

CHAPTER VI. THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

At danger being over, all scruples vanished. Prudent and wise people could now give their adherence to the *coup d'état*, they allowed their names to be posted up.

Here is the placard:

"FRENCH REPUBLIC.

"In the name of the French People.

"The President of the Republic,

"Wishing, until the reorganization of the Legislative Body and the Council of State, to be surrounded by men who justly possess the esteem and the confidence of the country,

"Has created a Consultative committee, which is composed of MM.—

"Abbatucci, ex-Councillor of the Court of Cassation (of the Loiret).

General Achard (of the Moselle).

André, Ernest (of the Seine).

André (of the Charente).

D'Argout, Governor of the Bank, ex-Minister.

General Arrighi of Padua (of Corsica).

General de Bar (of the Seine).

General Baraguay-d'Hilliers (of Doubs).

Barbaroux, ex-Procureur-General (of the Réunion).

Baroche, ex-Minister of the Interior and of Foreign Affairs,

Vice-President of the Committee (of the Charente-Inférieure).

Barret (Ferdinand), ex-Minister (of the Seine).

Barthe, ex-Minister, first President (of the Cour de Comptes).

Bataille (of the Haute-Vienne).

Bavoux (Evariste) (of the Seine-et-Marne).

De Beaumont (of the Somme).

Bérard (of the Lot-et-Garonne).

Berger, Prefect of the Seine (of Puy-de-Dôme).

Bertrand (of the Yonne).

Bidault (of the Cher).

Bigrel (of the Côtes-du-Nord).

Billault, barrister.

Bineau, ex-Minister (of the Maine-et-Loire).

Boinvilliers, ex-President of the body of barristers (of the Seine).

Bonjean, Attorney-General of the Court of Cassation (of the Drome).

Boulatignier.

Bourbousson (of Vaucluse).

Bréhier (of the Manche).

De Cambacérès (Hubert).

De Cambacérès (of the Aisne).

Carlier, ex-Prefect of Police.

De Casabianca, ex-Minister (of Corsica).

General de Castellane, Commander-in-Chief at Lyons.

De Caulaincourt (of Calvados).

Vice-Admiral Cécile (of the Seine-Inférieure).

Chadenet (of the Meuse).

Charlemagne (of the Indre).

Chassaigne-Goyon (of Puy de Dôme).

General de Chasseloup-Laubat (of the Seine-Inférieure).

Prosper de Chasseloup-Laubat (Charente-Inférieure).

Chaix d'Est-Ange, Barrister of Paris (of the Marne).

De Chazelles, Mayor of Clermont-Ferrand (of Puy-de-Dôme).

Collas (of the Gironde).

*De Crouseilhès, ex-Councillor of the Court of Cassation, ex-Minister
(of the Basses-Pyrénées).*

Curial (of the Orne).

De Cuverville (of the Côtes-du-Nord).

Dabeaux (of the Haute-Garonne).

Dariste (of the Basses-Pyrénées).

Daviel, ex-Minister.

Delacoste, ex-Commissary-General (of the Rhône).

Delajus (of the Charente-Inférieure).

Delavau (of the Indre).

Deltheil (of the Lot).

Denjoy (of the Gironde).

Desjobert (of the Seine-Inférieure).

Desmaroux (of the Allier).

Drouyn de Lhuys, ex-Minister (of the Seine-et-Marne).

*Théodore Ducos, Minister of the Marine and of the Colonies (of the
Seine).*

Dumas (of the Institut) ex-Minister (of the Nord).

Charles Dupin, of the Institut (of the Seine-Inférieure).

General Durrieu (of the Landes).

Maurice Duval, ex-Prefect.

Eschassériaux (of the Charente-Inférieure).

Marshal Excelmans, Grand Chancellor of the Legion of Honor.

Ferdinand Favre (of the Loire-Inférieure) General de Flahaut,
ex-Ambassador.

Fortoul, Minister of Public Instruction (of the Basses-Alpes).

Achille Fould, Minister of Finance (of the Seine).

De Fourment (of the Somme).

Fouquier-d'Hérouël (of the Aisne).

Fremy (of the Yonne).

Furtado (of the Seine).

Gasc (of the Haute Garonne).

Gaslonde (of the Manche).

De Gasparin (ex-Minister).

Ernest de Girardin (of the Charente).

Augustin Giraud (of Maine-et-Loire).

Charles Giraud, of the Institut, member of the Court of Public
Instruction, ex-Minister.

Godelle (of the Aisne).

Goulhot de Saint-Germain (of the Manche).

General de Grammont (of the Loire).

De Grammont (of the Haute-Saône).

De Greslan (of the Réunion).

General de Grouchy (of the Gironde).

Kallez Claparède (of the Bas-Rhin).

General d'Hautpoul, ex-Minister (of the Aude).

Hébert (of the Aisne).

De Heeckeren (of the Haut-Rhin).

D'Hérembault (of the Pas-de-Calais).

Hermann.

Heurtier (of the Loire).

General Husson (of the Aube).

Janvier (of the Tarn-et-Garonne).

Lacaze (of the Hautes-Pyrénées).

Lacrosse, ex-Minister (of Finistère).

Ladoucette (of the Moselle).

Frédéric de Lagrange (of the Gers).

De Lagrange (of the Gironde).

General de La Hitte, ex-Minister.

Delangle, ex-Attorney-General.

Lanquetin, President of the Municipal Commission.

De la Riboissière (of Ille-et-Vilaine).

General Lawoestine.

Lebeuf (of the Seine-et-Marne).

Genéral Lebreton (of the Eure-et-Loir).

Le Comte (of the Yonne).

Le Conte (of the Côtes-du-Nord).

Lefebvre-Duruflé, Minister of Commerce (of the Eure).

Lélut (of the Haute-Saône).

Lemarois (of the Manche).

Lemercier (of the Charente). Lequien (of the Pas-de-Calais).

Lestiboudois (of the Nord).

Levavasseur (of the Seine-Inférieure).

Le Verrier (of the Manche).

Lezay de Marnésia (of Loir-et-Cher).

General Magnan, Commander-in-chief of the Army of Paris.

Magne, Minister of Public Works (of the Dordogne).

Edmond Maigne (of the Dordogne).

Marchant (of the Nord).

Mathieu Bodet, Barrister at the Court of Cassation.

De Maupas, Prefect of Police.

De Mérode (of the Nord).

Mesnard, President of the Chamber of the Court of Cassation.

Meynadier, ex-Prefect (of the Lozère).

De Montalembert (of the Doubs).

De Morny (of the Puy-de-Dôme).

De Mortemart (of the Seine-Inférieure).

De Mouchy (of the Oise).

De Moustiers (of the Doubs).

Lucien Murat (of the Lot).

General d'Ornano (of the Indre-et-Loire).

Pepin Lehalleur (of the Seine-et-Marne).

Joseph Périer, Governor of the Bank.

De Persigny (of the Nord).

Pichon, Mayor of Arras (of the Pas de Calais).

Portalis, First President of the Court of Cassation.

Pongerard, Mayor of Pennes (of the Ille-et-Vilaine).

General de Préval.

De Rancé (of Algeria).

General Randon, ex-Minister, Governor-General of Algeria.

*General Regnauld de Saint-Jean-d'Angély, ex-Minister (of the
Charente-Inférieure).*

Renouard de Bussière (of the Bas-Rhin).

Renouard (of the Lozère).

General Rogé.

Rouher, Keeper of the Seals, Minister of Justice (of the Puy-de-Dôme).

*De Royer, ex-Minister, Attorney-General at the Court of Appeal of
Paris.*

General de Saint-Arnaud, Minister of War.

De Saint-Arnaud, Barrister at the Court of Appeal of Paris.

De Salis (of the Moselle).

Sapey (of the Isère).

Schneider, ex-Minister.

De Ségur d'Aguesseau (of the Hautes-Pyrénées).

Seydoux (of the Nord).

Amédée Thayer.

Thieullen (of the Côtes-du-Nord).

De Thorigny, ex-Minister.

Toupot de Béveaux (of the Haute-Marne).

*Tourangin, ex-Prefect. Troplong, First President of the Court of
Appeal.*

De Turgot, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Vaillant, Marshal of France.

Vaisse, ex-Minister (of the Nord).

De Vandeul (of the Haute-Marne).

General Vast-Vimeux (of the Charente-Inférieure).

Vauchelle, Mayor of Versailles.

Viard (of the Meurthe).

Vieillard (of the Manche).

Vuillefroy.

Vuitry, Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Finance De Wagram.

"The President of the Republic,

"LOUIS NAPOLEON BONAPARTE.

"Minister of the Interior, DE MORNY."

The name of Bourbousson is found on this list.

It would be a pity if this name were lost.

At the same time as this placard appeared the protest of M. Daru, as follows:—

*"I approve of the proceedings of the National Assembly at the Mairie
of the Tenth Arrondissement on the 2d of December, 1851, in which I was
hindered from participating by force.*

"DARU."

Some of these members of the Consultative Committee came from Mazas or from Mount Valerien. They had been detained in a cell for four-and-twenty hours, and then released. It may be seen that these legislators bore little malice to the man who had made them undergo this disagreeable taste of the law.

Many of the personages comprised in this menagerie possessed no other renown but the outcry caused by their debts, clamoring around them. Such a one had been twice declared bankrupt, but this extenuating circumstance was added, "not under his own name:" Another who belonged to a literary or scientific circle was reputed to have sold his vote. A third, who was handsome, elegant, fashionable, dandified, polished, gilded, embroidered, owed his prosperity to a connection which indicated a filthiness of soul.

Such people as these gave their adherence with little hesitation to the deed which "saved society."

Some others, amongst those who composed this mosaic, possessed no political enthusiasm, and merely consented to figure in this list in order to keep their situations and their salaries; they were under the Empire what they had been before the Empire, neuters, and during the nineteen years of the reign, they continued to exercise their military, judicial, or administrative functions unobtrusively, surrounded with the right and proper respect due to inoffensive idiots.

Others were genuine politicians, belonging to that learned school which begins with Guizot, and does not finish with Parieu, grave physicians of social order, who reassure the frightened middle-classes, and who preserve dead things.

"Shall I lose my eye?" asked Messer Pancrace.

"Not at all, my friend, I hold it in my hand."

In this quasi Council of State there were a goodly number of men of the Police, a race of beings then held in esteem, Carlier, Piétri, Maupas, etc.

Shortly after the 2d of December under the title of Mixed Commissions, the police substituted itself for justice, drew up judgments, pronounced sentences, violated every law judicially without the regular magistracy interposing the slightest obstacle to this irregular magistracy: Justice allowed the police to do what it liked with the satisfied look of a team of horses which had just been relieved.

Some of the men inscribed on the list of this commission refused: Léon Faucher Goulard, Mortemart, Frédéric Granier, Marchand, Maillard Paravay, Beugnot. The newspapers received orders not to publish these refusals.

M. Beugnot inscribed on his card: "Count Beugnot, who does not belong to the Consultative Committee."

M. Joseph Périer went from corner to corner of the streets, pencil in hand, scratching out his name from all the placards, saying, "I shall take back my name wherever I find it."

General Baraguay d'Hilliers did not refuse. A brave soldier nevertheless; he had lost an arm in the Russian war. Later on, he has been Marshall of France; he deserved better than to have been created a Marshal by Louis Bonaparte. It did not appear likely that he would have come to this. During the last days of November General Baraguay d'Hilliers, seated in a large arm-chair before the high fireplace of the Conference Hall of the National Assembly, was warming himself; some one, one of his colleagues, he who is writing these lines, sat down near him on the other side of the fireplace. They did not speak to each other, one belonging to the Right, the other to the Left; but M. Piscatory came in, who belonged a little to the Right and a little to the Left. He addressed himself to Baraguay d'Hilliers: "Well, general, do you know what they are saying?"

"What?"

"That one of these days the President will shut the door in our faces."

General Baraguay d'Hilliers answered, and I heard the answer,—"If M. Bonaparte should close the door of the Assembly against us, France will fling it wide open again."

Louis Bonaparte at one moment thought of entitling this committee the "Executive Commission." "No," said Morny to him, "that would be to credit them with courage. They will willingly be supporters; they will not be proscribers."

General Rulhière was dismissed for having blamed the passive obedience of the army.

Let us here mention an incident. Some days after the 4th of December, Emmanuel Arago met M. Dupin, who was going up the Faubourg Saint Honoré.

"What!" said Arago, "are you going to the Elysée?"

M. Dupin answered, "I never go to disreputable houses."

Yet he went there.

M. Dupin, it may be remembered, was appointed Attorney-General at the Court of Cessation.

CHAPTER VII. THE OTHER LIST

Opposite to the list of adherents should be placed the list of the proscribed. In this manner the two sides of the *coup d'état* can be seen at a glance.

"DECREE.

"ARTICLE I.—*The ex-Representatives of the Assembly, whose names are found beneath, are expelled from French territory, from Algeria, and from the Colonies, for the sake of public safety:—*

Edmond Valentine. Charrassin.

Paul Racouchot. Bandsept.

Agricol Perdiguier. Savoye.

Eugène Cholat. Joly.

Louis Latrade. Combier.

Michel Renaud. Boysset.

Joseph Benoist (du Rhône). Duché.

Joseph Burgard. Ennery.

Jean Colfavru. Guilgot.

Joseph Faure (du Rhone). Hochstuhl.

Pierre-Charles Gambon. Michot Boutet.

Charles Lagrange. Baune.

Martin Nadaud. Bertholon.

Barthélemy Terrier. Schoelcher.

Victor Hugo. De Flotte.

Cassal. Joigneaux.
Signard. Laboulaye.
Viguiet. Bruys.
Esquiros. Gaston Dussoubs.
Madier de Montjau. Guiter.
Noël Parfait. Lafon.
Emile Péan. Lamarque.
Pelletier. Pierre Lafranc.
Raspail. Jules Leroux.
Théodore Bac. Francisque Maigne.
Bancel. Malardier.
Belin (Drôme). Mathieu (de la Drôme).
Bosse. Millotte.
Bourzat. Roselli-Mollet.
Brive. Charras.
Chavoix. Saint-Ferreol.
Clément Dulac. Sommier.
Dupout (de Bussac). Testelin (Nord).

"ARTICLE II.—In the event, contrary to the present decree, of one of the persons named in Article I. re-entering the prohibited limits, he may be transported for the sake of public safety.

"Given at the Palace of the Tuileries, at the Cabinet Council assembled, January 9th, 1852.

"LOUIS BONAPARTE.

"DE MORNAY, Minister of the Interior."

There was besides a list of the "provisionally exiled," on which figured Edward Quinet, Victor Chauffour, General Laidet, Pascal Duprat, Versigny, Antony Thouret, Thiers, Girardin, and Rémusat. Four Representatives, Mathé, Greppo, Marc-Dufraisse, and Richardet, were added to the list of the "expelled." Representative Miot was reserved for the tortures of the casemates of Africa. Thus in addition to the massacres, the victory of the *coup d'état* was paid for by these figures: eighty-eight Representatives proscribed, one killed.

I usually dined at Brussels in a café, called the Café des Mille Colonnes, which was frequented by the exiles. On the 10th of January I had invited Michel de Bourges to lunch, and we were sitting at the same table. The waiter brought me the *Moniteur Français*; I glanced over it.

"Ah," said I, "here is the list of the proscribed." I ran my eye over it, and I said to Michel de Bourges, "I have a piece of bad news to tell you." Michel de Bourges turned pale. I added, "You are not on the list." His face brightened.

Michel de Bourges, so dauntless in the face of death, was faint-hearted in the face of exile.

CHAPTER VIII. DAVID D'ANGERS

Brutalities and ferocities were mingled together. The great sculptor, David d'Angers, was arrested in his own house, 16, Rue d'Assas; the Commissary of Police on entering, said to him,—

"Have you any arms in your house?"

"Yes," Said David, "for my defence."

And he added,—

"If I had to deal with civilized people."

"Where are these arms?" rejoined the Commissary. "Let us see them."

David showed him his studio full of masterpieces.

They placed him in a *fiacre*, and drove him to the station-house of the Prefecture of Police.

Although there was only space for 120 prisoners, there were 700 there. David was the twelfth in a dungeon intended for two. No light nor air. A narrow ventilation hole above their heads. A dreadful tub in a corner, common to all, covered but not closed by a wooden lid. At noon they brought them soup, a sort of warm and stinking water, David told me. They stood leaning against the wall, and trampled upon the mattresses which had been thrown on the floor, not having room to lie down on them. At length, however, they pressed so closely to each other, that they succeeded in lying down at full length. Their jailers had thrown them some blankets. Some of them slept. At day break the bolts creaked, the door was half-opened and the jailers cried out to them, "Get up!" They went into the adjoining corridor, the jailer took up the mattresses, threw a few buckets of water on the floor, wiped it up anyhow, replaced the mattresses on the damp stones, and said to them, "Go back again." They locked them up until the next morning. From time to time they brought in 100 new prisoners, and they fetched away 100 old ones (those who had been there for two or three days). What became of them?—At night the prisoners could hear from their dungeon the sound of explosions, and in the morning passers-by could see, as we have stated, pools of blood in the courtyard of the Prefecture.

The calling over of those who went out was conducted in alphabetical order.

One day they called David d'Angers. David took up his packet, and was getting ready to leave, when the governor of the jail, who seemed to be keeping watch over him, suddenly came up and said quickly, "Stay, M. David, stay."

One morning he saw Buchez, the ex-President of the Constituent Assembly, coming into his cell "Ah!" said David, "good! you have come to visit the prisoners?"—"I am a prisoner," said Buchez.

They wished to insist on David leaving for America. He refused. They contented themselves with Belgium. On the 19th December he reached Brussels. He came to see me, and said to me, "I am lodging at the Grand Monarque, 89, Rue des Fripiers."³¹

And he added laughing, "The Great Monarch—the King. The old clothesmen—the Royalists, '89. The Revolution." Chance occasionally furnishes some wit.

CHAPTER IX. OUR LAST MEETING

On the 3d of December everything was coming in in our favor. On the 5th everything was receding from us. It was like a mighty sea which was going out. The tide had come in gloriously, it went out disastrously. Gloomy ebb and flow of the people.

