, on that very same day. On the other hand, it initiated the civil war they were now to wage with the assistance of Prussia, against the Republic and Paris. The trap was laid in the very terms of the capitulation. At that time above one-third of the territory was in the hands of the enemy, the capital was cut off from the provinces, all communications were disorganised. To elect under such circumstances a real representation of France was impossible, unless ample time were given for preparation. In view of this, the capitulation stipulated that a National Assembly must be elected within eight days; so that in many parts of France the news of the impending election arrived on its eve only. This assembly moreover, was, by an express clause of the capitulation, to be elected for the sole purpose of deciding on peace or war, and, eventually, to conclude a treaty of peace. The population could not but feel that the terms of the armistice rendered the continuation of the war impossible, and that for sanctioning the peace imposed by Bismarck, the worst men in France were the best. But not content with these precautions, Thiers, even before the secret of the armistice had been broached to Paris, set out for an electioneering tour through the provinces, there to galvanize back into life the Legitimist party, which now, along with the Orleanists, had to take the place of the then impossible Bonapartists. He was not afraid of them. Impossible as a government of modern France, and, therefore, contemptible as rivals, what party were more eligible as tools of counter-revolution than the party whose action, in the words of Thiers himself (Chamber of Deputies, 5th January, 1833), "had always been confined to the three resources of foreign invasion, civil war, and anarchy"? They verily believed in the advent of their long-expected retrospective millennium. There were the heels of foreign invasion trampling upon France; there was the downfall of an Empire, and the captivity of a Bonaparte; and there they were themselves. The wheel of history has evidently rolled back to stop at the "Chambre introuvable" of 1816. In the assemblies of the Republic, 1848 to '51, they had been represented by their educated and trained Parliamentary champions; it was the rank-and-file of the party which now rushed in—all the Pourceaugnacs of France.

As soon as this assembly of "Rurals" had met at Bordeaux, Thiers made it clear to them that the peace preliminaries must be assented to at once, without even the honours of a Parliamentary debate, as the only condition on which Prussia would permit them to open the war against the Republic and Paris, its stronghold. The counter-revolution had, in fact, no time to lose. The Second

Empire had more than doubled the national debt, and plunged all the large towns into heavy municipal debts. The war had fearfully swelled the liabilities, and mercilessly ravaged the resources of the nation. To complete the ruin, the Prussian Shylock was there with his bond for the keep of half a million of his soldiers on French soil, his indemnity of five miliards and interest at 5 per cent. on the unpaid instalments thereof. Who was to pay the bill? It was only by the violent overthrow of the Republic that the appropriators of wealth could hope to shift on to the shoulders of its producers the cost of a war which they, the appropriators, had themselves originated. Thus, the immense ruin of France spurred on these patriotic representatives of land and capital, under the very eyes and patronage of the invader, to graft upon the foreign war a civil war—a slaveholders' rebellion.

There stood in the way of this conspiracy one great obstacle—Paris. To disarm Paris was the first condition of success. Paris was therefore summoned by Thiers to surrender its arms. Then Paris was exasperated by the frantic anti-republican demonstrations of the "Rural" Assembly and by Thiers's own equivocations about the legal status of the Republic; by the threat to decapitate and and decapitalise Paris; the appointment of Orleanist ambassadors; Dufaure's laws on over-due commercial bills and house rents, inflicting ruin on the commerce and industry of Paris; Pouyer-Quertier's tax of two centimes upon every copy of every imaginable publication; the sentences of death against Blanqui and Flourens; the suppression of the Republican journals; the transfer of the National Assembly to Versailles; the renewal of the state of siege declared by Palikao, and expired on the 4th of September; the appointment of Vinoy, the *Décembriseur*, as governor of Paris—of Valentin, the Imperialist *gendarme*, as its prefect of police—and of D'Aurelles de Paladine, the Jesuit general, as the commander-in-chief of its National Guard.

And now we have to address a question to M. Thiers and the men of national defence, his understrappers. It is known that, through the agency of M. Pouyer Quertier, his finance minister, Thiers had contracted a loan of two milliards, to be paid down at once. Now, is it true or not—

1. That the business was so managed that a consideration of several hundred millions was secured for the private benefit of Thiers, Jules Favre, Ernest Picard, Fouyer-Quertier, and Jules Simon? and—

2. That no money was to be paid down until after the "pacification" of Paris?

At all events, there must have been something very pressing in the matter, for Thiers and Jules Favre, in the name of the majority of the Bordeaux Assembly, unblushingly solicited the immediate occupation of Paris by Prussian troops. Such, however, was not the game of Bismarck, as he sneeringly, and in public, told the admiring Frankfort Philistines on his return to Germany.

II.

ARMED Paris was the only serious obstacle in the way of counter-revolutionary conspiracy. Paris was, therefore, to be disarmed. On this point the Bordeaux Assembly was sincerity itself. If the roaring rant of its Rurals had not been audible enough, the surrender of Paris by Thiers to the tender mercies of the triumvirate of Vinoy the *Décembriseur*, Valentin the Bonapartist *gendarme*, and Aurelles de Paladine the Jesuit general, would have cut off even the last subterfuge of doubt. But while insultingly exhibiting the true purpose of the disarmament of Paris, the conspirators asked her to lay down her arms on a pretext which was the most glaring, the most barefaced of lies. The artillery of the Paris National Guard, said Thiers, belonged to the State, and to the State it must be returned. The fact is this :—From the very day of the capitulation, by which Bismarck's prisoners had signed the surrender of France, but reserved to themselves a numerous body-guard for the express purpose of cowing Paris, Paris stood on the watch. The National Guard reorganised themselves and intrusted their supreme control to a Central Committee elected by their whole body, save some fragments of the old Bonapartist formation. On the eve of the entrance of the Prussians into Paris, the Central Committee took measures for the removal to Montmartre, Belleville, and La Villette of the cannon and mitrailleuses treacherously abandoned by the capitulards in and about the very quarters the Prussians were to occupy. That artillery had been furnished by the subscriptions of the National Guard. As their private property, it was officially recognised in the capitulation of the 28th of January, and on that very title exempted from the general surrender, into the hands of the conqueror, of arms belonging to the Government. And Thiers was so utterly destitute of even the flimsiest pretext for initiating the war against Paris, that he had to resort to the flagrant lie of the artillery of the National Guard being State property !

The seizure of her artillery was evidently but to serve as the preliminary to the general disarmament of Paris, and, therefore, of the Revolution of the 4th of September. But that Revolution had become the legal status of France. The Republic, its work, was recognised by the conqueror in the terms of the capitulation. After the capitulation, it was acknowledged by all the foreign Powers, and in its name the National Assembly had been summoned. The Paris working men's revolution of the 4th of September was the only legal title of the National Assembly seated at Bordeaux, and of its executive. Without it, the National Assembly would at once have to give way to the Corps Législatif, elected in 1869 by universal suffrage under French, not under Prussian, rule, and forcibly

dispersed by the arm of the Revolution. Thiers and his ticket-of-leave men would have had to capitulate for safe conducts signed by Louis Bonaparte, to save them from a voyage to Cayenne. The National Assembly, with its power of attorney to settle the terms of peace with Prussia, was but an incident of that Revolution, the true embodiment of which was still armed Paris, which had initiated it, undergone for it a five months' siege, with its horrors of famine, and made her prolonged resistance, despite Trochu's plan, the basis of an obstinate war of defence in the provinces. And Paris was now either to lay down her arms at the insulting behest of the rebellious slaveholders of Bordeaux, and acknowledge that her Revolution of the 4th of September meant nothing but a simple transfer of power from Louis Bonaparte to his Royal rivals; or she had to stand forward as the self-sacrificing champion of France, whose salvation from ruin, and whose regeneration were impossible, without the revolutionary overthrow of the political and social conditions that had engendered the second Empire, and, under its fostering care, matured into utter rottenness. Paris, emaciated by a five months' famine, did not hesitate one moment. She heroically resolved to run all the hazards of a resistance against the French conspirators, even with Prussian cannon frowning upon her from her own forts. Still, in its abhorrence of the civil war into which Paris was to be goaded, the Central Committee continued to persist in a merely defensive attitude, despite the provocations of the Assembly, the usurpations of the Executive, and the menacing concentration of troops in and around Paris.

Thiers opened the civil war by sending Vinoy, at the head of a multitude of *sergents-de-ville* and some regiments of the line, upon a nocturnal expedition against Montmartre, there to seize, by surprise, the artillery of the National Guard. It is well known how this attempt broke down before the resistance of the National Guard and the fraternisation of the line with the people. Aurelles de Paladine had printed beforehand his bulletin of victory, and Thiers held ready the placards announcing his measures of *coup d'etat*. Now these had to be replaced by Thiers' appeals, imparting his magnanimous resolve to leave the National Guard in the possession of their arms, with which, he said, he felt sure they would rally round the Government against the rebels. Out of 300,000 National Guards only 300 responded to this summons to rally round little Thiers against themselves. The glorious working men's Revolution of the 18th March took undisputed sway of Paris. The Central Committee was its provisional Government. Europe seemed, for a moment, to doubt whether its recent sensational performances of state and war had any reality in them, or whether they were the dreams of a long bygone past.

