



FEATURING WORKS BY AND ABOUT

LOUISE MICHEL,
PAULE MINK, &
SEVERINE

CORVUS EDITIONS

AUGUST 2012

LOUISE MICHEL was born in France in 1830, the child of domestics at the Château of Vroncourt. Educated to be a teacher, she was prevented from working in state schools by her refusal to acknowledge Louis Napoleon. She was active in the Paris Commune, and was subsequently imprisoned and then deported to New Caledonia, where she took the side of the indigenous *kanaks* in their own revolt. During the journey into exile she was convinced to embrace anarchism through contact with Nathalie Lemel. She returned to France in 1880, following the amnesty of the Communards. She was a prolific writer, producing novels, poetry, and political works.

PAULE MINK (1839–1901), was born Adèle Paulina Mekarska, to a French family of Polish descent. Her parents had been influenced by Saint-Simon, and she was a founder of the mutualist *Société fraternelle de l'ouvrière* with André Léo [see issue #1], but she was herself a socialist radical with close contacts in both Blanquist and Guesdist circles. She had four children, and two sons born in the 1880s were named Lucifer-Blanqui-Vercingetorix-Révolution and Spartacus-Blanqui-Révolution. Mink wrote both fiction and non-fiction, and was active in the Paris Commune and the First International.

SÉVERINE was the nom de plume of Caroline Rémy de Guebhard (1855–1929) a radical socialist journalist. She promoted a range of radical causes, and was particularly supportive of anarchists throughout the era of “propaganda by deed.” She wrote for a number of journals, including Marguerite Durand’s daily feminist paper, *La Fronde* [The Sling]. Among her writing is the *Notes d'une frondeuse* [Notes of a Troublemaker, or Anti-Authoritarian], from which this project takes its name.

With the exception of Louise Michel’s “Why I am an Anarchist,” which appeared in English in *Liberty* (UK) in 1896, all texts appear in working translations by Shawn P. Wilbur.

LOUISE MICHEL



WHY I AM AN ANARCHIST.

I am an Anarchist because Anarchy alone, by means of liberty and justice based on equal rights, will make humanity happy, and because Anarchy is the sublimest idea conceivable by man. It is, today, the summit of human wisdom, awaiting discoveries of undreamt of progress on new horizons, as ages roll on and succeed each other in an ever widening circle.

Man will only be conscious when he is free. Anarchy will therefore be the complete separation between the human flocks, composed of slaves and tyrants, as they exist to day, and the free humanity of tomorrow. As soon as man, whoever he may be, comes to power, he suffers its fatal influence and is corrupted; he uses force to defend his person. He is the State; and he considers it a property to be used for his benefit, as a dog considers the bone he gnaws. If power renders a man egotistical and cruel, servitude degrades him. A slave is often worse than his master; nobody knows how tyrannous he would be as a master, or base as a slave, if his own fortune or life were at stake.

To end the horrible misery in which humanity has always dragged a bloody and painful existence incites brave hearts more and: more to battle for justice and truth. The hour is at hand: hastened by the crimes of governors, the law's severity, the impossibility of living in such circumstances, thousands of unfortunates without hope of an end to their tortures, the illusory amelioration of gangrened institutions, the change of power which is but a change of suffering, and man's natural love of life; every man, like every race, looks around to see from which side deliverance will come.

Anarchy will not begin the eternal miseries anew. Humanity in its flight of despair will cling to it in order to emerge from the abyss. It is the rugged ascent of the rock that will lead to the summit; humanity will no longer clutch at rolling stones and tufts of grass, to fall without end.

Anarchy is the new ideal, the progress of which nothing can hinder. Our epoch is as dead as the age of stone. Whether death took place yesterday or a thousand years ago, its vestiges of life are utterly lost. The end of the epoch through which we are passing is only a necropolis full of ashes and bones.

Power, authority, privileges no longer exist for thinkers, for artists, or for any who rebel against the common evil. Science discovers unknown forces that study will yet simplify. The disappearance of the order of things we see at present is near at hand. The world, up till now divided among a few privileged beings, will be taken back by all. And the ignorant alone will be astonished at the conquest of humanity over antique beastiality.

I became definitely an Anarchist when sent to New Caledonia, on a state ship, in order to bring me to repentance for having fought for liberty. I and my companions were kept in cages like lions or tigers during four months. We saw nothing but sky and water, with now and then the white sail of a vessel on the horizon, like a bird's wing in the sky. This impression and the expanse were overwhelming. We had much time to think on board, and by constantly comparing things, events, and men; by having seen my friends of the Commune, who were honest, at work, and who only knew how to throw their lives into the struggle, so much they feared to act ill; I came rapidly to the conclusion that honest men in power are incapable, and that dishonest ones are monsters; that it is impossible to ally liberty with power, and that a revolution whose aim is any form of government would be but a delusion if only a few institutions fell, because everything is bound by indestructible chains in the old world, and everything must be uprooted by the foundations for the new world to grow happy and be at liberty under a free sky.

Anarchism is today the end which progress seeks to attain, and when it has attained it will look forward from there to the edge of a new horizon, which again as soon as it has been reached will disclose another, and so on always, since progress is eternal.

We must fight not only with courage but with logic; that the disinherited masses, who sprinkle every step of progress with their blood, may benefit at last by the supreme struggle soon to be entered upon by human reason together with despair. It is necessary that the true ideal be revealed, grander and more beautiful than all the preceding fictions. And should this ideal be still far off it is worth dying for.

That is why I am an Anarchist.

LOUISE MICHEL

Liberty (UK), 3, 3 (March, 1896), 26.

THE NEW ERA

I

Like sap in April, the blood rises in a secular revival in the old human tree (the old tree of poverty).

Under the humus of the errors which fall and pile up like dead leaves, there are snowdrops and golden daffodils, and the old tree quivers in the vernal breezes.

In the lovely woods the red flowers emerge bloody from the branches; the swollen buds burst. There are new leaves and flowers.

It is a stage of nature.

This will become the deep shrubbery where the nests will be built, where the fruits will ripen; and everything will return to the crucible of universal life.

So blows the morning breeze in the ruddy dawn of the New World.

The religions and states are still there, before our eyes, but do cadavers not maintain a human aspect when we bury them and commit them to the earth?

The pallor, the rigidity of the dead, the odor of decomposition, don't they indicate that all is finished for the being which has ceased to live?

That pallor, that decomposition, the old society already displays them in the throes of its agony.

Rest assured, it will end.

She is dying, that old ogress who has drunk human blood from the start to prolong her accursed existence.

Her provocations, her incessant cruelties, her worn-out plots, none of this will help; it is the winter of the century, and this accursed world must go its way. Here is the spring when the human race will prepare the nest for its little ones, which have been more unfortunate to this point than the offspring of beasts.

This old world must die, since no one is safe any longer, since the instinct of preservation of the race awakens, and each, anxious and breathless in the pestilential ruin, casts a desperate look towards the horizon.

The bridges have been burned. Just yesterday, many believed all that was solid; today, no one but fools or rogues denies the evidence of the facts.—The Revolution imposes itself. The interests of all demand an end to the parasitism.

When a swarm of bees, looted by hornets, has no more honey in its hive, it makes war to the death with the bandits before resuming its labors.