And who was the power who said to this ocean, "Thou shalt go no farther?" Alas! a pigmy.

These hiding-places of the abyss are fathomless.

The abyss is afraid. Of what?

Of something deeper than itself. Of the Crime.

The people drew back. They drew back on the 5th; on the 6th they disappeared.

On the horizon there could be seen nothing but the beginning of a species of vast night.

This night has been the Empire.

We found ourselves on the 5th what we were on the 2d. Alone.

But we persevered. Our mental condition was this—desperate, yes; discouraged, no.

Items of bad news came to us as good news had come to us on the evening of the 3d, one after another. Aubry du Nord was at the Concièrgerie. Our dear and eloquent Crémieux was at Mazas. Louis Blanc, who, although banished, was coming to the assistance of France, and was bringing to us the great power of his name and of his mind, had been compelled, like Ledru Rollin, to halt before the catastrophe of the 4th. He had not been able to get beyond Tournay.

As for General Neumayer, he had not "marched upon Paris," but he had come there. For what purpose? To give in his submission.

We no longer possessed a refuge. No. 15, Rue Richelieu, was watched, No. 11, Rue Monthabor, had been denounced. We wandered about Paris, meeting each other here and there, and exchanging a few words in a whisper, not knowing where we should sleep, or whether we should get a meal; and amongst those heads which did not know what pillow they should have at night there was at least one upon which a price was set.

They accosted each other, and this is the sort of conversation they held:—

"What has become of So-and-So?"

"He is arrested."

"And So-and-So?"

"Dead."

"And So-and-So?"

"Disappeared."

We held, however, one other meeting. This was on the 6th, at the house of the Representative Raymond, in the Place de la Madeleine. Nearly all of us met there. I was enabled to shake the hands of Edgar Quinet, of Chauffour, of Clément Dulac, of Bancel, of Versigny, of Emile Péan, and I again met our energetic and honest host of the Rue Blanche, Coppens, and our courageous colleague, Pons Stande, whom we had lost sight of in the smoke of the battle. From the windows of the room where we were deliberating we could see the Place de la Madeleine and the Boulevards militarily occupied, and covered with a fierce and deep mass of soldiers drawn up in battle order, and which still seemed to face a possible combat. Charamaule came in.

He drew two pistols from his great cloak, placed them on the table, and said, "All is at an end. Nothing feasible and sensible remains, except a deed of rashness. I propose it. Are you of my opinion, Victor Hugo?"

"Yes," I answered.

I did not know what he was going to say, but I knew that he would only say that which was noble.

This was his proposition.

"We number," resumed he, "about fifty Representatives of the People, still standing and assembled together. We are all that remains of the National Assembly, of Universal Suffrage, of the Law, of Right. To-morrow, where shall we be? We do not

know. Scattered or dead. The hour of to-day is ours; this hour gone and past, we have nothing left but the shadow. The opportunity is unique. Let us profit by it."

He stopped, looked at us fixedly with his steadfast gaze, and resumed,—

"Let us take the advantage of this chance of being alive and the good fortune of being together. The group which is here is the whole of the Republic. Well, then; let us offer in our persons all the Republic to the army, and let us make the army fall back before the Republic, and Might fall back before Right. In that supreme moment one of the two must tremble, Might or Right, and if Right does not tremble Might will tremble. If we do not tremble the soldiers will tremble. Let us march upon the Crime. If the Law advances, the Crime will draw back. In either case we shall have done our duty. Living, we shall be preservers, dead, we shall be heroes. This is what I propose."

A profound silence ensued.

"Let us put on our sashes, and let us all go down in a procession, two by two, into the Place de la Madeleine. You can see that Colonel before that large flight of steps, with his regiment in battle array; we will go to him, and there, before his soldiers, I will summon him to come over to the side of duty, and to restore his regiment to the Republic. If he refuses ..."

Charamaule took his two pistols in his hands.

"... I will blow out his brains."

"Charamaule," said I, "I will be by your side."

"I knew that well," Charamaule said to me.

He added,—

"This explosion will awaken the people."

"But," several cried out, "suppose it does not awaken them?"

"We shall die."

"I am on your side," said I to him.

We each pressed the other's hand. But objections burst forth.

No one trembled, but all criticised the proposal. Would it not be madness? And useless madness? Would it not be to play the last card of the Republic without any possible chance of success? What good fortune for Bonaparte! To crush with one blow all that remained of those who were resisting and of those who were combating!

To finish with them once for all! We were beaten, granted, but was it necessary to add annihilation to defeat? No possible chance of success. The brains of an army cannot be blown out. To do what Charamaule advised would be to open the tomb, nothing more. It would be a magnificent suicide, but it would be a suicide. Under certain circumstances it is selfish to be merely a hero. A man accomplishes it at once, he becomes illustrious, he enters into history, all that is very easy. He leaves to others behind him the laborious work of a long protest, the immovable resistance of the exile, the bitter, hard life of the conquered who continues to combat the victory. Some degree of patience forms a part of politics. To know how to await revenge is sometimes more difficult than to hurry on its catastrophe. There are two kinds of courage—bravery and perseverance; the first belongs to the soldier, the second belongs to the citizen. A hap-hazard end, however dauntless, does not suffice. To extricate oneself from the difficulty by death, it is only too easily done: what is required, what is the reverse of easy, is to extricate one's country from the difficulty. No, said those high-minded men, who opposed Charamaule and myself, this to-day which you propose to us is the suppression of to-morrow; take care, there is a certain amount of desertion in suicide....

The word "desertion" grievously wounded Charamaule. "Very well," said he, "I abandon the idea."

This scene was exceedingly grand, and Quinet later on, when in exile, spoke to me of it with deep emotion.

We separated. We did not meet again.

I wandered about the streets. Where should I sleep? That was the question. I thought that No. 19, Rue Richelieu would probably be as much watched as No. 15. But the night was cold, and I decided at all hazards to re-enter this refuge, although perhaps a hazardous one. I was right to trust myself to it. I supped on a morsel of bread, and I passed a very good night. The next morning at daybreak on waking I thought of the duties which awaited me. I thought that I was about to go out, and that I should probably not come back to the room; I took a little bread which remained, and I crumbled it on the window-sill for the birds.

CHAPTER X. DUTY CAN HAVE TWO ASPECTS

Had it been in the power of the Left at any moment to prevent the *coup d'état*?

We do not think so.

Nevertheless here is a fact which we believe we ought not to pass by in silence. On the 16th November, 1851, I was in my study at home at 37, Rue de la Tour d'Auvergne; it was about midnight. I was working. My servant opened the door.

"Will you see M. —, sir?"

And he mentioned a name.

"Yes," I said.

Some one came in.

I shall only speak reservedly of this eminent and distinguished man. Let it suffice to state that he had the right to say when mentioning the Bonapartes "my family."

It is known that the Bonaparte family is divided into two branches, the Imperial family and the private family. The Imperial family had the tradition of Napoleon, the private family had the tradition of Lucien: a shade of difference which, however, had no reality about it.

My midnight visitor took the other corner of the fireplace.

He began by speaking to me of the memoirs of a very highminded and virtuous woman, the Princess —, his mother, the manuscript of which he had confided to me, asking my advice as to the utility or the suitability of their publication; this manuscript, besides being full of interest, possessed for me a special charm, because the handwriting of the Princess resembled my mother's handwriting. My visitor, to whom I gave it back, turned over the leaves for a few moments, and then suddenly interrupting himself, he turned to me and said,—

"The Republic is lost."

I answered,—

"Almost."

He resumed,—

"Unless you save it."

"I?"

"You."

"How so?"

"Listen to me."

Then he set forth with that clearness, complicated at times with paradoxes, which is one of the resources of his remarkable mind, the situation, at the same time desperate and strong, in which we were placed.

This situation, which moreover I realized as well as he himself, was this:—

The Right of the Assembly was composed of about 400 members, and the Left of about 180. The four hundred of the majority belonged by thirds to three parties, the Legitimist party, the Orleanist party, the Bonapartist party, and in a body to the Clerical party. The 180 of the minority belonged to the Republic. The Right mistrusted the Left, and had taken a precaution against the minority.

A Vigilance Committee, composed of sixteen members of the Right, charged with impressing unity upon this trinity of parties, and charged with the task of carefully watching the Left, such was this precaution. The Left at first had confined itself to irony, and borrowing from me a word to which people then attached, though wrongly, the idea of decrepitude, had called the sixteen Commissioners the "Burgraves." The irony subsequently turning into suspicion, the Left had on its side ended by creating a committee of sixteen members to direct the Left, and observe the Right; these the Right had hastened to name the "Red Burgraves." A harmless rejoinder. The result was that the Right watched the Left, and that the Left watched the Right, but that no one watched Bonaparte. They were two flocks of sheep so distrustful of one another that they forgot the wolf. During that time, in his den at the Elysée, Bonaparte was working. He was busily employing the time which the Assembly, the majority and the minority, was losing in mistrusting itself. As people feel the loosening of the avalanche, so they felt the catastrophe tottering in the gloom. They kept watch upon the enemy, but they did not turn their attention in the true direction. To know where to fix one's mistrust is the secret of a great politician. The Assembly of 1851 did not possess this shrewd certainty of eyesight, their perspective was bad, each saw the future after his own fashion, and a sort of political short-sightedness blinded the Left as well as the Right; they were afraid, but not where fear was advisable; they were in the presence of a mystery, they had an ambushade before them, but they sought it where it did not exist, and they did not perceive where it really lay. Thus it was that these two flocks of sheep, the majority, and the minority faced each other affrightedly, and while the leaders on one side and the guides on the other, grave and attentive, asked

themselves anxiously what could be the mewling of the grumbling, of the Left on the one side, of the bleatings of the Right on the other, they ran the risk of suddenly feeling the four claws of the *coup d'état* fastened in their shoulders.

My visitor said to me,-

"You are one of the Sixteen!"

"Yes," answered I, smiling; "a 'Red Burgrave.'"

"Like me, a 'Red Prince.'"

And his smile responded to mine.

He resumed,—

"You have full powers?"

"Yes. Like the others."

And I added,—

"Not more than the others. The Left has no leaders."

He continued,—

"Yon, the Commissary of Police, is a Republican?"

"Yes."

"He would obey an order signed by you?"

"Possibly."

"I say, without doubt."

He looked at me fixedly.

"Well, then, have the President arrested this night."

It was now my turn to look at him.

"What do you mean?"

"What I say."

I ought to state that his language was frank, resolute, and self-convinced, and that during the whole of this conversation, and now, and always, it has given me the impression of honesty.

"Arrest the President!" I cried.

Then he set forth that this extraordinary enterprise was an easy matter; that the Army was undecided; that in the Army the African Generals counterpoised the President; that the National Guard favored the Assembly, and in the Assembly the Left; that Colonel Forestier answered for the 8th Legion; Colonel Gressier for the 6th, and Colonel Howyne for the 5th; that at the order of the Sixteen of the Left there would be an immediate taking up of arms; that my signature would suffice; that, nevertheless, if I preferred to call together the Committee, in Secret Session, we could wait till the next day; that on the order from the Sixteen, a battalion would march upon the Elysée; that the Elysée apprehended nothing, thought only of offensive, and not of defensive measures, and accordingly would be taken by surprise; that the soldiers would not resist the National Guard; that the thing would be done without striking a blow; that Vincennes would open and close while Paris slept; that the President would finish his night there, and that France, on awakening, would learn the twofold good tidings: that Bonaparte was out of the fight, and France out of danger.

He added,—

"You can count on two Generals: Neumayer at Lyons, and Lawoëstyne at Paris."

He got up and leaned against the chimney-piece; I can still see him there, standing thoughtfully; and he continued:

"I do not feel myself strong enough to begin exile all over again, but I feel the wish to save my family and my country."

He probably thought he noticed a movement of surprise in me, for he accentuated and italicized these words.

"I will explain myself. Yes; I wish to save my family and my country. I bear the name of Napoleon; but as you know without fanaticism. I am a Bonaparte, but not a Bonapartist. I respect the name, but I judge it. It already has one stain. The Eighteenth Brumaire. Is it about to have another? The old stain disappeared beneath the glory; Austerlitz covered Brumaire. Napoleon was absolved by his genius. The people admired him so greatly that it forgave him. Napoleon is upon the column, there is an end of it, let them leave him there in peace. Let them not resuscitate him through his bad qualities. Let them not compel France to remember too much. This glory of Napoleon is vulnerable. It has a wound; closed, I admit. Do not let them reopen it. Whatever apologists may say and do, it is none the less true that by the Eighteenth of Brumaire Napoleon struck himself a first blow."

"In truth," said I, "it is ever against ourselves that we commit a crime."

"Well, then," he continued, "his glory has survived a first blow, a second will kill it. I do not wish it. I hate the first Eighteenth Brumaire; I fear the second. I wish to prevent it."

He paused again, and continued,—

"That is why I have come to you to-night. I wish to succor this great wounded glory. By the advice which I am giving you, if you can carry it out, if the Left carries it out, I save the first Napoleon; for if a second crime is superposed upon his glory, this glory would disappear. Yes, this name would founder, and history would no longer own it. I will go farther and complete my idea. I also save the present Napoleon, for he who as yet has no glory will only have come. I save his memory from an eternal pillory. Therefore, arrest him."

He was truly and deeply moved. He resumed,—

"As to the Republic, the arrest of Louis Bonaparte is deliverance for her. I am right, therefore, in saying that by what I am proposing to you I am saving my family and my country."

"But," I said to him, "what you propose to me is a *coup d'état*."

"Do you think so?"

"Without doubt. We are the minority, and we should commit an act which belongs to the majority. We are a part of the Assembly. We should be acting as though we were the entire Assembly. We who condemn all usurpation should ourselves become usurpers. We should put our hands upon a functionary whom the Assembly alone has the right of arresting. We, the defenders of the Constitution, we should break the Constitution. We, the men of the Law, we should violate the Law. It is a *coup d'état*."

"Yes, but a *coup d'état* for a good purpose."

"Evil committed for a good purpose remains evil."

"Even when it succeeds?"

"Above all when it succeeds."

"Why?"

"Because it then becomes an example."

"You do not then approve of the Eighteenth Fructidor?"

"No."

"But Eighteenth Fructidors prevent Eighteenth Brumaires."

"No. They prepare the way for them."

"But reasons of State exist?"

"No. What exists is the Law."

"The Eighteenth Fructidor has been accepted by exceedingly honest minds."

"I know that."

"Blanqui is in its favor, with Michelet."

"I am against it, with Barbès."

From the moral aspect I passed to the practical aspect.

"This said," resumed I, "let us examine your plan."

This plan bristled with difficulties. I pointed them out to him.

"Count on the National Guard! Why, General Lawoëstyne had not yet got command of it. Count on the Army? Why, General Neumayer was at Lyons, and not at Paris. Would he march to the assistance of the Assembly? What did we know about this? As for Lawoëstyne, was he not double-faced? Were they sure of him? Call to arms the 8th Legion? Forestier was no longer Colonel. The 5th and 6th? But Gressier and Howyne were only lieutenant-colonels, would these legions follow them? Order the Commissary Yon? But would he obey the Left alone? He was the agent of the Assembly, and consequently of the majority, but not of the minority. These were so many questions. But these questions, supposing them answered, and answered in the sense of success, was success itself the question? The question is never Success, it is always Right. But here, even if we had obtained success, we should not have Right. In order to arrest the President an order of the Assembly was necessary; we should replace the order of the Assembly by an act of violence of the Left. A scaling and a burglary; an assault by scaling-ladders on the constituted authority, a burglary on the Law. Now let us suppose resistance; we should shed blood. The Law violated leads to the shedding of blood. What is all this? It is a crime."

"No, indeed," he exclaimed, "it is the *salus populi*."

And he added,—

"*Suprema Lex*."

"Not for me," I said.

I continued,—

"I would not kill a child to save a people."

"Cato did so."

"Jesus did not do so."

And I added,—

"You have on your side all ancient history, you are acting according to the uprightness of the Greeks, and according to the uprightness of the Romans; for me, I am acting according to the uprightness of Humanity. The new horizon is of wider range than the old."

There was a pause. He broke it.

"Then he will be the one to attack!"

"Let it be so."

"You are about to engage in a battle which is almost lost beforehand."

"I fear so."

"And this unequal combat can only end for you, Victor Hugo, in death or exile."

"I believe it."

"Death is the affair of a moment, but exile is long."

"It is a habit to be learned."

He continued,—

"You will not only be proscribed. You will be calumniated."

"It is a habit already learned."

He continued,—

"Do you know what they are saying already?"

"What?"

"They say that you are irritated against him because he has refused to make you a Minister."

"Why you know yourself that—"

"I know that it is just the reverse. It is he who has asked you, and it is you who have refused."

"Well, then—"

"They lie."

"What does it matter?"

He exclaimed,—

"Thus, you will have caused the Bonapartes to re-enter France, and you will be banished from France by a Bonaparte!"³²

"Who knows," said I, "if I have not committed a fault? This injustice is perhaps a justice."

We were both silent. He resumed,—

"Could you bear exile?"

"I will try."

"Could you live without Paris?"

"I should have the ocean."

"You would then go to the seaside?"

"I think so."

"It is sad."

"It is grand."

There was another pause. He broke it.

"You do not know what exile is. I do know it. It is terrible. Assuredly, I would not begin it again. Death is a bourne whence no one comes back, exile is a place whither no one returns."

"If necessary," I said to him, "I will go, and I will return to it."

"Better die. To quit life is nothing, but to quit one's country—"

"Alas!" said I, "that is every thing."

"Well, then, why accept exile when it is in your power to avoid it? What do you place above your country?"

"Conscience."

This answer made him thoughtful. However, he resumed.

"But on reflection your conscience will approve of what you will have done."

"No."

"Why?"

"I have told you. Because my conscience is so constituted that it puts nothing above itself. I feel it upon me as the headland can feel the lighthouse which is upon it. All life is an abyss, and conscience illuminates it around me."

"And I also," he exclaimed—and I affirm that nothing could be more sincere or more loyal than his tone—"and I also feel and see my conscience. It approves of what I am doing. I appear to be betraying Louis; but I am really doing him a service. To save him from a crime is to save him. I have tried every means. There only remains this one, to arrest him. In coming to you, in acting as I do, I conspire at the same time against him and for him, against his power, and for his honor. What I am doing is right."