From the 18th of March to the entrance of the Versailles troops

into Paris, the proletarian revolution remained so free from the acts of violence in which the revolutions, and still more the counter-revolutions, of the "better classes" abound, that no facts were left to its opponents to cry out about, but the execution of Generals Lecomte and Clement Thomas, and the affair of the Place Vendôme.

One of the Bonapartist officers engaged in the nocturnal attempt against Montmartre, General Lecomte, had four times ordered the 81st line regiment to fire at an unarmed gathering in the Place Pigale, and on their refusal fiercely insulted them. Instead of shooting women and children, his own men shot him. The inveterate habits acquired by the soldiery under the training of the enemies of the working class are, of course, not likely to change the very moment these soldiers change sides. The same men executed Clement Thomas.

"General" Clement Thomas, a malcontent ex-quartermaster-sergeant, had, in the latter times of Louis Philippe's reign, enlisted at the office of the Republican newspaper *Le National*, there to serve in the double capacity of responsible man-of-straw (*gérant responsable*) and of duelling bully to that very combative journal. After the revolution of February, the men of the *National* having got into power, they metamorphosed this old quartermaster-sergeant into a general on the eve of the butchery of June, of which he, like Jules Favre, was one of the sinister plotters, and became one of the most dastardly executioners. Then he and his generalship disappeared for a long time, to again rise to the surface on the 1st November, 1870. The day before the Government of Defence, caught at the Hotel de Ville, had solemnly pledged their parole to Blanqui, Flourens, and other representatives of the working class, to abdicate their usurped power into the hands of a commune to be freely elected by Paris. Instead of keeping their word, they let loose on Paris the Bretons of Trochu, who now replaced the Corsicans of Bonaparte. General Tamisier alone, refusing to sully his name by such a breach of faith, resigned the commandership-in-chief of the National Guard, and in his place Clement Thomas for once became again a general. During the whole of his tenure of command, he made war, not upon the Prussians, but upon the Paris National Guard. He prevented their general armament, pitted the bourgeois battalions against the working men's battalions, weeded out the officers hostile to Trochu's "plan," and disbanded, under the stigma of cowardice, the very same proletarian battalions whose heroism has now astonished their most inveterate enemies. Clement Thomas felt quite proud of having reconquered his June pre-eminence as the personal enemy of the working class of Paris. Only a few days before the 18th of March, he laid before the War Minister, Leflô, a plan of his own for "finishing off *la fine fleur* (the cream) of the

Paris *canaille*." After Vinoy's rout, he must needs appear upon the scene of action in the quality of an amateur spy. The Central Committee and the Paris working men were as much responsible for the killing of Clement Thomas and Lecomte as the Princess of Wales was for the fate of the people crushed to death on the day of her entrance into London.

The massacre of unarmed citizens in the Place Vendôme is a myth which M. Thiers and the Rurals persistently ignored in the Assembly, entrusting its propagation exclusively to the servants' hall of European journalism. "The men of order," the reactionists of Paris, trembled at the victory of the 18th of March. To them it was the signal of popular retribution at last arriving. The ghosts of the victims assassinated at their hands from the days of June, 1848, down to the 22nd of January, 1871, arose before their faces. Their panic was their only punishment. Even the sergents-de-ville, instead of being disarmed and locked up, as ought to have been done, had the gates of Paris flung wide open for their safe retreat to Versailles. The men of order were left not only unharmed, but allowed to rally and quietly to seize more than one stronghold in the very centre of Paris. This indulgence of the Central Committee—this magnanimity of the armed working men—so strangely at variance with the habits of the "party of order," the latter misinterpreted as mere symptoms of conscious weakness. Hence their silly plan to try, under the cloak of an unarmed demonstration, what Vinoy had failed to perform with his cannon and mitrailleuses. On the 22nd of March a riotous mob of swells started from the quarters of luxury, all the *petits crevés* in their ranks, and at their head the notorious familiars of the Empire—the Heeckeren, Coëtlogon, Henri de Pène, &c. Under the cowardly pretence of a pacific demonstration, this rabble, secretly armed with the weapons of the bravo, fell into marching order, ill-treated and disarmed the detached patrols and sentries of the National Guard they met with on their progress, and, on debouching from the Rue de la Paix, with the cry of "Down with the Central Committee! Down with the assassins! The National Assembly for ever!" attempted to break through the line drawn up there, and thus to carry by a surprise the head-quarters of the National Guard in the Place Vendôme. In reply to their pistol-shots, the regular *sommations* (the French equivalent of the English Riot Act) were made, and, proving ineffective, fire was commanded by the general of the National Guard. One volley dispersed into wild flight the silly coxcombs, who expected that the mere exhibition of their "respectability" would have the same effect upon the Revolution of Paris as Joshua's trumpets upon the walls of Jericho. The runaways left behind them two National Guards killed, nine severely wounded (among them a member of the Central Committee), and the whole scene of their exploit strewn

with revolvers, daggers, and sword-canes, in evidence of the "unarmed" character of their "pacific" demonstration. When, on the 13th of June, 1849, the National Guard made a really pacific demonstration in protest against the felonious assault of French troops upon Rome, Changarnier, then general of the party of order, was acclaimed by the National Assembly, and especially by M. Thiers, as the saviour of society, for having launched his troops from all sides upon these unarmed men, to shoot and sabre them down, and to trample them under their horses' feet. Paris, then, was placed under a state of siege. Dufaure hurried through the Assembly new laws of repression. New arrests, new proscriptions —a new reign of terror set in. But the lower orders manage these things otherwise. The Central Committee of 1871 simply ignored the heroes of the "pacific demonstration;" so much so, that only two days later they were enabled to muster, under Admiral Saisset, for that *armed* demonstration, crowned by the famous stampede to Versailles. In their reluctance to continue the civil war opened by Thiers' burglarious attempt on Montmartre, the Central Committee made themselves, this time, guilty of a decisive mistake in not at once marching upon Versailles, then completely helpless, and thus putting an end to the conspiracies of Thiers and his Rurals. Instead of this, the party of order was again allowed to try its strength at the ballot-box, on the 26th of March, the day of the election of the Commune. Then, in the mairies of Paris, they exchanged bland words of conciliation with their too generous conquerors, muttering in their hearts solemn vows to exterminate them in due time.

Now, look at the reverse of the medal. Thiers opened his second campaign against Paris in the beginning of April. The first batch of Parisian prisoners brought into Versailles was subjected to revolting atrocities, while Ernest Picard, with his hands in his trousers' pockets, strolled about jeering them, and while Mesdames Thiers and Favre, in the midst of their ladies of honour (?) applauded, from the balcony, the outrages of the Versailles mob. The captured soldiers of the line were massacred in cold blood; our brave friend, General Duval, the ironfounder, was shot without any form of trial. Gallifet, the kept man of his wife, so notorious for her shameless exhibitions at the orgies of the Second Empire, boasted in a proclamation of having commanded the murder of a small troop of National Guards, with their captain and lieutenant, surprised and disarmed by his Chasseurs. Vinoy, the runaway, was appointed Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour by Thiers, for his general order to shoot down every soldier of the line taken in the ranks of the Federals. Desmaret, the gendarme, was decorated for the treacherous butcher-like chopping in pieces of the high-souled and chivalrous Flourens, who had saved the heads of the Government of Defence on the 31st of October, 1870. "The

encouraging particulars" of his assassination were triumphantly expatiated upon by Thiers in the National Assembly. With the elevated vanity of a parliamentary Tom Thumb, permitted to play the part of a Tamerlane, he denied the rebels against his littleness every right of civilised warfare, up to the right of neutrality for ambulances. Nothing more horrid than that monkey allowed for a time to give full fling to his tigerish instincts, as foreseen by Voltaire. (See note, p. 136).

