

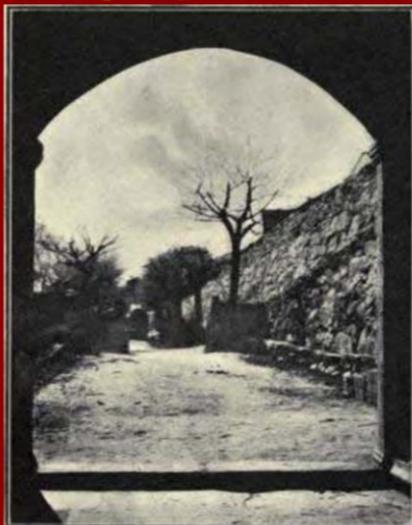
ANNE OF THE BARRICADES

The Complete Crockett

The Galloway Raiders

digital edition

European/World fiction



ANNE OF THE
BARRICADES

S.R.CROCKETT

Galloway Raiders Digital Edition

First Published by Hodder & Stoughton in 1913.

This Galloway Raiders digital edition published in 2021 is part of a decade long project (2012-2022) to bring the works of Samuel Rutherford Crockett (1859-1914) together in one place. The Complete Crockett comprises 66 published works, re-edited and re-formatted by volunteer labour to the highest standard.

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INTRODUCTION

Crockett spent much of the last two years of his life in France, dying there in April 1914. *Anne of the Barricades* is one of two novels published in 1913 which is set in France during the period 1869-71. An earlier novel *Men of the Mountain* (1909) covers the same period, though it is set mostly on the Swiss/French border. In *Anne*, the setting is Paris and more specifically, the Paris Commune during the fall of the 2nd Empire and the rise of the 3rd Republic.

While these events of 150 years ago may be little known to us today, on publication they were in events known of in living memory and indeed Crockett's youthful travels in Europe came less than a decade after the events. His understanding of and interest in them is therefore in the realm of contemporary politics rather than history. He had written of this period much earlier, indeed a section set in the Paris Commune is included in the pirated *Galloway Herd* (1895) but it is in this latter period of his life that he reflects more fully upon them.

Of the two novels published by Hodder & Stoughton in 1913 on this subject, *Anne* is the more serious. Indeed one might see *Anne* as the historic romance with the emphasis on history and *A Tatter of Scarlet* as an adventure romance.

Anne of the Barricades is foremost the story of ordinary people facing extraordinary circumstances. Crockett is uncompromising on the bloodiness and cruelty of war but also foregrounds the love relations. His style is more Dumas than Hugo and

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as usual his plot is complex till the end.

Anne opens on November 5th 1869 and takes the reader through to the 'Red Dawn' in 1871. He begins with three main female characters, but this is whittled down to two, who represent different sides of a very complex political situation. Of the women, Anne (Anais) is a Scottish migrant while Nini is a French opera singer. Anais allies herself with the Commune while Nini supports the establishment. The third woman, Louise Michel, who disappears out of the picture early on is a radical anarchist. *La Grande Louise* (29 May 1830 – 9 January 1905) is an historic figure whereas the other two women are fully fictional.

Throughout the novel nearly all the characters seem conflicted as they attempt to live by their principles. The 'hero' Jean de Larzac is conflicted between the two main female characters and Crockett makes it clear that while Anne allows her ideals to prevail (and dies for them on the barricades) Nini puts personal love before idealism. The reader is offered a choice. Neither option is given full authorial approval. The story starts off lightly, but gets darker as it progresses.

While the fictional characters take the foreground, there is deep historic research and the inclusion of many historic characters and events throughout. A knowledge of the Franco-Prussian war and the Fall of the 2nd Empire is helpful to get the most out of the story. A roll call of the historic figures includes: Henri Rochefort producer of *La Lanterne* a subversive magazine smuggled from Brussels; Victor Noir, a French journalist, shot and killed by Prince Pierre Bonaparte who was a cousin of the French Emperor Napoleon III; Assi, the

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organiser of Cruezot Ironworks strike; Raoul Rigault a journalist and French revolutionary who led a ruthless police operation during the Paris Commune of 1871 (but saved Pierre-Auguste Renoir from a firing squad); Adolphe Thiers, executive head of the provisional national government, Le Boeuf aka Edmond Leboeuf (5 December 1809 – 7 June 1888) minister of war promoted to Marshal of France; General Claude Lecomte, French general killed by the National Guard of the Paris Commune; Louis Charles Delescluze (2 October 1809 – 25 May 1871) French revolutionary leader, journalist, and military commander of the Paris Commune; Louis-Nathaniel Rossel (9 September 1844 – 28 November 1871) a French army officer and politician who became the only senior French officer to join with the Paris Commune, playing an important role as Minister of War; François Jourde who paid the National Guards thus supporting nearly 500,000 Parisians during the Paris Commune and Joseph Vinoy (10 August 1803 – 27 April 1880) who held important commands in the army of Versailles during the Paris Commune. There are also several important French novelists mentioned, including Victor Hugo and Alphonse Daudet. It is clear then that Crockett had done his research and drew heavily from history as it was known at the time.

Crockett does not offer a full critique of the Commune. His theme is about the dangers of rebellion in itself. He observes how the ideals of the Commune are reduced to bloody killing but has little time for the establishment position. He draws details and comparisons between those supporting the failing regime, Communists and Anarchists. Vitaly, we see how these groups existed in the 19th century,

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which is quite different to our conceptions of them today.

While there is much less of his trademark natural description, with the novel being firmly set in urban Paris, there is still much small detail. For example, we learn of the introduction of absinthe into Parisian culture.

Anne is written in the third person and retains a level of detachment above its companion, *A Tatter of Scarlet*, published in the same year. That novel is written from the first person and in some respects takes a more personal approach to the themes of rebellion and idealism. It is worth reading both for comparison – and if the subject matter of the period grabs you, reading *Men of the Mountain* as well will be an additional pleasure.

Cally Phillips

April 2022.

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CHAPTER ONE

A POLICE LESSON

From the door you looked along the unpleasantly greasy building, all bare pine planking and shoulder-polished whitewash, damp as a tomb, nude in summer, and pearly with that unpleasant sweatiness which all police edifices seem to exude. This was the school-room of Miss Anais Severine Decies, and her class was in session at that very moment.

No towsy-headed infants these, to move kindergartenwise to the tinkle of a cottage piano, no innocent girls with flower faces angelically upturned. No, Mademoiselle Anne, as every one called her at the Prefecture of Police, had other lambs to handle.

Batches of one hundred picked policemen of the Paris force at a time – all learning as hard as they could to understand and to speak so much of the English language as their calling required – that and no more.

Anais Severine, daughter of a sometime colonel of the Scots Guards, had the masterful blood that alone could impress such men. She had only been two days with the present lot, but already the men were conscious that they could not play with Mademoiselle Anne. ‘Forty-eight,’ she said imperiously to a huge agent of the peace who had addressed her as ‘thou,’ ‘how often must I tell you, Forty-eight, that in English “thou” is only used in poetry and in prayer? You have no need of either – at least in English, when regulating the traffic in the Rue de Rivoli. You – *you* – YOU!’ she repeated, her voice mounting at each repetition of the pronoun.

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'Do you hear, YOU?'

'YOU - YOU - YOU!' chorused the class delightedly, pointing weather-reddened fingers at the teacher. Forty-eight was still upon his feet, a huge hulk of a man, an Auvergnat of innermost Auvergne.

'But if I would say a word to the Good Lady of Clermont?' he queried with sham innocence, trying Mademoiselle Anne up to the limit of her patience for the benefit of his comrades.

'Speak to the Good Lady in the "Chee-chee" of the Puy,' snapped Anais, 'she is of your country and will understand the patois! Sit down, Forty-eight!'

'And why is all this?' demanded another. 'Which way to the Arc de Triomphe - to the Place de la Concorde - to the Sainte Chapelle? What is the, sense of it?'

'Ask your superiors,' cried Mademoiselle Anne in the quick stinging French of Paris. 'The Emperor pays me to teach you, as he pays you to keep his capital in order. Both of us earn our salaries very indifferently, but if I had a baton like you, perhaps I could get something into your thick heads. As it is, only about half-a-dozen of you can count up to four without making at least two mistakes!'

'Von—Two—Tree—,' chorused the class promptly, proud to show its progress. There was some noise at the back of the hall, the reason of which they divined without turning their heads. The class did not turn; they were men of discipline.

But Anais clapped her hands and laughed, careless and unconscious.

'Two wrong out of three,' she said. 'Now please listen - no, not with your mouth, Twenty-five! Shut that, please!'

And she gave the English numerals, clear as so

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many, silver bells.

'Mademoiselle,' said Twenty-five politely, 'you must pardon us - we are only gendarmes. We cannot whistle like the birds in spring.'

'Can any of you say "The," "These," "Those," "Three," "Thirty"?'

A tall young fellow rose from the back benches and repeated the test words perfectly.

'Ah,' said Anais after a long look at him, 'your mother must have been English - mine was French. I must handicap you, or, better still, you can help me to teach, Thirteen. When the lesson is done, you will take Thirty-three and Forty-eight in hand. They are in your beat, and before the next lesson you will see that they can say their numerals. You hear, Thirteen?'

'I hear, Miss.'

Anais was on the point of saying, 'There is no reason for your coming to these elementary lessons in English - you speak the language perfectly.' But she reflected that the young fellow might have other reasons. He might have got himself excused from an unpleasant duty—a *corvée* as he would call it, and the couple of hours on the benches of the classroom might be the best resting-place of his day.

So, with her usual tolerance for the perquisites of others, Anais held her tongue, and allowed Thirteen to explain his conduct to his superiors as he chose.

Anais had early banished the verb "to love" from her curriculum. It was altogether too popular with the policemen, and led to misunderstandings. She substituted the verb "to go," less popular but decidedly more useful. She rattled off sentences of English, and demanded unexpectedly, swooping upon an unattentive pupil, 'Now, Thirty-eight, what

did I say?’

In the open space behind the benches, occasional frock-coated men high in office whispered and watched. To them Mademoiselle Anne paid no attention. Now it was M. Claude, the famous Imperial Director of the Sureté – following him the dark spare figure of his enemy, M. Piètri, the friend of the Highest in the Land, who, it was said, had his entries by day and by night at the Château.

But once late in the afternoon, while Mademoiselle Anne was admonishing a rather unattentive class with cutting words, and while punishments pelted thick as hail, a sudden hush fell on that sweating, greasy hall. No gendarme moved. The unwonted still affected even Miss Anne. She did what she had never done before. She looked up and beheld a wan, waxen-faced man with prominent eyes, grey head and moustache invincibly pointed, passing along behind the rows of heads bent over well-scribbled notebooks.

Her heart gave a leap. There he was at last, the man of the Second December, the man who had waded through blood to a throne, against whom her father had fought, the man to whom she owed her position and her daily bread.

Nevertheless, she continued her lesson with an effort, praised Thirteen, rebuked the irrepressible Forty-eight, while the Emperor halted, leaning heavily on the arm of stout General Le Boeuf, formerly his son's tutor, now his Minister of War. There was a bitter smile at the corners of his mouth, but so far as Anais was concerned, his prominent eyes gleamed kindly in her direction.

He murmured some words to his companions, nodded his head, and limped away through an

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opposite door. It was her first sight, of the man her father had taught her to hate, Napoleon III, Emperor of the French, the Man of Destiny, now sick and very sore-hearted.

The idea of the police classes had been his. He had recently held a universal Exhibition, and for six months the streets of Paris had been crowded with English and Americans. These had continued to arrive and abide even after the Exposition had closed its doors. They had discovered what a pleasant place Paris was in the days of the Liberal Empire.

So the Man of Mystery had resolved to encourage these visitors to his capital. They overflowed his recently-built quarters. They dried the plaster in his new hotels. He loved to look at them promenading from his palace windows. There was something settled and solid about England. The Queen had sat firmly on her throne when he was a friendless exile in London, and there she would sit (if she lived so long) scores of years after he had disappeared. In France it was different.

There were many things to trouble this ivory-faced man in the early months of 1869. True, he had essayed a plebiscite and had amassed an enormous majority, largely by the care of his prefects. But here in Paris he was conscious that he must walk gingerly as on the lava-crust of a volcano.

Miss Anne's lesson was over at last. Forty-eight was ordered to take the copy-books and lock them up, which he did smiling broadly, shoving and knocking about his comrades like ninepins, if they were in the least slow in giving them up. For thus Forty-eight magnified his office.

Presently he stopped, saluted, and said to

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Mademoiselle Anne, 'I have to report Sixteen and Twenty-three for insubordination.'

Anais gravely entered these numbers in a notebook, and stood silent observing the zeal of Forty-eight, who was now making up for the faults he was inclined to at the expense of his more diligent companions.

Then Anais Severine locked away her own books, her chalk and pointer, in a tall cupboard in the wall, and slid the key into her pocket. Her pupils were a merry set of rascals, especially the Corsicans, of which race the majority was composed. But, when they got there first, they were apt to make hay of her scholastic stock-in-trade. Then she lifted the little morocco case into which she had slid the exercises of the day. She placed it under her arm, made a little bow to the class, and at the signal the whole hundred of stalwart gendarmes of the Second Empire stood up in their places and gravely saluted. There was no more of the give-and-take of the recitation hour. The Empress herself could not have been more respectfully received.

'*Au revoir*, Miss Anne!' said Forty-eight, turning from the wall-press with the key in his hand. But there was a general feeling that Forty-eight took too much upon himself, and would need to be taught a lesson. The rest stood fixed at the salute till Miss Anne had tripped down the bare wooden steps, and closed the door of her own private room - there to put on her hat and veil, before going out to wait for the yellow Montmartre omnibus.

Every man knew all about Anais - her broken-down father who had once been a high English officer and the friend of royalty in his own country, who now lived on his daughter's scanty earnings,

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and plotted against the very hand that had fed him. Miss Anne, they whispered, was also a Republican and read the *Lanterne* regularly - nay, helped to spread it through the capital after its perilous trip across the frontiers of Belgium.

But little they cared for that, these jolly policeman. She belonged to them. She was their Miss Anne, and there was not one among them who would have cried 'Holà' had they caught her climbing into one of the windows of the Tuileries at one o'clock of a dark morning. Her father was a different matter.

In his house on the heights of Montmartre he received and sometimes sheltered the most noted perturbators of the Empire, and only the most strict protection, filtered down from On High, had kept him from a cell in Mazas, or even from La Petite Roquette.

Anais went out into the keen air of the Paris November day. She sniffed the river fog. It was penetrating and raw, but Anais knew, as she drew her scarlet wrapper closer round her throat, that it would be clear as a bell on the windy summits of Montmartre, when the time came for her to get off the 'bus at the corner of the Rue Lepic, and turn on her heel eastwards towards the village-like quiet of the Rue des Rosiers. Number Four of that street was her destination.

As she halted for a moment before crossing the bridge to draw her blue cloak, hooded and lined with red, closer about her, a voice said quite close to her ear, 'This has fallen out well, Anais. Now I shall come home with you and see your father.'

'It would be wise of you, Jean, to stay where you are, seeing you are in uniform.'

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However, Anais showed no astonishment. She was accustomed to such sudden appearances. But to-day the tall young officer of the Artillery had not had the time to change into the dark-grey mufti he favoured, and his uniform made him the more remarkable.

She had known Jean de Larzac all her life - known him as a devoted ally in his boyhood, and more recently she had almost persuaded him to drop the aristocratic "de" from his name, and in addition had considered him as a trustworthy big brother any time these fifteen years.

But then Miss Anais Severine Decies, having no brothers after the flesh, did not know what real brothers were like. Real brothers do not hurry to meet their sisters, from the Ecole Militaire to the Ile de la Cité, in order to convey them in rickety 'buses to the heights of Montmartre.

And indeed when she thought about it, Anais did not suppose that they did. But she instinctively felt it was all right that Jean should do it.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE SALON OF THE REDS

They had a long way to go - almost to the end of the route, and Anais was so well known that on her journey down the conductor would wait for her at the corner of the Rue Lepic. Nay, he would descend in order to help her out himself, and if any *sergent de ville* happened to be watching, he would wave him an amicable salute as he remounted, which signified as clear as any spoken words, 'There, you can report what you like about me, but you can't say that I have not taken good care of your Miss Anne!'

For on the line of canary-yellow omnibuses from the Hotel de Ville to the windmills of Montmartre Miss Anne was a great person, protected alike by the Imperial police and by the reddest of the Reds in Belleville and Montmartre.

Jean de Larzac's escort was therefore quite superfluous, and though many men envied him his favour and his good looks, none thought he was half good enough for Mademoiselle, who could rap the haughtiest gendarme in Paris over the knuckles with her pointer or give an inspector a page of English grammar to learn by heart like a naughty school-boy.

Nor could any deny that Anais and her tall escort looked well in company, and it was not generally supposed along the route that the red breeches with the broad stripes of gold were on their way to see old Monsieur le Colonel Decies, who though a foreigner meddled so much with politics.

The ripple of mirth, contagious, contemptuous, irresistible, which chased each other over the face of

Mademoiselle Anne were quite reason enough for any man. And when the Parisian - aristocrat, bourgeois, or workman - sees two young people enjoying each other's society, he does not philosophise about the matter. He sighs, smiles, and wishes that he too were young again. Above all, he is not shocked. He does not turn away his head. He looks after them as long as he can and shares to the utmost in the pleasant sight.

So in the corner of the swaying omnibus Anais and Jean let the town stream behind (and below) them. There was, so much to talk over. They had not met since the night before, and though by no means in love with Jean de Larzac, Anais could talk more freely to him than to any other. That is, if he would only be sage and not - well, he knew as well as she did what their compact was, and how it was his business to keep it.

Jean did not always see this as dearly as Anais. He had a treacherous memory, easily deviated to masculine follies. But the warning chill in the voice of Mademoiselle Anne speedily recovered him, and instantly, with a 'Pardon' and a thrust-back of his well-drilled shoulders, he was his own man again.

Every policeman, gendarme, city policeman, plain-clothes man, detective, or what not of that complicated Imperial machine knew the pair, and their sympathies were all with Miss Anne. That she should be in love with any one man struck them as a jest. They loved her not singly but by battalions.

'She only amuses herself,' they said. 'And pray why not? She has worked hard enough all day, and God knows it is not gay up there in the Rue des Rosiers - a museum of old armour and fusty conspirators!'

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But Jean de Larzac did not quite see things in that light.

All day long he had been waiting and plotting for the chance - now fearing that some detail of service might detain him beyond Miss Anne's immutable hour, now keeping out of his Colonel's way, owing to a mania that worthy gentleman had for having letters copied after hours. Jean had the misfortune to write a good hand for a Frenchman, very legible and print-like - not at all 'distinguished,' as his comrades told him frankly, but rather like that of a cashier at the Louvre.

However, Jean had smoked many cigarettes in a snug corner behind the sergeant's mess, a place flanked on one side by a water barrel, and on the other by the remains of an arbour constructed in Louis Philippe's time by some long-forgotten officer's lady. His excellent comrade Riffard, who wrote an equally good hand, was with him in hiding also, and the sergeant-major Auguste Long (who was in the confidence of the Colonel, but still more in theirs) could inform them through the open window above, of anything that it behoved them to know.

Here these two young men idled away most of the afternoon; Jean de Larzac frequently consulting his watch, for reasons perfectly understood by the other. At last Jean announced that he must be off, and was out of barracks before Riffard could rise. Then he stretched himself lazily, looked after Jean compassionately, and sauntered towards the "Cercle des Officiers" humming the refrain of:

*'T'd rather be false to Fifty
Than stupidly tied to One.'*

It was a popular ditty at the time, and Riffard, like

the other young officers of crack regiments quartered in Paris, had for a while done his best to live up to it. But Jean was his friend, and he allowed no one to amuse himself with Jean's affairs during his absence. Riffard was a keen swordsman and an excellent shot, so few cared to meddle with him. When Jean de Larzac was present, he could take care of himself. But it was well known that they only fought in pairs. The other man's second would have to deal with Riffard (or Jean, as the case might be), so the officers left them a good deal to themselves. They found the much-quoted Cécile and Léonie and Toto unspeakably tiresome. They only drank at their meals and never tasted absinthe, the dangerous green Swiss bitters just then beginning to be popular. They persisted in coming out first and second alternately at the service examinations. Altogether they were two strange young men, probably tainted with radical opinions (had they not, for a while, dropped the aristocratic particle from their names?) but decidedly well able to take care of themselves.

Nevertheless they were respected. For the pair were well-born and brilliant, a credit to the regiment, always at the head of the Artillery *concours* for the whole army. And Frenchmen, of whatever politics, have not the British officer's instinctive fear and hatred of exceptional brilliance in their regimental equals.

The Rue des Rosiers came all too soon. Miss Anne would have shaken hands on the irregular pavement of worn round cobble-stones like a crooked street in the far provinces.

'I will come in and see your father if I may!' said Jean; 'I have something to talk to him about.'

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Anais looked keenly at the young man, was somehow reassured, and turning her back on the roadway passed into the quiet of the garden, at the bottom of which, bowered in creepers and trees, stood the pavilion which was numbered officially Rue des Rosiers 4.

Anais shrugged her shoulders and moved on ahead, leaving the officer of Artillery to follow as seemed good to him. Once she looked over her shoulder and murmured, 'Keep close to me, Jean, or you will frighten all my father's friends. They have little love for the uniform.'

'I am sorry,' said Jean, 'but the fact is, I dared not go back to my room to change it, for fear that the Colonel would pounce upon me to copy his silly letters.'

She beckoned him forward with sisterly amity.

'I will protect you,' she said, 'but please do you keep your spurs from jingling - and, here - give me your sword to leave down-stairs.'

Jean seemed uncertain as to whether he ought to obey this last command. But Anais stamped her foot and declared, 'You are not going upstairs with all that ironmongery for people to fall over. I will lock it safely up with my street wraps and my hat. Now are you content?'

Jean undid his sword and handed it to Anais as if it had been that of a defeated general. She took it smilingly. He watched her as she moved towards the half-open door of the hall cupboard where boots, wraps and cloaks were seen arrayed.

A confused murmur came to them from above, the murmur of many voices, some raised as if in anger, strident and piercing - others continuing evenly without slack or pause, as if arguing a point,

or pressing a conclusion home upon a reluctant listener.

Anais pointed upwards with her chin, with what Larzac thought a divine gesture, at once sweet and scornful. Then she shrugged her shoulders.

'Poor father,' she murmured, 'he thinks that his house is a very head centre of sedition, and that every man is a De Rochefort or a Blanqui, when there are at least half-a-dozen up there who will repeat every word at the prefecture to-night, one hurrying to get ahead of the other.'

It was a long, somewhat bare room, taken over furnished from many former occupants. As judged by the chairs and sofas, the original base had been the red velvet and gilt upholstery of the First Empire. But many of these were now decrepit, and supported themselves with precarious indigence against the wall or were wedged into corners. The lack of a fourth leg to a couch was sometimes forgotten in the heat of argument, but the atmosphere of the salon was so charged with electricity that the person dismounted picked himself up unconcernedly, without discontinuing his argument. And what was more remarkable still, nobody laughed. All were conducting discussions of their own, and chairs and sofas were quite minor considerations.

They rustled the last number of the *Lanterne*. They talked of Badinguet and the Spanish Woman, of the Mioche, by which last they meant the Prince Imperial. They shouted separately when they disagreed and in chorus when they agreed.

Colonel Decies, a tall grey-haired man whose hook nose dominated a frock-coat suit shabbily correct, came over and kissed his daughter. Then he

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shook hands with Jean de Larzac, gazing with a dubious owlshness at his uniform.

'They will not like it,' he whispered to his daughter.

'Go and put on your old uniform - the Scots Guards, you know - that will keep Jean in countenance. Why, have you forgotten, it is - well, say your grandfather's birthday!'

'Nonsense, that was in January!'

'Well then, it is Guy Fawkes' Day, at any rate, and ought to be marked by something special. How can you ever expect to teach this crowd of international plotters anything of the feelings of an English gentleman, unless you keep our festivals? Be quick, papa! Jean and I will see about the wine.'

The tall man rubbed the scanty furze on his chin thoughtfully.

'Well, if there is to be wine, Anne, why, there is no more to be said, of course. I shall put on my Guards' uniform and appear by Jean's side. He is our guest, and perhaps it is well to show the world that our movement draws its recruits even from the trusted ranks of the army of the tyrant!'

He spoke theatrically, with a certain mouthing of his words, straightening his back and throwing forward his chest as if he had still been the fine young Guardsman of thirty years ago doing his service at St. James's and Buckingham Palace under the eyes of the maids of honour. During his absence Anais beckoned Jean into a little parlour which she had had fitted up as her study. There was a tiny desk in one corner by the window of good old rosewood. A bunch of faded flowers stood upon it, pushed far back by exercises and heavily scrawled 'punishments,' the work of Forty-eight and his kind.

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For not only did the pupils of Anais do these things from a sense of discipline and because they knew that her work was under the highest protection, but, since she was the only woman who could browbeat, and abuse them, they put a sort of coquetry into fulfilling the tasks she laid upon them. Some score were under the impression that they were in love with her. To them she seemed so bright and hard-hearted and distant, so impossible in her plain English dress, well-dressed hair, and neat boots, that they would have died for her with greater alacrity than for the Empress herself.

It was by no means the first time that Jean had been there. He and Anais sat down in their accustomed places; Anais throwing herself back in a low chair and crossing her legs as she knitted her fingers behind her head and threw back her bare arms, from which the wide sleeves of the house-dress fell away to the elbow. Jean sat erect on a high stiff chair, watching her, his hands knitted as over the sword-hilt which was locked in the cupboard downstairs. He was aware of curious tugs at his heart-strings, of the desire to do something great for this girl and to do it immediately - which he knew was rank foolishness. Had he not for a long season undertaken to think no more of love in connection with Anais Severine Decies? They were to be only brother and sister 'pour le bon.'

It was apparently a good solution, but Jean de Larzac felt that it was as full of emptiness as the shell of a well-sucked egg.

A little way off the turmoil of the revolutionary, salon rose and fell - the shrill note of a woman's voice occasionally dominating it in strident rebuke.

The young man telegraphed a query with his eye-

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brows, and Anais answered wearily:

'It is only Louise - a school teacher like myself. She has been in prison, and has been silent so long. Perhaps that is the reason. Louise Michel - La Grande Louise, you have heard of her. She gives away all she has. But then, you know, she has no father to look after, nor has she all these people to provide for.'

She started, and rose hastily to her feet.

'I forgot the wine! Come down to the cellar and help me to draw it off. It is father's favourite - real Midi wine, Châteauneuf du Pape, which he gets in casks from Avignon every year.'

Impulsively she held out her hand to hasten him, and the pair ran down the cellar stairs as they might have done a dozen years ago when they played 'Hide and Seek.'

CHAPTER THREE

ROCHEFORT'S BODYGUARD

Colonel Decies entered with his daughter's friend. He was in full Guards' uniform, and in spite of the lean pallor of his cheeks, looked remarkably handsome.

Jean, in his everyday Artillery kit, appeared common-place beside him.

'My father's birthday,' the Colonel explained, 'and besides, the day which is remembered all over my country as having delivered King and parliament from a terrible danger.'

'Ah, Guy Fawkes,' said a worn little man with a brush of black hair rising from his high brow; 'you do well to celebrate him. He was an excellent *compagnon* before his time - a little narrow in his views perhaps, but notwithstanding an anarchist without knowing it!'

'Henri, Henri!' the elder man reproached his guest affectionately, 'will nothing stop your tongue? This is Jean Larzac, who has shortened his name as you have done yours.'

'If you are not nice to him,' put in Anais, 'I shall call you viscount!'

The slim, strikingly haggard man made pretence to grovel at the threat, and kissed her hand penitently.

'Hush,' he said, 'Henri Rochefort is my name, neither more nor less. I swear it. Keep my guilty secret, and I shall be as amiable to your friend as a father confessor with a millionaire heiress to dispose of!'

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What are you doing out of Brussels?' demanded the girl; 'don't you know that there are those here who would sell you for eighteenpence to the Château, and that I myself am a stipendiary of the police?'

'Ah, little Anais, you are indeed the danger. The others are too much intimidated by my bodyguard to leave the room before I do, and then it will be too late'

'Your bodyguard, Henri?'

The fuzzy-haired man with the bossy brow of an over-clever child, indicated a couple of men who were busily going to and fro among the assembly. The butts of many revolvers protruded from their pockets. They displayed cartridges in handfuls.

These fellows held up half a regiment of frontier guards and as many peaceful custom-house officers in order to get my last *Lanterne* through. Now they are explaining what will happen to any one who betrays to Monsieur Claude the fact that I am in Paris. They are good fellows, but coming from Brabant, their methods lack some finesse. Still, they do what they can. I have therefore only you to fear - you and this young gentleman. Why, De Larzac! Is it possible? Our precious families made ewe-milk cheese on the same mountain - Shepherd Rochefort and Milkmaid Larzac, or t'other way about. I dare say there were *mésalliances*, and perhaps, who knows, you and I may be related, by right hand or left hand, what does it matter? The blood is the same.'

So the great pamphleteer rattled gaily on, never stopping to measure his words, nor yet their effect on those to whom they were addressed.

Anais, who knew his humour, always pulled him

up on the verge of his wilder flights, knowing that on the morrow, when he would need all his wits to escape the police traps laid for him, he would, if allowed to scintillate, be as useless as a burnt-out firework.

Jean de Larzac kept close to Anais and allowed himself to be amused. He knew that he did not risk a great deal by wearing his uniform in such a doubtful assembly. Every policeman in Paris, from the Prefecture to the Sûreté, knew that he went there because of Mademoiselle Anne, and all Paris gendarmes are kind and considerate when it comes to two young people hoodwinking an elder.

So Jean kept close to Anais, and she told him the names of those who came and went. How that tall chubby-cheeked shy youth was a certain Victor Noir. Nobody in particular when, as now, alive - a third-rate journalist merely, but destined when dead to become the most famous and important personage in France, and to give a final shake to a tottering imperial throne.

Yonder was Assi, who had organised the great Creuzot strike, a pretentious dark man of the Midi, falling naturally into poses, silent mostly to conceal his lack of instruction, but continually passing his hand through his dense curly locks till his fingertips glittered with grease.

Nobody took much notice of him, and presently he made some stammering excuse to his hostess, and went his way in search of more congenial society.

'He has much need to be in my class,' whispered Anais; 'I would at least teach him the elements of good manners.'

The wine was brought up, the neat little cashier

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of a great house, wise, rotund and comfortable, apparently a bourgeois of the bourgeoisie, helping Jean to bring it up from the cellar and keep tally of the bottles on a set of worn tablets hung from his watch-chain. His wife, with infinite respect, referred to him as 'Monsieur Jourde.' He had, it appeared, a cough, and he must not fatigue himself.

There was less joviality about the drinking of the toasts than Jean had expected. His host indeed drank deep, carefully watched by his daughter. But most of the others drank, as it were, with the lips only. They had no liberty in their potations. A rope seemed to be drawn tight about each Adam's apple. Some, like Rochefort and La Grande Louise, were consistent water-drinkers.

Still a good deal of Châteauneuf from the vineyards of Avignonnaise Popes was got through, and the toasts grew daring.

'To the Republic!'

'To the Commune!'

'Down with Badinguet and his crew!'

There seemed to be no end to them, and the armed Brabanters of Rochefort's bodyguard moved among the suspected spies, compelling them to their feet to propose some still more insulting and compromising sentiment. Jan and Joris from Brabant appeared to derive much satisfaction from this performance. At least they were never tired of repeating it, all the while caressing the hilts of every deadly weapon in their panoply. There could be no doubt that some confederate, perhaps Henri Rochefort himself, had indicated to them the most probable objects of their chase. White faces and anxious eyes told that the quarry was not ill chosen.

As the hours passed Anais grew restless. It was

quite time for the exile Rochefort to eclipse himself. But he was wilful, and for a long time showed no signs of moving. He had taken a fancy to Jean, and sat talking fortification with him. His long experience in Belgium had given him a clearer view of the future possibilities of Prussia.

'The smaller states would join her,' he said. 'Yes, they would fall over one another to help her, like people taking tickets for a Grisi night! And Saxony - Bavaria? They would do just like the rest. They know quite well that Austria could not stir hand or foot for them. And the fate of Hanover lies weary upon them! Bismarck has the cards in his hands. Yet our dreamy Emperor and his leathery pack of ministers see no farther than across the boulevards. Ah, if Morny were alive! He had his faults, but he was the only true son of his uncle!'

'It is time you were going, Henri,' said Mademoiselle sharply, in the tone she used to Forty-eight. 'We cannot have you hauled to prison from this house. Collect your Mamelukes and be off!'

Henri Rochefort bowed over her hand. 'So you, in whom I trusted, thrust me out into a cold world. But I do not complain. I turn the other cheek as the law bids.'

He presented his thin cheek, which Anais kissed laughingly.

'Now go,' she commanded, 'if you do not want us all to wake in Mazas to-morrow morning.' And with a daughter's tender familiarity she pushed him towards the door.

His armed bodyguards waited till his feet were well down the stairs, and then Joris announced that no one must leave the salon for a full half-hour. They would find the time pass quickly enough,

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because Mademoiselle Anne would sing to them the songs of her country.

'Stay where you are in case of accident,' said Jan more briefly to those over whom he kept watch. And then they clattered down the stone steps after their master, who stood in the hall cursing them ferociously because he had not been able to open the outer door which gave upon the street.

'We were at some pains that you should not,' said Joris; 'we shall go out together, all three abreast. So! Open, seneschal!'

The two swaggered out, weapons hidden under their wrap-rascals, while between them, slim and trim and unarmed in his frock-coat and tiny flat-brimmed opera hat, paced with sufficient dignity the most sought-after man in France, Henri Rochefort, pamphleteer and Journalist, presently guest of a still greater man, one Victor Hugo, dwelling in Brussels in the midst of the most reactionary society in Europe.

The half-hour of compulsory waiting was difficult to fill in. Three or four were manifestly uncomfortable on their chairs. They had visions of some one getting to the Prefecture of Police before them.

They were full to the gullet of the great news that Henri Rochefort, tribune of the people, was in Paris. They knew that their reward depended on how soon they could set the fine *limiers* of Monsieur Claude upon his track.

But a volley from the men who had held up a regiment was a very serious thing to face. And after all what was half-an-hour? The delay was the same for one as for another. They would all start equal, and then it would depend upon their heels and their

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luck which got first to the Ile de France.

It was not Anais but Jean who supplied the music. Anais needed her eyes for another purpose. She was resolved that Henri Rochefort should not be taken after leaving her house.

Oh, nobody would blame *her*, she knew that. But the Château did not look with the same favour upon her father, and she could not have the old man annoyed, his beliefs tampered with. So she kept her eyes upon the company, and especially upon those restless young men whom she had noticed occasionally kicking their heels about the corridors of the Prefecture of Police.

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CHAPTER FOUR

RAOUL RIGAULT

Jean was still playing. The minute hand of the ormolu clock on the mantelpiece was creeping slowly round to a mark, observed by all the uneasy young men. Anne, without relaxing any of her vigilance, leaned more deeply back into her chair, and with the swift movement habitual to her (and which to French eyes marked her as foreign), crossed her legs, so that her pretty foot was poised like a tit on a cornstalk, where, like that bird, it danced a dainty swaying minuet all by itself.

'Mademoiselle has by chance forgotten me?' said some one in her ear - a voice at which Anais started. It was the last voice she had expected to hear.

Mademoiselle Anne had never been afraid of any one in all her life, but somehow this thick, ill-instructed pachydermatous voice gave her cold shivers.

She had known Raoul Rigault when he was a young student, conceited and self-assured, with little education and no manners at all. He could not even sit and eat at table like any one else. He scattered his viands athwart in a crisis of revolutionary fury. He roared and spluttered till Jean could hardly refrain from kicking him downstairs. But this man was Anne's father's guest! A condemnation to prison under the late rigorous Empire had brought him consideration of a sort, and with it an entry to Number 4 of the Rue des Rosiers.

There was something about the man, too, which preserved him from being altogether despicable - the fatal look more common among women than men;

something of the fighting wild boar concealed under the manners and customs of the common pig.

Anais did not move nor reply. She only made a slight movement of her hand to indicate that she was attending to the music.

This angered the dark-bearded youth, whose skin still kept, by dint of careful unguents, and going out only after sundown, something of its interesting prison paleness.

'You have not a word for me - for me who love you,' he blurted out; 'all your thoughts are for that painted popinjay in the tyrant's uniform.'

Anais shrugged her shoulders. It was really not worth while talking to such a man. She had been over the ground so often. But as she was anxious not to move till the half-hour struck, she replied indolently, 'Jean de Larzac is a soldier. So is my father. Both are good republicans.'

'Then what does your good republican here wearing the tyrant's colours? Have you never heard of the "whiff of grape-shot" - of the fusilades of the Second December? It was that gentleman's regiment which shot down the people on both occasions. Doubtless there will be a third before long, and your friend will not be absent! He will do his best to blow us off the face of the earth and call it duty.'

Anais let the man talk. She understood his fury. It was because Jean was a gentleman, and still more because Rochefort had talked apart with him as a member of the same caste. Rigault hated rank and breeding, but especially the latter. It gave a man so enormous an advantage - especially with women.

'Mademoiselle Anne,' he said, more quietly, 'you are all I have to cling to. Do not cast me off. Let me be your friend. I ask no more. I have never known a

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good woman before. I know that I cannot speak as I ought to a young girl. But since I have had the privilege of coming here, of seeing you, something has turned over within me. I have been the Man of the Boulevard Saint-Michel, the conqueror of *cafés*. There I can speak and men will listen to me. Be kind to me and I shall yet do great things, terrible things, which, will make the world tremble.'

'I would rather,' said the young girl quietly, 'that you would attend to your business, which is to pass examinations!'

'Pshaw!' cried Rigault, 'I am made of no such common clay. One day I shall sit in the seats of the scornful, and be known as the greatest *policier* in Europe. Hébert and Marat will be counted children to me.'

Just then the clock chimed the half-hour, and promptly three or four young men made for the door.

Anais smiled. 'Oh, Solomon among magistrates,' she said tauntingly, 'if you are so wise, tell me for what purpose these young men left the room in such a hurry without even bidding me "good-evening"'

'I suppose they had some other engagement,' said Rigault, 'they would never dream of selling Henri Rochefort from this house. I easily understood that the boasting of the Brabanters was but a *blague*.'

'Then you misunderstood. Look at the minute hand of the time-piece. The half-hour has just struck.'

'Then I shall go and kill them!' The strident tones pierced the hum of talk.

'You will do nothing of the kind,' said the girl, catching him by the arm. 'Henri is quite safe. Be sure that if he said he needed half-an-hour, he

could content himself with fifteen minutes. Louise – oh, La Grande Louise, come here and help me to put some sense into this extremely foolish young man!’

Through all this Jean played on, dreamy sonatas of Beethoven chiefly, into which he tried to put his whole feeling for Anais. He felt sure that she was listening, the music hardly perceptible above the hum of talk. Yet if it came to her ear, Jean did not care for the rest. She knew the sonatas perfectly, though she would never play them to him, holding her own performances far inferior to his, as, in spite of their correction, they were indeed.

On hearing her name La Grande Louise came over at once, and sat down on the other side of Rigault with the air of a gendarme taking charge of a prisoner.

‘Has he been annoying you, Anais?’ she demanded. Anais laughed a little.

‘Oh, no – that is, not more than usual. Of course he has the usual mania of men, who think that women are herded together like farm lads at a village fair, waiting to be hired. But we must forgive him that, Louise. It is common to his stupid sex.’

‘Then he *has* annoyed you?’ The brows of Louise Michel drew together threateningly as she blinked upon Rigault, whom anger and excitement caused to appear more hirsute and commonplace than ever

No, not in the least,’ said Anais, spreading her hands abroad wearily.

‘Then why did you call me away from the propaganda?’ blurted out La Grande Louise. ‘I was in the midst of enrolling half-a-dozen hopeful recruits to the sacred army of anarchy.’

Hastily Anais explained. There were traitors in the camp. She herself had seen them sneaking by back-

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doors into the Prefecture of Police. Perhaps she ought to have mentioned it earlier. But though they had done nothing which she had taken hold of, she was sure of their treachery. They had waited the half-hour as ordered by the Brabanter, each with his eyes upon the clock-face. She had watched them.

'And yet you allowed them to escape?' cried Louise Michel. 'There are men here who would have choked the life out of them, drained their rascal flesh to the white -'

'Thank you, Louise, I quite believe it. But I will have nothing of that sort in my father's house. Life is hard enough for him as it is.'

'Then what am I to do for you, Anais?' said Louise Michel, suddenly mollified. Domestic affections and impulses were always strong in her, and it was said, that of all the women sent to New Caledonia after the Commune, she, though virgin, had ever the largest family to care for.

'This foolish young man wished to pursue the men who left hastily, as the clock struck, in order to kill them before they got their news to the Prefecture. Now Henri asked for half-an-hour, and there is no doubt that he would be out of reach of all police in five minutes. He has his entire army of *Lanterne* distributors at his back to say nothing of the two wild Brabanters.'

'Raoul Rigault,' said La Grande Louise gravely, 'shall come with me. I will watch over him, and give him better work to do than running after spies whom, if need be, he can deal with as well to-morrow as to-day. Anais, go you straight to bed. Your father and I will see the room clear, and I shall explain to them that it will be better to leave the Rue des Rosiers alone for a little. For there will be

trouble for all of us after Henri's escapade!

Anais was deeply grateful to Louise Michel. The demagogue and doctrinaire with the steaming hot brain could do the kindest things, especially to women.

Anais quietly said a word or two in Jean's ear as he sat at the piano. She turned over a sheet of music on the little estrade before him, music which he was not playing.

'Don't stop,' she murmured, 'play anything till they go. My father must wait, and La Grande Louise will take my place.'

Now Jean de Larzac did not like the famous revolutionary, and he made a slight involuntary grimace, which Anais caught.

'Love me, love my Louise,' she said, with a new firmness in her tone. 'She says I am tired and sends me off to bed. So be grateful. Good-night. Take care of yourself on your way home. You are in uniform, so Louise had better walk with you, at least as far as the Place Clichy.'

The next moment she was gone, and Jean played on – or rather his fingers did. As for himself, he was above, in the little north-looking room from which one could look out on the last straggling vineyards of Montmartre, the pear-trees, the northern apple orchards, and, best of all, upon the blue haze that made a great mystery of the deep valley, cut by the double silver link of the Seine, and lit to the north-east by the sombre glow from the iron foundries of St. Denis.

Anais would be looking at all this through her open casement. Jean knew it, but went on playing as he had been bidden, so softly that he did not disturb word of any spoken or whispered

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conversation about him

He was upstairs with Anais looking out upon the blue mist, the pearl-grey moon, the red fires of St. Denis and the pale splendours of the naked orchards darkly scaling the summit. And somehow it seemed to him as if, with a quick familiar gesture, Anais put her hand upon his shoulder as they both looked out of the window upon the still moonlit valley.

CHAPTER FIVE

NINI OF THE OPERA

A real hand was on his shoulder and he heard a voice that was quite unforgettable:

‘I am her friend, therefore I must be yours!’

The girl who bent over him was tall, fully developed deep-chested. She breathed force and health. She had that ruddy purple on her brown cheeks which is Italian rather than French. Jean told himself that he had seen her before. He was sure of it, yet he had not recognised her that night in the salon of the Rue des Rosiers.

Perhaps she had come in late. She might even have entered after he had sat down to play. ‘I have not had the honour,’ he murmured, half rising from his seat, but the hand that had rested on his shoulder kept him down.

‘We need no introduction from a third party, you and I. You play Mendelssohn like an angel, and to this audience you might as well play “Partant pour la Syrie.” But I am a musician also. Perhaps you have heard me sing. I am Nini Auroy, but my friends call me La Camarade. Still I shall be Nini to you if you like, as I am to Anais – to you two only. Do you accept?’

The young man could do no less than assent with the best grace possible. It was an invitation of a sort which cannot be declined. But all the same he thought it strange that he had not seen Nini Auroy before her very dear friend Anais went to bed. Clearly she had not been expected.

Two great Oriental eyes read his thought, and

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their owner answered as to an unspoken question.

'I was so sorry to miss my little Anne to-night – I was kept at the Opera-house till the very end of the piece. So, to my sorrow, I could not arrive earlier, and when I got here the little one was tired and had fled. It is my misfortune.'

'Yes, she was tired, I believe,' said Jean, who was a little tired himself of hearing his Anais called "little one" by somebody he had never heard of before.

'And no wonder,' said the cantatrice: 'she has been at work all day teaching those brutes of policemen. And for what? That her selfish old father may spend her money and his wine in entertaining a crew like this! Oh, I know – you need not talk to me. If I had a father like our precious Colonel, I should quickly leave him to entertain his revolutionaries as best pleased him.'

'Then why do you come to his house?' Jean demanded brusquely, still somewhat offended.

The girl laughed, and drew a chair closer to his music-stool.

'Oh, I won't compromise you, and I am not going to take offence,' she said, laughing lightly. 'We are going to be good friends, you and I. Else it will not be my fault.'

She laid a hand lightly, and as it seemed almost wooingly on his arm.

'If it comes to that, why do you come here?'

Jean felt himself blushing, and he mangled an entire passage of Gounod which he had gone on mechanically playing. He felt that the actress was laughing at him.

'I have heard and admired you in Grand Opera, but I think you would be more in place at the Opera Comique.'

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‘And pray, why?’

‘Because you are a *pince-sans-rire* – you laugh at me in your sleeve.’

‘Never,’ said the girl earnestly. ‘I am only Nini Auroy, and I make as much in a night as my adored Anne makes in a month, more shame to me. Yet after a tiring performance I find my way up here to see her. And for what? For the same purpose that you came, my brave Artillery Officer. See, I am not unexpected. I am “in the know,” as you would say in your English.’

She dangled a key before him, the key of the cupboard in which Anais had locked away his sword.

‘I am to give it to you, and then you shall see me home – ’

‘I think Louise Michel has been charged with that duty,’ said Jean, conscientiously. For in his heart of hearts he would rather have done without the escort of the great revolutionary.

‘Nonsense,’ said Nini Auroy, ‘she has forgotten all about you long ago. As I came upstairs I heard her inviting a trio of long-haired gentlemen to a *cabaret* near the Halles, there to finish the night and definitely to enrol themselves in the Grand Army. You should have heard hoe she rolls her *rr*’s – everything is Great or Grand – the *Grrrand* army, the Grrrand cause, the Grrrand Soir!’

She laughed a wicked little laugh.

‘Besides,’ she continued with a quaint characteristic little grimace, ‘I don’t think you will lose. My carriage is at the door. I will drive you home. My footman is Bibi le Bonhomme, who was once the Terror of La Villette and the Scourge of Monmartre. He is not yet forgotten. I should not

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dare to venture so far nor stay so late without him. Come, shall we be going?’

She gathered her silken skirts with a pleasant frou-frou about her. Jean, seeing that most of the people had departed, hastily shut down the piano lid, piled the music into its copper box, and bade good-night to his host, who hardly paused to notice him, being deeply engaged in a discussion as to how long a regular army, chosen from the people by conscription, could stand against a universal revolutionary uprising – a *levée en masse*, as he explained.

Jean was very glad to pass safely down the staircase without meeting La Grande Louise. He looked anxiously about, but he need not have troubled, for Nini Auroy had spoken the truth. La Grande Citoyenne was well on her way to the all-night *café* at the Halles with her three converts.

Jean was looking very handsome when the singer unlocked the door of the cupboard, and holding the blade in both hands stooped and kissed the gold braid of the hilt knot. Seeing his blush she added;

‘I am a forward young woman, no doubt. But I have just come from Vienna, where a pretty woman does that to bring good luck to the wearer of the sword. Now let me buckle it on.’

And with fingers rendered lissom and expert by stage-craft, Nini Auroy buckled on Jean’s sword before he offered his arm to conduct her to the carriage. A huge man with tawny moustache blown about by the wind opened the door, and grinned amicably at Jean, not in the least surprised by his uniform.

‘That is the Ex-terror of Montmartre, Bibi le Bonhomme. See that row of slouching young

ruffians who are watching my carriage and horses. Each one of them has a knife in his pocket, but watch them get off the pavement when Bibi le Bonhomme motions to them with the back of his hand. I never made a better investment than Bibi. He adores me, too, and is so considerate, that when he can keep the peace no longer he asks for two days' leave in which to get properly drunk and finish his numerous vendettas. I always allow him double, and on the eve of the fourth day, without fail, there is Bibi at my carriage door, his hand to his cap, clothed and in his right mind.'

They had a long way to drive to the dainty little house of Mademoiselle Nini in the Boulevard Haussmann near the Arc de Triomphe. They drove directly into a courtyard, where Jean, after thanking Nini and kissing her hand upon the stone steps of the outer staircase, started to walk back to his lodgings near the Caserne of Artillery.

He had many things to think about - not least, this girl who had so suddenly sprung from nowhere, whom he had seen only in the glitter of diamonds and footlights, or the clean blue intensity of limelight. Jean was a modest fellow, but in truth, who shall blame him if he lost his head a little as he thought?

What could she mean, this Nini Auroy? Why did she single him out from all those who were at the Rue des Rosiers? What would have happened if Mademoiselle Anne had been able to wait? In that case would they have driven home together?

He was not in the least untrue to his lifelong feeling for Anais, and he did not consider that there was anything of the merely fraternal on his side. But of a surety there was something that thrilled him in

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this girl's presence and manner. Yes, she had kissed his sword-hilt. He remembered how. What a dolt he was - he had only kissed her hand. Still, he had not done so ill for a beginning.

And then the vision of Anne at the window under the soft mother-of-pearl sky, which is the moonlight roof of Paris (or at least *was* in these old smokeless days) brought him to earth like a fowl pushed from a perch. What, after all, was this girl to him? He had known and loved Anais all his life, and he would belong to Anais to the end, whether she would marry him or not.

But he could not help thinking how Nini would laugh at his old-fashioned illusions. "Brother and sister - to be always like that! Ha! ha! ha!" The very notion would call down a thrilling flight of merry notes swirling and circling like doves from their windows at grain-throwing time.

And marriage? As to this he was not so sure. But something told him that just at present, at least, the seventh sacrament entered little into the calculations of Mademoiselle Nini Auroy, *premiere divette* at the Imperial Opera House.

Jean would have been glad to turn out again into the cool air. But, though it created no astonishment in the guard-room to see an officer enter late, awkward questions might be asked if he went out too early. Jean had therefore to resign himself to pitch and turn in the narrow confines of his camp bedstead. He was full of questions which he could not answer. He passed in review all he had done, and it now appeared to him that in every case he ought to have done the exact opposite.

There being no hope of sleep, Jean rose, lighted his green-shaded reading-lamp, and from a shelf

pulled down a huge technical volume which dealt strictly with the latest developments of his particular arm of the service. He settled down after a little. The habit of work exercised its natural effect, and it was not till his soldier servant brought in his coffee and crispy *croissants*, together with his letters, that Jean Larzac raised his eyes from *Methods for Obtaining a Flat Trajectory*.

Three letters lay before him, two small and the other in a heavily official envelope.

He opened the last and gazed at the contents in surprise.

“The General Le Boeuf desires Captain Jean de Larzac to call upon him this morning at the Ministry of War.”

The date was that of the day's newspaper.

He thrust his thumb into the thinner of the other two. He did so with a happy heart, for he recognised the handwriting of Anais.

“Be comforted” (it said). “I was sorry to run away so shamefully. I hope that you got home all safe, and that my brave Louise did not bore you too much. I am quite better to-day.”

The third, addressed in a smaller and more irregular hand, was wholly unknown to Jean. He could not even guess at the sender.

But he made a bound for his uniform greatcoat when he read, “By mistake I pushed my gloves into your pocket. Please do not lose them, nor tell any one. If you wish to be very good to me you can bring them to the Boulevard Haussmann this afternoon at four. That is, if you really care to see me again. I watched you till you were out of sight last night. Already it seems ages ago. - N. A.”

His military superior required his presence at ten

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o'clock. It was the hour for dressings down – “head-washing,” they called it in the French army. Then at four he was due in the Boulevard Haussmann to deliver to their owner that pair of twenty-button gloves, scented so strongly with lily of the valley.

Only Anais had asked nothing from him. She had written and posted the note in the early morning, so that his heart might be comforted about her, and that he might know she was better again. A gush of tenderness came over Jean. After all, only Anais mattered. Who was like Anais? Who so unselfish? Who so thoughtful? He imagined her stealing out under the sinking moon, alone, skirting the dubious walks, hurting her little light-shod feet on the cobbles of the Rue des Rosiers in order that he might have news of her by the first post in the morning.

The other would doubtless send her maid. He took up the gloves and tossed them into a corner of the room. Yet somehow he knew that he would keep the appointment.

At ten o'clock, in spotless *tenue*, he was in the Bureau of the General, the Emperor's favourite, soon to receive his baton of Marshal.

Le Boeuf cultivated towards his inferiors a bluff heartiness which made the beginnings of an interview invariably pleasant. But this grace before meat was reported to have little to do with the final result. An officer (so ran the tale) had been greeted like a long-lost brother, and after a pleasant call of a quarter of an hour, had been invited to leave his sword behind him and report himself at the Cherche-Midi prison as under provisional arrest.

Most army men preferred MacMahon's chill insolence or even the butcherly brutality of Bazaine.

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But there was a real suavity about his address to Jean de Larzac which would have told one more practised in the ways of the Bureau that Le Boeuf had received his orders.

Jean was invited to sit down. He did so and looked the great man in the face. He knew nothing in his conduct that he had the least wish to conceal - at least from a service point of view. But he was conscious of a certain thankfulness that he had not been seen home the night before by La Grande Citoyenne.

The General tapped with an ivory ruler on the desk, and seemed to be a little at a loss for words.

'Captain,' he began at last, 'I believe that you have the privilege of knowing well the highly respected young lady who teaches English to the gendarmes of Paris. Let me see, the name is Mademoiselle Anais Severine Decies, daughter of Colonel Decies, formerly of the Scots Guards of Her Majesty Queen Victoria.'

'I have known the young lady from her earliest youth,' said Jean; 'her father had a house near ours on the Causse de Larzac.'

'From which you derive your name,' said the General, bowing; 'the De Larzacs of Larzac are one of the oldest families in France. And my master, the Emperor, appreciates the fact that you wear his uniform. He is particularly pleased to see young men of good birth enter his service. They are sure of promotion.'

Jean bowed at the compliments, wondering what was to come of them. If he were to believe the common report as to the results of General Le Boeuf's interviews, he would probably sleep that night in a military prison. But Jean was noways cast

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down. The vision of the slender figure stealing along the dangerous ways of Montmartre to the pillar-letter-box in the ghostly glimmer of the earliest dawn, that he might be reassured as to her welfare, was worth all the Le Boeufs in the world. As for Nini Auroy, she counted for nothing - just then.

Jean was conscious of a glow of nobleness, as if he had successfully resisted a temptation - which, in, fact, he had been far from doing. He was secretly hoping that Armand his servant might not find the roll of twenty-button gloves and "pinch" them for the red hands of his sweetheart Katrina, the second maid of La Colonelle.

'Yesterday you met Mademoiselle Anne Decies at the Prefecture of Police, and went home with her to her father's house in Montmartre?'

'Certainly,' said Jean, 'everybody could see us. Many of the gendarmes saluted us! I see her home as often as possible. She has no one else.'

'You were, then, in uniform? Was not that an incorrection?'

'I did not think so. There is not an officer in Paris who does not know Mademoiselle Decies as being connected with the Prefecture. I had just come off duty, and I had no time to change into "civil."'

Le Boeuf nodded tolerantly. The innocent arrangements of young people, one of them English and emancipated, would find no severe critic in him.

'You are, of course, aware of the character of the assembly which her father allows to assemble about him in the Rue des Rosiers?'

Jean de Larzac smiled - a smile almost of complicity. Then he paused a moment before replying. 'I do not think that the police trouble themselves much about what goes on at the house

of Colonel Decies. Certainly Miss Anne had nothing to do with it, except to bring up the wine from the cellar, and that I helped with. I also played Beethoven on the piano for hours, though nobody listened. There was no treason that I heard, and Miss Anne went early to bed.'

'Precisely, but I have here four separate informations that you held converse with a notable ex-deputy and personal enemy of the Emperor's, M. Henri Rochefort, Viscount de Lucay. I do not interrogate you as a policeman; it is not my business; but would you tell me as a friend, in pursuance of your duty to your Emperor, what was the substance of the conversation between you?'

Jean laughed lightly. His conscience was easy, even a little contemptuous.

'M. de Rochefort was pleased to observe that his ancestors and mine had kept cows and sheep on the same Larzac plateau. He maligned several of his ancestresses and my own in order to establish a blood relationship between us. But he said nothing which gentlemen talking among themselves could take as matter of offence.'

'Nothing about politics, then?'