"It is true," I said to him. "You have a generous and a lofty aim."

And I resumed,—

"But our two duties are different. I could not hinder Louis Bonaparte from committing a crime unless I committed one myself. I wish neither for an Eighteenth Brumaire for him, nor for an Eighteenth Fructidor for myself. I would rather be proscribed than be a proscriber. I have the choice between two crimes, my crime and the crime of Louis Bonaparte. I will not choose my crime."

"But then you will have to endure his."

"I would rather endure a crime than commit one."

He remained thoughtful, and said to me,—

"Let it be so."

And he added,—

"Perhaps we are both in the right."

"I think so," I said.

And I pressed his hand.

He took his mother's manuscript and went away. It was three o'clock in the morning. The conversation had lasted more than two hours. I did not go to bed until I had written it out.

[32](#) *14th of June, 1847. Chamber of Peers. See the work "Avant l'Exile."*

CHAPTER XI. THE COMBAT FINISHED, THE ORDEAL BEGINS

I did not know where to go.

On the afternoon of the 7th I determined to go back once more to 19, Rue Richelieu. Under the gateway some one seized my arm. It was Madame D. She was waiting for me.

"Do not go in," she said to me.

"Am I discovered?"

"Yes."

"And taken."

"No."

She added,—

"Come."

We crossed the courtyard, and we went out by a backdoor into the Rue Fontaine Molière; we reached the square of the Palais Royal. The *fiacres* were standing there as usual. We got into the first we came to.

"Where are we to go?" asked the driver.

She looked at me.

I answered,—

"I do not know."

"I know," she said.

Women always know where Providence lies.

An hour later I was in safety.

From the 4th, every day which passed by consolidated the *coup d'état*. Our defeat was complete, and we felt ourselves abandoned. Paris was like a forest in which Louis Bonaparte was making a *battue* of the Representatives; the wild beast was hunting down the sportsmen. We heard the indistinct baying of Maupas behind us. We were compelled to disperse. The pursuit was energetic. We entered into the second phase of duty—the catastrophe accepted and submitted to. The vanquished became the proscribed. Each one of us had his own concluding adventures. Mine was what it should have been—exile; death having missed me. I am not going to relate it here, this book is not my biography, and I ought not to divert to myself any of the attention which it may excite. Besides, what concerns me personally is told in a narrative which is one of the testaments of exile.³³

Notwithstanding the relentless pursuit which was directed against us, I did not think it my duty to leave Paris as long as a glimmer of hope remained, and as long as an awakening of the people seemed possible. Malarmet sent me word in my refuge that a movement would take place at Belleville on Tuesday the 9th. I waited until the 12th. Nothing stirred. The people were indeed dead. Happily such deaths as these, like the deaths of the gods, are only for a time.

I had a last interview with Jules Favre and Michel de Bourges at Madame Didier's in the Rue de la Ville-Lévêque. It was at night. Bastide came there. This brave man said to me,—

"You are about to leave Paris; for myself, I remain here. Take me as your lieutenant. Direct me from the depths of your exile. Make use of me as an arm which you have in France."

"I will make use of you as of a heart," I said to him.

On the 14th, amidst the adventures which my son Charles relates in his book, I succeeded in reaching Brussels.

The vanquished are like cinders, Destiny blows upon them and disperses them. There was a gloomy vanishing of all the combatants for Right and for Law. A tragical disappearance.

³³ *"Les Hommes de l'Exile," by Charles Hugo.*

CHAPTER XII. THE EXILED

The Crime having succeeded, all hastened to join it. To persist was possible, to resist was not possible. The situation became more and more desperate. One would have said that an enormous wall was rising upon the horizon ready to close in. The outlet: Exile.

The great souls, the glories of the people, emigrated. Thus there was seen this dismal sight—France driven out from France.

But what the Present appears to lose, the Future gains, the hand which scatters is also the hand which sows.

The Representatives of the Left, surrounded, tracked, pursued, hunted down, wandered for several days from refuge to refuge. Those who escaped found great difficulty in leaving Paris and France. Madier de Montjan had very black and thick eyebrows, he shaved off half of them, cut his hair, and let his beard grow. Yvan, Pelletier, Gindrier, and Doutré shaved off their moustaches and beards. Versigny reached Brussels on the 14th with a passport in the name of Morin. Schoelcher dressed himself up as a priest. This costume became him admirably, and suited his austere countenance and grave voice. A worthy priest helped him to disguise himself, and lent him his cassock and his band, made him shave off his whiskers a few days previously, so that he should not be betrayed by the white trace of his freshly-cut beard, gave him his own passport, and only left him at the railway station.³⁴

De Flotte disguised himself as a servant, and in this manner succeeded in crossing the frontier at Mouscron. From there he reached Ghent, and thence Brussels.

On the night of December 26th, I had returned to the little room, without a fire, which I occupied (No. 9) on the second story of the Hôtel de la Porte-Verte; it was midnight; I had just gone to bed and was falling asleep, when a knock sounded at my door. I awoke. I always left the key outside. "Come in," I said. A chambermaid entered with a light, and brought two men whom I did not know. One was a lawyer, of Ghent, M. —; the other was De Flotte. He took my two hands and pressed them tenderly. "What," I said to him, "is it you?"

At the Assembly De Flotte, with his prominent and thoughtful brow, his deep-set eyes, his close-shorn head, and his long beard, slightly turned back, looked like a creation of Sebastian del Piombo wandering out of his picture of the "Raising of Lazarus;" and I had before my eyes a short young man, thin and pallid, with spectacles. But what he had not been able to change, and what I recognized immediately, was the great heart, the lofty mind, the energetic character, the dauntless courage; and if I did not recognize him by his features, I recognized him by the grasp of his hand.

Edgar Quinet was brought away on the 10th by a noble-hearted Wallachian woman, Princess Cantacuzène, who undertook to conduct him to the frontier, and who kept her word. It was a troublesome task. Quinet had a foreign passport in the name of Grubesko, he was to personate a Wallachian, and it was arranged that he should not know how to speak French, he who writes it as a master. The journey was perilous. They ask for passports along all the line, beginning at the terminus. At Amiens they were particularly suspicious. But at Lille the danger was great. The gendarmes went from carriage to carriage; entered them lantern in hand, and compared the written descriptions of the travellers with their personal appearance. Several who appeared to be suspicious characters were arrested, and were immediately thrown into prison. Edgar Quinet, seated by the side of Madame Cantacuzène awaited the turn of his carriage. At length it came. Madame Cantacuzène leaned quickly forward towards the gendarmes, and hastened to present her passport, but the corporal waved back Madame Cantacuzène's passport saying, "It is useless, Madame. We have nothing to do with women's passports," and he asked Quinet abruptly, "Your papers?" Quinet held out his passport unfolded. The gendarmes said to him, "Come out of the carriage, so that we can compare your description." It happened, however, that the Wallachian passport contained no description. The corporal frowned, and said to his subordinates, "An irregular passport! Go and fetch the Commissary."

All seemed lost, but Madame Cantacuzène began to speak to Quinet in the most Wallachian words in the world, with incredible assurance and volubility, so much so that the gendarme, convinced that he had to deal with all Wallachia in person, and seeing the train ready to start, returned the passport to Quinet, saying to him, "There! be off with you!"—a few hours afterwards Edgar Quinet was in Belgium.

Arnauld de l'Ariège also had his adventures. He was a marked man, he had to hide himself. Arnauld being a Catholic, Madame Arnauld went to the priest; the Abbé Deguerry slipped out of the way, the Abbé Maret consented to conceal him; the Abbé Maret was honest and good. Arnauld d'Ariège remained hidden for a fortnight at the house of this worthy priest. He wrote from the Abbé Maret's a letter to the Archbishop of Paris, urging him to refuse the Pantheon, which a decree of Louis Bonaparte took

away from France and gave to Rome. This letter angered the Archbishop. Arnauld, proscribed, reached Brussels, and there, at the age of eighteen months, died the "little Red," who on the 3d of December had carried the workman's letter to the Archbishop—an angel sent by God to the priest who had not understood the angel, and who no longer knew God.

In this medley of incidents and adventures each one had his drama. Cournet's drama was strange and terrible.

Cournet, it may be remembered, had been a naval officer. He was one of those men of a prompt, decisive character, who magnetized other men, and who on certain extraordinary occasions send an electric shock through a multitude. He possessed an imposing air, broad shoulders, brawny arms, powerful fists, a tall stature, all of which give confidence to the masses, and the intelligent expression which gives confidence to the thinkers. You saw him pass, and you recognized strength; you heard him speak, and you felt the will, which is more than strength. When quite a youth he had served in the navy. He combined in himself in a certain degree—and it is this which made this energetic man, when well directed and well employed, a means of enthusiasm and a support—he combined the popular fire and the military coolness. He was one of those natures created for the hurricane and for the crowd, who have begun their study of the people by their study of the ocean, and who are at their ease in revolutions as in tempests. As we have narrated, he took an important part in the combat. He had been dauntless and indefatigable, he was one of those who could yet rouse it to life. From Wednesday afternoon several police agents were charged to seek him everywhere, to arrest him wherever they might find him, and to take him to the Prefecture of the Police, where orders had been given to shoot him immediately.

Cournet, however, with his habitual daring, came and went freely in order to carry on the lawful resistance, even in the quarters occupied by the troops, shaving off his moustaches as his sole precaution.

On the Thursday afternoon he was on the boulevards at a few paces from a regiment of cavalry drawn up in order. He was quietly conversing with two of his comrades of the fight, Huy and Lorrain. Suddenly, he perceives himself and his companions surrounded by a company of *sergents de ville*; a man touches his arm and says to him, "You are Cournet; I arrest you."

"Bah!" answers Cournet; "My name is Lépine."

The man resumes,—

"You are Cournet. Do not you recognize me? Well, then, I recognize you; I have been, like you, a member of the Socialist Electoral Committee."

Cournet looks him in the face, and finds this countenance in his memory. The man was right. He had, in fact, formed part of the gathering in the Rue Saint Spire. The police spy resumed, laughing,—

"I nominated Eugène Sue with you."

It was useless to deny it, and the moment was not favorable for resistance. There were on the spot, as we have said, twenty *sergents de ville* and a regiment of Dragoons.

"I will follow you," said Cournet.

A *fiacre* was called up.

"While I am about it," said the police spy, "come in all three of you."

He made Huy and Lorrain get in with Cournet, placed them on the front seat, and seated himself on the back seat by Cournet, and then shouted to the driver,—

"To the Prefecture!"

The *sergents de ville* surrounded the *fiacre*. But whether by chance or through confidence, or in the haste to obtain the payment for his capture, the man who had arrested Cournet shouted to the coachman, "Look sharp, look sharp!" and the *fiacre* went off at a gallop.

In the meantime Cournet was well aware that on arriving he would be shot in the very courtyard of the Prefecture. He had resolved not to go there.

At a turning in the Rue St Antoine he glanced behind, and noticed that the *sergents de ville* only followed the *fiacre* at a considerable distance.

Not one of the four men which the *fiacre* was bearing away had as yet opened their lips.

Cournet threw a meaning look at his two companions seated in front of him, as much as to say, "We are three; let us take advantage of this to escape." Both answered by an imperceptible movement of the eyes, which pointed out the street full of passers-by, and which said, "No."

A few moments afterwards the *fiacre* emerged from the Rue St. Antoine, and entered the Rue de Fourcy. The Rue de Fourcy is usually deserted, no one was passing down it at that moment.

Cournet turned suddenly to the police spy, and asked him,—

"Have you a warrant for my arrest?"

"No; but I have my card."

And he drew his police agent's card out of his pocket, and showed it to Cournet. Then the following dialogue ensued between these two men,—

"This is not regular."

"What does that matter to me?"

"You have no right to arrest me."

"All the same, I arrest you."

"Look here; is it money that you want? Do you wish for any? I have some with me; let me escape."

"A gold nugget as big as your head would not tempt me. You are my finest capture, Citizen Cournet."

"Where are you taking me to?"

"To the Prefecture."

"They will shoot me there?"

"Possibly."

"And my two comrades?"

"I do not say 'No.'"

"I will not go."

"You will go, nevertheless."

"I tell you I will not go," exclaimed Cournet.

And with a movement, unexpected as a flash of lightning, he seized the police spy by the throat.

The police agent could not utter a cry, he struggled: a hand of bronze clutched him.

His tongue protruded from his mouth, his eyes became hideous, and started from their sockets. Suddenly his head sank down, and reddish froth rose from his throat to his lips. He was dead.

Huy and Lorrain, motionless, and as though themselves thunderstruck, gazed at this gloomy deed.

They did not utter a word. They did not move a limb. The *fiacre* was still driving on.

"Open the door!" Cournet cried to them.

They did not stir, they seemed to have become stone.

Cournet, whose thumb was closely pressed in the neck of the wretched police spy, tried to open the door with his left hand, but he did not succeed, he felt that he could only do it with his right hand, and he was obliged to loose his hold of the man. The man fell face forwards, and sank down on his knees.

Cournet opened the door.

"Off with you!" he said to them.

Huy and Lorrain jumped into the street and fled at the top of their speed.

The coachman had noticed nothing.

Cournet let them get away, and then, pulling the check string, stopped the *fiacre*, got down leisurely, reclosed the door, quietly took forty sous from his purse, gave them to the coachman, who had not left his seat, and said to him, "Drive on."

He plunged into Paris. In the Place des Victoires he met the ex-Constituent Isidore Buvignier, his friend, who about six weeks previously had come out of the Madelonnettes, where he had been confined for the matter of the *Solidarité R publicaine*. Buvignier was one of the noteworthy figures on the high benches of the Left; fair, close-shaven, with a stern glance, he made one think of the English Roundheads, and he had the bearing rather of a Cromwellian Puritan than of a Dantonist Man of the Mountain. Cournet told his adventure, the extremity had been terrible.

Buvignier shook his head.

"You have killed a man," he said.

In "Marie Tudor," I have made Fabiani answer under similar circumstances,—

"No, a Jew."

Cournet, who probably had not read "Marie Tudor," answered,—

"No, a police spy."

Then he resumed,—

"I have killed a police spy to save three men, one of whom was myself."

Cournet was right. They were in the midst of the combat, they were taking him to be shot; the spy who had arrested him was, properly speaking, an assassin, and assuredly it was a case of legitimate defence. I add that this wretch, a democrat for the people, a spy for the police, was a twofold traitor. Moreover, the police spy was the jackal of the *coup d'état*, while Cournet was the combatant for the Law.

"You must conceal yourself," said Buvignier; "come to Juvisy."

Buvignier had a little refuge at Juvisy, which is on the road to Corbeil. He was known and loved there; Cournet and he reached there that evening.

But they had hardly arrived when some peasants said to Buvignier, "The police have already been here to arrest you, and are coming again to-night."

It was necessary to go back.

Cournet, more in danger than ever, hunted, wandering, pursued, hid himself in Paris with considerable difficulty. He remained there till the 16th. He had no means of procuring himself a passport. At length, on the 16th, some friends of his on the Northern Railway obtained for him a special passport, worded as follows:—

"Allow M. —, an Inspector on the service of the Company, to pass."

He decided to leave the next day, and take the day train, thinking, perhaps rightly, that the night train would be more closely watched.

On the 17th, at daybreak, favored by the dim dawn, he glided from street to street, to the Northern Railway Station. His tall stature was a special source of danger. He, however, reached the station in safety. The stokers placed him with them on the tender of the engine of the train, which was about to start. He only had the clothes which he had worn since the 2d; no clean linen, no trunk, a little money.

In December, the day breaks late and the night closes in early, which is favorable to proscribed persons.

He reached the frontier at night without hindrance. At Neuvéglise he was in Belgium; he believed himself in safety. When asked for his papers he caused himself to be taken before the Burgomaster, and said to him, "I am a political refugee."

The Burgomaster, a Belgian but a Bonapartist—this breed is to be found—had him at once reconducted to the frontier by the gendarmes, who were ordered to hand him over to the French authorities.

Cournet gave himself up for lost.

The Belgian gendarmes took him to Armentières. If they had asked for the Mayor it would have been all at an end with Cournet, but they asked for the Inspector of Customs.

A glimmer of hope dawned upon Cournet.

He accosted the Inspector of Customs with his head erect, and shook hands with him.

The Belgian gendarmes had not yet released him.

"Now, sir," said Cournet to the Custom House officer, "you are an Inspector of Customs, I am an Inspector of Railways. Inspectors do not eat inspectors. The deuce take it! Some worthy Belgians have taken fright and sent me to you between four gendarmes. Why, I know not. I am sent by the Northern Company to relay the ballast of a bridge somewhere about here which is not firm. I come to ask you to allow me to continue my road. Here is my pass."

He presented the pass to the Custom House officer, the Custom House officer read it, found it according to due form, and said to Cournet,—

"Mr. Inspector, you are free."

Cournet, delivered from the Belgian gendarmes by French authority, hastened to the railway station. He had friends there.

"Quick," he said, "it is dark, but it does not matter, it is even all the better. Find me some one who has been a smuggler, and who will help me to pass the frontier."

They brought him a small lad of eighteen; fair-haired, ruddy, hardy, a Walloon³⁵ and who spoke French.

"What is your name?" said Cournet.

"Henry."

"You look like a girl."

"Nevertheless I am a man."

"Is it you who undertake to guide me?"

"Yes."

"You have been a smuggler?"

"I am one still."

"Do you know the roads?"

"No. I have nothing to do with the roads."

"What do you know then?"

"I know the passes."

"There are two Custom House lines."

"I know that well."

"Will you pass me across them?"

"Without doubt."

"Then you are not afraid of the Custom House officers?"

"I'm afraid of the dogs."

"In that case," said Cournet, "we will take sticks."

They accordingly armed themselves with big sticks. Cournet gave fifty francs to Henry, and promised him fifty more when they should have crossed the second Custom House line.

"That is to say, at four o'clock in the morning," said Henry.

It was midnight.

They set out on their way.

What Henry called the "passes" another would have called the "hindrances." They were a succession of pitfalls and quagmires. It had been raining, and all the holes were pools of water.