After the decree of the Commune of the 7th April, ordering reprisals and declaring it to be its duty "to protect Paris against the cannibal exploits of the Versailles banditti, and to demand an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," Thiers did not stop the barbarous treatment of prisoners, moreover insulting them in his bulletins as follows:—"Never have more degraded countenances of a degraded democracy met the afflicted gaze of honest men," —honest, like Thiers himself and his ministerial ticket-of-leave men. Still the shooting of prisoners was suspended for a time. Hardly, however, had Thiers and his Decembrist generals become aware that the Communal decree of reprisals was but an empty threat, that even their gendarme spies caught in Paries under the disguise of National Guards, that even sergents-de-ville taken with incendiary shells upon them, were spared,—when the wholesale shooting of prisoners was resumed and carried on uninterruptedly to the end. Houses to which National Guards had fled were surrounded by gendarmes, inundated with petroleum (which here occurs for the first time in this war), and then set fire to, the charred corpses being afterwards brought out by the ambulance of the Press at the Ternes. Four National Guards having surrendered to a troop of mounted Chasseurs at Belle Epine, on the 25th of April, were afterwards shot down, one after another, by the captain, a worthy man of Gallitet's. One of his four victims, left for dead, Scheffer, crawled back to the Parisian outposts, and deposed to this fact before a commission of the Commune. When Tolain interpellated the War Minister upon the report of this commission, the Rurals drowned his voice and forbade Leflo to answer. It would be an insult to their "glorious" army to speak of its deeds. The flippant tone in which Thiers' bulletins announced the bayoneting of the Federals surprised asleep at Moulin Saquet, and the wholesale fusillades at Clamart shocked the nerves even of the not over-sensitive London *Times*. But it would be ludicrous to-day to attempt recounting the merely preliminary atrocities committed by the bombarders of Paris and the fomenters of a slaveholders' rebellion protected by foreign invasion. Amidst all these horrors, Thiers, forgetful of his parliamentary laments on the terrible responsibility weighing down his dwarfish shoulders, boasts in his bulletins that *l'Assemblée siège*

paisiblement (the Assembly continues meeting in peace), and proves by his constant carousals, now with Decembrist generals, now with German princes, that his digestion is not troubled in the least, not even by the ghosts of Lecomte and Clement Thomas.

III.

On the dawn of the 18th of March, Paris arose to the thunder-burst of "Vive la Commune!" What is the Commune, that sphinx so tantalizing to the bourgeois mind?

"The proletarians of Paris," said the Central Committee in its manifesto of the 18th March, "amidst the failures and treasons of the ruling classes, have understood that the hour has struck for them to save the situation by taking into their own hands the direction of public affairs. . . . . They have understood that it is their imperious duty and their absolute right to render themselves masters of their own destinies, by seizing upon the governmental power." But the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes.

The centralized State power, with its ubiquitous organs of standing army, police, bureaucracy, clergy, and judicature—organs wrought after the plan of a systematic and hierarchic division of labour—originates from the days of absolute monarchy, serving nascent middle-class society as a mighty weapon in its struggles against feudalism. Still, its development remained clogged by all manner of mediæval rubbish, seignorial rights, local privileges, municipal and guild monopolies and provincial constitutions. The gigantic broom of the French Revolution of the eighteenth century swept away all these relics of bygone times, thus clearing simultaneously the social soil of its last hindrances to the superstructure of the modern State edifice raised under the First Empire, itself the offspring of the coalition wars of old semi-feudal Europe against modern France. During the subsequent *regimes* the Government, placed under parliamentary control—that is, under the direct control of the propertied classes—became not only a hotbed of huge national debts and crushing taxes; with its irresistible allurements of place, pelf, and patronage, it became not only the bone of contention between the rival factions and adventurers of the ruling classes; but its political character changed simultaneously with the economic changes of society. At the same pace at which the progress of modern industry developed, widened, intensified the class-antagonism between capital and labour, the State power

assumed more and more the character of the national power of capital over labour, of a public force organised for social enslavement, of an engine of class despotism. After every revolution marking a progressive phase in the class struggle, the purely repressive character of the State power stands out in bolder and bolder relief. The revolution of 1830, resulting in the transfer of Government from the landlords to the capitalists, transferred it from the more remote to the more direct antagonists of the working men. The bourgeois Republicans, who, in the name of the Revolution of February, took the State power, used it for the June massacres, in order to convince the working class that "social" republic meant the republic ensuring their social subjection, and in order to convince the royalist bulk of the bourgeois and landlord class that they might safely leave the cares and emoluments of government to the bourgeois "Republicans." However, after their one heroic exploit of June, the bourgeois Republicans had, from the front, to fall back to the rear of the "Party of Order"—a combination formed by all the rival fractions and factions of the appropriating class in their now openly declared antagonism to the producing classes. The proper form of their joint stock Government was the *Parliamentary Republic*, with Louis Bonaparte for its President. Theirs was a *regime* of avowed class terrorism and deliberate insult towards the "vile multitude." If the Parliamentary Republic, as M. Thiers said, "divided them (the different fractions of the ruling class) least," it opened an abyss between that class and the whole body of society outside their spare ranks. The restraints by which their own divisions had under former *regimes* still checked the State power, were removed by their union ; and in view of the threatening upheaval of the proletariat, they now used that State power mercilessly and ostentatiously as the national war engine of capital against labour. In their uninterrupted crusade against the producing masses they were, however, bound not only to invest the executive with continually increased powers of repression, but at the same time to divest their own parliamentary stronghold —the National Assembly—one by one, of all its own means of defence against the Executive. The Executive, in the person of Louis Bonaparte, turned them out. The natural offspring of the "Party-of-Order" Republic was the Second Empire.

The Empire, with the *coup d'etat* for its certificate of birth, universal suffrage for its sanction, and the sword for its sceptre, professed to rest upon the peasantry, the large mass of producers not directly involved in the struggle of capital and labour. It professed to save the working class by breaking down Parliamentarism, and, with it, the undisguised subserviency of Government to the propertied classes. It professed to save the propertied classes by upholding their economic supremacy over the working class ; and, finally, it professed to unite all classes by reviving for

all the chimera of national glory. In reality, it was the only form of government possible at a time when the bourgeoisie had already lost, and the working class had not yet acquired, the faculty of ruling the nation. It was acclaimed throughout the world as the saviour of society. Under its sway, bourgeois society, freed from political cares, attained a development unexpected even by itself. Its industry and commerce expanded to colossal dimensions; financial swindling celebrated cosmopolitan orgies; the misery of the masses was set off by a shameless display of gorgeous, meretricious, and debased luxury. The State power, apparently soaring high above society, was at the same time itself the greatest scandal of that society and the very hot-bed of all its corruptions. Its own rottenness, and the rottenness of the society it had saved, were laid bare by the bayonet of Prussia, herself eagerly bent upon transferring the supreme seat of that *regime* from Paris to Berlin. Imperialism is, at the same time, the most prostitute and the ultimate form of the State power which nascent middle-class society had commenced to elaborate as a means of its own emancipation from feudalism, and which full grown bourgeois society had finally transformed into a means for the enslavement of labour by capital.

The direct antithesis to the Empire was the Commune. The cry of "Social Republic," with which the revolution of February was ushered in by the Paris proletariate, did but express a vague aspiration after a Republic that was not only to supersede the monarchial form of class-rule, but class-rule itself. The Commune was the positive form of that Republic.

Paris, the central seat of the old governmental power, and, at the same time, the social stronghold of the French working class, had risen in arms against the attempt of Thiers and the Rurals to restore and perpetuate that old governmental power bequeathed to them by the Empire. Paris could resist only because, in consequence of the siege, it had got rid of the army, and replaced it by a National Guard, the bulk of which consisted of working men. This fact was now to be transformed into an institution. The first degee of the Commune, therefore, was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people.

The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class. The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time. Instead of continuing to be the agent of the Central Government, the police was at once stripped of its political attributes, and turned into the responsible and at all times revocable agent of the

Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the Administration. From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at *workmen's wages*. The vested interests and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of State disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves. Public functions ceased to be the private property of the tools of the Central Government. Not only municipal administration, but the whole initiative hitherto exercised by the State was laid into the hands of the Commune.

Having once got rid of the standing army and the police, the physical force elements of the old Government, the Commune was anxious to break the spiritual force of repression, the 'parson-power," by the disestablishment and disendowment of all churches as proprietary bodies. The priests were sent back to the recesses of private life, there to feed upon the alms of the faithful in imitation of their predecessors, the Apostles. The whole of the educational institutions were opened to the people gratuitously, and at the same time cleared of all interference of Church and State. Thus, not only was education made accessible to all, but science itself freed from the fetters which class prejudice and governmental force had imposed upon it.

The judicial functionaries were to be divested of that sham independence which had but served to mask their abject subserviency to all succeeding governments to which, in turn, they had taken, and broken, the oaths of allegiance. Like the rest of public servants, magistrates and judges were to be elective, responsible, and revocable.

The Paris Commune was, of course, to serve as a model to all the great industrial centres of France. The communal *régime* once established in Paris and the secondary centres, the old centralised Government would in the provinces, too, have to give way to the self-government of the producers. In a rough sketch of national organisation which the Commune had no time to develop, it states clearly that the Commune was to be the political form of even the smallest country hamlet, and that in the rural districts the standing army was to be replaced by a national militia, with an extremely short term of service. The rural communes of every district were to administer their common affairs by an assembly of delegates in the central town, and these district assemblies were again to send deputies to the National Delegation in Paris, each delegate to be at any time revocable and bound by the *mandat imperatif* (formal instructions) of his constituents. The few but important functions which still would remain for a central government were not to be suppressed, as has been intentionally misstated, but were to be discharged by Communal, and therefore strictly responsible agents. The unity of the nation was not to be broken ; but, on the contrary, to be organised by the Communal

constitution, and to become a reality by the destruction of the State power which claimed to be the embodiment of that unity independent of, and superior to, the nation itself, from which it was but a parasitic excrescence. While the merely repressive organs of the old governmental power were to be amputated, its legitimate functions were to be wrested from an authority usurping pre-eminence over society itself, and restored to the responsible agents of society. Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to represent the people in Parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people, constituted in Communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for the workmen and managers in his business. And it is well known that companies, like individuals, in matters of real business generally know how to put the right man in the right place, and, if they for once make a mistake, to redress it promptly. On the other hand, nothing could be more foreign to the spirit of the Commune than to supersede universal suffrage by hierarchic investiture.