'Not at all, sir,' quoth Jean, 'that is a game a soldier should keep out of.'

And then remembering the reported position of the General as the second self of the Emperor, he added, 'at least one of my age.'

Le Boeuf paused a moment and turned over a score of papers. He had a difficult question to ask, and it was quite on the cards that this spirited young fellow might, in spite of discipline, send him to the devil. He moved uneasily in his comfortable bureau chair. But at last he got it out.

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‘Captain, I hate to intrude a question which may seem impertinence to you, even from one of my age – one who might be your father. However, I have no option but to ask you what are the exact relations between yourself and Mademoiselle Anais Severine Decies.’

‘She has no brother of her own,’ Jean explained frankly, ‘and Monsieur le General knows how much protection she has from her father. We have made a bargain between us that I shall act on all occasions as her brother – ’

‘Without overstepping the line?’ Le Boeuf smiled. ‘That is difficult, young man - I should say almost impossible for one of our nationality.’

‘Not with an English girl, sir!’ Jean eagerly explained, without taking offence. ‘They are trained in another school than our girls of the convent.’

‘But Mademoiselle Anne was at the Convent of l'Abbaye des Bois, if I mistake not?’

‘Yes, but she ran away from it, and since then she has completed her education by herself in London. She is more like a young man studying for a profession, than a *jeune fille* hedged in with our conventions.’

‘Then you have no thought of letting the relationship go farther than the idyllic one of brother and sister?’

‘I – I?’ quoth Jean boldly; ‘the difficulty does not come from me. I should change the terms of the agreement to-morrow if the matter were in my hands. You do not suppose, General, that a French officer – ’

‘ha, ha! – I misjudged you, boy. That is spoken like a man who has some right to wear the uniform. But the young lady is impervious?’

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'Absolutely.' Said Jean; 'I have no more right over her than her *concierge*. I am forbidden even to speak to her of . . . love!'

'And how did you get into barracks last night, young man, after your Miss Anne had disappeared, leaving you alone with the grand piano?'

Jean blushed. He had not meant to refer to this part of the story; but there was no help for it, so he blurted out:

'Mademoiselle Nini Auroy of the Opera was good enough to drive me back in her carriage.'

Le Boeuf's thick lips pursed with a sudden amusement which he restrained. They emitted a long mellow whistle, and a smirk of satisfaction creased his red good-humoured face. He looked like a man who has brought a difficult business to a satisfactory conclusion.

He rose and slapped the young officer jovially on the back, laughing the while like one who has made an amusing discovery.

'I'll wager my spurs there was no brother-and-sister clause in that last agreement.' He cried. 'You dog, for a junior captain of Artillery, you do yourself pretty well - the two prettiest women in Paris, by gad!'

He shook his head reminiscently.

'But you are right - ten times right. There was a time when I was as trim about the waist as you, and when girls smiled after me when I walked abroad. But now, if I would get a look from the dear creatures I must take one of my *aides* - that fool De Forrest or young Bertrand - and walk arm-in-arm with him before I can capture the ghost of a smile. It is true that under our good sovereign every soldier carries a potential baton in his haversack, but he

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has his best times before he needs to flourish it in the light of day. Ah, De Larzac, you are the fortunate man. What would I not give to be slim-waisted and a junior Captain again!

CHAPTER SIX

UNPLATONIC

Jean was left with many questions unsolved and a doubt upon his mind like a mist of the morning, dank and cheerless . . . Why had Le Boeuf given up his morning to him? What had made him so anxious as to his position, with Anais? Could any misfortune be hanging over her unknown to him? Le Boeuf? Le Boeuf was only a servant. Then it flashed across his mind that it was upon his arm that the Emperor had leaned when he visited the class-room of Mademoiselle Anne at the Prefecture of Police on the Île de France.

The Emperor? Jealousy ran hot and liquid through his veins. Tales of the secret door by which the Man of Mystery escaped, cloaked to the eyes, from the Tuileries, to return only in the grey dawn of the morning, flashed upon him. He had laughed at these with his brother officers, and rather considered that if the Emperor shook himself free for certain hours from the burdens of State and etiquette, he acted like a wise man.

But the quick rise of Anais into favour, the position created for her wholly by the Emperor's good pleasure, stuck somehow in his throat. He could not believe that she could willingly deceive him. In fact, to do so was at present impossible. He knew her whole life, but that something against her peace of mind and his was brewing, he did not doubt for a moment.

But, again, the Emperor was by all accounts wholly under the power of Margaret Bellanger, who

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permitted no rival near her throne. Perhaps the danger came from that side - certainly not from the Empress, lost in churchly devotion and the cult of her only son. For years she had let the Emperor "gang his ain gait." It was a long step since the famous proclamation in which Napoleon III had declared that, like the meanest of his subjects, he had left statecraft one side to wed the woman he loved. And perhaps Eugenie, drowned fathoms deep in Ultramontanism and Jesuitry, was hardly the woman to hold such a man as the Third Napoleon.

Her famous *mot* is still quoted: "Why complain? In the farmyard the hen is naturally monogame, Chanteclair polygame. There is no more to be said."

But whether this be true or only *ben trovato*, at any rate she raised no hindrance to the escapades of her husband, which waxed more numerous with his age and the crumbling state of his empire.

The thoughts that passed rapidly through Jean de Larzac's mind were quite as full of anarchy as if he had permitted himself to become a convert of La Grande Citoyenne in the Triperie Tardot behind the Halles at three o'clock of the morning.

But more sage ideas returned to him. He was offending the girl of girls by the very least of these thoughts. To him she ought to be the real Immaculate. Jean was all Ultramontane where Anais was concerned. Besides, what a fool he was! Did he not know all her life? Had he not known it for years? Of course he knew it - from the moment when she rose in that topsy-turvy house where no servant worth the name would stay a month, to cook her father's breakfast - a breakfast, too, which, to satisfy Colonel Decies, must be prepared in the English style - to the time when she betook herself wearily

upstairs and shut the door of her little chamber overlooking the wide valley with the lights sparkling distantly on the wooded heights of Herblay and Montmorency.

Yes, he knew it all. What a beast he was! How unworthy to be her brother! But nevertheless he thought of her unprotected position, of her father, old, pretentious, and useless, but to whom she clung with a touching fidelity. She had nobody except himself, Jean de Larzac, to depend upon, even as he had said to General Le Boeuf. Well, he would prove that his championship was no empty boast. He would kill the man who harmed her, were he the Emperor himself - kill him and afterwards blow out his own brains.

He would be her brother indeed, without thought of anything else. And (such a thing is man) because there was to be nothing but brotherhood in his love for Anne, he began to count upon his visit to the Boulevard Haussmann that afternoon as a kind of sweetmeat which his nobility of soul had both deserved and earned! Jean did not see (not having yet the age) how pitiful was his burden of sex, and what a poor business it was to be a man with trustful women believing in you.

Still, the fact that he had so clearly defined his position as brother and defender, not only to Le Boeuf but to Anais herself - the latter certainly upon compulsion - put the visit to the Boulevard Haussmann in a new and rosier light.

If he had been in any way bound to Anais it would have been different (so he told himself); but she herself had set up a barrier which he was not allowed to pass, on pain of the entire loss of her favour.

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The fact was that Anais made a mistake, an innocent and natural mistake, but still one which indubitably put her in the wrong. She wanted to keep Jean, yet she desired to hold him upon impossible terms of leasehold. In a small English town where women are scarce and plain, it might have been possible, but not in Paris and with a junior captain of Artillery as a subject.

Jean lunched at the Cafe Riche, where he bowed to the younger Daudet dreaming over a glass of sherbet, and swinging an immense *loupe* which was fixed in a tortoiseshell circle, mounted on a handle. With this he alternately scrutinised the *entrants* and talked with apparent seriousness to a number of adepts who had banded themselves about him. He was evidently telling a story about Morny at which they all laughed, but the face of the raconteur remained sad and grave, his clustered hair waving about his ears.

Jean called for paper and wrote a rapid letter to Anais. He was glad that she was better. Glad too, that she would have a complete rest, as it was not her day at the Prefecture. He was sorry not to see her, but she must not again risk the silent streets on the edge of the Butte in order to send him a note. Furthermore, he was always her brother and sure friend through all the years.

He signed and closed the letter, sending it out to be posted immediately; and then with a sigh he looked at his watch, and thought how he would get through the hours till four o'clock. He had been dispensed from military duties for the whole day by showing the summation of General Le Boeuf.

'Send me a messenger,' his Colonel had said, 'if you get a cell in the Cherche-Midi prison. You may

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even be "confined in a fortress." If so, try and make it Mont Valérien, where a big detail of "ours" is due back next month. Then you can be of some use to us.'

It was exactly four o'clock when Jean knocked at Nini Auroy's door in the Boulevard Haussmann. On ordinary days he would have been setting out to catch Anais at her exit from the Prefecture, one part of his mind on the gladness he would see in her face, and the other on the yellow omnibus which they must catch in order to be set down in the corner of the Rue Lepic!

But now, alas, he was only conscious of a curious elation and a sense of playing truant which rendered him a little light-headed. This feeling is not exclusively masculine.

It was Bibi le Bonhomme who opened the door to him - Bibi arrayed in the finest of canary-and-black coats with silver buttons, silk stockings, satin knee breeches, and with the broadest possible smile of welcome upon his face.

'Mademoiselle Nini is waiting for Monsieur the Captain!' he said. And to show that he looked upon the visitor as a friend of the house, he took away the Captain's hat and cane. Then with his head a little on one side, and a 'Permit me,' he drew forth a clothes brush and passed it lightly over Jean's coat. He produced a glass and a small comb for the moustache, which Jean used smilingly, and lastly he set the white camelia in his button-hole at a proper angle, gave a smart tailorly forward pull to his frock-coat, and nodded his head approvingly.

'Now you will do!' he said. 'Come this way.'

Most Parisian singers and actresses have mothers in permanence, more or less reliable. But after

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several attempts in which temper, mistakes in judgment, and a liking for absinthe played parts, Nini Auroy had taken the strong step of improvising her "mothers" as she went along.

She was rich enough to adapt herself to circumstances, and could choose, among a dozen or so, the one who was most suitable to the expected visitor. To-day she put her most complaisant and easily-got-rid-of "mother" at Jean's service, a dear old lady who helped her with her letters, saw importunate creditors, did disagreeable messages to the tyrant of the kitchen, and was in all respects a model of propriety.

'My mother!' said Nini, 'and the very nicest possible!'

'Madame!' murmured Jean, bowing low.

She dropped him a curtsy of the old school, while the colour upon her cheek (from Nini's carmine stick) and the corkscrew side-curls dipping and dimpling roused a fever of admiration in Jean's bosom to which he would doubtless have given expression. But Nini stopped him abruptly; nothing of that kind had any right to be wasted.

'Now, mother,' she said, 'you were telling me all you have to do. Captain Jean and I will be able to entertain one another; so don't let us stand in the way of your work.'

The "mother" on active service was already half-way through the door, for Nini was never one to stand upon ceremony.

'Tell Bibi that I am not at home to any one,' she called after her; 'not that it is necessary. He will know without being told.'

She glanced bewitchingly at Jean's hair and moustache. Then she clapped her hands.

'You have made a conquest,' she cried. 'I can see it. Bibi has been lending you his pocket-glass and moustache comb. He has taken a fancy to you. He does not do that to everybody, I can tell you; indeed, to very few.'

She folded her hands with comical seriousness upon the bosom of her dress. 'Alas, my poor heart,' she cried, 'Bibi was preparing you for conquest. He desires nothing so much as that I should marry and settle down. "A husband is such a protection to a lady in your position," he says. "Find me one then, Bibi!" I was once incautious enough to say. And ever since Bibi has transfixed my friends with his searching glances, and bought a private toilette set for the use of such as he considers eligible.'

'I fear,' said Jean, looking about him at the splendours of the *salle de réception*, 'that Bibi has made a mistake as to my eligibility. A junior Captain of Artillery is little suited to all this.'

Nini laughed like a peal of bells, suddenly jangled, perhaps to cover a certain embarrassment. The situation was strained; but in a moment Nini was again mistress of herself.

'Jean,' she said, 'do not be angry with Bibi. He does it all for my sake. I will wager that he knows the figure of your income better than you know it yourself, also all about the Larzac, what you said to Henri Rochéfort the other night, and all about your old castle up there where your old Camisard ancestors fought in their shirts till even Louis le Grand was glad to let them alone. Oh, Bibi knows it all!'

Jean de Larzac stared at the pretty girl before him with a new feeling of respect. He had not expected to hear historical details about his family from such

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pretty careless lips. He bowed, however, with something of the measured gravity he would have used to a lady of his own world.

Nini threw up her hands in horror.

'Oh, don't do that! I did not mean to frighten you,' she cried. 'Bibi's ideas on matrimony are not mine. I have no intention of conveying you under armed escort before the mayor of the arrondissement. I shall not marry you against your will, I promise you that. I have no calling for the holy state - at least I have not felt it yet. Come now, kiss and be friends. I would not have you terrified for the world. Bibi shall not touch you then. No, indeed, he shan't!'

So with hearty goodwill Nini stood on tiptoe and pressed a pair of very warm and soft lips under the young man's moustache, till for very shame he was obliged to return her kisses. He found the experience anything but unpleasing.

'There now, sit down,' she went on, 'here - beside me on the sofa. This is nice and cosy. We have cleared away all misconceptions, and - oh, have you brought me back my gloves?'

Jean produced them, and with them a little box containing a dozen pairs exactly the same which he had procured at Jouvin's on his way.

'Oh, you bad, wicked boy,' she cried, her cheek flushing for the first time. 'If ever you do the like again I shall be seriously angry with you. You shall not be my boy any more, but just like the rest who are always sending flowers and things to the theatre. I don't want you like that, or anything but what you are!'

And she passed her fingers through his crispy hair, rumpling it and bringing out the little curls which tendrilled low on his forehead. He blushed till

she cried, 'What a babe it is!' She patted his cheek with delight. 'There is not one of us who could blush like that - not if we had to grace a Roman triumph like Zenobia, clothed only in ankle-chains!

'Do you know,' she added, still caressingly, 'that you are delicious. I am more than three-quarters in love with you now. I own I was a little from the first, but then I thought that that dear Anais had a lien upon you, and I would not disturb her peace of mind for the world, not with so much as a rose-leaf. But since she assured me that you were only her brother, and could never be anything else - that you held your sword at her service, but that she could never, never think of you as anything but a friend, I called her a foolish hard-hearted little villain, and told her that I should do my best to make it up to you. And I have not succeeded so very badly thus far, have I?'

She took Jean de Larzac's glowing face for an answer.

'Only no more gloves, if you wish me to love you, Jean dear. Now you understand. Honey from the combs of your Larzac bees if you like. I am fond of honey, and can make it into pastilles - so good for the breath - a real kissing comfort. Also a cheese from your ewes, the ewes that never drink water. Some day you will take me to the old castle and show me all. But you will need to rig up a bath-room for me, though where you will get the water from on the Larzac, I do not know.'

'I think we can manage even that if you will come,' said Jean, whose heart was elated to base forgetfulness. He saw Nini's bright presence about the courtyard of his grey old castle, her mother knitting harmlessly in the shade by the well, while

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Nini and he, with many pauses and refreshments, climbed hand in hand to the top of the Marshal's tower - the tower from which young women and old men of his race had flung themselves headlong in order that there should be fewer mouths to feed so that the day of surrender to the Marshal de Villars might be put farther back. He felt that he had never cared enough about the old place on which were stamped the stern virtues of his Cévenol forefathers.

So obediently he promised no more to offend. For this once the gloves were accepted, and he was even permitted to assist in trying on the topmost pair, which buttoned well above Nini's shapely elbow. She bent her head seriously to the task. She shot out her round arm and turned it about in a delight of admiration shaking pinpricks of fascination in Jean's face with every gesture, yet doing everything with the same inimitable simplicity with which she had flung out the unforgettable hint that pastilles of honey improved kissing.

A wise maid this, perhaps some would have said, rather too well instructed. But Jean was too simple to think of that. He had never spent such a head-turning afternoon, and the time for sending him away arrived before he imagined that he had been there half-an-hour.

'Now you must go,' she said gently. 'I must get ready for the theatre. If you are not on brotherly service to-night, you might wait for me and take me home. Bibi will show you where!'

CHAPTER SEVEN

EXPELLED

The next was one of Mademoiselle Anne's lesson days at the Prefecture. She went there with a real joy, her headache and depression quite passed away. The house had been quiet, and her father had given much less trouble than usual. There was no word of any more of these wretched fatiguing evenings which took so much out of her.

Louise Michel, in whom she had a curious confidence, and who always showed her a special affection, had been to see her. It was certain that Henri, with his Flemish bodyguard, had got clear away across the frontier. There had even been a cipher dispatch that the new number of the *Lanterne* might be expected up to time. Accordingly everybody was busy, and all the agencies of distribution were ready to be set to work under the very nose of the Government.

When Anais got to the lesson hall she found to her surprise Nini Auroy there before her. She kissed her friend, and expressed no little surprise that, according to habit and repute, she was not at that hour flat on her face in bed, with her nose burrowed in the pillow.

Nini laughed and said that she had not heard of her since her friend Jean had told her of the illness, which, on the night of the party, had sent her upstairs at an early hour.

'I should have passed all *consignes*,' she continued, 'only just to see you. But I was kept late at the Opera, and scarcely arrived till it was time to

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be thinking of going home. So I judged that by that time you would be asleep and it would be cruel to awake you.'

'I heard you drive away!'

'Did you? If I had only known! But I did one good deed. I kept hold of your Captain Jean and let him talk about his sister. Then I drove him home. He was in uniform, poor boy, and the streets of Montmartre were quite unsafe for an officer of the Emperor's at that hour of the morning.'

'But Louise Michel,' said Anais, 'she promised me -'

Nini Auroy laughed scornfully.

'Never trust a political fanatic, my dear. Louise had forgotten all about your good brother Jean. She had left him sitting at the piano playing Beethoven to the painted angels on the ceiling, and betaken herself to the Père Tricon's *cabaret* behind the Halles. She had three men to convert to philanthropic anarchy, and one Captain of Artillery more or less made no difference to her. If anything happened, there would be just one gunner the less to fight against her hordes on Le Grand Soir!'

'For shame, Nini! You have never been fair to Louise. She would -'

'Send me to Saint Lazare as a useless non-combatant to knit socks for her high-souled bomb-throwers!'

'Nini, you must not!'

'Very well, then, I won't. But you must admit that I, your foolish little friend, with not enough political convictions to fill an empty nutshell, did your brother the greater service. First, he could easily, and without getting into trouble, drive home with me. Nini Auroy compromises no officer of his

Imperial Highness. On the contrary, she distinguishes them. But if he had walked his uniform with La Grande Citoyenne Louise he would have been in a military prison before night. As it was, he was called in to explain himself to his General - the Emperor's friend Le Boeuf.'

'I did not know - I am sorry - I did not think!' said Anais humbly.

However, Nini Auroy, on her way to her morning canter in the Bois, did not consider it necessary to inform Mademoiselle Anne of the visit which her brother by adoption had paid to the Boulevard Haussmann the day before. Curiously enough the same reticence characterised Jean when he met Anais on the doorstep of the Prefecture. Anne was voluble and penitent in the matter of Louise Michel. She made him promise never again to venture to her house in uniform or unarmed. Nothing could have pleased Jean better. He promised all she asked with alacrity.

After that she fell to praising Nini all the way to the yellow omnibus. She continued the subject in the shelter, looking into his eyes the while, and not seeing the very proper shamefacedness in them. Anais loyally defended her friend.

It was true Nini often did things which set people's hair on end. Hers was a true artistic nature, and could not be judged by the same standard as house-walled, convent-bred women. But if she, Anais Severine Decies, wanted to be sure of a woman who would do a really unselfish service for pure love, she would address herself to Nini's heart of gold! Yes, it was much to say, but it was not too much - not half enough indeed.

Instead of feeling elated, Jean grew more and

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more depressed. Of course he was not in any way bound to tell Anais. He had done nothing to be ashamed of. But that was the annoying thing about it. His conscience persecuted him, worried and throttled him as if he had been disloyal to his trust.

A foolish, illogical, useless thing conscience! And, thought Jean, to be got rid of as soon as possible. To the first scrap-heap with it, and then he would be able to enjoy the pleasant lighting up of Miss Anne's features, and the long "happy-release" talk she had with him after her day's work all the way to the famous corner of the Rue Lepic.

Distance lends an enchantment of a kind not foreseen by the poet. As they mounted upwards, the influence of the Boulevard Haussmann was strangely left behind. Jean felt himself nearer the fragrant innocence of Anais. He was willing to be her brother again, and before they passed the Cemetery Montmartre they were chattering away as unconcernedly as ever. The yellow omnibus stopped of its own forethought at the proper place. The conductor, the driver, the two policemen on "point" duty, all saluted Mademoiselle with smiles of proprietary pride. She was their own - the elect of the line, from Montmartre to the Hotel de Ville, and they suffered even her father for her sake, though perhaps not gladly, as the Good Book advises.

Our handsome pair walked down the Rue des Rosiers in leisurely converse. It was a glorious winter evening. The stars were beginning to pinpoint the sky. As they crested the hill the North Star and the Plough hung overhead, while away to the right the pioneers of Orion's glorious storming party began to climb out of the valley.

Silence fell upon the two as the gardens shut

them in. It had not been yet discussed whether Jean was to go in or to say good-bye at the door. Anais knew that the black dog had been riding her father for some days, and that an outburst was coming. For herself she feared nothing, but Jean might possibly come in for the thunderclap of long-accumulated anger.

Colonel Decies regretted his evening entertainments, and resented the fact that his daughter was obviously keeping her money to herself. Jean was moved by the account which Anais gave of her father. For his own sake it mattered little, if only he could draw the fire of the Colonel and so spare Anne.

Anais had never told him much of her father. She was full of pride, and would in no case have roused pity by complaining of her home life. Yet it was obvious enough to Jean that she had a great deal to put up with there. When the Colonel had money - that is, his daughter's money - he was in reckless haste to spend it. For days he would be full of sullen gloomings if he suspected that Anais had kept forty sous for herself. She could only go to the Prefecture suitably dressed, by leaving her professional attire at her nurse's half-way clown the Rue des Rosiers, and putting on the ancient hat and skirt in which she went to market at seven in the morning. So well was this known, that Jean went in and gossiped with Madame Legrand while Anais was "changing her things." Neighbours knew, the whole *quartier* knew, and deeply sympathised, divining the reason without being told, in the sympathetic manner of kindly French people.

If by chance, as sometimes happened, the Colonel issued forth, straight as a lance, his eyeglass

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adjusted and his cane swinging, during the time that his daughter was in the house of Madame Legrand, he found himself overpowered by the immediate attentions of a crowd of neighbours, who wanted his opinion on their lettuce-beds, on their carrots, on their rabbits and poultry - anything to stop him or get him in safety past the point of danger.

'It is flattering, of course, but why can't they let me alone?' he would complain. 'I am not interested in their manure-heaps! I do not worry them to come in and view my back premises.'

Yet Colonel Decies felt that one who had become a leader of popular revolt, could not be uncivil to the proletariat. Therefore he curbed his pride and went bravely to inspect a new and extremely insanitary pig-sty. In his youth he had received the Victoria Cross. He had fought side by side with the soldiers of Canrobert and the dead St. Arnaud in the trenches of Sebastopol. But perhaps this was, take it all in all, the most gallant deed of his life. And to the day of his death he never knew why he had been led down these long passages, ferried over that greenish slough of slime perilously planked, and set down in front of that odorous sty.

But all the neighbours knew and did not laugh. It was only one of the moves in the daily game which was played in the Rue des Rosiers to protect the peace of mind of their dear and much-vaunted Mademoiselle Anne.

The owner of the pig in question, Monsieur Isnard, gained quite a local reputation by the ruse. The danger had been imminent. At any moment Anais might come out of Madame Legrand's in her smart dress and neat little hat with the white gull's

wing at the side which made the joy of all the Pic, and the imagination of the locality was quite unable to think what the Colonel would have done in the circumstances.

Colonel Decies was well born. He had run through several fortunes, including that of his wife, and the only reason that he did not do the same with his daughter's was that Anais had none.

His name had been suddenly removed from the British Army List, for reasons that were apparently sufficient; for though no accusation was made, Colonel Decies was not even allowed the privilege of resigning. Yet neither he nor his family made any complaint. Probably his relatives were glad enough to see the last of him, and made no representations to the War Office - on the principle of the least said the soonest mended.

But the Colonel, who in the Scots Guards had been the strictest of martinets, could never forgive, nor for a moment forget, the exercise of arbitrary authority which had deprived him of his command. He threw himself into all manner of intrigue, talked loudly and emptily against all authority, made his house a gathering-place for the disaffected of his adopted country, and ignored all reference to the ungrateful motherland which had cast him out.

He had a small allowance from my Lord, his elder brother, which was to cease if ever he crossed the Manche. The Channel Islands even were forbidden to him, and so, like many another, he had drifted from one suburb of Paris to another, till he settled in the largest and best house he had occupied since his fall - at No. 4 of the Rue des Rosiers. He owed this luxury to the salary of his daughter at the Prefecture, every penny of which he considered to be

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his own, and also to the various casual loans he had been able to raise from new-comers to his house.

Though he never dared tell Anais, whose indignation would have been intense, Captain Jean had been by far the most fruitful of the Colonel's discoveries in this direction. Luckily Jean was a bachelor, who, though rich, lived habitually the life of an officer of Artillery, apparently as poor as his comrades. He could therefore afford to suffer in silence. And indeed the exactions of the Colonel did not amount to more than a hundred-franc note at a time, which amount Jean held ready for him each time that he ventured into his presence.

He felt that, in some degree, the life of Anais was rendered easier by these exactions. The Colonel on every occasion scrupulously gave him an IOU for the amount, which Jean on his return home as scrupulously burned. His fear had always been that Anais should come to know of the transaction. But her father was far too cunning for that.

He referred to his benefactor as 'that fellow de Larzac - good family - old castle - in the Artillery for the sake of his pay - but poor as a rat.'

And Anais, to whom Jean was just Jean, saw no reason to dispute the statement. Besides, what difference did it make? She was poor herself, yet had an uncle a lord. It was so in every country, and she liked Jean all the better for it - liked him better and confided in him more.

They went upstairs, and Anais, opening the door of the large sitting-room to the right, ushered Jean in. Her father was sitting in his dressing-gown. His toilet had consisted in passing a comb through his scanty locks. Of the soldierly neatness of his good days there was not a sign. He jerked his head

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angrily away when his daughter bent to kiss him.

'I wonder you are not ashamed,' he growled, 'you, my only daughter and a Decies, to go about the town in the head-gear of a kitchen wench!'

'Why, father, what does it matter!' she said, flushing, 'every one knows me. Let us wait till I have made you a little richer!'

'A little richer,' he burst out; 'have a care of your tongue, wench, or I will curb it for you. I hope I shall always have enough to act worthily of my family and, ancestors. Have you kept a strict account of the last remittance sent across by my agent from the Irish estates?'

'No, father,' said Anais mildly, 'you know that you never allow me to meddle with such things. But I can show you the housekeeping and marketing books if you like.'

'How should I know anything about such things? But I have no doubt, from the way you let the money slip through your fingers, that you are most atrociously swindled. You are too familiar with people. They take advantage of you.'

'But they are all republicans and revolutionaries up here, father,' said Anais mischievously; 'you would not accuse your own side. Only Jean there is a traitor, a paid pretorian of the tyrant. *He* might cheat us, but it is impossible that sworn republicans and good children of '48 could be anything but honest'

She left the room hastily in order to escape the torrent of abuse which she felt was ready to burst upon her. Jean and the Colonel were left alone. The silence which ensued was only broken by the twizzling of the Colonel's eternal cigarette papers, and the satisfied grunt with which he stretched out

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his long spare legs and intimated his thanks to Jean for serving him with a match.

He smoked in silence, looking at the slowly dying fire. His face was discontented and angry. Jean augured the worst for Anais unless he could first bring about an emptying of the vials of wrath.

'I waited for Miss Anne at the door of the Prefecture and brought her home,' he said at length. 'The yellow omnibus was rather longer than usual on the way. I hope that you were not anxious about her?'

The Colonel drew in his long legs, rose to his full height, looked down upon Jean and gave vent to his ill-humour.

'See here, you,' he said; 'perhaps you do not know of whom you are speaking. I am Colonel Auberon Decies, late of Her Majesty's Third Life Guards, and Anais Severine is my only daughter. I have had enough of this. What right have you to wait for my daughter every night in the public thoroughfare and bring her home to my house as if she were a maid-of-all-work returning from an outing? You have no right, sir, and you would not do it to any one of similar rank among your own people.'

Jean knew that it was no use fighting this man with the gloves on, so he replied at once:

'I am the oldest friend Miss Anais has, and that by your own express permission. You know all about me and about my people. You have encouraged me to come to the house, where you have even been good enough to say that I have been of some slight service to you - '

'I thought you were a gentleman, sir!' cried the Colonel angrily, who hated any allusion, however remote, to his monetary obligations.

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'I am,' said Jean firmly, 'and of blood and descent at least equal to your own. But I have acted as escort to your daughter for the reasons which I shall give. She has no maid to wait for her at the Île de France after her work is done. She has no chaperon nor any companion. I am not only an old friend, but an officer of the French army. If you have any complaint to make of my conduct, I refer you to my Colonel, who will investigate it. But till you, sir, or some one delegated by you, whom Miss Anais and I can approve, is ready to take my place, I shall continue to have the honour of escorting your daughter home as heretofore. And now I bid you a very good evening!'

Jean stalked out with much dignity, and the Colonel called after him.

'One moment, sir. I thank you for your care of my daughter, but I beg to inform you that this will be the last occasion on which she will require your services,' And with the fingers of one hand he made the back-handed signal of dismissal which one high in military rank might make to an inferior.

Anais was coming down the stairs in her indoors working frock, and she called out to Jean to know what was the matter.

'I am forbidden the house,' he said; 'and what is more, I am not to be allowed to see you home any more after your class hours.'

'Nonsense,' she said. 'Then who is, I should like to know?'

'That I do not know,' said Jean quietly, holding out his hand. 'Some one in whom your father has more confidence than he has in me, little sister.'

The girl paled ever so slightly.

'You will be there all the same; please come,' she

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pleaded. 'If my father fetches me himself, of course there is no more to be said. But that I do not think in the least likely. And if it is any of the band that gathers here, I shall need my brother to look after me more than ever. Promise me!'

And Jean promised, quitting her with regret, yet having no option after her father's dismissal. Still the promise contented him a little. He would see her as heretofore.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ROSES AND HONEY

Expelled from the Rue des Rosiers, a natural need of feminine sympathy caused Jean to think with astonishing pleasure of the Boulevard Haussmann. Nine men out of ten in his place would have done the same. The melancholy fair-haired Teuton who in such circumstances goes home and plays the flute for consolation, if he ever existed, has tended to become more and more the rarest of rare birds. Besides, he would soon become as great a nuisance to his neighbours as he was in literature. The youth banished from the smiles of one charmer does not make a bee line for the low parapet of Westminster Bridge. Instead, he runs over in his mind a list of alternatives known to himself alone, or, at a pinch, chooses among the music-halls.

So Jean de Larzac, being a hero only in the unsentimental, meridional way, had no difficulty in deciding that his troubled mind would be best soothed by a visit to the Boulevard Haussmann.

Let us not blame him too severely. He was a man just and upright, a breathing and valiant man, but after all only a man. He was ready to do his duty by Anais, more than his duty - indeed, more strictly than she knew or was ever likely to know. It was rather late. Nini would soon be going off to the Opera-house, but he would just have time to tell her what had occurred, and to ask her opinion. She was so exceedingly pretty and, consummately attractive that Jean had a great idea of the worth of her advice. This also appertained to his age.

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He hailed a cab, which, finding slow, he dismissed at a rank in the Place Clichy and took another so as to be in time.

Bibi le Bonhomme smiled upon him, and presented his comb and brush upon a silver tray, the most naturally in the world. He walked round Jean de Larzac till he was satisfied - no easy matter - and then he showed him upstairs, but not to the same salon in which he had been received before.

A whispered colloquy with Mademoiselle Nini's maid, overbearing and successful protestations in pantomime from Bibi, and presently, as a result Jean found himself in a little room; half-dressing, half morning-room. There were books about and growing plants, while a tiny *serre* of hothouse plants clung to an oriel window like a crystal swallow's nest.

Nini's boudoir, not a doubt, thought Jean. If there had been any, it would have been immediately dispelled. The maid knocked and then opened a door to the left, from which there proceeded a sound of vigorous splashing. Nini was taking her pre-prandial tub, and was evidently enjoying it. A warm sweet scent diffused itself through the boudoir. Jean could hear the quick murmur of the maid's explanations.

'Oh,' cried a clear voice - 'quick, it is Jean, I must speak to him or he will go away!'

After a few minutes devoted to friction, the door opened slightly and a head of damp curls and unsullied rose-leaf cheeks was pushed through.

'I can't come in,' said Nini - 'I am not decent, in spite of a lot of towels. But I shall be all ready in ten minutes, if you can wait so long.'

'Of course I can wait!' said Jean, 'as long as ever

you like. What else am I here for?’

‘Good boy,’ said Nini, shaking rebellious kinks at him. ‘I am not playing to-night. I don't know what to do with myself. Will you take me to dinner and go to the theatre afterwards? ’Busman's holiday, you know - ride on another man's ’bus. No, I can't tell you all about why I am not playing. That must wait. They are trying a new Carmen with a chest like a bastion - some shareholder's pet, I'll wager, or old Caviare would not have disarranged the programme, No matter, so long as you have come. Now take a book and be good!’

Nini nodded again and shut the door. Jean's mind was intensely excited. He breathed an atmosphere of lively freedom. At the Rue des Rosiers he had permitted himself to be insulted by that cadging parasite of an ex-Colonel. No, it was certainly not poor Anne's fault. She would possibly be suffering for it even now. He would keep all his promises to Anais to the uttermost. He would wait for her as heretofore, and if she were annoyed he would challenge the man who had usurped his place. He was glad now of his years of practice in the *salles*.

Meanwhile he was surrounded by the most winsome things in the world - the frank gaiety and unconcealed liking of a pretty girl - whom he was, for that evening, to have all to himself, without sharing her with the crowded Opera-house, the flower and note-senders, the attitudinising leading tenors, and the young men in irreproachable evening dress who tried in vain to waylay her. Jean smiled in happy anticipation.

‘*Me voilà!*’ cried a radiant vision clad in the palest of pale blue, with filmy wreaths of lace and mousseline de soie about it. ‘Here am I dressed for

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dinner and a good two minutes before my time. Where is your woman of the world who could have done as much? She would have kept you pacing up and down the hall for the better part of an hour, teaching poor Bibi bad words. After all, the theatre does benefit a woman somewhat in the matter of quick changing. Now, tell me, am I not adorable? You have never, so far, said a word. Tell me, or I shall scratch my maid's eyes out. She knew that I wanted to look specially nice. I told; her so.'

'You are lovely!' said Jean with intense conviction. 'You take my breath away. Besides, you have talked so much from the moment you came in that I could not get out a syllable.'

'Did I? Why, of course I did. So would you, if you had been amusing other people every evening for months, and had at last got a night to amuse yourself in, and, besides, the man you wanted most of all to come and amuse you - the very man you had been thinking of. Oh, but for all that, I am going to be very serious - part of the time. You are in for a sermon, my friend. Just wait, and I shall remount your *morale* for you, my cheerful comrade!

'First, we have to make up our minds where we shall go. Bibi will fetch your evening clothes if you give him the key and a line to your *concierge*. He is wonderful. He will turn you out like a bridegroom. Here - at this desk. There is no need of more than a word. Bibi will manage the rest. There, that will do. Now sign, seal, and deliver. You don't know your *concierge's* name? That shows you have never been on such escapades before, I like that. Better put in a louis. Bibi will not steal it. Have you not got one? There are plenty in the little drawer at your elbow. Yes, take one, and I shall be your hard-hearted

creditor.'

So she rattled on, her arms crossed on his shoulders, her chin on her hands watching him, and her breath stirring the little blonde curls about his neck. She stooped and kissed him behind the ear, thereby adding a blottesque and quite inedited *paraphe* to his signature.

She was contrite the moment after.

'I am so sorry,' she said, 'but you have no idea what a charming baby it is, all floss silk and curliwigs where its hair is cropped short! You have no right to do it and expect a woman to behave. Did nobody ever do these things before? No! Well, somebody must be the first. I am a little ashamed or ought to be, but really, down in the well of my heart I am glad. You have a great deal to learn, baby. Does your Anais always sit at the other side of the table and give you lessons in good behaviour?'

'No,' said Jean, smiling 'sometimes, on nights of fête, we take hands and run down to the cellar, where we draw the wine and bring it up in bottles.'

'And do you never kiss her, nor she you? The truth now? Out with it! Come!'

'Never,' said Jean valorously; 'that is, not since we were little kittens, I in knickerbockers open at the knee, and she in short petticoats.'

'Ah,' said Nini Auroy, her eyes drowned deep in reminiscence.

'But since we grew up, Anais says that brothers do not kiss their sisters. They only do things for them, big, brave, unselfish things.'

'And indeed she has kept you pretty busy at these all the time.'

Nini had begun her acquaintance with Jean in one of her fanciful fits, but even to herself she now

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acknowledged that the matter was becoming serious - too serious altogether for her views of life. Yet somehow she could not help herself. It had suddenly become as life and death to her to know exactly how Jean and Anais affected each other.

Like a wise and well-experienced girl she mistrusted all relationships of brother and sister not provided for in the parish registers. But, oddly enough, this seemed an exception. It had become a daily necessity for her to see Jean. She could continue to love Anais, but mixed with this she was conscious of some slight contempt, as for one who did not know how to keep a good thing when she had it. *She* could not give Jean up - not to anybody - not to her dearest friend.

Nini had no illusions as to brotherhood. She was wholly unplatonic, but she could put forth her whole nature to secure and keep that which she desired. She sang and acted better than she had ever done in her life, for the red flame of true love had entered her heart. Her manager was amazed, and, rubbing his hands as he looked at the crowded house, he told himself that he had always foretold this, wondered who the lucky man was, and thought of putting up the prices.

They dined that night in a charming little restaurant, looking out on the Rue des Saints-Pères. The dining-room was on the first floor, all tarnished gilding and old-fashioned comfort. A clear fire of wood burned on brass-headed andirons, with brass terminal dogs which winked cheerfully at the glass and silver.

It was a gay dinner. Not much of anything, but a good many "anythings." Nini, compelled to be passing abstemious during most afternoons and

evenings, recouped herself gallantly.

Besides, she was so glad to be off on a little excursion, cut adrift from acts and calls, that her gratitude to Jean interrupted the service on several occasions. She could not keep her hands from his curls, and she showed her appreciation of certain dishes by swift *élans* of tenderness, when, as a matter of justice, she ought really to have kissed the cook!

In that warm, red-tapestried room with the close-drawn curtains shutting out the swirling snow-flakes of the street, there grew up a joyous warmth which was not gaiety, but something pleasanter and deeper. They sat opposite one another, and Nini, with her chin upon her netted fingers and a dimple in her chin, listened to Jean as he told of the simple folk of the Larzac, where he was still Monsieur Jean, the young master, and where they took him in and fed him on crisp local shortcakes to comfort him because his father used to thrash him twenty years before.

Nini listened entranced to these tales. She too was a little girl again, paddling with her aunt on the Breton sands, a lighthouse on one hand, and a covey of brown fishing-boats beached on the other. Something gripped her in the throat, something tight-drawn, dry, and hurting. She seemed to have fallen from the cliffs. Jean had picked her up and carried her home. Jean had dressed the wound. Jean had sat stroking her hair and telling her stories while she lay with her arms about his neck. But no, it was Anais to whom Jean had really done these things on the bald crest of the Larzac. His heart would turn to her in spite of all that she could do. It was as if the long ago gave Anais a claim upon

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him that she could never have.

Suddenly Nini became furiously jealous, and she was moved to put more questions to the young man as to Anais. But something warned her in time. She was sure that she loved him ten times as well as a girl who put him off with "sacred brotherhood" and selfishness of that sort.

Nini did what was perhaps the wisest thing possible to her. "When in doubt, cry," is a good feminine maxim. And the tears of Nini were genuine, though perhaps a little due to jealousy of the fact that one except herself should ever have come into Jean's life.

Still it was not yet too late, and as he comforted Nini, putting his arm about her and drying her tears, she thought out the lecture she had made up her mind to give him.

It was for his own good – perhaps a little also for her own satisfaction. So presently Nini choked back her sobs and smiled. Jean thought that nothing so lovely had ever been seen in his world. And indeed he was very nearly right. Nini was not acting now. Indeed, somehow Jean had taken away from her the power and the desire to play a part.

He kissed her tear-stained cheeks and wet salt lips, till the world seemed to enlarge immeasurably – wider horizons, closer and more intimate possibilities. He tasted of the Tree of Knowledge and it was the Woman who tendered the apple.

Somehow the dinner got itself finished, the servants withdrawn, and lo! On his knees was Nini, being most tenderly and innocently comforted. He seemed to awake as from a dream. So, somewhat less astonished, did Nini.

She rose suddenly, patted out her pale blue skirt,

and gave a shake to the various folds of tulle. Then she went and sat at the end of the table, not far from Jean, but at right angles to him. She held out her hand and took his, which was burning. Her own was cool and pleasant as ever.

'Now, I am going to teach you to be wise,' she said. 'You may be angry with me, I cannot help that. But after a little while you will see that I am right.'

She paused a little, put her hand to her heart to still an irregular throbbing, and went on;

'Jean,' she said, 'have you ever thought where all this talk of rebellion is going to lead to? The empire will fall – yes, do not start; in spite of liberal cabinets and plebiscites I can see with this foolish little head of mine that the end is near, in spite of all the prefects and stuffed ballot-boxes in the world. Oh, I am *not* repeating what other people have told me. Well, what shall we have, then, when it falls?'

'We shall have the army,' said Jean loyally.

'But the army will not be of the opinion of the good folk up in the Rue des Rosiers. *You* will not be of that opinion. Such people will be Republicans under the Empire, Communists under a Republic, and Anarchists under a Commune. There is no possible government that will satisfy them. Think it over well, for by no means can you, thinking as you do, ever succeed in working along with them. Even now you dare not talk frankly to them. You play the piano. You are silent for Anais's sake, but you never hear a word that is in sympathy with the order and obedience you learned in your childhood, with the spirit of discipline you have imbibed since. Answer me! Have you? Am I not right?'

But Jean did not answer at once.

'Oh, I know,' said Nini, with her eyes flashing,

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'you think that I have no thoughts in my brain because I have lips that can kiss. But you are mistaken, Captain Jean de Larzac. I have lain awake many nights mustering up courage to tell you.'

'And Anais?' said Jean gravely, 'is she to be left to herself?'

'Certainly not,' said the girl, 'but there is a hard fight before us. In her heart of hearts she believes what her father believes. At any rate she will follow him. Of that you may be sure. She will be in the forefront on the day when the red flag is hoisted and the battalions of the faubourgs descend into the city to storm the Tuileries!'

'What, then, do you propose?'

'First,' said Nini, 'go no further with your politics. You have really no interest in them. You have heard of them already from the Minister of War, the General Le Boeuf. He is not a man to be prodigal of warnings. Do not go too often to these gatherings - '

'I cannot go more,' said Jean promptly. 'I have been forbidden the house - forbidden even to go home with Anais. I meant to tell you before, but everything went out of my head when I saw you.'

The girl's face softened, and she thanked him with a glance which many a more famous man would have gone down on his knees for.

'So the old mackerel of a Colonel objects to brothering and sistering as much as to an honest courtship conducted according to all the rules of the game.'

'He is to - provide a substitute - some friend of his own!'

'Ah,' said Nini thoughtfully, 'I begin to understand. Then I shall meet her with Bibi tomorrow and drive her home myself.'

'That,' agreed Jean de Larzac, 'is by no means a bad idea. She made me promise to be on the spot, and if she did not like the man of her father's choice - well, I should be there to protect her. But that would mean a quarrel before a lady. Now, if you carry her off in the carriage with Bibi enthroned before, I can get to the bottom of my quarrel with an easy mind.'

But to this Nini was not so ready to agree. She did not want any quarrel - least of all about another woman. Still, she was a practical girl, and it seemed the only thing to do. Perhaps she wished that she had not spoken quite so quickly; but she was not going back on her word now.

'Well, Jean,' she said, 'if you will promise to give up politics altogether and attend to your soldiering, I will take Anais home as you suggest.'

But from that moment her face had a strained and anxious look. She began to look about for her wraps, and the commissionaire of the restaurant was sent for a carriage. On a night like this Nini preferred not to be tied even to Bibi and her own equipage. She was a little resentful, also, that her happiness should have been clouded, though of this she showed nothing to Jean. After all, poor boy, it was by no means his fault if Anne's father "behaved like a pig."

Jean had taken fauteuils at the Châtelet where, as usual, was a brave show. He had rightly judged that the solemnity of the Comédie Française and the chill black-beetle damps of the half-empty Odéon would not cheer his little friend on her one night of liberty.

As soon as they were in the *voiture de cercle* Nini's manner changed.

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'I have been horrid to you,' she mourned, 'a cat, nothing else. But then you have made me love you, and you must e'en pay the piper. I cannot give you up to any one now, not even to Anais. Be her brother as much as you like, but I shall be her sister too. No, do not kiss me till I get out my little stick of carmine for my lips. Your fault! Of course it is. I go all pale when you kiss me, and tremble like a bird taken in the hand. There . . . now - I have found it!'

Jean had not been able to get a *loge* at the Châtelet, but when he had settled Nini in her armchair, he was annoyed and astonished to see two men turning about immediately in front to stare at them. They laughed to each other, the younger openly and rudely, and the other with silent irony.

They were Colonel Auberon Decies and his friend Raoul Rigault.

CHAPTER NINE

A COURT OF HONOUR

The very hairs on Jean's head stood on end, hedgehog fashion. He was so angry that he had to grip himself with both hands to avoid falling upon them there and then with his fists.

Rigault especially behaved like the ill-mannered *gamin* he was. He could not have enough of the jest, whatever it was, and every five minutes he turned round and cackled vinously in their faces. Happily Nini merely thought that they had happened upon one of Colonel Decies' friends who had taken too much before rising from dinner.

Now at that time, and indeed till quite recently, tipsiness was not a French failing, even in great towns, Absinthe was still the "Swiss poison," but was little heard of across the frontier. Wine was abundant, cheap and good, yet few people abused its use. So that the sight of a man *pompette*, as the phrase went, was one so rare as to awaken pity rather than any disgusted feeling. People merely wondered what the man's friends were about to allow him to make an exhibition of himself.

But Raoul Rigault, though a pillar of the insurrectional cafes, was not in the least drunk. Nini wasted her pity upon him.

He was only, as always, perfectly reckless of the feelings of others, insolent, and overbearing. Jean would have made short work of him had he been alone, but he had Nini to consider. Also he shrank from making a scene in a theatre which must inevitably drag in the father of Anais as the

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companion of the most ruffianly revolutionary among the younger men in Paris. Therefore, though with difficulty, he contained himself. He made Nini change to the seat farthest from Rigault, which put some little distance between them, but enabled him to leer at her and chuckle more at his ease.

Presently Jean leaned over and touched Anne's father on the shoulder.

'I beg your pardon, Colonel Decies,' he said, 'but your friend is behaving in such a manner as to inconvenience the lady under my charge. Will you be good enough to recall him to good manners? I am sure it is merely a case of inadvertence.'

But for all reply the Colonel shrugged his shoulders with a gesture which said, 'I am not my brother's keeper!'

Clearly there was nothing to be hoped for from him, and Jean's interference, to be effective, must address itself to the younger man. Whatever he did, he must not alarm Nini. On the next day, Anais would hear of him whatever they liked to tell, and though he was quite prepared for this, at present his duty was to the woman beside him. Now he could understand how the thing had come about. As a journalist even of his low type, Rigault would have access to the theatres, and, discovering Jean's name on the list in the box office, he had doubtless taken the two places in front, and had invited Colonel Decies with the purpose of making a scene.

Jean resolved to baulk him, at least for that time. He would give him his bellyful of scenes when once he had Nini safe home at the Boulevard Haussmann.

Nevertheless, he took the first opportunity of speaking to Rigault, when Nini Auroy was making

the tour of the boxes with her opera-glass.

'Your attentions to the lady with me I have so far taken in good part,' he said, 'but I warn you that I am getting tired!'

The spoilt *gamin* of the Boul' Mich' turned swiftly and bit his thumb at Jean. The Captain of Artillery had not been trained in the school where such an insult meant anything, but something in the man's manner of looking out of the corners of his eyes at Nini put him beside himself.

He slipped a card from his case and silently passed it to Rigault. Now at that time, in all places where gentlemen assembled, the exchanging of cards was regarded either as the cementing of the bonds of friendship, or the first and most necessary preliminary to a duel.

Jean had the sacramental words upon his lips, 'My seconds will wait upon you to-morrow morning!' when the unexpected took place. With the greatest calmness in the world Raoul Rigault took from his pocket a matchbox, caused one to flame, waited till the blue spurt had died down to an even yellow, and then, holding Jean's card between a listless finger and thumb, he deftly burnt it to ashes.

Nini, who had eyes other than those with which she was supposed to be surveying the house, saw the Colonel's face flush to a dark ruby red. Then slowly his pallor returned. He leaned to speak to his companion. Nini opened all her ears to catch his words. However, they escaped her. But the reply of Rigault was boisterous enough to be heard on the stage itself.

'Do you not see? They fear me. They put a hired spadassin on my track. When my work for the Cause is done, I will fight with such cattle, but not

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before.'

'But you cannot refuse a challenge from a gentleman!'

'Can't I? My comrades know me. I do not need to give them proofs of my courage. I will be judged only by them. It strikes me that one day that popinjay and his light-o'-love will look very well set up against a wall with a willing firing party in front of them!'

Jean heard this too, but for Nini's sake laid his anger aside. She had a name that was great on the operatic stage. She was here, quiet and unknown, with him to forget her work for the evening, and he was not the man to do anything to hurt her in character or in profession.

Besides which, the chastisement which he reserved for Raoul Rigault would lose nothing by waiting. He would lay on his strokes better when his nerves were in less of a jangle.

* * * * *

The next day passed in a savage search by Jean for the biggest and most deadly dog-whip in Paris. After he had rejected one after another, an irate dealer said, 'Monsieur, it is surely not a dog you wish to chastise, but a rhinoceros!'

Finally, with a feeling of triumph, Jean pocketed the most barbaric weapon he could disinter. The contempt of his rejected challenge rankled in his heart. For Jean de Larzac had been trained in the most quixotically punctilious army in the world in the matter of quarrels. He knew that the English did not fight duels, and he would have understood a little had the offender been one of that race, like Colonel Decies. But that a man of his own race

should so treat a solemnly presented cartel, left him stupefied.

After all Nini was right. He was not of the school to mix with revolutions or to understand revolutionaries. Now, of this he was certain - had the quarrel been with the old Colonel, he would have stood up to him like a man. But then the Colonel was Anne's father, an officer and a gentleman, whatever might be the reason which had compelled him to quit his native country and take up the trade of extremist agitator.

Next morning he carried a note to Nini's hotel, suggesting the best place for her carriage to wait, while he penetrated into the tangled, hospital-like mass of buildings whose gables ran out into the many courtyards of the Prefecture of Police on the Ile de la Cité.

Now, the dog-whip found, duly suppled and curled away in his pocket, Jean de Larzac prowled restlessly between his barracks and the outer courts of the Prefecture.

His Colonel, who had a strong regard for him, met him a little way east of the Hôtel de Ville.

'What,' he said, 'you are not on duty - how is that?'

'You gave me leave, sir,' quoth Jean. 'I have an affair on hand.'

'Ha,' said the Colonel, pricking up his ears, 'an affair of honour? - Who are your seconds, and how is it that I have not heard of it?'

Jean shook his head sadly.

'Rather I should say an affair of dishonour!'

'Nonsense,' cried the Colonel, tilting his *képi* back on his head as if he had not heard aright. 'An affair of dishonour - you, Jean de Larzac!'

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Jean told his tale without any mention of names. He recounted what had happened in the theatre the night before, his narrative reaching its most thrilling point with the burning of the sacred card.

'What a cad - what a *Pékin!* Why did not you take him by the scruff of the neck and throw him among the fiddlers?'

'I had a lady with me,' said Jean gravely.

The Colonel whistled softly to himself, his face equally grave.

'Of course, I understand. I might have thought. No, of course you could not make a scene, which would have been exploited against the army in all these brutes of newspapers. I have no doubt that you behaved with perfect correction.'

'Perfect correction,' was the Colonel's fetish - also the reason why he frequented the short eleven o'clock Mass on Sundays, wore a tall hat when in mufti, and never spoke lightly of the Emperor, whom, as a royalist, he detested.

Jean was silent and somewhat ashamed before his superior officer. He was also afraid that he might be put under arrest, and so be compelled to miss his appointment with Anais and Nini.

'What do you propose to do?' demanded the Colonel at length. 'The matter cannot surely remain where it is. Is there no man of the dog's friends with a sense of honour? This Colonel Decies?'

'He is an old man,' said Jean hastily, 'and so' (dragging the huge dog-whip from his pocket) 'I thought this might regulate the matter just as well!'

The Colonel grinned, held out his hand for the short thick shaft, and tried the effect of the lash on his neat leg.

'Ten thousands of millions of pigs!' he exclaimed,

as he handed it back. 'I would rather fight a score of duels than stand up to that hippopotamus quirt. Why, there is a weal down my leg now like a field breast-work. You surely never mean to work with that on a man – *pékin* though he be?'

'He burned my card!' said Jean dourly.

The Colonel grinned.

'Well,' he said, 'if it were not for the regiment I should give a day's pay to be there to see. I shall do my best to prevent your being cashiered over the head of it.'

'No fear,' said Jean; 'the man is a dangerous anarchist.'

'What is his name?' said the Colonel eagerly; 'perhaps we can arrange it otherwise.'

'No, thank you,' said Jean. 'The little weapon in my pocket will be good enough for him. I don't want any Monsieur Claude of the *Sûreté* coming in to spoil the fun.'

'I have grave doubts if the Citizen Anarchist would not prefer Monsieur Claude.'

And he strode off tranquilly, trusting Jean to bring no disgrace upon the regiment.

The last hours were specially difficult to fill in. Jean wandered through miles of museum – Greek and Egyptian collections, Roman and Etruscan masks and statues. Yet he could not tire himself, and the habit of looking at his watch every five minutes did not expedite the long weary flight of time.

At last it was time to be off. He entered by the door to the south, and was relieved to see Nini's carriage there, though he did not see Nini herself. He walked rapidly within. In the doorway, having made or renewed acquaintance with the medalled

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concierge, Bibi le Bonhomme was ensconced, casting a watchful eye all about. He favoured the young officer with a stealthy wink as he passed.

It said, 'All's well on our side. Go on and prosper!'

Jean turned sharply into a closed doorway with a deep porch, from which he could command the steps down which Anais would presently trip. If she wanted him she would let him know. He remembered how at that precise moment the much-reproved Forty-eight would be putting away the lesson books of the day, and the class of picked gendarmes, a hundred strong, would be rising as one man to the salute.

Still there was no sign of Rigault. Neither had Colonel Decies arrived in sight. It was probable, therefore, that her father was not coming to escort his daughter. For in that case he would have been certain to wait in the hall, which, as Jean could see from his observatory, was entirely empty.

At last, there she was, standing on the topmost step, pausing, with the determined little biting of her underlip that he knew so well from the days of her girlhood, putting on a recalcitrant pair of gloves. Jean felt in his pocket for the butt of the whip. It was of ebony and protruded a little.

After that events trampled fast on the heels of each other.

Anais tripped down the steps, paused a moment uncertainly, and then, moved by some curious instinct of distaste, turned to the right towards the southern entrance. She had always gone out by that on the north, which was nearer to the great Pont Neuf and the noble, trampling statue of Henri Quatre, which, in spite of all revolutionary training, she loved.

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Anais could not have told why she did so. Perhaps it was a subtle feeling that she was being waited for by the person with whose escort her father had threatened her, at the northern gate of the huge block which makes the Prefecture of Police of the city of Paris.

Hardly had she turned to the right, her gloves well pulled up, and her head high, when a thick-set, full-bearded youth in the soft hat of the Latin quarter, darted from some hiding-place on the far side of the detention rooms and bore down upon her. Anais was perfectly unconscious of the pursuit, till her arm was caught in a strong grip. Raoul Rigault swung her round sharply and was directing her towards the northern entrance, when she twisted furiously loose from him, and called aloud, 'Jean - Jean - I want you, Jean!'

She looked about for her friend, still continuing her way towards the south branch of the river. She arrived quickly under the great arch and quite near to the *loge* of the *concierge*.

