TO THE COMMUNE AND BEYOND

WRITINGS BY

PASCHAL GROUSSET

VOLUME II

LEAVES FROM THE POCKET-BOOK OF A STATE PRISONER

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(1880-1881)

I. L'HEURE DE L'ABSINTHE

WELL nigh exhausted with fatigue, I had fallen asleep in an armchair. It was about four in the afternoon of a dull sultry 2d of June. For eight whole days and nights I had not stretched my limbs on a bed, and from the 23d of May I had lived the life of a salamander in the hell of hopeless battle and wholesale murder that Paris then was. Silence at last had succeeded the thunder of five hundred guns—the silence of the grave hanging over a holocaust of some twenty thousand beings. If an occasional round of rifles, bespeaking the supplementary assassination of two or three dozen prisoners in the neighbouring barracks, happened to tear the air from time to time, it sounded now, through the open window, like the mock report of a child's pistol. In the street below, four human carcasses, lying on the footpath in a pool of blood, were still waiting for the scavenger's cart. In the gray sky above, hardly a stray smut or a lingering cinder -of burnt paper was hovering.

The room was a common one at an hotel where I had just drifted, a waif and stray from the wreck. Of going home there could be no idea. To call on a friend would have been simply to serve him with a death-warrant. I had had a wash at a public bath, purchased a travelling-bag at the first shop that I had found open in a bystreet, and put up at the Hotel des Deux Mondes. 'Monsieur George Chapuis, barrister-at-law, from Lille,' was my entry on the register. I did not think the plan a good one, but I had not the option of another, and in fact I did not care much, being so tired. Not to awake suspicion, I slept in the armchair, with the key left in the door.

A sense of something cold that I felt on my forehead roused me from my slumber. It was the barrel of a revolver. Five men in private clothes were round me, and had taken hold of my arms and legs.

'I charge you with being Tiburce Moray, the member of the Commune,' said the man with the revolver.

'Did any one tell you I am not?'

'All right, then; you are a prisoner.'

This time it is not a joke. Once before, in the course of the 'Semaine Sanglante,' I had fallen into the hands of the regulars, and succeeded in slipping

through the meshes of the net. But now I am with the police, and there is no chance. They have known me, every one of them, from the days of the Empire.

A dense crowd has congregated round the cab in which I am, with the commissaire and two detectives—mostly well-dressed people, with glossy hats, gloves on their hands, sticks or umbrellas, white faces which never saw the hardships of the war, and who have just returned from Florence or the Isle of Wight. These gentry are quite overcome with their feelings. They roll furious eyes, clench their generous fists, and, I am sorry to say, are simply booting me. Some of them even go a little farther, and exhibit a lively desire to have me burnt alive on the ruins of the house at the corner. Others throw stones at me; while a pushing individual succeeds in getting the end of his umbrella inside the carriage, and poking furiously at the commissaire. He mistakes him for Tiburce Moray. All of them cry:

'Down with him! Let him walk! Let him be shot at once! Let him be strangled! Let him be quartered! Let him be roasted!'

'M. le Commissaire, you had better put on your sash, if you do not want to be cooked like mince-pie in my stead.'

And so he does, too, with a vengeance.

A picket of soldiers which is round the cab experiences the greatest difliculty in opening a way for it. On coming down to the Boulevard the crowd is so enormous and so' madly infuriated, that we are at a standstill. A Versaillist general rushes up from an adjoining café with a posse of officers.

'What is the matter?' he inquires.

When made aware of the case, he addresses the distinguished mob, tells them I shall lose nothing by waiting, and that they had better not interfere with the proper executioners.

'Drum court-martials are sitting night and day for the despatch of business. Let drum court-martials do their work. They are quite up to the mark.'

Which assertion elicits the approval of a majority in the yelling community, whilst some others are still evidently of opinion that drum court-martials fall very short of their divine mission. Meanwhile the cab is suffered to proceed.

'You had better take him at once to General Galiffet,' stammers, with an unsteady eye, M. F., the deputy-mayor at the Mairie Drouot, as the commissaire introduces his prisoner to him.

This, I should rather believe, bodes no good, although, as I was leaving the deputy-mayor's study, Dr. X., whom I know well by sight——a spare little sneak in gold spectacles—crawled in with the remark:

'It is all right now. I have had the blood washed up and chloride of lime spread over.'

Clearly this bodes no good. Why mince matters? It is perfectly obvious that within a very few hours—it may be a very few minutes—I am to be passé par les armes, as the phrase is. I rather like the phrase. It is a neat and decent one.

When it is uttered, would it not seem as if the fact that it expresses were the most usual and ordinary one in the world? There is something in it which sounds almost homelike.