An indescribable footpath wound through an inextricable labyrinth, sometimes as thorny as a heath, sometimes as miry as a marsh.

The night was very dark.

From time to time, far away in the darkness, they could hear a dog bark. The smuggler then made bends or zigzags, turned sharply to the right or to the left, and sometimes retraced his steps.

Cournet, jumping hedges, striding over ditches, stumbling at every moment, slipping into sloughs, laying hold of briars, with his clothes in rags, his hands bleeding, dying with hunger, battered about, wearied, worn out, almost exhausted, followed his guide gaily.

At every minute he made a false step; he fell into every bog, and got up covered with mud. At length he fell into a pond. It was several feet deep. This washed him.

"Bravo!" he said. "I am very clean, but I am very cold."

At four o'clock in the morning, as Henry had promised him, they reached Messine, a Belgian village. The two Custom House lines had been cleared. Cournet had nothing more to fear, either from the Custom House nor from the *coup d'état*, neither from men nor from dogs.

He gave Henry the second fifty francs, and continued his journey on foot, trusting somewhat to chance.

It was not until towards evening that he reached a railway station. He got into a train, and at nightfall he arrived at the Southern Railway Station at Brussels.

He had left Paris on the preceding morning, had not slept an hour, had been walking all night, and had eaten nothing. On searching in his pocket he missed his pocket book, but found a crust of bread. He was more delighted at the discovery of the crust than grieved at the loss of his pocket-book. He carried his money in a waistband; the pocket-book, which had probably disappeared in the pond, contained his letters, and amongst others an exceedingly useful letter of introduction from his friend M. Ernest Koechlin, to the Representatives Guilgot and Carlos Forel, who at that moment were refugees at Brussels, and lodged at the Hôtel de Brabant.

On leaving the railway station he threw himself into a cab, and said to the coachman,—

"Hôtel de Brabant."

He heard a voice repeat, "Hôtel de Brabant." He put out his head and saw a man writing something in a notebook with a pencil by the light of a street-lamp.

It was probably some police agent.

Without a passport, without letters, without papers, he was afraid of being arrested in the night, and he was longing for a good sleep. A good bed to-night, he thought, and to-morrow the Deluge! At the Hôtel de Brabant he paid the coachman, but did not go into the hotel. Moreover, he would have asked in vain for the Representatives Forel and Guilgot; both were there under false names.

He took to wandering about the streets. It was eleven o'clock at night, and for a long time he had begun to feel utterly worn out.

At length he saw a lighted lamp with the inscription "Hôtel de la Monnaie."

He walked in.

The landlord came up, and looked at him somewhat askance.

He then thought of looking at himself.

His unshaven beard, his disordered hair, his cap soiled with mud, his blood-stained hands, his clothes in rags, he looked horrible.

He took a double louis out of his waistband, and put it on the table of the parlor, which he had entered and said to the landlord,—

"In truth, sir, I am not a thief, I am a proscrip; money is now my only passport. I have just come from Paris, I wish to eat first and sleep afterwards."

The landlord was touched, took the double louis, and gave him bed and supper.

Next day, while he was still sleeping, the landlord came into his room, woke him gently, and said to him,—

"Now, sir, if I were you, I should go and see Baron Hody."

"Who and what is Baron Hody?" asked Cournet, half asleep.

The landlord explained to him who Baron Hody was. When I had occasion to ask the same question as Cournet, I received from three inhabitants of Brussels the three answers as follows:—

"He is a dog."

"He is a polecat."

"He is a hyena."

There is probably some exaggeration in these three answers.

A fourth Belgian whom I need not specify confined himself to saying to me,—

"He is a beast."

As to his public functions, Baron Hody was what they call at Brussels "The Administrator of Public Safety;" that is to say, a counterfeit of the Prefect of Police, half Carlier, half Maupas.

Thanks to Baron Hody, who has since left the place, and who, moreover, like M. de Montalembert, was a "mere Jesuit," the Belgian police at that moment was a compound of the Russian and Austrian police. I have read strange confidential letters of this Baron Hody. In action and in style there is nothing more cynical and more repulsive than the Jesuit police, when they unveil their secret treasures. These are the contents of the unbuttoned cassock.

At the time of which we are speaking (December, 1851), the Clerical party had joined itself to all the forms of Monarchy; and this Baron Hody confused Orleanism with Legitimate right. I simply tell the tale. Nothing more.

"Baron Hody. Very well, I will go to him," said Cournet.

He got up, dressed himself, brushed his clothes as well as he could, and asked the landlord, "Where is the Police office?"

"At the Ministry of Justice."

In fact this is the case in Brussels; the police administration forms part of the Ministry of Justice, an arrangement which does not greatly raise the police and somewhat lowers justice.

Cournet went there, and was shown into the presence of this personage.

Baron Hody did him the honor to ask him sharply,—

"Who are you?"

"A refugee," answered Cournet; "I am one of those whom the *coup d'état* has driven from Paris.

"Your profession?"

"Ex-naval officer."

"Ex-naval officer!" exclaimed Baron Hody in a much gentler tone, "did you know His Royal Highness the Prince de Joinville?"

"I have served under him."

It was the truth. Cournet had served under M. de Joinville, and prided himself on it.

At this statement the administrator of Belgian safety completely unbent, and said to Cournet, with the most gracious smile that the police can find, "That's all right, sir; stay here as long as you please; we close Belgium to the Men of the Mountain, but we throw it widely open to men like you."

When Cournet told me this answer of Hody's, I thought that my fourth Belgian was right.

A certain comic gloom was mingled at times with these tragedies. Barthelémy Terrier was a Representative of the people, and a proscrip. They gave him a special passport for a compulsory route as far as Belgium for himself and his wife. Furnished with this passport he left with a woman. This woman was a man. Préveraud, a landed proprietor at Donjon, one of the most prominent men in the Department of Allier, was Terrier's brother-in-law. When the *coup d'état* broke out at Donjon, Préveraud had taken up arms and fulfilled his duty, had combated the outrage and defended the law. For this he had been condemned to death. The justice of that time, as we know. Justice executed justice. For this crime of being an honest man they had guillotined Charlet, guillotined Cuisinier, guillotined Cirasse. The guillotine was an instrument of the reign. Assassination by the guillotine was one of the means of order of that time. It was necessary to save Préveraud. He was little and slim: they dressed him as a woman. He was not sufficiently pretty for them not to cover his face with a thick veil. They put the brave and sturdy hands of the combatant in a muff. Thus veiled and a little filled out with padding, Préveraud made a charming woman. He became Madame Terrier, and his brother-in-law took him away. They crossed Paris peaceably, and without any other adventure than an imprudence committed by Préveraud, who, seeing that the shaft-horse of a wagon had fallen down, threw aside his muff, lifted his veil and his petticoat, and if Terrier, in dire alarm, had not stopped him, he would have helped the carter to raise his horse. Had a *sergent de ville* been there, Préveraud would have been captured. Terrier hastened to thrust Préveraud into a carriage, and at nightfall they left for Brussels. They were alone in the carriage, each in a corner and face to face. All went well as far as Amiens. At Amiens station the door was opened, and a gendarme entered and seated himself by the side of Préveraud. The gendarme asked for his passport, Terrier showed it him; the little woman in her corner, veiled and silent, did not stir, and the gendarme found all in due form. He contented himself with saying, "We shall travel together, I am on duty as far as the frontier."

The train, after the ordinary delay of a few minutes, again started. The night was dark. Terrier had fallen asleep. Suddenly Préveraud felt a knee press against his, it was the knee of the policeman. A boot placed itself softly on his foot, it was a horse-soldier's boot. An idyll had just germinated in the gendarme's soul. He first tenderly pressed Préveraud's knee, and then emboldened by the darkness of the hour and by the slumbering husband, he ventured his hand as far as her dress, a circumstance foreseen by Molière, but the fair veiled one was virtuous. Préveraud, full of surprise and rage, gently pushed back the gendarme's hand. The danger was extreme. Too much love on the part of the gendarme, one audacious step further, would bring about the unexpected, would abruptly change the eclogue into an official indictment, would reconvert the amorous satyr into a stony-hearted policeman, would transform Tircis into Vidocq; and then this strange thing would be seen, a passenger guillotined because a gendarme had committed an outrage. The danger increased every moment. Terrier was sleeping. Suddenly the train stopped. A voice cried, "Quièvrain!" and the door was opened. They were in Belgium. The gendarme, obliged to stop here, and to re-enter France, rose to get out, and at the moment when he stepped on to the ground he heard behind him these expressive words coming from beneath the lace veil, "Be off, or I'll break your jaw!"

[34](#) See "*Les Hommes de l'Exile.*"

[35](#) *The name given to a population belonging to the Romanic family, and more particularly to those of French descent, who occupy the region along the frontiers of the German-speaking territory in the South Netherlands from Dunkirk to Malmedy in Rhenish Prussia.*

CHAPTER XIII. THE MILITARY COMMISSIONS AND THE MIXED COMMISSIONS

Justice sometime meets with strange adventures.

This old phrase assumed a new sense.

The code ceased to be a safeguard. The law became something which had sworn fealty to a crime. Louis Bonaparte appointed judges by whom one felt oneself stopped as in the corner of a wood. In the same manner as the forest is an accomplice through

its density, so the legislation was an accomplice by its obscurity. What it lacked at certain points in order to make it perfectly dark they added. How? By force. Purely and simply. By decree. *Sic jubeo*. The decree of the 17th of February was a masterpiece. This decree completed the proscription of the person, by the proscription of the name. Domitian could not have done better. Human conscience was bewildered; Right, Equity, Reason felt that the master had over them the authority that a thief has over a purse. No reply. Obey. Nothing resembles those infamous times.

Every iniquity was possible. Legislative bodies supervened and instilled so much gloom into legislation that it was easy to achieve a baseness in this darkness.

A successful *coup d'état* does not stand upon ceremony. This kind of success permits itself everything.

Facts abound. But we must abridge, we will only present them briefly.

There were two species of Justice; the Military Commissions and the Mixed Commissions.

The Military Commissions sat in judgment with closed doors. A colonel presided.

In Paris alone there were three Military Commissions: each received a thousand bills of indictment. The Judge of Instruction sent these accusations to the Procureur of the Republic, Lascoux, who transmitted them to the Colonel President. The Commission summoned the accused to appear. The accused himself was his own bill of indictment. They searched him, that is to say, they "thumbed" him. The accusing document was short. Two or three lines. Such as this, for example,—

Name. Christian name. Profession. A sharp fellow. Goes to the Café. Reads the papers. Speaks. Dangerous.

The accusation was laconic. The judgment was still less prolix. It was a simple sign.

The bill of indictment having been examined, the judges having been consulted, the colonel took a pen, and put at the end of the accusing line one of three signs:—

- + o

- *signified consignment to Lambessa.*

+ *signified transportation to Cayenne. (The dry guillotine. Death.)*

o signified acquittal.

While this justice was at work, the man on whose case they were working was sometimes still at liberty, he was going and coming at his ease; suddenly they arrested him, and without knowing what they wanted with him, he left for Lambessa or for Cayenne.

His family was often ignorant of what had become of him.

People asked of a wife, of a sister, of a daughter, of a mother,—

"Where is your husband?"

"Where is your brother?"

"Where is your father?"

"Where is your son?"

The wife, the sister, the daughter, the mother answered,—"I do not know."

In the Allier eleven members of one family alone, the Préveraud family of Donjon, were struck down, one by the penalty of death, the others by banishment and transportation.

A wine-seller of the Batignolles, named Brisadoux, was transported to Cayenne for this line in his deed of accusation: *his shop is frequented by Socialists.*

Here is a dialogue, word for word, and taken from life, between a colonel and his convicted prisoner:—

"You are condemned."

"Indeed! Why?"

"In truth I do not exactly know myself. Examine your conscience. Think what you have done."

"I?"

"Yes, you."

"How I?"

"You must have done something."

"No. I have done nothing. I have not even done my duty. I ought to have taken my gun, gone down into the street, harangued the people, raised barricades; I remained at home stupidly like a sluggard" (the accused laughs); "that is the offence of which I accuse myself."

"You have not been condemned for that offence. Think carefully."

"I can think of nothing."

"What! You have not been to the *café*?"

"Yes, I have breakfasted there."

"Have you not chatted there?"

"Yes, perhaps."

"Have you not laughed?"

"Perhaps I have laughed."

"At whom? At what?"

"At what is going on. It is true I was wrong to laugh."

"At the same time you talked?"

"Yes."

"Of whom?"

"Of the President."

"What did you say?"

"Indeed, what may be said with justice, that he had broken his oath."

"And then?"

"That he had not the right to arrest the Representatives."

"You said that?"

"Yes. And I added that he had not the right to kill people on the boulevard...."

Here the condemned man interrupted himself and exclaimed,—

"And thereupon they send me to Cayenne!"

The judge looks fixedly at the prisoner, and answers,— "Well, then?"

Another form of justice:—

Three miscellaneous personages, three removable functionaries, a Prefect, a soldier, a public prosecutor, whose only conscience is the sound of Louis Bonaparte's bell, seated themselves at a table and judged. Whom? You, me, us, everybody. For what crimes? They invented crimes. In the name of what laws? They invented laws. What penalties did they inflict? They invented penalties. Did they know the accused? No. Did they listen to him? No. What advocates did they listen to? None. What witnesses did they question? None. What deliberation did they enter upon? None. What public did they call in? None. Thus, no public, no deliberation, no counsellors, no witnesses, judges who are not magistrates, a jury where none are sworn in, a tribunal which is not a tribunal, imaginary offences, invented penalties, the accused absent, the law absent; from all these things which resembled a dream there came forth a reality: the condemnation of the innocent.

Exile, banishment, transportation, ruin, home-sickness, death, and despair for 40,000 families.

That is what History calls the Mixed Commissions.

Ordinarily the great crimes of State strike the great heads, and content themselves with this destruction; they roll like blocks of stone, all in one piece, and break the great resistances; illustrious victims suffice for them. But the Second of December had its refinements of cruelty; it required in addition petty victims. Its appetite for extermination extended to the poor and to the obscure, its anger and animosity penetrated as far as the lowest class; it created fissures in the social subsoil in order to diffuse the proscription there; the local triumvirates, nicknamed "mixed mixtures," served it for that. Not one head escaped, however humble and puny. They found means to impoverish the indigent, to ruin those dying of hunger, to spoil the disinherited; the *coup d'état* achieved this wonderful feat of adding misfortune to misery. Bonaparte, it seems, took the trouble to hate a mere peasant; the vine-dresser was torn from his vine, the laborer from his furrow, the mason from his scaffold, the weaver from his loom. Men accepted this mission of causing the immense public calamity to fall, morsel by morsel, upon the humblest walks of life. Detestable task! To crumble a catastrophe upon the little and on the weak.

CHAPTER XIV. A RELIGIOUS INCIDENT

A little religion can be mingled with this justice. Here is an example.

Frederick Morin, like Arnauld de l'Ariège, was a Catholic Republican. He thought that the souls of the victims of the 4th of December, suddenly cast by the volleys of the *coup d'état* into the infinite and the unknown, might need some assistance, and he undertook the laborious task of having a mass said for the repose of these souls. But the priests wished to keep the masses for their friends. The group of Catholic Republicans which Frederick Morin headed applied successively to all the priests of Paris; but met with a refusal. They applied to the Archbishop: again a refusal. As many masses for the assassin as they liked, but far the assassinated not one. To pray for dead men of this sort would be a scandal. The refusal was determined. How should it be overcome? To do without a mass would have appeared easy to others, but not to these staunch believers. The worthy Catholic Democrats with great difficulty at length unearthed in a tiny suburban parish a poor old vicar, who consented to mumble in a whisper this mass in the ear of the Almighty, while begging Him to say nothing about it.

CHAPTER XV. HOW THEY CAME OUT OF HAM

On the night of the 7th and 8th of January, Charras was sleeping. The noise of his bolts being drawn awoke him.

"So then!" said he, "they are going to put us in close confinement." And he went to sleep again.

An hour afterwards the door was opened. The commandant of the fort entered in full uniform, accompanied by a police agent carrying a torch.

It was about four o'clock in the morning.

"Colonel," said the Commandant, "dress yourself at once."

"What for?"

"You are about to leave."

"Some more rascality, I suppose!"

The Commandant was silent. Charras dressed himself.

As he finished dressing, a short young man, dressed in black, came in. This young man spoke to Charras.

"Colonel, you are about to leave the fortress, you are about to quit France. I am instructed to have you conducted to the frontier."

Charras exclaimed,—

"If I am to quit France I will not leave the fortress. This is yet another outrage. They have no more the right to exile me than they had the right to imprison me. I have on my side the Law, Right, my old services, my commission. I protest. Who are you, sir?"

"I am the Private Secretary of the Minister of the Interior."

"Ah! it is you who are named Léopold Lehon."

The young man cast down his eyes.

Charras continued,—

"You come on the part of some one whom they call 'Minister of the Interior,' M. de Morny, I believe. I know M. de Morny. A bald young man; he has played the game where people lose their hair; and now he is playing the game where people risk their heads."

The conversation was painful. The young man was deeply interested in the toe of his boot.

After a pause, however, he ventured to speak,—

"M. Charras, I am instructed to say that if you want money—"

Charras interrupted him impetuously.

"Hold your tongue, sir! not another word. I have served my country five-and-twenty years as an officer, under fire, at the peril of my life, always for honor, never for gain. Keep your money for your own set!"

"But, sir—"

"Silence! Money which passes through your hands would soil mine."

Another pause ensued, which the private secretary again broke,—

"Colonel, you will be accompanied by two police agents who have special instructions, and I should inform you that you are ordered to travel with a false passport, and under the name of Vincent."

"Good heavens!" said Charras; "this is really too much. Who is it imagines that they will make me travel by order with a false passport, and under a false name?" And looking steadily at M. Léopold Lehon, "Know, sir, that my name is Charras and not Vincent, and that I belong to a family whose members have always borne the name of their father."

They set out.

They journeyed by carriage as far as Creil, which is on the railway.

At Creil station the first person whom Charras saw was General Changarnier.

"Ah! it is you, General."

The two proscripsts embraced each other. Such is exile.

"What the deuce are they doing with you?" asked the General.

"What they are probably doing with you. These vagabonds are making me travel under the name of Vincent."