Jean hurried after, but before Rigault could seize her again, Bibi le Bonhomme had sent him stumbling back-wards into the arms of De Larzac. Then Nini appeared from some hidden recess, and the pair of them whisked off Anais more quickly than it can be told.

'We leave the pig to you!' cried Bibi over his shoulder.

Jean pushed Rigault fiercely before him. The *concierge*, fearing a tumult within the sacred precincts, clanged the iron door after them, and in a moment Jean and his foe found themselves facing the south branch of the Seine, clean-swept, desolate and windy. The Quai des Orfèvres was wholly desert

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at that time of day. The hoofs of Nini's carriage horses were heard only for a moment. Then the pair of foes had for sole witness the commanding cavalier figure of the Vert Gallant armoured and batoned. It was such a quarrel as he would have loved to settle . . . or to second.

'Now, sir, we two for it!' said Jean, standing face to face with his victim, ready to dodge like a boy at a game if Rigault attempted flight.

Doubtless each misunderstood the other. Rigault's record (when we come to it) was full of a curiously sinister *apache* cruelty, but he was not lacking in courage. But Jean could not imagine any other reason for insulting a lady and then refusing a challenge from her champion.

Besides, he was not there to argue. He took his card-case again from his pocket, drew forth and presented his card, and said in a clear and quiet tone, 'I should be honoured to possess your name and address.'

'No doubt,' laughed Rigault, 'you would stick it in your mirror to boast to your friends that you possessed the acquaintance of at least one honest man!'

He held Jean's card between his finger and thumb, then tore it across and across, let the pieces fall in the muddy roadway, and ground them down with his heel.

But by this time Jean had the dog-whip out of his pocket, and the first lash took the insulter on both cheeks, curling about his head and knocking off his hat.

'You will not fight,' he cried; 'then you shall taste of this! It was meant for dogs!'

And from the shut gate of the Prefecture all the

way to the great road of the Pont Neuf, Jean drove the insulter. Rigault protected his face as best he could with his hands, but the rest of his person was at the mercy of the smiter. And thinking of the night before and the terror of Anais, Jean's mercy could not be called merciful.

Amply was Nini avenged. Rigault blasphemed, and threatened that some day he would send Jean and all his friends before a *peloton* of execution.

Unfortunately for himself he used a word concerning Anais, whom he suspected of betraying him, which caused Jean to cut his clothes to ribbons with fierce slashes of the merciless four-square lash.

Rigault, still threatening, had fallen into a paroxysm of anger and tears of pain and shame.

'There,' said Jean, 'I have had you five minutes to myself, without the presence of the ladies to whom you are not fit to speak. If ever you insult either of them, you shall have a hundredfold worse, and at any rate you shall destroy no more of my cards. This' (he tapped the whip) 'is the only weapon which can appeal to your honour.'

Rigault stood at bay, quivering and half-hysterical with impotent anger.

'One day I shall sit yonder as Prefect of Police, and you shall creep whining at my feet for what you have done to-day! You shall plead for mercy for those you love best, and the answer shall be "Death—death, death!"'

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CHAPTER TEN

OF NECESSITY, GRAVE AND CONNECTIVE

Between December 1869 and March 1871 the calendar marked fifteen months. But during that time the old secure world had rolled away and its place had been taken, so far as France and Paris were concerned, by a new, tottering, fretful baby of a Republic.

The great ill-conceived, worse-prepared-for war had been fought. France had been, not so much beaten as trampled underfoot, even shouldered out of the way with a certain gross Teutonic contempt. The Emperor had gone to a German castle. The Empress had fled from her own rebellious subjects under the care of an English dentist. Gambetta had roused the provinces, bringing them against the steadfast invading hosts in sudden wayward dashes like battles of the kites and crows. Two-and-thirty departments had been occupied till the vast indemnity of five milliards had been paid.

Through all France had run the name of treason. Bazaine, so all men believed, had played the traitor. He had delivered Metz with the finest army in the world, an army practically unbeaten, with ample munitions of war, with food, horses, guns and hope. Death, therefore, to Bazaine and all who had not fought to the bitter end!

Paris had stood its winter siege, when every man went to the walls, from stout Meissonnier and frail Alphonse Daudet to the workmen of Montmartre and Belleville, all with sublime courage and without distinction of social position.

But it was evident that Paris was no longer

united. In October and again in January attempts had been made to wrest the power from the controlling hands of the men of the 4th September. Even Gambetta fell from his lofty place. The spirit of 1848 was abroad. North, south, and east, the populous faubourgs were armed and disciplined.

Yet Trochu, with the true spirit of a regular soldier never allowed the National Guard to fight the Prussians, whose batteries they would see from the heights of their own Montmartre. Even the favourite 42nd was not allowed to set its nose outside the ramparts which it manned. Fighting was the work of the soldier, and the National Guard of Paris were not soldiers. They were workmen and bourgeois in uniform, and the sooner their guns were taken away from them the better. Such was the high military theory.

‘At least *we* have not played the traitor and delivered fortresses!’ they responded fiercely. There were other demands that deeply irritated the people of Paris, matters which now seem slight and natural to us, but which burned like heath fires in 1871. Paris would submit to no more prefects designated from on high. She must name her own municipal council, elect her own mayors, have control of her own police, like every other Commune in the 36,000 in France.

This spelled treason to Monsieur Thiers, and still more to the monarchist majority who controlled the new Assembly at Bordeaux. The Government of France had been (and remains) highly centralised. The Cabinet appoints and controls. Prefects are their servants. The police exists for the purpose of compelling the people to accept the decisions of the Government as conveyed to them by the prefects.

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Most of the police at that time were of an alien race, or at least what the Parisians regarded as such. They were Italians from Corsica, blood brothers of the Buonapartes.

Theoretically the Parisians had made the Republic. Well, they had it, and they meant to keep it. But there went up a cry that the lawyers were selling them to the Germans - Jules Simon, Picard, Favre and the cunning old peer of France, Thiers himself. They would bear watching. So would the head of the army, Vinoy - one of the men of the Emperor's *coup d'état* in 1851.

The Central Committees of the National Guard must keep a wary eye upon these. Yet more terrible was the outcry when it was known that 30,000 Germans were to enter and occupy Paris for three days. The rich *quartiers* were immediately deserted. But populous Popincourt, Belleville, Menilmontant, Montmartre, hummed like a hive.

The Government, with a few thousand soldiers collected in the centre of the city, went on with its work, apparently (probably really) unconscious of the gathering storm. The battalions from the eccentric suburbs defiled under curious banners round the Boulevards and along the Rue de Rivoli, headed by their bands, but no one took any serious heed of them.

'The National Guard is amusing itself!' said languid secretaries, as they gathered in the windows of ministerial offices along the line of march.

'Yes, at eighteenpence a day!' sneered a man in the finance department; 'but there will soon be an end to that. They will be disarmed.'

'It may be easier to arm such men than to take their arms away from them!' put in a quiet old fellow

who had not so much as raised his head from his desk, but who remembered '48.

The flags they carried were mostly black or the tricolor barred with heavy crape, in token of the national mourning for the lost provinces.

The *haillon rouge* - "the red tatter" of the Commune - had not yet been thought of, except perhaps in the secret councils of the Internationale. The regiments of Paris only assumed the red flag because black looked like a funeral, and because, on the other hand, the soldiers of the Versailles Assembly marched under the tricolor. But there were veritable "hard shells" like Louise Michel who carried the black flag, the emblem of the people's misery, to the bitter end.

And no doubt there was great suffering in Paris. The well-to-do had gone elsewhere as soon as the gates were opened. They had taken their families with them. Whole *quartiers* were given over to the prowling dog and the wastrel cat. The shopkeepers stayed on, indeed, waiting in vain for their clients to return. But so long as the Germans shadowed the whole north and overlooked the ramparts from their headquarters at St. Denis, the customers obstinately refused to come. The bourgeois had money; they could provide for themselves. But two-thirds of the Paris that was left, depended upon closed workshops and unopened public works for its daily bread. The war had caught Paris in the midst of the greatest building operations which any city has known in modern times. The Haussmanising of the ancient streets, the piercing of great Boulevards through a wallowing mass of the meanest streets, had brought tens of thousands of workmen to the city. During the siege these had had nothing to live

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upon but the eighteenpence a day which was the stipend of the soldiers of the National Guard.

Still there was no work for them, but with reopened railways, provisions were becoming more plentiful. Wives and children were able to exist without discomfort while their husbands marched along the Boulevards to the music of the Marseillaise. It is hard to blame them if they declined to deliver up their arms and resign themselves to slow starvation.

Unfortunately the sense of coming trouble ran far abroad, so that the eagles and vultures swooped down - Poles, Russians, Italians, Spaniards, dwellers in Mesopotamia, Greeks, and Arabians, outcast and free-lance Frenchmen who had long ago made their own country too hot for them. All these now flocked to Paris, where a new power, still unknown to the nominal heads of the Cabinet, ruled all the vast city outside the Government offices, and gazed with greedy eyes even upon them.

But this ruling power was not at first directed by workmen and adventurers; it had a strongly theoretical and even philosophical basis. Professors and sons of professors, men of letters and journalists controlled the movement, or at least influenced it, though the great fighting machine of two hundred battalions was from the first beyond any single control.

Of these men Henri Rochefort had the most universal popularity. Yet though condemned and sent to the Ile de Pins, Rochefort was never a member of the Commune. The most learned of the philosophers was Gustave Flourens, son of a famous professor, who himself, though young in years, had "professed" at the Sorbonne. After them came

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Reclus, Jules Vallés, Arthur Arnauld, Vallant, the *théoriciens* of Communism, not yet driven into anarchy by the massacres of the Seven Bloody Days.

The mayors of Paris had not yet separated themselves from the Central Committee. They tried to mediate, endeavouring to bring the two parties together, urging the deadly shame of waging a civil war under the grinning snouts of hostile siege-guns, on which lounged and watched long-piped Germans at St. Denis.

Chief of these, most ardent, most popular, was the famous mayor of Montmartre, a certain Clemenceau, afterwards to be known as the "Cabinet-maker." He administered the most turbulent population in Paris. But he stood like a rock, getting officials, policemen, men of the Sûreté, safely out of the way. He had sometimes as many as a couple of hundred of these stowed away in the cellars of the Mairie at a time. Nor is there the slightest doubt that if the butchers who conducted the Dominican fathers of Arcueil had stopped at the Mairie or Montmartre, or if the guards posted at the door had barred their way, the bloody work of that day would never have taken place. Clemenceau has earned a good many folks' hatred in the long period since 1871. But even in 1912 his conduct as mayor of Montmartre should be remembered to his high and eternal honour.

'An old fighter,' he called himself lately when on his defence, and a time-serving Chamber of Deputies laughed. But they had forgotten their history - or perhaps they had never known it. Indeed few Frenchmen know much about the Commune, nor indeed do they desire to know. Such wilful ignorance is characteristic of France, and the

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explanation of such otherwise inexplicable phenomena as Boulangerism and the Affaire Dreyfus is, that, even historically, a Frenchman never can bear to hear more than one side of a question - his own.

Bertillon, through all his chemical tests, saw only the fact that Dreyfus was a Jew, and therefore a traitor. They paint politics at Rome. They give University scholarships on political lines. In the Bordeaux Assembly Garibaldi was insulted, and at Versailles the mayors of Paris were kept waiting at the doors like charity children.

Paris felt herself dethroned by a pack of ignorant squireens, or, as we would say, "backwoodsmen," crowding up from districts which had never felt the whip of the war, where a German soldier had never been seen, or by royalist nominees whose mandates (such as they were) came chiefly from an anti-republican clergy. The smaller towns were eager for peace at any price, grown sodden and nerveless with the wish to be done with it once for all.

These all resented the determined attitude of Paris. They hated her resistance which had so prolonged the war, and increased the German occupation. Paris was rebellious and *frondeur*. The country would side with any Government which would give it peace, at no matter what cost to the national honour. Add to this the old jealousy of the capital, and you have what, to an impartial outside observer, are the main palliations, if not excuses, of the Commune revolt.

Pity it is that the practice should have fallen so far short of the theory. But the truth is, that the men who dreamed these patriotic dreams and laid down these ideal bed-plates, were from the first

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overborne by the dangerous element of the revolt. They disappear and are heard of no more, till you find them being tried for the misdeeds of others in the courts-martial of '71 and the succeeding years. Happily many of them had ere this reached England in safety.

In Paris they might elaborate wise Statutes of Federation, but the men who really ruled the roost were among the howling mob which pushed the two hundred and thirty pieces of artillery to the top of Montmartre, and left them there to rust, the men who shot the hostages, and gave Paris to the flames.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

AFTER FIFTEEN MONTHS

Jean de Larzac was the youngest Colonel in the French army. His chief had been killed on the terrible day of Forbach. He had been wounded at the defence of Rouen, and had lain, fevered and unconscious, in the ill-found, ill-nursed field hospital at Saucy-les-Ecuys, dreaming that he was still defending the city against the passage of the Prussians and the Crown Prince of Saxony. Here Nini Auroy had found him. Here she had used her horses for the last time to convey him to a quiet house in Les Andeleys, from which he could see the ancient castle of Richard Coeur de Lion, and through which, from gable window to oriel, the pleasant breeze blew off the water. Then she had sent Bibi le Bonhomme, somewhat sobered as to his smile, to dispose of horses and carriage (there was a brisk market for these in all the Teuton-threatened districts). He was also to bring back all the valuables from her Paris house which were portable, especially money and jewellery. She handed him her keys as if he had been her brother, and thought no more about the matter. She had arranged the affair. Then she gave her mind to Jean de Larzac, and troubled no more about Bibi for a week. He was away exactly five days, and came back with much money and a just reckoning.

The house in the Boulevard Haussmann was still intact, though there had been attempts at robbery on two neighbouring properties.

‘I think,’ said Bibi grimly, ‘they are afraid that I should find them out. And if I had . . . why then,

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God help them!’

Accordingly in the pleasant Seine-side village of Les Andeleys the Lower, Jean fought his fight with death, a nurse from the riverain folk (who understand nursing) alternating with Nini when she was utterly dead beat, and a doctor from Chartres coming over twice a week.

No Germans were yet in the neighbourhood, and the days were days of perfect peace. Not an oar on the river. You could hear from an open window, which took in wide draughts of sunshine, the lapping of the water among the reeds and lily stalks. No rafts. Even, the piled criss-crossings of the river-side wood-yards had been sold for firewood and kitchen use.

Jean raved, sometimes of the Rue des Rosiers and of Anais - often calling up old memories of poaching tramps which they had taken on his father's ground. And then Nini sat silent, not letting go his hand, but with a sick heart and tearful eyes.

But more often his talk concerned details of dangerous military service.

‘Let no man pass!’ he would cry in a voice that shook the little house, and halted the scanty domino-players in the little inn close at hand.

‘Oh, the officer of Artillery! He is having a bad time. As usual, they will decorate him after he is dead!’

‘More to the point if they would decorate the girl! She has been worth all the doctors in the world. If he pulls through, he will have her to thank!’

‘There will not be much difficulty about that,’ said a third; ‘old Château Gaillard up there never looked on a prettier girl.’

‘That's a tough customer (*costaud*) they have with

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them, though; he threw those two fellows from Melaunay into the river just because they said that they had come to be nursed by her also. All the way from Gaillon they had come to say only that, with a bottle of the green Swiss bitters in their pocket. Bibi threw the bottle after them into the Seine, so they lost half of it.'

'There will be trouble with Bibi when the Germans come!' said the landlord. 'They will have him out before a firing party if he tries tricks like these.'

'He won't,' said the man who had the advantage of Bibi's personal acquaintance, 'that is, not unless they molest his lady mistress. Then there will be a certain number of sudden deaths, and last of all, Bibi's.'

In addition to the money, Bibi had brought back news from the Rue des Rosiers. For some time he kept it to himself. It was not good news, and he knew that the Decies, father and daughter, had been friends of Jean's in childhood.

Besides, Bibi was not above listening at the door, and there he had picked up many things, but what touched him most nearly were his mistress's strange silences.

The thoughts of Bibi within him were long, long thoughts, and Bibi was not given to thinking. He heard his mistress croon soothing tunes to Jean when he was restless. She talked to him, and told him tales when for a little the fever left him. But still Bibi was not content. He had studied his mistress's face too long to be deceived. At least so he thought. So it was with wonder and joy that he saw her come out to give place to Blanche Pichon, her face shining and her lips smiling through tears.

What had happened had been this:

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Jean had been lying for a long time quite still, only muttering at intervals the ancient sad refrain of the child in the Bible, 'Oh my head, my head!'

The bone had set where the fragment of shell had struck him, but there were constant severe pains, and the cellular tissue within was bubbling with disordered ideas. It would all come right, the doctor from Chartres assured Nini. The splinters in the shoulder and neck had all been extracted, and there was nothing to fear from them. But still like a river ran the refrain, 'My head, oh, my head!'

At moments when he tried to lift himself from his bed Nini laid her cool cheek against his feverish one, and the touch, light as it was, seemed somehow to ease the pain. He grew immediately less distressed and ceased his weary outcry.

But to-day he had spoken of her for the first time. He had reached out his arms towards her, calling her his saviour, his helper, his love. She had imprisoned the wandering hands and put them gently under the bedclothes, but Jean had continued to talk, not less wildly than before.

'You never asked to be only a sister to me! Where is my sister - now when I am dying?'

'Hush, Jean, it is wicked to talk like that - you are not dying. You are getting better - the doctor says so.'

'What matter? - Anais, who called me "brother" ever since I can remember, is not here, and you are. Is not that enough for me?'

He would have said more, and Nini would have been glad to listen; but she was afraid of the counter-stroke, the certain relapse into weakness.

'Hush,' she said, 'we do not know what keeps Anais - she is still in Paris. It is the siege time, dear.'

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People cannot come and go as they would like.'

Of course the siege had long been over, but enough lies are told daily to the sick to fill up the recording angel's ledger from cover to cover, which is the cause why he lets them go unengrossed. It is like Jove's treatment of lovers' perjuries.

Nevertheless Jean gave Nini such a bad time on account of Anais that for several days she returned out of the sick-room at Les Andeleys with tears in her eyes. Bibi, having listened at the door, came upon her once by accident, still shaken by sobs.

'Now by the holiest of holy blues,' swore Bibi recklessly, 'I won't have this. It is because of Mademoiselle Anais that you are weeping, and she is not worthy of it. Her father has got himself made a Communard General, and she marches with the National Guards to look after him - sometimes as nurse and sometimes as *vivandiere*. I myself saw her in her uniform with a revolver at her belt, and exceedingly pretty she looked. But take my word for it, she does not think one hundredth part as much of her old friends as they do of her.'

'Well,' said Nini tolerantly, 'she has only gone with her own. Who can blame her?'

CHAPTER TWELVE

JEAN HEARS NEWS OF ANAIS

She told Jean when his brain grew clear. It might stop his parrot's cry of "Anais, come to the woods and play. I know a tree you cannot climb. Yonder is a rock that will shelter us from the sun. Let us go and throw stones at old Berton the Larzac shepherd!"

For weeks Nini struggled desperately to keep Jean sane. She was afraid of the other thing. It hurt her. Vainly she argued with herself: 'What does it matter? He has never kissed Anais as he has kissed me. When he is himself he loves me best. It is I who am here with him, and Anais who is serving out *eau-de-vie* to the militia of the Commune! What more can I ask?'

Only the last thought comforted her at all. Certainly she had Jean to herself, and was doing all that a woman could for him. But Anais had known him longest, and somehow she seemed to possess so many years of his life.

Wise as Nini was she did not know how little this counted. Clear in her mind she saw Paris, as grey as this was green. She saw the long black undulating snakes of the faubourg battalions, the red flag leading them all, and on a horse General Decies, riding with something of his old pomp, while Anais tramped along in her dark uniform of navy blue braided and sashed with red and silver. There was a revolver at her belt, and slung in bandolier over her shoulder by a broad strap, the tiny *vivandiere* keg with its winking brass-work, which had been just

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finished for her by Père Violet, the patriot cooper.

The Communists would be as proud of their Miss Anne as the police had been. Nini Auroy was sure of that. Anais could not remain unremarked wherever she went. No more could she, Nini, for that matter. But that was for another and more commonplace reason - a reason she hated - at least ever since she had met Jean de Larzac. Men thought themselves in love with her. They waited about doors and in the street to tell her so. Oh, the shame of it! While Anais seemed to pass freely along, gathering nothing but smiles, goodwill and comradely greetings. Lucky Anais!

But then, though she forgot it, Jean de Larzac was a man, and would probably fall in love for the same reason as others - because he wanted to - because he could not help it.

Still it was without the least animus or conscious jealousy that she told all this to Jean, as he sat up, propped on pillows, watching the spring breaking over the wide empty river and the square leagues of apple-blossom on the garden of Normandy.

Jean had been talking about Anais, as indeed he did often. How Clemenceau had been to hear her - nay, the Emperor himself, though that would not serve her greatly now. He supposed, however, that, as in the army, all things official would go on with the orderly precision of a hierarchy, and Paris certainly could not do without police.

He laughed as he recalled her brusque methods with Forty-eight and men of his kidney. He told of the flaring gas-jets in the early-deepening November twilight, the policemen with their badges of office, their cloaks and hats carefully tucked away. Above all, his mind rested on the slim girl at the black-

board, her hand flickering from side to side, her clear repetition of the technical phrases. "How far to the station?" "Second to the right, and straight on!" "Can you find a cab? - They have refused me all down the stand because I am not going to the races." ("After that you must find him one, and take the numbers of the other drivers.") "Follow me, please, to the Commissaire's office. You can explain everything there!" "No, it is not permitted." "Your dog, sir, must be muzzled!" "Certainly, madame, I will conduct you across the street, and with pleasure!"

'So polite a street service will not be found in Europe as that of our Paris fellows,' said Jean, 'if they let Anais have a year's fair try at them!'

Upon which Nini could keep the secret no longer and told all Bibi's tale.

Paris was in rebellion against the Government. Monsieur Thiers and all the Ministry were at Versailles, gathering a new army. The troops sent to Paris had fraternised with the National Guards. They had shot two generals - Lecomte and Clement Thomas, the latter their own late Commander-in-Chief. (Nini had pity and did not say where the murder had taken place.) The Government of the Commune was already established all over Paris. A second siege was in prospect, far bloodier than the first. The Germans were at St. Denis and in all the northern forts, watching events with grim humour. It saved them trouble to see the French cutting each others' throats. If it only went on long enough, France would put herself among the third-rate Powers - a little before Greece and about on a level with Spain and Italy.

Last of all, like the postscript of a woman's letter,

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she told him how Colonel Decies was a Communard General and Anais a *vivandiere*, with intervals of nursing in one or other of the hastily established press hospitals.

Jean gasped and was silent for long.

'Who can have persuaded her to such a thing?' he said in low shocked tones. 'But are you sure?'

'Bibi was in Paris on business for me,' said Nini, in a faltering voice, 'and he saw her.'

She was in terror lest he should find out that they had been living down here on the produce of Bibi's raid on her cashbox, her jewel-case, and the price of the horses and carriage. Jean looked at her keenly, but it was with other suspicions in his mind.

'Perhaps,' he said, 'Bibi, mistook her for somebody else.'

Nini shook her head, and taking from a drawer a copy of the *Journal Officiel de la Commune de Paris*, she read, 'Nothing has put more spirit into our gallant, troops than the appointment of the famous Mademoiselle Anne Decies to be *vivandiere* in her father's division. The brave young lady is to be congratulated, as she will find the work infinitely more to her liking than teaching the elements of her native language to Corsican bandits and the contemptible levies of Cathelineau and La Charette.'

Jean took the paper and re-read the paragraph to himself with a grave face.

'What will happen?' he demanded suddenly.

'When I am well I shall need to go back to my regiment, and that is at Versailles. Yet how can I fight against Anais?'

'Anais is a non-combatant,' Nini suggested, to pacify him, 'and besides, there is no question of your being able to move from here for many weeks. Your

wounds must not break out afresh or you will die. The Rouen specialist says so.'

'But Anais,' moaned Jean, whom the news had touched to the quick, 'she does not in the least understand. The Communists are rebels. They or theirs have murdered the Generals. No quarter will be given them. The fault of the few will be visited on the many. You will see military tribunals in permanent session as there were in Mexico, and a firing party ready at the door. Anais, Anais, why would you not listen to us?'

Now Nini thought this was more than a little ungrateful, seeing that but for her advice Colonel Jean de Larzac might have been the Citoyen Larzac and on the staff of the Communist General Decies. But she said nothing. By and by he would remember. On the contrary, she strove to comfort him about Anais. No one, she urged, would hurt a woman. Anne would soon see what sort of men she had cast her lot among. It was her father's influence. She had obeyed him as aforetime she had handed over to him her money. She had too many friends for any serious harm to befall. And so on; Nini doing her best all the time. But Jean was under no misapprehension. He knew the military spirit when left to himself. Death would become a trade in a day or two, and woe betide the innocent who were caught in the same net as the guilty.

Suddenly, while still twisting and turning the crumpled journal between his fingers, he read, "The two so-called Generals who on the 18th were executed by the just anger of their own soldiers at Number 6, Rue des Rosiers, Montmartre, have been provisionally buried in the cemetery of that Quartier. The executive of the military tribunal and that of the

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Central Committee of the National Guard continue in permanent session at that address, next door to the mansion of General Decies. The civil Committees are to be found at Clignancourt."

As through a sudden rift of angry hell-fire, the danger of Anais and of her vain and foolish father presented itself to Jean.

'We must save her somehow!' he said; 'I suppose we could not carry her off in the carriage as we did before?'

Nini struggled bravely, but the tears welled over. 'It is impossible,' she said.

'And why?' demanded Jean. 'I will warrant that Bibi, if he is the man I take him for, can find a way into Paris. We shall carry her off, brass-mounted cognac barrel and all. Why not?'

He was eager, excited. The idea had taken hold upon him.

'Because the horses are sold!' murmured Nini, so low that he could scarcely hear.

'Sold? My God!' he cried incredulously; 'and you loved them so much.'

Then all of a sudden he understood how much more she loved him, and his heart smote him, as well it might, hard.

'Oh, Nini,' he said, as many another man has said, and yet more ought to have said, 'I am not worthy.'

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

NUMBER SIX, RUE DES ROSIERS

This is how Anais joined the insurrection. She saw the thing that she hated coming to pass, yet because she must support her father she let herself be tempted. To some extent, too, though not completely, she saw the danger. She knew that her police friends were all at Versailles. She knew that Jean had been severely wounded, and that, if he recovered in time, he would certainly fight on the other side. One thing she did not know - where and by whom he was being nursed. If she had known, it would have made her happier. For she had none of Nini Auroy's anxious jealousy. She would have been rejoiced that Jean was so well cared for. Next to herself, she would have chosen Nini to care for him. Dear Nini! Besides, Nini would be brighter and better company for a wounded man than she, in the midst of this turmoil of uncertainty - the thunder-cloud darkening in the south, and the city she loved for the second time shut in as with iron bands.

Her father had no doubts. His old courage had returned. He appeared younger by twenty years, and he wore with sober dignity the uniform of the National Guard. Some day - and the day was not far off - they would be compelled to make him Commander-in-Chief. To Anais, her father had showed himself more kind and loving than ever she remembered him since she was a little girl. She had no one but her father. Who could blame her for following him, helping his position and influence by her universal popularity, as she stood to be

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photographed by Nadar on the barricades of the Père Gaillard?

Anne of the Police had become Anne of the Barricades, and the Barricades were prouder of her than were ever the gendarmes of the Prefecture.

She shuddered at the name and she avoided the place. For the man who sat there as master was none other than Raoul Rigault, who had made good his boast, though the scar of Jean's dog-whip was still livid upon his cheek. It was not likely that he had forgotten it either, and though for the moment her father's reputation and position protected her, it might not always be so. Already the Commune and the Central Committee were at daggers drawn.

But what lay heaviest on her heart was not any fear for the future, nor yet the daily scenes of pain and blood which passed under her eyes at the hospitals.

In the heart of Anais the remembrance of the 18th of March and the trampled gardens of the Rue des Rosiers were before her, sleeping and waking. Her father had been one of the Military Commission ever since the outbreak in October, 1870. He had ordered the carrying of the guns up to Montmartre. He had urged the putting these out of the reach of the Prussians - and when things grew thicker, because they were the property of the Parisians, cast during their siege, paid for with their money, served by their cannoniers - out of the reach of the Government of Bordeaux also.

He it was who had pointed out the convenience of the unoccupied Rue des Rosiers (No. 6), next door to his own house. The very fact would give him considerable importance. In case of pressure the Military Committee of the National Guard might use

all his house. He would only reserve a couple of bedrooms on the top floor for his daughter and himself. The rest of his dwelling was at the service of the Cause.

No. 6 was (like No. 4) an old house, of pleasant and provincial aspect, ensconced in trees, shrubs and gardens. In a village it would have been the Château, with its green shutters, its *vert-jardin*, and round-topped gate for carriage entrance. It was an early year after the hard winter, and in the gardens of the two neighbouring houses lilac, purple and white, was already in bud, and on the white-washed garden walls the green criss-crossing of the espaliers was starred by the delicate blooms of abundant peach-blossom.

From her window Anais often admired it. There was nothing in her own garden so beautiful - at least nothing that she could see in her view across the valley towards Montmorency.

There had been a quick coming and going all day since the morning. The famous 18th was a Saturday, and so clear that the work of the Commissions had begun as early as six in the morning. The sun had risen soon after that hour, and was clear of the houses by half-past six. Everything promised a magnificent spring day, and Anais had prepared breakfast for her father, laid out his white shirt, his cravat, and brushed his frock coat suit, double-breasted, as was the fashion when Poole had made it in the old London days. Her father must do her credit when he went out. He was to go that day to the Hôtel de Ville to take possession of it in the name of the Commune, but as a nominal head for his battalion had been selected in the distant days of the 4th September, Colonel Decies

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judged it more correct to go in civil dress, and let his martial carriage speak for itself.

Three men, also members of the Central Committee, came in a carriage, hired from Clement, one of the less important members of the Commune. The only one presentable was Assi, the Creuzot strike leader. But Anais was pleased to see that they had reserved the place of honour on the right for her father. She waved her handkerchief to him from the window, and the soldiers on guard at the house next door saluted.

The morning was of an amazing quiet. The Rue des Rosiers slept like a country village in the peaceful scent of fruit-blossoms. Bees hummed. The National Guards sprawled about, too lazy to play at "cork" or belt one another over the hand with knotted handkerchiefs. A pack of cards lay face downwards between two sleeping men. One of them still held four cards in his hand, so that certainly their game had never been finished.

Every one was enjoying the warmth and sunshine after the four days of lashing rain which had beaten upon Paris from the thirteenth to the seventeenth. But, though on the level the earth was moist, the paths and dry knolls of Montmartre had soaked up the moisture like a sponge.

But the afternoon was terribly different. It was about one o'clock. From the right there began to arrive the continuous growl of an angry multitude. Some shots, fired by chance or in reckless mood, rang out, and presently the mouth of the Rue des Rosiers was blackened by a furious surging mob. All sorts of uniforms were mixed together, though perhaps the red breeches of the deserting linesmen were most prominent. Besides these, there were

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National Guards of half-a-dozen battalions, a few sailors, and a great multitude of roughs. They appeared to be dragging along four or five men, thrusting, elbowing and kicking. Now one of the men went down. Now another would put his hand to his brow and bring it away covered with blood. Stones flew. The worn cobbles of the Rue des Rosiers made dangerous missiles.

Anais could see that the men who were being dragged along were all officers of the regular army. Her heart sank within her. One of them might be Jean. But she soon made out that the foremost was a tall and erect general - a youngish man, one whom she had often seen in the Government offices. Yes, General Lecomte, that was his name, whom she knew as a polite, gentlemanly man in spite of his military stiffness.

Every now and then some rowdy among the crowd knocked off his gold-laurelled *képi*, whereupon the crowd threw themselves upon it, kicking it along the muddy street. Then it would be rescued, and, all torn as it was, some deserter would stick it awry on the General's head. But Lecomte remained calm, as if leading his troops at a review.

In consternation Anne flew downstairs, and tried to follow the disorderly rout into the gardens of the house next door. But strange men in red breeches would not permit her to pass. These were Pharaohs who knew not Joseph. They only knew that they had captured their martinet General, and that with the zeal of perverts they were only waiting for the return of the Central Committee to murder him. The sadly maltreated suite of officers had vanished into some room where they were being kept safe.

After a while Anais recognised that by no

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possibility could she do any good. She met one of the Montmartre officers, who advised her to go home, and offered to conduct her there through the crowd.

'It is useless waiting,' he said (he was a pleasant young fellow, with a curly head and a great admiration for Anne). 'These are not our men. They are deserters chiefly from the 88th of the line, who carry their lives in their hands. They are desperate, and if the Central Committee does not allow them to shoot their officers they will do it without permission or warrant.'

'But this is terrible,' said Anais; 'I had no idea - '

She broke off short. 'Better go in at once, and I will set a guard of National Guards about the house - men I can trust. They will keep you safe till the red breeches take themselves off.'

He saluted, and waited till, according to his directions, he heard the wards of the lock turn behind Anne. He was a kind fellow, and afterwards much beloved in New Caledonia, where he was allowed to set up a little shop near the "line," which was frequented by the whole population of Ile des Pins.

Anais was grateful to him at the time, but she wearied for her father to return. It was perhaps as well for him that he did not. The brutal crew, recruited from all the dens of north-eastern Paris, would not have recognised his quality nor authority. The ringleaders were bad soldiers with grievances, most mere barrack-room grudges against *sous-officiers*, and probably not one of the whole escort had ever spoken to a General in his life.

The very sight of men high in authority under the Empire had stirred the bottom-dross of Society on

the heights of Belleville and Montmartre. All the afternoon recruits kept arriving, till the garden of No. 6 was black with people roosting everywhere on walls and roofs and hangars, trampling the neatly palisaded garden, and even trailing across the lawn of Anne's house.

In the wide oblong within the walls of No. 6 there was hardly room to turn. Fierce women, whom no one had ever seen before on this side of the Butte, stood talking with soldiers in unbuttoned tunics and *kepis* with the brim turned to the nape of their necks. Hundreds elbowed their way towards the room where the officers were held prisoners. They thrust fierce grimy faces against the window-panes, yelled out insults, and then, displaced by clutches of hand and play of foot and knee, made way for others more ruffianly still.

The afternoon dragged slowly. The Central Committee did not return. Messengers had been dispatched to seek them at Clignancourt, at the Hotel de Ville, and some, ill-advised, had even made known their request at the Mairie of Montmartre. Clemenceau had been at the funeral of Charles Hugo, whence he had just returned. He was not permitted to enter the street of the crime. The Rue des Rosiers was packed more densely than ever.

Clemenceau, who was never afraid of anything, commanded the men of the 88th to let the officers go. He would take them to the Mairie and be answerable for them.

'You are a traitor,' they answered, 'and your Mairie is full of traitors, whom you have been saving. But we will teach you a lesson in a day or two!'

Clemenceau was all alone. One of his *adjoints* had

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gone over to the enemy. But the young lion, who one day was to be the old lion, roared as if he still held his unquestioned authority of a week ago. When the deserters pointed guns at him, he bade them remember that he never forgot a face, and that he would have them all shot for this. He, the elected of the free people, defied them and their rifles. He summoned his own excited citizens, bidding them see that innocent blood was not shed in their arrondissement.

'Get out, royalist!' they cried. 'Go, traitor, or we will pump more lead into you than you will carry to the Mairie, which shall be taken from you to-morrow!'

The Mayor of Montmartre had to be surrounded by his friends and forced from the Rue des Rosiers; nay, even carried past the church before he would consent to re-enter his Maine.

Yet when this same man went with Tirard to plead the cause of Paris in the Versailles Assembly, he was shouted down with cries of 'Assassin of the Generals,' while several officers of the National Guard, who had spent a vain afternoon in trying to save Lecomte (and who actually did save his *aides-de-camp*), were either shot or sent to New Caledonia for the deed.

Later in the day, somewhere about four in the afternoon, Anais watching from her gable window saw a new arrival, a tall old man, white-bearded, dignified, clad in decent black, as it were cast up breathless, gasping and breathless, with the astonished look of one who had battled through a wilderness of waves only to find himself surrounded by savages on an unfriendly shore.

At sight of him the howls became demoniacal.

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Men struck him on the face with the backs of their hands. The red-eyed women plucked at the decent fulness of his white and well-kept beard. They thrust him in beside Lecomte, and though no member of the Revolutionary Committee was on the spot, the order was made out and stamped with the stamp of the "Centrale." It was also signed by several wholly illegible names, none of which belonged to the men who afterwards suffered for the deed.

Indeed, two of these, Meyer and Herpin-Lacroix, almost lost their lives in defending the imprisoned Generals. They saved the ten inferior officers who were shut up with them. The furious crowd tore the insignia of their ranks from their arms and shoulders. A black and ruthless fury, wholly inexplicable, like that of cattle at the scent of freshly-spilt blood, seized upon them.

The men of the 88th regiment of the line, in fear of their heads, broke into the room where the Generals were guarded. These had vainly been demanding to be led before the Committee. But there was no Committee nor any one to act for it. The order for the execution of the Generals was probably a forgery after the event.

First they brought out the old Republican Clement Thomas. He carried his hat in his hand, and addressed the crowd, reminding them that, as in '48, they were ruining the Republic and playing into the hands of their enemies. He would have done better not to have spoken.

'You sold us,' they cried, tearing hatefully at the old man, 'you drive in carriages and we must tramp afoot!'

Shots began to go off, not regularly, for there was no sign of the regular *peloton* of execution which had

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been designed by Lagrange. One soldier after another fired, and long before the old Republican chief had been pushed against the wall by butt-strokes he was bleeding from half-a-dozen wounds.

Yet in spite of all he continued to reproach them with the destruction of the Republic which had been won for them at the cost of blood. His own life was of no value, he said. He was a very old man, but his death would let loose the reaction.

He continued making head to the roaring mob till he had received sixteen or seventeen shots. Then suddenly his body bent in two and he fell on his right side with his face towards the green espaliers of the wall.

General Lecomte in the room hard by, had listened to the irregular fusillade. He knew that for him too his last hour had come. The feet of his slayers were already at the door. They brought him out, and on the way by which they made him ascend his Calvary he was obliged to step over the body of the dead General Clement Thomas.

Lecomte made no appeals. He did not address the crowd. He expected no mercy. Only he murmured so that those nearest could hear him, 'My children, my young children - I have five! What is to become of them?'

He stood at last against the wall, his head among the peach-blossoms on the trellis, which were presently blood-splashed. His was no lengthened suffering like that of the old Revolutionary of '48. He was threatened, taunted, but the prestige of the uniform kept wild hands off him until, at least, he was dead.

A sergeant of the 88th thrust a hand under his nose and claimed the first shot because of a former

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punishment of thirty days. A corporal of the third Chasseurs formulated the death sentence in these words, 'If we do not shoot him to-day, he will have us shot to-morrow.'

They were so near that they could rest the muzzles of the chassepots against the General's tunic. He fell at the first shot. But afterwards there was desperate work as each man with a grudge came up and emptied his rifle into the dead bodies, and maniac women bent to the task of mutilation with more than Afreedee cruelty, though without Afreedee science.

But long before this, Anais had fainted. It was fortunate that she did, for if not, she would have rushed to the rescue, and not even the guards set about her father's house could have saved her from the fury of these harpies sprung from the devil knows where.

She must have lain long by the window, the air blowing fresh upon her from the heights of St. Germain. For when she awakened it was already twilight. The garden of No.6 was empty, trampled, desolate, the grass and flowers trodden like a cattle-pen after a sale of oxen.

Only against the opposite wall, which still glowed with the mild pearly after-light of a Parisian gloaming, the peach-blossoms upon the trellis-work showed burnt and blackened at about the height of a man's heart.

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE BRASS CURTAIN RING

The irregular oval which was Paris had again been shut off from the world for some weeks, though the actual fighting had not yet begun. Thiers was biding his time. He had with him but thirty-two thousand men, and had the two hundred battalions, each a thousand strong, at the call of the Commune, been at anything like their full strength, Versailles would have been swept out of existence, Assembly and all, as easily as a wasps' nest.

In which case, as in times past, the revolution accomplished at Paris would have run like wild-fire over the country. As it was, Marseilles was in the hands of the revolutionaries for a fortnight; Lyons had its Commune; Perpignan was bitterly troubled. But of all the southern cities Narbonne was the most completely in the power of the emissaries of Paris. The smallness of its population alone saved the south-east corner of France from a dangerous rising. The half Spanish character of the population gave a force and a determination to the acts of the Narbonne revolution which were lacking in the other towns.

Nevertheless the Commune, in its strength and its weakness, was essentially a Parisian growth. The other outbreaks were sporadic, and were fed by the reading of the journals smuggled from Paris and reproduced in the secret presses of Toulouse and Bordeaux. The *Internationale* also counted for much,

especially in the south.

But Les Andeleys was far distant from Paris, and the ferry-boat that passed at the cry of the chance wayfarer to the further shore never brought back any tidings. The Germans were in Rouen to the north and at Chartres to the east, but as yet they had not found out the little red-roofed village by the river-side where few dwelt except raftsmen, longshoremen, wood-buyers and sawyers. It was merely a clean line of neat cottages, each with a patch of fruit trees somewhere out on the plain - trees which must pay the rent and furnish also the twice-a-day draught of cider that makes glad the heart of every true Norman.

Jean grew stronger. So well indeed was he that he could sit out in the little court orchard (for in Les Andeleys-sur-Seine nothing is lost), and there, when she was not employed in the kitchen with the details of the house, Nini would come and talk to him. She sat the while upon a stool which she brought there every morning from the verandah that overlooked the river.

For a while she had in a woman of the village to help her, but finally contented herself with Bibi, who was always difficult and fractious when there were other unknown servants in the house. They might oust him from his mistress's favour, thought Bibi. And then - there would be nothing left for him but to go back to Paris and carry a *flingot* at eighteenpence a day. This was a desperate resolve, for from the bottom of his heart Bibi despised the Commune and all its works.

The days were creeping on, and Nini feared each time that she saw Jean rise and shake himself, lest he should find himself well enough to rejoin his

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regiment. He had written, she knew, telling how he had been wounded in the head by a shell, had lain long between life and death, but was getting better and hoped soon to be well enough to return to his service. He had written also to his banker and to his agent - a *notaire* in Millhau.

It was this last, with its reply, which had led to the most serious quarrel they had had as yet.

'Nini,' said Jean, 'I have to speak seriously to you upon business. I am not a poor man, and I cannot afford to let you spend all you have on getting me well.'

'I have spent nothing,' said Nini, grown suddenly white as chalk. 'Do you not see? I should have needed a house to cover my own head in any case. If it covers yours also, what difference does that make?'

'It makes this difference, that you sold your horses and carriage for my sake. You are not earning any money, and you have paid all the expenses - Bibi's wages, the woman who came in - yes, the very doctors from Rouen and Chartres!'

'Nonsense,' said Nini, ready to cry with vexation. 'I am not your sister, as you have many times reminded me. But you might permit a friend - only a friend - to do so much! I should have been glad if you had done it for me!'

'I know,' said Jean, gently, 'what you have done can never be repaid in minted money - '

'Then don't try - don't try, *please*,' cried Nini, utterly agonised, 'don't, or you will spoil it all. I love so to have you to yourself like this. Besides, I do not keep a pension, and you are not a paying guest.'

Jean was nonplussed. He could not bear to see the tears breaking through her fingers and running

down her wrists upon the light lace which twinkled about her elbows. Yet how, with any self-respect, could he accept all that this girl had done for him?

‘Very well, Nini,’ he said roughly, ‘we shall say no more about it. For my sake, stop whining!’

He had found that a well-considered brusqueness was the best way to make Nini's nerves aware of themselves.

Nini clapped her hands with quickly found joy. The radiance came back to her pale cheeks and wet eyes.

‘Oh,’ she cried, ‘I will sit on my stool. I won't touch you, not with the point of my little finger. But it is splendid that you will let me do this for you. Think, it is all ours - this house, that fine cloth of apple-blossom over yonder, the broad silent river, and the silence in which I have made you better. All ours, yours and mine. Oh, I know I must give you up some day, but not yet. You must go back to your profession, and I can earn money at mine - more than you - oh, ever so much more than you, though you think yourself so rich. In the escritoire yonder I have a letter from a man in Milan, and one from another in London, and if I accept either of them, I shall be able to buy a score of carriages. So don't think that I am any foolish little novice. You will be mistaken.’

‘I have never thought so,’ Jean began, but she cut him off abruptly.

‘Then don't act it and don't say it. Don't even think it. I have had a holiday of gladness such as I have never known, and there have been times when (if I had not thought the doctor would find me out) I should have forgotten to give you your medicine, or done something wicked to keep you longer with me.’

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Oh, yes, I ought to be ashamed. Girls with families and proper chaperons and bow-windowed fathers with white waistcoats and any amount of money in the funds, girls who are made to stay at the convent till somebody with as much money as themselves is ready to make an arrangement and marry them – they would never talk like that.

‘But then, you see, they might not have nursed you either, nor carried you off from that horrid hospital at the point of a bayonet. *They* would never have put a curtain ring on the fourth finger of their left hands and sworn till all was blue that you were their husband. Yes, I did; they would not let me take you away without. I wrote a paper and signed it too – with your name. Oh, I know it was mean, horridly mean. For poor you could not deny it! And, do you know, I mean to wear the ring always now, though it is only brass, and makes a horrid black mark on my finger! See!’

She stretched out her left hand and showed a stout yellow band. It was not a pretty thing, but strong, snatched from some tapestry or chance window-blind.

‘I will give you a gold one for it.’ Said Jean, without in the least thinking what he was saying.

But in an instant the face and brow of Nini Auroy were crimsoned, while Jean paused anxiously, gazing at the girl, wondering what he had said to offend her.

‘Thank you,’ she said, drawing away her hand and walking off to the window to observe the fifteenth passage of the *bac* that day, pulling languidly on its ferry-rope, ‘but I prefer the old brass one that I found for myself . . . and lied about.’

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

ACCOUNT RENDERED

Gradually the thought cells knitted under the ridged bone. Slowly the headaches grew fewer, and at last ceased altogether. Jean woke every morning with the call of duty more strongly in his ears. He was an officer of the regular army. That was gathering at Versailles. They were in need of men, still more of officers. The Artillery, especially, would be badly handicapped after its losses to the Germans.

Yes, Paris might have some right on its side, but - an officer of the regular army could not do less than his duty under the critical eyes of the Germans whom he had fought so many months.

Of course Rossel had thought otherwise. He, a Colonel of Engineers, had joined the Communists, "because," as he wrote to his General, "the Versaillists had broken up the national territory. They had delivered intact and virgin fortresses. Therefore he would cast in his lot with the party which had done neither."

But Jean's notion of a soldier's duty was simpler. It was to obey what his superior officer commanded, just as he expected obedience from those beneath him in rank.

Thenceforward Jean de Larzac began to sleep less well. The noise of heavy guns was always in his ears.

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He seemed to hear (it was too far to hear them in reality) the roar of the siege guns at Châtillon and Mont Valérien.

He sat long silent in the orchard during these early days of April, and the fearful heart of Nini followed his anxiety like a printed page. No matter what she might do in the matter of concealing news from him, let the doctor from Rouen be never so staunch on her side, she read with clear eyes the secret of that persistent restlessness.

Jean was pining - pining for his work. Duty called him as duty does not call a woman, unless some man pulls the strings. She thought wistfully of how gladly she would have bided on under the orchard trees in the little river-side village of Les Andeleys. She did not want to sing. She craved for no applause from crowded theatres. If Jean would only say that his, coffee was to his taste, or the soup excellent, she would ask no more.

But, with the vague recognition which women have of the difference between them and men, she knew that the inevitable time had come for her to be left alone. She knew also that she must not show her sorrow, but let him go away smiling, carrying with him the best possible impression. Only so could she keep him - as she meant to keep the dainty flower-clambered cottage-villa, crouching under the vast morning shadow of Château Gaillard and looped about by the broad still river.

Still there were days before her - a few, at least - and Nini must make the most of them. The doctor had not given his consent to the final setting out of Jean de Larzac. He had been an old army surgeon, but was now the distinguished head of the military hospital in Rouen, where wounded French and

Germans lay side by side - the French cursing the fate which kept them bed-bound, but the Teutons content to lie staring at the ceiling, dreaming dreams and taking their potions down like so many lambs.

So in that distressful country Dr. Sabin was a man of considerable authority, even among the conquerors. He had all the passwords, and was trusted by the German authorities as no other Frenchman in all the Seine valley had been. In due time he would get Colonel Jean away to his famous 10th Artillery, but the time had not quite come yet. Dr. Sabin could not come very often, and Nini never revealed, even to Jean, what it cost her to bring such a man to his bedside.

Sabin was a brave man who saw much, and asked no questions which did not strictly concern his business. But his heart went out to the young pair of hermits at Les Andeleys. Whatever he may have thought in the deeps of his heart, his largely tolerant nature imagined no ill, and - he said nothing to his wife.

The last days were full of a most gracious and abiding charm. The flutter of falling apple-blossom was continuous over all the orchard. The broad cloth of peach-colour which covered the plain opposite was denuding itself. Only the hawthorn and the lilac survived, longer-lived and more firmly attached to the branches.

Never had Nini been so bright and cheerful. Jean caught himself listening for the swish of her silken petticoats. She had a mania for plain blue linen gowns in which she could go into the kitchen at any moment, but underneath these she held to the *frou-frou* of clinging silk and the coolness of finest

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baptiste. Perhaps she did not sing so much nor so clear. Indeed during these days her voice was seldom heard, and when Jean asked whether she was keeping it for the London man or him of Milan, she turned swiftly and went out of the room.

She came back, however, immediately, and asked pardon with such a reality of grace and sorrow, that Jean had perforce to take her in his arms. She remained there inert, and would not, as in the early days of their friendship, permit him to kiss her. Nini was walking now in new ways. Her feeling of reserve had come late in her youth, but once arrived, it was more punctilious than that of most girls of her age.

'Good heavens,' thought Jean, 'I hope she is not going to become like my aunts in Brittany, who fitted all their pigeons with wooden beaks to keep them from billing and cooing!'

But what Nini thought of was very different. It was definitely gracious, delicate and tender. Jean was going away. She had had him to herself for many days. Perhaps such a time would never come again to either of them - so simple in its happiness, so wholly innocent. It was the bath of a new birth. Nini would never be the same again. She would live in these weeks all her life. .

But could it be the same with a man? Would he not think that what she had done for him, she had done before for others? She had been most loving, and also free in the showing of it. Could he believe that it was for the first time? This was for Nini a grave question, swallowing up all others. She had kissed him, allowed him to kiss her. That did not matter now, but when he was away, would he not think the worse of her for it?

These were the anxieties of Nini Auroy when Jean

held her for a moment in his arms to comfort her as in the old time. Everything before their arrival at the little white-and-green waterside villa under Château Gaillard was the old time - a time indeed so inconceivably ancient as to have retreated almost out of sight in her memory. So it is now clear why Nini had moments of sadness which Jean tried in vain to conjure. He endeavoured to amuse her. He told her how, when a boy, he had teased his aunts Berthilde and Pulchérie by fitting the kittens and poultry with trousers of sailcloth and giving the big mother cat a waistcoat of the same with real buttons, which she had in vain endeavoured to scratch off. How they called him a cruel monster of a boy, and how he explained that he only did it out of consideration for the animals themselves, in order that they might be fit to live in the same château with two such correct and particular Breton ladies as his dear aunts Berthilde and Pulchérie.

From a chair placed at a respectable distance from his sofa Nini listened and laughed, believing in her heart that the tale had been made up to suit the circumstances, but not thinking the worse of the teller on that account.

Somehow, however, a glory had departed from the day. The long happy evenings when they used to watch the sun setting on the calm crimson of the water and flushing the apple orchards, would not come back any more. They used to take hands in those days naturally, because it made them happy and added warmth and understanding to the twilight glory.

But the want which they both felt was not Nini's fault. She was nerving herself for an immense sacrifice. Not only that of letting Jean go. She had

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made up her mind to that. It was inevitable, and because he was a man - indeed a hero to her - she did not even wish to prevent his going, though she had no scruple about detaining him as long as possible.

But the sacrifice was something infinitely more difficult, and the preparation for it involved several nights of steady figuring, than which there was nothing that Nini detested more. At last she had finished and was ready. She had been restless all Friday, and that evening she sent a note to Jean asking if he could remain a little longer after dinner than usual, as she had something serious to communicate. In that case, she would not expect him to afternoon *goûter*, but would send him up a tray to his chamber.

Of course Jean came down at once with the letter in his hand to know the meaning of this mysterious communication.

'Hallo, little girl,' he called out at sight of her, 'what in the world is the matter? Have you decided to become a *châtelaine* all at once? You are more formal than my Aunt Berthilde, Now what is the meaning of all this?'

Nini was taken a little aback by his unexpected action, but motioned him to a seat with a trembling hand.

'I have decided to do as you asked me,' she said uncertainly; 'wait till I get my notebooks.'

'Your notebooks, child!' he exclaimed, this time perfectly mystified. However, she had already flown from the room. She came back with a little pile of cook's marketing *carnets* in her hand, and produced with pride a long slip of paper which was duly headed;

'Colonel de Larzac owes the undermentioned sums to Mlle. Nini Auroy.'

'I have made up my mind to let you pay your share,' said Nini, with a dry sob in her throat. 'It was a hard thing to do, but I saw that you were right. So now I have gone over everything, and you will find no overcharges. But of course, I have put down nothing that I should not have had, whether you had been here or not. There is nothing for the house. I have bought it, and that I should have done whether I had fetched you or not. I need a shelter - a city of refuge in my wandering life. Nowhere could I have found a more pleasant place. With that, therefore, you have nothing to do.

'Neither for Bibi's wages. He would have served me all the same. So with the woman who comes to help; for there are things that Bibi cannot attempt. But I have charged you with Bibi's extra fare to Paris and a part of his expenses, excepting his drinks at *cafes*, which I made him pay out of his own pocket. The nurse also and the doctors - you will see what I have put down for them.' (Here Nini's voice broke a little.) 'Dr. Sabin says that he is not coming back again. You can send for him if there is any need, but he has his hospital, and it is a long way from Chartres.'

The young man's face still expressed vivid bewilderment, but Nini with her pencil ticked off the items in the most practical manner possible.

'Then,' she continued, 'you have the account for food. It is not much. The extra milk had to be brought from across the river, and the ferryman's charges were a halfpenny a day. That I could not

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help. There are few cows on this side of the river, and the milk is dearer, because so much of it goes to Elboeuf and Rouen.

There is an account for tapioca which I do not eat, and you will find set down all the medicines which Bibi fetched from Gaillon or from Paris when he went there.

'Of the general expenses of living I have only charged you a twelfth. First, because you ate hardly anything, and next because Bibi and Madame Guillaume have both great appetites. I gave you some of my scented soap and I have charged you for that, also the confiture twice from the pastry cook's at Andeleys the Upper. , Oh, and if there is anything I should have put down, and have forgotten, I am sorry. I will take the money. I know you would not want to go away feeling indebted to me!'

And just here Nini the practical gulped suddenly, and the next moment, forgetting her new dignity, she was sobbing on Jean's shoulder.

'I have remembered all I could,' she whispered, 'but I really do think I have overcharged you about Bibi's journey to Paris, for he sold the horses and carriage very well in Rouen, and he *had* to go to Paris for me - or rather, he would have needed to go some day. But, though I tried my hardest to make a fair division, I could not, and so had to put it all down to you - except Bibi's drinks, of course. All the same, I do not think it fair!'

Nini soon recovered herself, and again sat erect with the pencil tapping the account.

'I will take the money whenever you like,' she said; 'I had no right to think I deserved such happiness as looking after you just for my own pleasure.'

It really was by far the most touching thing that had ever happened to Jean in his whole life. He knew the struggle, and the victorious pain that had now possession of Nini's heart. He should at least go away feeling that he was not in the least beholden to her for anything.

He clasped her to him, but her body felt somehow rigid and unyielding. She kept looking down at the paper.

'If you have the money, I shall be glad to take it,' she said. 'Then it will all be settled and done with; the amount is twenty-seven francs, eight-five centimes exactly. If I had allowed Bibi to put in his *café* debts it would have been nearer forty, but that I could not permit.'

'Poor Bibi!' murmured Jean, resolving that Bibi should be indemnified at the first possible opportunity. He took his purse out of his pocket and counted twenty-eight francs solemnly into Nini's slender palm, and from a little gold-netted wallet at her side she returned him with solemn justice three sous - neither more nor less. She regarded him steadily with bright moist eyes, her breath coming and going and her heart beating as if she had run a race. There was a brilliant flush on her cheeks, and though she did not smile, she wore a look of modest triumph.

The thing was done. It had been hard to do - harder than any one knew. Still she had worked her way through. Suddenly she leaped up.