Homelike or not, such things will happen, and I am to know ere long what the experience is like. The trifling operation would probably have been performed already but for an important circumstance, to which I am indebted for a reprieve:

'The general is not here. He has just gone out to his absinthe.'

Such is the piece of oficial information volunteered by a young fellow in gold lace and red trousers, on the commissaire applying to the temporary head-quarters, established in the Palais de l'Industrie, at the Champs Elysées. In consequence of which answer, it is the painful duty of the commissaire to have me shut up in the guardroom, and to leave me there.

'I am very sorry to do so. But you heard what the aide-de-camp said. I must go at once and report the news at the Préfecture.'

Really the commissaire seems to be sorry. He would rather, I believe, ask my pardon for what is going to take place. My apprehension is worth 400l. premium and the Cross of the Legion of Honour to him, which cannot but cause him to look at the whole affair as a most satisfactory stroke of business, but personally he does not in the least desire that I should be shot. One may be a police-officer and a man as well. When one has been for three-quarters of an hour in a cab with a prisoner, chatting and smoking cigars and sharing umbrella-thrusts with him—even supposing the prisoner to be the 'sinister Tiburce Moray' in the flesh—it must be an uncomfortable feeling to hand him over, without the semblance of a trial, to the executioner. This is not the first time I have to note the fact: the police, as a rule, are a thousand times better in such crises than the profanum vulgus or the soldiery. The latter indulge freely in their frantic impulses, in their genuine or assumed rage, above all, in their immoderate longing of faire du zèle; whilst the former alone are composed and sceptical, like the passive tools of ephemeral governments that they are, accustomed to see revolutions rise and fall, to receive to-day the word of command from men whom they took in custody yesterday, or to arrest to-morrow those whom they obey at the present moment.

I am in a hole of three yards by four, on the ground-floor of the left aisle of the Palace. A field bed—the cleanliness of which seems rather doubtful, as far as it is possible to ascertain in the dim glitter of a small grating in the middle of the double-bolted door—is the only piece of furniture. Facing my door, another one, its exact counterpart: between the two, a square space of a few feet, held by a young Chasseur d'Afrique mounting guard, sword in hand.

Groans are coming from behind the opposite door. I look through the grating at the soldier. He seems to think mounting guard a dull business, and has a kind candid sort of face.

'I say, chasseur, what is that groaning over there?'

'Only a wounded fédéré just left on the field-bed. His blood's running fast.'

'Why, then, a surgeon ought to be called in to dress his wound!'

'Pshaw! what would be the use? Within half-an-hour or so—'

A gesture completes the phrase.

'O, indeed! Do you suppose it is to be so soon?'

'Of course it is. You will not be the first ones, you may take it for granted. Lots of 'em despatched at La Muette within the last few days. But you had better not speak to me, as the brigadier might hear, and I should be the worse for it.'

A silence. I can walk three paces in my hole, neither more nor less. The game is a tame one after a while. I am struck with an idea, and again I flatten my nose at the grating.

'Chasseur, one word only. The bodies are stripped, are they not?'

'That depends. When the gear is worth the while: money, watches, papers, boots, are collected.'

'Well, look here, my boy. I have a few gold pieces about me——one, two, five, six. I am just going to make a present of them to you—quite a pleasure to let a fine fellow like you profit by the opportunity; but in return you will take to the address a note which I am going to write down, will you P'

'I guess I will.'

The man's face is beaming with honest satisfaction. I daresay he can see an unlimited number of petite verres spread before his wide-open blue eyes.

The fact is I have eight louis in my pocket, instead of six. That reserve fund of two, which I keep to myself, might seem to represent accurately the odds which I stake on my own life. It does not, however. A secret voice warns me that the insurance premium is far too high—that my chances are not 1 to 100. I can hardly help sneering at myself, and at my fine precaution, as I scribble hastily a few lines in pencil on a leaf torn out of my pocket-book.

'Dearest Ones,—When this reaches you, all will be over. It is from the Palais de l'Industrie that I send you' my last love and good-bye. I suppose the knowledge of the fact may help you in recovering my remains, and I hope it will be a comfort to 'your grief. Adieu. June 2d, 1871, 6 P.M.——TIBURCE.'

The idea that the old dear ones will possibly recover my body is of infinite sweetness to me. I feel now as if I had a lesser weight on my shoulders. What a strange weakness! How little it ought to matter to me where my bones rest, when all is at an end! But. it is so. No use arguing about an impulse.—The hope was a vain one, by the way, as good care was taken by the butchers that none of their victims might ever be singled out by a mother or a wife.

Note and money have been pocketed by the private. He looks thoughtful now. Gold has softened him.

'It is a sad affair, after all. . . . And to think that if I had been in Paris too, I should be in the same predicament; for I am a Parisian myself, born at Montmartre.'

'Are you? 'Listed for the war, perhaps?'