It is generally the fate of completely new historical creations to be mistaken for the counterpart of older and even defunct forms of social life, to which they may bear a certain likeness. Thus, this new Commune, which breaks the modern State power, has been mistaken for a reproduction of the mediæval Communes, which first preceded, and afterwards became the substratum of, that very State power. The communal constitution has been mistaken for an attempt to break up into a federation of small States, as dreamt of by Montesquieu and the Girondins, that unity of great nations which, if originally brought about by political force, has now become a powerful coefficient of social production. The antagonism of the Commune against the State power has been mistaken for an exaggerated form of the ancient struggle against over-centralisation. Peculiar historical circumstances may have prevented the classical development, as in France, of the bourgeois form of government, and may have allowed, as in England, to complete the great central State organs by corrupt vestries, jobbing councillors, and ferocious poor-law guardians in the towns, and virtually hereditary magistrates in the counties. The Communal Constitution would have restored to the social body all the forces hitherto absorbed by the State parasite feeding upon, and clogging the free movement of, society. By this one act it would have initiated the regeneration of France. The provincial French middle-class saw in the Commune an attempt to restore the sway their order had held over the country under Louis Philippe, and which, under Louis Napoleon, was supplanted by the pretended rule of the country over the towns. In reality, the Communal Constitution brought the rural producers under the intellectual lead of the central towns of their districts, and there secured to

them, in the working man, the natural trustees of their interests. The very existence of the Commune involved, as a matter of course, local municipal liberty, but no longer as a check upon the, now superseded State power. It could only enter into the head of a Bismarck, who, when not engaged on his intrigues of blood and iron, always likes to resume his old trade, so befitting his mental calibre, of contributor to *Kladderadatch* (the Berlin *Punch*), it could only enter in such a head, to ascribe to the Paris Commune aspirations after that caricature of the old French municipal organisation of 1791, the Prussian municipal constitution which degrades the town governments to mere secondary wheels in the police-machinery of the Prussian State. The Commune made that catch-word of bourgeois revolutions, cheap government, a reality, by destroying the two greatest sources of expenditure—the standing army and State functionarism. Its very existence presupposed the non-existence of monarchy, which, in Europe at least, is the normal incumbrance and indispensable cloak of class-rule. It supplied the Republic with the basis of really democratic institutions. But neither cheap government nor the "true Republic" was its ultimate aim; they were its mere concomitants.

The multiplicity of interpretations to which the Commune has been subjected, and the multiplicity of interests which construed it in their favour, show that it was a thoroughly expansive political form, while all previous forms of government had been emphatically repressive. Its true secret was this. It was essentially a working-class government, the produce of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economical emancipation of Labour.

Except on this last condition, the Communal Constitution would have been an impossibility and a delusion. The political rule of the producer cannot coexist with the perpetuation of his social slavery. The Commune was therefore to serve as a lever for uprooting the economical foundations upon which rests the existence of classes, and therefore of class rule. With labour emancipated, every man becomes a working man, and productive labour ceases to be a class attribute.

It is a strange fact. In spite of all the tall talk and all the immense literature, for the last sixty years, about Emancipation of Labour, no sooner do the working men anywhere take the subject into their own hands with a will, than uprises at once all the apologetic phraseolgy of the mouthpieces of present society with its two poles of Capital and Wage-slavery (the landlord now is but the sleeping partner of the capitalist), as if capitalist society was still in its purest state of virgin innocence, with its antagonisms still undeveloped, with its delusions still unexploded, with its prostitute realities not yet laid bare. The Commune, they exclaim,

intends to abolish property, the basis of all civilization! Yes, gentlemen, the Commune intended to abolish that class-property which makes the labour of the many the wealth of the few. It aimed at the expropriation of the expropriators. It wanted to make individual property a truth by transforming the means of production, land and capital, now chiefly the means of enslaving and exploiting labour, into mere instruments of free and associated labour. But this is Communism, "impossible" Communism! Why, those members of the ruling classes who are intelligent enough to perceive the impossibility of continuing the present system—and they are many—have become the obtrusive and full-mouthed apostles of co-operative production. If co-operative production is not to remain a sham and a snare; if it is to supersede the Capitalist system; if united co-operative societies are to regulate national production upon a common plan, thus taking it under their own control, and putting an end to the constant anarchy and periodical convulsions which are the fatality of capitalist production—what else, gentlemen, would it be but Communism, "possible" Communism?

The working class did not expect miracles from the Commune. They have no ready-made utopias to introduce *par decret du peuple*. They know that in order to work out their own emancipation, and along with it that higher form to which present society is irresistibly tending, by its own economical agencies, they will have to pass through long struggles, through a series of historic processes, transforming circumstances and men. They have no ideals to realise, but to set free the elements of the new society with which old collapsing bourgeois society itself is pregnant. In the full consciousness of their historic mission, and with the heroic resolve to act up to it, the working class can afford to smile at the coarse invective of the gentlemen's gentlemen with the pen and inkhorn, and at the didactic patronage of well-wishing bourgeois-doctrinaires, pouring forth their ignorant platitudes and sectarian crotchets in the oracular tone of scientific infallibility.

When the Paris Commune took the management of the revolution in its own hands; when plain working men for the first time dared to infringe upon the Governmental privilege of their "natural superiors," and, under circumstances of unexampled difficulty, performed their work modestly, conscientiously, and efficiently,—performed it at salaries the highest of which barely amounted to one-fifth of what, according to high scientific authority, is the minimum required for a secretary to a certain metropolitan school board,—the old world writhed in convulsions of rage at the sight of the Red Flag, the symbol of the Republic of Labour, floating over the Hôtel de Ville.

And yet, this was the first revolution in which the working class

was openly acknowledged as the only class capable of social initiative, even by the great bulk of the Paris middle-class—shopkeepers, tradesmen, merchants — the wealthy capitalist alone excepted. The Commune had saved them by a sagacious settlement of that ever recurring cause of dispute among the middle-class themselves—the debtor and creditor accounts. The same portion of the middle class, after they had assisted in putting down the working men's insurrection of June, 1848, had been at once unceremoniously sacrificed to their creditors by the then Constituent Assembly. But this was not their only motive for now rallying round the working class. They felt there was but one alternative—the Commune, or the Empire—under whatever name it might reappear. The Empire had ruined them economically by the havoc it made of public wealth, by the wholesale financial swindling it fostered, by the props it lent to the artificially accelerated centralisation of capital, and the concomitant expropriation of their own ranks. It has suppressed them politically, it has shocked them morally by its orgies, it had insulted their Voltairianism by handing over the education of their children to the *freres Ignorantins*, it had revolted their national feeling as Frenchmen by precipitating them headlong into a war which left only one equivalent for the ruins it made—the disappearance of the Empire. In fact, after the exodus from Paris of the high Bonapartist and capitalist *Bohême*, the true middle class Party of Order came out in the shape of the "Union Républicane," enrolling themselves under the colours of the Commune and defending it against the wilful misconstruction of Thiers. Whether the gratitude of this great body of the middle class will stand the present severe trial, time must show.

The Commune was perfectly right in telling the peasants that "its victory was their only hope." Of all the lies hatched at Versailles and re-echoed by the glorious European penny-a-liner, one of the most tremendous was that the Rurals represented the French peasantry. Think only of the love of the French peasant for the men to whom, after 1815, he had to pay the milliard of indemnity! In the eyes of the French peasant, the very existence of a great landed proprietary is in itself an encroachment on his conquests of 1789. The bourgeoisie, in 1848, had burthened his plot of land with the additional tax of forty-five cents. in the franc; but then he did so in the name of the revolution; while now he had fomented a civil war against the revolution, to shift on the peasant's shoulders the chief load of the five milliards of indemnity to be paid to the Prussian. The Commune, on the other hand, in one of its first proclamations, declared that the true originators of the war would be made to pay its cost. The Commune would have delivered the peasant of the blood tax, would have given him a cheap government, transformed his present blood-suckers, the notary,

advocate, executor, and other judicial vampires, into salaried communal agents, elected by, and responsible to, himself. It would have freed him of the tyranny of the *garde champêtre*, the gendarme, and the prefect; would have put enlightenment by the schoolmaster in the place of stultification by the priest. And the French peasant is, above all, a man of reckoning. He would find it extremely reasonable that the pay of the priest, instead of being extorted by the tax-gatherer, should only depend upon the spontaneous action of the parishioners' religious instincts. Such were the great immediate boons which the rule of the Commune—and that rule alone—held out to the French peasantry. It is, therefore, quite superfluous here to expiate upon the more complicated but vital problems which the Commune alone was able, and at the same time compelled, to solve in favour of the peasant, viz., the hopothecary debt, lying like an incubus upon his parcel of soil, the *proletariat foncièr* (the rural proletariat), daily growing upon it, and his expropriation from it enforced, at a more and more rapid rate, by the very development of modern agriculture and the competition of capitalist farming.