'Oh, how stupid I am,' she cried, 'how near I came to forgetting.' And going to the rosewood *escritoire* which had accompanied her from Paris, she drew forth an oblong strip of paper, a receipt written out carefully and in due form. It was already stamped

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and she signed and dated it across the handsome head of the Emperor in the most business-like way in the world.

She handed it across to Jean with as complete an imitation of the manner of a tradesman settling with a good client as she could muster. Jean had hard work not to laugh, but the whole transaction was so real and even tragic to Nini that he dared not. He folded the paper, placed it in a recently received official envelope, thanked her, and said, 'I shall always keep it, Nini!' in a tone which rather took away from the perfectly commercial nature of the transaction.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

HOW NINI SAID GOOD-BYE

The hours waxed few. Jean's proposition of service had been accepted from Versailles. A day had been set for him to rejoin. They had no more than ten days before them, and one would be a day of travel. The distance to Versailles was not great, but the communications were crooked. It was judged best that he should drive straight to the junction of Serquigny, where he would tap the main line. Nothing but military trains would be passing there, but his papers and his uniform would get him through.

They sat much during these days in the orchard, saying little, occupied in counting the swift flight of the hours. Jean's eyes were some times far away, and at that Nini winced, for she knew that he heard the thunder of the captains and the shouting. At such times she put her hands behind her and kept them there obstinately.

For Jean had a way of taking possession of what was not his, though she recognised that in the beginning of things it had been her own fault. It is hard to break men of such habits. She would teach him, though, if it took her all her life, that she was no silly woman led captive by her follies.

Secretly, too, she began to get ready his uniform. The silver hilt of his sword shone with the moonlike radiance of that finest of metals when it has been much handled. They had rather laughed at it in the regiment, calling it the forehammer because of its weight, but then many De Larzacs had carried it to

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battle in their time, and it had been taken from more than one stiffened hand.

The "day woman," good Madame Guillaume, an expert laundress, was now at the house every day, and sometimes continued her work well into the night.

'Remember, the Colonel is not to know!' Nini had said over and over. And the excellent woman would answer, 'Certainly not, Madame. He shall know nothing about it. And carefully will I look after the house when you are away.'

Bibi had gone to Chartres to get her a maid, a friend of his own, who did not object to travelling. So in the last days of all the two in the orchard were very much alone. Jean dismantled and cleaned his revolver, oiled it, and put it together again as well as the armoury instructor at St. Cyr. He longed to slip a cartridge home and try it against the trunk of an apple-tree. But for Nini's sake he refrained. Besides, in that peaceful hamlet clustering down by the river, far from battles and armies, the people would certainly have run to their doors expecting an invasion of Uhlans, at the least.

I do not know that they said very much of interest to others during these last fast-ebbing hours. They had short intervals of speech, trenched upon by sudden long silences which, strangely enough, did not embarrass either of them.

They did not arrange much about the future. The good Madame Guillaume in charge at the little house under Château Gaillard would forward Nini's letters, and the headquarters of his Artillery division would always find him. After that there remained only the present. And, God knows, that was sweet enough - fleeting but marvellous, like the flush of

the apple-blossom which had budded, bloomed and spread butterfly wings poised for flight, and then - passed away with a single puff of the wind of Time - all since they had come to that cottage, and since Jean had looked out upon it across the clear, slow, seaward pour of the Seine waters.

They made no love to each other. They sat a little part, silent mostly, but their hearts grew great in the silences. They did not read aloud, for that might make the time go faster, and neither wished that. Sometimes their eyes would meet. Sometimes it was their hands (though that but rarely) across the little green-topped table on which lay books unread and fancy-work untouched.

But it was all marvellously dear and unforgettable. Jean knew already how he would muse over these days in distant bivouacs, and when he lay down by his guns wrapped in his cloak to be ready for the daybreak roar which would herald abroad from battery to battery the recommencement of hostilities.

He did not think much of Anais, except at night, when uncertainty as to her fate often kept him awake for hours together. But during the day, and out in the orchard, he belonged to Nini, and in his thoughts his ancient playmate had small part.

What troubled him most was how swiftly the minutes were passing. Evening rose-red trod on the heels of pearly morn, and there was nothing between except the silence of the orchard, and the distant cry of the passenger summoning the *bac* down by the ferry. Several times Jean surprised a terrified expression on Nini's face, and he winced as he thought of the parting. She was thinking of it too, he knew. But she said nothing, and the blackbirds

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sang as they do only in Normandy of all France, while the leaves, rose and white, fluttered down noiselessly upon their heads.

At last there was but one more day left, and early in the dawn Jean wondered how it would be passed. Like a man he detested scenes, being a son of the self-contained Central Plateaux, with much Huguenot blood in his veins. How could he comfort Nini, all nerve and passion as she was, a true woman and of the South, and, loving - yes, he did not doubt - it would be foolish not to face the fact, loving him with all her heart . . . and such a heart.

Somehow that morning Jean felt humble and tender and more gentle than a young Colonel of Artillery had any right to feel as he rose and stropped his razor before shaving.

He was conscious of an unwonted quiet about the house. Presently he went into his little dressing-room. All his bags stood packed, locked, and labelled! The keys were on the table, and underneath them was a letter.

'Jean,' it said, 'I cannot bear to give you the pain of saying good-bye. You are anxious for me, I can see. You think I should break down. Well, perhaps I should, but to prevent that I am going. After we had finished and were waiting for Bibi, Madame Guillaume and I peeped in to look at you. You were sound asleep. I dared not kiss you for fear of awakening you, but I kissed the poor old bed-hanging which had nothing to do with the case. So good-bye, Jean. God keep you! Perhaps you will come down after all the fighting is over and see the little house. Madame Guillaume would be so delighted. You will remember that you are 'Monsieur' to her.

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‘So I must be going. Bibi has come. The post-chaise will arrive for you at ten to-morrow to take you to Serquigny, and I have written to the station-master here about you. There are five pieces of baggage, and all that you have to put on is lying on the cane chair beside your uniform. I don't think anything is forgotten, because Madame Guillaume's husband was a sergent-major when he was alive, and, as she says, “most particular.”

‘Again good-bye and good-bye, dear Jean. I have thought it out every way, and it is better like this. Believe me it is.

“NINI.”

Jean left his chin unshaved and strode to the window. There were marks outside where the wheels of a vehicle had turned. Yonder was Nini's straw hat abandoned on the grass by their favourite orchard tree, a thick-leafed cherry now in full blossom.

Then something clutched at him suddenly, something he would not have liked his batteries to witness, nor his fellow officers, something he had never experienced during all the campaigns against the invader.

A full Colonel of French artillery sat down on a packed leather trunk, addressed in a woman's handwriting - but what he did shall not be written here for the sake of his uniform and of all the glories of France.

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

GENERAL JEAN

The killing of the Generals in the Rue des Rosiers had been a great blow to the philosophic Communists, as well as to those who, like Colonel Decies, had joined the movement from a belief in the noble justice of a free people.

He went sadly over the ground with Delescluse, and the two old men complained bitterly, going hither and thither with bowed heads. They mourned for the dead Generals as for their own flesh and blood.

'Our backs are as much against the wall as theirs,' said the Colonel. 'It is only a question of time.'

Delescluse looked at the red-splattered, bullet-frayed wall, and answered, 'This loses us the mayors and a hundred thousand men!'

Both prophecies were fulfilled to the letter. The hundred thousand men either escaped from Paris, or hid themselves where they would have no further dealings with the National Guard. Innocent blood should not be on their hands, nor even the name of it. The well-to-do quarters became depopulated.

For though the National Guard had taken little part in the black deed of the Rue des Rosiers, their enemies at Versailles had no difficulty in dubbing them "assassins." And there is no doubt that those who knew, like Ferré, Rigault and their band, did nothing to prevent the tragedy. But the vast majority of the members of the Central Committee heard of the dark business for the first time in the newspapers.

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General Decies had come home to the astounding and fatal tale which Anais told him as soon as she was sufficiently recovered. But the idea of going back upon their pledged word never entered into either of their heads. They were committed to the men, still more to the Cause. With the exception of Rossel, the father of Anais was the only trained soldier among them. For Cluseret, though once an officer, was of purpose so infirm that he always set out to do two things at once.

'There remains for us only this,' said Delescluse, after a pause, 'to guide them as far as they will take guidance, which, I fear, is not very far, and then to seek to make a good end on the nearest barricade!'

General Decies nodded, but sadly shook his head. There was a weight on his heart.

'You are a childless man,' he said, 'and I have a daughter. The Versaillists will not be more tender to women than to men, especially when they had worn the uniform of the Commune.'

'But the Geneva cross?' Delescluse suggested.

'Sir,' said General Decies, 'do you suppose that we are combatants? What Power has recognised us? Who will interfere when they begin to murder our women, and to drive the children like sheep? If they were covered from head to foot with Genevan crosses it would make no difference. We could not help the blood of these two slain men, I as little as you. But what will that avail us in the day of reckoning?'

'Have you no friends to whom you could send your daughter?' Delescluse suggested. 'I have a sister - if she - '

He paused, but Decies broke in upon his suggestion before it was complete.

'It is of no use. Anais and I have never been

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parted. She would not listen to anything of the sort for a moment.'

'But this is men's work,' urged Delescluse. 'If we lose we pay a man's penalty. But women ought not to be brought into it. At least, that is my opinion.'

The face of the old fighter of '48, austere and meagre, took on for a moment a kindlier aspect.

'Let us hear what she has to say,' said her father, leading the way across the still trampled lawn towards the back of the house.

'Anais, come down, we want you. Monsieur Delescluse is here.'

Now the severe old philosopher was a friend of Mademoiselle Anne's, and at her father's weariful reunions she had often sat with him in a corner for an hour, glad to talk to a man serious yet suave, with so much of the spirit of the early Greek republicans in him. So she ran gladly down.

Her father began heavily.

'Anais, listen, my child. Delescluse says that since the shedding of blood yonder, this is no place for you. We are men, he says truly, and can abide our fate, but it is a different matter for a young girl. He advises me to send you away. There may still be those in England who would receive me for the sake of what I was, or, more likely, for the sake of your mother. I have influence enough to get you smuggled through by St. Denis and the German lines. Now what do you say?'

The girl had grown pale as she listened to her father's words.

'I say that I shall not go. I cannot leave you. You have, and have had, no one in the world but me. In the excitement of this new call you think you can do for yourself - '

'But I may not long be left - to be a burden on you,' said Auberon Decies.

'Well,' snapped Anais, 'I am not going to leave you for anybody. If you were going to be shot this morning, I should want to see that you went looking like a gentleman!'

Decies looked towards Delescluse, who shrugged his shoulders.

'I am not quite sure,' said the philosopher gently, 'that the young lady entirely understands. We are left in peace for the moment, but in the South and West the storm is gathering. Thiers is calling up his armies, numbering his forces. They are coming to him from German prisons - the soldiers of the beaten Empire, burning to wipe out their shame. It is on us that they will have a chance to do the wiping. We are only rats in a wide trap. It is locked, and the Germans keep the key. But when the edge of the trap is lifted and the killers come in, they will not make much difference between men and women. It is that which lies heavy on our hearts, young lady.'

But Anais was grave and determined. She had made up her mind from the first.

'I have only my father,' she said, 'he was left in my charge, and only death shall part us - not even that, if I have a revolver!'

'She is a good daughter and a better revolutionary, said the old man; 'if I believed in God, I would ask Him to bless her!'

'If anything happened to me,' said General Decies to his daughter, 'would you object to going to Nini - Mademoiselle Auroy, I ought to say?'

Anais laughed as she had not laughed for long.

'I might go and be made welcome, of that I have

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no doubt,' she said, 'if only for the sake of Jean. There - Jean's little finger is thicker than our loins. She would do the best she could. Only, how could I endure it? If a revolution were going on at the corner, Nini would neither know nor care which party stood for the people and their wrongs; she would only grumble because the traffic was disturbed.'

'Your fiery heart is not given to all women,' said Delescluse with respect, 'but if she would give you a shelter during the dark days when your father and I are with Lecomte and Clément Thomas,' — he stretched a lean finger towards the scorched trellises from which the blossoms were already falling — 'what matters her carelessness about politics?'

'Listen,' said Anais, drawing herself up, 'you are old and wise; but we are still at the beginning of things. Do not speak as if we are already beaten. We are ready to take the offensive. The battalions are full of fight, eager to be led. We outnumber the Versaillais ten to one. There are more than four hundred guns on the ramparts. Barricades are rising everywhere. Paris shall be again what she was in the Great Revolution, what she would have been in '48 but for the treachery of Cavaignac, the centre of the free world. The great towns are in arms. There are governments standing for the Commune at Lyons, Marseilles, Toulouse, St. Etienne, and Narbonne. There is good news even from the North - the black, clerical North.'

'And pray, young lady, who has told you all these things? We are members of the Central Committee and we have not heard one half so much.'

'There are men who know more than the Committee,' said Anais.

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'Their name?' said Delescluse.

'Rigault and Ferré,' Anais answered after a little pause. 'I misjudged Rigault; he is a strong man, and he sent young Dacosta to tell me these things only this afternoon.'

The two old men looked at each other and smiled.

'They are passing us over already. The place is to the young. Wait till the fruit is ripe, and there will be nothing for us but a cell in Mazas, or a gap in a barricade.'

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

VERSAILLES DURING THE COMMUNE

During the first part of April Versailles hummed like a great hive. The great little ex-peer of Louis Philippe with characteristic impetuosity had improvised himself soldier, and controlled all the operations of Vinoy, as afterwards those of MacMahon. He had a universality of genius which recalls our Lord Brougham, with the same dog-in-the-mangerish temper and a more profound self-esteem.

Jean found an excellent pair of rooms at the Hôtel des Reservoirs. This was great good luck, but the Versaillais were now growing accustomed to coining money out of the misfortunes of their country. After the Prussians came the Assembly with its eight hundred members, and as many thousands of employés of all grades, the ambassadors and their suites, the officers of all arms, all to be housed somewhere.

Jean's rooms had been evacuated by a general officer who found the suite too dear, but Jean was too content to find a resting-place in the crowded town, to utter a word of complaint.

Indeed it would have been wholly in vain. The hostel-keepers could pick and choose, and anyone who did not like their terms might go elsewhere. Jean looked about him the next day and hugged himself on his luck. He might have been making one of the queue in the halls of the other hotels - the Hôtel de France, the Petit Vatel, the Hôtel de la Chasse, the Cheval Blanc, or even scuffling among the soldiers drinking in the tap-room of Le Chien

Qui Fume. It was a good chance which had sent him to Les Reservoirs, for it was the best hotel. The English Ambassador was there immediately beneath him, and the price would make little difference at such a time.

He reported himself to Vinoy, who sent him on to Thiers. The rosy little man was busy among his figures, and never was any man more welcome than Colonel Jean de Larzac found himself in that vast palais of Le Grand Monarque.

'Artillery is our weak point,' postulated Thiers, 'and you must take over the control of the whole, both the field artillery and the placing of the big naval guns they are sending us up from Havre.'

'I fear,' said Jean, 'that I cannot do that. You have with you many of my superiors in rank, and even among the Colonels I am almost the youngest.'

'Let that make no difference. I will it so!' called out Thiers shrilly; 'old heads in the council - young men to carry out what we order. That is my principle. Where is Vinoy?'

Now Vinoy was sulking a little. The night before he had forced his way into the bedroom of the President. Mont Valérien was only occupied by the Commandant Lochner and a handful of men. The President had ordered its evacuation. Mont Valérien was the key of the whole position. It must instantly be retaken and strongly held. 'If not' (said Vinoy to the blinking little figure under the sheets), 'I resign my command, and will have no more to do with the business. Find your officers where you will.'

'Well, do as you like,' Thiers had snapped. 'Only let me sleep in peace.'

Vinoy took him at his word, saluted, wished him a good-night, and so went out. But this morning he

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came slowly at the summons of the President.

'Here is Colonel de Larzac of the Artillery. He has been wounded. He is the man we have been looking for. I could command a division myself, but to organise the Artillery we need a specialist - and a young man. De Larzac cannot be set to command his seniors and superiors. What rank must we give him?'

'Let me see,' said Vinoy, looking calmly into the small twinkling eyes of the Chief of the State, 'we have many sorts of superior officers in the Artillery, most experienced, all ripe for their pensions, and all equally useless to us. The best way will be to make the young man a full General at once, and antedate his commission from the 4th of September, 1870. In that way no one in the gunnery arm, or in any other, can be senior to him.'

'Naturally,' said Thiers, 'the ex-emperor's commission carries no weight in the Republic!'

Vinoy looked curiously at him, and being an impulsive man, it was on the tip of his tongue to say, 'To whom, then, do you look to take Paris for you?'

But the memory of the midnight quarrel was still in Vinoy's mind, and he did not risk any further irritating of the peppery little man.

'A full General,' he repeated. 'What may your age be?' he demanded of Jean.

'Twenty-nine'

'Why, it will be almost a record. Nothing like it, certainly, since Napoleon's time. This will show the grumblers that we do not depend on the *débris* of the Empire. Let the commission be made out, Vinoy, and I shall sign it'

Jean went off without waiting for his commission.

Almost before he had been fitted with the gold-laurelled *képi*, and long before he had been measured for his new uniforms, the news of his extraordinary fortune had spread over Versailles. The town was so small that gossip ran athwart it as through a provincial village after mass.

Jean was well approved among his companions at arms. They defended him when the jealousy of the older men broke all bounds, as it often did. They told the tale of his castigation of Raoul Rigault, and enlarged upon it to such an extent that before night all Versailles believed that Jean de Larzac had thrown the famous Communard chief from a fourth-story window.

They also bore witness that there was no one among the younger men who was so fit as Jean to direct the task which the Artillery would have to perform. Jean was fortunate in that he reached Versailles during the most sombre and cruel period of waiting. From Paris there came no fortunate news. Even Monsieur Picard had at last been cut off from his correspondence. Yet every hour brought news of the most dismal sort - defections the most unexpected, the springing up of new barricades under the fostering care of the Père Gaillard, wholesale arrests, suppressions of newspapers, vigorous and brave journalists fleeing for their lives.

Only a few of the Mayors still kept their places, but these few were of the very best. Clémenceau, Lockroy the son-in-law of Victor Hugo, Floquet, still held their ground in the hope of arranging some terms of peace, where neither side wanted anything but war. Political passions have a way of envenoming themselves in France, and a political opponent easily becomes a candidate for the

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guillotine or the chassepot.

As Jean pushed on his inspection he became more and more disheartened. Paris had kept the best of the pieces of artillery, both horse and siege guns, and the rest were in Germany, beginning to decorate the public places from Kiel to the Rhine Falls. He discovered, however, beginnings of a working material in the cannons which had been prepared for, but never dispatched to, the Army of the East.

There were also some batteries in the South - at Avignon, at Clermont and other towns. Jean telegraphed to their commanding officers in the name of the President to hasten their arrival at Versailles.

As Jean de Larzac hastened about his duties it was with difficulty that he recognised the sleepy town in which he had been in garrison as a fledgeling lieutenant. Where were the hurrying parties of Cook's tourists who had been driven in wagonettes along the dusty Sèvres road? Jean had often watched them curiously, marvelling at their eager following of their leader, like a flock of fowls at feeding-time. He had admired the way in which the dispenser of historical informations invariably kept a place beside him for a favourite pullet.

The race back again to the conveyances, watch in hand had also amused him, the dust of departure, and then the town and the *cafés* sinking back into their original drowsiness. Nothing ever seemed to have happened there since the King drove to Marly in the Ditch.

But now the streets were blazing with uniforms. Groups of deputies formed, thickened and dissolved. The air of the Versaillais themselves was that of little

rentiers who had unexpectedly gained the million prize in a state lottery.

There were no tourists any more. There was no room for them. On the Champ de Manœuvres tents were rising fast. An immense army already was spread away to the south towards the valley of the Chevreuse. At any rate provision for it was being made.

Jean pondered where he could find a place for his batteries when they arrived. He must have a sort of temporary *depôt*, and accordingly he interviewed a merchant of corn and hay with some considerable military brusqueness. The man had a great park - at present empty, swept and garnished, but presently to be filled with the turmoil of forage wagons. Meantime Jean could have the use of it. He would not, Monsieur Richard suggested, forget him when it came to providing for his battery horses. No one in all the department of Seine-et-Oise could compete with Monsieur Richard when it came to selling fodder. Why, he had supplied His Excellency the General von - . But he paused in time, not thinking it safe, in these dangerous days, to refer to the late enemies of his country, out of whom nevertheless, he had made a not inconsiderable fortune.

Jean was soon in the very thick of his reconstructive work. He had scarcely time to take off his clothes at night, when one glorious day in April he received his first letter from Nini.

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CHAPTER NINETEEN

A LOVE-LETTER AND AN ARMY

This was Nini's first real letter, one which marked a very remarkable date in this story of Jean de Larzac, General of Artillery in the regular army, commonly called that of Versailles.

'Jean,' he read, 'I was so glad to see you ride by yesterday that I cried, and you looked so handsome in your General's uniform. I was so glad, and yet I was sorry. For of course you will forget all about the little house on the riverside at Les Andeleys, and about Bibi and Madame Guillaume and me. I knew that you would rise to be a great man, Jean, only I hoped it would not be so fast as to make you forget - all.

'But of course it is right, and you must have enough on your mind, poor boy. You will take care, Jean, for the doctor from Rouen said that you must avoid fatigue for quite a long while. Now you have gone right into harness, and they tell me you have the command of the whole of the cannons. They make such a noise in the mornings, Jean, they keep one from sleeping. But I suppose you cannot help that.

'They told me, too, that the nice old gentleman who was riding with you on the pony was Marshal MacMahon, and the sulky, bad-tempered man like a stage-manager, Vinoy. Well, you have fallen among great company, Jean, and if any one is proud and glad it is Nini. Because, you see, she knows that you would not have been there at all if she had not stolen you away from that awful field hospital and nursed you so well herself! Trumpets and fanfare

here, please!

'After all, I could not go and sing, either at Milan or for the man in London. How could I? I won't pretend it was on account of my Country, or the Cause, or anything noble. Anais could write these things in capital letters, and they would be true and just. She would mean them and feel them. But if I said them, you would only laugh, and tell me to remember that I was not on the boards. And you would be quite right, Jean.

'No, I could not sing, and I cannot, so long as you are in daily danger of your life, with no one to nurse you. Of course so long as you are well, I ask you to please not trouble about me. For the clever Bibi goes out and hears about you every day. Oh, he is very good as a spy, and knows everything you do, and tells me every time you have to pass within range of the Paris people's batteries. He loves you too, and would carry you out of range on his back if anything happened to you with these horrid guns . . . which God forbid.

'And to think that it is Anne's father and her friends who are trying to shoot you. I don't think I can ever again love Anais quite so much as I ought. But perhaps she does not know that you are there, though I should know you ever so far off in spite of your General's uniform and the tall black horse with the sweeping tail.

'But this is foolish, and not like a girl who knows as much about making poultices and potions as I do. Madame Guillaume writes that she has moved the chairs from underneath the cherry-tree in the orchard to have them painted. The cushions of your window seat have been teased and remade, and so are quite ready for you to stretch your legs upon and

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smoke as you watch the river with the window open. Of course I know you have other things to do, and when Mont Valérien speaks, I say there is Jean bidding me good-night. You have such a loud voice, Jean.

I shall not tell you where I am, dear Jean, but I am somewhere where I can see you as you ride betwixt your batteries, and if you need me or Bibi - why, we shall be with you without your needing to call.

But all the same, Master Jean, you must take care and not need us. For if you are necessary to Monsieur Thiers, you are still more so to

‘NINI.’

As he read Jean forgot that he was a General in charge of the reorganisation of the Artillery and in close touch with all the great personages of the Assembly. He was again an infant, just awakened, and conscious that he had been babbling in his sleep. Nini's cool hand was on his brow. She was singing softly as one might to a fretful but well-beloved child, while outside the open window the broad Seine slid away to the sea, stilly and smoothly without a mutter or a ripple.

He roused himself, folded the letter after looking to see that neither at top nor bottom was there any indication of address. He looked at the postmark. Its date was that of the previous night, and was clearly stamped “St-Germain-en-Laye.” But that did not tell him much, for all the letters of his command which were not from Versailles itself passed by St. Germain, because Sèvres, Pecq, Rueil, Marly, and the villages on the plain were subject to the excursions of the Communists. No matter. He, Jean

de Larzac, would keep his eyes open. Nini might hide herself as carefully as she would; she might stay indoors all day, but Bibi le Bonhomme was not exactly of the figure to be hidden for ever under a bushel.

And to this end Jean gave orders to his spies. Such a man as he described was not to be meddled with on any account. Only he was to be kept under observation, and the place of his retreat reported to the General.

This was not very fair of Jean, perhaps, but he longed to see Nini face to face. Had she not saved his life? As to Anais, he seemed to have lost touch with her altogether. He could not recall her any more even as a playmate.

Jean had no particular hatred of the Communists. A soldier, he thought, had no business to concern himself with politics. The work of the day ought to be enough for him. It was only in the way of duty that he was laying plans how to bring the Commune to an end as speedily as possible, and not his fault at all if the father of Anais was one of their leading Generals, while Anais herself (so they said) was daily foremost in the battle.

He could not help contrasting the two women. Anais was, without doubt, the nobler. She was daily risking her life for an ideal, while Nini was only giving up money, fame, and safety to be near him in case of need.

But then Jean de Larzac was a man, and every man prefers the woman who gives up something for him, to the woman who sacrifices herself to any Cause whatever.

So into the midst of his daily business - the planting of batteries at Châtillon and on the plateau

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to command the Porte Maillot-Neuilly, at Mourmillon and opposite Mont Valérien, where he was laying a trap for the promised *sortie en masse* of the National Guards - he had a restless eye for a cottage like that which he knew so well on the waterside beneath Château Gaillard, where the waters flow softly and the cut timbers are aligned in stiff oblongs.

But no such little house looked out at him. He saw no trim windows, but more often broken panes stuffed with rags. The whole district had been desolated by the storm of war, and had not yet recovered its native cleanliness. Only near St. Germain itself the ravages of war had been got under, and its present mission in life, which was to be a sort of overflow station for Versailles, had quickened the inhabitants to this repairing of damages.

But look as he would he saw no sign of Nini or of Bibi le Bonhomme. Jean remembered the items of Bibi's Paris expenditure, and directed the attention of his agents upon the *cafes*. But here again the luck was not on his side. He learned nothing, and yet he never went abroad without a consciousness that he himself was being carefully watched.

Perhaps it was fortunate that about this time he had other subjects for serious thought. He saw M. Thiers daily, ostensibly to report to the Chief of the State, and to give him his best advice. But Jean was not long in discovering that the little historian was far less eager to listen to his (Jean's) advice than to impress Jean with the value of his own.

Jean found him always among his papers, his *History of the Consulate and Empire* ever open beside him. He was drawing out plans of attack and defence, based on his own reading of Napoleon's

campaigns. He had somehow acquired the belief that he was really a much greater General than the little Corsican. Only, hitherto, opportunity had been lacking to him. Now he would astonish the world. The rolls of regiments, the number of Jean's guns, their position and probable effect were judged by plump little Monsieur Thiers on the scale of Austerlitz and Wagram. They said that the prestige of Napoleon kept him from sleeping. He wished that he had his own volumes to rewrite. He would prove to the world how overrated a soldier the man had been. He would show the Prussians how *he* would take the city which had kept their best Generals so long at bay. It was with the utmost difficulty that he kept from calling upon Field-Marshal von Moltke in the Street of the Peintre-Lebrun, where he was domiciled, to ask his opinion upon his plans! He would have done it, too, but for the watchful common-sense of Madame Thiers, who felt his pockets before she allowed him to go out, and took counsel with his valet Charles as to the growing militancy of the Chief of the State. He had secretly ordered a uniform of a military character which his wife would not allow him to put on. He was capable of addressing the Assembly in it.

Jean, who had no pride of place, took the President's orders with humility, but carried them out according to his own interpretation. To Monsieur Thiers a cannon was a cannon so long as it could make a noise. So Jean, at his good-will, distributed the new howitzers and long-nosed Creuzot-Schneiders where they would give the best results.

The army built itself up very slowly, and there were times before Jean took possession of his *mandat* when the famous *sortie en masse* might

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have succeeded. But all through the early days of April, and indeed till the actual beginning of hostilities, the Communist leaders of Paris constantly overestimated the strength of the forces which Versailles could oppose to them.

When the 69th regiment marched out of the Jardin du Luxembourg, with drums beating and colours flying, in spite of all the efforts of the Communists to win it to fraternise with them as the 88th had done on the 18th of March, it was received at Versailles as the first gleam of hope for the Government and its Chief of State.

But one morning Jean, starting early to ride round the positions in the direction of St. Germain, saw a yet more startling sight.

The *cadres* of the line regiments were filling up, which kept Monsieur Thiers busy with his figures and additions, and the heavy tread of marching regiments could be heard all day and late into the night.

Jean rose early, when the dawn was still dusky pearl and before the sun had risen, as it did somewhere about half-past five. For Jean loved to descend upon his artillerymen while they were still busy with their fire-making and coffee kettles. He loved the scent of the blue wood smoke, and he pleased the men by breakfasting with them just where he happened to find himself.

He was on his way out of Versailles by the Porte St. Antoine when he shortened his bridle a little to let a regiment of gendarmes pass, men after the heart of Monsieur Thiers, solid, broad-shouldered and firm on their feet, and with a look of resolution on their faces that boded ill for any Communists they would have to encounter. They were from the

East - from what department Jean knew not. But they had seen service, and were glad to find themselves once more among their countrymen. But from behind them, startling his horse, came the unwonted trampling of cavalry on the paved streets of Versailles.

Jean halted, and as the first man passed he saluted, which he had not thought it necessary to do in the case of the gendarmes.

They were the men of Reichshofen. Forty of them - all that were left alive of the men whom Margueritte had led, forty gaunt spectres, all save for their *képis* just as they had come out of that glorious death-trap. Cuirasses bruised and battered as with sledge-hammers were on their breasts - but shining every one of them in spite of the bumps and dints. Their red mantles had been carefully mended for the entrance into Versailles, the curve of them sweeping to the horse's tail as if they had never been rolled in the blood and dust of desperate fight. A lieutenant-colonel, looking strangely warlike, with the long grey beard of his imprisonment, conducted the forty red spectres of Reichshofen. They were like men risen from the dead. Four regiments out of five they had left on the ground - two Generals out of three, and the third was Gallifet the inviolable.

Jean stood motionless with his hand at the salute, but they passed like men in a dream, misty, unreal, only the grey-bearded officer raising a weary hand in acknowledgment of the salutation. Jean turned in his saddle and watched them as they were lost in the dim green alley-ways of the park. Could he have seen a vision? But no, the policemen, at least, were too solid to be so explained.

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CHAPTER TWENTY

THE DEATH-TRAP

While Jean thus searched for Nini so far as his opportunities permitted, he had quite other matters on his mind. The spies of Monsieur Thiers in Paris had often signalled the attack upon Versailles as immediate and inevitable. So often had they cried "wolf," that the most part of Jean's colleagues believed that the Communists would never come at all. But Jean had heard the talk at the meetings as in the Rue des Rosiers, and he knew well that it was not courage but leading that was wanting.

Now that they had such good soldiers as Rossel and Decies, they would assuredly come. Therefore, to the great annoyance of Monsieur Thiers, who loved noise, Jean kept Mont Valérien obstinately silent for some days, while on the other side of the valley he was mounting a battery which would sweep the Rond Point des Bergères. The main attack upon Versailles, he saw plainly, must pass that way.

He was right, but he would not have been right if the men in Paris had been guided by the science of Colonel Decies. He had ordered the dark-blue battalions of the Commune to pass to the right of the batteries of Châtillon, screening themselves behind the slopes of Meudon and Bellevue, to sweep the undefended valley of Chevreuse, mount the low hills near St. Cyr, and enter Versailles unseen by the long alleys of the Parc.

But the men of the battalions would hear nothing of this. Indeed, even from the first they would obey no discipline of any kind. The Commune itself might multiply orders, and appoint commanders-in-chief,

but the battalions *fichéd* themselves *pas mal* of the Commune and all its works. They had indeed struck on the rock on which troubles among workers always make shipwreck. They would not obey their own chosen leaders. They threw them overboard whenever it suited them, repudiated the bargains they made, and generally fell back on anarchy.

On the day of the *sortie* they poured out of Paris in two great streams, blackening the roads to which they kept with the persistence of tramps. Many women were among them, women of the Halles and distant faubourgs.

They had been told that it would be a mere promenade, an excursion, nothing more. Versailles would capitulate at the first summons. Mont Valérien had been “squared.” The soldiers who held it would not fire on the people; indeed they were heart and soul with them. Had its guns not been silent for four days?

So they came on gaily, in shouting, billowy masses, as at a picnic, the men breaking ranks on the slightest pretext, running to the sides of the road and sticking branches of hawthorn in the muzzles of their *fusils à tabatière*. They might have been going out to breakfast at Robinson for all the anxiety that was visible among them. Only the men in the immediate neighbourhood of Flourens and Duval kept up some semblance of discipline.

But when at last they came under the frowning mass at Mont Valérien, a fear fell upon them. Perhaps after all they had been misinformed. What if

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A sudden thunder broke from the top of the huge fort. White smoke rose into the air. Shells whistled and exploded. The road to Versailles was suddenly

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crossed by a division of infantry, companies of gendarmes standing steady in the front. Unseen batteries swept their ranks with fire of mitraille.

The great sortie halted a moment, petrified. They could not understand. The men gazed at their neighbours falling all about them. Then they fell themselves.

A great cry went up, the inevitable cry of the Latin races in disaster: "*Nous sommes trahis!*" "We are betrayed!"

So they were, but it was by the men who had allowed them to go forth to their doom, who had stayed behind in their comfortable bureaux, or eating and drinking in their favourite restaurants, and chuckling at the "good lesson" the hot-heads of the battalions would receive on their way to take Versailles.

The idyllically named Place of the Shepherdesses' became an Aceldama, a place of skulls and blood. So helpless were the victims that Jean could not bear to continue the slaughter, and having stopped the fire of his batteries, he signalled Mont Valeri n to cease firing. But even that did not cause the carnage to cease.

All those taken prisoners were immediately thrust against walls and shot in heaps. The ruddy blossoms of the Rue des Rosiers were avenged a hundredfold.

But on the next day Jean received a sharp reprimand from Monsieur Thiers for not continuing his artillery practice upon the broken and liquefied masses of the fugitives.

'The more we kill now, the fewer will there be to fight us when we have to take the barricades!' was the clinching argument of the little paper-and-ink

Napoleon.

The convoys of prisoners were most brutally treated on arriving at Versailles. A mob of well-dressed people fell upon them and tore their clothes off, striking them in the faces with umbrellas, and leaving no doubt in Jean's mind what would be the fate of Anais and her father if by ill-chance they were sent thither.

Altogether it was a great day for the Army of the Assembly, and in some ways the turning-point of the strike, but in spite of this an invincible sadness brooded over Jean's spirit. They knew so little, these poor people. They had no mercy to expect. They certainly received none. And somewhere among them were Anais and her father. Now Jean did not mind charging a barricade, but it seemed too much like the slaughtering of sheep-droves to fire on these tragic ramblers whom he saw lying dead by the hundred with the innocent hawthorn still white in the muzzles of their rifles. The poor devils had not even thought of firing upon their enemies.

But, though little Thiers, crouched among his maps and papers, reprimanded Jean, he was not grievously offended. He was indeed in too good a humour for real wrath.

'I dare say,' he said graciously, 'you were afraid of hitting my troops, especially my precious gendarmes, the right arm of my army. When I speak in the Assembly to-morrow I shall make special mention of them.'

Jean thought that Mont Valérien and his concealed batteries of mitrailleuses on the Collines de la Bergère deserved at least an equal notice, but he guarded himself carefully from suggesting as much to the vain little historian.

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After all, by a little arrangement, he could easily have his own way. Vinoy, who sulked, swore, contradicted, and called names, had been relegated to the reserve, but Jean had some of the caution natural to the Cévenol. He was not a de Larzac for nothing, and, having marched with Henry IV., his family had always been of opinion that Paris was well worth a mass.

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

ANAIS BRINGS HOME ANOTHER FRIEND

Already towards the end of April, all save the shouting was over with the Commune. At least its end became a mere question of time. They were losing hundreds every day. Men were escaping by the gates, bribing the guards with a louis to let them pass, escaping as mourners at funerals, and, according to Daudet, as drivers of garbage waggons. Some were even scrambling desperately down rope-ladders to escape the conscription of the Commune.

Within, the wiser men saw well enough how things were going. But they, Delescluse, Decies, Rossel, were passed over for clamorous young hot-heads like Rigault and Ferré with their mechanism of despotic tribunals and Committees of Public Safety. These young men set out to be more Hébertian than Hébert, more cruel, than Marat, more stern than Robespierre. But times and men had changed, so that on the evening of the day when they had arranged for the seizure of hundreds of hostages, they would be found in the dancing-halls of the Boulevard St. Antoine, feasting their friends of the Latin Quarter, artists' models and riff-raff dwellers in Bohemia.

Of quite another faction were Delescluse, the austere *theoricién*; Jourde, the impeccable cashier - the man who saved the Bank of France, and with it the public credit; General Decies, and Rossel, the finest engineer in France. These men continued to meet in the house in the Rue des Rosiers in the long, golden twilights of that early Parisian summer,

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one of the most beautiful the capital has ever known.

Over the long serpent links of the Seine valley, flashing like silver, the little group would stand silent watching the flakes of straw-coloured gold change to red and then to deep purple. Mont Valérien would spurt white jets of smoke which changed to tongues of fire as the night advanced, and at all times of night and day the booming shriek of the shell could be heard. Sometimes, most often indeed, it would burst in the air white and woolly, but when it descended it was generally in the direction of Neuilly, or along the long Avenue, now lined with automobile shops, which leads from the Port Maillot to the Arc de Triomphe.

Anais stood with her father's hand in hers. Father and daughter had drawn much closer together during these latter weeks, when Anais found out that it had not been all talk that had been going on in the big red-and-gold room of No. 4 in the Rue des Rosiers.

For the first time since she could remember Anais respected her father. Even when he only received and spent her money, often on things which she knew to be unnecessary and foolish, she defended him publicly, but she had always in her mind a certain contempt of which she was secretly ashamed.

But now when she saw her father every day in the becoming dark uniform of the National Guard, the successor of Duval, Commander-in-Chief of the forces in Paris, and attending to his business with chivalry and devotion, she began to form wholly new ideas of him. Delescluse, who admired him, and Rossel, who admired her, assisted in forming this

impression.

Anais must have been singularly unsusceptible to masculine liking, for from the first she treated this brilliant officer much as she had treated Jean. She knew his wonderful record, his escape from Metz after the capitulation, his Quixotic casting behind him of a brilliant career, his championship of the weaker side, and - most tragic of all - the fact that he would not be supported in his reforms, but that the *gamins*, the irresponsibles, the shoemaking, joinering ex-journeymen who had been promoted officers of battalions, would check every plan for the organisation of a real army.

Decies knew it. Bitter disappointment had taught it him even thus early. Delescluse knew it. 'The men of Paris will fight, but they will not let themselves be led,' he said. 'There will always be the 111th, which will only fight in its own *quartier*; the 68th, which objects to night duty, and will place no sentinels. Hardly thirty thousand of the 250,000 paper soldiers are ready to march night and day, to go where they are wanted, to sleep on their positions, in a word to do what the officers of Thiers yonder will teach their raw lads to do in a fortnight or so!'

'Our men you cannot teach. They stand for liberty, but they will not obey . . . not even the officers whom they themselves have appointed!' General Decies spoke sorrowfully, but from a full knowledge.

'No,' said Delescluse, 'but once the invader is within the walls, when they see the blood flowing and the barricades attacked in front, then they will fight - I know how they will fight, for I remember '48.'

'But the end will be the same,' said his friend,

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‘Cavaignac promised not to massacre, and he massacred. Thiers promises a massacre, and he will make a holocaust of Paris.’

‘But the Assembly?’ Delescluse urged. ‘They proclaim the law; they live by the law, they make the law. Surely they must administer it?’

‘Because you are just, shall others be just also?’ asked General Decies. ‘Taking our own men only, can you put wisdom into Eudes, when he rages like a naughty child, or calm justice into Rigault, when he splutters abominations like a cruel street urchin, or sanity of outlook into the calculated devilry of Ferré? These are our worst, you say - yes, my friend, but they are by far our most powerful. The crowd applauds them, laughs at their foul mouths and their worst cruelties. It is their youth! Age and wisdom, experience and self-abnegation go for nothing. Give them a jolly fellow who scatters gold pieces among *les soupeuses*. Where do you and I come in, when *that* makes popularity?’

The old republican who had divided his life between prison and the propaganda, winced. ‘I will never believe it of true followers of the Commune,’ he said, ‘of men who are ready to die that their children may have better chances than they had, that their daughters may have no need to yield to temptation - ’

Delescluse had fallen into a sort of frenzy. He was quoting from one of his idealist leading articles. He entirely believed every word of what he uttered. Had not his own pen written it?

‘Hush!’ said General Decies in his ear, ‘yonder comes Anais, and if I am not mistaken, that is Rigault at her elbow!’

He spoke as one who finds himself betrayed by

those of his own house. But he was mistaken. Anais thought she understood the stormy, boyish, *farouche* character of the Procureur of the Commune. He would do for her what he would grant to no one else. Rigault had passed his life amid the reek of the Latin *cafés*. He had never known one good woman before Anais had been thrown in his way, and she had begun by treating him with the frankness she had used towards Jean.

Of course, one of the first stories told her had been the supping of Jean and Nini Auroy at the Café Riche, with as much as redounded to the credit of Rigault of what happened at the theatre of the Châtelet. As usual her father had said nothing, and she liked him for that. But though she did not blame Nini, she felt that she was henceforth separated from Jean by a gulf of different ideals.

Meanwhile Rigault was using the most subtle method known to him of gaining her favour. He had begun consulting her daily on the affairs of his office and of the Commune. Furthermore he was taking her advice. Anais was fast becoming notable in the State.

Day by day Rigault was gathering the strings of public affairs into his hands. He had vast capacity as a Préfect of Police. He was of boundless ambition, tireless energy, and had that furious flamboyant nature which crows so easily the sort of men with whom he was mostly brought into contact. He could do his work swiftly with a great deal of doggish humour. He could afford time to give midday lunches to friends who crossed the bridges arm-in-arm to pay homage at his shrine, but at five o'clock he had always a victoria and coachman at the door of the hospital where Anais was working. A note

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from the delegate of the War Department would liberate her, and then the great man would see her home in person through the warm evening light.

This was the first occasion on which Rigault had come down the Rue des Rosiers. He had resolved on this beforehand. He now felt himself strong enough to cope with General Decies and his friend Delescluse. Why should he not accompany Anais home if so it seemed good to him?

'It is Rigault,' said Delescluse to the old soldier; 'mind that you do not cross him. He is a dangerous dog. He barks too much, but he can bit also!'

General Decies nodded grimly and watched the pair as they came nearer to the house.

'Bite or bark - he had better take care,' he muttered. 'One bullet is as good as another, but when I shoot at a man I do not miss. Also in the Crimea I learned to be enough of a surgeon to know where a man's vitals lie.'

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

'HER MAN!'

At about the same hour when Anais in her red *vivandière* sash and coquettish *képi*, with the little crimson rosette at the side, was walking down the Rue des Rosiers watched by the two old men, her father and Delescluse, Nini, in the sober costume of a nursing sister of the hospitals, was leaving the courts of the Orangerie where the less dangerous of the Communist prisoners were detained, while awaiting the *prévôtal* court and the sharp sentence which might mean immediate death or embarkation for the other side of the world.

At the gate a huge man in the uniform of a prison-guard heaved himself slowly up and followed Nini out, not near at hand, nor yet ever losing her to view. She did not look behind, but she was quite conscious that Bibi le Bonhomme was following her. Nini had obtained this great favour in the wisest and simplest way.

She had gone to the power behind the throne. Nini had known Mademoiselle Dosne, the sister-in-law of Thiers, and the ruler of his household, whom alone he consulted, and of whom even his famous valet Charles stood in awe.

In former days Nini, because of her musical gifts, had been a welcome guest at the beautiful house in the Place St. George, so soon to be demolished. Nini reaped her harvest now. She knew that Mademoiselle Dosne would keep her secret. She might possibly misunderstand her motive for keeping out of Jean de Larzac's way, but most

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certainly she would obtain for her what she wanted - the right to come and go unmolested among the Communist prisoners, especially the women. Also she would keep her secret.

So it came about that every day Nini Auroy, late prima donna at the Paris Opera, had become a sister of mercy, and, under the tireless escort of Bibi le Bonhomme, could pass in and out of these jealously guarded precincts at her pleasure.

'She has a special autograph order from the Chief of the State,' said the officers one to the other as they relieved guard.

'She shows *patte blanche* from the little Napoleon, you know!' the jailers confided to one another, behind their hands.

But there could be no doubt that since her advent the bread and the soup had been improved out of all knowledge, the sleeping-places provided with better straw, the supply of clean drinking water made continuous.

The Orangerie of Versailles is a vast court, round which at that time were niches in which the orange trees had formerly been placed during the winter. These now provided sleeping-places for the women prisoners. Rough doors, open a foot at the top, had been provided as some shelter for the women. These, could be shut at night. The straw was clean and good. But in the men's quarter there were no doors and the straw was changed less frequently. Fortunately all that summer the weather remained magnificent!

It was, then, not from any snug cottage at St. Germain that Nini, always about in the open air and unseen herself, could keep an eye upon Jean. And the women, with extraordinary swiftness of

intuition, knew at once why at the clatter of hoofs, Sister Nini would raise herself from the patient and look long over the wall.

'It is her man - see how she watches for him!' they whispered; and even the sick woman she happened to be tending was content to wait, on condition that her friends should tell her faithfully afterwards what he looked like.'

They had known at a glance that Nini Auroy was no real nurse by any religious vocation, but it did not hinder her usefulness in the least that she had come there to be "near her man."

So, for the matter of that, had they all, and that Nini's "man" was an officer in the service of the enemy made no difference. She loved and they loved, and whether "rouge" or "tricolor" - why, to a woman that was merely the way the dice had fallen.

For long their puzzle was Bibi. He could not be her brother. He was too respectful. He wore the uniform of the prison guards, but he never entered the enclosure. Some thought that they had seen him before, and most were conscious of a vague but quite real admiration for the limbs and thews of Bibi le Bonhomme.

Bibi, however, had no eyes save for his mistress. In the wide arch with little side niches which served as a guardroom, he played at cards, treated the soldiers to "sealed wine" - no "little blue" was good enough for Bibi. And at intervals he would rise and stroll nonchalantly towards the barriers as if with the intention of going in.

He never did, however. He only noted carefully where his mistress was, saw what she was doing, and being satisfied, returned imperturbably to his glass of wine and his cards. The guard blessed the

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hours that their pseudo-comrade Bibi spent with them.

When the officers came to visit, either officially or from curiosity, they would sometimes ask what he did there. Bibi's reply was always the same 'On Special Service for the Chief of the State!' He had not often to show his papers, for mostly the *sous-officier*, sergeant-major or *maréchal des logis* was ready to whisper something behind his hand. Bibi was there by Monsieur Thiers' written orders, and there was no more to be said. Yet no one considered him to be a drag upon them. A man of Bibi's build and proportions would make but an indifferent spy upon his fellows. And, as a matter of fact, no one was the worse, but all many pints of wine the better for Bibi's sojourn among them.

When Jean rode by, as he did at least twice a day, there was a little eager whispering among the women. Very few looked up so that they might not embarrass Sister Nini, who (they thought) "knew much more about ailments than many *religieuses*," and could put heart into the sick and nerve into those about to die, like one who had had bitter experiences of life and death. As indeed she had done in the little deeply bowered cottage, before the windows of which the Seine slipped smoothly and broadly to the sea.

One morning it chanced that Monsieur Thiers took it into that head of a little parakeet-like Napoleon, that he must find out for himself how the prisoners were being treated. The journals of the Commune had conveyed to him in bitterest taunts the information that the women had to sleep in the open air, and that all means of decency and cleanliness were denied them. Mademoiselle Dosne

refused to make the visit, so he must go himself.

Thereupon he had summoned Jean to attend him for he meant to go as far as the batteries of Meudon, which he had never yet seen, but whose emplacement he had superintended upon paper. The Marshal MacMahon, Duc de Magetna, did not like to submit his decisions to this miniature autocrat, and kept out of his way as much as possible. Jean, on the other hand, was so ready to explain and so ready to agree that the Napoleonic method was the best, that Monsieur Thiers had the highest respect for him. But he found means of going his own way all the same.

This favour caused Jean to be regarded as a coming man in the State. Men of infinitely greater experience asked his advice, and even surly Vinoy, who bore no malice when his own interests were not directly encroached upon, said to him one day, 'How do you do it, de Larzac? I never can keep the peace with the little *crapaud* of an Orléanist for a single quarter of an hour. And no more can the Duke. Yet you are no scribbling bourgeois.'

Jean laughed cheerfully.

'Mon général,' he said, 'my grade is none too old. What is the use of my quarrelling with a man who does not know anything about my business? The guns are placed, after all, as I want them.'

'I dare say,' said Vinoy, 'but see how he sops up all the credit to himself. I can assure you that the Duke does not like it. "The army and Monsieur Thiers have deserved well of the country" - put, and passed by acclamation in the Assembly! *Ouch!*'

Vinoy's snort of scorn was onomatopoeic and indescribable.

'He is welcome to my share,' said Jean easily.

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'Yes, no doubt,' growled Vinoy, for some reason you are just now his petted darling. But the little man may change, and send you where you will never smell a grain of powder.'

'I don't see how he can do that till the city is taken. Besides, when it comes to street fighting he will need me for the mitrailleuses. I have been going over them with a good *maitre-d'armes*, a man with brains.'

'You are cursedly lucky to find him,' said Vinoy. 'Well, be all the patted darling you can be. Kick the ball while it is at your foot. The miniature Napoleon in the flowered waistcoat will no doubt find some other deserving young man who will be more amenable to advice than you - that is, when he finds you out. Adolphe never forgives!'

Vinoy swung his horse about and galloped away. He was bitterly conscious that he had lost kudos when he had been made to give up his Commander-in-Chief's position in favour of MacMahon. Yet he liked the Marshal personally, and had no quarrel save with Monsieur Thiers and the camarilla which, as he supposed, surrounded him.

He was mistaken on the last point. Thiers took advice from none, save perhaps from his sister-in-law, Mademoiselle Dosne. No loner hand was ever played than that of the little old man who was called from long obscurity to pilot France through the darkest crisis in all her perilous history.

They started for the Orangerie - Monsieur the Chief of the State with his usual full escort of the Republican Guard, which, as a budding military hero he loved. He wished that he could dress and whisker them like the heroes of Austerlitz, but the helmets and breast-plates, the trampling horses,

and the framework of gay and shifting colour, reconciled him to the things that were.

Jean had as aide-de-camp one Calvé, born near his father's estate, of a family of decayed Royalist gentry. So, like a good soldier, preferring those whom he knew he had made the young officer his habitual attendant. And when Jean was engaged, it was the duty of François Calvé to show Monsieur the President with what precision his wishes had been carried out. Calvé was better at this than Jean. For he believed in his chief, and he had taken the measure of Monsieur Thiers' military abilities in a moment. It was therefore just that his General should do things his own way, and also that the little old man from the Château should be made to believe that his orders were being fulfilled to the letter.

As they clattered up to the postern gate of the Orangerie there was a great excitement. The guard in full strength was called out to receive the Chief of State and his friend, the young Commander of the Artillery which was to take Paris.

The Garde Republicaine, too, was a wonderful sight, and the men on duty, youths from an infantry regiment, stood forth in full strength. They were mostly smallish men from the south-eastern districts about Perpignan and Narbonne, dried in the sun like bean-husks, but active and willing as only the best French infantry can be, incomparable marchers, dashing fighters, with the single fault of being too easily discouraged - or, as Jean would have said, 'with not enough grip to their bite.'

In the centre of this array of slender sun-tanned figures, half Spanish, half Arab in type, stood the huge bulk of Bibi le Bonhomme, like a rather stout

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obelisk in an indifferently fitting uniform.

Now Monsieur Thiers had the gift, commonly attributed to royalty, of never forgetting a face. He recognised Bibi at once.

'Ah,' he said, putting his head to the side like a wise little cockatoo, 'you are Mademoiselle Dosne's *protège*. Where is your charming young lady?'

For once Bibi was taken entirely aback. It was not because of the honour of being spoken to by the Chief of the State, though Monsieur Thiers happily understood it in that sense. It was the sight of Jean sitting his black horse a little behind, with an eager look on his face. For of course Jean had recognised Bibi also.

Bibi made a curious noise in his throat, as if he had been trying to low like a cow from pasture to pasture.

'Do not be upset, my good fellow,' said Monsieur Thiers kindly, 'I can well understand that you find a difficulty in expressing yourself before' (with a noble generosity he included Jean de Larzac) – 'before us; but I think I have sufficiently proved myself your friend, in conjunction with my admirable sister-in-law, Mademoiselle Dosne, to be freely trusted. Where is your most devoted young lady?'

Bibi saluted and walked, as if in the irons of a condemned criminal, to the barricade. He pointed stiffly to the little zinc-roofed hospital away to the left.

'I think,' he said, 'you will find her there!'

'Very well,' said Monsieur Thiers, getting out of his Presidential barouche, and motioning Jean and his aide to dismount; 'now we shall go in. Do you follow us' (he addressed Bibi over his shoulder with the quick flirting motion of a bird's head). 'You look

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a highly efficient guard. I should much like to see your most self-sacrificing young lady - a paragon of nobility. Mademoiselle Dosne is never tired of singing her praises.'

Jean de Larzac saw in a moment how things were, and he had a certain pity for Bibi's confusion. They were now within the triple range of barrier, ditch, and *pont-levis* which shut in the women. The chiefs of the prison had, of course, started off their men at the first alarm to get a certain number of cells into order, so that without inconvenience they might be exhibited to the President.

Now it chanced that in one of these lay a poor woman dying of consumption. She had been netted on the streets of Reuil on some marketing errand when the gendarmes happened to be chasing possible Communards. Nobody expected intelligence from a gendarme, and so the poor creature was still lying there, comforted only by Nini's daily visits. Sister Nini had been, however, disturbed by the entry of the hasty jailers with their brooms and pails, and had walked forth indignantly to complain to the Chief of the Prison, when within ten paces she was brought face to face with Jean and - Monsieur Adolphe Thiers. There was Bibi also, a Bibi who desired that he might sink into the ground. He had seen perfectly well where his mistress was, and had promptly indicated the hospital which lay as far as possible from her real position at the moment.

'If they go away down yonder, as they should, she will thank Bibi, and she will have a chance to slip off without being seen!'

But Bibi had lied to the Chief of the State, and lied in vain.

'What,' chirruped the President, taking off his hat

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and bowing low, 'so this is our wonder. Mademoiselle Dosne's wonder, I should say. Yes, yes - "I was in prison and ye visited me" - eh, De Larzac - you go to church I hope - and with all that the greatest of our cantatrices, with a throat whose every note coins gold. There is a woman for you, De Larzac! Let these people be worthy or the reverse, we must not forget that a Certain One was crucified between two thieves, and spoke kindly to them both!'

Nini, blushing deeply, curtsied, and would have passed on, but little Monsieur Thiers, a gossip to his finger-tips, was eager to have something really interesting to tell to his beloved Mademoiselle Dosne on his return home.

'Will you not do us the honour to accompany us,' he suggested, 'and point out in what manner the lot of these poor creatures can be mitigated?'

Nini inclined her head, and was not long in pointing out so many ways of amendment, that a shade fell upon the face of the Chief Warden of the Orangerie. The visit was no doubt an honour, but one might have too much of it.

'De Larzac,' said the little autocrat, 'I cannot remember all these recommendations. Will you note them down, and see that I embody them in a particular order which you can make out? Mr. Warden, you will receive my wishes in full this evening. See that they are carried out according to this young lady's indications, and that I shall find the whole perfectly regulated on my next visit. Where were you stationed before you came to Paris, Mr. Warden? At Ax-en-Ariège - ah, a poor place with a continual smell of washing day. I have visited it. I do not suppose you wish to go back there, Mr.

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Warden! Then, I pray you, pay good heed to the recommendations of Sister Nini!’

Mr. Warden bowed his head, and vowed that he would obey the behests of Nini if she ordered him to provide spring mattresses and summer parasols for her patients. Powerful protections are a fine thing everywhere, but especially when one has to deal with the police of a democratic country.

Nini never looked at Jean after she had bowed, as distantly and coldly to him as to the others of the Presidential suite. But each was acutely conscious of the other's presence,

When they went into the little hastily arranged niche in which Nini's latest patient was lying, the poor woman, though invited to make any complaint, said nothing. She was far beyond that. She knew that she would never leave the Orangerie. She felt death near and friendly, so she smiled and was silent, looking at Nini as if she had been the Madonna whose image she wore on her bosom.