But we parlay with the human hornets, humbly asking them to leave a bit of honey at the bottom of the cells, so that the hive can begin to fill them up again for them.

Animals unite against the common danger; wild cattle go in herds to seek more fertile pastures: together, they circle up against the wolves.

Only human beings will not unite to pass through this terrible era in which we find ourselves! Could we be less intelligent than the beasts?

What will be done for the thousand and thousands of laborers who will starve in the black countries from which they have already drawn so much wealth for their exploiters?

Will they let themselves be slaughtered like bands of wolves?

The Romans, when they were not rich enough to send the excess of their slaves to Carthage, buried them alive. A massacre would have made too much noise; the sandy shroud is silent. Is this how the capitalist sequel will proceed?

Will they fill the prisons with all those dying of hunger? They would soon overflow.

Will they build new ones? There is no longer enough money even for the evil. The follies in Tonkin and elsewhere have absorbed millions, and the secret funds are exhausted to set some traps for the revolutionaries.

Will they try once again to string the people along, to lull them with promises?

That has become difficult. The revanchist Don Quixotes who blow their bugles at the least sign of a Bismarck (to protect them by pretending to threaten them) do not, fortunately, deceive all the young. The spirit of the International has survived the fusillades of Versailles.

Louder and stronger than brass, the calls for Liberty, for Equality, thunder from peak to peak. Their legend awakens new senses.

Now we need the reality of those words, which are written everywhere, but nowhere put into practice.

The human chrysalis evolves: its wings will no longer return to the split husk.

Everything must make its way to the common Ocean, called by the need for renewal, by senses hitherto unknown, the inevitable development of which nothing can halt.

As the drops of water hold to one another in the same wave or the same ocean, all of humanity rolls in the same tempest towards its great goal.

The human beast who, down through the ages, has evolved from the family to the tribe, to the horde, to the nation, climbs, still climbs, and always climbs; and the family becomes the entire race.

The languages, which have evolved according to the vicissitudes of humanity, adopt for their new needs similar words, because all the peoples feel this same need: the Revolution.

And the revolution in science, in the arts, as in industry, makes more and more necessary that universal language which already forms by itself and which will be the corollary of the great dawn.

II

Human society will not have for much longer these wars which only serve its enemies, its masters. Nothing can stop the sun of tomorrow from following our night.

Today no one can live except like a bird on the branch, watched by the cat or the hunter.

The states themselves have the sword of Damocles hanging over their heads. Debt gnaws at them and the borrowing which lets them live wears them out like the rest.

The starving leave the woods; they roam the plains, and enter the towns. The hive, tired of being plundered, buzzes, showing its sting. Those who have created everything, lack everything.

On the corners and in the gutters, they have long died, vagabonds, before the palaces that they have built. The grass of the fields cannot nourish them; it is for the flocks of the wealthy.

There is work only for those who adapt themselves to a derisory wage or who exhaust themselves in a daily task of eight or ten hours.

Then the anger mounts. The exploited feel that they, too, have a heart, a stomach, a brain.

And they are starving, and they do not want to die. And they rise! The peasants light their torches with the lamps of the miners. No proletarian will return to their hole. It is better to die in the revolt.

The revolt! It is the uprising of consciousnesses. It is indignation. It is the claim of violated rights... Who revolts without being wronged?

The more the destitute are weighted down, the more terrible the revolt will be. The more crimes are committed by those who govern, the more we will finally see clearly, and the more implacably justice will be done...

III

— Capital! Says one with fearful respect,—you speak of destroying capital! Huh? ...

Ah! Reason and logic have long since done justice to Capital. Is it superior in essence to labor and science?

Suppose some Rothschilds possess all the gold and diamond mines on the earth. Can they work them without miners? How will they extract the gold from the sand, the diamond from the rock?

Give the exploiters of the quarries some marble without anyone to cut it, without anyone to dig out the blocks...

Let these people know that they are incapable of making good use of anything without the workers. Will they eat the soil if no one makes it produce?

Go on! Go! It has been a long time since the capitalist Bastille mattered to the future.

Besides, the portion of goods that they hold, to the detriment of the disinherited masses, is minimal in comparison with the prodigious riches that science will give us!

We do not destroy hell in the afterlife in order to rebuild it on earth. We must destroy, the day when we are conscious that it is monstrous, this eternally tormenting God, which, being capable of establishing justice everywhere, leaves the world to struggle forever with all sorts of despair, with all the horrors. And at the same time that we demolish the hells of religion, we must destroy the earthly hells, whose bait of selfish rewards only engenders corruption.

It is these corrupting rewards that have made some wait so long that their patience is worn down, and completely persuaded others that everything must pass through *centuries of injustice*, so that their conscience has stiffened and they commit or suffer crime.

That is finished. The veils of all the tabernacles have been torn.

Gone are the thrones, the *chamarreries* of illusory dignities, gone the human bells.

Anything in which we no longer believe is dead.

We begin to notice that the birds, the ants and the bees group freely, to work together and resist the dangers that might arise. The animals give humans an example of sociability.

How will the prison of the past, which the popular tempests strike from all sides, finally fall?

No one knows

Will it crumble in the disasters?

Will the privileged, brought to bay by common misfortunes, make an immense night of August 4?

Will the popular tide cover the world?...

What is certain is that the century will not sleep without the start of the Revolution finally arising. People, like all beings, want to live, and soon no one—not even the exploiter—will be able to live if right does not replace force.

Proletarians, employees, small businesspeople, and small proprietors all sense that everyone, from one end of society to the other, is, in their bitter struggle for existence, at once devouring and devoured.

The large proprietor, the large capitalist, weighs on the small proprietor in the same way that the small shopkeepers weigh on the laborers. And those laborers inflict on one another the same fatal laws of competition, and also have to support the whole weight of the great and small exploiters. So, like grain under the millstone, they are finally ground up.

We notice, besides, that the sun and the air, belonging to all (because they cannot be leased for the profit of a few), nonetheless continue to invigorate nature for the benefit of all. We notice that by taking the train, no traveler prevents others from reaching their destination; and that the letters or telegrams received by some do not prevent the arrival of letters or telegrams to the profit of others.

On the contrary, the more that communications are universalized, the better it is for everyone.

For all these things, there is no need of a government, which hinders, taxes and even wastes at every step, but we do need labor, intelligence, and free development, which invigorates.

In short, the principle of all for all simplifies and expresses itself clearly in our minds.

We can say, however, that the sun and air do not belong equally to everyone, since some have a thousand times more space and light than they need, and the others have a thousand times less; but since the fault lies in social inequalities, it should disappear with them.

The ignorance those faults engender—what a calamity!

Ignorance of the first notions of hygiene is the reason that so many city dwellers—who die without air—still diminish that quantity of air.

As if health—the first of goods—did not require that we sweep away, by ventilation, the miasma from the hovels where we are crammed, and from the factory where we are robbed!

As if to make things healthier, pure air was not the complement of fire!

“Drafts! Drafts!” This tired old tune grates on the ears of those whose childhood has bloomed in the sweet scent of the fields, whose lungs have been filled with the rustic atmosphere of beautiful Nature!

How happy the rich are!

It is a fact that birth and death, those great egalitarians, do not appear in the same way for the rich as for the poor. Given our sinful laws, it could not be otherwise.