The French peasant had elected Louis Bonaparte president of the Republic; but the Party of Order created the Empire. What the French peasant really wants he commenced to show in 1849 and 1850, by opposing his maire to the Government's prefect, his schoolmaster to the Government's priest, and himself to the Government's gendarme. All the laws made by the party of order in January and February, 1850, were avowed measures of repression against the peasant. The peasant was a Bonapartist, because the great Revolution, with all its benefits to him, was, in his eyes, personified in Napoleon. This delusion, rapidly breaking down under the Second Empire (and in its very nature hostile to the Rurals), this prejudice of the past, how could it have withstood the appeal of the Commune to the living interests and urgent wants of the peasantry?

The Rurals—this was, in fact, their chief apprehension—knew that three month's free communication of Communal Paris with the provinces would bring about a general rising of the peasants, and hence their anxiety to establish a police blockade around Paris, so as to stop the spread of the rinderpest.

If the Commune was thus the true representative of all the healthy elements of French society, and therefore the truly national Government, it was, at the same time, a working men's Government, as the bold champion of the emancipation of labour, emphatically international. Within sight of the Prussian army, that had annexed to Germany two French provinces, the Commune annexed to France the working people all over the world.

The second Empire had been the jubilee of cosmopolitan blackleggism, the rakes of all countries rushing in at its call for a share

in its orgies and in the plunder of the French people. Even at this moment the right hand of Thiers is Ganesco, the foul Wallachian, and his left hand is Markowski, the Russian spy. The Commune admitted all foreigners to the honour of dying for the immortal cause. Between the foreign war lost by their treason, and the civil war fomented by their conspiracy with the foreign invader, the bourgeoisie had found the time to display their patriotism by organising police-hunts upon the Germans in France. The Commune made a German working-man its Minister of Labour, Thiers, the bourgeoisie, the Second Empire, had continually deluded Poland by loud professions of sympathy, while in reality betraying her to, and doing the dirty work of, Russia. The Commune honoured the heroic sons of Poland by placing them at the head of the defenders of Paris. And, to broadly mark the new era of history, it was conscious of initiating, under the eyes of the conquering Prussians on the one side and of the Bonapartist army, led by Bonapartist generals, on the other, the Commune pulled down that colossal symbol of martial glory, the Vendôme column.

The great social measure of the Commune was its own working existence. Its special measures could but betoken the tendency of a government of the people by the people. Such were the abolition of the nightwork of journeyman bakers; the prohibition, under penalty, of the employers' practice to reduce wages by levying upon their workpeople fines under manifold pretexts—a process in which the employer combines in his own person the parts of legislator, judge, and executioner, and filches the money to boot. Another measure of this class was the surrender, to associations of workmen, under reserve of compensation, of all closed workshops and factories, no matter whether the respective capitalists had absconded or preferred to strike work.

The financial measures of the Commune, remarkable for their sagacity and moderation, could only be such as were compatible with the state of a besieged town. Considering the colossal robberies committed upon the City of Paris by the great financial companies and contractors, under the protection of Haussmann, the Commune would have had an incomparably better title to confiscate their property than Louis Napoleon had against the Orleans family. The Hohenzollern and the English oligarchs, who both have derived a good deal of their estates from Church plunder, were, of course, greatly shocked at the Commune clearing but 8,000f. out of secularisation.

While the Versailles Government, as soon as it had recovered some spirit and strength, used the most violent means against the Commune; while it put down the free expression of opinion all over France, even to the forbidding of meetings of delegates from the large towns; while it subjected Versailles and the rest of France to an espionage far surpassing that of the Second Empire;

while it burned by its gendarme inquisitors all papers printed at Paris, and sifted all correspondence from and to Paris; while in the National Assembly the most timid attempts to put in a word for Paris were howled down in a manner unknown even to the *Chambre introuvable* of 1816; with the savage warfare of Versailles outside, and its attempts at corruption and conspiracy inside Paris —would the Commune not have shamefully betrayed its trust by affecting to keep up all the decencies and appearances of liberalism as in a time of profound peace? Had the Government of the Commune been akin to that of M. Thiers, there would have been no more occasion to suppress Party-of-Order papers at Paris than there was to suppress Communal papers at Versailles.

It was irritating, indeed, to the Rurals that at the very same time they declared the return to the Church to be the only means of salvation for France, the infidel Commune unearthed the peculiar mysteries of the Picpus nunnery and of the Church of St. Laurent. It was a satire upon M. Thiers that, while he showered grand crosses upon the Bonapartist generals, in acknowledgment of their mastery in losing battles, signing capitulations, and turning cigarettes at Wilhelmshoe, the Commune dismissed and arrested its generals whenever they were suspected of neglecting their duties. The expulsion from, and arrest by, the Commune of one of its members who had slipped in under a false name, and had undergone at Lyons six days' imprisonment for simple bankruptcy, was it not a deliberate insult hurled at the forger, Jules Favre, then still the Foreign Minister of France, still selling France to Bismarck, and still dictating his orders to that paragon Government of Belgium? But, indeed, the Commune did not pretend to infallibility, the invariable attribute of all governments of the old stamp. It published its doings and sayings, it initiated the public into all its shortcomings.

In every revolution there intrude, at the side of its true agents, men of a different stamp; some of them survivors of and devotees to past revolutions, without insight into the present movement, but preserving popular influence by their known honesty and courage, or by the sheer force of tradition; others mere bawlers, who by dint of repeating year after year the same set of stereotyped declamation against the Government of the day, have sneaked into the reputation of revolutionists of the first water. After 18th of March, some such men did also turn up, and in some cases contrived to play pre-eminent parts. As far as their power went, they hampered the real action of the working class, exactly as men of that sort have hampered the full development of every previous revolution. They are an unavoidable evil: with time they are shaken off; but time was not allowed to the Commune.

Wonderful, indeed, was the change the Commune had wrought in Paris! No longer any trace of the meretricious Paris of the

Second Empire. No longer was Paris the rendezvous of British landlords, Irish absentees, American ex-slaveholders and shoddy men, Russian ex-serfowners, and Wallachian boyards. No more corpses at the Morgue, no nocturnal burglaries, scarcely any robberies; in fact, for the first time since the days of February, 1848, the streets of Paris were safe, and that without any police of any kind. "We," said a member of the Commune, "hear no longer of assasination, theft, and personal assault; it seems, indeed, as if the police had dragged along with it to Versailles all its Conservative friends." The *cocottes* had refound the scent of their protectors—the absconding men of family, religion, and, above all, of property. In their stead, the real women of Paris showed again at the surface—heroic, noble, and devoted, like the women of antiquity. Working, thinking, fighting, bleeding Paris—almost forgetful, in its incubation of a new society, of the cannibals at its gates—radiant in the enthusiasm of its historic initiative!

Opposed to this new world at Paris, behold the old world at Versailles—that assembly of the ghouls of all defunct *regimes*, Legitimists and Orleanists, eager to feed upon the carcass of the nation—with a tail of antediluvian Republicans, sanctioning, by their presence in the Assembly, the slaveholders' rebellion, relying for the maintenance of their Parliamentary Republic upon the vanity of the senile mountebank at its head, and caricaturing 1789 by holding their ghastly meetings in the *Jeu de Paume*. There it was, this Assembly, the representative of everything dead in France, propped up by the semblance of life by nothing but the swords of the generals of Louis Bonaparte. Paris all truth, Versailles all lie; and that lie vented through the mouth of Thiers.

Thiers tells a deputation of the mayors of the Seine-et-Oise,—"You may rely upon my word, which I have *never* broken!" He tells the Assembly itself that "it was the most freely elected and most liberal Assembly France ever possessed"; he tells his motley soldiery that it was "the admiration of the world, and the finest army France ever possessed;" he tells the provinces that the bombardment of Paris by him was a myth: "If some cannon-shots have been fired, it is not the deed of the army of Versailles, but of some insurgents trying to make believe that they are fighting, while they dare not show their faces." He again tells the provinces that "the artillery of Versailles does not bombard Paris, but only cannonades it." He tells the Archbishop of Paris, that the pretended executions and reprisals (!) attributed to the Versailles troops were all moonshine. He tells Paris that he was only anxious "to free it from the hideous tyrants who oppress it," and that, in fact, the Paris of the Commune was "but a handful of criminals."