'Just so. I belonged to the Mobile, you know, but enlisted for the sake of being on horseback.'

'Well, my boy, mind you go yourself to the address on the note. You will have a warm reception, I assure you, especially if you can take a few items of news—tell them where I have been put, or anything of the kind.'

The key is turned in the lock of the outward door. At once the chasseur has struck the correct attitude.

They come in to fetch me. This is the time. With a wink I bid good-bye to my friend, and I follow the brigadier. A picket of four men is in the rear.

No. It is not for what I supposed. The general has not returned from his absinthe yet. More than one glass, I fancy. The reason of my being called out is the formal process of proving my identity, which to all intents and purposes is most likely to be the sole legal proceedings in my case.

The ' recorder' is a dirty little old man in spectacles, with not so much as one hair left on his scalp, yellow teeth few and far between, a greasy coat, and a suspicious-looking shirt-collar emerging from a cravat rolled in the guise of a rope. Some street letter-writer, I suppose, picked up during the battle, and hired on the job for these provisional duties. He rejoices in a pair of brand-new glazed-cambric sleeves—whether to protect his coat or to protect the desk I could not tell; and he sits on a common chair, in front of a lame table, in the very middle of the guardroom. Around us, on the field-bed, a dozen privates are asleep. The man writes in pencil on a large sheet of paper, which his fingers seem to have impressed with several unofficial stamps. Without even lifting his sheepish eyes:

'Name and surname?'

'Tiburce Moray.'

'Age?'

'Twenty-five.'

'Employment?'

'Member of the Paris Commune, elected by 17,000 constituents.'

The dirty little old man is somewhat puzzled. He looks up for a minute or two above his spectacles, wondering, it may be, what the atrocious monster, a Member of the Commune, is like. Then, shaking his long ears, he resumes, in the most business-like fashion:

'Address?'

'127 Rue Chaptal.'

'Any money, jewelry, papers?'

'My watch and chain, a gold pin, some small change.'

'Put all down over here. All right. That is all.'

Back to the hole. My friend the soldier is no more on the landing. Another chasseur mounts guard in his stead—a big lanky fellow, with a thick moustache, dull eyes, the gait of a drunkard. He is half asleep on his legs, as he leans over his sword.

Sun must be down. The hole is getting darker every minute. Alone on the threshold of death, on the brink of the boundless sea that edges the world, I cannot help thinking. I think of the days gone by, of vanished happiness, of every one who is dear to me; of things of yesterday that seem already so far away; of to-morrow that I am not to see. Is it in despair or sorrow?

By no means. Rather more in wonder. I feel as if I were dreaming awake, or sitting at some extraordinary spectacle, and looking at it with passionate curiosity; as if all this were a succession of events of which I were not the subject but the witness; or rather, as if I were cut in two halves, and there were two beings in me, one submitted to an uncommon experiment, the other beholding it. Coming death has nothing repulsive in it, but much that is puzzling. Mixed with my curiosity, a kind of self-pity far from unpleasant, and a queer sense of the poetry of the situation creeping gradually into my inner self.

The key again in the lock, and the brigadier with four privates.

'Ready?'

'Yes, I am.'

This time we are going out of the palace to one of the by-alleys. A barouche is standing there with the door open—one of those large carriages, with two strong horses, which are let on hire for middle-class weddings. The coachman is on his seat, with a pair of white gloves—no ribbon, however; no flowers in his button-hole. Six gendarmes on horseback, rifle on the shoulder, are in waiting. Inside the barouche, three gardiens-de-la-paix in field-dress, with revolver in hand. Room for one—for me.

The door is shut, the coachman gives rein, the gendarmes start at a trot—off we are! Where to? I should rather like to know, and venture after a while to ask one of the men on the fore seat who faces me, always conscientiously holding up his revolver, like a wax candle.

'No business of yours,' is the courteous reply.

The man seems to be in a rage at the audacity of my question. He is a good while before he has succeeded in overcoming his wounded feelings, grumbling away under his reddish moustache. Finally, he comes round somehow.

'I don't know, after all,' says he. ' The brigadier does.'

The brigadier is that big fellow who gallops on a fine black charger by my side. As I look at him, I notice that we are running down the Cours-la-Reine. I am clearly bound either for La Muette or Versailles. Which of the two? That is the question. A few passers-by stop to look at my retinue. Some of them take their hats off, mistaking me for one of the dictators of the hour, I suppose, or they would rather pelt than salute me. Now we are at the top of the avenue; down we

go along the quay, along Passy, Auteuil. Good-bye, dear old Paris. At the fortifications we stop. La Muette, then?

No. Only the password to give. A few guards come round to have a look at the prisoner, and mutter some vague threats to themselves. I can see they would like to try their sweet hand on me, but they dare not; the barouche overawes them. Then on the road again, and to Versailles at a brisk pace.