But these iniquitous laws will disappear with the rest: we must pull up the thatch and turn the earth, in order to sow the new wheat.

IV

Let us suppose that the thing is done, that in the revolutionary tempest, the wreckage on which we float finally touches the beach, despite those who, stupidly, prefer to squander themselves with the present society.

Let us suppose that the worker hive spreads freely in space. Here is what it would say:

— We can no longer live like our stone-age ancestors, nor as in the past century, since the successive inventions, the discoveries of science have brought about the certainty that all will produce a hundredfold when we use these discoveries for the general well-being, instead of only allowing a handful of predators to help themselves to them, in order to starve the rest.

The machines, each of which kill hundreds of workers, because they have never been employed except for the exploitation of man by man, will be, when employed for all, one of the sources of infinite wealth.

Up to the present, the people have been victims of the machine. We have only perfected the gears which multiply labor; we have not touched the economic gears which tear the laborers in their teeth.

Too bad! Since we can't establish abattoirs to rid ourselves of the proletarians exhausted before their time, the machine takes care of it, and it would be wrong to hinder such *great works*.

Well! On the contrary, the machine, become the slave of the worker, would produce for each, for the general profit, what is presently produced by such a great number of the exploited for the benefit of the few, and often the single individual who exploits them. And even then, each would have every day, for their rest or their studies, more time and more leisure than they can have, now, in the whole week.

Rest after labor! Study! It is so good! And so rare, except for the wealthy, who have too much of it.

As much as the one who never works is unaware of the advantages of a bit of rest, the overworked being aspires to it.

Those whose brains have narrowed, walled off by selfishness, no longer have ideas. They no longer shine; they are dead.

On the other hand, the brain, like the stomach of the worker, becomes greedy from the voracious activity of a whole race without food for centuries, an activity prepared even more by the virile era of humanity. In uncultivated brains sprout some strong, proud ideas, like the shoots of the virgin forests.

It is indeed the time of renewal.

Meanwhile, you know the verses of the good Lafontaine:

*Pour un âne enlevé, deux voleurs se battaient:
Survint un troisième larron
Qui saisit maître Aliboron...¹*

Such is the history of the governments which legislate and the gluttonous financial companies which starve the strikers and feed themselves on the detritus of the old societies. Governments and companies harass them, always holding the guns of order at their throat, and debate whether it will be the company or the state that will resume the exploitation (as at Decazeville).

In comes the third robber of fable, in the form of collapse, which destroys the mine without miners, the abandoned mine where the coal dust ignites, the mine invaded by water, which rushes in as soon as one no longer fights it.

Everywhere that the creative hand of the pioneer is no longer applied, industry dies, and that creative hand, that hand of the pioneer alone will resuscitate, it as soon as it can without forfeiture. And it can when the mine belongs to those who dig it, the earth to those who make it produce, the machine to those who make it grind, that is when all the means of producing and all the products belong to each and all.

The Revolution, the violent Revolution is hastened, prompted, and rendered inevitable by the panic of power.

Property is no more if the proletarians prefer to starve rather than to fatten their masters, their bloodsuckers, and Capital will have had its day, like all other errors, when we wish it so.

¹ THE ROBBERS AND THE ASS.

Two Thieves stole an Ass: but we frequently see
Two of this trade, like other trades, cannot agree,
One would take him to market—the other would not—
So reproaches were mingled with arguments hot.
From words the dispute quickly ripened to blows,
Breasts resounded with thumps, and blood streamed from each nose;
But whilst in this desperate contest they grapple.
Comes up a third Robber and makes off with Dapple.
Whilst two petty Princes in quarrels engage.
And war for some grass-plat most royally wage,
In steps Buonaparte, or some other swabber,
Takes the prize for himself, and makes peace for each robber.

If it pleases the workers to strike, if they choose to rebel, the earth will be black with human ants. They are the many, an immense number who have never known their strength: despair will teach it to them.

The blows of the whip teach the lion in a cage, as the blows of the club teach the bull in the slaughterhouse. Then the lion takes the comedian who has whipped it in its claws; the bull breaks the rope which holds its head in the killing ring, escapes and sows terror in its wake.

We have seen it in 1793 and on March 18, and we have seen it at Decazeville when the measure has been satisfied. We will see it elsewhere, perhaps one day at Vierzon.

V

Nothing is useless in nature. Like the spring buds which cover the trees in April, the new meanings which fill the brains of the crowds do not remain without shoots, and they will not germinate in vain.

Observe this: the majority of the strikers, whether at Decazeville or at Borinage, do not know a word of socialism. The words Liberty and Equality, which they spell out on the pediments of the buildings, tell them nothing.

But they have cast such hot scents, those words, that everywhere they become rudimentary senses and make it so that everywhere the human race must replace the human cattle that we still are.

The last of the great solitary bards is dead. Here is a choir of bards, and the bards are the crowds. As each speaks, as each walks, each will make use of their ears, their voices, their eyes.

The ear develops through music education; the eyes become correct among the painters; the hands, which, in the sculptor, know how to carve wood, marble and stone, will become, through practice, expert in all. For no one has eyes, ears and hand in order not to make use of them, and the race will attain a degree of expertise that is difficult to comprehend.

It will be magnificent, that new legend sung by those who will succeed us.

All being poets, all being scholars, all knowing how to use faculties hitherto rudimentary, no part of our present savagery will remain.

Humanity finally evolving in the full light of liberty, some objections, based then on the mores of today, will be still less valid.

— How will the idle live? How will envy and jealousy come to an arrangement with equality?

— In the midst of general well-being won't these arguments fail by themselves?

Well indeed! How will the idlers live?

Haven't they already maimed body and mind long enough, these lazy sorts, people who, by atavism, will pass on some present infirmities?

The lazy, like the blind or the deaf, are cripples who have a right to live, and they will live, or rather they will vegetate without harming anyone.

As to jealousy and envy, etc., will such states be possible? Since the machine will be in the service of humans, and work for the profit of all, what use will it serve to envy what we can always be sure of possessing in all fullness?

Won't universalized science prevent the follies of pride?

Will the laborers, then, remain chained to a trade that they cannot do, from lack of aptitude or because it does not please them to exercise it? By changing groups won't they always find new resources?

Instead of inheritances which make parricides, each will have the heritage of humanity, an immense inheritance, of which we can hardly form an idea, in the form of wealth of every sort, or rather from all the sorts of labor, in their boundless varieties.

Free groups of free individuals, labor done for the good of each and all: we must reach this state (by necessity), since some idlers, some monstrous parasites, cannot make disappear, at their will, the numberless legions, the rumbling legions of those who labor.

Must those whose death would prevent nothing from advancing cause the loss of the entire species?

Things, moreover, will be much simplified: Europe, and the universe experience the very anxieties which are the prelude to the birth of the New World, a birth which already makes the entrails of every thinker tremble.

The ages of stone and bronze have passed; our age will pass: we feel the spasms of its agony, and in its death that we see the history of all the bygone eras.

Each of them carries cold the things which have inflamed them; they are finished: then in the renewal burgeon things regarded as utopias in the last stage.

The ideas laid down as markers by lost sentinels serve new explorers and, we go constantly towards times incomparably closer to the Ideal.

Between those times and our own is precisely the period when humanity, becoming virile, no longer tolerates without balking the chains which immobilize it in the rut.