The Paris of M. Thiers was not the real Paris of the "vile multitude," but a phantom Paris, the Paris of the *francs-fileurs*,

the Paris of the Boulevards, male and female—the rich, the capitalist, the gilded, the idle Paris, now thronging with its lackeys, its blacklegs, its literary *boheme*, and its *cocottes* at Versailles, Saint-Denis, Rueil, and Saint-Germain; considering the civil war but an agreeable diversion, eyeing the battle going on through telescopes, counting the rounds of cannon, and swearing by their own honour and that of their prostitutes, that the performance was far better got up than it used to be at the Porte St. Martin. The men who fell were really dead; the cries of the wounded were cries in good earnest; and, besides, the whole thing was so intensely historical.

This is the Paris of M. Thiers, as the Emigration of Coblentz was the France of M. de Calonne.

IV.

THE first attempt of the slaveholders' conspiracy to put down Paris by getting the Prussians to occupy it, was frustrated by Bismarck's refusal. The second attempt, that of the 18th of March, ended in the rout of the army and the flight to Versailles of the Government, which ordered the whole administration to break up and follow in its track. By the semblance of peace-negociations with Paris, Thiers found the time to prepare for war against it. But where to find an army? The remnants of the line regiments were weak in number and unsafe in character. His urgent appeal to the provinces to succour Versailles, by their National Guards and volunteers, met with a flat refusal. Brittany alone furnished a handful of *Choudas* fighting under a white flag, every one of them wearing on his breast the heart of Jesus in white cloth, and shouting "Vive le Roi?" (Long live the King!) Thiers was, therefore, compelled to collect, in hot haste, a motley crew, composed of sailors, marines, Pontifical Zouaves, Valentin's gendarmes, and Piétri's *sergents de ville* and *mouchards*. This army, however, would have been ridiculously ineffective without the instalments of imperialist war-prisoners, which Bismarck granted in numbers just sufficient to keep the civil war a-going, and keep the Versailles Government in abject dependence on Prussia. During the war itself, the Versailles police had to look after the Versailles army, while the gendarmes had to drag it on by exposing themselves at all posts of danger. The forts which fell were not taken but bought. The heroism of the Federals convinced Thiers that the resistance of Paris was not to be broken by his own strategic genius and the bayonets at his disposal.

Meanwhile, his relations with the provinces became more and more difficult. Not one single address of approval came in to gladden Thiers and his Rurals. Quite the contrary. Deputations and addresses demanding, in a tone anything but respectful, conciliation with Paris on the basis of the unequivocal recognition of the Republic, the acknowledgment of the Communal liberties, and the dissolution of the National Assembly, whose mandate was extinct, poured in from all sides, and in such numbers that Dufaure, Thiers's Minister of Justice, in his circular of April 23rd to the public prosecutors, commanded them to treat "the cry of conciliation" as a crime. In regard, however, of the hopeless prospect held out by his campaign, Thiers resolved to shift his tactics by ordering, all over the country, municipal elections to take place on the 30th of April, on the basis of the new municipal law dictated by himself to the National Assembly. What with the intrigues of his prefects, what with police intimidation, he felt quite sanguine of imparting, by the verdict of the provinces, to the National Assembly that moral power it had never possessed, and of getting at last from the provinces the physical force required for the conquest of Paris.

His banditti-warfare against Paris, exalted in his own bulletins, and the attempts of his ministers at the establishment, throughout France, of a reign of terror, Thiers was from the beginning anxious to accompany with a little byplay of conciliation, which had to serve more than one purpose. It was to dupe the provinces, to inveigle the middle-class element in Paris, and, above all, to afford the professed Republicans in the National Assembly the opportunity of hiding their treason against Paris behind their faith in Thiers. On the 21st of March, when still without an army, he had declared to the Assembly: "Come what may, I will not send an army to Paris." On the 27th March he rose again: "I have found the Republic an accomplished fact, and I am firmly resolved to maintain it." In reality, he put down the revolution at Lyons and Marseilles in the name of the Republic, while the roars of his Rurals drowned the very mention of its name at Versailles. After this exploit, he toned down the "accomplished fact" into an hypothetical fact. The Orleans princes, whom he had cautiously warned off Bordeaux, were now, in flagrant breach of the law, permitted to intrigue at Dreux. The concessions held out by Thiers in his interminable interviews with the delegates from Paris and the provinces, although constantly varied in tone and colour, according to time and circumstances, did in fact never come to more than the prospective restriction of revenge to the "handful of criminals implicated in the murder of Lecomte and Clement Thomas,' on the well-understood premiss that Paris and France were unreservedly to accept M. Thiers himself as the best of possible Republics, as he, in 1830, had done with Louis

Philippe. Even these concessions he not only took care to render doubtful by the official comments put upon them in the Assembly through his Ministers. He had his Dufaure to act. Dufaure, this old Orleanist lawyer, had always been the justiciary of the state of siege, as now in 1871, under Thiers, so in 1839 under Louis Philippe, and in 1849 under Louis Bonaparte's presidency. While out of office he made a fortune by pleading for the Paris capitalists, and made political capital by pleading against the laws he had himself originated. He now hurried through the National Assembly not only a set of repressive laws which were, after the fall of Paris, to extirpate the last remnants of Republican liberty in France ; he foreshadowed the fate of Paris by abridging the, for him, too slow procedure of courts-martial, and by a new-fangled, Draconic code of deportation. The Revolution of 1848, abolishing the penalty of death for political crimes, had replaced it by deportation. Louis Bonaparte did not dare, at least not in theory, to re-establish the *regime* of the guillotine. The Rural Assembly, not yet bold enough even to hint that the Parisians were not rebels, but assassins, had therefore to confine its prospective vengeance against Paris to Dufaure's new code of deportation. Under all these circumstances Thiers himself could not have gone on with his comedy of conciliation, had it not, as he intended it to do, drawn forth shrieks of rage from the Rurals, whose ruminating mind did neither understand the play, nor its necessities of hypocrisy, tergiversation, and procrastination.

In sight of the impending municipal elections of the 30th April, Thiers enacted one of his great conciliation scenes on the 27th April. Amidst a flood of sentimental rhetoric, he exclaimed from the tribune of the Assembly : "There exists no conspiracy against the Republic but that of Paris, which compels us to shed French blood. I repeat it again and again. Let those impious arms fall from the hands which hold them, and chastisement will be arrested at once by an act of peace excluding only the small n umber of criminals." To the violent interruption of the Rurals he replied : "Gentlemen, tell me, I implore you, am I wrong? Do you really regret that I could have stated the truth that the criminals are only a handful? Is it not fortunate in the midst of our misfortunes that those who have been capable to shed the blood of Clement Thomas and General Lecomte are but rare exceptions?"

France, however, turned a deaf ear to what Thiers flattered himself to be a parliamentary siren's song. Out of 700,000 municipal councillors returned by the 35,000 communes still left to France, the united Legitimists, Orleanists, and Bonapartists did not carry 8,000. The supplementary elections which followed were still more decidedly hostile. Thus, instead of getting from the provinces the badly-needed physical force, the National Assembly

lost even its clast laim of moral force, that of being the expression of the universal suffrage of the country. To complete the discomfiture, the newly-chosen municipal councils of all the cities of France openly threatened the usurping Assembly at Versailles with a counter Assembly at Bordeaux.

Then the long-expected moment of decisive action had at last come for Bismarck. He peremptorily summoned Thiers to send to Frankfort plenipotentiaries for the definitive settlement of peace. In humble obedience to the call of his master, Thiers hastened to despatch his trusty Julves Favre, backed by Pouyer-Quertier. Pouyer-Quertier, an "eminent" Rouen cotton-spinner, a fervent and even servile partisan of the Second Empire, had never found any fault with it save its commercial treaty with England, prejudicial to his own shop-interest. Hardly installed at Bordeaux as Thiers's Minister of Finance, he denounced that "unholy" treaty, hinted at its near abrogation, and had even the effrontery to try, although in vain (having counted without Bismarck), the immediate enforcement of the old protective duties against Alsace, where, he said, no previous international treaties stood in the way. This man, who considered counter-revolution as a means to put down wages at Rouen, and the surrender of French provinces as a means to bring up the price of his wares in France, was he not *the one* predestined to be picked out by Thiers as the helpmate of Jules Favre in his last and crowning treason?

On the arrival at Frankfort of this exquisite pair of plenipotentiaries, bully Bismarck at once met them with the imperious alternative' Either the restoration of the Empire, or the unconditional acceptance of my own peace terms! These terms included a shortening of the intervals in which the war indemnity was to be paid, and the continued occupation of the Paris forts by Prussian troops until Bismarck should feel satisfied with the state of things in France; Prussia thus being recognised as the supreme arbiter in internal French politics! In return for this he offered to let loose, for the extermination of Paris, the captive Bonapartist army, and to lend them the direct assistance of Emperor William's troops. He pledged his good faith by making payment of the first instalment of the indemnity dependent on the "pacification" of Paris. Such a bait was, of course, eagerly swallowed by Thiers and his plenipotentiaries. They signed the treaty of peace on the 10th of May, and had it endorsed by the Versailles Assembly on the 18th.