Thus, the commissaire has called at once on the civilians, as he left me, or he has telegraphed to them, and precise orders have been sent to take me to Versailles. I am to be put by, for some final farce in the shape of a judicial performance. General, this will teach you to linger by your absinthe!

What a strange machine man is! Half an hour ago I had quite made up my mind to go to the wall; I should have died willingly; and yet the present delay is far from unwelcome. A mean sense of relief pervades me. What is worse, it assumes its lowest shape——that of physical satisfaction. I cannot help it. The air is fresh and bracing, the road even, and the barouche happens to be well set on its springs. I give myself up to the enjoyment of that drive in the country, without a further thought for the future, whatever it may be. I look, in the falling twilight, at the trees torn up by the shells of two sieges, and which Nature is hard at work repairing. Young shoots have sprung out, verdant and thick, already. Spring is on the wane, and I had not even noticed its coming yet, during those two months and a half of all-absorbing struggle. Night is slowly spreading its veil over the ruins with which both sides of the road are edged. Stars begin to glitter above and crickets to strike in the grass below their evening song. In the distance, Mount Valerien lights the windows of its barracks. Everything around me is silent and balmy; everything brings me back to the sense of quiet dreaming-awake, which I remember having experienced on that very road some two years ago, as I drove back at night from the races at La Marche.

All at once a dark mass is in sight in front of us, whilst a peculiar stampede, something like the trotting of two or three hundred sheep, mixed with the heavy regulation pace of a squadron of horse, comes within my hearing. At first it is not easy to ascertain what it is, although a dim suspicion of it dawns upon my mind. As we approach, however, the dark mass melts into distinct beings. It is a band of Parisian prisoners, afoot, driven by an escort of cavahy. As we bear upon them, they are brutally ordered to open their ranks; and as we slide past I can discern several rows of men and women, old and young, children and white-haired people, all tied arm to arm, and looking eagerly up with eyes full of the wild fire of despair. There they stand, on their dreary way to Satory, a motley crowd, assembled by the hazards of the civil battle, representatives of every class, of every station in life; rags and broadcloth, professors and workmen, artists and soldiers, mothers with infants in arms, poor girls picked up in the streets to play the part of pétroleuse in the dismal procession; none

with a hat or bonnet on. Hats and bonnets have been swept ofl by the tempest of moral order. Many with bruises or blood on their faces. Some with their coats turned inside out by way of derision. I can hear the troopers swearing at them, and putting them together behind me by dint of swords and butt-ends. A woman's cry, a man's protest, and it is over.

Presently the ghastly vision has vanished, and I wonder, with a pang of shame, how I dared to enjoy anything—even a drive to the execution-stake whilst thousands and thousands of my friends were thus driven, like doomed cattle, in the dust of the road, to some unknown abyss of horror and misery. I wonder why I am not by their side, tied arm to arm with them, and sharing in their sorrow. So much I cannot help saying aloud.

'I wish I were with those poor people!'

The harmless remark leads to an unexpected crisis. Hardly had it been uttered, when the brigadier, who gallops by my side, and has reason of his own for loathing the ride, thinks fit to enter into a rage.

'What is he saying? Hold, coachman! Stop! I am going to do for him this time!'

The conclusion is a revolver-shot, which he fires at me, almost point-blank. How he did miss his aim is more than I can understand. But the fact is I only felt in my face the heat of the shot, whilst the bullet, travelling over my left shoulder, imbeds itself in the cushion behind.

The guards inside deem the joke a very bad one, and protest to a man.

'I say, brigadier, mind what you are about! You might as well have lodged your bullet in some of us! What is the matter with you now?' And a great deal more, spiced in the simple ways of camp-vocabulary.

A rather confused discussion ensues, the burden of which seems to be that the brigadier is drunk beyond hope. This is the only plausible induction which might be taken from what they say. All of them are speaking at one time, without heeding what the others utter, and without ever going to the point themselves. After a while, however, by some mysterious device of the craft, they succeed in coming to an understanding. It is arranged that if I happen to insult them again, I shall be kindly requested to step down to the ditch, and my account will be settled at once. But the brigadier is not to fire thus at random any more.

'These are sad tricks to the fellows inside, don't you see, old boy?' says, in conclusion, the cleverest of the party.

Galloping again.

The journey is drawing to its close without further incident. Sevres is behind us. Here we come on the pavé du roi. The carriage ascends a steep street, then drives down, then stops in front of a large gate, over which I can read, written in big letters, MAISON DE JUSTICE.

I am ordered down. The gate opens. A muster of five or six passers-by witnesses the proceedings, and by the yellowish light of the gas I can discern their features. A girl of seventeen, as pretty as a Greuze, stares at me in the face, with an astonished look.