No soothing promise will lull any longer those who have seen the misfortunes piled on our species by credulity, not even the shimmerings of improvement based on vain words.

The words are blown by all the winds: oaths and laments fall together in the eternal sweeping.

It is this which, under the name of parliamentary government, prolongs the present stage where we tread.

A turbulent stage where vertigo inhabits the summits of power more and more: powerlessness, parasitism, stupidity, madness, propped up one on the other, are still standing.

But what ruin lasts forever?

Also, is there any doubt that the most abominable of all the infirmities—our social state—must soon disappear.

When that society becomes cut-throat, it is absolutely necessary to be done with it.

VI

Do you know how we will realize that the old world no longer exists? Only those who are returned to the light, to security, from their dungeons could tell.

Groups formed by the common danger and alone surviving the common ruin naturally recapture the things of general interest, from which today our mortal enemies are the only ones to benefit:

Postal services, railways, telegraphs, mining, agriculture, will be more active as communications between the workers will have the overabundance of life of the delivered crowds—finally breathing free.

No more wars, no more parasites to gorge. The power of men over things—so much greater so much more beneficial than the power of individuals over one another—will have been destroyed.

No more struggle for existence—struggles like those of the wildcats: all the forces to multiply productions, in order that each being swim in the abundance; all the new inventions—and science, finally free in his investigations—serving, for the first time, all of humanity: radiant, fertile, audacious, they will strike with their brilliance everything that at this hour is still weakened, stifled, and darkened.

If it expends, alas! so many efforts to impede irresistible march of progress, it is because, in addition to those who live in ignorance, error, and injustice, there are those who die in it and find that good; there are also the laggards insisting on useless things because they have cost them a lot to capture—it is natural—and it is not with words that we will cure people of such crushes: only catastrophes could suffice.

We will still debate in our bourgeois (and even revolutionary) chatter when the tidal wave of the starving passes over the heads of everyone.

It rises swiftly, and, by gaps made all over the map—at Decazeville, in Belgium, England, and America—the reefs which protect the worm-eaten world from day to day are breached and it is through these breaches that will pass the ocean of revolt which roars everywhere. (Everything comes in its time.)

It is into that ocean that the human rivers rush: so it goes. Arts, literature, sciences, thus all drown under the flood of the red dawn of the twentieth century which already shines.

And under the flood of that growing dawn, like a fused mass of dust the little conceits become the immense love of human progress; and the bells of celebrity, of honors, cease to ring for ears, and for hearts burning with a thirst for perfectibility.

All that seems indecipherable to us—electricity, magnetism—will, in twenty-five years, have given such results that by joining the discoveries on chemistry, agriculture, and mechanism, one will demand, stupefied, how the men of our era could believe that the poverty that decimates the masses was an inevitable calamity and was necessary to the well-being of a handful of the privileged!

Is it not high time that everyone is privileged, you privileged! Hasn't this already gone on long enough? Has it been long enough that each has dragged their ball, that each takes hold of their chain without managing to break it! Broken? Thus they will all be.

"Here is the Red Easter," says the song of the peasants.

The red Easter after which the human chrysalis will have evolved, urged by the breath of Germinal, to be cast finally onto the earth, the wings torn,

perhaps. What does it matter! It has felt the free air: others will fly there, and overcome by the same sublime fervor, all will fly in their turn.

VII

Why always compare what happens under this foul regime to that which will occur in healthy environments?

Are the windows closed to winter snows not opened wide to the hot breath of summer?

Do the ages of life have the same needs, the same aptitudes?

Thus, let us stop these pointless arguments.

Are not new needs, and new aptitudes, in their turn, the sources of other needs awakening other aptitudes?

Individuals shape themselves in the arts, in the sciences, in ideas of justice, as in the blind proteus the visual sense evolves when stimulated by the light; and despite unfavorable environments, the human beast, finally, also feels itself called by some luminous horizons.

From fire stolen from a smoking crater, from forests set afire by lightning, or even from the simple rubbing together of two bits of wood, comes such a great push forward, so that after having chained Prometheus to the rocky peak where the vultures will devour him, men will worship fire and deify it.

Nothing is more expressive than that legend.

Always those who are the most interested in progress rebel most fiercely against this progress.

We killed the first to make fire; we beat the first who, proclaiming the movement of the earth around the sun, destroyed the legend of Joshua, as one removes a stone from a citadel.

Always those who attack gods and kings will be broken in the struggle; yet the gods are fallen, the kings fall, and soon the words of Blanqui are borne out: "Neither God nor master!"

Let Prometheus be delivered to the vultures. Does that prevent the tribe from gathering together at the common hearth? Does that prevent steam from making marvels, electricity from promising some even greater ones?

On the contrary, the blood-drenched idea germinates better and more quickly, it branches more extensively; in brains scoured by sorrow, electrified by ardent passions, fiercely generous, it is fertilized; and, like the wild grass, it will become wheat.

The more men are broken, the more profoundly, if not more rapidly, ideas are spread.

We see far through the cell windows. In the great silence, being grows in all of humanity. We see in advance, the present disappearing: the mind, which urges the New Era, glides in the Future.

At present, struggle is made supreme by the course of events, of pressing circumstances, which, at our end of the century, corner the old society like an enraged beast that labor and science replaces even before it is brought down.

Why does it smother us in its death spasms, the cursed beast, since it will die?

Right must triumph, unless the workers are slaughtered, knocked senseless, or shot like packs of wolves which howl with hunger.

And those who produce everything, and have neither bread, nor shelter, begin to sense that each and every being should have its place at the banquet of plenty.

We can no more prevent the enlargement of human societies than we can make the adult human return to its cradle.

The world has had its early childhood cradled by legends, then, its chivalrous youth, and then its virile age, which already prepares the nest of the races to come.

Some individualities take shape: the humanity where all the beings live and multiply is at once one and multiple.

Some bold, strange figures pass who join the new idea to the types of former times.

If there are, alas! some grasping humans for whom the blood of the whole world will not suffice: finance, power, stupidity, cowardice, monsters teeming in our soil—and it is not too much for all the masses to stifle them there—we also have some fakirs sowing their life like we pour a cup, some for the idea, others for science, but all for the great triumph.

After its struggles, the race, wanting to live, will gather on the liberated soil.

The stars attract one another and gravitate together in the stellar spaces: just so the men, freely, take their place in groups.

Free labor, conscious, enlightened, will make fertile crops where there is now only empty countryside

The forces of storms and torrents, used as a tool, will crush rocks, and cut passages in the mountains in order to make one single human paradise of the two hemispheres.

Submarine vessels exploring the depths of the ocean will uncover the lost continents: and Atlantis will perhaps appear to us, dead under its shroud of tides and lying pale in cyclopean ruins garlanded with gigantic coral and sea grass.

Electricity will carry aerial vessels above the polar ice caps, to witness the night of six months under the red fringe of the polar auroras.

How many things do we see when we look forward, things so great that when we think about them it becomes impossible to concern ourselves with our wretched person!

Thinking about them, personalities will be far off!

Each will live, happy and harmless, in all of humanity, helping to multiply strength, life, and thought of all indefinitely.

VIII

Ideas formed in our shade, and now their flames dart; we see everywhere, in their true light the things that darkness made vague and misleading.

Here they are in life, the ideas of Liberty, Equality, Justice, so long displayed in jails.