But as the great folk, satisfied with their inspection, turned to go out, she beckoned Nini to come close to her.

‘For you,’ she whispered, putting something into her hand; ‘don’t let the others see. Read it here before you go out.’

Nini opened and read, still bending over the low straw couch.

‘Don’t let General Jean go into the Court of the Lions to-day. There is a plot to kill him. We are all condemned, so they will do what Rigault says.’

It was signed “FORTY-EIGHT.”

* * * * *

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Nini could make nothing of this, except that the men in the Court of the Lions, all condemned Communists without hope of mercy, had received orders to kill Jean. And with Jean to-day there was yet higher game, the Chief of the State himself.

Nini was puzzled how she ought to communicate with Jean. She must not do it openly, or the other women would fall upon the poor woman who had conveyed the message and most likely strangle her as a traitress.

She waited till they were in the zinc hospital, where, of course, the utmost neatness reigned. Then she beckoned Jean behind a screen where operations were sometimes performed when there was no time for transportation to the city hospital.

There was no greeting between them. They did not seem to have been parted for an hour.

She thrust the paper into his hand.

'Who is Forty-eight?' she whispered, 'and why does Rigault want to kill you? – not on my account, surely?'

'Forty-eight,' said Jean gravely, avoiding the latter question, 'used to be the number of an interesting but insubordinate scholar in Anne Decies's class, and I have the best reason in the world for believing that Raoul Rigault wishes me no particular goodwill.'

'Then you will take warning,' she said, 'you will keep away from the Court of the Lions?'

'On the contrary, Nini,' he answered firmly, 'that is just where I shall go, as soon as I have got rid of our good friend Monsieur Adolphe Thiers.'

'Oh, Jean, I beg you!'

'Nini,' he answered, 'would you respect me – would I respect myself if there was one place in all

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Versailles where I dare not go on a tour of inspection?’

‘But for this once, Jean, and not to the Court of the Lions!’

‘I shall go to the Court of the Lions, roar they never so loudly,’ he announced. ‘I only wish that Monsieur Rigault were there in the midst of them.’

Nini burst into tears, clasping his arm.

‘You will not do this for me, Jean?’

‘Nini,’ he said gently, ‘we live so much on the verge of the volcano here, that no one of us can afford to show himself a coward – not even to himself!’

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CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE COURT OF THE LIONS

In 1871 a curious sunk courtyard existed at Versailles, a hundred yards or so from the wide alley which, cumbered with green-bedrippped statues, runs towards the Grand Canal of the Ménagerie. It was surrounded with small earthen lairs each with a rusty iron door, and report had it that in the time of the monarch who had "been" Versailles, as well as made it, these had been occupied by many lions, sent as tributes to his greatness or – but this was not usually mentioned – bought on more ordinary terms from the dealers in such things.

At any rate it had long been called the Court of the Lions. And how it was presently occupied must now be related.

Saint Simon with his finest ironic edge, says that Louis XIV liked to take the ladies of his Court down there to see the lions, because they were so tired of seeing the monkeys up at the Château. But now at least the lions who filled the Court were wild and dangerous enough.

In these early days the happy dispatch of Satory had not yet been got into working order. And prisoners, if not actually taken with arms in their hands, enjoyed the comfort of a breathing-time. Even afterwards, the forms of French law, to which our reddest and broadest of red tape is mere twine, prescribed that a long period should take place between condemnation and execution.

All this was afterwards dropped, and in the

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Bloody Week from the 21st May to the 28th, men, women, and children were mowed down indiscriminately because they happened to be in front of the troops.

During this breathing-space, however, the Court of the Lions, sunk beneath the level of the great green park of Versailles, with its crumbling stone cells and creaking doors, was the abiding-place of as desperate a set of men as were ever gathered together on the face of the earth.

First of all every man of them was a rebel condemned to die without hope of mercy, or any mitigation of his sentence. Next, they were, for the most part, adventurers and twice broken men of many lands to whom the shedding of blood was as familiar as taking breakfast - indeed, rather more so. Hardly a Frenchman could be found among them, but a few Englishmen who with a last flicker of honour hid their names and nationalities. There were masses of Poles, Spaniards who had made a tour of the Islands till even they became too hot for them, men from the West Coast of Africa, slave-traders black-birders, scoundrels from the ultimate Pacific Islands, but above all Central and South Americans whom death, their own or that of another, affected no more than the shearing the head off a cabbage. The Spaniard is a fine fellow in his own land, but his blood makes an abominably bad mixture in all parts of the world where he has left his half-breeds. These were the men, experts in pillage and revolution, for whom the generally industrious and fairly amenable workmen of Paris were in a few weeks to pay so crimson a price.

This Austrian had put the last shot into his countryman Maximilian when a renegade in Mexico.

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Fighting along with the "greasers" was, he said, a fine game. They were so jolly simple about plunder. But the Yankees – ah, 'ware hawk! They would have you dangling from the limb of a tree before you could remember the first saint in the calendar.'

A second had shot his friend, a South American Dictator, for thirty thousand dollars, having made a bargain with his successor. But the Ecuadorians were such blamed scoundrels that, would you believe it, he had failed in collecting the cash, and as a party of his new friends was out after him, he had concluded to skip. In the Court of the Lions he rather wished that he had stayed.

A third had stories to tell of the black Emperor Soulouque in Hayti, some of which were too strong even for the accomplished stomachs of his companions, who nevertheless were noways squeamish. They had bidden him keep his mouth shut under the well-known penalty of "*the stretching*." Hardly a morning passed but the body of some prisoner, executed by his comrades inside, was placed prominently near the great iron gate where the three mitrailleuses stood ready to sweep the Court. Four men took the doomed man by hands and feet. A fifth told him why he was to die, and then slowly and methodically choked the life out of him. The grounds of quarrel had usually something to do with the concealing of food, which all shared in common.

They carried knives and pikes about them too, carefully elaborated at the bottom of their dens from the iron bars of their gates.

The authorities knew this, though all had been carefully searched on entering into prison, and again before passing to their trials.

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Their food was pushed to them through closed bars, as it had been to the four-footed lions of the Grand Monarque. The heads of armed sentinels could be seen at all times of the night and day above the boundary wall, punctuated by the flash of sword-bayonets as the sentries met and wheeled. At each corner were the curiously pierced muzzles of one of the famous mitrailleuses of the time, while at the gate Jean hid two others of an improved type invented by himself and thought out in all details in many a lonely bivouac. The "Larzac" machine-guns would take the cartridges in a long ribbon, eject the cases, and use the recoil for firing the next, all with the whirr of a threshing-machine at the end of harvest.

It was into this grim enclosure that Jean meant to push his researches. It had been an eyesore for a long time. The judgments of tribunals could not be carried out because of the way the men hung together. It was quite unsafe to go down and take out the criminals when their time arrived. More than twenty sentences remained unexecuted, and new inmates arrived every day.

Jean understood the business now. Rigault, from whom nothing which concerned Versailles was hid, knew of Jean's protection and Nini's nursing in the women's court of the Orangerie. Some day the new General would visit the Court of the Lions. The men there had nothing but death to expect, and the additional murder of a Versaillist General would neither affect their consciences nor their fates.

Rigault had his own way of reaching the imprisoned men with his secret messages - generally by the Orangerie, for the regulations were less severe at that time for the women and those who

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desired to communicate with them. Yet for Nini's sake and for the sake of "her Man," the poor moribund made the disclosure which had saved Jean, and so had set him to cleaning out this plague-spot hidden among the trees of the great green park, with the waters of the broad canal of the Menagerie, rippling almost to its stone ramparts.

Jean was not long in making up his mind. His *aide* Calvé should stop and control the firing of the new Larzac machine-guns which were still buttoned in their jackets, and of which the prisoners knew nothing. The old before-the-war mitrailleuses at the four corners could be of no great use. They would scatter their fire as from a pepper-pot vigorously shaken - excellent in case of a general revolt, but useless when, as in the present case, Ripert and himself with their suite would be in the midst of things.

Jean had a dislike, which increased as the time went on, for the force which Monsieur Thiers chiefly depended upon - the ancient gendarmes of the Empire. They proved themselves cruel and heartless beyond relief, and no doubt part of the intractability of all the prisoners might safely be set down to them.

Still, in the present case Jean could not do without them. He had only artillery men within call, and very few of these. These few were needed by Calvé for his hidden guns behind the dark-green screen of the cypress hedge.

The Chief Keeper held up his hands in horror when he heard of Jean's intentions - he a General, and Ripert a Colonel, proposing to go where not even he and his men dared venture.

'There is a plot,' he said briefly; 'I have the men's

names who have been instructed by the Procureur of the Commune, Raoul Rigault, to assassinate either myself or another.'

'What other?' queried the Chief Jailer, fearing for himself.

'This morning,' said Jean, evading the direct question, 'Monsieur Thiers himself did me the honour to invite me to visit some of the places of detention with him. I did so. He might just as well have come here. And what would you have said if the Chief of the State had been assassinated in the prison under your charge by an emissary of Raoul Rigault?'

The poor man turned pale. The almost sacred name of the Chief of the State, First President of the Third Republic, the future Liberator of the Territory, struck him dumb. The icon of his faith, the totem of all the tribe of Tegumi the Policeman, was ever Adolphe Thiers - the man who organised an army behind the cocked hats and well-girthed belts of a few companies of gendarmes.

'That would have been a catastrophe which Heaven would never have permitted!' he cried sententiously. 'But do not go in till I communicate with my comrade, the warden of La Faisanderie. He is only preparing for the next influx of prisoners, and they are not *classé* (condemned to be shot) like mine - being only *Ordinaires*; he has plenty of men at his disposal.' But Jean remembered that much remained to be done, and that a large part of his day had disappeared already. So he insisted on the gates being opened at once. He showed Calvé where to place his guns, two in hiding and the third and most modern in the place of one of the old-fashioned pepper-boxes.

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Then with Ripert at his side, a bugler, and a few of the officers of the prison, he penetrated into the redoubt - Court of the Lions.

The bugler blew the blast which called the men together to receive their daily rations, or that they might be addressed from the safe summit of the rampart. They came from their dens, of aspect hardly human, long-haired, desperate-eyed, and in especial exceedingly astonished to behold a well-uniformed young man in a General's brodered cap and another red-breeched officer standing at ease in the midst of their enclosure.

Ripert involuntarily put his hand behind him to ease his revolver in its *douillette*, but Jean held up his hand with a gesture of command.

'Back every man to the door of his sleeping-place - or he shall be shot down instantly!'

This checked the rush for a moment. The prisoners were in uncertainty as to what this General might want of them. His escort was too small to enforce obedience if he had come to carry them off to the post of execution on the plateau of Satory. Yet he carried a paper in his hand at which he occasionally glanced.

When the men were once more back at the mouths of their lairs, black dismal dens, rotten with damp, and mould, to which death (save perhaps in the marvellous weather of that early summer) would have been infinitely preferable, Jean raised his hand for silence.

'There are men here who are concerned in an attempt to murder one of the Generals of the Republic - '

'The Generals of the Republic murder us!' cried a hoarse voice from the left side of the quadrangle. 'We

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are to be killed without any but a military trial. Our doom is sealed. We know it. Why should not we kill whom we choose?’

‘You have received your orders from the Delegate of the Police in Paris. Mine is the life he strikes at. I have come to demand the delivery of the following men, to be dealt with according to the law!’

(Cries of ‘We know the law. Satory! Satory!’). Jean read the list of the names clearly, and the Chief jailer announced the numbers of the wanted men in a trembling tenor.

‘Avriali,’ said Jean (‘19,’ the warden added weakly, turning his head in all directions), ‘Tzariwsky, Danielli, Vogelli, Vaganay, Demitrieff.’

The trembling warden gave the necessary indications in a voice which no one could hear. The men at the rusty doors swayed and seemed inclined to take counsel. They looked upwards only to see that the black muzzles of the guns were being depressed. One was ready to sweep each side of the court with grapeshot.

The men whose names had been called crossed over, finally huddling together at the top end. Each held his hand behind him. The others lagged and seemed anxious to wait upon events.

‘Will you deliver them or no? Remember,’ said Jean, ‘I have the ear of Monsieur Thiers, and there is hope of mercy for those who will assist justice. True, I can promise nothing definite, but I have no doubt that I shall be successful if the guilty are given up.’

‘If there were a traitor amongst us,’ cried the same hoarse voice as before, ‘he would not long be in want of your mercy. He would be carted out in the morning with the other garbage’

Suddenly the cluster of men at the far end of the

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Court was seen to take a swift resolution. A long knife or spike set in a wooden handle gleamed in every right hand. A low growl of execration ran among the other prisoners, but they did not move, waiting to see what should happen.

A loose cloud of armed men swept towards the compact group of uniforms of which Jean de Larzac formed the centre. There was no cheering of each other on. The men who came had no hope of life, none of escape. They were only determined to add one more to their crimes, and if they could have the blood of a Versaillist General, there was no man among them but would die the happier. Yet they had no particular quarrel with Jean. They were not Frenchmen. They were simply *condottieri*, fighting for their own hand in a quarrel that was not their own, but now, finding themselves trapped, they turned savagely at bay.

But they did not get far. The three Larzac machine-guns whirred unexpectedly from behind the green pot-shrubs in the archway. The mitrailleuse just over Jean's head snarled. (It was the only one which could be fired for fear of hitting the group of officers.)

At the first rasping sound of the mitraille, the groups of men at the doors of their lairs disappeared as if by magic. Half the attacking party were lying in the middle of the Court, their weapons fallen from their hands. But a few daring spirits crossed the line beyond which the machine-guns dared not fire. Wounded, some of them - desperate all, they tottered rather than ran towards Jean and Ripert. A soldier from the rampart above dropped one with a well-directed bullet, but he waved his fellows on, crying, 'Don't mind me. Kill your butchers! Vive

'Internationale!'

The small compact company had only themselves to depend upon now. The rough-handled home-made knives gleamed high. They were almost upon them. But Jean and Ripert had waited till a revolver shot would not miss. And standing, a little forward, they turned to right and left, dropping the desperadoes as they came. A last man, who needed two bullets, fell with a clash, his knife ringing within six inches of Jean's foot.

'Near enough!' said Ripert calmly, as he turned him over. 'I wish I had a cigarette!'

'We must see them into the hospital waggon,' said Jean; 'have it brought forward, warden!'

The man hastened to obey, and the prison surgeon sauntered up, a sallow man with the mark of sleepless nights on his face. Ripert knew him as an incurable gambler.

The hospital waggon was soon in waiting, and at the same opening of the gates, the three new machine-guns were wheeled within and set so as to command the three sides of the Cour des Lions.

But not a man showed his face, though no doubt they were watching keenly. The surgeon moved listlessly about, glanced at this one and that, and indicated which had better go at once to the cemetery and which might be taken to the hospital.

'Are these men all really dead?' demanded Jean, who was surprised at the slightness of the surgeon's examination.

'Certainly,' said the other; 'see, their feet have all fallen outward!'

Jean had never noticed the indication, but he took the soldier-surgeon's word for it, and in a little while he had ticked off on his list every man who

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had been concerned in the attack, according to the paper given to Nini by the dying woman in the Orangerie.

That very night hundreds of torches gleamed in the dusky enclosure of the Cour des Lions. The prisoners dragged themselves to the doors drowsed with sleep, only to find that five hundred linesmen and gunners with pointed rifles had them at their mercy.

Jean had reported the whole matter to Monsieur Thiers, and had obtained his permission to clear out such a den, in the name of mercy as well as of justice.

The Maison d'Arret of Satory, in the midst of the biggest camp in all the vicinity of Versailles, was their destination. And early on the morrow, while the light still lay blue and luminous as that of a moonstone in the valley, and red as a ruby on the heights, the worst cases were, in the euphemism of the time, "passed by the arms." And for the first time was heard upon that fatal plateau the dry rattle of the fusillade.

Jean sighed, but comforted himself with the thought that at the worst it was a better fate than to rot in those grievous hell-holes in the Court of the Lions which the useless keepers were at that moment employed in cleansing out.

At any rate the worst plague-spot in Versailles had been wiped out, and, and, as a side issue, the kind intentions of Monsieur Raoul Rigault with regard to Jean de Larzac and Nini had been stricken with absolute failure.

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Since her father's promotion, first to the position of General of the Commune, and afterwards to that of Commander-in-Chief of the National Guard, Anais had confined herself to her work in the hospitals. But at the request of the men and to the unspoken pleasure of her father, she continued to wear her becoming costume of *vivandière*, for which the First Montmartre battalion had subscribed.

Her days were very full of work, so full that sometimes she could not find time to sleep at the house in the Rue des Rosiers. Her father, also, could go there but seldom, so she hired a little room on the fifth story looking down on the Place Dauphine. For she had always loved the Ile de la Cité, and now regretted it more than ever when all the good safe days were over, and the old canary-coloured omnibus had long been made firewood of to warm cold feet and keep the pot boiling during stern winter of the Prussian siege.

Her brother Jean too! He was fighting, as she always knew that he would, for the old order and the party to which he had been born. Anais was fighting for her father. She had lost her playmate. She had lost her brother. Never at any time did she regret having kept him to that relationship, for his brotherliness had been sweet while it lasted. It was in no way Jean's fault. Still less was it the fault of Nini if, as people said, she had taken with gratitude that love which Anais had refused - or at least put off accepting, which is the same thing. At any rate

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Anais sighed, feeling strangely lonely.

Few things had given Anais more pleasure than the news, printed the other day in the *Journal Officiel* of the Versaillais Government, that one of the most devoted and self-sacrificing nurses of all in the city hospitals was Mademoiselle Nini Auroy, formerly so well known - and so forth.

It was an additional gladness to her heart to read that Nini had devoted herself from the first to ameliorating the condition of the captured women of the Commune,'

The thought rose in the breast of Anais, and she smiled, 'Who knows? Perhaps one day I may be glad of the ministrations of Sister Nini in the prisons of Versailles.'

But really she knew better than that - she must go with her father, and for him the way was clearly marked out. He would first of all be dismissed from his post of Commander-in-Chief owing to the internecine quarrels of the Commune. For him, for Delescluse, for all the Old Guard of Communism, what remained but to die on a barricade? They were too old to run to earth like the fox Felix Pyat, too old to change their opinions like Regère, or modify them like Vaillant. The old ought to die, even as Gallifet had said on the road to Versailles, when he met a convoy of prisoners - 'Step out and be shot, all you who have grey hair! You can remember '48, and you should have learned to know better by this time.'

There was frequently a little gathering in the official bureau of Delescluse of men of this type, sometimes presided over by his sister Azémia, a woman stern of face and tall as any dragoon - who appeared to overtop and domineer her gentle brother, but who in reality served him hand and foot

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to the day of his gallant death. Sometimes Anais went westward to help her to entertain.

But gatherings were vastly different from those in the old house in the Rue des Rosiers. The young bold tribunes of the "Mountain" were absent. Though the meeting might (given the differences between '93 and '71) have been called Girondist, there was little talking. Louise Michel did not often come. La Grande Citoyenne now gave her whole attention to her black revolutionary anarchy. The reddest of possible Communes had become faded and reactionary to her.

Nevertheless Anais was glad in these days. She had regained her father. He had gone back to a period which she just remembered. There were no more rich young men to be exploited. Her salary was not paid. He was now earning his wages like every other servant of the Commune. A new (or perhaps an old) sense of honour and devotion had awakened in General Decies, Commander-in-Chief (for the time being) of the battalions of the Commune.

But he did not hold any illusions as to the security of his tenure. He often talked the matter over with the young and still enthusiastic Rosselo.

'If we escape going to prison and are allowed to die in the open, it is the best we can hope for, you and I. Oh, I know, you still imagine that you can make something out of this rabble. So you could, if they could be made to submit to ordinary military conditions. But at the first hunt of punishment, however necessary and slight, a whole battalion threatens your life, and cherishes a grudge against you which may lead you one day to the execution wall.'

'But surely the Belleville and Montmartre men

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will fight!' interjected Rossel, doggedly unconvinced.

'Fight - of course they will fight. Most of the regiments will fight. But the war must be managed by themselves and not by us. The Commune appoints us, but the soldiers of the Commune resent us. They disbelieve in the pressing danger and think we are betraying them - or that we are bought by Versailles - if we do not lead them every day to victory without loss of life.'

'You think they will be brave enough behind a barricade, then?' said Rossel, while Delescluse sat silent and listened. He approved what General Decies had said. The two seniors had talked it over a hundred times, but the young Rossel, not foreseeing the future, was still enthusiastic. He could not understand why these brave fellows of the northern Faubourgs should not be better war material than the farm lads gathering to crush them in the camps behind Versailles.

'Brave enough, I grant you,' said Decies; 'Delescluse there knows better than I how uselessly brave they can be. They stretch a barricade across a street, and expect old soldiers like Vinoy and MacMahon to attack it in front. They will die, shot in the back!'

'Never!' exclaimed Rossel indignantly. 'You do not know our Parisian Workmen. Their wounds will all be in front like those of your own Guards at Fontenoy!'

'They cannot be,' said Decies, 'their positions will be turned, and the first news they will get of the armies of Cissey and Clinchant will be a volley from behind. Then their barricades will melt away like children's sand castles beset by the tide.'

Delescluse nodded his head gravely in token of

approbation.

'Nevertheless it is not thus that we must all die,' Azémia Delescluse flashed out in anger. 'General Decies takes too much for granted, the Rurals are not yet within the walls of Paris.'

'No, Mademoiselle, but they will come,' said Decies. 'The party is simply postponed. They will take tea with us across Père Gaillard's paving-stones within a fortnight.'

'A Frenchman would have more confidence in his fellow-countrymen,' said Azémia.

She turned to her brother as she spoke as if to demand confirmation from one who had seen so much of revolution in Paris. He shook his head with gravity.

'General Decies,' he said gently, 'perhaps states his case with too great breadth. There are exceptions even among the battalions. But in the main it is too sadly true. Our men will not obey orders. They will not fight well out of their *quartiers*. But there, believe me, they will fight like tigers.'

Altogether it was a disconcerting conversation for the young and enthusiastic like Anais. She had only to look out of the window to see the endless hosts of the Commune, on which her hopes depended, marching to the walls, skillet pots hung to their bayonets, and the little spotted handkerchief drooping against the barrel, in which were the provisions for the coming twenty-four hours. They cheered at sight of her. They gave cheers for the famous member of the Commune if Delescluse happened to show himself. They even cheered, though with diminished volume, the foreigner who had been made, without their complicity, the Commune's Commander-in-Chief.

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'If they were only allowed to elect their generals,' said Decies bitterly, 'we might get anything out of them - even heroism!'

Anais went back early to her little room, her father and Delescluse punctiliously walking with her all the way, the one in his uniform, the other girt with his scarf of Member of the Commune. This, too, gladdened Anais for her father's sake. Come what would (and instinctively she prepared for the worst) her father was a better man than ever he had been in the Rue des Rosiers. He was again a man among his peers, and few indeed in the strange hubbub of Paris of that time were his peers except Delescluse and Rossel. Of Rochefort, busy with his paper and keeping himself from too close association with the official Commune, they saw little. He had quarrelled with most people, and he meant to quarrel with the others as soon as possible.

The freakish imp in him would not be still, nor leave others quiet. If cornered by some real friend who demanded why he did it, he would express incredulity and astonishment, and (when the offending passage was pointed out to him) even contrition. But that was no surety that the offence might not be repeated next day.

Every night Anais listened to the roar of Jean's guns, the despairing shriek of the concave fragments of shell, the dull boom of the solid shot, the tremor which shook the houses after a near explosion. From the Arc de Triomphe, to which her father and she sometimes mounted after an evening at the house of Delescluse, one would come suddenly upon a small sheltering crowd of curious people watching the bombardment, as if the great naval guns and mortars had been 14th of July fireworks. The whole

semi-circle of little hills, the outlines of which could just be made out when a great discharge seemed to crumble in the very heavens, was aflame with lines of lightning flashes.

The replies of the Federals from the ramparts seemed disappointingly irregular and vague, but an ordered purpose seemed to direct matters all along the long batteries which stretched from the edge of the plain of Versailles to the giant forty-gun rampart of Châtillon, installed on the site of the old Prussian emplacements. The fire was as exact as if regulated by a stop-watch, and the cannon were discharged as though by a single lever, making of the whole horizon a twinkling circuit of fire.

Anais grasped her father's arm silently with a sudden clutch which caused him to say, 'Of what are you thinking, little girl?'

'Of Jean!' she answered truthfully.

'Jean!' the old man cried fiercely, 'he is a traitor. Let me never hear his name again upon your lips!'

'You are wrong, father,' she answered; 'Jean is no traitor. I sent him away. He did not belong to us. I made him go back to his own people.'

'But,' said ex-Colonel Decies, more quietly but still unsatisfied. 'I was under the impression that - that he was paying his court to you.'

Anais stood directly in front of her father. The concourse of spectators had melted away because a shell had scattered some fragments at the farther corner of the big octagon of buildings. They were all alone. Above them, like the chorus of some infernal tragedy, whirred and whooped and shrieked the shells and round-shot of the Versailles bombardment. Neither of them minded the din more than they would the purring of a cat in a

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comfortable chair.

'Listen, father,' she said firmly; 'nothing of what happened was Jean's fault. I did not love him. As a brother I liked him. He was kind, and we laughed together, as we had done from childhood. Perhaps I preferred him to any man I have ever seen, but I would not let him speak of marriage - still less now, when he is in love with Nini - '

'What Nini?' said the old man.

'Nini Auroy, my friend!'

'A singer!' he exclaimed, with the true British contempt of his period and training.

'My best friend,' repeated the loyal little lady. 'Father, you remember that you forbade him the house. Perhaps it is cruel to remind you of that. You sent the man Rigault to meet me - the man who is now your bitterest enemy. Well, Raoul Rigault would have insulted me, but Nini saved me, and - you have never heard - but Jean nearly killed him for it!'

'What, not in a duel!' exclaimed the old General of the Commune, brightening visibly.

'No, with a dog-whip. The man would not fight, and he destroyed two of Jean's cards before his eyes. What would you have done, father?'

The Colonel thought a little, and then his saddened spirit was traversed by a sudden lightning flash of chivalry.

'When I was young and foolish I should probably not have been so patient as Jean was the night I saw him at the theatre of the Châtelet.'

'He had Nini to think of, father!'

'Ah yes, but . . . perhaps I should not have thought so much of Nini, At all events - well, apparently he made amends the next afternoon. I wonder what old Henri Quatre would have thought

of it. There was a rude humour about the Béarnais.'

'Probably very much what you think of it yourself, father!' said Anais, as they turned slowly homewards, while overhead the infernal concert sank into one of its strange silences, more impressive, perhaps, than the loudest roar of the cannonade.

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CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE

JEAN BECOMES A SPY

It was not given to Anne and her father only, to experience the fickleness of the favour of the powerful. Monsieur Thiers could be as ungrateful as any Committee of Public Safety. He was a man who loved civil strife, but who trembled at domestic discord. And Mademoiselle Dosne, his sister-in-law, had a new *protégé*. Jean's place was wanted. Besides, he told himself, a lesser man would do well enough now that the great batteries were all in place, and the bombardment of the recalcitrant capital was in full swing. MacMahon would not be sorry to have the artillery more directly under his orders, and in exchange for this our pocket Napoleon could manoeuvre to receive a larger share of his confidence, so that he might be able so much earlier to wire his inflated messages to the mayors of the thirty-six thousand communes of France, each of whom would feel that they were in immediate touch with "A. Thiers Chef d'Etat." The little man owed much of his popularity to this courteous precaution which he never neglected.

Briefly then, Jean was summoned one morning to the cabinet of the great man, where he was received with the same frankness and even (officially speaking) paternal consideration as when he was first made the head of the nascent artillery of the Assembly.

'I feel,' said Thiers, pushing a nervous hand through the little cock's-comb tuft of his dry white hair, 'I have felt for some time that you are too good a man to vegetate in the position you occupy at

present. Any one can regulate the hours and details of a bombardment – ’

‘That is not the opinion of General von Moltke,’ said Jean drily.

‘He is doubtless a great soldier, but he has had no experience of the monotony of a siege like this. Now, when it comes to the push of pikes within the walls, we shall need you again to lead the field artillery. In the meantime, I have other work for you!’

Jean bowed without speaking. He was wondering what this work could be which was so more important than the sole task the army was occupied in at that moment - the breaching of the ramparts for the passage of the troops within the walls of Paris.

‘What is your opinion of the progress we have made?’ Thiers demanded abruptly.

‘We do very fairly,’ said Jean briefly, ‘but, as I had the honour to inform you before, we shall not do anything decisive till we have established batteries nearer to the Port Maillot, where the suburb of Neuilly offers excellent cover for our advance.’

‘Ahem! I have property there,’ said Thiers, ‘so has Mademoiselle Dosne, but, after all, it may have to come to that. We must all make sacrifices to the cause of order – and’ (as if recollecting himself) ‘to the Republic.’

Jean assented again, but urged that he should be allowed to bring a number of the guns which cumbered the bastions at Châtillon and Meudon, and place them where they could concentrate their fire upon the Port Maillot and the Pont du Jour.

‘These are the true entrances into Paris, since the North and East are useless to us!’ he added.

Now Monsieur Thiers liked nothing so little as to

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be reminded of anything unpleasant. He had turned out the journalist who had brought him news of the shooting of the two generals, first making the poor man apologise for causing pain to Mlle. Dosne. He had received with contumely the news of the shooting down of the demonstration of the Friends of Order in the Place Vendôme. Afterwards they dared not tell him for many days of the death of the Archbishop and the Abbé Duguerry. So now he was deeply offended that Jean should venture to remind him of a fact so unpleasant as the presence of the German hosts who occupied all the forts to the North and East. It was inopportune. It showed bad taste - indeed nothing less than a sad want of tact in a man who ought to have remembered that he was speaking to the only great strategist of his country.

'I have arranged,' Monsieur Thiers spoke in his most official falsetto, 'that you shall undertake a private mission into the interior of Paris. Mademoiselle Dosne tells me that you have many friends there connected with the revolt, and that it will be the simplest thing in the world for you to inform yourself as to the actual condition of the rebels. I am in ignorance of the numbers of the fighting battalions, of the strength of the artillery which is opposing us, and particularly of that which will oppose us when the time comes. Two hundred guns are said to be on the plateau of Montmartre. It shall be your duty to find out what is their state of service, to ascertain the amount of ammunition in stock, and how much can be produced daily in the factories of Saint Ouen and in the Avenue Rapp near the Champ de Mars.'

Jean thought it was quite time to stop this flood of instructions. He felt that he was, in all probability

being sent to his doom, much as David had placed the husband of Bathsheba in the front of the battle, and caused the servants of Joab to retire from him.

‘Sir,’ he said coldly, ‘I should have been glad to have continued my work here and brought my task to a speedy conclusion –’

‘Oh, not too speedy - that helps nothing,’ broke in the little man, nervously. ‘This thing is serious. The German papers think well of the caution of my movements. No haste! No haste!’

‘Of course,’ said Jean, ‘as a soldier I am ready to do as you wish me. I shall enter into Paris and endeavour to find out all you have indicated. But I cannot bring my former friends and acquaintances into the matter. I have no right to risk their lives as well as my own. Monsieur the President knows very well what he would do to those who aided and abetted a Communist spy caught among our batteries! The Parisians could do no less. May I ask when I am to start, and when I am to receive the necessary instructions from your private bureau of information?’

‘At once - no time like the present,’ exclaimed Thiers. ‘Mademoiselle Dosne will be glad to hear at lunch that you have accepted this honourable and difficult task, which, I say it honestly, could have been committed to no one except yourself. No one has your knowledge of all the points to be observed. You had better communicate directly with myself - that is, through the German Officer Commanding at St. Denis. Good-day, General. I shall be glad to hear from you. The matter is pressing and most important. I cannot too often impress upon you how much depends upon your zeal. But I shall need you back to lead the artillery into the city when the time

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comes for an advance along the whole line!

Jean went out muttering to himself, 'An hour ago I was General Commanding the Artillery of the French Republic, and now I am a *spy!*'

And on a white poster outside, wet from the official press, he saw the first notice of the appointment of his successor, *vice* General de Larzac, detailed by the Chief of State for very special duty. Jean also learned with some curious contempt that he was made a Commander of the Legion of Honour.

'Shelved or shot!' was his mental summing up of the position in so far as it concerned himself.

There was not much to be obtained at the Bureau of the Secret Military Service. They rather wanted to know how it had all come about, but, of course Jean could be passed into Paris by way of St. Denis. There was no doubt that he could come and go safely by that route. The Communard officials at the Hôtel de Ville were intensely polite to the authorities of St. Denis about this time.

Jean noted in a secret script of his own, all that he was required to report upon. If he were to obtain information worth having, he must risk his life twenty times over. But, he thought, bitterly, perhaps that was what Monsieur Thiers intended.

He sought Nini at five o'clock, and they went for a long walk under the green leaves of the park. Nini was frankly terrified by the news, and proposed to go straight to Mademoiselle Dosne. But this Jean forbade in a tone so full of resolution that Nini dared no longer persist.

'Oh, Jean, Jean,' she murmured, 'what shall I do without you? I cannot bear this life without seeing you. I shall think all the time that the reds are

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shooting you for a spy – oh, do you think they will dare?’

‘Dare!’ laughed Jean; ‘why, they must if they catch me. How long would a spy be allowed to go asking questions among my gunners? I must not get found out – that is all.’

‘You must let Anais know you are in Paris,’ she said tentatively.

But she was much relieved by his prompt answer.

‘Not for anything in the world,’ he cried; ‘why should she and her father lose their lives because of me?’

‘Oh, Jean, what shall I do all alone? I do wish I could help – but being a girl, and one so well known to everybody as Nini Auroy, I should be worse than no use!’

She thought for a moment and then cried, clapping her hands with something of her old gaiety:

‘I have found it. Bibi le Bonhomme shall go with you. What he does not know about Montmartre and Belleville is not worth the trouble of trying to find out. Besides, he can say that he is out of a job, and in trouble with both Governments. He will look after you. One can always hide on the Butte.’

Jean thanked Nini, but said that he would need to talk the matter over with Bibi, and if he accepted, have his own St. Denis introductions added to. He could not, however, deny that Nini’s was an excellent idea and one which afforded new chances of success for his mission.

‘It is not the mission I care a button for,’ cried Nini, putting her arms about his neck in a secluded alleyway. ‘It is that I want *you* back safe.’

‘I came back to you out of the great war,’ said Jean, ‘and this is but a flea-bite by comparison.’

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'Still,' Nini argued, 'think how nearly I lost you. A few millimetres closer and you would have been dead! Oh, Jean, it is all very well for Anais to be brave. She has nobody to be brave for - nobody to be afraid for all the time, night and day - to wake in the night for, all in a cold sweat and trembling - '

'There is her father,' Jean reminded her, smiling.

'Her father!' cried Nini, with such an accent of contempt that it constituted a real breach of the fifth commandment; 'I should not be afraid as I am about you, Jean - not if I had barrels and hogsheads of fathers!'

CHAPTER TWENTY SIX

TO SPY OUT THE LAND

There was no doubt as to the importance of Jean's mission. Spies there were in plenty, coming and going between the two camps. But nothing could be entrusted to them of any real value lest they should sell their wares at both ends - to Raoul Rigault as well as to Monsieur Thiers's Chief of Cabinet.

Also expert evidence was needed, and that from a man so highly placed as to be incorruptible. Jean had been chosen because he fulfilled these conditions, and still more because his position was wanted for a new *protégé*. He had not known how to retain his first favour. His neck was stiff, his back unsupple. He was a newcomer also, the youngest General on the roster, and could not hold his place by mere doggedness of seniority as Vinoy or MacMahon would have done.

Jean smiled to think of what Vinoy would have said to his Chief of State, had he ventured to make a similar proposition to him. But Jean was still modest. In his own mind he remained only a junior captain, and his quick rise had not afflicted him with swelled head. He was as eager to serve as ever - though, on the present occasion, he was of opinion that another might have been found, some Parisian born, who could have done the business better than he, and so left him in peace to install his batteries in Upper Neuilly and in front of the Federal post at the Pont du Jour - which he looked upon, correctly, as it turned out, as the two keys of Paris.

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There was no difficulty about taking with him Bibi le Bonhomme, and so accordingly Bibi figured under the sounding name of Alain Polhuel, *dit* Bibi le Bonhomme, valet to the respectable rentier Monsieur Jean Grave, who was going to Paris to take stock of the damage the bombardment had done to his property and interests - these being for the most part situated in the quarters of Montmartre and Belleville.

Nini was happier than Jean had feared when the time came to say farewell. Evidently the taking of Bibi into Paris quieted her mind immensely. She had confidence in the ex-prizefighter, savatier, and champion of fairs. No one knew the Paris from which the bands of the Commune were drawn half so well. His quality of valet would only continue till they were clear of the German lines.

Beyond these, Jean, with the official cap and armband of the sanitary services of the Commune, must fend for himself, under the benevolent and ready eye of Bibi. One must not compromise the other.

All ordinary street services of cleanliness had vanished immediately after the 18th of March. And now after the hot days of that marvellous burst of summer weather, the frequented roadways of Paris had become more and more malodorous. A cleansing service of a feeble sort was still kept up along the central boulevards, but for the rest it was only a question of time when, to add to her other ills, an epidemic should smite the city.

The Commune had talked and talked on the subject with its usual discursive aimlessness. But finally it resolved to create a body of certified Inspectors to circulate through all the districts of

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Paris, to report, and finally to take charge of the reorganisation of the cleansing services of the capital.

Jean had promoted himself one of these, being perfectly sure that no other of his comrades would waste his time outside their favourite *cabaret*, on the condition of which they were mostly well able to report without further investigation.

Through the Secret Service Bureau in Versailles Jean had already obtained the certificate and badge, together with the badge of office belonging to a certain newly-appointed Jean Grave, responsible for the districts of the north-east of Paris, and to be allowed free access to all houses, hangars, buildings, hospitals and military casernes for the purposes of carrying out his mission, It was Bibi who arranged the details.

How he obtained the transfer of these papers and badges did not transpire. He had doubtless tapped some underground railway of fugitives from Paris, and there was little doubt that Jean Grave the First was at that moment holding high revel in Versailles, on the price to which Bibi le Bonhomme had at last agreed for documents and badges.

The alert German officers who vised the passports of Jean Grave, rentier, took each one look at the well-drilled shoulders of the bourgeois in agony for his property, smiled, and glanced at one another. They had seen many of Jean's sort, and they would have sworn to him as a soldier anywhere without the least hesitation. But his papers were perfectly in order - so perfect, indeed, that the matter was evidently one of joint Governmental agreement. In any case it was none of their business.

Bibi was more difficult to place; but he also was

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amply provided for in the papers from Versailles, and countersigned for by General von Moltke, and so under the escort of Uhlans Jean and Bibi found themselves at the first post of the Federals on the Boulevard de la Chapelle.

Jean's soldierly disgust at the pig-sty filth of the Communal installation was intensified by the neatness of the escort which had brought him so far. They had been Uhlans of the 1st Berlin regiment, a sort of German "Dandy Fifths" as to their tenue and accoutrements, and the first sight of the unkempt, buttonless guards sprawling about these remote barriers was something startling.

But there was no danger to be expected from the direction of St. Denis. The Germans protected Paris upon that side, and the ne'er-do-wells who lounged about the guard entrance asked little more from fate than that they should be well supplied with liquor. So long as they were left alone, paid thirty sous a day, they were ready to go on indefinitely with the war.

After they had passed the post and found themselves within the ramparts of Paris, Bibi (who for a five-franc piece had arranged everything with the sergeant in command) explained the philosophy of the matter of Jean

'You see, Monsieur Jean,' he said, 'every Frenchman has the taste for adventure. If only the military profession were made a comfortable one, not a workman in Paris would do anything else. They grew to like it during the first siege. Think, Monsieur Jean, no doubt there are among them many rascals and bandits gathered from all the countries of the world, but the most part are no worse than you or me. They are brave common folk,

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decently honest, who like the uniform, the freedom, the open-air life, and above all to pouch thirty sous daily without working for them. They are clad, paid, fed at the cost of the State. Their life is quite different from what it used to be in the stuffy workshop, bending over a bench for ten or twelve hours at a stretch. They have no anxieties of family, no noise of squalling children. Why, even the mothers have a wage and get their living from the *cantine* of the Commune. The husbands live in the open air. They lie about playing at dice and "cork," telling stories, and drinking out of the common fund from morning till evening and from eve till morning. They are perfectly happy and mean to remain so as long as they can. I do not greatly blame them.'

'You put their cases well, Bibi,' said Jean, as they passed into the town by the northern side of the Butte. 'How came it that you took up your own profession?'

'I was lazy and took the easiest way of earning a livelihood, but from the first I understood the advantage of being no fool.'

They were passing the end of a street which opened to the right. Jean was already thinking of other things, and failed to notice where they were.

'Let us go down there and see!' said Bibi in a whisper. 'Turn naturally, as if - yes, thank you sir. Exactly right. We may be watched, though I think not.'

They had entered the Rue des Rosiers, and in another moment they found themselves at the door of good Madame Legrand, in whose kitchen Jean had so often waited for Anais in the days when she was making herself smart for the eyes of Forty-eight and his companions.

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During siege time the good woman's face had lost some of its chubby freshness, but her voice had all her old good-humour. She knew them both - Jean because he had been so often Mademoiselle Anne's escort, and Bibi - because in Montmartre everybody knew Bibi.

'You have come to visit Mademoiselle,' said Madame Legrand, 'Alas, we seldom see her now. She has rooms somewhere on the Isle of the City, near Notre Dame. Since her father was made a General the house has been left to take care of itself, though indeed I have the key, and if you would like - for the sake of old times - No? Well then, Monsieur Jean, what can I do for you? I have a little good wine in the cellar?'

'Bibi and I have need of rest and quiet,' said Jean. 'This neighbourhood will suit us better than any other. Have you a couple of rooms you can let us have, Madame Legrand?'

'My rooms are very small and poor,' the good woman protested, 'but if you will be content I shall have a bed put in the big workroom where my milliner girls used to work in the good times when work was to be had. That will do for Monsieur Jean, and Bibi can have his choice of the other two. I am not so rich but that whatever you care to give me will make a great difference these days. I have no husband nor any sons to march to the ramparts, and therefore nothing from the Commune to keep body and soul together.'

Jean asked to be shown to his room. He found it very empty, with only a long table and a range of chairs, a couple of sewing-machines of an American pattern, a print of the Virgin, another of Gambetta, and a torn wall-print of the fashions of the previous

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year. He gazed at these things blankly with vague unseeing eyes, and without the least idea how familiar they would become to him in the days that followed.

Jean had left Bibi below on purpose. Bibi would arrange terms. He would explain that on no account were Anais or her father to be told of their coming.

Madame Legrand would not wish to involve Anais and the General with the hot-heads of the Commune. As it was, General Decies might any day find himself in prison. Briefly Bibi had no difficulty in persuading Madame Legrand to keep silence as to their presence, should Anais come to see her, which was not likely. As for the neighbours, it would be enough for them to know that Monsieur Jean Grave and his assistant, Inspectors of Hygiene in the service of the Commune, were her guests during the survey of the Butte.

There was not much danger in this. The Hôtel de Ville and the Government buildings where the chiefs of the Commune idled and wrangled, were at an infinite distance from the Rue des Rosiers. Besides, it had a name of sinister import. None of them wished to be connected with it. That wall with the splintered plaster, the broken espaliers and the dull-splashed whitewash recurred to their minds like some monstrous birth to be hidden from sight. Yet it had been theirs - their very own. It marked the day of their coming into the world. The Commune desired to forget it, and could not.

Madame Legrand told how she had seen a whole battalion ordered to turn "left wheel" into the entrance of the street on their way to the Gate of La Chapelle - then, seeing the name on the blue oblong at the corner, they had been struck by a sudden

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horror, and had gone their way by another route, the commander not daring to enforce his order.

The two men slept well that night, both being tired out, but the next day found them busy. Bibi at once proved himself a great acquisition. He was greeted wherever he went with cries of recognition and delight. 'Yes, I have lost my place,' he would say; 'Mademoiselle Nini has gone to stay with an aunt in the country till the Opera opens again. Nonsense, it was all lies about her looking after the wounded at Versailles. And in the meantime, I am carrying a surveying chain, and helping Monsieur the Inspector of Public Health appointed for this district.'

'What does he do, this *coco*? We never heard of him!' came the instant question.

'Oh, he will do no harm. He is earning his pay, and writing reports. You are quite safe on the Butte. Nobody will bother about what he writes. Only let Bibi and his master earn their little thirty sous a day like every one else.'

'Ah, *Ca*,' said the curious interrupter, 'we understand that - so long as he does not trouble us about having our pig-sties too near an inhabited house, nor condemn our hen-roosts, let him write all the reports he wants. And how goes it with you, Bibi? And can you still pick up a couple of agents and use them as Indian clubs?'

'Would you like to try?' quoth Bibi grimly; 'if so, go find me a second!'

'Ah, no, Bibi le Bonhomme, be off and trail your measuring chain - we have other uses for our lives. We remember you of old. But drink just one *coup* before you go!'

CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN

LONG LANDRY

Bibi and Jean stuck to their work squarely for several days, till the first interest excited by their presence had died down in the district. The chief of the 141st battalion had been to call upon them, and had vouched for the excellence of their work and of their cigars. If he mentioned the fact at headquarters, it would not matter - for one Jean Grave, and a colleague to be chosen by him, had really been appointed to that district. The Commune would only wonder that the man had settled down so quickly to work.

More than anything the good state of the district astonished Jean. Never had there been so little crime in Paris - that is, of the private sort. For burglary and even for theft there was but one punishment - a wall and a dozen of well-directed bullets. There were no police, but Paris was never so well policed. Till the entrance of the Versaillists into the city, there were no outrages, except such public and ordered ones as the demolition of the house of Monsieur Thiers in the Place St. George, and the man-hunt after recalcitrant non-combatants within the legal age for conscription. But private crime of all sorts had suddenly become almost unknown.

It was with a gasp of wonder that Jean and Bibi came one day upon a typical *pale voyou* strung up to a lamp-post, with a gold watch and chain hung round his neck. There was also a written scrap of paper pinned to his brown *vareuse*. "*Executed for theft - taken in the act. Lescaut, Commandant of the*

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240th," ran the brief sufficient record.

The Commune had its blessings, which ought not to be forgotten in days when *Le Petit Parisien* gives us two full pages of crimes of violence per diem, with illustrations of the *maisons de crime* in the case of the more entrancing assassinations. The Commune certainly kept in its pay a large number of ruffians, but then they were ruffians in office, and they made it so hot for the others that a decent life became preferable. They mustered them into the fighting battalions, and if they did not change their ways, the wall or the nearest lamp-post was their fate, promptly and without question. Montmartre, at this date, was safer by night and day than any far-off French village with a peasant mayor and a white-haired, pleasantly reactionary priest.

On the fourth day Bibi departed to make his researches, and Jean was left alone. He had obtained a good deal of information from Lescaut of the 240th battalion; but, naturally, it would all need to be checked. Jean buckled on his "armlet" (*brassard*), and with his papers in his pocket found his way to the square where the guns which had been directly responsible for the whole insurrection were packed in incredible disorder.

The ex-Commandant of the Versailles Artillery could hardly believe his eyes. There they stood, like so many out-of-use vehicles pushed into the corner of an inn yard to be out of the way. Their working parts were rusted hopelessly. The brasswork was green and flaky, and the rifling would need to be renewed, every inch of it. Some had even been used with round shot, so that the rifling had been stripped wholesale from the barrels.

Jean could spend no time in any profound

examination. He went about his business of measuring and drain-examining with sober attention to detail, and only laid a hand upon a gun when it happened to come in his way. Once he even called up a couple of loafers to help him to move a three-pounder far enough out of the way to let him get to a grating, the size and position of which he accurately noted. Then he lifted it, and still with his improvised *aides* he solemnly sounded it, shaking his head as he drew up the cord, taking them into his confidence so far as to say, 'It is about time that the Commune did something here, or we shall have half the *quartier* down with fever.' In which they concurred, proud of being let into an official secret, and for a franc apiece helped him to put the gun back as he had found it.

Then he went across to the Cemetery of Père La Chaise, where he stumbled upon quite another state of matters. A post of sailors had been established there, and before entering they subjected Jean to a very complete examination. Once he had proved his errand, however, they assisted him by every means in their power.

Among them were several of the best gun-layers in the fleet, men so guileless that to their minds Versailles was still occupied by the Prussians. They were fighting for the Republic against the Prussians of Versailles. Their gunboats had been ordered up the river to fight the Prussians. The city was now being again bombarded - no doubt by the aforesaid Prussians - and they were using their fine naval guns with skill and discretion. Would he like to see what Long Landry could do? Long Landry was the prize gun-layer of all the fleet.

Down yonder (they told him) the Prussians were

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pushing into Neuilly. You could see them mounting a battery if you looked through that telescope. Well, one moment, please, while they made all things shipshape for Long Landry. Of course, he did nothing but lay the gun, because he was a genius.

Not a man of words, Long Landry! But he stood beside Jean with a grin on his face that had something of triumph already discounted about it.

Jean fell to thinking how very early Thiers had taken his hint about the batteries at Neuilly. He turned the glass to the Pont du Jour, and there too they were hard at it digging and plumping in the osiers of sand.

'They are starting another at the Pont du Jour!' he said almost involuntarily. Long Landry shouted incredulously, while half-a-dozen men made a jump at the telescope on its whitewood tripod. Long Landry waved them away.

'After me!' he ordered briefly. Presently, after a careful inspection, he turned round and shook hands cordially with Jean.

'Ever in the navy, sir?' he queried. 'No - well you ought to have been. You have eyes like a hawk!' He looked him over a trifle doubtfully.

'Soldier then?' he asked.

Jean nodded.

'I was till I got this,' - he pointed to the scar which ran white and ridgy from above his right ear to his crown. 'Since then I am no use except to poke about at work like this - drains and street-cleaning! Paugh!'

'Poor fellow!' said Long Landry with real commiseration. 'But these lads are ready. They like to show me off, so I must not disappoint them.'

He stretched himself lazily, moving the gun as it

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were by fractions of a millimetre. Then he looked up suddenly.

'Watch the third gun,' he said, 'the new one on the Neuilly battery, the one they are just bringing into place!'

Jean looked and saw that it was his very latest treasure, fresh from Creusot with all the Larzac improvements. It had never yet been fired. He felt like a parent who is being made an accomplice in the murder of his child.

The big naval gun spoke.

'Keep your eye on the third, sir,' called out Long Landry, 'the new one they have just taken the horses from.'

Jean saw a long curved line extending itself in the air, the trajectory of the Père La Chaise shell. The next moment his Creusot leaped into the air, her nozzle kicking high, and the whole framework of the carriage seemed to crumble away. Long Landry's shell had blown his own work to bits.

But professional enthusiasm was ever first with Jean. 'Hurrah!' he cried. 'Never have I seen such a shot!'

'Nonsense,' said Long Landry modestly, as his companions, satisfied that their hero had come off, danced wildly round. 'The distance was a little long or I should have split the gun into slivers. As it is, she is only dismounted. They will soon get her right again!'

And this also Jean was very glad to hear, for though he wished he had Long Landry in his command, he wanted a chance to try the new gun on which he had spent so much thought and science.

The sailors were an easy prey. They would tell

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Jean everything because he had seen Long Landry do them credit, and so he was invited to examine every piece on the crest of the cemetery. He was taken to see their sleeping-places in the "caves" of the dead. Sailors may be a superstitious folk at sea, but these fellows had no fear of disarranging the occupants of Père La Chaise. They had even ordered their narrow cells with sailorly precision, and had put up rough shelves for provisions, among which were scattered a few nautical books and cheap sea yellow-backs.

All was the very antipodes of the quarters of the National Guards whom he had seen at the Port of La Chapelle. If Bibi were worth his salt, he would not leave Paris without taking Long Landry with him. Jean would rather have him than any six men in his favourite battery.

CHAPTER TWENTY EIGHT

LIEUTENANT DE SIVRY

Bibi came home late at night, and then the two compared notes. Bibi took a much lower strata of life than his temporary master. But he had obtained his information at first-hand, chiefly from fighting members of the Commune itself. Apparently he had both stood treat, and been treated in half the wineshops of Paris that day. Nevertheless his ancient experience in such matters had kept him as sober as a judge. A certain deepened warmth of colouring and a speech somewhat in steeplechase, alone made the evening-returning Bibi other than the Bibi who had gone forth in the morning. But Bibi was full of facts, cunningly and patiently gathered. The paper army of the Commune had inched away. There were nominally still about forty thousand infantrymen on the pay lists; but half of those did guard duty alone, and of the four thousand artillerymen hardly fifteen hundred were serviceable.

‘Where did you get these facts?’ said Jean, busily and even triumphantly noting them down. ,

I came upon a couple of their officers who had formerly been my pupils in the *salles* of La Villette. They had not forgotten Bibi, nor what he had taught them. We had a long talk in the first floor room of a *café*. I pretended that I thought of taking service with them, whereupon they both dissuaded me.

“We are in it to the neck,” they said, “and it is not likely that we shall save even that. But - you were a good chum, Bibi, and what we say to you is, “If you

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are out, stay out!”

Yes, I heard all about the arsenals and the cartridge factory of the Avenue Rapp. Nothing wrong there, except a great deal of waste. They have plenty of arms and ammunition, far more than they can use. There are stacks of excellent chassepots which have never been issued, but the men prefer the old model. Then the arms of the battalions, which were disarmed because their fidelity to the Commune was doubtful, are still at the Military School near the Invalides. They have plenty of shells of all kinds for their guns, but the store-keepers are so drunken and careless that they often send the wrong sizes even to a battery in action!

Jean imagined himself holding converse with these store-keepers, but remembered that the lazier and more careless they were, the better it would be for his precious Creusots.

Bibi had learned much more than that. The spirit of the men left to fight was desperate.

“If we have to blow up, Paris shall blow up with us!” That was the burden of their cry.

‘And,’ added Bibi, ‘I know the men. They will make it good. They have got to the point when they do not care for death, so that it be quick and certain. The fusillade just suits them. They see no way out, and things being as they are, they ask no better. And the women are as desperate as the men - more so, if anything!’

Madame Legrand came in presently to chatter about the dearness of food in the markets of Montmartre.

It is not of course, as in the days when the Prussians were starving us, but still if one is not the wife of a National Guard, a poor woman is worse off

than under Trochu.'

Jean was about to reassure her as to her future, when to his surprise he received a warning touch from the foot of Bibi under the table - a touch which amounted to a good rousing kick. He looked up to see Bibi looking sternly at him, and understood that Inspectors in the service of the Commune were not in a position to enrich a poor woman on the Butte without her neighbours having something to say upon the transaction. Afterwards they would see.

Bibi went out early the following morning. His destination was Saint Ouen, the Ornano quarter, and all the north-west fortifications to the Port Neuilly barricades.

'Beyond that,' he explained, 'I shall not be much use to you, unless I meet somebody who knows the lie of the land about Montparnasse and the "Boule" de Rennes.'

From which Jean gathered that no reputation, even one so great as that of Bibi, can cover the whole of Paris - which is broken up, especially the literary and artistic parts of it, into little cliques for mutual admiration, filled with spleen like that of a backward *sous-préfecture*, and riddled by the gossip of a village in which old maids abound.

Left alone Jean skirted the southern side of the Butte and tried his hand upon Belleville. But he found the population, especially the National Guards, many of them mere lads - children even - wild and intractable. They did not care for the orders of the Commune. They were masters within their own bounds - a Commune within a Commune. Belleville for the Bellevilleois was their motto, and down there by the Seine the Commune could keep its own streets clean. They wanted no interference at

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Belleville. No man should drag chains about their Buttes du Chaumont. None should peer down their sewers under penalty of a broken neck.

Jean was glad to beat a retreat, not, however, without having marked the emplacements of several barricades. the construction of which was not much more than begun. He kept these in his memory, and was glad to observe how they could all be turned when the time came for his precious artillery to do its work upon this most *farouche* of all the strongholds of the Commune.

Jean resolved to spend the rest of the day in writing out his first report for the benefit of Monsieur Thiers, which a young employée of the Nord Railway, Alfred Maury by name, would carry safely to St. Denis to be placed in the dispatch cases of his Excellency the Count von Moltke, representative of Germany at Versailles.

But when he reached the door of the little house on the Rue des Rosiers, Madame Legrand was waiting for him at the door. She was trembling with anxious agitation.

'There is an officer of the National Guard upstairs,' she said. 'He would not go away without seeing you. He went right to your room. I dared not stop him. He said that he knew you very well, and must speak to you as soon as you came in. And he has been there in your room for an hour. I could do nothing - indeed I could not, Monsieur Jean'

De Larzac stiffened for the ordeal. He did not like to lie, and he felt that there was a good deal of the hardest sort before him. He did not mind Bibi doing it. Bibi had gifts that way, but he had been born to a kind of conscience, and had been taught that, except to shield a woman, it was unworthy of a

gentleman to speak the thing that was not true.