'So young!' she exclaims, behind me, in silvery tones.

As I turn back to smile at her, I can see the little witch jump on her feet, clap her tiny hands in charming and ferocious delight, and say, ' So much the worse for him, the monster!'

II. CELL No. 3.

NINE hours asleep; a kind of sport I had not tasted for months. It is a revanche. The bed I would not recommend as a particularly good one; but there is no such narcotic as the first breath of air in a prison-cell.

Well, it is quite true. I am a prisoner at Versailles, Cell No. 3, on the ground-floor of the common gaol. I was not shot yesterday, as there were such odds that I should be. 'But nothing to lose by waiting,' as the old general said, as everything says to me—the logic of events, and the face of my warders here, and the sentry at my door, and the low number of my cell, which I know is one reserved for men under capital sentence, and the rounds of fire which I heard yesterday evening as I fell asleep. There is no question about it. Which, however, will be the process? Probably the one I saw described in yesterday's papers:

'The prisoner is shown into the drum court-martial, made up of the provost and two officers. He is examined, asked if he has anything to say in his defence, and then pronounced interesting or classé. In the latter case, the execution takes place at once, in one of the yards of the building.'

Is it not delightful? Of course, I am classé. I do not feel interesting at all, not a bit of it. Moreover, I have had the pleasure of reading, in the same paper of the period, that every pétroleuse taken red-handed by the troops, without a single exception, had her pockets full of orders signed by me. Perhaps it was so; such extraordinary things have been witnessed lately. No mistake—classé.

Meanwhile, I am dreadfully hungry. On the table there is a. big loaf of bread, and by its side an earthenware pitcher. Next, a book for orders at the canteen. One has only to write down what» he requires out of a given bill of fare, and after twenty-four hours. or so one gets through the wicket what he wants. One, two, ten, thirty white pages. At the rate of one per diem, I dare say I shall not use up the book. Let me begin it, however.

Now let me write home. Dear old mother! What to say to her? Fibs, of course—plenty of hope, and that sort of thing.

A voice through the wicket:

'Walking out—will you?'

Why not? What an admirable humbug those gaol regulations are! I may be summoned within one hour to the court-martial. But meanwhile the rules want

me to walk for thirty-five minutes, for the sake of my precious health, and I am called out. The" walking-yard of a cellular prison is a system of triangular patches of ground, encaged within high white walls. Those walls diverge, like the spokes of a wheel, from a central turret, in which stands, spider-like, a warder, who can thus watch twelve or more prisoners at a time as they walk, invisible one to another. Speaking aloud, or trying to open communications with neighbours, whose step, however, is audible, is strictly forbidden. Men told ofl' for walkingtime go in and out in succession, so that a meeting is impossible.

Of all prison-yards, those of the Versailles gaol are conspicuous for their diminutive proportions, and for the beds of parched-up flowers, which help in giving them the look of so many cemetery enclosures. On the walls, knife-cut inscriptions can tell who are the ordinary guests of those enchanting premises: 'Volumine, of Montpernasse, sends good-bye to Bibi.' 'I love Frisette.' 'Seventy-three days still. Hurrah for the 27th of October!' 'Ducky, from Plaisance stretches a twelvemonth for robbery;' and below, 'Does Ducky enjoy the ducking?' A few German inscriptions—'Wilhelm Konig von Preussen,' 'Johann Miiller,' &c.—show that the house was used as a military gaol during the foreign occupation.

It is rather hot in this kind of well, on the bottom of which the sun now pours down almost perpendicular rays. Life is swarming there under various shapes. In the dust, all along the wall, ants are hard at work. A white butterfly fairly tries to extract a last drop of juice from the core of those poor flowers; a May bug hums its awkward tune above; a pretty sage-green spider weaves its web in the corner, and the silly little flies, as they bask in the sun, let themselves be caught. I feel for the flies, and I set them free. The spider does not like it in the least. My kindness to them is cruelty to the other; she will have no breakfast to-day.

'Well, let us consider matters. Court-martial at two or three: so much for the debtor side. On the creditor page I find a rather tidy cell as a waiting-room, a bit of ground with roses and sun for a walk, the invaluable boon of solitude, a little time to breathe, no dastardly outrages to swallow, no butt-ends at my back: this is certainly something, as times go. On the whole, I have more than one cause to be satisfied with my own lot.'

The half-hour is spent. I must go back to my cell.

'Yes; but were I not a dead man I should have gone to such or such a place, seen men and things, read this, written that. How many schemes blighted in the bud! Not to speak of Olympe, whom I was to marry in September next.

'"If you marry, you will do well; if you marry not, you will do better,"' a great-uncle of mine used to say.