We admire the works of a gathering of scholars, artists, or laborers; we admire the monuments on which generations of men have labored.

These ideas flash and blaze, stirred and fertilized by the struggle. The heart expands, and life multiplies.

Some burning hot winds pass across the multitudes. They grab you, transfigure you, and cast you in the current which rushes to the revolutionary ocean, to the crucible where even the muck shines in the sun.

Individual hardly matter in this cataclysm. Progress alone survives it: just, implacable progress, which demolish the old reefs.

What parcel of land is not covered with blood? What law of the cursed net does not serve as a noose which strangle us?...

Nothing is worth keeping.

You have seen the plowman turning the furrows to sow new wheat: thus will be turned all the human strata as if to plow under, like old stubble, all the social iniquities.

It must be so!

Of what use then will be the discoveries, the sciences? For what purpose will be the machines, if it is not to create happiness for all and at the same time multiply the invigorating forces?

What good is a sense for the arts, if it is to be stifled among the multitudes, and cultivated it only at great cost among a few vain artists?

All have the same senses, except that the races who have enjoyed too much have brains still more arid than the others without culture.

Wait until a quarter of a century has passed for the race, until it has evolved in the full light of liberty, and the difference between the intellectual flowering in that era and in the present will be such that the vulgar, imbued with authoritarian nonsense, cannot presently grasp it.

Neither the states, whose last rags we see floating in the tempest, soaked with the blood of the lowly, nor the lies of the map, of race, species or sex, nothing will remain of this twaddle.

Each character, each intelligence will take its place.

The struggles for existence being finished, science having regenerated the world, no one could be human cattle any longer, nor proletarians.

And women, for whom life has thus far only been a hell?...

Let that hell go, along with the cruel dreams of mystical underworlds!

Each individual living in the whole human race; all living in each individual, especially living in each individual and above all living forward, always forward where the idea flames, in the great peace—so far, still so far off—that limitlessness of progress will appear to all in the cycle of perpetual transformations.

It is thus that before returning to the crucible, each individual, in a few years, in just a few years, will have an eternity.

LAST THOUGHT

Diving into the past, we see it join with the future like the two extremities of a circular arc, and that circle, like a sound wave, awakens others, infinitely.

Eaten away by the world (from ancient India to ourselves), will the lost sciences germinate or are they dead in the flower?

Must we wait for new emanations for new beginnings? Will there be enough to return to the soil to provide the seeds of renewal and conditions proper to existence?

How many civilizations have fallen, how many scientific hypotheses have been overthrown by other hypotheses!

And yet, let's go, let's always go! Don't we have whereof to dispel the struggle for life? to replace the anxiety of stomachs, the general misery by general well-being?

Moreover, brains becoming more hungry than ever. It must be in order to satisfy them that the New Era shines.

If the love of humanity is powerless to sound the hour of liberation on the fraternitary clock—the hour when crime will longer have a place—indignation will see to it.

Hate is pure as steel, sharp as an ax; and if love is fruitless, long live hate!

SOUVENIRS DE CALÉDONIE (CHANT DES CAPTIFS)

Ici l'hiver n'a pas de prise,
Ici les bois sont toujours verts ;
De l'Océan, la fraîche brise
Souffle sur les mornes déserts,
Et si profond est le silence
Que l'insecte qui se balance
Trouble seul le calme des airs.

Le soir, sur ces lointaines plages,
S'élève parfois un doux chant :
Ce sont de pauvres coquillages
Qui le murmurent en s'ouvrant.
Dans la forêt, les lauriers-roses,
Les fleurs nouvellement écloses
Frissonnent d'amour sous le vent.

Voyez, des vagues aux étoiles,
Poindre ces errantes blancheurs !
Des flottes sont à pleines voiles
Dans les immenses profondeurs.
Dans la nuit qu'éclairent les
mondes,
Voyez sortir du sein des ondes
Ces phosphorescentes lueurs !

Viens en sauveur, léger navire,
Hisser le captif à ton bord !
Ici, dans les fers il expire :
Le bagne est pire que la mort.
En nos coeurs survit l'espérance,
Et si nous revoyons la France,
Ce sera pour combattre encor !

Voici la lutte universelle :
Dans l'air plane la Liberté !
A la bataille nous appelle
La clameur du déshérité !...
... L'aurore a chassé l'ombre
épaisse,
Et le Monde nouveau se dresse
A l'horizon ensanglanté !

MEMORIES OF CALEDONIA (SONG OF THE CAPTIVES)

Here the winter has no hold,
Here the woods are always green ;
From the Ocean, the fresh breeze
Blows over the dreary deserts,
And so profound is the silence
That the insect which sways
Alone troubles the calm of the air.

Evening, on these remotes shores,
Sometimes rises a sweet song:
It is some poor shellfish
Which murmurs while it opens.
In the forest, the oleanders,
The newly blooming flowers
Quiver with love in the wind.

See, from the starry waves,
Breaks a wandering whiteness!
Fleets are in full sail
In the immense depths.
In the night that enlightens the
worlds,
See erupt from the breast of the
waves
These phosphorescent glimmers!

Come as savior, nimble ship,
Hoist the captive aboard!
Here, in irons we expire:
The penal colony worse than
death.
But in our hearts hope survives,
And if we once again see France,
It will be to fight once again!

Here is the universal struggle:
In the air glides Liberty!
We are called to battle by
The clamor of the disinherited!...
... The dawn dispels the heavy
darkness,
And the New World towers
On the bloodstained horizon!

LA NUIT DE LA MORT DE VAILLANT

Dies irae, Dies illa

Solvat scelum in favilla.

Jamais ne viendra donc la fin ?
Dorment-ils tous, les meurt-de-
faim ?

Jamais, jamais le dernier jour
Ne les jettera-t-il à leur tour
Dans les angoisses de la mort,
Ces bandits que la rage mord ?

Toujours, esclaves et bourreaux,
Pâtiront-ils leurs échafauds ?
Amis, dans l'ombre entendez-vous
Gronder la mer aux noirs
remous ?

Elle monte et les couvrira.

Dies irae, Dies illa...

Elle couvre, pourpre de sang,
L'Elysée et le Vatican.

Compagnons, arrachons nos
cœurs,

Ne soyons plus que des vengeurs.

Passons, effrayants et maudits,
Afin que les maux soient finis.
Comblons l'abîme avec nos corps.
Amis, n'oubliez pas les morts...
La légende des temps nouveaux
Fleurira parmi les tombeaux.
C'est le destin ; le maître est dur.
C'est pourquoi le fer sera pur.

Dies irae, Dies illa,

Solvat scelum, in favina.

THE NIGHT OF THE DEATH OF VAILLANT

Dies irae, Dies illa

Solvat scelum in favilla.

Will the end never come then?
Do they all sleep, the starving and
dying?

Will the last day never, never
Cast them, in their turn
Into the anguish of death,
These bandits that rage
consumes?

Always, slaves and butchers,
Will they suffer their scaffolds?
Friends, do you hear in the
shadows

The ocean moan in black eddies?
It rises and covers them.

Dies irae, Dies illa...

It covers, crimson with blood,
The Elysée and the Vatican.

Comrades, let's pluck out our
hearts,

And only be avengers from now
on.