"And me," said Changarnier, "under the name of Leblanc."

"In that case they ought at least to have called me Lerouge," said Charras, with a burst of laughter.

In the meantime a group, kept at a distance by the police agents, had formed round them. People had recognized them and saluted them. A little child, whose mother could not hold him back, ran quickly to Charras and took his hand.

They got into the train apparently as free as other travellers. Only they isolated them in empty compartments, and each was accompanied by two men, who sat one at the side and the other facing him, and who never took their eyes off him. The keepers of General Changarnier were of ordinary strength and stature. Those of Charras were almost giants. Charras is exceedingly tall; they topped him by an entire head. These men who were galley sergeants, had been carabineers; these spies had been heroes.

Charras questioned them. They had served when quite young, from 1813. Thus they had shared the bivouac of Napoleon; now they ate the same bread as Vidocq. The soldier brought to such a sorry pass as this is a sad sight.

The pocket of one of them was bulged out with something which he was hiding there.

When this man crossed the station in company with Charras, a lady traveller said,—

"Has he got M. Thiers in his pocket?"

What the police agent was hiding was a pair of pistols. Under their long, buttoned-up and doubled-breasted frock coats these men were armed. They were ordered to treat "those gentlemen" with the most profound respect, but in certain circumstances to blow out their brains.

The prisoners had each been informed that in the eyes of the different authorities whom they would meet on the road they would pass for foreigners, Swiss or Belgians, expelled on account of their political opinions, and that the police agents would keep their title of police agents, and would represent themselves as charged with reconducting these foreigners to the frontier.

Two-thirds of the journey were accomplished without any hindrance. At Valenciennes an incident occurred.

The *coup d'état* having succeeded, zeal reigned paramount. No task was any longer considered despicable. To denounce was to please; zeal is one of the forms of servitude towards which people lean the most willingly. The general became a common soldier, the prefect became a commissary of police, the commissary of police became a police spy.

The commissary of police at Valenciennes himself superintended the inspection of passports. For nothing in the world would he have deputed this important office to a subordinate inspector. When they presented him the passport of the so-called Leblanc, he looked the so-called Leblanc full in the face, started, and exclaimed,—

"You are General Changarnier!"

"That is no affair of mine," said the General.

Upon this the two keepers of the General protested and exhibited their papers, perfectly drawn up in due form.

"Mr. Commissary, we are Government agents. Here are our proper passports."

"Improper ones," said the General.

The Commissary shook his head. He had been employed in Paris, and had been frequently sent to the headquarters of the staff at the Tuileries, to General Changarnier. He knew him very well.

"This is too much!" exclaimed the police agents. They blustered, declared that they were police functionaries on a special service, that they had instructions to conduct to the frontier this Leblanc, expelled for political reasons, swore by all the gods, and gave their word of honor that the so-called Leblanc was really named Leblanc.

"I do not much believe in words of honor," said the Commissary.

"Honest Commissary," muttered Changarnier, "you are right. Since the 2d of December words of honor and oaths are no more than worthless paper money."

And then he began to smile.

The Commissary became more and more perplexed. The police agents ended by invoking the testimony of the prisoner himself.

"Now, sir, tell him your name yourself."

"Get out of the difficulty yourselves," answered Changarnier.

All this appeared most irregular to the mind of a provincial alguazil.

It seemed evident to the Commissary of Valenciennes that General Changarnier was escaping from Ham under a false name with a false passport, and with false agents of police, in order to mislead the authorities, and that it was a plot to escape which was on the point of succeeding.

"Come down, all three of you!" exclaimed the Commissary.

The General gets down, and on putting foot to the ground notices Charras in the depths of his compartment between his two bullies.

"Oho! Charras, you are there!" he cries.

"Charras!" exclaimed the Commissary. "Charras there! Quick! the passports of these gentlemen!" And looking Charras in the face,—

"Are you Colonel Charras?"

"Egad!" said Charras.

Yet another complication. It was now the turn of Charras's bullies to bluster. They declared that Charras was the man called Vincent, displayed passports and papers, swore and protested. The Commissary's suspicions were fully confirmed.

"Very well," said he, "I arrest everybody."

And he handed over Changarnier, Charras, and the four police agents to the gendarmes. The Commissary saw the Cross of Honor shining in the distance. He was radiant.

The police arrested the police. It happens sometimes that the wolf thinks he has seized a victim and bites his own tail.

The six prisoners—for now there were six prisoners—were taken into a parlor at the railway station. The Commissary informed the town authorities. The town authorities hastened hither, headed by the sub-prefect.

The sub-prefect, who was named Censier, comes in, and does not know whether he ought to salute or to question, to grovel in the dust or to keep his hat on his head. These poor devils of magistrates and local officials were very much exercised in their minds. General Changarnier had been too near the Dictatorship not to make them thoughtful. Who can foresee the course of events? Everything is possible. Yesterday called itself Cavaignac, to-day calls itself Bonaparte, to-morrow may call itself Changarnier. Providence is really cruel not to let sub-prefects have a peep at the future.

It is sad for a respectable functionary, who would ask for nothing better than to be servile or arrogant according to circumstances, to be in danger of lavishing his platitudes on a person who is perhaps going to rot forever in exile, and who is nothing more than a rascal, or to risk being insolent to a vagabond of a postscript who is capable of coming back a conqueror in six months' time, and of becoming the Government in his turn. What was to be done? And then they were spied upon. This takes place between officials. The slightest word would be maliciously interpreted, the slightest gesture would be laid to their discredit. How should he keep on good terms at the same time this Cabbage, which is called To-day, and that Goat, which is called To-morrow? To ask too many questions would offend the General, to render too many salutations would annoy the President. How could he be at the same time very much a sub-prefect, and in some degree a lacquey? How could he combine the appearance of obsequiousness, which would please Changarnier, with the appearance of authority, which would please Bonaparte?

The sub-prefect thought to get out of the difficulty by saying, "General, you are my prisoner," and by adding, with a smile, "Do me the honor of breakfasting with me?" He addressed the same words to Charras.

The General refused curtly.

Charras looked at him fixedly, and did not answer him.

Doubts regarding the identity of the prisoners came to the mind of the sub-prefect. He whispered to the Commissary "Are you quite sure?" "Certainly," said the Commissary.

The sub-prefect decided to address himself to Charras, and dissatisfied with the manner in which his advances had been received, asked him somewhat sharply, "But, in short, who are you?"

Charras answered, "We are packages."

And turning to his keepers who were now in their turn in keeping:—

"Apply to our exporters. Ask our Custom House officers. It is a mere matter of goods traffic."

They set the electric telegraph to work. Valenciennes, alarmed, questioned Paris. The sub-prefect informed the Minister of the Interior that, thanks to a strict supervision, which he had trusted to no one but himself, he had just effected an important capture, that he had just discovered a plot, had saved the President, had saved society, had saved religion, etc., that in one word he had just arrested General Changarnier and Colonel Charras, who had escaped that morning from the fort of Ham with false passports, doubtless for the purpose of heading a rising, etc., and that, in short, he asked the Government what was to be done with the two prisoners.

At the end of an hour the answer arrived:—"Let them go on their way."

The police perceived that in a burst of zeal they had pushed profundity to the point of stupidity. That sometimes happens.

The next train carried away the prisoners, restored, not to liberty, but to their keepers.

They passed Quiévrain.

They got down from the carriage, and got in again.

When the train again started Charras heaved the deep, joyous sigh of a freed man, and said, "At last!"

He raised his eyes, and perceived his two jailers by his side.

They had got up behind him into the carriage.

"Ah, indeed!" he said to them; "you there!"

Of these two men there was only one who spoke, that one answered,—

"Yes, Colonel."

"What are you doing here?"

"We are keeping watch over you."

"But we are in Belgium."

"Possibly."

"Belgium is not France."

"Ah, that may be."

"But suppose I put my head out of the carriage? Suppose I call out? Suppose I had you arrested? Suppose I reclaimed my liberty?"

"You will not do all that, Colonel."

"How will you prevent me?"

The police agent showed the butt-end of his pistol and said "Thus."

Charras burst out laughing, and asked them, "Where then are you going to leave me?"

"At Brussels."

"That is to say, that at Brussels you will salute me with your cap; but that at Mons you will salute me with your pistol."

"As you say, Colonel."

"In truth," said Charras, "it does not matter to me. It is King Leopold's business. The Bonaparte treats countries as he has treated the Representatives. He has violated the Assembly, he violates Belgium. But all the same, you are a medley of strange rascals. He who is at the top is a madman, those who are beneath are blockheads. Very well, my friends, let me go to sleep."

And he went to sleep.

Almost the same incident happened nearly at the same moment to Generals Changarnier and Lamoricière and to M. Baze.

The police agents did not leave General Changarnier until they had reached Mons. There they made him get down from the train, and said to him, "General, this is your place of residence. We leave you free."

"Ah!" said he, "this is my place of residence, and I am free? Well, then, good-night."

And he sprang lightly back into the carriage just as the train was starting, leaving behind him two galley sergeants dumfounded.

The police released Charras at Brussels, but did not release General Lamoricière. The two police agents wished to compel him to leave immediately for Cologne. The General, who was suffering from rheumatism which he had caught at Ham, declared that he would sleep at Brussels.

"Be it so," said the police agents.

They followed him to the Hôtel de Bellevue. They spent the night there with him. He had considerable difficulty to prevent them from sleeping in his room. Next day they carried him off, and took him to Cologne-violating Prussian territory after having violated Belgian territory.

The *coup d'état* was still more impudent with M. Baze.

They made M. Baze journey with his wife and his children under the name of Lassalle. He passed for the servant of the police agent who accompanied him.

They took him thus to Aix-la-Chapelle.

There, in the middle of the night, in the middle of the street, the police agents deposited him and the whole of his family, without a passport, without papers, without money. M. Baze, indignant, was obliged to have recourse to threats to induce them to take him and identify him before a magistrate. It was, perhaps, part of the petty joys of Bonaparte to cause a Questor of the Assembly to be treated as a vagrant.

On the night of the 7th of January, General Bedeau, although he was not to leave till the next day, was awakened like the others by the noise of bolts. He did not understand that they were shutting him in, but on the contrary, believed that they were releasing M. Baze, his neighbor in the adjoining cell. He cried through the door, "Bravo, Baze!"

In fact, every day the Generals said to the Questor, "You have no business here, this is a military fortress. One of these fine mornings you will be thrust outside like Roger du Nord."

Nevertheless General Bedeau heard an unusual noise in the fortress. He got up and "knocked" for General Leflô, his neighbor in the cell on the other side, with whom he exchanged frequent military dialogues, little flattering to the *coup d'état*. General Leflô answered the knocking, but he did not know any more than General Bedeau.

General Bedeau's window looked out on the inner courtyard of the prison. He went to this window and saw lanterns flashing hither and thither, species of covered carts, horsed, and a company of the 48th under arms. A moment afterwards he saw General Changarnier come into the courtyard, get into a carriage, and drive off. Some moments elapsed, then he saw Charras pass. Charras noticed him at the window, and cried out to him, "Mons!"

In fact he believed he was going to Mons, and this made General Bedeau, on the next day, choose Mons as his residence, expecting to meet Charras there.

Charras having left, M. Léopold Lehon came in accompanied by the Commandant of the fort. He saluted Bedeau, explained his business, and gave his name. General Bedeau confined himself to saying, "They banish us; it is an illegality, and one more indignity added to the others. However, with the people who send you one is no longer surprised at anything."

They did not send him away till the next day. Louis Bonaparte had said, "We must 'space out' the Generals."

The police agent charged with escorting General Bedeau to Belgium was one of those who, on the 2d of December, had arrested General Cavaignac. He told General Bedeau that they had had a moment of uneasiness when arresting General Cavaignac: the picket of fifty men, which had been told off to assist the police having failed them.

In the compartment of the railway carriage which was taking General Bedeau into Belgium there was a lady, manifestly belonging to good society, of very distinguished appearance, and who was accompanied by three little children. A servant in livery, who appeared to be a German, had two of the children on his knees, and lavished a thousand little attentions on them. However, the General, hidden by the darkness, and muffled up, like the police agents, in the collar of his mantle, paid little attention to this group. When they reached Quièvrain, the lady turned to him and said, "General, I congratulate you, you are now in safety."

The General thanked her, and asked her name.

"Baroness Coppens," she answered.

It may be remembered that it was at M. Coppens's house, 70, Rue Blanche, that the first meeting of the Left had taken place on December 2d.

"You have charming children there, madam," said the General, "and," he added, "an exceedingly good servant."

"It is my husband," said Madame Coppens.

M. Coppens, in fact, had remained five weeks buried in a hiding-place contrived in his own house. He had escaped from France that very night under the cover of his own livery. They had carefully taught their children their lesson. Chance had made them get into the same carriage as General Bedeau and the two bullies who were keeping guard over him, and throughout the night Madame Coppens had been in terror lest, in the presence of the policeman, one of the little ones awakening, should throw its arms around the neck of the servant and cry "Papa!"

CHAPTER XVI. A RETROSPECT

Louis Bonaparte had tested the majority as engineers test a bridge; he had loaded it with iniquities, encroachments, enormities, slaughters on the Place du Havre, cries of "Long live the Emperor," distributions of money to the troops, sales of Bonapartist journals in the streets, prohibition of Republican and parliamentary journals, reviews at Satory, speeches at Dijon; the majority bore everything.

"Good," said he, "It will carry the weight of the *coup d'état*."

Let us recall the facts. Before the 2d of December the *coup d'état* was being constructed in detail, here and there, a little everywhere, with exceeding impudence, and yet the majority smiled. The Representative Pascal Duprat had been violently treated by police agents. "That is very funny," said the Right. The Representative Dain was seized. "Charming." The Representative Sartin was arrested. "Bravo." One fine morning when all the hinges had been well tested and oiled, and when all the wires were well fixed, the *coup d'état* was carried out all at once, abruptly. The majority ceased to laugh, but the trick, was done. It had not perceived that for a long time past, while it was laughing at the strangling of others, the cord was round its own neck.

Let us maintain this, not to punish the past, but to illuminate the future. Many months before being carried out, the *coup d'état* had been accomplished. The day having come, the hour having struck, the mechanism being completely wound up, it had only to be set going. It was bound not to fail, and nothing did fail. What would have been an abyss if the majority had done its duty, and had understood its joint responsibility with the Left, was not even a ditch. The inviolability had been demolished by those who were inviolable. The hand of gendarmes had become as accustomed to the collar of the Representatives as to the collar of thieves: the white tie of the statesman was not even rumpled in the grasp of the galley sergeants, and one can admire the Vicomte de Falloux—oh, candor!—for being dumfounded at being treated like Citizen Sartin.

The majority, going backwards, and ever applauding Bonaparte, fell into the hole which Bonaparte had dug for it.

CHAPTER XVII. CONDUCT OF THE LEFT

The conduct of the Republican Left in this grave crisis of the 2d of December was memorable.

The flag of the Law was on the ground, in the mire of universal treason, under the feet of Louis Bonaparte; the Left raised this flag, washed away the mire with its blood, unfurled it, waved it before the eyes of the people, and from the 2d to the 5th of December held Bonaparte at bay.

A few men, a mere handful, 120 Representatives of the people escaped by chance from arrest, plunged in darkness and in silence, without even possessing that cry of the free press which sounds the tocsin to human intellects, and which encourages the combatants, without generals under their orders, without soldiers, without ammunition, went down into the streets, resolutely barred the way against the *coup d'état*, and gave battle to this monstrous crime, which had taken all its precautions, which was mail-clad in every part, armed to the teeth, crowding round it forests of bayonets, and making a pack of mortars and cannons give tongue in its favor.

They had that presence of mind, which is the most practical kind of courage; they had, while lacking everything else, the formidable improvisation of duty, which never loses

heart. They had no printing-offices, they obtained them; they had no guns, they found them; they had no balls, they cast them; they had no powder, they manufactured it; they had nothing but paving-stones, and from thence they evolved combatants.

It is true that these paving-stones were the paving-stones of Paris, stones which change themselves into men.

Such is the power of Right, that, during four days these hundred and twenty men, who had nothing in their favor but the goodness of their cause, counterbalanced an army of 100,000 soldiers. At one moment the scale turned on their side. Thanks to them, thanks to their resistance, seconded by the indignation of honest hearts, there came an hour when the victory of the law seemed possible, and even certain. On Thursday, the 4th, the *coup d'état* tottered, and was obliged to support itself by assassination. We seen that without the butchery of the boulevards, if he had not saved his perjury by a massacre, if he had not sheltered his crime by another crime, Louis Bonaparte was lost.

During the long hours of this struggle, a struggle without a truce, a struggle against the army during the day and against the police during the night,—an unequal struggle, where all the strength and all the rage was on one side, and, as we have just said, nothing but Right on the other, not one of these hundred and twenty Representatives, not a single one failed at the call of duty, not one shunned the danger, not one drew back, not one wearied,—all these heads placed themselves resolutely under the axe, and for four days waited for it to fall.

To-day captivity, transportation, expatriation, exile, the axe has fallen on nearly all these heads.

I am one of those who have had no other merit in this struggle than to rally into one unique thought the courage of all; but let me here heartily render justice to those men amongst whom I pride myself with having for three years served the holy cause of human progress, to this Left, insulted, calumniated, unappreciated, and dauntless, which was always in the breach, and which did not repose for a single day, which recoiled none the more before the military conspiracy than before the parliamentary conspiracy, and which, entrusted by the people with the task of defending them, defended them even when abandoned by themselves; defended them in the tribune with speech, and in the street with the sword.

When the Committee of Resistance in the sitting at which the decree of deposition and of outlawry was drawn up and voted, making use of the discretionary power which the Left had confided to it, decided that all the signatures of the Republican

Representatives remaining at liberty should be placed at the foot of the decree, it was a bold stroke; the Committee did not conceal from itself that it was a list of proscription offered to the victorious *coup d'état* ready drawn up, and perhaps in its inner conscience it feared that some would disavow it, and protest against it. As a matter of fact, the next day we received two letters, two complaints. They were from two Representatives who had been omitted from the list, and who claimed the honor of being reinstated there. I reinstate these two Representatives here, in their right of being proscripts. Here are their names—Anglade and Pradié.