'He may have been right, the old man. But it is a bitter pill, all. the' same, dear girl.

‘Better for her sake that the thing should not yet have been done, after all. She will not be a widow.

‘Of course she will not. But she hardly will forget me at once, poor girl, and hers will be a blighted life.

‘This looks very like conceit, sir. Remember your authorities: tout passe, tout casse, tout lasse.

‘I will order the firing of the volley myself, if they will allow me. When the bullets go right through the heart, the brain, or the spine, it is almost thunderlike. I wonder what the feeling may be during the very short space of time between the. first notion of the bullets coming in and the total extinction of sensibility? There is no reason whatever for asserting that thought does not persist for an appreciable while, more or less confused, if the brain is not directly blown out. Most certainly, life cannot be the simple uncomplex phenomenon that some people fancy. It does not fly from the body all at once, like a bird from a cage. It is the sum-total of the innumerable but distinct chemical transactions which are going on simultaneously in the millions of anatomical elements of which we are made. One after the other, in succession, like the tiny lamps of an illumination when the oil is burnt up or overturned, those elements die when some great organ has stopped its action and ceased to send them their pabulum. The extinction of some of the number may be very slow. Twenty-four hours after apparent death, the beard and nails are often growing still. Who can tell me whether the pale head of the man just killed does not feel dimly the beloved lips which press it for the last time? There is Brown-Séquard’s experiment. He injected some hot blood in the carotids of a beheaded dog, and called the poor brute to life again—caused it to open its eyes.’

My chief thought is an intense contempt for the murderers who are going to assassinate me. What does that prove? A fine argument, indeed!

‘One without a retort, at all events.’

What I appreciate in my temporary quarters is a wide blazing red copper basin connected with a tap, and pure, clear, fresh water at will. The petit bourgeois at the Prefecture cannot possibly have anything better in his dressing-room. Many a so-called aristocrat in Paris would consider it a ‘hydrotherapic’ appliance, fit only for lunatics. They have no such baths at the Grand Hotel, nor indeed at any hotel in the world. Royal water, too, from Bougival through the Marly aqueduct.

In my solitude, I am somewhat addicted, like a premature old man, to pursue any association of ideas suggested by the surrounding objects, and the Marly aqueduct which ends in my prison tap brings me back to many a happy day spent at its source. O you quivering poplars on the towpath by the Seine, familiar woods of La Celle, cosy little inn at Tourne-Bride, merry boating parties, carps fished out from below the big paddle-wheel by the lock—where are you? So near in point of space, and yet so far away!

Do I regret having followed the stream, or rather having deliberately taken a header in the deep? No, a thousand times no. If it were to be done again, I would do it all the same. I firmly believe in the fatality of history, and the unfailing succession of actions and reactions which constitute its weft. I consequently entertain but a very indifferent opinion of the weight of any individual man in the balance. The strongest and the greatest is only a name given to a situation—something like its algebraical expression. All appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, his part is always a limited one, as is his responsibility. The struggle of progress against routine is as old as life itself, and it is not by one champion more or less that its episodes can be materially altered. In saecula saeculorum it will last, with isochronic alternations, and the scale will for ever fall, now on one side, now on the other. Reason would consequently urge on a sensible man, it seems, the advisability of quietly reading his newspaper by the fireside in winter, by the open window in summer time, and scoring the odds as the battle proceeds. But this I cannot do. I do not care for such a passive and selfish—I ought rather to write shellfish—mood of life. Whoever is satisfied with it I consider an inferior sort of anthropoid, who has not yet developed the only sense that can raise the ephemeral being of to-day above his miserable condition—I mean the sense of an everlasting, ever perfectible, and progressing man-king, of which he happens to be the passing representative.

In short, I firmly believe with the Stoics of old—of whom I do not otherwise pretend to be one—with Diderot, with Cloots, with Fourier, with Auguste Comte, with John Stuart Mill, with Schopenhauer, with every one that I cherish and respect as the highest expression of Man, that there is but one thing worth living for, namely, to stand, irrespective of consequences, by what one considers to be just and true, to carefully heal one's mind of its congenital egotism, to merge one's individuality in the common soul of humanity, and to work solely towards the benefit of the number.

They say I have workman on the brain. Yes, I have; I cannot help it. Love needs no argument, but needs only to be stated. It is quite true that I am partial to the People. I love it because it is open-hearted and honest, which its 'betters' are not to any great extent; because it is unconscious like a child, and forbearing like an ox; because it keeps within its rude breast the great manly force; because it sows and seldom reaps; because it stands like a rough block of Carrara marble, from which any perfect statue might be carved, provided it is properly handled; because its stubborn and desperate effort, its long sobbing through the ages, move me deeply, with unequalled intensity, as neither the most splendid verse, nor the best music, nor the finest picture will ever do; because again and again I have writhed under a pang of indignation and pity as I have looked at the wanton sufferings of the million-headed Sisyphus.