'Pshaw, I am only a Versaillist spy,' he muttered to himself half aloud, 'and my present business is to be of use to Monsieur Thiers and to keep the life within my body.'

He saw to it that his papers, or rather those of Jean Grave, Inspector of Communal Hygiene, were ready to hand and all in order. Then he mounted the stairs to meet his fate.

A very young and slight Communist officer was standing by the window, and it seemed as if the room had been darkened. Perhaps a cloud was passing across the sky, a strange thing in that long spell of glorious weather, when all Paris basked like a sun-dried city of the south.

The young man was of middle height, dressed in the most elegant fashion of the Incroyables of '71, blue uniform of a lighter shade than that used by the average National Guard, the broad *reverses* of his lapels a full geranium red, shining boots with spurs, and long white gloves on his hands. His dark hair appeared to curl tightly about his head, and an unlit cigarette was between his lips, held daintily.

'Sir,' said the young man, 'let me introduce myself. I am Lieutenant de Sivry, on the staff of General Max Lisbonne in command of the troops on the Left Bank. I have called upon you to ask for certain information.'

'I am wholly at your service,' said Jean, uneasy in his mind, but all the more courteous in his manner. 'Will you be good enough to sit there, Monsieur - Grave, I think your name is.'

'Grave - Jean Grave,' said De Larzac, obediently seating himself to submit to examination, and beginning to search in his pockets for the false titles

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of his name-sake's professional career with which these were stuffed. For a moment he did not observe the young man at the window. Indeed he had mentally set him down as a popinjay, an improvised occasional soldier, and had congratulated himself that it might prove easier to throw dust in his eyes than in those of, say, an emissary of Raoul Rigault.

Suddenly Jean was astonished to feel arms about his neck, and a well-known voice in his ear:

'Jean - Jean!'

CHAPTER TWENTY NINE

OFFICER AND GENTLEMAN

Nini was sitting on his knees, somewhat blushful and ashamed of her uniform, conscious also of her cropped hair, but in no ways embarrassed or uneasy. She had often worn the like upon the stage. Jean was staggered. He could not find a single word to utter.

‘Are you angry, Jean, that I have become a blue-and-scarlet staff-officer of the Commune for your sake?’

‘Angry? No,’ said Jean, ‘but you are in great danger.’

‘Not a bit, goose!’ said Nini, assuring her position with an involuntarily swirl of imaginary silken skirts which were not there to make their pleasant rustling music.

‘The way of it was this. I went straight to old Max Lisbonne, for whom I had sung when I was a juvenile wonder, and he the director of a theatre. I saved him from bankruptcy, and so he owed me a good turn. He is a brave fellow too, and laughed when I told him how sick I was of waiting for the Opera to re-open. I wanted him to give me something to do, where I could see things and do them - not nursing, but something at once fantastic and real. In fact, I asked for this uniform and a place on his staff.’

‘Nini,’ said Jean, ‘will you ever learn to be wise? It was my comfort that I had left you in safety, and now - here you are masquerading!’

‘Oh, there is really no danger,’ said Nini, swinging

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her feet so that she might the more easily admire her tall Wellington boots. 'I am Max's only staff-officer with a commission. He has his work done by sergeants and people of that kind, who really can ride and be depended upon. I am his only popinjay, just as you thought when I came in!'

'And what did he want for keeping your secret?' Jean demanded jealously. He did not like to think of Nini putting herself at the mercy of ex-directors of theatres. But at that time he did not know Max Lisbonne.

'It was his wife who dressed me,' said Nini cunningly. 'You ought to see how pretty and charming she is, and how they adore one another. She had to turn out the whole stock of theatre properties to find these boots. But they are dandies, you can't deny that!'

And Nini, quite her own woman again, held them up for inspection.

They certainly were pretty, but Jean had graver matters for thought.

It was not a time for love-making, and Jean's uneasiness increased.

Then with the instinct of her sex, Nini rose and from the breast-pocket of her uniform produced a little *carnet* of notes. She glanced at the desk where De Larzac had been writing, and compromised matters by sitting down on the arm of his chair. She began soberly to read out lists of the states of service and numbers of men and guns on the south side of the Seine with all the exactitude of an accountant.

'I have by no means wasted my time,' she said, 'but I can do better for you than that. To-night I can take you to meet old Max, if you will promise me not

to fall in love with his young wife. You are only Jean Grave, remember, but you can show yourself as fond of me as you like. Max will expect it. I told him I had a friend in Paris whom I wished to be near, and being always compassionate to lovers, he was the more ready to do this for me. If he had not been, his wife would have made him help me - I mean us!

Jean felt that they were wading deep in dangers, and wished to put off their departure till they could have Bibi's advice, but Nini would take no denial.

'Bid your landlady serve supper for us,' she commanded; 'she seemed terrified enough, poor soul, at the sight of Max's gay uniform - not but what mine is subdued and bourgeois to that of many of the young officers whom one sees, all "brandebourgs" and gold lace to the eyes. But if Bibi comes in time, he shall come with us. But no asking for his advice. He will take any risks for himself or allow you to take them. But I know my Bibi. He will want to get me out of the city by the quickest and surest road as soon as he sets eyes on me!'

Madame Legrand was much relieved to find her lodger and the fine young officer seated amicably at opposite sides of the table, with Jean's tracings and papers between them. She had feared nothing less than a descent of the battalions - or perhaps Dacosta as the *avant-courier* of the terrible Raoul Rigault himself.

Still, in spite of the completeness of the information which Nini had brought him, there was a weight on Jean's heart. He would have given much to know that she was back in the sober glades of the Orangerie, tending the pallets of the women who strove to raise themselves gratefully at her entrance.

It was true that her coming to aid him in his

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mission sent sharp, proud gushes of warm gratitude through his heart. And at the thought of her love, so unselfish, so triumphant, he silently thanked God that he was not a man alone. In life or in death, she would be near him, and it was evident, indeed, that she counted her own life as nothing where he was concerned.

Well, few were the men who encountered a love like that. And having found, he would not miss it. Ah, if only once he got clear of Paris, even of duty, then he would show her. He would make it all up to her, or his name was not Jean de Larzac. A man, even the best, always thinks that he can repay everything to a woman by making her his wife, whereas he is only incurring new obligations without paying off the old. Only, though all good women know this, they keep the fact carefully to themselves.

Nini had been observing the bunch of wrinkles drawing themselves together about the bridge of Jean's nose. She knew that he always did that when he was thinking deeply, and she dreaded that she might be packed off again to the overcrowded "round-up" of prisoners at Versailles. So she hastened to break in upon Jean's meditation.

'I have promised to take you to-night. They are expecting us. You shall see old Max in his element. The meeting is in the Theatre of Montparnasse. Madame Max, you, and I, shall hide in a box - Bibi too, if he comes before it is time to set out. That will give you a better idea of the real fighting power of the Commune on the Left Bank than any array of figures. You will come with me, Jean?'

'I will come, Nini,' he said a little sadly, 'but I wish you had stayed where I left you. I should have been

more at ease!’

‘Bless you, Jean, I never meant to for a moment. I was so glad to have thought out a way of being near you, that I could hardly keep from telling you before you went - though that, I knew, would have been fatal. You would not have let me come.’

‘Indeed I would not,’ cried Jean, knocking his closed fist hard on the table.

Nini unwittingly trilled a laugh, and then, with a quaint grimace, changed her voice to the uncertain croaking falsetto of a youth whose voice is breaking.

‘I have to tell people, sometimes, that I have been a choir-boy, who has run away from a cathedral; and how I used to do the solos there. But sometimes I forget! It is so much more difficult to persuade people that you are telling the truth when you - wear trousers - ever so much more so than when you are only a girl!’

‘I dare say!’ said Jean shortly.

They ate the omelette, the cold meat and salad which were to have furnished out Jean's evening meal, with excellent appetites. The wine was tolerable, for Paris in mid-Commune. Nini, who had the faculty of enjoying every hour of her life, immediately laid aside all the anxieties of their position, in order to make Jean laugh, with her adventures on entering the city, and the difficulties she had in finding Max Lisbonne in the wilds of the south.

‘He did not care very much about the idea at first,’ she admitted frankly, ‘not till he had heard about you - and his wife had coerced him. Also I promised to sing at his first benefit after he had got back from New Caledonia!’

(And in due time Nini had a long way to come to

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fulfil this last promise.)

Bibi did not arrive, though Jean listened eagerly for his voice below, where he halted, as was his custom, to gossip with Madame Legrand. It was in vain.

Nini rose to her feet, as a sign that it was time to go.

'Now you must be my Bibi, and walk round me to see that I am immaculate, or rather I shall turn like the nice little wax mannequins in the windows of the Rue de la Paix ("English Style, roof."). No, Jean, for shame! You can't kiss me like this. Wait.'

She swept the deep fold of a cheap window curtain about her waist, and leaned forward invitingly, fresh as a calla lily from its sheath.

'Now, sir, you can kiss Nini Auroy, but by no means Lieutenant de Sivry.'

There was a pause.

'Hands off an officer and a gentleman!' said Nini, suddenly releasing herself and the curtain, 'remember I am your superior officer, sir. Indeed, you only rank as a civilian - a mere chain-dragger, and draughtsman of pigsties. But now come along. We cannot depend upon cabs in these days, though I bade mine wait for me on the Boulevard Ornano - opposite No. 57 where they sell the Kirkcaldy wax-cloths! The man thought I was a smart young officer going to a rendezvous. And so I was, but he will be rather disappointed when he sees only you! However, the name of Max Lisbonne will make him carry us across the water, if there is force in his poor siege-horse to run so far on three legs!'

They found the driver drowsing upon his cushion, and between the shafts the animal with all four legs good for the journey. The man was evidently kindly-

hearted, for he had given the poor beast a nose-bag containing chopped straw, with a little beans and corn. At sight of his fare he jumped from his seat and ran to get it off. Three or four Scots lads came to the door of the house, and doubtless had their comments on the two young Frenchmen who had taken their places

There can be no doubt that Nini's uniform would have looked exceedingly out of place on the High Street of the Lang Toun. But they were sensible enough to know that in Paris of the late April and early May of 1871, much more outlandish things were worn. Jean was glad that there seemed to be no questioning as to Nini's sex. Madame Max and she had certainly taken great care with the waist padding, and her stage experience helped her as to stride and carriage.

Nini bade the man drive to the great meeting which General Max Lisbonne, familiarly known in all the region of the *Bouffes du Nord* as "Colonel," was to address that night in the Theatre of Montparnasse. The man was amazingly civil. Under a settled Government he would probably have sworn that he had to go home to the stables, or that he had another engagement. At the very least he would have demanded double pay, but now all he said was, 'I shall do my best, Captain, and as to the price, I leave that to you.'

The Theatre of Montparnasse was a well-known meeting-place for the advanced thinkers of the revolution. Nini, with pretty little Madame Max on her arm, led the way into it with the ease of one who has the habitude of theatres.

Presently they found themselves in a stage-box, whence, from behind convenient curtains, they

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could see all without showing themselves even to the chairman and his assessors on the stage. Max Lisbonne, slender and a little disdainful, sat somewhat apart, as became the chief speaker. He held a tall ebony staff in his hand with a black apple at the top. His wound was not yet healed, and he used this as a cane to lean upon.

The meeting was stormy. There were there the partisans of moderate measures (as moderation went in the time of the Commune), the true "proselytes of the gate" who favoured the Dictature of the Five – the famous Committee of Public Safety, not yet openly constituted, and a small but noisy band of Anarchists, greatly in the minority - yet who by their audacity threatened to take possession of the meeting and turn it to their own purposes.

The first speakers were howled down with exceeding little respect. But dainty Madame was in no way intimidated.

'Wait till they hear Max,' she whispered, a confident smile upon her face.

The sense of the noisy throng, so far as it could be made out, was that the Commune was stale and useless, The Generals of the Commune were particularly useless. The pampered battalions of the northern suburbs were notably suspect. What was wanted was that Paris should arise in its tens of thousands and pour itself out across the southern and south-western hills till it overwhelmed and submerged Versailles. It was, in fact, the famous *sortie en masse* risen from the dead. They had not tasted of the grapeshot of Les Bergères where Duval and Flourens died. They knew nothing of the well-equipped batteries which were every day being brought into place between Courbevoie and the Pont

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de Jour. They knew nothing at all, in fact, except that things were going wrong, most deadly wrong, and that the meeting believed in its power to set them right.

Max Lisbonne sat listening with a smile of irony on his lips. They would sweep out the city traitors. They would cleanse Versailles of the do-nothing Republicans, of the beaten Imperialists, and of disguised Orleanists like Thiers and MacMahon.

Some noble resolutions based upon these intentions were put to the meeting and passed by acclamation. Then Max Lisbonne rose to make his speech. His legendary hat was in his hand - a wide stove-pipe of the period with an extra wide and flat brim - on the street, always poised on the top of his curly locks. He leaned upon his tall black cane, partly for support and partly to remind the people of his wound received in the service of the Commune. Thus he mounted slowly and painfully to the tribune.

'Comedien!' whispered his wife. 'Max can get round the garden after the cats quick enough, even when his stick is in the lobby!'

But she smiled lovingly as she said it.

The roar which greeted Max was thunderous. They had come to hear the famous actor-orator-fighter Max Lisbonne, and there he was before them. To applaud was the least they could do. But they might have been warned by the subtle bitterness of the smile lurking at the corner of Max's mouth.

'He has something up his sleeve,' said his wife, who knew a storm signal when she saw one on the face of her husband.

'Oh, I hope Max will not make them angry. He can do anything and say anything in Montmartre. But

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here, where he is only a commandant like another, it is different. I do wish Max were not so determined to have his own way!

She sighed gently.

'I can stop him at home,' she said, 'but on a platform or in a battle neither I nor any one else can manage him! Yet he is always good-humoured. It is the other people who are angry!'

Max Lisbonne wore an ingratiating smile, good-naturedly condescending as that of the master of a school being asked for a holiday which he means to grant. He let his eyes take in slowly the vast audience of two or three thousand enthusiastic men who filled every inch of standing room in the theatre.

Then the black pommel of his ebony wand rose high and demanded silence.

'Citizens,' he began, almost caressingly, 'you wish to be led to Versailles, gallantly, weapons in hand? This is your unanimous desire.'

'Yes - yes! To Versailles! To Versailles!'

The house rose to his voice.

'Very well,' Max went on, 'I for one am with you. I am ready to lead you. You all know me. Every one in Paris knows Max Lisbonne. If any one wants me, you know where to find me. I have given my proofs - at Lès Bergères, at Châtillon, at the Fort of Issy. But then I am not content with vociferation; I act also. Now, early in April there were two hundred thousand noise-makers who did the shouting. "Vive la Commune! Vive la Commune!"'

'Well, excellent citizens and Communards here present, how many of these two hundred thousand tried what like was the volley-firing of the Versailles rifles outside the walls? Something like ten thousand! Now we can't afford to have it the same

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to-day. We will not make the mistake twice - the fatal error which cost us Duval and our well beloved Flourens.'

'No - no!' vociferated the crowd. 'Give us arms. We will march and destroy the traitors!'

'Good,' said Max, 'very good! Now here you are somewhere well over two thousand who shout "A Versailles!" and who wish to be led there, bayonet at the muzzle.'

'That is it! - To Versailles! To Versailles!'

'Good hearing,' cried Max; 'but just a moment before we start. Since you all know me and where I live, where my wife lives, and my cat and my dog and everything that is mine, you won't think it out of the way that I also, Max Lisbonne, should like to have the honour of your acquaintance - to know something about you. Now, all those who are determined to follow me to Versailles - come to this end of the hall. I will take the names and addresses of our recruits. Stand up, citizens - by files to the right. March!'

After a pause a slight movement was visible, like the first bubbling of a pot before it boils. But it went no further. However, a few young fellows disengaged themselves from the restraining grasp of relatives, and passed swiftly to the right of the stage.

Putting up his eyeglass, Lisbonne calmly counted them.

'Nineteen!' he said in a clear resonant voice. 'Not one more. Not one less.'

Then with a noble sweep of his arm Max turned and bowed deeply to the nineteen.

'I salute you - you, the only brave!' he cried. 'I admire you, and I thank you in the name of the Great Cause. But you see very well that you and this

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lame Max Lisbonne are not enough to open a way through the hosts of Vinoy and MacMahon, or sweep Thiers out of Versailles. Nevertheless, I thank you from my soul! As for you others - loud-mouthed cowards. *Oust!* Out of this - and quick! I suppose that after this, for a little while, you will keep your tongues within your teeth. Get home. Your wives are sitting up for you!

And Max Lisbonne sat down.

* * * * *

He was howled at and threatened, but there was no cold in the eyes of Max.

'There is nothing more to be done here,' he said. 'The play is played out. Ring down the curtain. As far as I am concerned, I am going to take a bock - Café des Arts, just opposite. Any one who is not content or who feels himself aggrieved, will find me in the *café*.'

And then Max limped out leaning on his cane with a certain airy arrogance. There was no more talk of further *levées en masse* to sweep away Versailles. When the hot-heads proposed such a thing, the more staid threatened them with Max Lisbonne and his ebony topped cane.

CHAPTER THIRTY

ANNE DECIES, JUSTICIAR

It all came through Long Landry.

Except at the bidding or for the protection of his mistress, Bibi le Bonhomme could never carry more than one thing in his head at a time. But then, he was a one-headed man who carried his idea through to the end.

Jean wanted Long Landry for his guns. He talked of little else for a whole evening, and Bibi's absence, on the night of the meeting in the Montmartre Theatre, had been due to the fact that he was suborning, procuring, beguiling Long Landry to leave the Commune and take service with his own present master.

First, of course, he had sworn him to secrecy, so far as his comrades were concerned. And in doing so he had struck upon his greatest difficulty. Long Landry would fight side by side with Bibi and his master, so long as the business was that of which he was a master. He would not cook, nor signal, nor wash decks nor do any menial duty. So much must be clearly understood.

Bibi reassured him. If any of these things had to be done, Bibi would attend to them. He was no gun-layer. As for Long Landry, he was thrown away upon any other job, while as to the political party for whom he was to lay the guns (and that other against which the shells were to be launched), neither of them mattered a doit, to Long Landry. But he failed to understand why he was not to take his comrades into the secret of such benefits as those laid before

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him by the serpent Bibi. Bibi was in no ways taken aback. He explained the matter to Long Landry. There was, it appeared, only one vacancy, and for that vacancy there was great competition and much jealousy. If, therefore, his comrades accompanied Long Landry to the great, battery of seven-inch guns at Châtillon, all those who wanted to "cross the master" would try and have him dismissed from his post for bringing so many new hands into an already overcrowded business.

'They need their heads punched,' averred Long Landry; 'gun-laying will never be an overcrowded profession till Michael the archangel fires off his last great gun.'

'I thought it was to be a trumpet,' Bibi suggested meekly.

'Not in the navy it isn't,' retorted Long Landry with contempt; 'besides, what chance would a tootling trumpet have alongside of one of the fleet's pets?'

As to this Bibi, naturally, was in no position to decide.

'How big is she, then?' demanded Landry, 'the gun that I am to point?'

Bibi considered a moment. These were matters wholly outside his ken, but whatever happened he must convince Long Landry.

'About as long as this room,' he said, 'indicating the long passage-like *café* which stretched back from its narrow street frontage over what had once been a garden.

'*Augrrh!*' snorted Long Landry, 'what's her calibre - her bore?'

'Calibre - bore - ? She's a new kind, I tell you, „ and hasn't got any of these old-fashioned devices,'

said Bibi, at his wits' end.

'What!' cried Landry, smiting his hand on the table, 'you are a great fighter, they tell me, Master Bibi, but if you think you are going to have any fun with Long Landry, come outside and I'll take my chance!'

Bibi, eager on his business (which was to enlist Long Landry), apologized profusely, and declared honestly that he knew nothing about it, but that his master did. The master would tell him all about it if he would come to call upon him that night at Madame Legrand's in the Rue des Rosiers.

'If I go I cannot come back here any more,' said Long Landry, growing suddenly serious. 'The mates, you see, would never let me leave the ship - I being, as it were, their pride. Holy blue, what a devilish contracting thing pride is! They won't even let me look over the wall for fear I should go and take service with the batteries up at Montmartre. And I won't deny but what I have had offers!'

'Come with me,' said Bibi coaxingly. 'It is true that I don't know much about those great guns except the noise they make, but I do know that the master invented all by himself the gun you are to have. She is the biggest and the best ever sent out of Creusot - '

Long Landry had risen in agitation.

'Your master invented it? He is an expert? He has been at Creusot, and no one has touched it before Long Landry?'

No one! Bibi promised with his eyes, the firmer and more truthful that he knew nothing whatever about the matter.

'Not that I ever thought to leave the navy,' said Long Landry mournfully. 'It is a good service.

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Besides, there is a pension and a coastguard's place which a man like me is preferred for - a little garden with white stone walks, a flag-staff, and maybe a little brass cannon to fire off on the Emperor's birthday.'

Bibi had to bite his lip to keep from telling Long Landry that if he remained where he was there would be no pension, no saluting on any Emperor's birthday - indeed that there was no Emperor any more, only a poor old man pacing alone down the alleys of Wilhelmshohe, with the German sentinels saluting him like so many marionettes.

But Bibi understood his Long Landry. He did not tell him the truth, which was that he had been fighting in open rebellion against the regular army and all the power in his country, including the Minister of Marine. For in that case, so soon as Long Landry had heard that he was in danger of the *peloton* of execution, he would have answered, 'Well then, so are my comrades, and whatever their fate may be, Long Landry will stay alongside and share it!'

So once more Bibi was judiciously silent. He wished to get the gun-layer away for the sake of Jean who wanted him. And what Jean desired, Nini would also be sure to want. So, having fallen into the meshes of Bibi's net, Long Landry disappeared from Père la Chaise, and left behind him a mourning battery that would not be comforted, and was with difficulty kept from escalating the heights of Montmartre in search of him. In all Paris there were none who could reply to the Versaillist long-range fire except the cannoniers of the fleet. And of all these, there was not one who could hit his mark with the amazing certainty of Long Landry. He had,

though he did not know it, become a celebrated man. His battery boasted of him, and all manner of men came to see and admire. Deputies of the Commune arrived, tucking away their red scarfs so that they might not embarrass Long Landry (who would not have been embarrassed before a jury of admirals); captains of other batteries in the vague hope of enlisting him, or the still vaguer of finding him beneath his reputation; curious officers of artillery battalions on their way to and from the fortifications, eager for the loan of Long Landry, so that he might try some favourite piece which was the apple of their eye, but "never had had a fair chance."

A man like Long Landry could not vanish without the Delegate for War hearing of it. And so Delescluse, and after him General Decies, heard that the best big-gun pointer of the Commune had strangely disappeared. It was a matter into which he proposed to look at once and in person. Besides, it was long since General Decies had visited his house on the heights of the Rue des Rosiers.

And Anais, when she heard of the expedition, resolved to go also. She had stores of clothes and lingerie at No. 4, and a new and fresh supply was something that appealed to her wonderfully after three weeks of the grime and foetid atmosphere of the hospitals of the lower city. She had done what she could in the way of washing needful things for herself. But, after finding that she took in her fine white linen spotted and speckled with the blowing of the grey street dust, she had begun to think with peculiar wistfulness of the stores of sweet, white, grass-bleached, lavender-scented delicacies in the drawers of which Madame Legrand kept the keys.

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Anais was fighting for freedom, but she was not less a woman.

And so it came about that Anais, sending her father on to open out the deserted house at No. 4 of the Rue des Rosiers, came suddenly face to face with Jean de Larzac in the little entrance hall of the house of Madame Legrand, where she had looked in to secure her truss of household keys.

Jean was calm, and held out his hand as though it were the simplest thing in the world that he should be found going out of the Rue des Rosiers in a Communist uniform. But Anais whipped her hands behind her in a moment.

'Jean de Larzac,' she said gravely, 'you must explain yourself. Come upstairs and I shall hear what you have to say. Then I shall be judge!'

Her face was very pale, and her lips were set and determined. She was, she felt, at a great forking of the ways of life. She must be guided by private or by public motives. Ordinary women (bless them!), women like Nini, do not care a candle-dip for public considerations. But ever since the Versaillists had begun to shoot their prisoners without trial, an extraordinary bitterness had entered into the nature of Anais - something fierce, perhaps, inherited from the French mother. She began to understand the women of the Halles, and those who fought side by side with their men on the fields of battle outside Paris.

If Jean were indeed what he seemed, no considerations of their youth together, no memory of the Larzac slopes, no kindness from the more recent days of the yellow omnibus would keep her from doing her duty.

She saw very clearly, more clearly than any man,

that the days of the Great Despair were fast coming.

In her heart there boiled up cruel anger against Versailles, and, for the first time, with Jean. A soldier – yes – it was his duty! But a spy! That changed all.

Jean, who was in no fear of Anais, his playmate, except a desire to save her from the wrath of her own folk, and from all participation in his own dangers, took the way upstairs with quite imperturbable calm.

He led her into a large bare room where the *midinettes* of Madame Legrand had formerly worked and gossiped. He hurried to open out a screen about his camp bed, but Anais was immediately busy with the notes which he had left scattered about the table and on the floor after he had written and dispatched the last report to Monsieur Adolphe Thiers, care of the German Minister at Versailles, the General von Moltke in the Street of the Painter Lebrun.

Numbers of guns, their condition, weight of shell-fire, condition of mortars, all was noted in Jean's small neat hand with little suggestive sketchy drawings, the exactness and expertness of which spoke for themselves without the figures (marked "approximately") at the sides.

Having fixed the screen to his liking Jean came forward smiling. He had committed an escapade. He certainly ought to have let Anais know that he was in Paris. But when he once told her of the reason, how he feared that any communication with him might bring her father and herself into trouble with the energumens of the Commune, she would at once understand his motives.

It had always been easy to make Anais understand. But Jean did not know what abysses

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had been hollowing themselves out between them since the days of the parties at the Rue des Rosiers, when they had taken hands and run down tinkling the big cellar keys, to decant and bring up the wine.

'Jean de Larzac,' said Anais, confronting him with all the sternness of a *justiciar*, 'you are here as a spy among us. You have there details of the number and power of our cannon. You have drawings - plans!'

'Of course,' said Jean, who did not even yet understand, 'that was what I was ordered here to find out!'

'Then you shall not go back,' said Anais, trembling a little, her face growing pallid, but losing none of its determination, 'you would only bring the butchers of Versailles the sooner upon us.'

At this Jean laughed a little inopportunately, which put the final cap on the irritation of the mood of Anais. That any one should laugh at a tragedy so black! Yet Jean meant no harm. The fact was that Nini had spoiled him. He had forgotten that there were women with real political views and convictions of their own. Nini only cared for him and his safety. She risked her life as a very little thing, only to be near him. Surely a girl so striking and so handsome as Anais would not waste her youth upon an idea - and such an idea - with such men at the head of it. He thought of Raoul Rigault and shuddered. No, it was unthinkable.

'Do not fear, Anais,' he said; 'we shall make sure and save you and your father when we do come. I am to command the artillery. Monsieur Thiers promised me the post!'

At this the agitation of Anais passed all bounds. She threw her head back and looked fiercely at Jean, her lip curling scorn, and her little foot

nervously tapping the floor, where it trod upon a clearly-worked-out sheet of Jean's drawings, not yet forwarded, representing the naval guns in position at Père la Chaise.

'Oh, I know the meaning of your military prose,' she said, in bitter self-contained tones, 'I have read your despatches. "The troops advanced with much decision and *élan*" - which meant that they pursued and cut down fleeing women and men without arms, men who had surrendered, and women who begged for mercy. Yes, there are such weak women. Thank God, when the day comes I shall not be one of these. You will find that I shall neither ask for nor accept my life at such hands as yours.'

Jean stood thunderstruck, his lips a little apart, gazing at her as if he were seeing a vision.

Anais went on volubly and fiercely.

'You shoot us all down, from the five lads at lunch in a *café* by a riverside who had hired a pleasure-boat, to Gustave Flourens the noble, whom the thick-headed captain of gendarmes cut down unarmed at Buzenval. And why have you noted these details of our cannons, of our powder, and of our defences?'

'Because I was ordered to,' said Jean, who knew no other terms of military service, and took it for granted that all others would find the reason as convincing as he did himself.

'No,' said Anais, in that unnatural voice which the strain of her nerves in the desperate days occasionally produced, 'not because you were ordered, but that our poor fellows may be the easier slaughtered. I know you, Jean de Larzac - you have a heart that cares for nothing apart from your profession. It is the same to you whether you are

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ordered to slaughter Frenchmen, men of your own race and language, or the enemies of your country. You are a brave soldier, I grant it, but you are a *reitre*, a trampling *spadassin*, a pretorian, a fighter for pay and profession, without the least care of what you are fighting for. You would as soon besiege Paris as Berlin, launching death on the innocent and helpless.'

'They would be as innocent and helpless in Berlin as in Paris,' said Jean; 'it is a necessity of war. But of course one's own country does make a difference!'

'I see your intentions,' cried Anais; 'you are preparing to enter and to kill – not by ones and twos as heretofore, but by battalions. You will make a clean sweep, so your master threatens, he who gave you your spy's orders. No quarter will be given, and you are here to make assurance doubly sure. You, with your knowledge of artillery, have been prying among our guns. You, the inventor of new weapons of death to kill our poor lads the more swiftly, have prostituted your knowledge to this vile and abominable use. But I shall do my duty, be sure.'

She leaned out of the window and summoned an escort of the famous fighting 141st which had followed her father and herself from the Ministry of War.

'I go to the Prefecture of police, to see the citizen Raoul Rigault,' she called out; 'let half of you keep the door of this house, and let none enter except officers of the Commune till I return.'

'Anais,' said Jean, when she had turned towards him, 'it is true that I have done and am doing what you have charged me with. It is true that I have incurred the penalty of death – but you will surely never be the denunciator – you, my sister, my

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friend!’

‘In this strife,’ she answered, ‘it is not a fight to the first blood as in a duel, but to the last drop in our bodies. We shall be beaten, but we shall die fighting. In the meantime, however, we shall know how to execute justice upon the spies who come to draw plans of our barricades, and to make our slaughter easy as the killing of so many sheep!’

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CHAPTER THIRTY ONE

THE ADVENTURE OF THE FLIGHT

At this moment, critical in the life of Jean de Larzac, voices were heard in front of the house. Madame Legrand had discreetly hidden herself in a neighbouring shed, where she waited for the passing of the storm. She had seen the four stalwart National Guards station themselves at her door, and had trembled for her guests. Bibi le Bonhomme or the handsome young officer might enter at any moment. Jean Grave might be arrested and she herself sent to St Lazare.

To do Madame Legrand justice, this was the contingency which she thought of last and least. Still she was bound to think of it, and meanwhile she made herself snug in the hangar, where were a few bundles of hay that had not yet been carried off for the use of the horses of the Federal staff.

Jean heard a challenge beneath on the street, a few low-spoken words, and then the rattle of rifle butts on the pavements after the salute. Two men were coming up the stairs. Anais went and opened the door. She saw her father in company with the new Minister of War, Delescluse, who had been up at Montmartre visiting his sister Azéma. She had been ill for some days, and so had been unable to make her customary visits to her brother at the War Office.

‘What is this?’ said her father; ‘soldiers guarding our excellent Madame Legrand's door? One must be a little thoughtful lest we should draw suspicion on a lonely woman. Even a corporal's guard at a house in the Rue des Rosiers is enough to awaken

attention.'

'I have captured a spy,' said Anais in a choked voice. 'There he stands - General Jean de Larzac, sent to spy us out. There are his notes. See - all our positions, our barricades, our guns, our ammunition, even the numbers of the regiments who would not follow Rossel beyond the walls! He is a spy, and if you will not help me, I shall carry the matter to the Procureur of the Commune, to Raoul Rigault himself!'

The two old men were silent. They were long past being surprised at anything that came in the daily round of revolutionary duty. Death loomed up close and near. They knew the worst that could befall them, and it was not beyond their endurance. But they could not understand Anais denouncing the man who had been her most chosen companion. Could it be jealousy - that singing woman, perhaps? That they could understand. But they did not understand how events were fast making the women of the Commune as fierce and dangerous as she-tigers robbed of their young.

'Anais,' said her father, 'have you considered what will be the inevitable issue if you carry this matter to Rigault?'

Anais Decies became fiercely indignant.

'If you two were true servants of the Commune and as eager in her service as I, you would find a shorter way. There is a wall a little down the street where two honest men were executed in the heat of anger. It would be honouring this man too much to spill there the blood of a spy! But that would be the best issue. Will you give the order, General Decies? Or you, sir, who are sworn to serve the Dictatorship of Five as their Minister of War, will you give the

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order? Oh, for a single minute of Rossel. He was a soldier, and they have put a man of ice in his place -

'You forget yourself, Anais,' interrupted her father, angrily. But at that moment nothing would stop her. She was fairly launched, and her woman's anger knew no bounds. She wanted to see the spy led out and shot on the spot - all the more because he had once been her friend and her playfellow. Had he not been caught in the act of betraying all she held most dear?

The movement for the benefit of the poor and mean of the earth, for those who could never, unaided, come to their own, had failed. And Anais could not forgive that failure, though it was the work of the men of the Commune itself.

'I do not forget myself,' she answered her father, 'I only speak what the Minister of War will hear any day and hour if he will leave his bureau and step into the street or visit the Hotel de Ville.'

At this Delescluse smiled, pensively, almost tenderly.

'I know that your view of my character is also the view of the majority of the Commune, who are my enemies. But when the time comes, the gentlemen of the majority, and you, my fair antagonist, may find that we of the old Brigade will know how to die as well as the fiercest Dictator of them all. Eh, Decies?'

And before she could prevent him, the old fighter of 1830 and 1848 had touched the hand of Anais with his lips. She was too hot and angry to appreciate the greatness of the compliment, and especially its rarity.

* * * * *

Anais went out, shutting the door behind her, and hastened along the streets to find a vehicle of some kind to carry her as quickly as possible to the Prefecture of Police. She had a hasty anger in her heart, and was afraid lest she could not keep her fortitude up to the striking point if she did not get there at once. She came to the corner of the Rue Lepic and instinctively looked about for the canary-coloured omnibus. It was not there, of course. But she saw it clearly in her mind's eye, and hastened her flying feet that she might forget it.

* * * * *

‘And now, young man,’ said Decies, ‘sit down and tell us what all this means. We have no desire to have your blood on our hands, but after all, a spy is a spy. I suppose you counted the cost before you came.’

Jean nodded.

‘I was ordered here by Monsieur Thiers, who took me away from the post of commander of his artillery to send me. I can, if you like, show you my orders.’

Decies waved his hand quickly.

‘We will take your word for it, sir,’ he said; ‘I saw in their *Officiel* that you had been “detailed for very special duty.” But I had no idea that I should find here, out of uniform, in the garb of a Communist Inspector of Street Cleaning, Jean de Larzac, a full General of the Versaillist Government, and, if I make no mistake, a Commander of the Legion of Honour!’

‘I little expected it myself,’ said Jean, ‘but to a soldier, orders are orders.’

‘What say you, Delescluse?’ the ex-Colonel of the

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Guards continued. 'That daughter of mine has been so exalted these last weeks that she will stick at nothing. She thinks that it is her duty to go with this affair to that firebrand Rigault!'

'Do you know any of the chiefs among the Legions?' said Delescluse quietly, 'some one popular and of authority?'

'I know Max Lisbonne!' said Jean; 'I was at his meeting last night.'

Delescluse smiled. He did not hold Max in high regard as a thinker, but no one could possibly dislike "the Colonel."

'Exceedingly well thought of,' he said, turning to Decies. 'If we could only get one of our younger officers to escort him to the headquarters of Lisbonne's troops on the south side, Max would find a way to convoy him outside the walls in safety.'

'At this moment,' put in Jean, 'I am expecting his aide-de-camp, Lieutenant de Sivry.'

'Lieutenant de Sivry - I had not heard of him,' said Decies.

'And I did not know that Lisbonne troubled himself with an *aide*;' Delescluse added, 'but no matter - all the better. It will be safer to send you all across Paris with some one known to Max. In any case I had better write you both a *laisser passer*.'

And this accordingly he did, finishing the signature while the feet of Lieutenant de Sivry were already on the stairs.

'Jean, Jean where are you?' For once De Larzac heard with real agony Nini's voice with its gay and personal appeal. He saw the pair sit erect and look towards the door. And then, vivid and happy, Nini entered. She stopped at sight of the two old men whom she had not expected, having found no

Madame Legrand, finger on lip, below, to warn her of visitors in Jean's room.

By a small stroke of luck Nini had a cloak wrapped about her, a cloak which the previous owner had worn on night-post duty. It was convenient in passing through the faubourgs, hiding the bravery of her hussar uniform, the fantastic choice of Max Lisbonne.

Jean muttered the introductions with his eyes on the floor, but Nini looked and bowed as to the manner born. She was the useless ornamental aide-de-camp of the Commune to the life, the pride of the club windows, but carefully to be put out of harm's way when the time came for fighting.

'Monsieur the Delegate for War, and General Decies,' said Jean, 'let me introduce you to Lieutenant de Sivry, aide-de-camp to the General Max Lisbonne.'

'Oh, yes,' said Nini boldly, 'he gave me this place because I had so long been a friend - of his wife. Do you know Madame Lisbonne? *I think her charming!*'

The two seniors bowed rather sternly, but on the whole seemed to take it as a matter of course. It was not a kind of weakness they were liable to themselves, but after all. Max was a younger man than they, a brave fighter in spite of his quaint professional ways, and, what meant more to them than anything, he was gallantly on their side in the conflict between old Republicans and young desperadoes. He loathed their enemy the Dictature of Five, and he had, so people said, warned Félix Pyat not to cross his path.

'It is, I think,' said Delescluse, 'useless to prolong this interview. The sooner you find General Lisbonne the better. This young officer doubtless knows where

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he is. We put you under his charge. We shall go downstairs with you, and see that all is right with the guard which has been placed at the door. As for your orders sir, deliver this gentleman to General Lisbonne, and bid him take the steps for his security which he judge necessary - '

'He, or his wife,' Decies interjected ironically.

Then with a last glance at his scattered papers Jean went downstairs. Delescluse caught the look and whispered to him, 'Do not be in any anxiety about these. We will make a clean sweep of them long before they can be disquieted by any other persons. We think Mademoiselle Anais is acting according to her conscience. But, for our part, we are too near the end to believe that the life or death of one young man - perhaps two - can make any difference. That is why we send you off alive with your friend Lieutenant de Sivry. *Guard there!*'

The four men of the 141st commanded by Anais, presented arms at sight of the officers, and especially at the appearance of the well-known stooping figure of the tall Minister of War, the Delescluse with whom their grandfathers had fought side by side in the great July days of 1830, and their fathers in the communal risings of '48.

'See these gentlemen past the post at the corner of the Rue Lepic,' said Delescluse, crisply; 'they have my orders to carry to the headquarters of the troops fighting at Grenelle. See also that they have all possible assistance on their way across the river!'

The men saluted and fell back. They were waiting for orders from Nini.

'Oh, Jean,' she whispered, much taken aback, 'what *shall* I say?'

'By files to the right - march!' Jean whispered.

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And the procession took its way. Jean and Lieutenant de Sivry were a little in the rear. The old men Delescluse and Decies were still standing watching them as they turned the corner.

‘Oh, Jean,’ said Nini, ‘I wonder if they suspected!’

‘I am afraid so,’ said Jean, ‘but perhaps it is just as well for us that they did, though you ought to be ashamed of yourself, Nini, for striving to take away the good name of so charming a woman as Madame Max Lisbonne.’

‘It was only for you sake, Jean!’ said Nini innocently. ‘Besides, they did not believe us! One could see that without eyes!’

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CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

JEAN'S MIDNIGHT VIGIL

Nini and Jean de Larzac made their way southward as speedily as possible. For a time it was impossible for them to obtain a cab of any kind. They could hardly hope to find one before the Grand Boulevards. They therefore walked smartly along, keeping to the middle of the street. Men of the National Guards sat and sprawled about the doors of all the wine-shops. They blocked the bars and cabarets. Few of them paid any attention to the officer's uniform which Nini wore, and not a single one saluted.

Only one drunken fellow, a Zouave of the Commune, called after Nini, observing her spurs, to know if she had eaten her horse. So in the next gateway Jean took them off, and while there they very nearly made shipwreck on a dangerous rock.

On the other side of the street was a girl, who had been walking some distance before them as they made their way hastily in the direction of the river. They had been too taken up with their own anxieties, with Jean's uniform and Nini's cloak, with the stare of hundreds of eyes, and with the crowded streets, to notice any one in particular, least of all a loitering girl.

But suddenly Nini grasped Jean's arm, clinging to it.

'Don't do that,' he growled, shaking himself loose. 'I told you before. Men don't do it!'

'Yes, Jean, but don't you see - there is Anais. She is stopping - no, she is walking on again. Now she is looking in at a window. Now she is slaying with a look a man who has dared to speak to her. I do not believe that she really knows what she means to do.'

Jean followed the direction of Nini's gaze. It was indeed Anais, and everything went to prove that Nini was right in her conjecture. Anais was storm-tossed in spirit. Now she would hurry along in the southern direction, which in time might have landed her at the Prefecture of Police, but again, as if stricken by a doubt, she would stop uncertainly and walk slowly back.

'Has she spotted us?' thought Jean. But no - she never looked over to the dark of their archway, and seemed wholly taken up with her own thoughts. Yet she was seeing many things, and the farther she got from the Rue des Rosiers, the less she wanted Jean to be shot as a spy. She would make him give up his papers, his statistics, his drawings. She would keep him locked up in the cellar of the old house, and guard him there herself. He should be held as a hostage - but a private hostage. There was room down there among the stores of firewood, beyond the wine-barrels from which they had so often drawn the red wine and the white, in the days that she would have given anything to forget but could not. Something comfortable could be rigged up there for her prisoner.

At last, with a sudden determination, she turned and marched away up the long slope in the direction of the Gare du Nord and the Butte. She would keep Jean prisoner. She would see that he was prevented from becoming a danger to the Commune. But she could not bear that he should be killed. She would

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save him, and by her arguments make him again the loyal Jean of the caves of the Larzac.

She hastened her pace, for this hope had taken possession of her heart. Not Raoul Rigault's bullets, but her own words should prevail. He had agreed with her in the days of the canary-coloured coach that waddled so slowly uphill to the corner of the Rue Lepic. She would make him see things as she saw them. He would fight with them, leaving everything for an Idea, as Rossel had done. Why should not Jean do the same?

But alas, Anais did not know Lieutenant de Sivry, and she had reckoned without the half-tolerant contempt of her father and Delescluse, with whom hatred of Rigault and all his works amounted almost to a passion.

Jean and Nini watched her carefully out of sight before they turned their faces in the direction of the river. They were soon on the Grand Boulevards, and there the sham Lieutenant's uniform was nothing uncommon. The cloak was therefore lent to Jean, who kept it on till they struck the eccentric quarters where the troops of Max Lisbonne were holding out doggedly, few but so far sufficient, behind the ramparts of Vanves and the Malakoff. They had to make a long detour to avoid the Champ de Mars and the Military School, but finally they managed to strike the solitary Rue Lecourbe, which took them straight to pretty little Madame Max and the Place de Grenelle.

Into her ear, ready for all sympathies, they poured their woes.

'I am glad to hear it of Delescluse,' she said. 'I always thought there might be a well in the flinty rock of his old heart. But the girl - what a

bloodthirsty wretch she must be!

'No! no!' cried Jean and Nini together. And then in hasty snatches, each interrupting the other, they told of what they had seen from the deep doorway of the Rue Tronchet.

'You see,' said Jean, snatching his opportunity, 'she could not bear to carry out her threat, so she went back!'

But Madame Max would not allow of any palliation. Anais was a monster, and she was sure that Max would think so. He was on the ramparts - black cane and all, just below there by the Port de Grenelle. She would send for him, and he would see them safe away from the clutches of that harpy! No wonder she liked to teach policemen, when she made herself the tracking bloodhound of that monster of the Prefecture, Raoul Rigault - who, if he could, would have her dear Max shot to-morrow. Only, luckily, he dared not.

There was, of course, no convincing Madame Max, and Jean did not try. After all, Anais might have sent a messenger to the Prefecture. Or her remorse might have come upon her too late, perhaps after the harm was done. The sooner he had Nini out of Paris, the better it would be. So Jean was much relieved when he saw little Madame Max hastily throw a black lace mantilla over her head, and trip away across the wide place of Grenelle in search of her husband as simply as if she were going marketing.

'He might not come for a message,' she said with a confident smile, 'but he will come back with me. . . and not limp so very much either!'

Max Lisbonne jumped quickly to the meaning of the service that was expected of him. But he was

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particularly astonished at the leniency of Delescluse.

He raised his eyebrows and took in Nini's dress, leaning his chin on the thin fingers clasped over the ebony pommel of his cane.

'Oh, he spotted you at once - from the first,' he affirmed, using Jean's own word. 'There is not a doubt about it. It is a blessing that you did not come in Mademoiselle Azémia's way. *She* would have sent you before a firing party without a qualm.'

He thought a little while and then turned to Nini.

'Lieutenant de Sivry,' he said in his commander's tones, 'there is no difficulty whatever about your case. "Dismissed for incompetence" is written all over you. Depart to Jericho, and tarry there till your hair grows! But when you come back, remember your promise to sing for me, so don't go catching a cold! As for you, sir, I will send you out to examine the drainages and water-tanks at Fort Issy. Busy yourself with that till the morning and report to me - when you like. "Max Lisbonne, Paris," will always find me till they send me to New Caledonia!'

His wife flung her arms about his neck. 'Oh, Max, you are a dear!' she cried.

'Very likely,' said Max, gently disengaging himself. 'Indeed I am of the same opinion myself. But pray think what you are doing. I must ask of you not to scandalise these two unmarried young - gentlemen.'

Madame Max was on her feet to come to the gate with them, but her husband stopped her.

'No,' he said, 'we are not picknicking, and you have been once on the ramparts asking for me to-night already. Let us carry this thing through on military lines. Yes, say good-bye to them both here, and be quick. I shall not look - I do not wish to be scandalised by this outburst of tenderness towards

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my late aide-de-camp. In respectable circles it would be thought disgraceful on the part of a General's young wife. Luckily, however, I flatter myself that I am a man without prejudices!

The two women wept on each other's shoulders, or at least little Madame Max did so on the breast of Nini's fine uniform.

Then she turned all wet-eyed to Jean.

'Oh, certainly,' said her husband, in answer to an appealing glance, 'kiss him too - one shame the more does not matter! It rather mitigates the blow. And now, downstairs, trot!'

They heard a tearful voice behind them.

'Kiss me too, Max - and don't be late!'

'Certainly not, my dear,' said Max; 'I shall come in directly after the "fourth" - before the Last Act!

Then they heard the tap of his cane on the stairs behind them.

* * * * *

They left Paris with the loudly given orders of Max in their ears. He made Jean give up his Jean Grave papers and the passport of Delescluse, Delegate for War, in case that he should be afterwards called in question as to his part in the night's proceedings. It was not likely, but - one never knew what might happen.

'To our next merry meeting,' he said to Jean in a low voice, 'and, I say, when the time comes, if you cannot make things any easier for me - and God knows I do not expect it - you will - you will - I mean you won't forget the dear little woman up yonder!'

He looked back, and sure enough, high in one of the houses was the yellow oblong of an illuminated window, and clear against the lamplight, the gentle,

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slender, gracious figure of Madame Max, with the occasional handkerchief still ready to her eyes.

'Humph!' said Max, 'she does need to be looked after. I hope I shall always be *en scene!* But if not - '

'Nini and I will do it, never fear, good friend,' said Jean, who rarely promised.

And on this they shook hands. It was their final good-bye.

The next minute they found themselves outside the ramparts of Paris. The figure of the General, tall, distinguished, leaning on his cane, and the gleam of warm light outlining the slim womanly figure above him were the last they saw of the city as they plunged into the darkness.

Yet it was strange how swiftly Paris fell behind. It was the 6th of May and a Saturday. The moon, two days past the full, was looking over the tree-tops, but the river fog made her light dull and ineffective. They could just make out away to the right the long, upstanding rampart of trees which they knew to be the woods about Clamart. There was a château on fire - at first they could not make out where. But the bulk of the Fort of Issy and the big curve of the left-bank Montparnasse railway to Versailles, with its rails torn up and its sleepers pointing their ragged teeth to the sky, warned Jean that they were not yet out of Communist territory. It was still necessary to be wary.

The château from which the ruddy tongues of flame were rising was that of Issy, though the cause of the conflagration Jean could not imagine. To the west the Versaillist guns were silent, and there appeared to be no disturbance among the National Guards, The Avengers of Flourens were settled in these outposts, and occasionally Jean and Nini

heard the shouted choruses of popular songs.

'They are happy,' said Nini, who was recovering her presence of mind, 'and what they sing sounds well in the moonlight.'

Jean grunted. He was glad that distance lent a glamour to the words, which in spite of her uniform would have surprised Nini. All Jean's desires were now set upon gaining the more distant woods of Meudon. So, guided by the flicker of the dying flames of the Château of Issy, they passed to the right of Bas Meudon, and at last, striking into the darkness of the woods between ruined Clamart and outlying Fort Fleury, they could afford to draw breath.

The city claimed their attention. It threw a livid glow up into the misty sky, putting ashes on the pale ineffectual moon, as the sun does with a fire on which it shines. A few shells were exploding away to the north, and the Butte of Montmartre was clearly illuminated by lines of lamp-lights, each curving like the point of a fishing-rod as it attained the peak.

But the leaves hid all this from sight, to Jean's great relief, and they were soon under the darkest of the foliage. Both had revolvers, but characteristically that of Nini had never been loaded. She had forgotten all about cartridges. In case of danger, she must pull the trigger. She knew that. Jean need not laugh. She knew that much, if she was not a gunnery expert, and had never invented anything in her life.

Not that it mattered. Jean was with her, and she leaned on his arm. This was pleasant enough, and would have been satisfactory had Jean seen any way of getting rid of the uniforms of the Commune which they both wore. He did not quite see himself facing

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his own artillerymen in the company of this too dainty young Lieutenant of the Communard Staff. Besides, it was quite possible that some of the Versaillists might shoot first and inquire afterwards as to what the uniform of the Reds was doing there.

Jean had more than once ridden through the woods of Meudon looking for a place for his batteries. He knew that they were infested by bandits who would think nothing of murder, and to whom Versaillist and Communard were exceedingly equal, if only they carried a purse or a gold watch.

Jean therefore kept to the depths of the wood away from the main roads, which would certainly be frequented at night by these gentry. He remembered the Commune's fierce rule in Montmartre and the *pâle voyou* he had seen a-swing on the lamp-post with the evidences of his crime about his neck. He resolved that he would take a lesson from the Colonel of the 240th of the Garde Nationale, if ever it were his luck to command troops on this side of Paris.

Then it came to his mind that he had noticed a little deserted cottage, the former abode of some Imperial forest ranger, near a place called the Warren. So in the first open space he took out his compass and obtained a rough bearing of the direction.

But a shot, fired as he was closing the little gun-metal compass case, and the whizz of a bullet, stripping the leaves overhead with a vicious hist, quickened their pace.

And so it came about that they took the direction of Villebon, where, after passing a couple of pieces of stagnant water, shrouded in bushes, they came upon a deserted house with wooden balconies,

dilapidated swings, and other tokens of "Robinsons" long passed to other occupations.

There were buildings about, white in the dim shining of the misty moon. It must be the Hermitage of Villebon, Jean thought. The lower storey and kitchen of the place had been roughly searched for provisions, but upstairs Jean found a chest of drawers, which he broke open, and in the bottom drawer, neatly folded in fine paper, there lay what appeared to be the Sunday costume of a decent couple of middle age. Nini, lighting herself with matches, discovered other things in a huge press-wardrobe close under the red tiles of the roof.

Jean went downstairs with his share of the loot under his arm, and left Nini to make the best of what they had found in drawer and *garde-robe*.

'I never can put on the bonnet,' she called down after Jean; 'it is too terrible. I should look like a charwoman.'

'Better look like a live charwoman than a dead staff-officer,' said Jean, sententiously. He was soon ready, and he felt that, though much after the pattern of a forest-guard come to church to hear Mass, he might pass muster not that ill, if he happened on any of his own batteries and knew the men he had placed in them.

It was now midnight or thereby, and Nini and Jean were not nearly far enough to the west. They must get closer to Versailles, or at least to Ville d'Avray, before they dared repose themselves and wait for the morning.

Then began a long tramp through alleys which apparently crossed and recrossed with purposeless tediousness. Nini was in decent woman's dress of black stuff, which hid her Wellingtons. With natural

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readiness she had made hasty adjustments as to figure, and so far as Jean could see was in excellent *tenuë*.

But she had left the bonnet behind, and had thrown a black scarf about her head after the Manner of Madame Max.

'It was *too* awful, Jean!' she pleaded; 'I could not think of going into Versailles - *in that!*'

'When I get you again to Versailles, my little lady,' said Jean grimly, 'I shall have you put into a convent till all this fuss is over. I should send you down with Bibi to Madame Guillaume and the orchard at Les Andeleys, which would be the best place for you. Only I know that you would not stay.'

'Indeed, would you expect it of me, Jean? Well, then? - Be reasonable . . . at least, for a man!'

They passed more and more reedy *étangs*, and at last, keeping steadily ahead, Jean began to orient himself. He would not enter into Versailles till the morning - at least not till after daybreak. So he turned aside into the opening of Les Grandes Carrières, where were old ranges of huts, which at one time had been used by the workmen to keep them near their work. Outside a big wooden building, which had doubtless been used as an eating-room, Jean found a great block of wood. He dragged it inside, and having discovered a bunk in a corner he filled it with pine branches, and ordered Nini to lie down there and rest. He seated himself on the log which barred the doorway, revolver in hand, to wait for the dawning.

But Nini, after moving restlessly about for a while, declared that she was not sleepy - which, considering the hardness of the planks, was not at all unlikely. She would rather sit up and watch with

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Jean. It would be so splendid to see the morning break through the woods, the pale moonlight die out, and the birds begin to sing.

But here or hereabouts in her speech Nini's voice faltered. Her head drooped on Jean's shoulder. He drew her closer to him, and, changing the hand in which lie held his revolver, he slipped a careful arm about her waist.

Poor little thing, she was only a girl. She was not accustomed to the strenuous days, the sleepless nights of a soldier. But - she was his Nini, and he would keep vigil over her till the daylight came, when they could go down together to Versailles and safety.

It was very still, and Jean thought of the old gold-and-red room in the Boulevard Haussmann given up for him, of the horses sold that Nini might have the wherewithal to nurse him. He heard the sough of the Seine passing under the big shadow of Château Gaillard, and there came to him the drowsy perfume of the bean-fields behind the little cottage and -

* * * * *

When he looked up again his eyes encountered those of half a score of his best artillerymen trying hard to look solemn. They had a couple of his own Larzac guns with full teams. Junior captains in temporary command kept respectfully in the rear, and with much good sense looked the other way.

But on the face of Long Landry there was a grin as broad as a rind of melon, and in front of him, at the salute, was Bibi, absolutely correct and respectful as ever, with a suit-case in his hand.

'Good-morning, sir and madame,' said Bibi as

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Nini raised her head bewildered.

'Ha! ha!' roared Long Landry suddenly, like one of his own big guns.

Bibi glanced at him furiously, as one who would say, 'For this you shall settle with me afterwards.'

'General,' he said, 'I have brought your kit in one side of the bag, you will find your things laid out in the next hut but two. The rest is for Mademoiselle Nini. It is the dress that she wears when she visits the Orangerie. Her maid found hers, so all will be right.'

'Yes, doubtless,' said Long Landry, 'and the little brass guns there at the horses' tails are very pretty. But what I want to know is, where to find that big Creusot seven-inch which nobody has ever yet touched. I am waiting for that.'

'Be quiet, Long Landry,' thundered Bibi, 'the gun is at Châtillon. You will find it all right. The master will take you to it. But *do* give them time to benefit by Bibi's forethought before going to talk to the Chief of the State. You may be a fine gun-layer, Long Landry, but for common sense - '

He broke off suddenly. General Jean had come out in field uniform, and everybody was saluting. Bibi did not salute. He was bending an anxious ear at the door of Nini's cabin.

'Oh, yes - certainly, Mademoiselle. Margot wished me to tell you very specially that the lip salve and the other things you would want are in the little pocket to the left-hand of the suit-case.'

And then - but not till then - Bibi le Bonhomme turned him about and saluted the General Jean de Larzac.