From Tuesday, the 2d, to Friday, the 5th of December, the Representatives of the Left and the Committee, dogged, worried, hunted down, always on the point of being discovered and taken, that is to say—massacred; repaired for the purpose of deliberating, to twenty-seven different houses, shifted twenty-seven times their place of meeting, from their first gathering in the Rue Blanche to their last conference at Raymond's. They refused the shelters which were offered them on the left bank of the river, wishing always to remain in the centre of the combat. During these changes they more than once traversed the right bank of Paris from one end to the other, most of the time on foot, and making long circuits in order not to be followed. Everything threatened them with danger; their number, their well-known faces, even their precautions. In the populous streets there was danger, the police were permanently posted there; in the lonely streets there was danger, because the goings and comings were more noticed there.

They did not sleep, they did not eat, they took what they could find, a glass of water from time to time, a morsel of bread here and there. Madame Landrin gave us a basin of soup, Madame Grévy the remainder of a cold pie. We dined one evening on a little chocolate which a chemist had distributed in a barricade. At Jeunesse's, in the Rue de Grammont, during the night of the 3rd, Michel de Bourges took a chair, and said, "This is my bed." Were they tired? They did not feel it. The old men, like Ronjat, the sick, like Boysset, all went forward. The public peril, like a fever, sustained them.

Our venerable colleague, Lamennais, did not come, but he remained three days without going to bed, buttoned up in his old frock coat, his thick boots on his feet, ready to march. He wrote to the author these three lines, which it is impossible not to quote:—"You are heroes without me. This pains me greatly. I await your orders. Try, then, to find me something to do, be it but to die."

In these meetings each man preserved his usual demeanor. At times one might have thought it an ordinary sitting in one of the bureaux of the Assembly. There was the calm of every day, mingled with the firmness of decisive crises. Edgar Quinet retained

all his lofty judgment, Noël Parfait all his mental vivacity, Yvan all his vigorous and intelligent penetration, Labrousse all his animation. In a corner Pierre Lefranc, pamphleteer and ballad-writer, but a pamphleteer like Courier, and a ballad-writer like Béranger smiled at the grave and stern words of Dupont de Bussac. All that brilliant group of young orators of the Left, Baneel with his powerful ardor, Versigny and Victor Chauffour with their youthful daring. Sain with his coolheadedness which reveals strength, Farconnet with his gentle voice and his energetic inspiration, lavishing his efforts in resisting the *coup d'état*, sometimes taking part in the deliberations, at others amongst the people, proving that to be an orator one must possess all the qualifications of a combatant. De Flotte, indefatigable, was ever ready to traverse all Paris. Xavier Durrieu was courageous, Dulac dauntless, Charamaule fool-hardy. Citizens and Paladins. Courage! who would have dared to exhibit none amongst all these men, of whom not one trembled? Untrimmed beards, torn coats, disordered hair, pale faces, pride glistening in every eye. In the houses where they were received they installed themselves as best they could. If there were no sofas or chairs, some, exhausted in strength, but not in heart, seated themselves on the floor. All became copyists of the decrees and proclamations; one dictated, ten wrote. They wrote on tables, on the corners of furniture, on their knees. Frequently paper was lacking, pens were wanting. These wretched trifles created obstacles at the most critical times. At certain moments in the history of peoples an inkstand where the ink is dried up may prove a public calamity. Moreover, cordiality prevailed among all, all shades of difference were effaced. In the secret sittings of the Committee Madier de Montjau, that firm and generous heart, De Flotte, brave and thoughtful, a fighting philosopher of the Devolution, Carnot, accurate, cold, tranquil, immovable, Jules Favre, eloquent, courageous, admirable through his simplicity and his strength, inexhaustible in resources as in sarcasms, doubled, by combining them, the diverse powers of their minds.

Michel de Bourges, seated in a corner of the fireplace, or leaning on a table enveloped in his great coat, his black silk cap on his head, had an answer for every suggestion, gave back to occurrences blow for blow, was on his guard for danger, difficulty, opportunity, necessity, for his is one of those wealthy natures which have always something ready either in their intellect or in their imagination. Words of advice crossed without jostling each other. These men entertained no illusion. They knew that they had entered into a life-and-death struggle. They had no quarter to expect. They had to do with the Man who had said, "Crush everything." They knew the bloody words of the self-styled Minister, Merny. These words the placards of Saint-Arnaud interpreted by decrees, the Praetorians let loose in the street interpreted them by

murder. The members of the Insurrectionary Committee and the Representatives assisting at the meetings were not ignorant that wherever they might be taken they would be killed on the spot by bayonet-thrusts. It was the fortune of this war. Yet the prevailing expression on every face was serenity; that profound serenity which comes from a happy conscience. At times this serenity rose to gaiety. They laughed willingly and at everything. At the torn trousers of one, at the hat which another had brought back from the barricade instead of his own, at the comforter of a third. "Hide your big body," they said to him. They were children, and everything amused them. On the morning of the 4th Mathien de la Drôme came in. He had organized for his part a committee which communicated with the Central Committee, he came to tell us of it. He had shaved off his fringe of beard so as not to be recognized in the streets. "You look like an Archbishop," said Michel de Bourges to him, and there was a general laugh. And all this, with this thought which every moment brought back; the noise which is heard at the door, the key which turns in the lock is perhaps Death coming in.

The Representatives and the Committee were at the mercy of chance. More than once they could have been captured, and they were not; either owing to the scruples of certain police agents (where the deuce will scruples next take up their abode?) or that these agents doubted the final result, and feared to lay their hand heedlessly upon possible victors. If Vassal, the Commissary of Police, who met us on the morning of the 4th, on the pavement of the Rue des Moulins, had wished, we might have been taken that day. He did not betray us. But these were exceptions. The pursuit of the police was none the less ardent and implacable. At Marie's, it may be remembered that the *sergents de ville* and the gendarmes arrived ten minutes after we had left the house, and that they even ransacked under the beds with their bayonets.

Amongst the Representatives there were several Constituents, and at their head Bastide. Bastide, in 1848, had been Minister for Foreign Affairs. During the second night, meeting in the Rue Popincourt, they reproached him with several of his actions. "Let me first get myself killed," he answered, "and then you can reproach me with what you like." And he added, "How can you distrust me, who am a Republican up to the hilt?" Bastide would not consent to call our resistance the "insurrection," he called it the "counter-insurrection." he said, "Victor Hugo is right. The insurgent is at the Elysée." It was my opinion, as we have seen, that we ought to bring the battle at once to an issue, to defer nothing, to reserve nothing; I said, "We must strike the *coup d'état* while it is hot." Bastide supported me. In the combat he was impassive, cold, gay beneath his coldness. At the Saint Antoine barricade, at the moment when the guns of the *coup d'état* were leveled at the Representatives of the people, he said smilingly to Madier de Montjau, "Ask Schoelcher what he thinks of the abolition of the

penalty of death." (Schoelcher, like myself, at this supreme moment, would have answered, "that it ought to be abolished") In another barricade Bastide, compelled to absent himself for a moment, placed his pipe on a paving-stone. They found Bastide's pipe, and they thought him dead. He came back, and it was hailing musket-balls; he said, "My pipe?" he relighted it and resumed the fight. Two balls pierced his coat.

When the barricades were constructed, the Republican Representatives spread themselves abroad; and distributed themselves amongst them. Nearly all the Representatives of the Left repaired to the barricades, assisting either to build them or to defend them. Besides the great exploit at Saint Antoine barricade, where Schoelcher was so admirable, Esquiros went to the barricade of the Rue de Charonne, De Flotte to those of the Pantheon and of the Chapelle Saint Denis, Madier de Montjau to those of Belleville and the Rue Aumaire, Doutre and Pelletier to that of the Mairie of the Fifth Arrondissement, Brives to that of Rue Beaubourg, Arnauld de l'Ariège to that of Rue de Petit-Repêsoir, Viguier to that of the Rue Pagevin, Versigny to that of the Rue Joigneaux; Dupont de Bussac to that of the Carré Saint Martin; Carlos Forel and Boysset to that of the Rue Rambuteau. Doutre received a sword-cut on his head, which cleft his hat; Bourzat had four balls in his overcoat; Baudin was killed; Gaston Dussoubs was ill and could not come; his brother, Denis Dussoubs, replaced him. Where? In the tomb.

Baudin fell on the first barricade, Denis Dussoubs on the last.

I was less favored than Bourzat; I only had three balls in my overcoat, and it is impossible for me to say whence they came. Probably from the boulevard.

After the battle was lost there was no general helter-skelter, no rout, no flight. All remained hidden in Paris ready to reappear, Michel in the Rue d'Alger, myself in the Rue de Navarin. The Committee held yet another sitting on Saturday, the 6th, at eleven o'clock at night. Jules Favre, Michel de Bourges, and myself, we came during the night to the house of a generous and brave woman, Madame Didier. Bastide came there and said to me, "If you are not killed here, you are going to enter upon exile. For myself, I am going to remain in Paris. Take me for your lieutenant." I have related this incident.

They hoped for the 9th (Tuesday) a resumption of arms, which did not take place. Malarmet had announced it to Dupont de Bussac, but the blow of the 4th had prostrated Paris. The populace no longer stirred. The Representatives did not resolve to think of their safety, and to quit France through a thousand additional dangers until several days afterwards, when the last spark of resistance was extinguished in the heart of the people, and the last glimmer of hope in heaven.

Several Republican Representatives were workmen; they have again become workmen in exile. Nadaud has resumed his trowel, and is a mason in London. Faure (du Rhône), a cutler, and Bansept, a shoemaker, felt that their trade had become their duty, and practise it in England. Faure makes knives, Bansept makes boots. Greppo is a weaver, it was he who when a proscrip made the coronation robe of Queen Victoria. Gloomy smile of Destiny. Noël Parfait is a proof-reader at Brussels; Agricol Perdiguier, called Avignonnais-la-Vertu, has girded on his leathern apron, and is a cabinet-maker at Antwerp. Yesterday these men sat in the Sovereign Assembly. Such things as these are seen in Plutarch.

The eloquent and courageous proscrip, Emile Deschanel, has created at Brussels, with a rare talent of speech, a new form of public instruction, the Conferences. To him is due the honor of this foundation, so fruitful and so useful.

Let us say in conclusion that the National Legislative Assembly lived badly but died well.

At this moment of the fall, irreparable for the cowards, the Right was worthy, the Left was great.

Never before has History seen a Parliament fall in this manner.

February had blown upon the Deputies of the legal country, and the Deputies had vanished. M. Sauzet had sunk down behind the tribune, and had gone away without even taking his hat.

Bonaparte, the other, the first, the true Bonaparte, had made the "Five Hundred" step out of the windows of the Orangery of Saint Cloud, somewhat embarrassed with their large mantles.

Cromwell, the oldest of the Bonapartes, when he achieved his Eighteenth Brumaire, encountered scarcely any other resistance than a few imprecations from Milton and from Ludlaw, and was able to say in his boorishly gigantic language, "I have put the King in my knapsack and the Parliament in my pocket."

We must go back to the Roman Senate in order to find true Curule chairs.

The Legislative Assembly, let us repeat, to its honor, did not lose countenance when facing the abyss. History will keep an account of it. After having betrayed so many things, it might have been feared that this Assembly would end by betraying itself. It did nothing of the kind. The Legislature, one is obliged to remember, had committed faults upon faults; the Royalist majority had, in the most odious manner, persecuted the Republican minority, which was bravely doing its duty in denouncing it to the

people; this Assembly had had a very long cohabitation and a most fatal complicity with the Man of Crime, who had ended by strangling it as a robber strangles his concubine in his bed; but whatever may be said of this fateful Assembly, it did not exhibit that wretched vanishing away which Louis Bonaparte hoped for; it was not a coward.

This is due to its having originated from universal suffrage. Let us mention this, for it is an instructive lesson. The virtue of this universal suffrage, which had begotten the Assembly and which the Assembly had wished to slay, it felt in itself to its last hour.

The sap of a whole people does not spread in vain throughout an Assembly, even throughout the most decrepit. On the decisive day this sap asserts itself.

The Legislative Assembly, laden as it may be with formidable responsibilities, will, perhaps, be less overwhelmed than it deserves by the reprobation of posterity.

Thanks to universal suffrage, which it had deceived, and which constituted its faith and its strength at the last moment, thanks to the Left, which it had oppressed, scoffed at, calumniated, and decimated, and which cast on it the glorious reflection of its heroism, this pitiful Assembly died a grand death.

CHAPTER XVIII. PAGE WRITTEN AT BRUSSELS

Well then, yes, I will kick open the door of this Palace, and I will enter with you, History! I will seize by the collar all the perpetrators, continually caught red-handed in the commission of all these outrages! I will suddenly illuminate this cavern of night with the broad daylight of truth!

Yes, I will bring in the daylight! I will tear down the curtain, I will open the window, I will show to every eye such as it really is, infamous, horrible, wealthy, triumphant, joyous, gilded, besmirched—this Elysée! this Court! this group! this heap! call it what you will! this galley-crew! where writhe and crawl, and pair and breed every baseness, every indignity, every abomination: filibusters, buccaneers, swearers of oaths, Signers of the Cross, spies, swindlers, butchers, executioners, from the brigand who vends his sword, to the Jesuit who sells his God second-hand! This sink where Baroche elbows

Teste! where each brings his own nastiness! Magnan his epaulets; Montalembert his religion, Dupin his person!

And above all the innermost circle, the Holy of Holies, the private Council, the smug den where they drink—where they eat—where they laugh—where they sleep—where they play—where they cheat—where they call Highnesses "Thou,"—where they wallow! Oh! what ignominies! It is them! It is there! Dishonor, baseness, shame, and opprobrium are there! Oh History! A hot iron for all these faces.

It is there that they amuse themselves, and that they jest, and that they banter, and that they make sport of France! It is there that they pocket hap-hazard, amid great shouts of laughter, the millions of louis and the millions of votes! See them, look at them! They have treated the Law like a girl, they are content! Right is slaughtered, Liberty is gagged, the flag is dishonored, the people are under their feet. They are happy! And who are they? What are these men? Europe knows not. One fine morning it saw them come out of a crime. Nothing more. A parcel of rascals who vainly tried to become celebrated, and who have remained anonymous. Look! they are all there! See them, I tell you! Look at them, I tell you! Recognize them if you can. Of what sex are they? To what species do they belong? Who is this one? Is he a writer? No; he is a dog. He gobbles human flesh. And that one? Is he a dog? No, he is a courtier—he has blood on his paw.

New men, that is what they term them. New, in truth! Unlooked-for, strange, unprecedented, monstrous! Perjury, iniquity, robbery, assassination, erected into ministerial departments, swindling applied to universal suffrage, government under false pretences, duty called crime, crime called duty, cynicism laughing in the midst of atrocity,—it is of all this that their newness is compounded.

Now, all is well, they have succeeded, they have a fair wind, they enjoy themselves to the full. They have cheated France, they are dividing the spoil. France is a bag, and they put their hand in it. Rummage, for Heaven's sake! Take, while you are there; help yourselves, draw out, plunder, steal! One wants money, another wants situations, another wants a decorative collar round his neck, another a plume in his hat, another embroidery on his sleeve, another women, another power; another news for the Bourse, another a railway, another wine. I should think, indeed, that they are well satisfied. Picture to yourself a poor devil who, three years ago, borrowed ten sous of his porter, and who to-day, leaning voluptuously on the *Moniteur*, has only to sign a decree to take a million. To make themselves perfectly happy, to be able to devour the finances of the State, to live at the expense of the Treasury like a son of the family, this is what is called their policy. Their ambition has a true name, it is gluttony.

They ambitious? Nonsense! They are gluttons. To govern is to gamble. This does not prevent betrayal. On the contrary, they spy upon each other, they betray each other. The little traitors betray the great traitors. Pietri looks askance at Maupas, and Maupas at Carlier. They all lie in the same reeking sewer! They have achieved the *coup d'état* in common. That is all. Moreover they feel sure of nothing, neither of glances, nor of smiles, nor of hidden thoughts, nor of men, nor of women, nor of the lacquey, nor of the prince, nor of words of honor, nor of birth certificates. Each feels himself fraudulent, and knows himself suspected. Each has his secret aims. Each alone knows why he has done this. Not one utters a word about his crime, and no one bears the name of his father. Ah! may God grant me life, and may Jesus pardon me, I will raise a gibbet a hundred yards high, I will take hammer and nails, and I will crucify this Beauharnais called Bonaparte, between this Leroy called Saint-Arnoud, and this Fialin called Persigny!

And I would drag you there also, all of you accomplices! This Morny, this Romieu, this Fould, the Jew senator, this Delangle, who bears on his back this placard: JUSTICE! and this Troplong, this judicial glorifier of the violation of the laws, this lawyer apologist of the *coup d'état*, this magistrate flatterer of perjury, this judge panegyrist of murder, who will go down to posterity with a sponge filled with mud and with blood in his hand.

I begin the battle therefore. With whom? With the present ruler of Europe. It is right that this spectacle should be given to the world. Louis Bonaparte is the success, is the intoxicated triumph, is the gay and ferocious despotism, opening out under the victory, he is the mad fulness of power, seeking limits and finding none, neither in things nor in men; Louis Bonaparte holds France, *Urbem Roman habit*; and whoever holds France holds the world; he is master of the votes, master of the consciences, master of the people; he nominates his successor, reigns forever over future electoral scrutinies, disposes of eternity, and places futurity in an envelope; his Senate, his Legislative Body, his Council of State, with heads lowered and mingled confusedly behind him, lick his feet; he drags along in a leash the bishops and cardinals; he tramples on the justice which curses him, and on the judges who adore him, thirty correspondents inform the Continent that he has frowned, and every electric telegraph vibrates if he raises his little finger; around him is heard the rustling of sabres, and the drums beat the salute; he sits under the shadow of the eagle in the midst of bayonets and of citadels, the free nations tremble and hide their liberties for fear that he should steal them, the great American Republic herself falters in his presence, and dares not withdraw her Ambassador from him; the kings, surrounded by their armies, look at him smilingly, with their hearts full of fear. Where will he begin?

With Belgium? With Switzerland? With Piedmont? Europe expects to be overrun. He is capable of all, and he dreams of all.