It is all very well to allege that 'thoroughbreds' are born to have not only precedence, but a monopoly of power and ease. I want, then, every one to be raised to the rank of a 'thoroughbred;' and I am perfectly satisfied this could be accomplished within the space of two or three generations by a modicum of teaching, health, and comfort, evenly distributed. Is that a dream or a chimera? I cannot admit as much, so far as France is concerned, when I consider the stupendous stride which our poorer classes have achieved within eighty years; when I see the soil so radically weeded out of any aristocracy, that its dozen more or less genuine dukes are only able to keep their carriage by marrying for money the daughters of usurers; when I see the land in the hands of the peasant; the clergy depending for bread on the tender mercies of the State; the franchise in the cradle of every baby; the nation so well fitted for wholesale reform by the masterly centralisation sprung from its own ethnical temper and shaped by the Convention. How little what remains to be done looks by the side of what has been already achieved! and still how indispensable to do it at once, if the entire fabric is not to collapse, and the experiment to end in failure.

Considering that not one single progress has ever been attained in France except as the consequence of a revolution; considering that the ruling class have never granted the most harmless of improvements except on compulsion, we Parisians have made up our mind that compulsion should be resorted to at every opportunity. This is the work, this is the positive duty, to which we have made the sacrifice of our individual happiness, freedom, and life; and now the hour has come for drinking the cup to the dregs.

I am made of the earthly clay, and I cannot without a regret bid farewell to life. Still, with that regret is mixed up a kind of intimate delight at the bottom of my inner self, something like a diffuse exultation at dying for my idol, and bestowing upon it the greatest evidence of love within the reach of man.

A fine merit, indeed, considering that the sacrifice is compulsory! Would it not seem as if I had surrendered of my own free will?

Of course I did not. But none the less the odd feeling is discernible. I would fain have boasted yesterday that I was the least fanatical of beings. Undoubtedly, however, this is a pennyweight of what makes fanatics.

Five o'clock. Nothing yet. Is it possible that I may have been forgotten? I ought to have been dispatched an hour ago, according to my estimate. Mine is really an awkward situation. I feel like a guest who has mistaken the right day for a dinner, and who falls in unexpectedly amongst a family party. How willingly I would laugh at myself, if only I had some one to exchange impressions with! Unfortunately, the humorous side of things tragical is quite lost in solitude, and their dryness only remains.

Upon my word, je m'ennuie, as I should do half an hour in advance in a railway waiting-room.

Night is coming again. The silent warder brings in the lamp, which is to be kept burning here to allow of my being watched through the wicket. They do not burn gas yet at the Versailles gaol. It is deemed bad form, probably—smelling of revolution.

Although the warder is certainly accustomed to wait on the worst description of criminals, I can read in his face that I am, in his eyes, an atrocious malefactor. He is polite enough—as far even as taking his cap off when he enters—evidently because such are his precise instructions; but under that show of self-possession lies a genuine repulsion, like that which overcomes one at the sight of a reptile. To think that I am actually playing the part of an alligator or a boa-constrictor to that simple soul!

It will be to-morrow, then, unless they arraign me at midnight before some Council of the Ten, with Venetian lanterns and masked sbirri. Shall I lie on my bed without undressing, in order to be up at once, and ready for any emergency? Most assuredly not. They will wait for me in their turn. Is not the toilette of the doomed man quite an institution?

I fancy 'our contemporaries' must make a pretty hash of us by this time. I-had a taste of it yesterday. It was quite affecting to one who knows the market price of such virtuous effusions. But what will be the verdict of the future—what will the next generation think of us? Probably the truth,—that we were well-meaning upright fellows, with a sense of modern aspirations and requirements, but very green—very green.

It may be they will make too much of us. History has a liking to precursors. At all events, there is hardly any doubt that some day or other our bones will be carried in triumph over the shoulders of a proletarian army, and most properly made capital of by our successors. Just it!—a candidate for the dignity of a political corpse; that is my present enviable position.

These apartments of mine are decidedly gloomy by the glitter of that primitive night-lamp—merely a wick floating over a layer of oil in an ignoble glass. I had not noticed it yesterday evening, being too sleepy; but really it gives one a foretaste of the grave, of which this cell is the ante-chamber.