Let's go, fearsome and cursed,
So that the evils are finished.
Let's fill the abyss with our bodies.
Friends, do not forget the dead...
The legend of the new times
Will flower among the tombs.
It is destiny; the master is hard.
That is why the iron will be pure.

Dies irae, Dies illa,

Solvat scelum, in favina.

PAULE MINK



PAULE MINK

ALREADY!

Eugène Pottier

To the citizen Paule Mink.

At the break of day, the snow falls,
Swirled by the air;
A sheet of dove's feathers
Covers the deserted cobblestones.
I soon passed that way again,
Where wheels and men's feet floundered;
No more snow, alas! but slush!
Already!

Was she yet fifteen? Certainly not! Not yet, but at the same time old.
With a great tint to her face,
But nothing of youth or spring.
The dazed look in her eyes
Told what vulture gnawed at her;
I could sense the corpse in her,
Already!

She was filthy and suspect,
Who followed her? Some gray hairs,
To the end of a vile alley,
From which soon issued cries.
An officer entered the fray,
Brutally questioned her,
Then packed her off to Saint-Lazare.
Already!

[Source: *Chants révolutionnaires* (1887)]

THE RIGHT OF ABORTION

Numerous, very sensational trials for the crime of *suppression of children* have taken place from the month of August 1891, to the same month in 1892, during one whole year, which we could call the year of abortions.

In all the countries of Europe, in Russia, German, England, and France, and everywhere women have been prosecuted, and trials have been brought on these serious grounds. In Russian Poland, twelve women were arrested, and twenty were condemned in London, and in France we have had various legal actions for these heinous acts in Paris, Lyon, Béziers, and Villeneuve-les-Avignon — where the mayor, an imitator of Fourroux, aborted his dear constituents whom he had put at risk — and then that appalling affair in Clichy, in which 53 defendants were brought to the benches of infamy

England has nothing to envy us in this regard. In Berlin, on several occasions, the criminal courts have had to judge unfortunates guilty of these crimes against the perpetuity of the species so severely punished, as an example, when society discovers them and must condemn them.

Humanity seems taken with a panic about the extinction of the race, and we rush to abortion as the ultimate remedy of painful or miserable situations.

In Belgium, Switzerland, and Italy we have seen in this year, fertile in child murders, some trials of this sort. It is not that crimes against life are unknown in this happy (?) country. Quite the contrary. Amorous liberty, and even license, being practiced here more than anywhere else, all the *sages femmes* are ready to get rid of the more or less tiresome, telltale consequences of the amorous lapses of young men and women. Even for married women, overburdened by their families, they are full of indulgence and always offer to “free” their clients of the dear, sweet burden, so costly to honor and position.

In this country abortion is a habitual practice and one is only tried for it when the scandal is too great or when an unfortunate has found death in the suppressive maneuvers in which she is engaged. Thus, if there is no trial, it is because, with the general tolerance, the police close their eyes, justice ignores it and wants to know nothing of it, in order not to crack down.

Isn't it a bit like that everywhere? We scarcely seek any but the most cynical and scandalous facts; we bring suit only when we can't do otherwise, when there is death or denunciation; and then we recoil in horror before the terrible revelations which are revealed for everyone to see in the court of assizes.

Such has been the case of the wife Thomas, abortionist of Clichy, who in a few years has conducted more than 10,000 operations. Ten thousand—you have read that right—*ten thousand abortions!* That wretch worked for 10 francs, 5 francs, a basket of eggs, or a basket of fruit, to serve women in trouble.

Her clients belonged to all classes of society: there were some semi-prostitutes, a quarter socialites, some seduced young women, timid and sweet, some women of the people, some honest mothers, mates of workers or of low-level clerks whose position did not allow them to have a large number of children, and who have come, red-faced with the shame, to ask the abortionist to “rid” them. This is the accepted term.

Alas, it is not often of their free will that they have recourse to “the maker of angels” but life is so hard in the world of the poor these days, and women are so unfortunate!

They love, they abandon themselves without concern for the future. It’s so good to love, to trust, believe in the one you love! They do not think about the consequences of their love that they will bear alone. They do not calculate the consequences. In a sweet recitation they hear the tender voice which whispers in their ear the melodies of love, and they give themselves completely in an embrace: their soul, their life, their honor, everything. Love sings in their hearts, like the insects in the grass, like the birds in the branches; they sleep securely, cradled in the arms of their beloved...

But they are soon awakened. The man wearies quickly of the one he has seduced, sated with love, full of satisfied desires, he distances himself more quickly the more duties he has to fulfill. The lover says to him softly, blushing and nervous: — “You will be a papa soon” — “Me, a father!... What! That’s just great!” He gets angry, shouts, leaves and never returns... The poor girl remains alone, left to herself and her grief, alone, without support, without protection, without love, alone! And she feels another being move within her: she is alone and she is going to be a mother!...

Then there appears to her fevered brain all that she has lost, all that she has sacrificed for the ingrate who abandoned her: the despair of her parents, the public scorn, the dishonor!... Then the pain of delivering a child, the difficulty of living; alone she can still manage, with a child it is impossible. It would be necessary to leave her workshop, her store, her labor; miserable already and living in great pain, she will be even more miserable and in an irreparable and absolute manner.

Then a comrade from the workshop, a neighbor whispers to her that she can escape from these troubles, these heartbreaks, that she can avoid the dishonor, be rid of all fear and recover happiness. And the poor little one, anxious, troubled, with great sadness and regret, goes to find the abortionist and delivers herself to her care to make disappear the result of the common fault, the dear treasure, the fruit of her love, which she loves already, that she would have wanted to keep so much, if it had a father!...

Other times the case is even more painful. The woman is married, there are already two, three children at home, the man barely earns enough to support the whole dear brood, just to not die of hunger. The valiant men of a new birth are produced, but the woman remains crushed! In tears she tells her husband news which would have been a pleasure in other conditions. Worried, they look at one another: What to do? What to decide? It is already difficult to live with four or five; when there are six, it will be completely impossible. What will they do with this new burden, this interloper who comes to eat from the portion, already so small, of those that came before? And grief, black despair takes the wife who worries and weeps, the husband who shouts and storms.

Then on day she comes to her husband and says quietly: — “Someone said to me... if you want...” The husband hesitates, grimly. — “Let’s go! It must be...” he says in the end, sadly. And the wife heaves a heavy sigh and goes to find the abortionist.

Ah! If there was bread to give the newcomer, how they would have looked after it! For already the mother loves it with all her heart, and it is only their poverty which forces her to sacrifice it... But she must save the beak-full for her dear babies and the nest is already so full of hungry little bills!...

Thus poverty, insecurity of life, fear of not being able to raise the children, then the fear of public scorn, seduction, abandonment: these are the reasons for the abortions that are so common in our time. — And, as we know, they are just as numerous in the provinces as in Paris, in the country as in the city, for in the village there is no lack of old women expert in these matters, and many matrons know all the processes for inducing labor and know, just as well as the women of Clichy, how to “rid” the unfortunates forced by the demands of honor or poverty to make their child disappear.

“But this is all terrible. How shall we prevent such horrors?” cry the hypocritical bourgeoisie who themselves drive these embryonic murders by their selfishness and vices. These days we mock those who have lots of children, we criticize them, no support, no effective aid is given them. And the handsome sons of the bourgeoisie, for whom article 340 was made — forbidding the search for paternity — can seduce the daughters of the people with an easy mind. They are the chief authors of the numerous infanticides committed by abandoned women!