In the interval between the conclusion of peace and the arrival of the Bonapartist prisoners, Thiers felt more bound to resume his comedy of conciliation as his Republican tools stood in sore need of a pretext for blinking their eyes at the preparations for the carnage of Paris. As late as the 18th May he replied to a deputation of middle-class conciliators—"Whatever the insurgents will make up

their minds for capitulation, the gates of Paris shall be flung wide open during a week for all except the murderers of Generals Clement Thomas and Lecomte."

A few days afterwards, when violently interpellated on these promises by the Rurals, he refused to enter into any explanations; not, however, without giving them this significant hint:—"I tell you there are impatient men amongst you, men who are in too great a hurry. They must have another eight days; at the end of these eight days there will be no more danger, and the task will be proportionate to their courage and to their capacities." As soon as MacMahon was able to assure him that he could shortly enter Paris, Thiers declared to the Assembly that "he would enter Paris, with the *laws* in his hands, and demand a full expiation from the wretches who had sacrificed the lives of soldiers and destroyed public monuments." As the moment of decision drew near he said —to the Assembly, "I shall be pitiless!"—to Paris, that it was doomed; and to his Bonapartist banditti, that they had State licence to wreak vengence upon Paris to their heart's content. At last, when treachery had opened the gates of Paris to General Douai, on the 21st May, Thiers, on the 22nd, revealed to the Rurals the "goal" of his conciliation comedy, which they had so obstinately persisted in not understanding. "I told you a few days ago that we were approaching *our goal;* to-day I came to tell you *the goal* is reached. The victory of order, justice, and civilisation is at last won!"

So it was. The civilisation 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 civilisation and justice stand forth as undisguised savagery and lawless revenge. Each new crisis in the class struggle between the appropriator and the producer brings out this fact more glaringly. Even the atrocities of the bourgeois in June, 1848, vanish before the ineffable infamy of 1871. The self-sacrificing heroism with which the population of Paris—men, women, and children—fought for eight days after the entrance of the Versaillese, reflects as much the grandeur of their cause as the infernal deeds of the soldiery reflect the innate spirit of that civilisation of which they are the mercenary vindicators. A glorious civilisation, indeed, the great problem of which is how to get rid of the heaps of corpses it made after the battle was over!

To find a parallel for the conduct of Thiers and his bloodhounds we must go back to the times of Sulla and the two Triumvirates of Rome. The same wholesale slaughter in cold blood; the same disregard, in massacre, of age and sex; the same system of torturing prisoners; the same proscriptions, but this time of a whole class; the same savage hunt after concealed leaders, lest one might escape; the same denunciations of political and private enemies; the same indifference for the butchery of entire strangers to the feud. There

is but this difference, that the Romans had no mitrailleuses for the despatch, in the lump, of the proscribed, and that they had not "the law in their hands," nor on their lips the cry of "civilisation."

And after those horrors, look upon the other, still more hideous, face of that bourgeois civilisation as described by its own press!

"With stray shots," writes the Paris correspondent of a London Tory paper, "still ringing in the distance, and untended wounded wretches dying amid the tombstones of Père la Chaise—with 6,000 terror-stricken insurgents wandering in an agony of despair in the labyrinth of the catacombs, and wretches hurried through the streets to be shot down in scores by the mitrailleuse—it is revolting to see the *cafés* filled with the votaries of absinthe, billiards, and dominoes; female profligacy perambulating the boulevards, and the sound of revelry disturbing the night from the *cabinets particuliers* of fashionable restaurants." M. Edouard Hervé writes in the *Journal de Paris*, a Versaillist journal suppressed by the Commune:—"The way in which the population of Paris (!) manifested its satisfaction yesterday was rather more than frivolous, and we fear it will grow worse as time progresses. Paris has now a *fete* day appearance, which is sadly out of place; and, unless we are to be called the *Parisiens de la décadence*, this sort of thing must come to an end." And then he quotes the passage from 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—*ali prœlia et vulnera, alibi balnea popinœque*—(here fights and wounds, there baths and restaurants." M. Hervé only forgets to say that the "population of Paris" he speaks of is but the population of the Paris of M. Thiers—the *francs-fileurs* returning in throngs from Versailles, Saint Denis, Rueil, and Saint Germain—*the* Paris of the "Decline."

In all its bloody triumphs over the self-sacrificing champions of a new and better society, that nefarious civilisation, based upon the enslavement of labour, drowns the moans of its victims in a hue-and-cry of calumny, reverberated by a world-wide echo. The serene workingmen's Paris of the Commune is suddenly changed into a pandemonium by the bloodhounds of "order." And what does this tremendous change prove to the bourgeois mind of all countries? Why, that the Commune has conspired against civilisation! The Paris people die enthusiastically for the Commune in numbers unequalled in any battle known to history. What does that prove? Why, that the Commune was not the people's own government, but the usurpation of a handful of criminals! The women of Paris joyfully give up their lives at the barricades and on the place of execution. What does this prove? Why, that the demon of the Commune has changed them into Megæras and Hecates! The

moderation of the Commune during two months of undisputed sway is equalled only by the heroism of its defence. What does that prove? Why, that for months the Commune carefully hid, under a mask of moderation and humanity, the bloodthirstiness of its fiendish instincts, to be let loose in the hour of its agony!

The working men's Paris, in the act of its heroic self-holocaust, involved in its flames buildings and monuments. While tearing to pieces the living body of the proletariate, its rulers must no longer expect to return triumphantly into the intact architecture of their abodes. The Government of Versailles cries, "Incendiarism!" and whispers this cue to all its agents, down to the remotest hamlet, to hunt up its enemies everywhere as suspect of professional incendiarism. The bourgeoisie of the whole world, which looks complacently upon the wholesale massacre after the battle, is convulsed by horror at the desecration of brick and mortar!

When governments give state-licences to their navies to "kill, *burn*, and destroy," is that a licence for incendiarism? When the British troops wantonly set fire to the Capitol at Washington and to the summer palace of the Chinese Emperor, was that incendiarism? When the Prussians, not for military reasons, but out of the mere spite of revenge, burnt down, by the help of petroleum, towns like Châteaudun and innumerable villages, was that incendiarism? When Thiers, during six weeks, bombarded Paris, under the pretext that he wanted to set fire to those houses only in which there were people, was that incendiarism? In war, fire is an arm as legitimate as any. Buildings held by the enemy are shelled to set them on fire. If their defenders have to retire, they themselves light the flames to prevent the attack from making use of the buildings. To be burnt down has always been the inevitable fate of all buildings situated in the front of battle of all the regular armies of the world. But in the war of the enslaved against their enslavers, the only justifiable war in history, this is by no means to hold good! The Commune used fire strictly as a means of defence. They used it to stop up to the Versailles troops those long straight avenues which Haussmann had expressly opened to artillery fire; they used it to cover their retreat, in the same way as the Versaillese, in their advance, used their shells which destroyed at least as many buildings as the fire of the Commune. It is a matter of dispute, even now, which buildings were set fire to by the defence, and which by the attack. And the defence resorted to fire only then, when the Versaillese troops had already commenced their wholesale murdering of prisoners. Besides, the Commune had, long before, given full public notice that, if driven to extremities, they would bury themselves under the ruins of Paris, and make Paris a second Moscow, as the Government of Defence, but only as a cloak for its treason, had promised to do. For this purpose Trochu had found them the petroleum. The

Commune knew that its opponents cared nothing for the lives of the Paris people, but cared much for their own Paris buildings. And Thiers, on the other hand, had given them notice that he would be implacable in his vengeance. No sooner had he got his army ready on one side, and the Prussians shutting up the trap on the other, than he proclaimed: "I shall be pitiless! The expiation will be complete, and justice will be stern!" If the acts of the Paris working men were vandalism, it was the vandalism of defence in despair, not the vandalism of triumph, like that which the Christians perpetrated upon the really priceless art treasures of heathen antiquity; and even that vandalism has been justified by the historian as an unavoidable and comparatively trifling concomitant to the Titanic struggle between a new society arising and an old one breaking down. It was still less the vandalism of Haussmann, razing historic Paris to make place for the Paris of the sightseer!