Well, then! Before this master, this triumpher, this conqueror, this dictator, this Emperor, this all-powerful, there rises a solitary man, a wanderer, despoiled, ruined, prostrate, proscribed, and attacks him. Louis Napoleon has ten thousand cannons, and five hundred thousand soldiers; the writer has his pen and his ink-stand. The writer is nothing, he is a grain of dust, he is a shadow, he is an exile without a refuge, he is a vagrant without a passport, but he has by his side and fighting with him two powers, Right, which is invincible, and Truth, which is immortal.

Assuredly, for this struggle to the death, for this formidable duel, Providence could have chosen a more illustrious champion, a grander athlete. But what matter men, there, where it is the idea with combats! Such as it is, it is good, let us repeat, that this spectacle should be given to the world. What is this in truth? It is intellect, an atom which resists strength—a colossus.

I have only one stone in my sling, but that stone is a good one; that stone is justice.

I attack Louis Bonaparte at this hour, when he is erect; at this hour, when he is master. He is in his zenith. So much the better; it is that which suits me.

Yes, I attack Louis Bonaparte. I attack him before the world; I attack him in the presence of God and men; I attack him resolutely, desperately; for the love of the people and of France. He is about to be Emperor, let it be so. Let there be at least one brow which resists. Let Louis Bonaparte know that an Empire may be taken, but that a Conscience cannot be taken.

CHAPTER XIX. THE INFALLIBLE BENEDICTION

The Pope approved.

When the mails brought to Rome intelligence of the event of the 2d of December, the Pope went to a review held by General Gêmeau, and begged him to congratulate Prince Louis Napoléon for him.

There was a precedent for this.

On the 12th December, 1572, Saint-Goard, Ambassador of Charles the Ninth, King of France, to Philip the Second, King of Spain, wrote from Madrid to his master, Charles the Ninth, "The news of the events of the day of Saint Bartholomew have reached the Catholic King. Contrary to his wont and custom, he has shown so much joy, that he has manifested it more openly than he has ever done for all the happy events and good fortune which have previously befallen him. So that I went to him on Sunday morning at Saint Hieronimus, and having approached him, he burst out laughing, and with every demonstration of extreme pleasure and contentment, began to praise your Majesty."³⁶

The hand of Pius IX. remained extended over France, when it had become the Empire.

Then, under the shadow of this benediction, began an era of prosperity.

[36](#) *"Archives of the house of Orange," page 125, Supplement.*

CONCLUSION—THE FALL.

CHAPTER I.

I was coming back from my fourth exile—an exile in Belgium, a small matter. It was one of the last days of September, 1871. I was re-entering France by the Luxembourg frontier. I had fallen asleep in the carriage. Suddenly the jolt of the train coming to a standstill awoke me. I opened my eyes.

The train had stopped in the middle of a charming landscape.

I was in the half-consciousness of an interrupted sleep; and ideas, as yet half-dreams, hazy and diffuse, hovered between myself and reality. I experienced the undefinable and confused sensation of awakening.

A river flowed by the side of the railway, clear, around a bright and verdant island. This vegetation was so thick that the moor-hens, on reaching it, plunged beneath it and disappeared. The river wound through a valley, which appeared like a huge garden. Apple-trees were there, which reminded one of Eve, and willows, which made one think of Galatea. It was, as I have said, in one of those equinoctial months when may be felt the peculiar charm of a season drawing to a close. If it be winter which is passing away, you hear the song of approaching spring; if it be summer which is vanishing, you see glimmering on the horizon the undefinable smile of autumn. The wind lulled and harmonized all those pleasant sounds which compose the murmur of the fields; the tinkling of the sheep-bells seemed to soothe the humming of the bees; the last butterflies met together with the first grapes; this hour of the year mingles the joy of being still alive with the unconscious melancholy of fast approaching death; the sweetness of the sun was indescribable. Fertile fields streaked with furrows, honest peasants' cottages; under the trees a turf covered with shade, the lowing of cattle as in Virgil, and the smoke of hamlets penetrated by rays of sunshine; such was the complete picture. The clanging of anvils rang in the distance, the rhythm of work amidst the harmony of nature. I listened, I mused vaguely. The valley was beautiful and quiet, the blue heavens seemed as though resting upon a lovely circle of hills; in the distance were the voices of birds, and close to me the voices of children, like two songs of angels mingled together; the universal purity enshrouded me: all this grace and all this grandeur shed a golden dawn into my soul....

Suddenly a fellow-traveller asked,—

"What place is this?"

Another answered,—

"Sedan."

I shuddered.

This paradise was a tomb.

I looked around. The valley was circular and hollow, like the bottom of a crater; the winding river resembled a serpent; the high hills, ranged one behind the other, surrounded this mysterious spot like a triple line of inexorable walls; once there, there is no means of exit. It reminded me of the amphitheatres. An indescribable disquieting

vegetation which seemed to be an extension of the Black Forest, overran all the heights, and lost itself in the horizon like a huge impenetrable snare; the sun shone, the birds sang, carters passed by whistling; sheep, lambs, and pigeons were scattered about, leaves quivered and rustled; the grass, a densely thick grass, was full of flowers. It was appalling.

I seemed to see waving over this valley the flashing of the avenging angel's sword.

This word "Sedan" had been like a veil abruptly torn aside. The landscape had become suddenly filled with tragedy. Those shapeless eyes which the bark of trees delineates on the trunks were gazing—at what? At something terrible and lost to view.

In truth, that was the place! And at the moment when I was passing by thirteen months all but a few days had elapsed. That was the place where the monstrous enterprise of the 2d of December had burst asunder. A fearful shipwreck.

The gloomy pathways of Fate cannot be studied without profound anguish of the heart.

CHAPTER II.

On the 31st of August, 1870, an army was reassembled, and was, as it were, massed together under the walls of Sedan, in a place called the Givonne Valley. This army was a French army—twenty-nine brigades, fifteen divisions, four army corps—90,000 men. This army was in this place without any one being able to divine the reason; without order, without an object, scattered about—a species of heap of men thrown down there as though with the view of being seized by some huge hand.

This army either did not entertain, or appeared not to entertain, for the moment any immediate uneasiness. They knew, or at least they thought they knew, that the enemy was a long way off. On calculating the stages at four leagues daily, it was three days' march distant. Nevertheless, towards evening the leaders took some wise strategic precautions; they protected the army, which rested in the rear on Sedan and the Meuse, by two battle fronts, one composed of the 7th Corps, and extending from Floing to Givonne, the other composed of the 12th Corps, extending from Givonne to

Bazeilles; a triangle of which the Meuse formed the hypotenuse. The 12th Corps, formed of the three divisions of Lacretelle, Lartigue, and Wolf, ranged on the right, with the artillery, between the brigades formed a veritable barrier, having Bazeilles and Givonne at each end, and Daigny in its centre; the two divisions of Petit and Lhéritier massed in the rear upon two lines supported this barrier. General Lebrun commanded the 12th Corps. The 7th Corps, commanded by General Douay, only possessed two divisions—Dumont's division and Gilbert's division—and formed the other battle front, covering the army of Givonne to Floing on the side of Illy; this battle front was comparatively weak, too open on the side of Givonne, and only protected on the side of the Meuse by the two cavalry divisions of Margueritte and Bonnemains, and by Guyomar's brigade, resting in squares upon Floing. Within this triangle were encamped the 5th Corps, commanded by General Wimpfen, and the 1st Corps, commanded by General Ducrot. Michel's cavalry division covered the 1st Corps on the side of Daigny; the 5th supported itself upon Sedan. Four divisions, each disposed upon two lines—the divisions of Lhéritier, Grandchamp, Goze, and Conseil-Duménil—formed a sort of horseshoe, turned towards Sedan, and uniting the first battle front with the second. The cavalry division of Ameil and the brigade of Fontanges served as a reserve for these four divisions. The whole of the artillery was upon the two battle fronts. Two portions of the army were in confusion, one to the right of Sedan beyond Balan, the other to the left of Sedan, on this side of Iges. Beyond Balan were the divisions of Vassoigne and the brigade of Reboul, on this side of Iges were the two cavalry divisions of Margueritte and Bonnemains.

These arrangements indicated a profound feeling of security. In the first place the Emperor Napoleon III. would not have come there if he had not been perfectly tranquil. This Givonne Valley is what Napoleon I. called a "washhand basin." There could not be a more complete enclosure. An army is so much at home there that it is too much so; it runs the risk of no longer being able to get out. This disquieted some brave and prudent leaders such as Wimpfen, but they were not listened to. If absolutely necessary, said the people of the Imperial circle, they could always be sure of being able to reach Mézières, and at the worst the Belgian frontier. Was it, however, needful to provide for such extreme eventualities? In certain cases foresight is almost an offence. They were all of one mind, therefore, to be at their ease.

If they had been uneasy they would have cut the bridges of the Meuse; but they did not even think of it. To what purpose? The enemy was a long way off. The Emperor, who evidently was well informed, affirmed it.

The army bivouacked somewhat in confusion, as we have said, and slept peaceably throughout this night of August 31, having, whatever might happen, or believing that

they had, the retreat upon Mézières open behind it. They disdained to take the most ordinary precautions, they made no cavalry reconnaissances, they did not even place outposts. A German military writer has stated this.³⁷ Fourteen leagues at least separated them from the German army, three days' march; they did not exactly know where it was; they believed it scattered, possessing little unity, badly informed, led somewhat at random upon several points at once, incapable of a movement converging upon one single point, like Sedan; they believed that the Crown Prince of Saxony was marching on Chalons, and that the Crown Prince of Prussia was marching on Metz; they were ignorant of everything appertaining to this army, its leaders, its plan, its armament, its effective force. Was it still following the strategy of Gustavus Adolphus? Was it still following the tactics of Frederick II.? No one knew. They felt sure of being at Berlin in a few weeks. What nonsense! The Prussian army! They talked of this war as of a dream, and of this army as of a phantom.

During this very night, while the French army was sleeping, this is what was taking place.

³⁷ *M. Harwik.*

CHAPTER III.

At a quarter to two in the morning, at his headquarters at Mouzon, Albert, Crown Prince of Saxony, set the Army of the Meuse in motion; the Royal Guard were beat to arms, and two divisions marched, one upon Villers-Cernay, by Escambre and Fouru-aux-Bois, the other upon Francheval by Suchy and Fouru-Saint-Remy. The Artillery of the Guard followed.

At the same moment the 12th Saxon Corps was beaten to arms, and by the high road to the south of Douzy reached Lamécourt, and marched upon La Moncelle; the 1st Bavarian Corps marched upon Bazeilles, supported at Reuilly-sur-Meuse by an Artillery Division of the 4th Corps. The other division of the 4th Corps crossed the Meuse at Mouzon, and massed itself in reserve at Mairy, upon the right bank. These three columns maintained close communication with each other. The order was given to the advanced guards to begin no offensive movement before five o'clock, and

silently to occupy Fouru-aux-Bois, Fouru-Saint-Remy, and Douay. They had left their knapsacks behind them. The baggage-wagons did not stir. The Crown Prince of Saxony was on horseback on the heights of Amblimont.

At the same time, at his headquarters at Chémery, Blumenthal was having a bridge built over the Meuse by the Wurtemberg division. The 11th Corps, astir before daylight, crossed the Meuse at Dom-le-Mesnil and at Donchery, and reached Vrignes-sur-Bois. The artillery followed, and held the road from Vrigne to Sedan. The Wurtemberg division kept the bridge which it had built, and held the road from Sedan to Mézières. At five o'clock, the 2d Bavarian Corps, with the artillery at its head, detached one of its divisions, and sent it by Bulson upon Frénois; the other division passed by Noyers, and drew up before Sedan, between Frénois and Wadelincourt. The artillery of the Reserve was drawn up on the heights of the left bank, opposite Donchery.

At the same time the 6th Cavalry Division was sent from Mazeray, and passing by Boutancourt and Bolzicourt, reached the Meuse at Flize; the 2d Cavalry Division quitted its encampment, and took up its position to the south of Boutancourt; the 4th Cavalry Division took up its position to the south of Frénois; the 1st Bavarian Corps installed itself at Remilly; the 5th Cavalry Division and the 6th Corps were posted to observe, and all in line, and order, massed upon the heights waited for the dawn to appear. The Crown Prince of Prussia was on horseback on the hill of Frénois.

At the same moment, upon every point of the horizon, other and similar movements were taking place from every side. The high hills were suddenly overrun by an immense black army. Not one shout of command. Two hundred and fifty thousand men came silently to encircle the Givonne Valley.

This is what the circle consisted of,—

The Bavarians, the right wing, at Bazeilles on the Meuse; next to the Bavarians the Saxons, at La Moncelle and Daigny; opposite Givonne, the Royal Guard; the 5th Corps at Saint Menges; the 2d at Flaigieux; the Wurtembergers at the bend of the Meuse, between Saint Menges and Donchery; Count Stolberg and his cavalry at Donchery; in front, towards Sedan, the 2d Bavarian Army.

All this was carried out in a ghostly manner, in order, without a whisper, without a sound, through forests, ravines, and valleys. A tortuous and ill-omened march. A stealthy gliding onwards of reptiles.

Scarcely could a murmur be heard beneath the thick foliage. The silent battle swarmed in the darkness awaiting the day.

The French army was sleeping.

Suddenly it awoke.

It was a prisoner.

The sun rose, brilliant on the side of God—terrible on the side of man.

CHAPTER IV.

Let us review the situation. The Germans have numbers on their side; they are three against one, perhaps four; they own to 250,000 men, and it is certain that their attacking front extended for 30 kilomètres; they have on their side the positions, they crown the heights, they fill the forests, they are covered by all these escarpments, they are masked by all this shade; they possess an incomparable artillery. The French army is in a valley, almost without artillery and without supplies, utterly naked beneath their hail of lead. The Germans have on their side the ambuscade, and the French have only on their side heroism. Death is glorious, but surprise is profitable.

A surprise, that is the true description of this brilliant exploit.

Is it fair warfare? Yes. But if this is fair, what is unfair warfare? It is the same thing.

This said, the story of the Battle of Sedan has been told.

I should have wished to stop there. But I cannot. Whatever horror the historian may feel, History is a duty, and this duty must be fulfilled. There is no incline more inexorable than this: to tell the truth; he who ventures on it rolls to the very bottom. It must be so. The guardian of Justice is doomed to justice.

The Battle of Sedan is more than a battle which has been fought; it is a syllogism which is completed; a formidable premeditation of destiny. Destiny never hurries, but it always comes. At its hour, there it is. It allows years to pass by, and at the moment when men are least thinking of it, it appears. Of this character is the fatal, the unexpected catastrophe named Sedan. From time to time in History, Divine logic makes an onslaught. Sedan is one of those onslaughts.

Thus on the 1st of September, at five o'clock in the morning the world awoke under the sun, and the French army under the thunderbolt.

CHAPTER V.

Bazeilles takes fire, Givonne takes fire, Floing takes fire; the battle begins with a furnace. The whole horizon is aflame. The French camp is in this crater, stupefied, affrighted, starting up from sleeping,—a funereal swarming. A circle of thunder surrounds the army. They are encircled by annihilation. This mighty slaughter is carried on on all sides simultaneously. The French resist, and they are terrible, having nothing left but despair. Our cannon, almost all old-fashioned and of short range, are at once dismounted by the fearful and exact aim of the Prussians. The density of the rain of shells upon the valley is so great, that "the earth is completely furrowed," says an eye-witness, "as though by a rake." How many cannon? Eleven hundred at least. Twelve German batteries upon La Moncelle alone; the 3d and 4th *Abtheilung*, an awe-striking artillery, upon the crests of Givonne, with the 2d horse battery in reserve; opposite Doigny ten Saxon and two Wurtemberg batteries; the curtain of trees of the wood to the north of Villers-Cernay masks the mounted *Abtheilung*, which is there with the 3d Heavy Artillery in reserve, and from this gloomy copse issues a formidable fire; the twenty-four pieces of the 1st Heavy Artillery are ranged in the glade skirting the road from La Moncelle to La Chapelle; the battery of the Royal Guard sets fire to the Garenne Wood; the shells and the balls riddle Suchy, Francheval, Fouru-Saint-Remy, and the valley between Heibes and Givonne; and the third and fourth rank of cannon extend without break of continuity as far as the Calvary of Illy, the extreme point of the horizon. The German soldiers, seated or lying before the batteries, watch the artillery at work. The French soldiers fall and die. Amongst the bodies which cover the plain there is one, the body of an officers on which they will find, after the battle, a sealed note, containing this order, signed NAPOLEON: "To-day, September 1st, rest for the whole army."

The gallant 35th of the Line almost completely disappears under the overwhelming shower of shells; the brave Marine Infantry holds at bay for a moment the Saxons, joined by the Bavarians, but outflanked on every side, draws back; all the admirable

cavalry of the Targueritte Division hurled against the German infantry, halts and sinks down midway, "annihilated," says the Prussian Report, "by well-aimed and cool firing."³⁸ This field of carnage has three outlets; all three barred: the Bouillon road by the Prussian Guard, the Carignan road by the Bavarians, the Mézières road by the Wurtembergers. The French have not thought of barricading the railway viaduct; three German battalions have occupied it during the night. Two isolated houses on the Balan road could be made the pivot of a long resistance; but the Germans are there. The wood from Monvilliers to Bazeilles, bushy and dense, might prevent the junction of the Saxons, masters of La Moncelle, and the Bavarians, masters of Bazeilles; but the French have been forestalled: they find the Bavarians cutting the underwood with their bill-hooks. The German army moves in one piece, in one absolute unity; the Crown Prince of Saxony is on the height of Mairy, whence he surveys the whole action; the command oscillates in the French army; at the beginning of the battle, at a quarter to six, MacMahon is wounded by the bursting of a shell; at seven o'clock Ducrot replaces him; at ten o'clock Wimpfen replaces Ducrot. Every instant the wall of fire is drawing closer in, the roll of the thunder is continuous, a dismal pulverization of 90,000 men! Never before has anything equal to this been seen; never before has an army been overwhelmed beneath such a downpour of lead and iron! At one o'clock all is lost. The regiments fly helter-skelter into Sedan. But Sedan begins to burn; Dijonval burns, the ambulances burn, there is nothing now possible but to cut their way out. Wimpfen, brave and resolute, proposes this to the Emperor. The 3d Zouaves, desperate, have set the example. Cut off from the rest of the army, they have forced a passage, and have reached Belgium. A flight of lions!