CHAPTER THIRTY THREE

BIBI THE PATHFINDER

There was nothing miraculous or even mysterious about the appearance of Bibi and Long Landry in front of the huts at Les Grands Carrières. A man with Bibi's special capacities for tracking and furrowing Paris in every direction without leaving a trace behind him can appear and disappear almost at will.

Bibi could pass from one side to the other of the capital without ever encountering a post of National Guards. But when he set out to steal Long Landry as a matter of course he handicapped himself. Because, if need were, Bibi le Bonhomme could dart up an entry closed at the end, slide into a side doorway, ascend to the roof, pass hastily but carefully over a couple of hundred yards of roofing, descend by another staircase, and saunter out into quite a different quarter of the city.

Still, Long Landry had been a sailor before the marvels of his skill as gun-layer were discovered, and if Bibi explained things Landry made a fair second - unless, that is, he was expected to talk. His slack-jaw gearing (as he put it) "functioned badly."

On leaving Père la Chaise they had gone first to a little place which Bibi affected - none other, indeed, than the home of the parents of Margot, the maid of his mistress, with whose address at Chartres he had been so strangely familiar. The little *cabaret* looked upon Pantin and the sinuous line of the Chemin Vert, so lately oppressed by the terrible tragedy of Troppmann, which it had taken a great war to wipe

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from men's minds.

It was a little whitewashed drinking booth, with a couple of chambers at the back, no trace of which appeared from the front of the house. The place was used chiefly by a few cultivators of the plain of Pantin, the railway-men from Aubervilliers, the soldiers from the fort, and in the meantime by stray German soldiers who had broken leave that they might have a drink of right Bavarian beer.

This place, called simply "Simon's," after the name of its proprietor, was recognised as a kind of neutral ground. Even Prussians were no longer enemies, but sympathetic spirits, who, because of a noble thirst and for the sake of a bottle of beer, had slipped out of their entrenchments under cloud of night, thereby risking arrest and imprisonment.

Poachers and hawkers, hangers about the German lines, came also, and none said them nay - so long as they paid their score and created no disturbance. Communists from the foreposts, and even rich bourgeois Parisians escaping from the compulsory enrolment of the 30th of April and succeeding days, had found the comfort of Père Simon's hidden rooms of singular value, till they could slip away into that wide un-Communitic region which was France.

But Bibi and Long Landry could not make the long detour which would eventually land them at Versailles. Specially, Bibi dared not. How was he to face his mistress without Jean de Larzac? He would assuredly get his fee and his leave, like poor Willie Nicholson's "brownie," and so be sent mourning away.

Therefore, back to Paris they must go. No help for it could Bibi see. And as for Long Landry, having

been hired to fight against the Prussians, one place was the same to him as another till he should come into sight of that new seven-inch Creusot which had been promised him.

So back to the Rue des Rosiers they went, debouching into it by divers paths. One was almost a *sentier* - a field path which included passing through several dwindling orchards of pear and apple, following hidden ways through darksome courts and out at other people's front doors, till at last there was No. 4 of the fatal street straight before them.

But as he glanced out, lo, a door a little way up was guarded by four National Guards of the wild 141st, and at the gleam of their sword-bayonets Bibi abruptly fell back upon Long Landry, pushing him into the empty kitchen of a vanished *concierge*.

'What is the matter?' said Long Landry, rubbing his elbow.

'A man I owe money to,' said Bibi promptly, speaking not the words of truth by a language which Long Landry could understand.

Bibi peered again. General Decies was just closing the gate of his house, and his friend Delescluse, Minister of War for the Commune, was waiting for him on the pavement. Bibi had no present or pressing desire for the society of these gentlemen. He retreated to devise more lies about his creditors.

Thus it happened that when Anais set off in the direction of the Rue Lepic she was in greater danger than Jean. For if Bibi had imagined for a moment her errand she would certainly never have reached the Ile de la Cité or got half-way to the Prefecture of Police.

However, honest Bibi was far from reading the

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mind of Anais as she hurried off, with anger in her heart against her erstwhile brother and playfellow. But when Jean appeared at the door with Lieutenant de Sivry, Bibi jumped, his whole great body shook, and a cold sweat broke out on his brow.

'I might have guessed it,' he muttered. 'What a fool! Oh, what a never-to-be-surpassed fool! She was so glad to get rid of me, so willing that he should go to do his duty. And I, Bibi le Bonhomme, who have known mademoiselle ever since she was a little girl, never once suspected. Ass! Dolt! Pigling and son of thirty-six thousand pigs that I am! Of course she had everything ready to be after us! It was a joke to her. I might have known her well enough to guess that. But her cantrip may be the death of all of us, for all that!'

He watched her order the little guard and march proudly away towards the Rue Lepic, leaving the two old men watching her bare-headed on the doorstep of Madame Legrand's house, a threshold worn low by generations of tripping milliners.

'Yet how well she carries it off!' he was forced to acknowledge, as they turned the corner and the dismissed guard straggled into the nearest wineshop to drink a bright piece of a hundred sous to the health of Lieutenant de Sivry, and Lieutenant de Sivry's generous friend. She never acted better on any stage. Yet, thought Bibi, her heart must be beating to a rare tune.

It was time to be following, however, as soon as the Minister of War and his friend General Decies had withdrawn themselves. Then down the long devious ways which led riverwards Bibi had all that he could manage. He had to explain the situation to Long Landry, a decided tax upon the imagination.

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He must keep Nini and Jean in sight, and yet not be seen, which, as Long Landry saw no reason for concealing his movements from any soul in Paris, was a sore trial to his companion. The presence of Landry gave Bibi's peculiar talents no elbow-room, as it were.

Still farther to complicate the situation, he had caught sight of Anais long before her presence was revealed to Nini and Jean in the deep doorway, where the spurs were removed. Bibi could not understand her "game." She seemed so unwontedly hesitating and uncertain. But there was Nini to think of, and when there are two women to one man it was, according to Bibi's philosophy, well to expect danger from number three. To his mind Mademoiselle Nini could not be other than number one!

So he kept a keen eye on Anais till she turned in her tracks and hurried back in the direction of the Rue des Rosiers. Then, being at last satisfied, he dismissed her from his mind. He had Long Landry to keep from dialogues with a company of bluejackets slouching about a gun, left helpless like a derelict cab in the gutter, while they waited for means of transport which might never arrive.

He had to cross the Seine in the rear of Nini and Jean. He must enter the unknown country which lies about the long Rue Lecourbe, and finally he must watch at the ramparts of Grenelle while Madame Max hurried across to fetch her husband from the post.

'What, another!' said Bibi, with a groan; 'that comes of being a General. Yet I don't know - after I had accounted for ten wrestlers at the fair of Asnières - well, I have no right to judge any man!

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Only, he will have to stick to Mademoiselle Nini now he has got her. Bibi will see to that. Of course a thing like this a man cannot help; now for myself - '

But then the General came in sight, tapping the roadway with his black cane, and there was another long wait before Bibi and Landry. At last Nini and Jean were escorted out into the darkness, and at sight of them escaping Bibi became quite wild. He was on one side of the ramparts of Paris, and all he cared about was on the other. He even thought of making a rush for it; but he soon saw that the outposts of Max Lisbonne were different from the men who held (or rather did not hold) the northern gates by the simple process of sitting with their feet on tables and draining litre after litre of wine.

Whereupon Bibi, never long at a loss, took promptly to burglary and plain theft. For in the spring of '71 such things were done by all honest men in peril of their lives. The theory of a community of goods was abroad, and in the case of empty houses and shops it was not only held theoretically, but put into constant practice. Nor did conscience ever appear to have anything to say concerning the matter afterwards. So Bibi stole a rope. From a contiguous rope-walk (in which the two men tripped, and tripping, swore), stole he it. And this rope, once purloined, was, by the agile and experimented fingers of Long Landry, converted into the rudest but most reliable of ladders.

They descended into the ditch about three hundred yards from the bastion of Grenelle, and so slid away into the night, keeping clear of the fort, and making their way due south instead of turning west as Jean and Nini had done.

Nor did they find them again till, in the clearing

where Jean paused to consult his pocket compass, they heard the shot fired. The sound guided them, and they were in time to see the fugitives take the westward road while Long Landry with a sheaf-knife showed the lurking bandit who had fired, the way to another and probably worse world. At least Bibi hoped sincerely that it would be worse. After which they took his weapons and followed on. They were detained while the uniforms were being changed at the Villebon Hermitage, a proceeding which eased Bibi's mind considerably; but he was not finally at rest till he saw the pair settled down in the big eating-room of Les Carrières. Then he left Long Landry on guard, and hurried off to Versailles. He ran across a little construction station for the supply of the batteries quite close by, and here, as everywhere, Bibi found friends. Using the name of his master, he got a trolley to run him down to the station of Versailles - a note too from the head of the detachment, so that he might have a team to push him up again if no engines were coming that way so early.

And a quarter of an hour afterwards Bibi was knocking up his friend Margot Simon, Mademoiselle's maid. He had little time to acknowledge Margot's transports, much less to return them. But instead he got the General's suitcase, together with his uniform and a clean shirt from the Hôtel des Reservoirs, while Margot was turning out her mistress's requirements. And half-an-hour before dawn he was at the station, with a team of eight stalwart surface-men sending the trolley upward in the direction of Les Grandes Carrieres. Bibi promised a reward if they were in time, but it was needless. In Versailles his name and

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fame were almost as powerful as in the northern faubourgs of Paris.

So, with four men resting and four pushing, the surfacemen soon had the trolley at the nearest point to Les Grandes Carrières.

The day was breaking and Bibi came upon a detachment of artillery, going to relieve the Meudon battery, halted close to the unconscious pair. The soldiers knew their late General. They had had a great deal to do with him, but they had never seen him with a pretty girl's head on his shoulder, his arm about her waist, and his revolver slipped from his grasp. They thought he looked well in spite of his odd clothes.

At any rate it was a rare spectacle, and they paused long before it, amused but respectful. The officers, well to the rear, waited for the General to awake. They knew that De Larzac was to lead the heavy fighting in the city, and perhaps they hoped for some little recognition. If so, it was the whitest of white mail. They would hold their tongues about the General's little escapade - they did not doubt that it had been an escapade - they liked him the better for it - and they would see to it that the men under them also saw reason to keep silence.

General de Larzac would not forget such a debt as that. It was one which appealed to every true Frenchman, whose motto, with a trifling addition, is that Thelema "*Do as you like, but don't get laughed at!*"

And that is how, mysterious as it may seem, Jean and Nini awoke to Long Landry's quarter-moon smile and the perfect correction of Bibi's 'Good-morning, Monsieur le General, your uniform is laid out in the next cabin but two!'

CHAPTER THIRTY FOUR

RAOUL RIGAULT ACCEPTS JEAN'S CARTEL

Glorious days, immaculate nights; mornings on splendid breath of freshness, the air filling the lungs with the cool, sufficient draught which seems to give life; long, warm evenings, which encouraged much sitting out of doors to watch the slow lob of the mortars and the flattened curve and brilliant explosion of the shells - all this might have been merely a display of falling stars, the by-play of some heavenly artillery - they looked at once so distant, so faint, and so harmless.

Such was the early May of 1871 as it crept on toward the terrible *dénouement* of the Bloody Week.

To see Paris in such weather was like looking from a house where some one lies in great agony, death watching over green lawns and flower-beds, and the peace of ancient trees where the birds sing.

Jean found that during his absence the preparations for assault had been hastened almost out of all knowledge. Only in his own artillery section he found the batteries much as he had left them, save that Monsieur Thiers had swelled some of the batteries, like Châtillon and Meudon, to a useless strength of a hundred guns.

Many generals and officers formerly devoted to the Empire had come back from Germany, and in order to blot out their shame were fighting against Paris with a zeal, a courage and a scientific dash which they had never shown against the foreign invader.

Jean de Larzac went at once to call upon

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Monsieur Thiers, and was received with the same effusion as before. As usual, Jean seemed the only man whom the little Dictator cared to see.

'Your letters reached me duly, by the kindness of the General von Moltke. They were most complete and valuable, amply bearing out my own views of the situation within Paris. MacMahon thinks even more highly of them than I do. I suppose you bring further information with you.'

'Yes,' said Jean, 'though I was very near to losing everything. I had to leave many valuable documents in order to escape from the city at all. The house where I lived had been marked down. There was a patrol of National Guards at the door, while a messenger had been sent to the Prefect of Police, Raoul Rigault, advising him of my capture as a spy.'

'I am glad that you managed to get safe away, and I do not doubt, from the tenor of your previous reports, that you can complete your information verbally.'

Jean thought this was a good time to introduce Long Landry, so he said that he had been lucky enough to find and bring out of Paris with him one of the loyal sailors, a very famous gun-layer, whom Monsieur Thiers would see some day at work if he would allow Jean to place him on the new battery of big guns being established at Montretout. This man, Long Landry by name, had been of the greatest possible service to Jean in Paris, and would be a valuable recruit in a service which above all things lacked highly-skilled gun-layers. In this Long Landry was nothing less than a genius, though, like many common sailors, he had an intelligence which was not particularly alert in other directions.

Jean gained his point easily, and Long Landry

was accepted. Monsieur Thiers even devoted a quarter of an hour to pointing out the narrowing life of shipboard.

‘I make no doubt,’ he said, ‘that in a single day you or I could make ourselves as great masters of the craft as Landry, because we have intelligences rendered supple and apt by years of various reading and action.’

Jean had to look several times at the twinkling spectacles of Monsieur Thiers to be sure he was in earnest. Still it was good of the little man to include Jean, because in his heart he thought far otherwise. With a quick change of subject he returned to Jean's future with all the birdlike alertness which characterised him.

‘Our new Artillery Commander, Charron, is far from being at the height of his duties,’ he said confidentially. ‘I am glad to see you back. Still, we must not say so much to Mademoiselle Dosne, who is the intimate friend of Charron's mother. We will leave him behind, however, when we move forward. The Assembly must be guarded. Versailles must be kept safe. And it needs a man like Charron to do it. I have not announced this to him yet, because I was waiting for your return. We will relegate him into the reserve, like that rascal Vinoy.’

He chuckled a little, parrot-like, with his head to the side.

‘But you will see that Vinoy will be as fast and as far into Paris as any General with a mandate. Reserve or no reserve will make small difference to Vinoy. He is a fighting butcher from the slaughterhouses - dogged and sullen. Imagine, he asked me one day if I thought that Paris would ever be taken by sitting here at my desk, measuring moves on a

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chess-board!

'He had forgotten himself,' said De Larzac, gravely; 'no one heeds Vinoy's *brusqueries*. He is a good soldier.'

The little man wagged his head.

'I grant you that,' he said, 'but he is a bull who will break his head all day against the same fence!'

'But he will break down the fence before he leaves it' said Jean, who remembered various acts of grumbling goodwill on Vinoy's part.

Thiers flung up his hands with a flirt of a bird tossing dust over himself.

'There!' he cried, not ungraciously, 'it is always the same. You band together, all you soldiers. You will speak no evil one of the other.'

'Then I am sure that Monsieur the Chef de l'Etat will agree that we of '71 are not like the Marshals of the Great Emperor whom he has described in his *Consulate soil Empire*.

Thiers smiled and bowed. Any reference to his literature made him happy for hours.

'I see,' he said, 'Monsieur the General is a scholar. I fear but few of his kind are lettered. Now there is Bazaine. He would have suited me for this business of taking Paris better than chilly MacMahon, who gives himself airs because of his wounds and because he did sign the capitulation. Poor Wimpfen was the scapegoat, and he just home from Algeria! Well, MacMahon will do for a figure-head. After all, it is the chiefs of brigade and the head of the Artillery whom I shall count when the pinch comes.'

Jean, having received his commission to take over the command of all the advanced bombarding batteries, and of all the new ones in course of formation, stood ready to take his departure. The

little man turned over the leaves of a small pocket diary with great rapidity.

'By the way,' he said, 'Mademoiselle Dosne has a small dinner to-night. Most of the commanders will be there, and others high in our councils. Will you do to be present? We are early people. Charles, my valet, carries me off at an abominably early hour. We dine at half-past six!'

'I shall be delighted,' said Jean, 'but I have a long all-day ride before me and many arrangements to make. Will Mademoiselle Dosne permit me to come in uniform as I ride back from Montretout?'

'Ah, yes,' said Thiers, 'you are much needed there. You and your friend Long Landry. You will see to the placing of the seventy naval guns - your own immense fellow among them, only just arrived from the Schneider-Creusot works. There will be a place for your friend the gun-layer there. By the way, what is his Christian name?'

'Long Landry,' said Jean; 'he has no other that he knows of!'

Thiers rang for a secretary, and made out an order for the promotion of Long Landry, late of Admiral Sausset's command, to be chief gun-layer in the battery of Montretout about to be organised by General Larzac.

'There,' he said, 'it is always well to have a man's papers direct from the well-spring of all authority. Now, sir, you will be at a loss for a mount. Horses are scarce in Versailles, and your own cannot have been duly exercised all the time you have been away. I shall be glad, therefore, if you will use the stables which pertain to my military establishment. Besides, it will save time. Colonel Ramollet? - Where is the officer-in-waiting? Ah, there you are! See to it,

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I pray you, that General de Larzac has all the horses he needs from my stables. Good-morning, General. Till this evening, when we shall hope to meet about the hospitable board of Mademoiselle!

And the little man waved him away with so airy a grace that he seemed to be kissing his hand to him.

'The President,' said the Colonel Ramollet as they went down the great staircase of the Château of Versailles, 'seems in a good humour this morning. Doubtless there are chances on foot among the personnel. I suppose I am not to be made Commander-in-Chief!'

'At least I have not heard of it,' said Jean, smiling. 'But I am to dine at the château to-night - '

'Ah, with Mademoiselle,' said the officer-in-waiting; 'then you have regained your popularity. I understood that your dispatches were very good. But I fear for Charron - '

'I am just going to call upon him,' said Jean.

'I shouldn't if I were you,' said Ramollet. 'Of course I have no right to advise my superiors, but - '

'But what?' said Jean. 'Be frank. You are an older man than I. You ought to be where I am - or rather where Charron is.'

'Oh, that,' said Ramollet lightly, 'I am like Canrobert, too deeply Imperialist. Besides I am a "Returned Empty" from Germany. But I care nothing about the matter. Street brawls and barricades would ill become a man of my age and figure. You are welcome to them, and if I am dismissed my post I can always go down to Elne and plant cabbages. It must be exciting to see them get bigger and greener, a little more so each day - and to be far away from all possible revolutions. But we were speaking of Charron. If I might advise, do not go near him. He

will only believe that you come to exult over him, while up there at the château it is not impossible that it might be thought that you two were making an alliance against – our Dictatorship of Two!’

‘Of Two?’ repeated Jean, mystified.

‘Yes, that is what we say - the Chief - and Mademoiselle Dosne. She does not sign the daily manifesto, but she rules France! Good luck to you, General!’

By this time Jean had mounted. He had as yet no staff, but Ramollet called up a scratch one from among the scores of young officers lounging about the terraces. ‘These are all, more or less, gunners, and would be proud to serve General de Larzac. The Chief of the Military Household vouched for them.’

And so Jean rode away in search of Bibi and Long Landry. He found them in the Street of the Reservoirs, where he presented the astonished Landry with his appointment to the position of chief gun-layer at the great battery of Montretout.

‘Seventy guns,’ said Landry. ‘I wonder what ships they came off. But I only want the big new one which you invented, Monsieur Jean! No one is to touch her but myself!’

Bibi whispered to him to say ‘Mon Général!’

‘Your generalship, I mean!’ quoth Long Landry. ‘Will the big Creusot be there - quite certainly?’

Jean nodded, and as for the staff, they did not quite forbear to smile. But the word had already gone abroad that the General had brought back with him from Paris a man who had saved his life, and the most remarkable big-gun pointer in the fleet.

Jean managed to ride past Nini's lodgings, where in spite of his watchful staff he waved a hand to a Nini hidden somewhere behind the window curtains,

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and to a handkerchief that fluttered from a window hastily opened for the purpose by Margot Simon.

Bibi was to stay in Versailles to take care of his mistress, and (so far as was in his power) prevent her from doing anything hasty. But Long Landry, refusing the slow transit of a forage waggon, chartered an open cab at his own charges and bade the man drive to Montretout, or as near it as his horse would go, keeping the General and his escort in sight.

On arriving Jean saw at once that the platforms had not nearly enough of slope to take the recoil of the big naval pieces, whereupon he set the men to work at once to strengthen the earthworks. Then remembering Long Landry, he bade them give their first attention to the new Larzac Creusot.

In half-an-hour Long Landry arrived, and as he saw the great row of big guns scattered over half-a-mile of emplacements, he broke into a run.

From every direction came the cries of 'Stop, Long Landry! Where do you spring from? We thought you were with the gun-boats in Paris. What is the number of your battery, Long Landry? Have a drink, Long Landry!'

But Jean appearing with his staff, caused a sudden silence to fall, and work was resumed as if by magic.

By means of his temporary aide-de-camp Jean announced that Long Landry had been appointed by the Government principal gun-layer to the whole of the batteries stationed at Montretout, and of all such guns as, from time to time, might be added thereto.

Meantime Long Landry was fussing and fluttering about the new Creusot, easing wheels and trying

sights. He was aching to the finger-tips to be at work. So having satisfied himself that the emplacement was well in order, Jean ordered a shell to be brought up in its trolley by the ordinary seamen in charge of the ammunition stores to the rear.

'I should like,' he said, addressing Long Landry, 'to send a visiting-card to Raoul Rigault at the Prefecture of Police as a forewarning of what he may expect when we get to work.'

And dismounting, he showed Long Landry the white bulk of the Prefecture on the Ile de la Cité. The gunner examined it with attention.

'It is a long shot,' said Landry doubtfully, 'across all these stumps of trees, the river, and the city. One is shooting at an angle. I should like a sighting shot. Why not let her go at the two towers a little to the left - they make a better mark?'

'Notre Dame!' cried Jean, astonished. 'Not for anything in the world.'

'Notre Dame!' said Long Landry, laughing like one not to be taken in even by a General, 'that is far off in my village, and has never had a tower at all - only a belfry, and on Sundays the *curé* pulls the rope himself.'

All who did not know Long Landry, his simplicity and native innocence, thought him either an imbecile or insolent. But when they had seen the effect of his first shot upon the Ecole Militaire on the Champ de Mars, they crowded nearer to watch him train his piece upon the distant blur of the Prefecture of Police.

It was certainly a very long shot even for Long Landry - twice across the river, over the wide wilderness of the Bois which had been cut for fuel in

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the time of the Prussian siege, over the positions of Max Lisbonne at Grenelle, and across the city to that hump of creamy white on the Isle in the Seine. With infinite pains De Larzac inserted in the band of the lower shell-case one of his calling cards.

It was a treat to Jean, and indeed to all who did not know his methods, to watch Long Landry when once the charge had gone home. Two or three times he stood up, took another look through the glass, and muttered, 'I do not like your cross shots.' Then he fell again to cuddling and humouring the mechanism of the new Creusot. It seemed as if he never would be satisfied, At last a thought seemed to strike him suddenly. He looked up at Jean, and asked anxiously, 'At which side of the big round door will your friend be found?'

'Raoul Rigault?' said Jean, smiling. 'Why to the left most likely.'

'Good,' said Long Landry, and fell to his gun-cuddling again. The men had deserted their other pieces. The fame of Long Landry was whispered abroad. They stood in silent masses, while their officers had possession of the glasses, except the one at Jean's elbow.

At last the Creusot let go with a roar, and the next moment Long Landry had his eye at the telescope. Between the first and second stories of the Prefecture there suddenly appeared an extra window not provided for by the architect.

'Left, she has gone in to the left,' cried Long Landry, 'and without exploding. Your friend will have some sweeping up to do if she explodes inside! I hope he will find your calling-card.'

A roar that was heard across the river to the wrecked village of Boulogne went up from the

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throats of many hundreds of blue-jackets.

The officers came and congratulated Long Landry, and Jean, having seen him installed with all due pomp and triumph, rode on his way.

‘That, at least,’ said Jean to himself, ‘is a cartel that Raoul Rigault cannot do other than accept.’

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CHAPTER THIRTY FIVE

A DINNER OF STATE

The little early dinner given by Mademoiselle Dosne to her brother-in-law's chosen advisers was held in the famous Queen's Salon of the Château of Versailles. Madame Thiers, her sister, was, as usual, too ill to attend; it was well known that she took little to do with the political affairs of her husband. Accordingly Mademoiselle Dosne was the only lady present, and took the head of the table. Jean had passed by Nini's pleasant lodgings near the Port St. Antoine, where there is a delightful outlook upon the park. He had seen Nini for a minute, while Bibi was walking round him, brushing him, and cleansing his uniform with dabs of eau-de-Cologne, grumbling the while that if certain persons (unmentioned) had had the sense to let him know, they would not have had to attend a state dinner at the château in the uniform in which they had been riding all day through the woods.

Jean, however, was deaf to everything. He heard that Nini had been, as agreed to, an exceptionally good girl. She had stayed in bed most of the day, and for the rest had lain on the sofa with a book for company. So much was cheerfully borne witness to by Margot and grudgingly by Bibi, still grieving over the matter of the uniform. At last all had been done that could be put right.

'If you are not too late, look in and see me!' Nini called out, 'I shall not go early to bed, after all these hours of sleep. Bibi will chaperon us!'

'And how about the "master"?' said Bibi, who, having taken up that fashion of speaking of Jean in

Paris, was loath to give it up; 'do you think that he has been in bed all day like you, Mademoiselle?'

But in spite of Bibi, Jean promised. If he should be kept too late (and Margot was to see that her mistress went timeously to bed) the light was to be extinguished in the drawing-room. In that case Jean would go on to his rooms at the Hotel des Reservoirs.

Jean was in excellent time, and his uniform, though obviously made for service, appeared wholly immaculate - without soil of travel or any saddle-scent of a horse pushed to its work across difficult country.

'Why, you are perfumed like my lady's maid! growled Vinoy, beside whom Jean presently found himself. 'Where have you been? Surely there were enough "tarts" in Paris!'

'I have ridden right in from the big new battery at Montretout, where I have been all day, and I only halted a moment to get a man to sprinkle a little eau-de-Cologne over me. I knew that we were to be received by Mademoiselle Dosne.'

'Humph!' said Vinoy. 'Well, after all your trouble - what do you think of her? She does not like me, but the Dresden China pair are not secure enough to do without me. You have, they say, come back into favour again. So much the better. We need men with hands, not icebergs on horseback.'

Jean knew that he was referring to his supplanter MacMahon, who sat at Mademoiselle's right hand, in the place which would have been Vinoy's a few weeks ago. Jean looked with astonishment at Mademoiselle Dosne. She wore her white hair under a delicate lace cap. Her dainty ringlets recalled the great days of Hernani and the coming of Romance.

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Her kind grey eyes, with their dark lashes, were full of gentle irony, while the droop at the corners of her mouth (which comes to every Parisian, male and female, from mere residence there), and the quick vivid phrases launched to this guest and that other, revealed a woman of spirit and determination. She called Thiers "Adolphe," and once or twice "Mon ami." But no one could doubt for a moment that the gentle little old lady at the head of the table held in her fine sensitive hands, only a little withered, the reins of government. The others were but the burgesses of Calais delivering to her the keys of France upon their knees.

But what rendered Jean dumb at first was the extraordinary tone of all present with regard to the fate of the capital. Paris had, said Mademoiselle Dosne, always been the brooding nest of every Terror, the *foyer* of all Revolution. Now, once for all when they had the chance, "that brazier must be slockened with blood!"

It was so extraordinary to hear such words proceeding from gentle smiling lips that Jean could not eat. Bu by his side Vinoy unconcernedly ate and drank for two.

'Yes,' squeaked the little President, from the other end of the table, 'I wholly agree with you, Mademoiselle. During my half-century of public life I have always seen things done by halves - revolutions half crushed, leniency misplaced and abused! But I mean to make no mistake this time. I shall sweep Paris from end to end with the besom of destruction!'

He was pleased with this phrase, and repeated it in a louder tone for the benefit of those who might not have heard it the first time.

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'The little 'Dolphe will lead the street fighting. I can see him from here scaling one of Père Gaillard's barricades!'

Vinoy's sneer came hissing and bitter to his companion's ear, but he never raised his eyes from his plate. Jean moved uneasily. Vinoy took no pains to conceal his contempt, and after all there was a lady at table.

'We - ' Mademoiselle corrected with emphasis, 'we will inspire the troops with our own spirit. We will, cause the past defeats to be wiped out by the victories of the present. We have the finest army ever collected together, and we will make Paris safe from all revolution for a century. I have impressed the necessity of severity on my brother-in-law, who is now quite of my way of thinking - no quarter - no shrinking. What if a few hundred innocents die for the people? - well, the Holy Church tells us that in this they had a glorious example!'

Now Mademoiselle Dosne was a devout woman, and in 1871 it is an open question whether these were not more dangerous than the *pétroleuses* of the Commune.

'I can't stand much of this,' said Jean to Vinoy under his breath. 'Do these little people suppose that the finest army and its victories over Paris will expel the Germans out of St. Denis, or - what lies more close to my heart - give us back the lost provinces?'

'Hush,' muttered Vinoy, 'do you want to be sent to Satory? Take your dinner, man, and let them talk. That is what they are *for*. See, I pledge you. Do you, suppose I think any different myself? But for the present yonder little chubby man *is* France. There is no other, and it must be his way or none. Luckily,

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he will have to cut himself loose from the brigade commanders once we get through the walls. Do your proper work, young man - which is to batter us a way through the gates of Paris, and after that the little politician can give all the orders he likes. The army will regulate matters for itself.'

'I have just come from Paris with my reports and other informations,' said Jean, 'and I am certain that one half of the Federals have not the least idea what they are fighting for, though I have no pity for the *canaille* at the Prefecture.'

And he related to Vinoy the tale of his third cartel to Raoul Rigault that day, together with as much of the history of Long Landry as was good for Vinoy to hear.

'Bravo!' cried the rough fighter, fisting the table to the astonishment of Mademoiselle and her guests.

'We must have that story,' she said. 'What is it that General de Larzac has been telling you to cause you to thump the table as if you were in a cabaret?'

'De Larzac, you must tell it all over again or my stock will be at vanishing-point,' Vinoy whispered.

And so, sore against his will, Jean must perforce tell the tale of his two cards, his horsewhip duel with Raoul Rigault, and lastly the iron-banded cartel which, by the miraculous skill of Long Landry, had been received at the Prefecture that day.

Mademoiselle Dosne was silent for a moment after the applause of the table had subsided, and then, in a voice like a cooing dove, she delivered her judgment, shaking her finger at Jean the while as if he had been a pet canary.

'General de Larzac,' she said, in a slow grave tone, 'I beg of you to respect the buildings erected and bequeathed to us by the wise care of our ancestors.'

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Do not copy the Commune. I know that you have recently been in Paris, and have seen the ruins of our dear house in the Place Saint George where we were all so happy. Doubtless the sight angered you, and it is little wonder. But remember that it is the inhabitants of Paris, its people, all who have touched with a finger the red stain of the Revolution, at whom we must strike. No mercy for them, men, women, or children! But the noble buildings, the edifices of public or private property, they must be safeguarded by every means in your power.'

Jean was Silent, but at his elbow he heard the voice of Vinoy making this whispered addition to the harangue of Mademoiselle Dosne:

'And think that we have been bombarding the Arc de Triomphe for the last two months by Monsieur Thiers' own orders'

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CHAPTER THIRTY SIX

'OH, JEAN!'

On the side of Versailles the great bombardment grew hotter. The city lay smokeless and silent, as if sulking under punishment. As much as possible, Jean confined his shells to the breaching of the gates and the destruction of the southern and western ramparts. He left Grenelle alone for the sake of pretty Madame Max and her lame man with the ebony-handled cane; besides, so he told himself, one gate opened was as good as twenty.

Accordingly, as Vinoy pointed out to him, he must never disobey an order, but, also by that General's advice, he allowed himself great latitude in interpreting it. The gates of the Bois de Boulogne, of Porte Maillot (that especially), of the Ternes, of Courcelles, Asnieres and Clichy were sufficient for the entry of all the armies in France, and it was hardly likely that more than one or two of these would really be needed. So Jean contented himself with keeping up an unceasing rain of shells upon those mentioned, especially the two nearest to Neuilly, where his guns had better cover, and where presently his troops actually found themselves under the protection of the ramparts of Paris, so that they could bide their time in the utmost security.

During the weeks which followed Nini had to reconcile herself to seeing but little of Jean. However, she had passed her word, and both Margot Simon, her maid, and Bibi le Bonhomme were there pledged to assist her in doing nothing rash. This inaction was hard for Nini. She was a girl of

adventure. Not at all after the manner of Anais, with a high and noble sense of devotion to her father which made all other things seem remote and useless to her.

Nini loved adventure for its own sake, and specially when it enabled her to be near Jean. The days she had spent masquerading in Paris in momentary peril of her life, when Lieutenant de Sivry shaved discovery and a firing-party at the corner of every street, were perhaps among the happiest she had ever known.

They were, she thought to herself, better even than the still days of Les Andeleys, with only the whisper of the opposite woods, the flirt and flutter of the early orchard blossom, and the occasional cry of the passenger to the ferryman summoning him to bring his boat across.

Still it was wondrously sweet at the Port St. Antoine when Jean did come. He had a way of sending his horse on by an orderly, and coming in for a cup of English tea. Then at his advent the whole little establishment waked up. The still green alleys of the park stretched away more gladsomely. They began to grow enchanted quite an hour before there was any use looking for him - that is, they were so to Nini's eyes.

In Jean's honour Bibi had resumed his yellow-and-black waistcoat, and had given the ultimate touch to his hair. He had received Margot's opinion, given after careful scrutiny, that he was 'the last thing in things' - for Margot frankly admired Bibi, and had her reward in weaning him finally from a wilderness of trifling loves.

As for Margot herself, she was as dainty and *accorte* a handmaid as ever opened a door to an

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expectant lover. And Jean was a lover who was never disappointed. He did not need to send a message specifying the hour of his arrival. Nini was always there as joyous and thankful, as simple and as delightfully complex as doubtless Eve was in the garden - or afterwards, when she tried and succeeded in "making it up" to her lord for what her curiosity had brought upon them.

The adage "Femme avertie vaut deux" (a woman forewarned is worth two who don't know you are coming) was of no application to Nini.

Jean, returning from his long rides, his struggles with Charron, who hung on like a leech to his portion of the command, his discussions with the miniature autocrat at the Château, with whom he only got his way full when he called him "saviour of France," felt all his being expanded in this atmosphere of grace and love.

Jean was doing double duty these days. He had his positions to ride round, new displacements of guns to make as the batteries crept nearer and ever nearer to the city. And what took him still more time, he had the guns for street fighting - three-pounders and grape-shot pieces, mitrailleuses and the new Larzac machine-guns - to collect, to supply with ammunition and horses, to equip with teams of men to carry them forward when barricades blocked the horses. All must be ready by the twenty-fourth of May, the day fixed by Monsieur Thiers for the assault.

Jean knew that the gates of Port Maillot and Pont du Jour were ready now, and that at a push the army could enter at any moment. But he had grown wary of obtruding his opinions on the touchy little Dictator of Versailles. These were never well

received. Omniscience cannot consistently afford to receive extraneous hints.

The equipment of the light street-fighting artillery weighed heavily upon Jean. There was none to give him any help, and his thoughts were unusually heavy during his long rides under the forest branches, or through the devastated valleys which separated the ridges on which his batteries were set out on great platforms.

No wonder, then, that it was with a real joy that he turned aside a hundred yards or so from the Port St. Antoine and sent on his *aide*, his orderly, and his escort. There was no particular secret about the matter. There could not be a secret about Nini Auroy, either in Paris or in Versailles. Had she not in Versailles been Sister Nini for many weeks? Had she not disappeared during the General's mission to Paris? Had they not returned together? *Well, my friend, I leave it to you!*

Moreover, Nini had sung at a concert given in aid of the wounded of the troops. She had sung in the very theatre where during the day the National Assembly held its séances. The Chef d'Etat, moved thereto by Mademoiselle Dosne, had been present, surrounded by a brilliant staff. Tickets had been at a premium. Deputies were there by dozens, while occasional wives, and a great multitude of well-dressed people who found a fascination in crowding to Versailles, filled the theatre from orchestra to topmost gallery.

There was no doubt that Nini was popular, and the luck of Jean de Larzac was the subject of much comment, witty and otherwise. But Jean was only approached on the subject once, and that by a General somewhat senior to himself - a real Imperial

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“Returned Empty” from Westphalia. Jean's face paled as he listened. The man was jesting loudly.

‘If you are not drunk,’ he answered, in a clear voice which could be heard all over the Army Club, ‘I give you fair warning that I shall call out any man of whatever age and rank who ventures to insult my affianced wife, Mademoiselle Auroy!’

Whereupon Jean de Larzac turned on his heel and went out, leaving behind him, however, Ripert and others of his trusted friends who would be quite able to deal with any offender in his absence.

Now it was quite characteristic of the relations of Nini and Jean that there had been no such definite arrangement between them as Jean had proclaimed when “backing down” his “dear comrade,” the General Lesage. He had acted wholly on the spur of the moment, and it would be necessary to tell Nini immediately, lest she should hear of the matter from other sources.

Jean was not quite easy in his mind, therefore, when on that delicately blue Sunday afternoon of early May, he stood slapping his leg with his riding-crop at Nini's, door. Margot was, if possible, more radiant than ever. Her pale blue ribbons matched the faint mist in the hollows of the park, where the marshes had been which Louis XIV had swept out of existence. There was a proud and warlike gleam in Bibi's eye, and he seemed to think that any valeting of his hero was unnecessary on such a day.

But had these two told their mistress? That was altogether a different question, and one which Jean would have given a month's pay to have been able to put to Bibi. On the whole he was inclined to think that silence had been kept. Bibi had in many ways the feelings of a gentleman, and De Larzac was

aware that Bibi could control Margot Simon's tongue by ways hidden from all mortal ken - except, perhaps, from Solomon, who hints at them, when he speaks so mystically of "the way of a man with a maid."

Nini had been looking out for Jean. She had seen him turn the corner, erect and tall, walking with the cavalry swing, and her heart had quickened its beating. She had dropped her book face-down on the window-seat, and turning had waited motionless till he came. She did not run and arrange an attitude, or affect surprise, or be astonished at what she had been expecting, and indeed had known would arrive.

Jean had come. It was the event of her day. So she stood still till the door opened, and then walked impulsively forward a few steps, her arms ready to go about his neck, the moment Margot Simon should shut the door. For ordinarily Margot did not spy through key-holes, nor would it have mattered very much if she had.

'Oh, Jean,' she said lamely, 'you look so tired. You must want some tea!'

But he stood a little way back from her, so that Nini's arms fell to her sides, and a strange and cruel pain bit at her heart.

'Jean, what is wrong!' she said. 'What have I done? - What can I have done since yesterday? Tell me quickly - Oh, very quickly!'

Jean de Larzac bent and kissed her hand, and then, as if she had been the greatest lady in the land, he led her to a sofa.

'Don't let us have tea quite yet - I have something confess to you - something very serious!'

'Oh, not that you love anybody better than you

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love me, Jean - not Anais surely, who wanted to shoot you, even though she changed her mind - nor any one you have met here. I can see women looking after you, and then - it is a shame, Jean, but I want to run after them, and tell them that you are mine. And if they dared say a word I - I would battle for you like a harridan of the Halles - yes, like a coster-wife at a cabaret door! There is no De Larzac blood in me, I fear, Jean!

'Of that I am none so sure,' said Jean, smiling. 'I have taken a shameful liberty with your name - for which you may, and indeed ought, to make Bibi turn me out of your house and never let me see you again.'

Nini's colour came and went. She breathed light and fast. Little spasms of agony drew the muscles of her mouth together and widened her fine nostrils. She felt that her heart did wrong to flutter, yet she could not stop it. She stayed silent, suffering.

They sat down close to one another, but Nini held herself apart. Of course she knew what would be said of her in the army after her escapade in Paris - she a singer, he a General on the high road of power and promotion. She had laid herself open to misconstruction. She had even challenged it. What if Jean had had enough of bearing the blame without eating of the fruit? Well, after all, he was Jean, and she was ready - even for that. She had promised him no brotherhood, and if he wished her innocence and her pride as a gift - well, he would see what it was to be loved by a woman who made no conditions, who gave her life as a little thing.

All these things passed more quickly through Nini's mind than a forked lightning flash cuts the blue-black of the thunder-cloud.

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She was a little startled out of her high tragedy by the gentle appeal of Jean's voice. He took her hand, and spoke apologetically and with his wonted respect.

'I have taken a liberty - a very great and inexcusable liberty. But I hope you will pardon me - when I have explained the circumstances - '

There was a pause while he searched for words.

'Oh, Jean - don't keep me like this - tell me, Jean. Don't you see?'

But Jean had resolved upon an apology *en règle*, and he was not to be put off the track he had laid out for himself.

'I was put into a difficult position at the Cercle Militaire,' he explained calmly, though without letting go Nini's hand; 'I have enemies there - or at least if not enemies, at least jealous people - people who hate success.'

'I know,' said Nini quickly, 'people without talent. We have them in my profession as well.'

She was determined, by reminding him of her profession, to make the way as easy for him as possible.

Jean took no notice of the interruption. His mind was all on what he had to communicate.

'One of these men, a General, lately shipped back from Germany, angry with the Republic, and especially with the younger men who have taken their positions, this man, General Lesage - I tell you his name lest you should hear rumours and perhaps blame me more than I deserve - spoke lightly of you.'

'“We cannot all have pretty young women donning lieutenant's uniforms and following us about Paris - friends of Mademoiselle - famous singers, too, who can bring the world and its money to our aid by a

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song!”

‘Well, Jean,’ said Nini, looking him full in the face, ‘it is all true - they have a right to say it. I hope you will not risk your life for that - or anything like that. Your life, after this horrible war, belongs to me - I do not care how. What the man said is true. Did I not obtain the uniform of Lieutenant de Sivry and follow you to Paris? Did we not come back together? What I have done I am ready to stand by, so long as - as you are not ashamed of me, Jean!’

‘Ashamed of you, Nini!’ he cried. ‘I do not know what you mean. But do you think I could let an insult like that pass in a public place?’

‘I do not care, Jean - the man spoke the truth!’

‘If he spoke the truth, Nini, it is more than I did. And that is the part which it is hard for me to tell you!’

‘Oh, Jean, did you tell them that I was nothing to you - that I persecuted you? I shall die if you did. Yet perhaps, at the first, just at the first, even that was partly true, and I have no reason to complain! But so much has come and gone since then, Jean, that I hoped you would have forgotten or at least forgiven. Oh, Jean, did you not think of the field hospital at Les Ecuys where I found you, of the long days by the river, of the two chairs in the orchard shade, and - and - oh Jean, it was cruel to deny me. I should have been content with so little love - and if one day you wanted to get married - really - ’

‘That is just it,’ said Jean, thoroughly mystified, ‘I *did* say that I was going to be married. It was abominable, I know, but I said it!’

Nini rose from the sofa and stood before him, her hands clasped so tightly that the blood slowly left them.

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'You – Jean - going to be married!'

'I said so - God forgive me - perhaps you will not.'

'Yes,' said Nini slowly, with an accent on every word, and a pause between that was heartbreaking to hear. 'Yes, I will – forgive - you, - Jean!'

'I said very loud before them all, there in the Cercle, because I was pricked by that fool's talk - what I had no right to say.'

'Well,' said Nini, in a strange far-away voice, 'who is she, Jean?'

Jean, quite unconscious, went blundering on with his tale.

'I said that if I heard anything of the sort again, I would send my seconds to any man, of whatever rank or age, were he the Marshal Duke himself, who would venture to insult my affianced wife - Mademoiselle Nini Auroy!'

'Oh, Jean!'

And though by no means given to fainting, Nini fell into Jean's arms, where he had to hold her till he could ring for Margot and Bibi, who appeared with a curious and almost miraculous celerity. The pair did not show all the anxiety which might have been expected, but their faces were ruddy as if they had been engaged for a long time in picking up pins off the floor. Nini soon came to herself, but all that she said was only as before, 'Oh, Jean!'

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CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

THEIR OWN STATE DINNER

The news of Jean's engagement to Mademoiselle Auroy flew round Versailles. Strangely enough, it did nothing to hurt his professional career. He was known to be rich. There was nothing to be said against Nini. Viperous and groundless slanderings had to stand down before two of the best swordsmen in the army, Jean and Ripert. The requisite official dowry could be covered five times over by Nini's professional savings.

True, there was a movement among the monarchists, then in the majority both in the army and in the Assembly, to show General de Larzac the cold shoulder. A gentleman and the heir of a long line of gentlemen, even though tainted with Huguenot blood, ought to have married among his equals - of whom there were many in the hotels of Versailles, hook-nosed and blue-blooded, waiting to return to the Faubourg St. Germain.

The *douairières* in particular frowned upon him, but Mademoiselle Dosne set all straight. She not only came and called in person upon Nini at the Porte St. Antoine, but she stayed till Jean came in hot and tired from his easterly round by Meudon to the Pont du Jour.

Now, when Mademoiselle Dosne talked politics, she slaughtered the people who did not agree with her by hundreds. But what gentle and kindly things she said and did in her private capacity! No sooner did she hear of the cabal against Nini than she

ordered out the equipage of state, and kept it waiting in front of Nini's door for a good two hours in sight of all Versailles.

Wherever she went she had nothing but praises for Nini. She told every one that she had known her from childhood - a very interesting and clever girl - good as bread, and worth a hundred of your convent-forced hot-house plants who could only peep and mutter. Mademoiselle Dosne was certainly charming to the young couple that day in the lodgings which Nini had decorated so prettily with no expectation of so famous a guest.

The sight of the old lady with her old-fashioned ringlets, her white muslin folded gracefully about her neck and the big cameo upon it, her sweet, clear-complexioned face and winning manner, gave Jean quite another idea of the all-powerful Mademoiselle of the Château. Could he have heard aright the night of the dinner? Never once did she mention the sweeping of Paris, nor the desperate work that lay before the army.

It was 'Nini' this, and 'dear Nini' that!

Then she gave her opinion more at large.

'General de Larzac, you are the most fortunate man in the army to have found such a treasure! What do you mean to do with her? Surely you can never mean to bury her alive in that old castle of yours up on the foot-hills of the Larzac, where the valley curves down towards Nant and the rush of the Dourbie? Oh, I know it. We have driven that way by the old wine-waggon road from Millhau to St. Jean's.'

'I - we have not thought of that yet,' said Jean, hesitatingly. 'After Paris is taken - if I get back without being too much of a cripple - then we shall

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see.'

Mademoiselle let an approving smile, pale and sweet as misty April sunshine, play about her lips that once had been rosebuds and still were exquisitely shaped. She nodded her head.

'Yes,' she said, 'we need you there. Every man to his duty. No one but you can fight the artillery. But I shall take care of Nini while you are' (she rose on tiptoe till she could look out upon Paris from the gable-window) '*over yonder!*'

For a moment her eyes grew hard as they rested on the hated city - Babylon the great which was to be cast down. But the next moment the sweetness returned. She had led a happy life herself. She had controlled, intellectually speaking, a god. She had been mistress of France and her destinies. But, above all, she approved of well-looking, well-loving young people who defied opinion and married for love.

'Afterwards,' she said, 'you must come to me, Nini, and we will marry you from the Château. I do not know if it brings luck, but I daresay you will risk that. At any rate, sure I am that never a prettier bride went down the great staircase on the arm of her husband. Yes, certainly, we cannot spare you. I shall speak to Monsieur Thiers about the matter to-night, and, of, course, to my sister also.'

Here Jean began to murmur some objections, but the dainty old lady of the ferocious politics and the honey-suckle heart cut him short.

'They tell me, General, that you have no relatives save some far-off cousinage with the Turennes dating before that family became reconciled to the Church. Nini has none either. Well then, you dears, I adopt you both. Adolphe shall give you away, and

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we shall have the whole of the President's Military Establishment, and all your artillerymen to line the route - with Bibi on the box in a new livery, and Long Landry (see how well I remember names) to shut the carriage door upon you.'

So smilingly the old lady rose to go, in a rustle of stiff silk, and a sweet-aired scent of lavender and fine web-like lace.

'Now, dears,' she said, 'I have arranged everything for you, and soon we shall choose the wedding dress - you and I, Nini - '

'Ah, no, no,' cried Nini, 'that would be bad luck. Not before he comes back. If we did, he might never come at all!'

'Nonsense, my dear,' said Mademoiselle, with some imperiousness, 'of course he will come. Monsieur Thiers has need of him.'

And to her, this seemed to clench the matter. There was no more to be said. But in her heart Nini resolved to wear nothing but black all the time Jean was fighting in that hateful Paris.

After the great lady had driven away, the escort of Republican Guards clattering after the carriage, Nini and Jean looked at one another.

'I suppose,' said Nini, 'that now I shall not quite disgrace you. My character, even after years of the foot-lights and the singing of many scores of Marguerites and Camilles, will be rehabilitated in the sight of all. I am glad for your sake, Jean.'

'Nini,' said Jean gravely, 'do not jest. I desire that you shall think as highly of yourself as I do. There is a black time before us, Nini, and only your bravery will keep me brave.'

'Oh, no, you are wrong,' said Nini with truer instinct; 'so soon as your foot is on the asphalt of

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Paris - as soon, as the enemy is before you and the barricades bristling with guns, you will forget all else except your duty. It is right that it should be so. But, all the same, God bring you safe back to me! I am only a poor girl, and remember, Jean, I have no one but you!

* * * * *

Their engagement having been, as it were, thus blessed by the highest State authorities, Jean took advantage of the circumstances to stay longer than usual that night. He knew, though he did not tell Nini, that the troops were much nearer to the final push for the south-western gates than even Monsieur Thiers himself imagined. So, as this might be his last opportunity, Jean determined to make the most of it.

Curiously enough, as their position towards one another became more regular, as it was known and approved of all men (and most women who mattered), they took the affair less in the spirit of love-making, and showed more and more of that instinctive comradeship upon which all lasting marriages must be based.

It was a transcendent evening, as indeed all these May nights were. They sat looking out on the greenery of the park, on the dry tritons and heavy-haunched eighteenth-century nymphs of the fountains. They watched the rippling water of the great *bassins*, green and weedy, the wide spaces of verdure, the high walls of trees, and in the distance the great plain swimming in the lilac and blue of the rising mist. The *étangs* were pure turquoise patches. The foliage varied from an aerial pink to deep sea

purple, while above the sky was delicate with infinitely remote flakes of gold and bronze.

Margot, with understanding alert in every feature, set a little table with a snowy cloth - two covers thereon, two dainty napkins done in Margot's favourite pattern, a footstool for Nini, and a silver cigarette box for Jean. It was Bibi's own prize box, but so occupied were Jean and Nini that neither noticed the substitution.

Bibi and Margot felt that in somewise the night was a celebration, and Bibi had been to the Hôtel des Reservoirs for some bottles of Leoville and Clicquot of famous years, for which he had paid out of the joint stock purse arranged between Margot and himself. Margot was a little surprised at the prices. Her father, Père Simon, certainly got no such money. However, she supposed it was all right, and especially after the visit of Mademoiselle Dosne in the State carriage, the same that was used for reviews, with an escort of steel-clad Gardes Républicains, Margot, though a careful soul, felt that even the "Widow" at fifteen *balles* the bottle was not too much for such an occasion.

It was agreed that after the *hors-d'œuvres* Margot and Bibi should go in together in state with the bottles ranged on a silver tray. A neat little speech was prepared, and Bibi was soon reported letter perfect.

Accordingly, while Nini and Jean were sitting cheerfully, still pecking at the smoked Norway sprats which were the best substitutes for sardines to be obtained at that hour in Versailles, the door opened, and Margot came first, bearing three majestic bottles on a silver salver. Bibi was behind in anxious travail with his speech, which he had

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forgotten.

Margot nudged him to begin.

'The wine - ' he stammered, 'the wine - ' But here he stuck. Margot darted one look of contempt at the tongue-tied giant.

'Mademoiselle and Monsieur le General,' she said smoothly and easily, 'this is a great occasion. Bibi and I hope that you will accept the wine for dinner as a token of respect and service from your most faithful servitors, Margot Simon and Bibi le Bonhomme.'

'Not unless you drink a toast with us,' cried Jean who saw at once how things were. And seizing the bottle of champagne, he uncorked it with the readiness of an expert, and had four tall glasses filled before any one could stop him.

'Oh, General,' protested Margot, 'I hope Bibi and I know our duty better!'

'To a pair of happy marriages!' cried Jean, raising his glass high.

Nini, amazed at first, imitated him, and repeated the toast smilingly. There was a little pause while Bibi and Margot interrogated one another with their eyes. Then Margot gave in.

'Since Monsieur the General bids us, we must,' she said; 'but remember, Bibi, it will make no difference to our service to Mademoiselle - or to Madame la Générale!'

The four drank in that pleasant French way which knows no distinction of ranks on such occasions. But after the glasses had been set down, Margot looked woefully at the bottle, and signed to Bibi to return to the treasure-house of their joint finance and buy another. But Jean caught him in the act.

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'I have to be early in the saddle to-morrow,' he said, 'so let this noble Leoville suffice. We thank you with all our hearts, and may the vows you have made for us serve also for your own married lives!'

'It is not to make any difference,' said Margot, anxiously, 'or I told Bibi it would just have to be put off. I should never consent!'

'Not the least difference,' said Jean reassuringly. 'If we are married - your mistress and I who am so ill-deserving of her - there will be a cottage for you two at the very garden gate of Larzac. It shall be put in order at once.'

'And whenever you come to Paris, you must let us come too,' said Margot, 'for who is to look after Mademoiselle or brush Monsieur's uniforms? He is so careless, Monsieur.'

'There,' said Jean, holding out his hand, 'it is promised. May it bring good luck to all of us!'

* * * * *

After dinner, they went and sat together in the little salon at the other side giving upon the great court in front of the Château. The night was dark, and the spaces were wide. Here was no more verdure - no more rosy purple on dewy woods and distant hills. Only the massing of troops, and the continual to-and-fro of new regiments as the army gathered and grew.

The night was all a-glitter with stars and the points of bayonets. Seeing which, Nini wept, because she knew what all this portended for them two. Suddenly, a trumpet blew. The regiments drew out serpent-wise and marched out of sight - a milky way of glittering, points of steel, the flashes changing and

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chasing along the serried bayonets as the troops wheeled and were lost.

Nini sobbed hard and dry, the anguish deep in her throat, for Jean seemed suddenly taken from her. He was leading those men to slaughter. Behind them the table still glimmered white, against which the bottles made black splashes, testifying to the joint love of Bibi and Margot.

But Nini got no comfort. Jean was being wrested from her, perhaps going to his death.

CHAPTER THIRTY EIGHT

FROM DUSK TO DARK

Paris winced and strained as the circle of steel tightened about her. The Commune was thrown back behind the walls. In spite of Rossel's brave words and braver acts, nothing could be done with the huge inert mass of the Commune and National Guard.

'I cannot be both Corporal and Commander-in-Chief,' he told the Delegates. 'I cannot make men fight who will not fight.'

He had made a famous reply to Major Laperche which, for the moment wiped that worthy off the face of things. Laperche had summoned Fort Issy to surrender within a quarter of an hour, on pain of having its whole garrison executed. Laperche probably did not know that he had to do with Rossel, a Colonel of regular engineers, and a former college companion of his own.

To him Rossel replied:

'MY DEAR COMRADE: The next time you allow yourself to send so insolent a message as your autograph letter of yesterday, I shall have your messenger shot, conformably to the rules of war.

'Your devoted Comrade, ROSSEL,
'Delegate of the Commune of Paris.'

But, alas, words without men could not hold Issy! It was little more than a heap of ruins in any case. Hardly stones remained sufficient to construct a barricade. Its last defenders had to retreat within

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the city, where they found a scanty five thousand manning the ramparts, wearied to death, without proper food, left to themselves, with hardly an officer, or a round of ammunition for their siege guns. Worst of all, the battalions thus fighting were always the same. The others would not stir from their *quartiers*. A few hours of uneasy repose, and then back to the wall again. They were mostly men from the National Guard of Montmartre, and their valour at the southern gates explains why Montmartre, supposed to be the citadel of the Commune, succumbed so easily. Its defenders lay dead between the Ternes and the Pont du Jour!

Within the city there was no cohesion. The Commune published its debates, unutterably stale and unprofitable. They abolished titles of nobility where there were none to abolish. They ordered communications with foreign nations, with which the young dandy Paschal Grousset charged himself harmlessly, because never was there a power in the world which would reply to his letters. Indeed, the waste-paper baskets of the chancelleries were overflowing with them.

Miles of ramparts were absolutely deserted, and at various points (notably about the Pont du Jour) all was ready for a vigorous storming party. Indeed, so much was not needed. The fighting Communists, all but a few stalwarts, had fallen back on their own quarters of the city, despairing of ever being reinforced or relieved.