But the execution by the Commune of the sixty-four hostages, with the Archbishop of Paris at their head! The bourgeoisie and its army in June, 1848, re-established a custom which had long disappeared from the practice of war—the shooting of their defenceless prisoners. This brutal custom has since been more or less strictly adhered to by the suppressors of all popular commotions in Europe and India; thus proving that it constitutes a real "progress of civilisation"! On the other hand, the Prussians, in France, had re-established the practice of taking hostages—innocent men, who, with their lives, were to answer to them for the acts of others. When Thiers, as we have seen, from the very beginning of the conflict, enforced the humane practice of shooting down the Communal prisoners, the Commune, to protect their lives, was obliged to resort to the Prussian practice of securing hostages. The lives of the hostages had been forfeited over and over again by the continued shooting of prisoners on the part of the Versaillese. How could they be spared any longer after the carnage with which MacMahon's prætorians celebrated their entrance into Paris? Was even the last check upon the unscrupulous ferocity of bourgeois governments—the taking of hostages—to be made a mere sham of? The real murderer of Archbishop Darboy is Thiers. The Commune again and again had offered to exchange the archbishop, and ever so many priests in the bargain, against the single Blanqui, then in the hands of Thiers. Thiers obstinately refused. He knew that with Blanqui he would give to the Commune a head; while the archbishop would serve his purpose best in the shape of a corpse. Thiers acted upon the precedent of Cavaignac. How, in June, 1848, did not Cavaignac and his men of order raise shouts of horror by stigmatising the insurgents as the assassins of Archbishop Affre! They knew perfectly well that the archbishop had been shot by the

soldiers of order. M. Jacquemet, the archbishop's vicar-general, present on the spot, had immediately afterwards handed them in his evidence to that effect.

All this chorus of calumny, which the party of order never fail, in their orgies of blood, to raise against their victims, only proves that the bourgeois of our days considers himself the legitimate successor to the baron of old, who thought every weapon in his own hand fair against the plebian, while in the hands of the plebian a weapon of any kind constituted in itself a crime.

The conspiracy of the ruling class to break down the Revolution by a civil war carried on under the patronage of the foreign invader —a conspiracy which we have traced from the very 4th of September down to the entrance of MacMahon's prætorians through the gate of St. Cloud—culminated in the carnage of Paris. Bismarck gloats over the ruins of Paris, in which he saw perhaps the first instalment of that general destruction of great cities he had prayed for when still a simple Rural in the Prussian *Chambre introuvable* of 1849. He gloats over the cadavres of the Paris proletariate. For him this is not only the extermination of revolution, but the extinction of France, now decapitated in reality, and by the French Government itself. With the shallowness characteristic of all successful statesmen, he sees but the surface of this tremendous historic event. Whenever before has history exhibited the spectacle of a conqueror crowning his victory by turning into, not only the gendarme, but the hired bravo of the conquered Government? There existed no war between Prussia and the Commune of Paris. On the contrary, the Commune had accepted the peace preliminaries, and Prussia had announced her neutrality. Prussia was, therefore, no belligerent. She acted the part of a bravo, a cowardly bravo, because incurring no danger; a hired bravo, because stipulating beforehand the payment of her blood-money of 500 millions on the fall of Paris. And thus, at last, came out the true character of the war, ordained by Providence as a chastisement of godless and debauched France by pious and moral Germany! And this unparalleled breach of the law of nations, even as understood by the old world lawyers, instead of arousing the "civilised" Governments of Europe to declare the felonious Prussian Government, the mere tool of the St. Petersburg Cabinet, an outlaw amongst nations, only incites them to consider whether the few victims who escape the double cordon around Paris are not to be given up to the hangman at Versailles!

That after the most tremendous war of modern times, the conquering and the conquered hosts should fraternize for the common massacre of the proletariate—this unparalleled event does indicate, not, as Bismarck thinks, the final repression of a new society upheaving, but the crumbling into dust of bourgeois society. The

highest heroic effort of which old society is still capable is national war; and this is now proved to be a mere governmental humbug, intended to defer the struggle of the classes, and to be thrown aside as soon as that class struggle bursts out in civil war. Class rule is no longer able to disguise itself in a national uniform; the national Governments are *one* as against the proletariate!

After Whit-Sunday, 1871, there can be neither peace nor truce possible between the working men of France and the appropriators of their produce. The iron hand of a mercenary soldiery may keep for a time both classes tied down in common oppression. But the battle must break out again and again in ever-growing dimensions, and there can be no doubt as to who will be the victor in the end, —the appropriating few, or the immense working majority. And the French working class is only the advanced guard of the modern proletariate.

While the European Governments thus testify, before Paris, to the international character of class rule, they cry down the International Working Men's Association—the international counter-organisation of labour against the cosmopolitan of capital—as the head fountain of all these disasters. Thiers denounced it as the despot of labour, pretending to be its liberator. Picard ordered that all communications between the French Internationals and those abroad should be cut off; Count Jaubet, Thiers's mummified accomplice of 1835, declares it the great problem of all civilised governments to weed it out. The Rurals roar against it, and the whole European press joins the chorus. An honourable French writer, completely foreign to our Association, speaks as follows:— "The members of the Central Committee of the National Guard, as well as the greater part of the members of the Commune, are the most active, intelligent, and energetic minds of the International Working Men's Association; . . . . men who are thoroughly honest, sincere, intelligent, devoted, pure, and fanatical in the *good* sense of the word." The police-tinged bourgeois mind naturally figures to itself the International Working Men's Association as acting in the manner of a secret conspiracy, its central body ordering, from time to time, explosions in different counties. Our Association is, in fact, nothing but the international bond between the most advanced working men in the various countries of the civilised world. Wherever, in whatever shape, and under whatever conditions the class struggle obtains any consistency, it is but natural that members of our association should stand in the foreground. The soil out of which it grows is modern society itself. It cannot be stamped out by any amount of carnage. To stamp it out, the Government would have to stamp out the despotism of capital over labour—the condition of their own parasitical existence.

Working men's Paris, with its Commune, will be for ever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society. Its martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class. Its exterminators history has already nailed to that eternal pillory from which all the prayers of their priest will not avail to redeem them.

THE GENERAL COUNCIL.

M. J. Boon, Fred. Bradnick, G. H. Buttery, Caihil, William Hales, Kolb, Lessner, B. Lucraft, George Milner, Thomas Mottershead, Charles Murray, George Odger, Pfänder, Rühl, Sadler, Cowell Stepney, William Townshend.

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KARL MARX	... ...	,, *Germany and Holland.*
FRED ENGELS	... ...	,, *Belgium, and Spain.*
HERMANN JUNG	... ...	,, *Switzerland.*
P. GIOVACCHINI	... ...	,, *Italy.*
ZEVY MAURICE	... ...	,, *Hungary.*
ANTON ZABICKI	... ...	,, *Poland.*
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HERMANN JUNG, Chairman.
JOHN WESTON, Treasurer.
GEORGE HARRIS, Financial Secretary.
JOHN HALES, General Secretary.

OFFICES—256, High Holborn, London W.C., *May 30th*, 1871.

"The column of prisoners halted in the Avenue Uhrich, and was drawn up, four or five deep, on the footway facing to the road. General Marquis de Gallifet and his staff dismounted and commenced an inspection from the left of the line. Walking down slowly and eyeing the ranks, the General stopped here and there, tapping a man on the shoulder or beckoning him out of the rear ranks. In most cases, without further parley, the individual thus selected was marched out into the centre of the road, where a small supplementary column was thus soon formed. . . . . It was evident that there was considerable room for error. A mounted officer pointed out to General Gallifet a man and woman for some particular offence. The woman, rushing out of the ranks, threw herself on her knees, and, with outstretched arms, protested her innocence in passionate terms. The general waited for a pause, and then with most impassable face and unmoved demeanour, said, 'Madame, I have visited every theatre in Paris, your acting will have no effect on me' ('ce n'est pas la peine de jouer la comédie'). . . . . It was not a good thing on that day to be noticeably taller, dirtier, cleaner, older, or uglier than one's neighbours. One individual in particular struck me as probably owing his speedy release from the ills of this world to his having a broken nose. . . . . Over a hundred being thus chosen, a firing party told off, and the column resumed its march, leaving them behind A few minutes afterwards a dropping fire in our rear commenced, and continued for over a quarter of an hour. It was the execution of these summarily-convicted wretches."—*Paris Correspondent "Daily News,"* June 8th.—This Gallifet, "the kept man of his wife, so notorious for her shameless exhibitions at the orgies of the Second Empire," went, during the war, by the name of the French "Ensign Pistol."

"The *Temps*, which is a careful journal, and not given to sensation, tells a dreadful story of people imperfectly shot and buried before life was extinct. A great number were buried in the Square round St. Jaques-la-Bouchiere; some of them very superficially. In the daytime the roar of the busy streets prevented any notice being taken; but in the stillness of the night the inhabitants of the houses in the neighbourhood were roused by distant moans, and in the morning a clenched hand was seen protruding through the soil. In consequence of this, exhumations were ordered to take place. . . . . That many wounded have been buried alive I have not the slightest doubt. One case I can vouch for. When Brunel was shot with his mistress on the 24th ult. in the courtyard of a house in the Place Vendôme, the bodies lay there until the afternoon of the 27th. When the burial party came to remove the corpses, they found the woman living still, and took her to an ambulance. Though she had received four bullets she is now out of danger."—*Paris Correspondent "Evening Standard,"* June 8th.