Suddenly, above the disaster, above the huge pile of dead and dying, above all this unfortunate heroism, appears disgrace. The white flag is hoisted.

Turenne and Vauban were both present, one in his statue, the other in his citadel.

The statue and the citadel witnessed the awe-striking capitulation. These two virgins, one of bronze, the other of granite, felt themselves prostituted. O noble face of our country! Oh, eternal blushes!

³⁸ *The Franco-German War of 1870-71. Report of the Prussian Staff, page 1087.*

CHAPTER VI.

This disaster of Sedan was easy of avoidance by any other man, but impossible of avoidance for Louis Bonaparte. He avoided it so little that he sought it. *Lex fati*.

Our army seemed expressly arranged for the catastrophe. The soldier was uneasy, ignorant of his whereabouts, famished. On the 31st of August, in the streets of Sedan, soldiers were seeking their regiments, and going from door to door asking for bread. We have seen the Emperor's order announcing the next day, September 1st, as a day of rest. In truth the army was worn out with fatigue. And yet it had only marched by short stages. The soldier was almost losing the habit of marching. One corps, the 1st, for example, only accomplished two leagues per day (on the 29th of August from Stonne to Raucourt).

During that time the German army, inexorably commanded and driven at the stick's end like the army of the Xerxes, achieved marches of fourteen leagues in fifteen hours, which enabled it to arrive unexpectedly, and to surround the French army while asleep. It was customary to allow oneself to be surprised. General Faily allowed himself to be surprised at Beaumont; during the day the soldiers took their guns to pieces to clean them, at night they slept, without even cutting the bridges which delivered them to the enemy; thus they neglected to blow up the bridges of Mouzon and Bazeilles. On September 1st, daylight had not yet appeared, when an advance guard of seven battalions, commanded by General Schultz, captured La Rulle, and insured the junction of the army of the Meuse with the Royal Guard. Almost at the same minute, with German precision, the Wurtembergers seized the bridge of La Platinerie, and hidden by the Chevalier Wood, the Saxon battalions, spread out into company columns, occupied the whole of the road from La Moncelle to Villers-Cernay.

Thus, as we have seen, the awakening of the French Army was horrible. At Bazeilles a fog was added to the smoke. Our soldiers, attacked in this gloom, knew not what death required of them; they fought from room to room and from house to house.³⁹

It was in vain that the Reboul brigade came to support the Martin des Pallières brigade; they were obliged to yield. At the same time Ducrot was compelled to concentrate his forces in the Garenne Wood, before the Calvary of Illy; Douay, shattered, fell back; Lebrun alone stood firm on the plateau of Stenay. Our troops occupied a line of five kilomètres; the front of the French army faced the east, the left faced the north, the extreme left (the Guyomar brigade) faced the west; but they did not know whether they faced the enemy, they did not see him; annihilation struck without showing itself; they had to deal with a masked Medusa. Our cavalry was

excellent, but useless. The field of battle, obstructed by a large wood, cut up by clumps of trees, by houses and by farms and by enclosure walls, was excellent for artillery and infantry, but bad for cavalry. The rivulet of Givonne, which flows at the bottom of the valley and crosses it, for three days ran with more blood than water. Among other places of carnage, Saint-Menges was appalling. For a moment it appeared possible to cut a way out by Carignan towards Montmédy, and then this outlet reclosed. This refuge only remained, Sedan; Sedan encumbered with carts, with wagons, with carriages, with hospital huts; a heap of combustible matter. This dying agony of heroes lasted ten hours. They refused to surrender, they grew indignant, they wished to complete their death, so bravely begun. They were delivered up to it.

As we have said, three men, three dauntless soldiers, had succeeded each other in the command, MacMahon, Ducrot, Wimpfen; MacMahon had only time to be wounded, Ducrot had only time to commit a blunder, Wimpfen had only time to conceive an heroic idea, and he conceived it; but MacMahon is not responsible for his wound, Ducrot is not responsible for his blunder, and Wimpfen is not responsible for the impossibility of his suggestion to cut their way out. The shell which struck MacMahon withdrew him from the catastrophe; Ducrot's blunder, the inopportune order to retreat given to General Lebrun, is explained by the confused horror of the situation, and is rather an error than a fault. Wimpfen, desperate, needed 20,000 soldiers to cut his way out, and could only get together 2000. History exculpates these three men; in this disaster of Sedan there was but one sole and fatal general, the Emperor. That which was knitted together on the 2d December, 1851, came apart on the 2d September, 1870; the carnage on the Boulevard Montmartre, and the capitulation of Sedan are, we maintain, the two parts of a syllogism; logic and justice have the same balance; it was Louis Bonaparte's dismal destiny to begin with the black flag of massacres and to end with the white flag of disgrace.

[39](#) *"The French were literally awakened from sleep by our attack." —Helvic.*

CHAPTER VII.

There was no alternative between death and opprobrium; either soul or sword must be surrendered. Louis Bonaparte surrendered his sword.

He wrote to William:

"SIRE, MY BROTHER,

"Not having been able to die in the midst of my troops, it only remains for me to place my sword in your Majesty's hands.

"I am, your Majesty,

"Your good Brother,

"NAPOLEON.

"Sedan, 1st September, 1870."

William answered, "Sire, my Brother, I accept your sword."

And on the 2d of September, at six o'clock in the morning, this plain, streaming with blood, and covered with dead, saw pass by a gilded open carriage and four, the horses harnessed after Daumont fashion, and in this carriage a man, cigarette in mouth. It was the Emperor of the French going to surrender his sword to the King of Prussia.

The King kept the Emperor waiting. It was too early. He sent M. de Bismarck to Louis Bonaparte to say that he "would not" receive him yet awhile. Louis Bonaparte entered into a hovel by the side of the road. A table and two chairs were there. Bismarck and he leant their arms on the table and conversed. A mournful conversation. At the hour which suited the King, towards noon, the Emperor got back into his carriage, and went to the castle of Bellevue, half way to the castle of Vandresse. There he waited until the King came. At one o'clock William arrived from Vandresse, and consented to receive Bonaparte. He received him badly. Attila has not a light hand. The King, a blunt, straightforward man, showed the Emperor a pity involuntarily cruel. There are pities which overwhelm. The conqueror upbraided the conquered with the victory.

Bluntness handles an open wound badly. "Whatever was your reason for declaring this war?" The conquered excused himself, accusing France. The distant hurrahs of the victorious German army cut short this dialogue.

The King caused the Emperor to be reconducted by a detachment of the Royal Guard. This excess of ignominy is called "an escort of honor."

After the sword the Army.

On the 3d of September, Louis Bonaparte handed over to Germany 88,000 French soldiers.

"In addition" (says the Prussian report):—

"One eagle and two flags.

"419 field-guns and mitrailleuses.

"139 heavy pieces.

"1079 vehicles of all kinds.

"60,000 muskets.

"6000 horses, still good for service."

These German figures are not wholly to be depended upon. According to what seems useful at the moment, the Aulic chancellors swell or reduce the disaster. There were about 13,000 wounded amongst the prisoners. The numbers vary in the official documents. A Prussian report, reckoning up the French soldiers killed and wounded in the battle of Sedan, publishes this total: *Sixteen thousand four hundred men*. This number causes a shudder. For it is that very number, *Sixteen thousand four hundred men*, which Saint Arnaud had set to work on the Boulevard Montmartre upon the 4th of December, 1851.

Half a league to the north-west of Sedan, near Iges, the bend of the Meuse almost forms an island. A canal crosses the isthmus, so that the peninsula becomes an island. It was there that there were penned, under the stick of the Prussian corporals, 83,000 French soldiers. A few sentinels watched over this army.

They placed but few, insolently. These conquered men remained there ten days, the wounded almost without care, the able-bodied almost without nourishment. The German army sneered around them. The heavens took part against them. The weather was fearful. Neither huts nor tents. Not a fire, not a truss of straw. For ten days and ten

nights these 83,000 prisoners bivouacked with their heads beneath the rain, their feet in the mud. Many died of fever, regretting the hail of bullets.

At length ox-wagons came and took them away.

The King placed the Emperor in some place or other. Wilhelmshöhe.

What a thing of rags and tatters, an Emperor "drawn" like a fowl!

CHAPTER VIII.

I was there, thoughtful. I looked on these fields, these ravines, these hills, shuddering. I would willingly have insulted this terrible place.

But sacred horror held me back.

The station-master of Sedan came to my carriage, and explained to me what I had before my eyes. I seemed to see, through his words, the pale lightnings of the battle. All these distant cottages, scattered about and charming in the sun, had been burnt; they were rebuilt; Nature, so quickly diverted, had repaired everything, had cleaned everything, had swept everything, had replaced everything. The ferocious convulsion of men had vanished, eternal order had resumed its sway. But, as I have said, the sun was there in vain, all this valley was smoke and darkness. In the distance, upon an eminence to my left, I saw a huge castle; it was Vandresse. There lodged the King of Prussia. Halfway up this height, along the road, I distinguished above the trees three pointed gables; it was another castle, Bellevue; there Louis Bonaparte surrendered to William; there he had given and delivered up our army; it was there that, not being immediately admitted, and requested to exercise a little patience, he had remained for nearly an hour silent and wan before the door, bringing his disgrace, and waiting until it should please William to open the door to him; it was there that before receiving it the King of Prussia had made the sword of France dangle about in an ante-chamber. Lower down, nearer, in the valley, at the beginning of a road leading to Vandresse, they pointed out to me a species of hovel. There they told me, while waiting for the King of Prussia, the Emperor Napoleon III. had got down, livid; he had gone into a little courtyard, which they pointed out to me, and where a dog growled on

the chain; he had seated himself on a stone close by a dunghill, and he had said, "I am thirsty." A Prussian soldier had brought him a glass of water.

Terrible end of the *coup d'état*! Blood when it is drunk does not quench the thirst. An hour was to come when the unhappy one should utter the cry of fever and of agony. Disgrace reserved for him this thirst, and Prussia this glass of water.

Fearful dregs of Destiny.

Beyond the road, at a few steps from me, five trembling and pale poplars sheltered the front of the house, the single story of which was surmounted by a sign. On this sign was written in great letters this name: DROUET. I became haggard. *Drouet* I read *Varennes*. Tragical Chance, which mingled Varennes with Sedan, seemed to wish to bring the two catastrophes face to face, and to couple in a manner with the same chain the Emperor a prisoner of the foreigner, to the King a prisoner of his people.

The mist of reverie veiled this plain from me. The Meuse appeared to me to wear a ruddy reflection, the neighboring isle, whose verdure I had admired, had for its subsoil a tomb: Fifteen hundred horses, and as many men, were buried there: thence the thick grass. Here and there, as far as could be seen, mounds, covered with ill-favored vegetation, dotted the valley; each of these patches of vegetation marked the place of a buried regiment. There Guyomar's Brigade had been annihilated; there, the Lhéritier Division had been exterminated; here the 7th Corps had perished; there, without having even reached the enemy's infantry, had fallen "beneath the cool and well-aimed firing," as the Prussian report states, the whole of General Margueritte's cavalry. From these two heights, the most elevated of this circle of hills, Daigny, opposite Givonne, which is 266 mètres high, Fleigneux, opposite Illy, 296 mètres high, the batteries of the Prussian Royal Guard had crushed the French Army. It was done from above, with the terrible authority of Destiny. It seemed as though they had come there purposely, these to kill, the others to die. A valley for a mortar, the German Army for a pestle, such is the battle of Sedan. I gazed, powerless to avert my eyes, at this field of disaster, at this undulating country which had proved no protection to our regiments, at this ravine where all our cavalry were demolished, at all this amphitheatre where the catastrophe was spread out, at the gloomy escarpments of La Marphée, at these thickets, at these declivities, at these precipices, at these forests filled with ambushes, and in this terrible shadow, O Thou the Invisible! I saw Thee.

CHAPTER IX.

Never was there a more dismal fall. No expiation can be compared with this. The unprecedented drama was in five acts, so fierce that Aeschylus himself would not have dared to dream of them. "The Ambush!" "The Struggle!" "The Massacre!" "The Victory!" "The Fall!" What a tangle and what an unwinding! A poet who would have predicted it would have seemed a traitor. God alone could permit Himself Sedan.

Everything in proportion, such is His law. Far worse than Brumaire, it needed a more crushing retribution than Waterloo.

The first Napoleon, as we have said elsewhere,⁴⁰ had faced his destiny; he had not been dishonored by his punishment, he fell while steadfastly regarding God. He came back to Paris, appraising the deserts of those men who overthrew him, proudly distinguishing amongst them, esteeming Lafayette and despising Dupin. He had at the last moment wished to see clearly into his destiny, he had not allowed his eyes to be bandaged; he had accepted the catastrophe while making his conditions with it. Here there is nothing of the kind. One might almost say that the traitor is struck treacherously. In this case there is a bad man who feels himself in the grasp of Destiny, and who does not know what it is doing to him. He was at the summit of his power, the blind master of an idiot world. He had wished for a *plebiscitum*, he had had one. He had at his feet this very William. It was at this moment that his crime suddenly seized him. He did not struggle against it; he was the condemned man who obeys his sentence. He submitted to everything which terrible Fate exacted from him. Never was there a more docile patient. He had no army, he made war; he had only Rouher, he provoked Bismarck; he had only Leboeuf, he attacked Moltke. He confided Strasburg to Urich; he gave Metz to Bazaine to guard. He had 120,000 men at Châlons; he had it in his power to cover Paris. He felt that his crime rose up there, threatening and erect; he fled, not daring to face Paris. He himself led—purposely, and yet despite himself; willing and yet unwilling, knowingly and yet unknowingly, a miserable mind, a prey to the abyss—he led his army into a place of annihilation; he made that terrible choice, a battle-field without an outlet; he was no longer conscious of anything, no more of his blunder of to-day than of his crime of former days; he must finish, but he could only finish as a fugitive; this condemned one was not worthy to look his end in the face; he lowered his head, he turned his back. God executed him in

degrading him. Napoleon III. as an Emperor had a right to thunder, but for this man the thunder was ignominious—he was thunderstruck in the back.

[40](#) "*L'Année Terrible.*"

CHAPTER X.

Let us forget this man, and let us look at Humanity. The invasion of France by Germany, in 1870, was a night effect. The world was astonished that so much gloom could come forth from a people. Five black months—such was the siege of Paris. To create night may prove Power, but Glory consists in the creation of daylight. France creates daylight. Thence her immense human popularity. To her Civilization owes the dawn. The human mind in order to see clearly turns in the direction of France. Five months of darkness, that is what, in 1870, Germany succeeded in giving to the Nations; France has given to them four centuries of light.

To-day the civilized world more than ever feels the need which it has of France. France has proved this by her danger. The ungrateful apathy of Governments only increased the anxiety of nations. At the sight of Paris threatened, there arose among the peoples dread that their own heads were in danger. Would they allow Germany to go on? But France saved herself quite alone. She had only to rise. *Patuit dea.*

To-day she is greater than ever. What would have killed another nation has hardly wounded her. The darkening of her horizon has rendered her light more visible. What she has lost in territory she has gained in radiancy. Moreover, she is fraternal without an effort. Above her misfortune there is her smile. It is not on her that the Gothic Empire weighs. She is a nation of citizens and not a flock of subjects. Frontiers? Will there be any frontiers in twenty years? Victories? France counts in her past victories of war, and in her future victories of peace. The future belongs to Voltaire, and not to Krupp; the future belongs to the book, and not to the sword. The future belongs to life, and not to death. There is in the policy opposed to France a certain amount of the tomb; to seek life in the old institutions is a vain task, and to feed upon the past is to bite the dust. France has the faculty of giving light; no catastrophe, political or military,

will deprive her of this mysterious supremacy. The cloud passes away, the star is seen once more.

The star possesses no anger; the dawn bears no malice. Light is satisfied in being light. Light is everything; the human race has no other love. France knows herself beloved because she is good, and the greatest of all powers is to be loved. The French revolution is for all the world. It is a battle perpetually waged for Right, and perpetually gained for Truth. Right is the innermost part of man; Truth is the innermost part of God. What can be done against a revolution which has so much right on its side? Nothing. To love it. That is what the nations do. France offers herself, the world accepts her. The whole phenomenon lies in these few words. An invasion of armies can be resisted; an invasion of ideas cannot be resisted. The glory of barbarians is to be conquered by humanity; the glory of savages is to be conquered by civilization; the glory of darkness is to be conquered by the torch. This is why France is desired and assented to by all. This is why, having no hatred, she has no fear; this is why she is fraternal and maternal; this is why it is impossible to lessen her, impossible to humiliate her, impossible to irritate her; this is why, after so many ordeals, after so many catastrophes, after so many disasters, after so many calamities, after so many falls, incorruptible and invulnerable she holds out her hand to all the peoples from above.

When our glance rests on this old continent, stirred to-day by a new breath, certain phenomena appear, and we seem to gain a glimpse of that august and mysterious problem, the formation of the future. It may be said, that in the same manner as light is compounded of seven colors, civilization is compounded of seven peoples. Of these peoples, three, Greece, Italy, and Spain, represent the South; three, England, Germany, and Russia, represent the north; the seventh, or the first, France, is at the same time North and South, Celtic and Latin, Gothic and Greek. This country owes to its heaven this sublime good fortune, the crossing of two rays of light; the crossing of two rays of light is as though we were to say the joining of two hands, that is to say Peace. Such is the privilege of this France, she is at the same time solar and starry. In her heaven she possesses as much dawn as the East, and as many stars as the North. Sometimes her glimmer rises in the twilight, but it is in the black night of revolutions and of wars that her resplendence blazes forth, and her aurean dawn becomes the Aurora Borealis.

One day, before long, the seven nations, which combine in themselves the whole of humanity, will join together and amalgamate like the seven colors of the prism, in a radiant celestial arch; the marvel of Peace will appear eternal and visible above civilization, and the world, dazzled, will contemplate the immense rainbow of the United Peoples of Europe.

THE END.