During these sad trials we have seen the well-meaning press utter cries of horror, and some grave and imposing magistrates cover their faces: “Oh! These women, these trollops,” they say, “these wretches! To make themselves guilty of such crimes, to abort, to do away with children, the strength of the homeland, the future of France!...”

— Excuse me, Monsieur Prudhomme. Does Madame have a lot of children? One or two at the most, and yet! But you understand, one should not have too many children; in order not to undermine the well-being of the family, the fine education that you want to give to your progeny, you must not risk scattering the fortune you possess, by leaving it to too many heirs. Monsieur and Madame practice restrictions... of the mental sort — infanticide before the letter — and even perhaps some preventative and solvent maneuvers as well, during the first days of the pregnancy; but they deal with experienced doctors, skillful and discrete midwives, everything takes place in secret, in the peace of the home, and as no one knows anything of it, these very honest persons shout that much more loudly that others are guilty, like those purse snatchers who yell “stop, thief!” to distract the attention of the police.

Our good bourgeois couldn’t care less about the strength of France, or the future of the homeland. When it is a question of their own actions, they hardly concern themselves with these great things.

“We must,” they say, “have children. We want to do it, for the power of our country, the greatness of the nation.” But they are careful not to have them, although they could raise them and not be condemned to suppress them because of shame or misery!...

But make them understand their duties, make some egoists, some sated pleasure-seekers listen to reason!...

And abortion, this crime against nature, this attack on the race, is more and more a habit for us. It has become a frequent, almost general, practice. It

is the consequence of our economic state, of our social state, of the harsh struggle for life which devours us. It is the inevitable result, so to speak, of our customs and law.

These days you would have to be heroic, or else thoughtless, to have a lot of children. How will provident mothers and father, wanting to give their firstborns a wonderful and more happy life, not try to destroy this new germ of life that they know is destined for poverty and unhappiness, and which would bring embarrassment to the poor household, despair to the family, eat the bread of the older children, force them into ignorance and premature labor, casting them into indigence, dooming them to a life of grief and suffering, plunging them into the cesspits where the destitute moan!...

Ah! If society guaranteed life and labor to every being coming into the world, who brings a new strength to the human association, then there would be no more suppression of children!

From the side of the seduced girls, it is even worse, since the law guarantees the security of masculine pleasures.

The woman identified as guilty of abortion, or infanticide, is severely punished. Certainly, she commits an abominable crime. But she risks her life, she, the unfortunate, to make disappear the fruit of the common distraction, she offers her existence to preserve her honor. But he, the first author of the common fault, he, the seducer and initiator, where is he? What will you do about it? He risks nothing, neither his repos, nor his life, nor his future. Even his honor is not at stake.

Ah! If the men were obliged to put their stamp on their more or less clandestine products, they would perhaps not be this way. They would think twice, and even four times, before seducing, and especially before producing. But that would be too awkward for these gentlemen... Respect to article 340, which assures the most complete impunity to the amorous adventures, juvenile or senile, of the Lovelaces.

You are decidedly illogical, gentlemen of the legislature, or supremely unjust. If there is a fault in this case, that fault has been committed by two. — There is no denying it. There must be two, must there not? — But only one is responsible for that fault in the eyes of the world, in the eyes of the law, the weakest and most unfortunate! She is pursued by public shame and contempt, arrested, imprisoned. While the other, her partner — or her accomplice, if you will — goes his way, jaunty and satisfied, whistling through his teeth a little hunting tune — about a beast run to ground, naturally. — And all that because this first tenor of the duo of love has the law behind him, so that he should not be concerned by the consequences of his pleasures, because he carries within him no trace of the wrong perpetrated by two, because there is nothing about his person which could make on say with certainty: "There is the author of the work."

How then does a woman, even the most simple, not say to herself: My... associate is responsible for nothing. Why would I be more responsible than him? He isn't blamed for anything because no one sees anything; why then shouldn't it be the same for me? I want, like him, to walk with my head high, without worrying any more about the consequences of our love." For as soon after as she is ill-advised, she goes where he security calls her, and she

resolves to commit a terribly murder, led to it, very often, by the cynical masculine impunity.

"If we enacted a law for the research of paternity," some say, "it would be unbearable. The seduced girls would make a living with their children." — Even if that were so, wouldn't it be better than killing them? And the strength of the race then, and the power of France, what would you do about them? But to pay for your pleasures, by bearing their consequences, that would exasperate you, handsome boy-children who have got such a good deal on the honor of the daughters of the people and the lives of your... illegitimate... offspring; as for other progeny, you have so few that it is hardly worth talking about.

"The seduced girls do not merit so much interest," says another. "They are vicious, capable of every shame and weakness." — It is soon said, and it is said deliberately by those who profit from these weaknesses, who have even provoked them to their greatest dissipation. — "It is very often they who seduce the men," claims one, "they who assault the young men"... morally, for otherwise... Look at them, these poor babies, all preserved in chastity, who would die virgins and martyrs without these shameless girls!

All these bourgeois and masculine sophisms are of a rare insolence and cynicism; we wish, however, to accept them for a moment. According to you, gentlemen, even the most innocent woman is perverted, she is depraved, she is debauched, this is understood; but once the girl becomes a mother everything changes, she transforms herself; responsibility begins for her, and she severely atones for the common practice, she is no longer the shameless bacchante — if she ever was — she is *the mother*, that is to say the creator of humanity, she carries in her womb the power of society, the greatness of the homeland, the hope of the future.

And it is precisely because she is a mother, because by this her love is nearly sanctified that you despise her, it is at the moment when she is rehabilitated by maternity that the world insults and spits on her, it is when she has the most need of aid and support that her family rejects her, she is chased from everywhere, execrated, booed, marked on the brow with an indelible stain, heaped with public scorn, while you bow very low before her seducer, particularly if he is rich and powerful. O justice! It is always the stone thrown at the poor thief who allows himself to be taken, and the respect for the skillful pickpocket who steals your coin, by transactions risked on the exchange, or despoils you by a skillfully fraudulent bankruptcy!

However, when the children are 20 years old, does the law ask if they are legitimate or not in order to make them soldiers, defenders of the homeland, of the public fortune, of bourgeois security? All men are equal before the law and the social duty, all, whoever their mother and whatever their origin might be.

Scorn the women of ill repute, I accept that, but bow before the mother: maternity, you see, is the pedestal for a woman, it is her triumph, her redemption.

But as long as customs are not changed, as well as the present social state which rests entirely on the exploitation of the small by the great, of the laborers by the possessors of capital, of women by men, as long as the

bourgeois regime will function, there will be crimes, there will be abortions, no matter what mild reforms we attempt to ease these sufferings.

As long as it is shameful to be a mother, with or without the code, as long as women will not be respected for their maternity itself, supported, and considered as the creators of humanity, there will be women who have abortions.

As long as young women who have been seduced will alone be responsible for the consequences of their love—while the men can say, insolent and cynical, “That is not my problem”—there will be young women who will have abortions.

As long as there are mother who do not have bread to give their little dear ones, existence assured for the children of their wombs there will be mothers who have abortions to avoid misery, despair and death from hunger for those that they love more than life, more than happiness, more than even honor!