Rossel had been called to reply to a charge of treason before the Commune. While there a certain vague pomposity named Miot had, foolishly for the attacking party, asked the accused what were his revolutionary antecedents.

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Whereupon Rossel broke out in an unforgettable speech.

I love France - I love her ardently! But during the last war it was forced upon me that the old France was dying. I saw the accursed incapacity and cowardice of my military chiefs. I saw that an oppressive and wicked social order was in its last agony.

'So in hatred of those who had sold my country, in hatred of the old tyranny, I left my rank and everything it meant, to range myself under the new and hopeful banner of the workmen of Paris. I cannot foresee the future of Socialism, but I love to have confidence in it. Anything is better than the old. That is why I devoted myself. That is why I have worked, and shall work, with reasoned hatred at the uprooting of the old bad past. That is why I shall prepare for that future in which I see the real liberty and the real equality which together make Justice.'

But the Commune sat about in their chairs of office and condemned him like so many trained animals. They were afraid of their own creation, that Frankenstein's Committee of the Public Safety.

The real powers on both sides now went little to the debates. Rigault and Ferré on the one hand, and Delescluse on the other, abode in their offices, doing their work with noise and clamour, or with quiet determination - but at any rate doing it, and by no means talking at large as did their fellows.

Delescluse at the Ministry of War had done his best to save Rossel, but even he had proved impotent, so that in a few days Rossel, who had so lately been elected Military Dictator, became little better than a prisoner. Still Delescluse often consulted him, as he did also General Decies, put in

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penitence at the same time.

After the refusal of the marching battalions to follow Rossel outside the wall, General Decies had foreseen the hopelessness of expecting anything whatever from the National Guard. He had been dismissed from his command, because with vehemence and decision he had taken the side of the unpopular Rossel, who as a real soldier was feared and disobeyed systematically by the Chiefs of the Legions.

Anais still kept her little room near the Prefecture of Police, but she was seldom there, and only that she and her father might keep in touch with Delescluse and Tridon. She could also hear news of Raoul Rigault, who, uniting the graces of a dancing bear and the cruel laughter of a malicious boy, pursued her with jovialities and invitations to lunch with him at his favourite *cafés*. The old house in the Rue des Rosiers was opened up. Good Madame Legrand had kept it thoroughly aired. The trampled walks had been carefully raked, and in the neighbouring garden of No. 6, where the tragedy of the Generals had taken place, a kindly growth of hop and wild vine had covered all.

Here, not impatiently, General Decies and Anais waited for the end.

They sat together in the study, a volume of *Practical Military Engineering* open on the table, and the far-off surge-like beat of the Versaillist bombardment of the southern gates, in their ears.

'At present,' he said, 'there is no room for us. We are without a mission. But in a little, when the troops of Thiers are inside the wall, it will again be the Day of Barricades. Then we may teach the invader a lesson. It is easy to get ships' great guns

and bombard a city from a distance - quite another to fight a way through a hostile town over a hundred barricades.'

Anais was tempted to ask him why he was in this affair at all. But she instinctively felt that by so doing she would be asking him to unveil that carefully guarded past, therefore she refrained.

Besides, her own feelings were deeply engaged. She had sworn her life to the Cause, and she was willing to pay when the bill was presented.

'Surely,' she answered her father, 'the men of Paris will yet rise, and with an irresistible rush hoist the invader outside the walls of their city! Think, father! God must see the justice of their cause. They are fighting that their children shall be better than themselves, that they may have better surroundings, and learn purer ways. In the new Commune there will be no poverty, for there will be no riches - no theft, because every hand will be able to earn - no vice, because the men and women shall be able to form themselves freely into families where are homes and children and happiness. There will be schools for all, and learning will be sweet - no more punishments nor cruelties executed upon children by brutal masters - !'

Decies shook his head indulgently at his daughter. 'These things will not make *men*,' he said; 'the bad blood will tell. The Cause is as good as you think it. In that I have not lost confidence. But in the *men* - it is otherwise. The Commune, down yonder at the Hôtel de Ville, spends its time in quarrelling - in signing honest men's death warrants, in tearing itself in two. The men, in their nearest square to their quarters, drink and smoke all day without a thought of going to the walls to

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fight. I commanded them to follow me - I, their duly chosen commander. They shrugged their shoulders like so many naughty children. Rossel, a man of their own race (and, as a soldier, of something approaching to genius), was no more fortunate than I. They told him they would obey only their elected officers, and that he could go and fight the ramparts by himself, since he had come all the way from Metz to do it!

'But surely,' said Anais, 'there is still confidence and abundant hope. The daily placards speak of victories, and Delescluse is a true man.'

'Yes, little girl,' said the old soldier, caressing her head, 'Delescluse is one of the just who, had they been numerous enough, might have saved Sodom and Gomorrah. But Delescluse has to take on trust what is reported to him - often by officers who have been no nearer the battlefield than the Café Riche.'

They heard a bell tinkling below, and the moment after the kind voice of Delescluse himself, asking after the health of Madame Legrand.

Anais rose hastily and ran downstairs to meet him. She was astonished to find Rossel with the Minister of War. The two men kissed her hand with an old-fashioned dignity strange among revolutionaries.

'Your father is with you?' asked the Minister. 'I have brought him a prisoner. General Rossel has been confided to me, and he will be safer up here in the Rue des Rosiers than within arm's length of Raoul Rigault, and Ferré his private assassin!'

They went upstairs together, where Colonel Decies, looking wonderfully grave and distinguished, met them on the landing.

'What is that I hear,' he said, smiling, 'that I am

to be a gaoler in my last days?’

‘Something like it, my friend,’ said Delescluse. ‘Rossel here is to be kept “under observation” - will you observe him? The five Dictators will have it so.’

‘I promise not to give you any trouble,’ said the young man; ‘I shall not desert to the enemy, nor take the road to Saint Denis as so many of the members of the Commune are already doing!’

Quickly Madame Legrand and Anais had a table spread, and their guests sat down to supper with them. It was a simple meal, but the *élite* of a movement which once might have been called great were about that table. It had, however, been strangled by its friends - betrayed by its own.

Delescluse, after the table had been cleared and Madame Legrand could be heard below, proclaiming in song that she was “plucking the lark, the lark, all the way along,” drew from his pocket a printed oblong.

It was on white paper, and all could see that it was one of the accustomed proclamations of Monsieur Thiers, which were, in fact, as regularly brought in to Paris as they were delivered to the 36,000 mayors of the communes of France.

‘Now what do you think of this?’ said Delescluse; and he read that famous despatch of the Chief of State proclaiming that no quarter should be given to any who opposed his forces, or to any who harboured them.

‘Well,’ said Decies, ‘is not that an old story? Did you expect any different?’

‘But the hostages,’ said Delescluse, ‘have you thought of them? There are more than five hundred of them - perhaps nearer a thousand, great and small, in the various prisons of Paris. How will

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Rigault and Ferré interpret this declaration of Monsieur Thiers?’

‘They will surely not shoot men who never had arms in their hands!’ said Decies with gravity, - ‘the Archbishop, for instance! It is bad enough to imitate the army of Versailles and to shoot prisoners. But for that there is some excuse, if not reason. But men innocent, famous, high-minded - it will blacken our cause for ever before all the world.’

Rossel handed the white proclamation back to Delescluse, and gave vent to one of the sharp, illuminating epigrams which were characteristic of the man, phrases which in their native language cracked like whips.

‘By signing this,’ he said, ‘Thiers has made himself as guilty of the blood of the hostages as if he had shot them with his own hand, beginning, with, the Archbishop!’

CHAPTER THIRTY NINE

BELSHAZZAR'S, FEAST

It was Sunday, the 21st of May, 1871, and to the careless eye Paris never looked brighter nor more gay. The streets that had long been empty, swept by shell-fire, were filled with people. Women and children appeared gaily dressed for the first time for many weeks. There had been a lull in the bombardment, and the most foolish rumours ran athwart the crowds

There had been (so they said) a great engagement, in which Versailles had been beaten so terribly that they had had to retreat, leaving their guns in the hands of the brave battalions of the National Guard.

Not for a moment did they ask themselves where the regiments were to come from. Every man and woman among the crowd knew that the men were at home in their *quartiers*, or in civil dress going like sober citizens to the great concert in the gardens of the Tuileries.

Mademoiselle Mars of the Opera was to sing, in the absence of that still greater star, Mademoiselle Auroy, known to be employed among the women prisoners at Versailles. Coquelin Cadet was to act. It was to be an ordinary May Sunday in Paris, and the released people were making the best of it. The Grand Prix was impossible. Cannons were ready to thunder all across the course. Besides, there were no races to run, nor any rich sportsmen with racing stables to send in their finest horses and to drive four-in-hand down the Avenue of the Bois. But the people of Paris did not greatly care, they could

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amuse themselves more cheaply.

A concert - and a concert for the wives and orphans of the Commune! This united pleasure and such patriotism as was understood in the Paris of that time. A delegation of the members of the Government had been appointed to be present. But those really serious had far other thoughts.

Rigault continued to laugh like a noisy *gamin* in his great halls at the Prefecture, as he directed the workmen how to place the temporary flooring in his room where Jean's big shell had plumped through to the cellar.

He had on hand, nearing completion, a new decree to eliminate God from all literature as "a Person of unknown abode, having no *état civil*," and also the Second Person in the Trinity, at whom he had a special grudge (so he boasted) "because he hated all overrated reputations!"

But all the same he kept a little book beside him, to which now and again he would add a name, as this one or that of the hostages occurred to him. He smiled occasionally as if at a jest better than any of his noisy splutterings.

'Chaudey,' he said, 'Chaudey! To-morrow he will be sorry for having insulted me in his "rag"! And that fellow who sent me his card on the unexploded shell. If I catch him when it comes to close grips, he shall have a duel with the twelve best shots in my battalion of the 142nd. I shall choose the men myself. They shall fire slowly, avoiding the vitals. Then General de Larzac shall have enough of duelling!'

He laughed aloud, for he heard the military music passing by.

'Oh, the concert at the Tuileries,' he said to young

Dacosta. 'I had forgotten. You had better go and represent me. Bring back any news you can pick up. Keep away from that stubborn fool Delescluse, and if you see any orderlies riding with dispatches to him at the War Office, send them along to me instead.'

At that moment a loud shout of triumph came from the street. Secretary Dacosta looked out, opened the window, and accosted a passer-by. The Commune, even at the dreaded Prefecture, did not trouble itself with forms and ceremonies.

'What is the matter?' Dacosta asked. 'Why are they shouting?'

'Because the news has just come that Thiers and MacMahon have resigned!' said the man, and hurried on out of that dangerous neighbourhood.

Rigault laughed aloud, throwing his head back so that even his eternal eyeglass fell off.

'Oh, what fools - what unspeakable fools!' he shouted, frothing with merriment.

There was something sinister and almost bestial about the man at such moments, and one could understand the verdict of the new student from Clermont Ferrand, who, seeing him for the first time in the courts of the Sorbonne, raging and spluttering, asked why they did not put him in a cage and set a sentinel over him! It would have been well for Paris if the advice had been taken.

In the little house in the green garden of the Rue des Rosiers (No. 4) Colonel Decies was preparing for the last scenes. He had expended all his energy of appeal upon Anais to find a way to London by St. Denis while the road was yet open. Rossel had gone down to find Delescluse.

To Auberon Decies England was a shut land. His own criminal folly had shut it, but there was no

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reason why his daughter should have her teeth set on edge because of the forbidden fruit her father had eaten.

Anais, however, refused all such projects. She had none on earth to care for except her father, and with her father she would stay to the last. When he set out to do his duty, she would be there to do hers too. And in the secrecy of her chamber, with the window looking upon the armed peace of Montmorency and St. Denis, she made few but careful preparations. She had a revolver Jean had given her and plenty of ammunition. She had a good cavalry carbine of her father's, and she made a cartridge bandolier for herself - against That Day.

Down the Rue Lepic went the sound of merry music - the bands from St. Ouen and Ornano were marching to the concert at the Tuileries. By looking out she could see them passing the end of the street, as unconscious of the doom that was awaiting them as so many larks singing in the blue mid-heaven, as they were doing at that moment above the meadows of Pantin.

At the Tuileries were gathered eight thousand persons intent on pleasure - and little cared they though the grape-shot was again bursting half-way down the Champs Elysées. The Arc de Triomphe was hazy through a veil of gunpowder smoke. The performance was good, the music better, and to the mind of the happy Parisians the massed bands of the National Guard, thirteen hundred strong, best of all. A staff Colonel mounted the platform and, after imposing silence, announced to the people, 'Citizens, this is the day Monsieur Thiers promised to enter Paris. Monsieur Thiers has not entered. He will never enter Paris. I have the honour to convoke you

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all to a second entertainment in aid of the widows and orphans of the Commune, to be held in this same place next Sunday, the 28th of May!

And just at that very time, half-past four by the clock, the advance guard of the regular army was entering Paris by the gate of Saint Cloud.

* * * * *

The hour had come at last. Jean had done his part. Montretout and Long Landry had laid open the ramparts of St Cloud. There was not a man left to defend the gate. In spite of the roar of the shells passing overhead the commander of the approach works, now within two hundred yards of the gate, marvelled at the Sabbath silence of the city.

Not a cannon, not a rifle-shot, not a red flag - nothing!

Presently, on the top of bastion 64, a man in plain clothes was seen waving a handkerchief, and with violent gestures urging the troops to enter.

'There is nobody,' he cried. 'I am Ducatel, of the service of the Roads and Bridges. Enter - Paris is before you for the taking, I will answer for it with my life!'

So, guided by this Ducatel, a most fortunate Inspector of Communications, the captain visited the bridge and the forts, looked into the houses to make sure that there was no hidden ambush, before risking his men. Then returning he telegraphed the news to his Generals, Douay and Vergé.

To Jean at Montretout also came a telegram.

'Suspend the fire of all the batteries. The troops are upon the point of entering Paris.'

This sent Jean galloping across country to

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Neuilly, where he had his *depôt* of street-fighting pieces ready, with all their ammunition and train.

From the height of Mont Valérien Monsieur Thiers, with Marshal MacMahon and other officers, was astonished by the sight of red breeches clambering about the trenches and bastions.

'The troops are in Paris!' cried MacMahon, who was seldom moved.

The face of Thiers clouded and he applied his eye to the glass.

'If it be so,' he said, 'they have gone without my orders. I will have no Sunday skylarking, and those who are the ringleaders shall pay for this. Wednesday next, not Sunday, was the day I fixed for the assault, as every one in the army very well knows.'

But he was forced to change his tune as the news came by rapid gallopers, telling how division after division had entered Paris without losing a man - Douay, Vinoy, Bruat - till in all not less than thirty thousand men of the army of Versailles were inside Paris, while the concert was still going on in the gardens of the doomed palace.

The Commune was in session, but turned a deaf ear to the catastrophic dispatch of Dombrowski, the General in command of the western section.

Delescluse sent immediately to the observatory on the Arc de Triomphe, but his men failed to obtain any news. He had, he announced, taken his precautions. He had ordered forward eleven battalions of reinforcements. His own staff officers were to conduct them.

So far well, but the old fighter had not yet realised the strength and the weakness of the new revolutionaries of '71. Not a bayonet stirred for all

his ordering, while the staff officers simply went and changed their clothes or hid among their relatives, understanding well that all was lost.

The other side of the facts is seen in the notice sent by the little Dictator to be placarded in all the Communes of France:

'The gate of St. Cloud having been broken down by the fire of our artillery, General Douay dashed through them, and is at this moment in Paris with all his troops. Clinchant and Lamirault hasten to follow.'

The dispatch was signed as usual "A. Thiers," but the writer did not know that Jean and Vinoy would be in the city before either of the Generals he had named.

A great silence seemed to brood over all the occupied quarter. Not a gun was fired as the brigades filed in, rushed along the wall and opened the other gates to their comrades, who thronged through them in dense masses. In a few hours the number of troops in Paris found itself ridiculously understated in the dispatch of Monsieur Thiers.

Yet that night the millions of Paris slept soundly, without an idea of the storm of war which was to burst over them and their city with the dawn of the morrow.

But moved by a strange instinct, Colonel Decies and Anais watched all night from the heights of Montmartre, marvelling at the sudden silence, and though nothing was said, one of them at least set it down to its real cause.

'They are afraid of hitting their own men,' said the Colonel, as he sat ready in his full uniform of a General of the Commune. 'There will be need for us, Anais, since you will choose no other than your

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father's way. I am glad to see that you have put on your uniform, Anne, but why have you unstitched the Geneva Cross from your sleeve?

'Because,' said Anais, standing up proudly, 'I am going to fight. Yonder comes the dawn. It is the Day of the Barricades!'

CHAPTER FORTY

BEHIND THE BARRICADES

On one of the most perfect mornings of a perfect May the army of Versailles, now strong to the number of sixty thousand men, moved out to the conquest of Paris. Few nations have had to take their own capital city by storm. It is, for instance, impossible to imagine such a thing happening to London.

But in Paris, it seemed to all who took part in the forward movement, even to Jean de Larzac, the simplest and most necessary thing in the world.

All that Monday morning Jean was called forward to train his guns upon the formidable barricades which had been raised to the south of the Seine. In this there was no particular difficulty.

'Clear me that out of the way, de Larzac!' a fellow-general of the line would call to Jean, and in a few minutes the grape-shot would be bursting and the mitrailleuses whirring, amid the hoarser barking of the three-pounders, and the queer cackle of the new Larzac machine-guns.

Then to the linesmen, 'Take that for me! Shoot me these men!'

Jean was early introduced to the inexorable severities of the Versaillist military code, and he soon understood that the words of Mademoiselle Dosne had been changed into strict orders by the little Dictator.

Then Jean was glad that his was the artillery arm, when he saw how quickly and with what zest the Generals of the line began to carry out the

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“becoming” of Paris - only Clinchant and Lamirault showing honourable exceptions of mercifulness.

The barricades in the Southern part of the city were not well defended. The army advanced rapidly. The Invalides, the Trocadero, the Champs Elysées themselves were quickly under the tricolour. The soldiers might have gone further had they been permitted, for at that time the great barricades to the Place de la Concorde were almost without defenders. But negotiations were being carried on with the German authorities for the right to pass by the North along the neutral zone, so that the Commune might find itself assaulted from all sides at once.

Then there were hardy little nests of Communists everywhere. Max Lisbonne had not been so long on the south side for nothing, and the defences of the Place St. Antoine, la Roquette, and the Rue de Rennes were particularly well-contested. Some of them, indeed, were as well fought as anything on the Right Bank.

Anais and her father were soon behind the first great barricade which stopped the victorious advance of the army of Versailles. While Max Lisbonne was still holding for many hours his positions about the Rue de Rennes - always driven from barricade to barricade, but always finding another sufficient to stop the steady push of the army corps established in and around the Gare Montparnasse - Colonel Decies, in his uniform of General of the National Guard, had taken command of the noble series of defences between the Tuileries and the Place Vendôme. At first there were not more than three hundred men, but, by gradual filtration from the east, the men rose to a total of five

hundred.

Probably the Tuileries men, drawn from half a score of battalions, could hardly have been said to acknowledge the leading of General Decies in spite of his uniform. Indeed, the only man whom the National Guards really obeyed among all its superior officers was Max Lisbonne.

Most of the other Generals either disappeared promptly, or entered into the ranks, where they fought like private soldiers.

But a cheer went up from the powder-blackened men at the sight of Anais. She had her light carbine over her arm, and as it took regulation *tabatière* cartridges, there was no fear of ammunition running short. Leaving her father to his work of direction, Anais walked quietly to a niche in the Tuileries defences which she shared with two National Guards, a man of the 17th and the other of the 256th, the latter a mere boy. They made room for her with pride, and gave her the left-hand corner place where was the least danger.

Then it was that Anais saw for the first time, in guise of enemies, the red breeches of the regular army. She remembered that behind there, where they were bringing up the artillery, Jean would be fighting also - fighting against her, fighting to kill her comrades and her father.

No anger came with this thought. She had known it even from the time of the canary-coloured omnibus. She was grateful for his care, and glad of their long talks, their genuine friendliness. Something English in her blood kept her from hating her enemies when they were good fellows. And Jean, though a Versaillist, was a good fellow.

The bullets kept coming up against the sacks of

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earth which lined the barricade, each with its vicious "*phisst!*" But there was as yet no artillery on the scene, except their own two pieces in the gardens of the Tuileries, which by scattering grape-shot held the enemy in respect for many hours.

Vinoy had kept his word. It was one of his divisions, that of Bruat, which had been the first to break its head on the strongest defences of Central Paris.

General Decies detailed a few men to watch the line of retreat which would keep them in touch with the much more vast forces of Communist defenders who held the Eastern heights from Père la Chaise and Vincennes to the Gate of St. Denis.

At first Anais shuddered to fire upon men who had done her no harm. But when the young beardless youth who had chivalrously made a place for her on the safer side reeled suddenly, halted erect just in time to receive a second bullet, and held himself at the salute long enough to say, 'I wish you better luck, Mademoiselle' before falling inert at her feet, Anais was seized with a cold anger such as she had not known since that evening when she had set out from the Rue des Rosiers to have Jean arrested as a spy. But this time there was no uncertainty in her purpose.

She stood and fired carefully every time that a Versaillist showed himself - aimed with precision and reloaded with promptitude and ease. The dull fierce anger, which at the advent of the army had taken possession of the city, seized Anne also. She was now one of a desperate band. There was little chance of a victory, yet the soldiers of the Commune fought far better than they had ever done, either during the Prussian siege or when the balance of

numbers was still on their side, as before the day of Les Bergères.

Anais looked about her in wonder. Could these be the same men whom she had seen entering Paris, wild and undisciplined, shrieking incoherently that they had been betrayed? Behind the barricades with Anais they fought silent and dogged, or gay and careless, according to their natures, but in either case without fear of death or the least braggadocio. Even bad language was unheard behind the barricade of the Tuileries, though doubtless this was out of regard for Anais.

The girl had on a vivandière's *képi* which was early shot off, and she found herself stooping without a shudder and picking up that of the dead boy which had rolled away when he stood swaying and trying to salute.

She felt that she owed him that much. So thereafter, through all the turmoil of the fight, to the very last barricades she fought under the boy's *képi*, with its silver numeral clear and bright - 256, the regimental number which showed how recently he had been enrolled. After this a new spirit possessed her. She laid aside her carbine, and took the boy's rifle. She would fight with the same weapons, now that she was in the thick of the same battle. And suddenly it became clear to her that this fair-haired boy whom she had seen for no more than a single quarter of an hour, to whom she had hardly spoken, had really died for her sake.

And, at the thought, his memory became more precious to her than Jean's or Nini's - indeed than that of any in the world except her father. Nevertheless she repeatedly stepped across his body as she moved from one side to the other watching

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for the chance of a shot. And in a lull, without the least disgust, because she knew that he would have been pleased and happy if he had known; she undid his cartridge belt and pouch and added the contents to her own.

Bruat was not a very dashing soldier, but he was under the command of Vinoy; so after an hour or so, of tentative skirmishing along various streets, he called upon his men to take the barricade from the front. But so fierce a fusillade was poured upon them, so accurate was the fire of the two pieces on the front of the Tuileries, that the attacking column absolutely melted away. It was a decided check, and after a breathing space the same firing from windows down upon the barricade began all over again. Anne was a good shot. She could always beat her father - nay, she was well-nigh as good as Jean in the old days when they used to practise in the garden of No. 4 of the Rue des Rosiers.

Her eyes, too, were sharp, and the red-breeched one who showed his person at a window was apt to fight no more for many days. Her father, though at first he moved about directing the defences with only a little riding-whip, soon saw that every arm was needed behind the works. Accordingly he picked up the rifle of a fallen guardsman, and took his place with the others. The men were indeed beyond all military leading. Max Lisbonne could have done something - indeed was doing something - but that was because he was so universally known, and had a tongue which, speaking the *argot* of the faubourgs, was as universally feared.

CHAPTER FORTY ONE

THE RED TWILIGHT

That night the army corps of Vergé came down from the north to reinforce the attacking columns of Bruat on the south. The river was no longer a defence. The Tuileries must be given up, and before they retired the last National Guards set on fire the houses from which they had been attacked. The Tuileries themselves soon began to show puffs of smoke and jets of flame. Before midnight they were flaming like a torch, and the Great Red Twilight had begun. It was to last four days and nights, till nearly half of the monumental buildings of Paris were only masses of blackened cinders.

To these men, at least, no orders had been given. The outbreak of fire was purely a matter of detail. As men who have slept too often on the same couch of straw may burn their bedding when they march off, so the Communists, having no further use for the Tuileries and the houses in the Place Vendôme, set them on fire.

Ignorance there was – yes - but no great hatred, nor any sense of evil done to France or to the world. They “cleaned up” behind them - that was all.

The General had kept his scouts ready to point out the best way of retreat, and now when he took the road ready to affront any turning movements of the enemy with the pick of his most trusted fighters, Anais paused a moment before the dead body of the lad whose *képi* she wore. He had fair hair and lay still as if smiling. She called to the soldier of the 17th, a black-bearded silent man, and between

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them they laid the body of the boy under a shelf of the barricade, where at least he would not be trodden upon. As they laid him down she stooped and kissed him.

The mitrailleuses were now in place and the work was dangerous, the hail of bullets sending up spurts of dust which showed dim and ghastly in the gloaming. Anais never gave a thought to Jean. Her comrade, the black-bearded man who had helped her to lift the boy, seemed far more to her.

'Mademoiselle,' he said, 'let me carry your rifle. It will be nothing to me. I am a porter from the docks of La Villette.'

'No,' answered Mademoiselle Anne, as she would have done to Forty-eight, 'I thank you, but if you will carry my father's, I shall not forget your kindness.'

The man looked eagerly at her, and then was hastening on, when he stopped suddenly.

'I'll risk it,' he said. 'If I am shot beside you, will you kiss me on the forehead as you did the lad of the 256th?'

'I will,' said Anais, and even then she was unconscious of the power of women - the power which needs no franchise to mend or strengthen it, but is as old as the race - the strongest and most lasting thing on earth, voted to them by Almighty God.

'Thank you,' said the man. 'I shall not survive - I have no need. I have neither wife nor sister to mourn me. But you made me envy that boy. Now let me carry your *flingot*.'

'But my father's?' queried Anais.,

The man smiled over his shoulder at her. He was walking directly in front to shield her from the shots of any stray ambush.

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'I am strong,' he said quite simply, 'I am from the docks. What difference can a dozen of rifles make to me? Have I not carried sacks of coal out of ships' holds for full twenty years? and there is none at La Villette who can thresh down the work before him like me.'

'Will you tell me your name?' said Anais, gently for her.

'I am named Gaston Amoureux. There is irony in that name for a man as solitary as I am. But you will not forget about - what you promised, if I fall beside you?'

'I will remember, Gaston Amoureux,' said Anais gravely.

After that the man marched along proudly and swiftly with the three *flingots* over his shoulder like so many feathers.

'I have seen you before in the hospitals, Mademoiselle,' he said, 'when I went to St. Sulpice to visit a friend. You are the daughter of our old Commander-in-Chief. I always said he would fight - and you, I see, you fight also. But why do you - it is not your quarrel?'

'It is my father's - the quarrel we have made our own. If there be no hope for you, there is surely none for my father. And I am with my father. Would you have me leave him?'

The man of the 17th shook his head sadly, and so they tramped on into the night. In the first rank went General Decies, tall and silent, but noble as though he had been leading his Guards at Inkermann instead of the irregular levies of a Parisian revolt in its death agony.

Anais was between him and the man with the three rifles on his shoulder. All were silent, and

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behind them the tread of the squadrons sounded heavily through the night. They saw their reflections cast forward by the flame-dance which had begun to shoot up behind them. But all were too weary and too set on their purpose to notice the unwonted illumination.

Presently this ceased too. The streets in the districts occupied by the Communists were still comparatively well lighted. The gasometers had been seen to, and they proceeded quickly till they were checked at the entrance of a great boulevard which led northward towards Montmartre.

Here the illumination ceased suddenly. What seemed to be a wide abyss of darkness yawned under their feet, and they stood aghast before the gulf of blackness, till the warning cry of the Federal sentries reached them like a hail from the sea.

'Passez au large!' 'Keep well away'

So back they went, marvelling what misfortune had befallen all their own beloved *Quartier* of Montmartre, where the guns were, and from which the pick of the fighting battalions had always come.

They were directed to the great defences which were rising about the Place de la Bastille and the Place du Trone. Behind, in a cheerful halo of light, lay the last strongholds of the revolt - Belleville, Menilmontant, La Villette. Beyond that were only "the wall" and the hopelessness of retreat. The word had come also that the Versaillist troops were taking no prisoners in the fighting districts. All were shot immediately and indiscriminately. The powder-grimed men, who a few months before had been patriot citizens keeping their watch on the ramparts to guard against Prussian attacks, did not flinch. All who held on after the first hour of surprise fought

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with an entire contempt of death, and, as the Versaillist writers themselves admit, with a courage worthy of a better cause,

Yet the fault was not so much in the Cause. All (or almost all) has long been conceded to London which Paris asked for in 1871, and no one is a penny the worse. But the Cause of self-government was killed by the bellowing vanities and cruelties of the leaders - leaders who for the most part disappeared when real danger began to threaten the movement.

The terrible blots on the last days of the Commune were hardly known at all among the men of the barricades. It was not they who executed the gendarmes, nor murdered the hostages, nor killed Chaudey, nor took part in the nameless brutalities of the Rue Haxo of ghastly memory.

They had too much and too hard fighting to do. These things by which the name of the Commune has been blackened - and is still perhaps so hopelessly besmirched so that no fuller on earth can white it - were the work of the disappointed men of the Central Bureaux, none of whom (except Genton) were ever seen behind the barricades - and he was but a subordinate, a ruffler in the train of Raoul Rigault.

Few of the fighters who fought till the afternoon of Sunday the 28th, ever so much as heard of the massacres, the killings, the slaughtered hostages of the previous days. They had no part in them. They had come down to fight it out, now that the enemy was within their walls. More, and still stranger, they did not hear of the wholesale massacres of their own men, except by the kind of vague hearsay I have mentioned. They knew that no quarter had been

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intended, but still they themselves stepped "to the wall," as the word went during the Bloody Week, they did not realise that the thing could happen to them. In fact they fought death as if there was no such thing as death.

Out of all the conflicting accounts, ranging from the academic untruthfulness of Maxime du Camp to the heedless enthusiasm of Camille Pelletan, and the wonderfully lucid paragraphs of the first Belgian edition of Lissagaray, beloved of Karl Marx, there may be distilled this - that the troops of Versailles shot by order and without discrimination to the number of at least 40,000 men, while the Commune, by the hands of two or three of its most violent members, aided by the blind angers of a few score of armed *apaches* who were never seen behind a barricade, murdered something less than a hundred and fifty. But in this slaughter, terrible and savage as it was, the men who were presently to be mowed down by thousands took no part. They did not even know of it. Not only did Delescluse not know, but neither did Anais nor her father, nor yet Lisbonne, the defender of many barricades. Still less the ordinary fighting men of the revolt, who flocked into the streets to the defence of the invaded *Quartiers*.

* * * * *

But it was not from Paris itself that the Red Twilight could be seen. Not Anais, levelling her heated rifle behind the barricade at the Château d'Eau, nor even Jean, labouring among his machine-guns and three-pounders, that he might distribute them fairly among the commanders who constantly demanded artillery from his hands - but

Nini and her maid Margot Simon, under the protection of Bibi le Bonhomme from the high ground above St. Cyr, saw the clear night of stars over Paris change to a ruddy wondrous glow as building after building, quarter after quarter, went up in flames.

'Paris is being destroyed!' said Nini, in an awed whisper. And all the crowd murmured in unison. 'Paris is in flames!'

They could not see the actual burning. The hills about Sevres were too high. They only beheld the reflection – the "skarrow" in the sky, the infernal heliograph of the deadly work which was being done in that brazier of a half-captured city.

Some were of milder councils, or, like good property owners all the world over, hoped for the best where their interests as landlords and taxpayers were so deeply involved.

'It is only the soldiers who are burning straw in the streets,' they said, 'we saw them do the same after the Prussians had evacuated the quarter of the Champs Elysées on the 3rd of March!'

But the speakers of smooth things were laughed down, and properly so. For there was not enough straw in Paris to cause such a marvellous glow. It was weird and irregular, now shooting up half way to the zenith and anon sinking till only a rim of red could be seen over the hills of Sevres and Meudon. Another gust of red smoke that seemed to storm the heavens! Then would come a widening out - and over all, a strange impressive silence. It was the end of the world seen in a dream, Titanic entrenchments, defended by fiery giants, rising to their full stature, crowning themselves with stars, and then falling as suddenly dead.

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And what impressed Nini and the people of Versailles most of all was the disquieting silence - Mont Valérien silent - the great batteries of General de Larzac, Montretout, Meudon, Mourmillan, all deathly silent, their positions not marked by a flicker, and all lanterns extinguished along the trenches of approach.

But over Paris, making all hearts faint with fear, intimidating the Chief of the State, as well as the aching woman's heart of Nini Auroy, there shot up, culminated, flickered and fell the Great Red Twilight, seen in the darkness of the moonless night.

CHAPTER FORTY TWO

FACING THE RIFLES

Jean had done his duty. He had been proud of the ready mobility of his artillery, for he had arrived within the gates at the same time that Douay was still feeling his way up the long slopes of the Avenue de la Grande Armée. His were the guns which had engaged and silenced the Communard batteries on the Arc de Triomphe. Long Landry, though he despised the work of three-pounders, took naturally to the Larzac machine-gun, perhaps because it was Jean's invention.

He had finished his work so well that little damage to the great monument had been done. If anybody could hasten the retreat of the artillerymen of the Commune, it was Long Landry. And indeed with the troops of Bruat marching upon them from two sides, and those of Douay armed with the newest artillery marching straight upon their positions, what were they to do?

'I wonder,' said Jean, as he helped to haul his guns, fifty men to a trace-rope, over some rather ill-nourished barricades, 'who gave himself all this trouble for nothing. The infantrymen simply go over them at the trot. They only use them for shooting poor devils against when they catch them. But they are the mischief and all for our fellows of the artillery.'

So whenever it was possible Jean took his guns round by a side street, and it was thus that the turning movements, which eventually conquered all Paris, were first inaugurated - in order to save rope-

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haulage for Jean's guns. It was not till the third day of the battle that Jean saw much of the hand-to-hand fighting. He had to transform himself into an Artillery Commander-in-Chief, with a staff of gallopers at hand and the field telegraph following him closely, while he proportioned his guns to the needs of the attack on South, West and North.

But at least he could do what he chose. As Vinoy had foretold, Monsieur Thiers' orders had an odd trick of getting lost in transmission. MacMahon, however, guided the whole enveloping movement, and called upon General de Larzac for the guns he could spare him.

On the whole Jean was glad of the respite. He passed places where the dead bodies of National Guards lay piled high. He saw walls in front of which they had fallen like the wreckage of a mighty blast. He had so far escaped all that and was thankful.

But on the Wednesday (after the Sunday afternoon when the troops entered) all was changed for Jean. His guns were completely distributed, and MacMahon bade him push forward with his spare artillerymen, a few hundred sailors of the fleet, and three of his mitrailleuses. Long Landry was also there. He stayed by Jean always, except when he was sent for by a neighbouring battery to help "lift" some difficult stronghold. Then he would saunter back again to wait in Jean's ante-room with his arms folded on his breast and on his face the most child-like smile in the world.

That day Jean learned many things. His men were becoming fevered with the smell of powder, infuriated by the eternal hedgehogs of the barricades which they were called upon to take, the shining bayonets, the dark gun muzzles belching fire. Soon

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their own faces were black with smoke, and their sword-bayonets shone no more. A sailor or an engineer would be found fighting with any weapon he could pick up, while to many the unused Chassepots, two hundred thousand of them, stored at the Ecole Militaire had already been served out. This involved frequent interchanges of ammunition, and every dead Communist was ransacked for cartridges.

Officers grew weary of ordering men "to the wall," and dropping their sword for the fusillade. The feeling passed away like the disgust of seeing an operation from a first-year's student of the medical schools. But very few, except the gendarmes and some of the corps of Vinoy, which from the first had shot all comers, had in this matter yet got their second wind.

There was a slackening of the attack on the night of Wednesday. The great redoubt of Château d'Eau had yet to be carried. It was being held magnificently. But the new corps from the Northern wall, and those who could be spared from Montmartre, made night marches, and were soon upon the scene in overwhelming numbers. Yet still the barricade held out.

The morning of Thursday announced itself of the most superb. So far to the East, beyond the burning buildings of the Red Dawn, there was only a faint but pervading silver-grey haze in the atmosphere.

Jean had with him his trio of Larzac guns, Long Landry, his squadron of artillerymen, a few unattached engineers eager to pierce walls, and a whole ship's crew of bluejackets, men capable of the most extraordinary celerity of movement and armed in a variety of ways - chassepots, *tabatières*,

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revolvers - but all of them ever on the look out for the means of bettering their equipment or adding to their stores of ammunition.

The task was noways pleasant. They had to keep well to the northward of the Château d'Eau, and try to find a street or alley-way which would lead them to the back of the stronghold of the revolt. Continually they found themselves being shot at from windows. Several were wounded. Then they would suddenly butt up against one of the rickety barricades which, when desperately defended, often cost as much to capture as the most solidly constructed masterpiece of the Père Gaillard.

Rattle - rattle would go the musketry. A man or two would fall, at which Jean swore between his teeth. The machine-guns would snarl and little flirts of dust begin to fly. A party would be detached, a way found to the rear, perhaps by the engineers piercing a wall or two, whereupon would ensue a *sauve qui peut* of the defenders, leaving half their force on the field.

There was no doubt about it. The Commune was fighting its last battle. After the Château d'Eau the resistance became only the furious turning, running, and biting of rats in a trap.

Late in the afternoon, Jean, with the number of his men somewhat diminished, came out upon a large open space near La Villette. Here were scouts of Cissey's division and dismounted cavalry with carbines. A barricade had been stretched across the eastern and northern entrances, and there were many dead bodies behind the barricades - the red breeches of the regulars being as numerous as the sombre uniforms of the National Guards. The fighting therefore had been dogged.

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As Jean's troops debouched into the powder-smelling haze of the wide square, he saw among the green treelets accurately aligned, some one who vehemently signalled to him. He went nearer and saw that it was Ripert.

'My men have gone on,' he cried; 'I must follow as hard as I can. We have trapped the rascals at last. Shoot me that man there and the girl. She is the worst of the gang. She has accounted for four of my best troopers - shot them dead with her own hand as we were coming over the barricade.'

And with this recommendation Ripert was gone.

Jean saw a few of the dismounted dragoons lingering. 'Come,' he cried, 'after your officer!'

But they had a private vengeance to satisfy first. A tall, black-bearded man was thrust against the wall by fierce drives of the gun-butt, and even as Jean looked the shots rang out! The man fell, and a sergeant stepped quickly up to give the *coup de grace*, and the dragoons passed on.

Then Jean became conscious of a girl kneeling beside the black-bearded man. She lifted his *képi* and kissed him on the brow. Then she stood and faced the *peloton* of execution, which, well accustomed to such things, had put itself into position. The rifles were already being loaded. Jean heard the click of the locking-gear.

It was Anais. Her hair streamed down her back, and she put up powder-stained hands to adjust it in a great coil on the top of her head. From the first moment Jean was conscious that she recognised him. But she gave no sign. She stood up proudly and willingly with her back to the blood-spattered wall. The dead body of the man of the 17th was directly in front of her. An engineer hauled him off

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by the shoulders, so that he would not be in the way of the line of fire.

Jean had his sword in his hand, and it gleamed in the mellow glow of the hot afternoon sun as if ready to fall. The men looked over their shoulders to know if their officer was not coming to the front. They wondered at this hesitation.

'See, you men,' said Jean to the sailors, 'go on with this quarter-master of yours. Follow the dismounted cavalry who have just left the square - you can ask for Colonel Ripert, and tell him that I sent you to reinforce him. You engineers, be off to scout along all the north-looking streets, then come back to report to me in an hour.'

Jean heaved a sigh of relief as he saw them obey.

'Long Landry,' he said, 'do you like shooting girls? - I saw this one last in a hospital. Go and tell the men to hold their tongues. There are only our own artillery fellows, I think?'

'Yes, General - gunners every man of them. Of course they will hold their tongues.'

'Well, I am going to talk to the girl. You hear, Long Landry? I may take her a little way along the road to Menilmonant to converse at my leisure. You understand, Long Landry?'

'I hear, sir!' (As to understanding, *that* was not Long Landry's business.)

'And in the meantime, get the gun teams out, and let nobody into the square by either entrance - not even our own people. Say that it is by the order of General de Larzac, chief of the Artillery. They must go round another way.'

Long Landry saluted and retired. They could hear him shouting, 'Gun teams there - double for each piece! And the rest stand by to relay!'

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'Now,' said Long Landry to the men as they took their stations, 'you have not seen that girl. There never was any girl. The girl whom Ripert saw was killed by his own men. Our General is going to take a little walk - a tour of inspection. Is there any swab that dares say a word? If so, let him come out here. Of course not. You are for our own General and hang everybody else - just the same as me!'

And as Jean went up to Anais, the backs of Long Landry and his gunners were discreetly turned the other way. Jean and Anais were really alone in that thunderous devildom which was the last writhing agony of Paris.

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CHAPTER FORTY THREE

THE PRICE OF A SOUL

Anais saw him come, and with a passionate gesture, threw out her hands to keep him off. She felt at that moment that she hated him intensely. She had an intense loathing of life received from his hands.

'Keep off,' she cried; 'why do not you shoot me as you shot my friend, my comrade?'

'I did not shoot your friend,' said Jean gently, 'and I am not going to shoot you. It was for that I got rid of these sailors and the engineers. Now there remains only my own picked gunners. Let me save you, Anais - let me help you for the sake of the old times on the Larzac, for the sake of our ancient friendship - '

She bent down, lifted up the disfigured head, and kissed the dark man who had been a porter at the docks of La Villette just behind them. Then she cried, 'He is my friend - not you. I refuse to accept life at your hands, Jean de Larzac. Get you gone to your own butcherly crew. Shoot me as you have done the others. I am no better than they are. See my hands. It is always the hands you look at. And see my shoulder. Your courteous dragoons have already looked at that, so you may see.'

She showed her shoulder all black and blue with the kick of the piece she had been handling. Yet her dress was unruffled save for the tear at the shoulder where ungentle hands had ripped the seam to find one proof the more of her guilt.

'Do you wonder now that I crave death?' she said. 'I have been among your brutes. But I did my best to

kill them. You heard your friend say that I had killed four. He told less than the truth - I have killed many!’

Anais was quite wild, and Jean was at his wits' end to find a way to save her. He could have done so easily enough if she would have obeyed his directions and left her fate in his hands. He could even have taken her across the city with an escort of his men, under his own protection to little Madame Lisbonne at Grenelle.

But at that moment Anais was far beyond all argument. Suddenly he bethought himself.

‘And your father, Anais - where is he?’

The girl winced a little, but she answered with that new truculence and hatred which hurt Jean so deeply. ‘He is in one of the houses over there. He was hurt on the head by a tile that fell from the roof, dislodged by one of your shells, probably.’

‘I have no guns that carry shells with me,’ said Jean gently, ‘therefore the fault was not mine.’

Then he thought a little, looking carefully about him. They were on a wide square of ground which had been prepared to be used for the recent extension of the Villette-St. Martin's canal. They were sufficiently out of the way. The houses about were old and had already been condemned in the days of Haussmann. Since then they had not improved in appearance or comfort. ‘Come,’ said Jean, ‘take me to your father. Perhaps we can save him between us’

‘Jean de Larzac, bombardier, killer of the innocent, hired butcher of the Assembly of Versailles, we want none of your saving - my father no more than I!’

‘Well, at any rate,’ said Jean, ‘you are no true

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daughter if you refuse him the right of choice. I can save him. At least I think so. Therefore let me see him.'

'Remember, if you come,' said the girl, 'you come, at the risk of your life!'

Jean shrugged his shoulders, very slightly.

'I am risking it every moment, standing here with you in the open,' he said; 'let us get to some place where there will be a chance of privacy.'

He could see Long Landry and his divided force of gunners. The long gun-layer was standing on the fragment of a barricade, a tricolour in his hand, and the echo of his voice came faint to them: '*Au Large!* Keep away wide there!'

'At the risk of your life, remember that, Jean de Larzac,' Anais repeated, 'and I will do nothing to save you.'

'Not even for the sake of Nini?' said Jean.

'For the sake of Nini?' Anais repeated uncertainly; 'then you are married?'

'We are not married,' said Jean, 'but if I get back with my life out of this hell we shall be married and -'

'Yes, I know - and go to the old house on the Dourbie-side beneath the Larzac, where the trees climb up and where -'

Something pitiful came into the voice of Anais.

'Come and see my father, if you will, and you shall not lose your life through me. You cannot help us - I warn you of that. But I will do the best I can for you - for the sake of the green walk above Nant, and the heather and the old three-cornered rainpools in the rocks, and the old towers which you will make all new and beautiful for Nini!'

She turned from the wall against which she had

been standing in the very attitude she had taken before the execution squad. Her eyes were no more glad nor yet more wistful than they had been when they looked along the levelled rifles of the soldiers. Only the deadly anger had died out of them. She did not hate Jean de Larzac any more. The thought that she might have sat where Nini was going to sit, roused no jealousy. On the contrary, some nobler passion was awakened, for in this thing Anais was not made as other women are.

She could not be jealous. The idea that Nini would pass many quiet years of a happy life in the spot she loved so well - instead of arousing hatred - was a reason for preserving the life of Jean, who alone could make Nini happy. For Anais knew well that she was leading him into a hiding-place of desperate men. They turned to the left up a narrow street which led to a row of houses partly demolished. Beyond, they could see the grimy waters of the docks of La Villette transfigured by the sun.

Anais knocked at the outer door, and through a barred opening a figure was seen dimly within. 'It is all right' said Anais; 'I vouch for this man. He saved my life, and has come to see my father, General Decies.'

For already the muzzles of three or four rifles had been thrust through the grille. 'Does he come alone?' a voice demanded.

'Alone, and on an errand of mercy. I have promised that he shall go as he came. He will do no harm to any in the house.'

The door was opened cautiously, and Jean entered, treading in the steps of Anais. He had good reason to walk warily. Here were many Communard wounded, all desperate, all armed, all determined to

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sell their lives at the fullest value.

'Where is my father?' said Anais, without troubling herself as to the levelled revolvers and the half-lowered bayonets. She took Jean's arm as the passage-way opened out, but Jean knew that it was from a sense of protection and not because of any return of old affection. In fact it was for Nini's sake - that Jean might return, to her friend - she who was fated to be happy. She should have him safe and sound, so far as Anais was concerned.

General Decies in full uniform, but with a soldier's cartridge belt about his waist, was sitting idly gazing out of the window. He looked up, and without the least surprise recognised his visitor.

'Ah, Jean,' he said, rising and holding out his hand; 'so Anais has brought you back?'

'He saved my life - *for the moment!*' said Anais. She spoke the last words almost in a whisper, as though to herself alone.

'Sir,' said Jean, sitting down close to the old man, 'I trust that you are not badly hurt!'

'I am not hurt at all,' affirmed General Decies. 'A tile fell from a roof on my head in some oblique fashion, and for a few minutes I was not myself. But now I am going back to my men on the barricade at the Château d'Eau!'

'I beg of you, sir, to let me use my influence to save you. I am for the time being in command of this quarter of Paris, and if you will put on a suit of ordinary clothes and persuade Anais to do the like, I have no doubt -'

'General de Larzac,' said the old soldier, 'I thank you. There are not many in the world who would risk so much even for a friend. And, sir, you and I have never been friends. Only I know a gentleman

when I see one. If Anais had chosen - but then she has not. She has taken the hard path from which there is no going back. She and I go together - because she has chosen her father.'

'Yes,' said Anais, 'I go with my father.'

The men under my command are defending the barricade of the Château d'Eau. I wish to go back to them. You say that you are in command here. I do not know the extent of your powers, but if you will enable my daughter and myself to rejoin them, I shall give you my hand as one true man to another.'

He looked at his hand thoughtfully before offering it to Jean.

'Once no gentleman of my own country would have taken it. Now it is cleansed. It shall be cleaner yet.'

They issued forth from the house untouched, and as a last counsel to the men within, Jean advised those who could to scatter along the far side of the great Bassin of La Villette.

'There is infinitely more safety there,' he said. 'Coal barges are coming and going every half-hour. You must get out of Paris. Perhaps a little money will help,' he added. 'Who is your treasurer?'

And he poured a handful of gold into the palm of the sturdy grey-bearded man who was thrust forward. The next instant the three were out in the splendour of the sunshine, now westering gently as the setting hour approached. Anais uttered no further word. She took her father's arm, and they walked back into the big square where Long Landry and his men were standing valiantly at their posts. They crossed it, the sun gilding everything with its level beams. The artillerymen gazed at the still brilliant uniform of the General of the Commune

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with dazed eyes.

'Leave the boulevard to the north open,' said Jean. 'Go and keep the little street yonder towards La Villette. Let no one enter till I return. Do not fire unless I give you the order. There are some wounded men thereabouts, whom I would like to see further from the scene of action. If you see them, let them go on their way. We do not fight with cripples!'

The men saluted. They knew he was thinking of grim Vinoy who shot the wounded and hospital patients - all who had fresh wounds, and sometimes the doctors who attended upon them as well! If their General liked to give poor devils a chance - well, that was his business. Theirs was not to get him into trouble.

'*Arch!*' said Long Landry, who always left out the initial consonants from his words of command in imitation of Jean. And the gunners marched accordingly, taking their gun with them.

'I shall need you in a quarter of an hour,' said Jean, 'so do not move from this square. The engineers should be back by that time. Bid them wait for me. Above all, don't move nor let them move when they return.'

'Is it likely, General,' queried Long Landry, 'with me here and your orders to see carried out?'

* * * * *

The three - General Decies, Anais and Jean - walked tranquilly down the long sunny boulevard. Already it was growing misty and hazy with the powder that hung in the air, but the setting sun glorified everything. At last, at the corner of the Faubourg du Temple, they saw the great barricade

of the Château d'Eau which had so long been assaulted in vain.

But now there were no National Guards to be seen alive upon it - only one or two late fighters who paused to fire a last shot before falling back.

'I think, sir, your men are not there,' said Jean.

'They must be,' said General Decies. 'See, there is still our red flag. I planted it myself. Listen to the volleys of the enemy. I tell you the work is hot on the other side! Good-bye! I thank you, General, for helping me to come to my own again. Good-bye; I have never liked you before to-day. But though an enemy, you are a man!' And with a courteous salute he marched away into the eye of the sunset.

'You are not an enemy of mine, Jean,' said Anais. 'No, Jean - no - not for Nini's sake, nor for your own! See, my father is going to his death. Shall I let him go alone? He and I have been together from the beginning. And of late he has made me proud of him. What have I to live for, Jean? I might be a nurse to your children, yours and Nini's. But, even for that I feel no enthusiasm. I shall never have children of my own. I was not born to any such fate. I must go with my father. The way is not long. Say farewell to Nini for me. She will be happy. She was made for youth and life. As for me I was made for - '

She lifted her arm and pointed westward, where the white smoke of the musketry fire rose above the deserted barricade. 'I was made *for that!*' said Anais. A bullet, ripping and ricocheting along the street, gave point to her words.

'Good-bye, Jean - if there be another conscious life, I shall not forget you! My best days were spent with you. I wish I could have loved you - but then' (with her first touch of emotion) 'what would have

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become of Nini? It is better as it is. Kiss me, Jean. I must not let my father get too far away!’

She waved her hand gaily to him as she had done in old days at the corner of the Rue Lepic, when he was not allowed to go so far as the house of Madame Legrand.

Already she was far away, running into the misty light that made a sort of iridescent halo about all things. Jean stood and watched her. Now she had her father by the arm. He walked steadily, leaning a little towards his daughter. In his hand was only the little riding-switch, which he carried tied to his belt. His gun had been left behind. No matter, he would find another.

The two came nearer to the barricade. There was not a man behind it, but this was not known to the assailants on the other side, who kept showering lead upon its abandoned façade as if it had been bristling with soldiers of the revolt.

Now they were immediately at the base. They set foot upon the broad steps which led to the top. Jean could see them, two misty figures enshrined in the mystery of the setting sun. Arm-in-arm they paced slowly to the top. They stood there a single moment black against the full red disk of the sun. And then suddenly, they were not.

The volley had rung out, the smoke mounted white, and Anais and her father were not divided in their deaths.

CHAPTER FORTY FOUR

AN ORDINARY WOMAN

The last flicker of the Red Dawn had long died down. Jean had laid Anais and her father in the cemetery of Montmartre, at the foot of the hill, not far from the grave which many years after was to be Zola's. The iron peace had settled upon Paris. Madame Max was safe in Geneva, and Max himself was cheerfully preparing for his long sojourn in New Caledonia.

It was time for Nini and Jean to leave Paris and the yet more hateful Versailles. As for Jean, he desired never more to look on these cities of the shedding of much blood. He had resolved to retire from the army. More and more was it evident that all who were not of the clan of the Marshal Duke of Magenta were being weeded out.

So Jean went to Mademoiselle Dosne, with whom he had become a great favourite. She was in her pretty sitting-room, the same in which Marie Antoinette had given her *petits soupers*.

'General,' said Mademoiselle Dosne, 'I think you have mistaken the floor. Nini's suite, which is quite ready for her when she is ready for it, is on the floor above! You will not come to see an old woman then.'

'That is what I came to speak to you about,' said Jean earnestly. 'Nini and I have lost a very dear friend - a companion of childhood and our kindest comrade on earth. We would rather be married quietly in some little church. Will you come just the same?'

'But I had looked forward so much to the state

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wedding!' said Mademoiselle; 'it would launch Nini completely, and it had better be soon, for the ground is slipping from under our feet. Monsieur Thiers will not betray the Republic, and if he would I should not let him.'

'You will come early, in the morning, to the little church of Saint Anne at the corner of the Place du Château. It is hardly a stone's-throw from the private garden of the President.'

'For when are you imagining these follies?' demanded Mademoiselle Dosne, shaking all her twinkling white curls at him.

'To-morrow morning at seven o'clock!'

The old lady threw up her hands.

'You are foolish children; and pray what do you intend to do with yourselves?'

'We shall go,' said Jean, 'to a cottage which belongs to my wife, in a village by the water's edge. We shall visit again the place where she nursed me back to life, the orchard where we used to sit. We shall forget about' (he waved his hand towards Paris) 'all that, and we shall not hear *that!*'

He indicated the crepitation of the fusillade on the deadly plateau of Satory, where the victims of the Military Terror perished by batches every day.

'As to that, I shall not argue with a man who wants to be married to-morrow morning,' said Mademoiselle. 'Of course I shall come, and Some One shall come with me, or I am not the woman I take myself for!'

* * * * *

And so it came to pass that Jean de Larzac, General of Artillery, and Nini Auroy were married in

the little church of St. Anne, with a white-haired old lady and a chubby-faced, high-crested little man in black as witnesses. And the little man gave Nini away, and the name he signed in the register, to the awe of the good *curé*, was that of Adolphe Thiers, First President of the Third French Republic.

* * * * *

In the garden of the villa at Les Andeleys stood Long Landry. He had been waiting long and impatiently. Bibi le Bonhomme had of course been in Versailles at the wedding - and also Margot. Bibi it was who had arranged the trains and the relays of horses from Serquigny Junction, and Margot had arranged the bride.

Long Landry stood watching, and when at last the carriage came in sight, and all the village turned out to see Jean in his General's uniform, worn to please the pretty lady who had nursed him back to life among them, Long Landry abased his pride, and stretched himself upon the little brass saluting gun he had brought out of his private hoards. Never had he loaded gun more tenderly, never timed fuse with more care.

'*Bang!*' it said, whereat the horses shied, to be instantly restrained and set in the right way by the strong hand of Bibi le Bonhomme, who was driving the last stage from Vernon.

Later they two sat out in the orchard under the ripening apples. All the plain of Normandy seemed to spread itself out wide before them. The corn was ripe for the sickle. The harvest of apples was already of a good smell, and in front the great river glided by, smoothly and silently as ever.

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'Jean,' said Nini suddenly, 'if Anais had loved you, I should never have known you!'

Jean moved uneasily, but a wave of tenderness swept over him.

'Rest her dear soul,' he said, 'she was the noblest of us all. She saved her father! She gave herself to save him'

'But she never loved you, Jean? Tell me true - now that she is dead and we are married!'

'Never!' said Jean with conviction, 'she never loved me!'

'Thank God!' said Nini, and crushed Jean in her arms.

For, you see, Nini was only an ordinary woman.

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'Mayhap that is the best fortune of all – to be loved by a few greatly and constantly, rather than to be loudly applauded and immediately forgotten by the many.'

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. R. Crockett". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized, with a large "S" and "R" at the beginning.