And we believe in good conscience, that they have the right to do so, for we could not force unfortunate, loving and abandoned women to bring forth children who will be miserable, sad and ragged, scattering in the thickets, living without love, sickly and pockmarked, dying of cold, starvation in the crossroads or along the gray roads...

They will spare them constantly reborn sufferings by killing them, the poor little things! fierce and lamentable, before they are born, before they have known the ineffable sadness of the existence des poverty-stricken.

As long as our unjust, hedonist, depraved and ferocious capitalist society exists, there will be sinister abortions, and there will be more and more of them.

And you do not have the right to punish these crimes against the race, for it is you, Society, who by your sinful laws and your lax and venal morals, drive that dreadful massacre of innocents.

Source: Almanach de la question sociale et de libre pensee, pour 1891

SEVERINE



THE ANARCHISTS OF CHICAGO

They have taken these four men full of life and health, cast over their shoulders the shrouds that shall, some few minutes later, wrap their twisted limbs, and hide their contorted faces—eyes bulging out of their orbits to punish them for having seen too far and too high into the future of humanity; tongues bulging from mouths, gags of purple flesh sealing forever these lips guilty of speaking of justice and truth!

Their gait was unsteady, for their ankles were cut by the cords which hobbled their feet, as the legs of beasts are tied before on the way to the slaughterhouse.

They were pale, for the night before their dearest friend, Louis Lingg, had sacrificed his life, stoically, in the hope of saving their four lives. They had heard the sudden explosion, the commotion among the prisoners, and the cries of suffering wrung from him by his frightful wounds. They had counted the minutes of his agony, and their sleep had been troubled during that ultimate night by a double pounding of hammers: the coffin was nailed, as the gallows was erected...

The day before, they had cut off their hearts from this world. The wives, the mothers, had sobbed in their arms, wailed against their chests, hugged their knees. There had been, in these dungeons, some dreadful scenes. The companions of Fisher and Parsons, the mother of Spies, and his fiancée, had watered with their tears the stone of the cells.

Parsons' wife had returned in the morning. She had dragged herself to the door of the jail, had knocked softly, and had begged, with words fit to move beasts, to be allowed to embrace one last time the still-living one whose widow she already was.

— No.

She said nothing, did not shout, and cried no more; but her fingernails, embedded in the edges of the door, came loose suddenly, and she fell back with a cry so terrible that it was heard all through the prison.

No one knew if Parsons had recognized the dear voice; but, from that moment, dreadful wrinkles cut at his face; he seemed sixty years old when the hangman took him.

The four condemned men listened, proudly—a superhuman thing to see—to the reading of the death sentence. Then, walking toward the scaffold, Fisher—the German, Fisher—began to sing the heroic *Marseillaise* whose red wing hovered over these martyrs.

The executioner seized them. The ignominious cords were knotted around their necks, the trapdoors opened—and the four bodies swung in space, like four bell clappers sounding the alarm of reprisals in the terrified air..

Before dying, Spies said: “The day will come when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today.”

Engel cried out: “Hurrah for Anarchy!”

Fisher cried: “Hurrah for Anarchy!”

The last phrase of the testament of Lingg was: “Long live Anarchy!”...

November, 1887.

LIBERTY—EQUALITY—FRATERNITY

Liberty?

That night, on the asphalt beach that dominates the view from my window, some human wreckage, a father, mother, and two babies, had washed up on a bench. From the heights where, much despite myself I glide, one could distinguish nothing, but a pile of gray flesh and soiled rags, from which emerged, here and there, an arm, a leg, with a movement slow and painful as a crushed crab's leg

They slept, clutching one another, huddled in one pile, from habit, less they die of cold—even on this warm summer night!

Some policemen had come who circled around, sniffing and staring at them, avec with that hostile curiosity of guard dogs and sergeants towards the poorly dressed—not too mean, however. They tapped on the shoulder of the man, who started, rubbed his eyes, stood up with an effort, shifting the group where the kids, awakened suddenly, had begun to cry.

From his gestures, I understood that he was telling their story; and still to the silent tears of the woman, wiping her eyes with the corner of her apron, while the other, by recalling them, revived her pains.

Not louts, nor bohemians—but workers! Workers brought to the most extreme limits of distress; having committed everything, sold everything, and lost everything!

Only one consolation could remain for this unfortunate: that of having lived as a free man in a free century; and the flags decorating the inn of La Belle Étoile (his last home!) recalled eloquently how fortunate it was, for him and his, to have been “delivered” a century before!

He was miserable, yes—but a voter and a citizen! It is all the same very profitable that we have freed plebs and glebes!

When he had finished, the guardians of the peace held a consultation, with great gestures which seemed to say: “What is to be done?”

Nothing, obviously, but to obey the orders, to carry out the law... the equitable law which has replaced the dreadful reign of good pleasure!

In the name of liberty, they have taken the free man and his brood to the station—he, resigned, bending his back; the mother and children, creatures unconscious of the benefits of independence, nearly sportive at the idea that their captivity reserves them a bed and bread...

Equality?

Again, under my windows, yesterday around two o'clock, suddenly, a stampede of cavalry, a sound of fast-moving wheels, shouts! In his carriage, the President passes...

The enthusiasm is in no way excessive, but nonetheless, people raise their hats, yell, and run along behind, with a great show of domesticity.

How fortunate it is, when you think about it, though, that a hundred years ago we beheaded a king; twenty-one years ago, we overthrew an emperor! No more scepters, no more thrones, no more crowns!

Nothing but the currency of the monarchy: kinglets at the l'Hôtel-de-Ville, kinglets at the Palais-Bourbon, kinglets at the Luxembourg, and this specter of a sovereign, costing dear, but not ruling at all. Ah! the nation has truly gained from the change!

Fraternity?

On the pavement, still the footfalls of the horses, the rolling of the artillery, a steady tumult from the horde that passes, with the rattle of steel. It is some regiments on their way to be reviewed.

And the hurrahs, the bravos, go less to these brave little soldiers with ruddy faces, all sweaty and breathless under the sharp eye of the brass, than to the formidable butcher's apparatus that they drag along.

Ah! The fine rifles, borne so straight and so well cared for! Ah! The pretty cannons, worked and finished like clockworks, with their necks like greyhounds, their hollowed flanks, their long muzzles which kill at such a distance!...

Won't that all make things course, with blood! All that will dice, fine, fine, finer, like mincemeat, the meat of human beings!

And with their regard, with their voices, the multitude flatters these massacring beasts who will, however, at the first sign—you know it, proletarians!—sink their fangs as well in French skin as in that of the Teutons!

Alas!

.....

And, while the clamors of the passersby mount towards my melancholy dwelling, I think of the cunning ancients, opening Rome for one day those who were oppressed thought the year; giving them, for twenty-four hours, more than liberty: license; allowing them to treat as equals the highest of the Republic, fraternizing with them among the festivities,—and profiting from their torpor from their drunkenness in order, the following day, at dawn, to increase their chains, augment their tasks, and deny them all justice and every right!

Dance and laugh, good people of France, if such is your fancy; but open your eyes at the same time! The anniversary that you celebrate is not your own; the victory that we fete is not yours; and for you, sucker, like the Golden Calf, the Bastille is always standing!

When will we take it?...

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