The grave! What a pity one does not retain consciousness when there! It would be most interesting, to be sure, even if it were not possible to make notes of one's impressions. That no live creature really expects anything of the kind is sufficiently shown by the general aversion entertained to death. Supposing that consummation should not be the definitive end of personal identity, it is pretty clear nobody would be so silly as to object to it; it would be commonly considered something like taking a dose of laughing-gas or chloroform, with reasonable hope of resuming oneself after a passing swoon. As for me, I could not for a moment admit the possibility of an intelligent being firmly convinced that, immediately after the event, he will be consciously in possession of absolute knowledge, who would not long impatiently for that most desirable of initiations. Indeed, I do not

profess to understand how, with such a prospect before him, he might bear the mean and miserable humdrum of existence, not to speak of its hardships and, in many cases, horrors. But the fact is that, however wearisome the journey may be in this valley of tears, every one clings to it with passionate fervour, and will not forfeit a single mile. This, in my humble opinion, does not speak much for the famous omnium consensus as to a brighter future. Logically, every one who firmly expects it ought to have no other end in life than to merit and to attain it. Now is there one single man or woman who ever behaved consistently with such an opinion?

I wonder how it is that amongst the innumerable systems respecting after-life, edited by more or less imaginative philosophers, none has ever been suggested in which consciousness of the identity, instead of deserting the corpse, would be buried with it under two feet of earth, and would follow, as a silent witness, the whole process of resorption into the common reservoir of what was once a human being—when it would watch each constitutive element in its transformations and fresh associations, see the phosphates proceeding by shoals to join their beloved chalk, the ammonias filtered through friendly gravels, the carbonates delicately sucked up by the radicles of some grass or shrub above, to grow up in process of time into a big tree, or perhaps ultimately to decay into a bank of coals; such a particle of flesh creeping its way up to a bright daisy, to be next carried away into space on the wing of a butterfly; another grazed up, in the shape of pasture, by an innocent Southdown, and next finding its way to a chop-house or, it may be, to some fashionable dining-room, under the more ambitious title of cotelette soubise; such a bubble of oxygen quietly exhaled in the air on a fine morning, next rolled into a dewdrop with a vagrant atom of hydrogen, drifting to a garbling brook, carried away to the mighty sea, and then travelling along with the currents of the deep, now to Brooklyn or Ceylon, now to the balmy coast of Madeira, now to the icebergs of the Pole; whilst a more enterprising molecule of azot, jumping at the confines of the atmospheric layer, manages to forfeit all dead weight, starts on a ray of light across the boundless ether, and calls, after a journey of some twenty years, now on the shores of Sirius, now on the rings of Saturn, finally to get tired of this commonplace nebula of ours, and to proceed on a tour of a few million centuries to some fresh solar systems in the abysses of space, where our earth has no recognised existence, and our sun no mention in the calendar.

And who can tell, then, whether some cell of brain, retaining its individuality, treasuring up like a faded photograph some old hackneyed idea, will not start as a whole, find a temporary shelter under some other skull—bring to the cerebellum of a horse some glimpse of humanity, or to the anterior circumvolution of a child some vague reminiscence of a previous life?

Of such possibilities I feel confident—of such an everlasting interchange of materials between the inert and the live world I am certain. By such an

uninterrupted chain of circulating elements I feel myself indissolubly connected, not only with my brother beings, but with the whole organic and inorganic universe. This is the comfortable pillow upon which my mind rests quietly—this is why the approaching dissolution does not appear to my thought with its absurd vanguard of scares and doubts and terrors, but only as a more intimate association with my mother Hertha. From some remains of animal hereditary prejudice, my actual identity still keeps to a certain extent rebelling against its disappearance; but the highest parts of it are growing athirst for that most real of nirvanas, and, but for a wholesome dread of creating a disturbance in this well-conducted gaol, I would fain cry, at the top of my voice, 'Hio, Pan, Pan, I am coming!'

Outside my door, as well as down my rough glass window, I can hear the sentries going up and down, up and down, like pendula. From time to time they are relieved from guard, and in the silence of the night I overhear them exchanging the password in a whisper. Poor fellows! They too find the watch a long one. Sometimes they will try the trigger of their Chassepot, by way of pastime, with a characteristic clicking. It would certainly be considered cruel to cause a man under capital sentence to sleep with a guillotine or the halter in his cell. How is it that, with the rifle which is to play the same part, the idea has nothing shocking? The remark amuses me for a while. All the distinction of death by fire-arms lies in it. I go on musing, hour after hour, under the low big voice of the prison clock outside, until, as dawn is creeping in, I lose consciousness.

June 4th. It is already broad daylight when I start up, suddenly aroused by a tumult in the passage. Scabbards are jingling, rifles clanging, heavy steps beaten on the floor, orders given aloud. I expect my door to open every minute.

But again this comes to nothing. Some fresh prisoner shown in, I fancy. '

All this waiting is getting positively fulsome. I think it very unfair of them to leave me thus in suspense.

If I am disappointed, it is somewhat my fault, however. I will have it that I am to be shot without delay. But suppose they want to reserve me for some kind of judicial show? Suppose public opinion has revolted at last against the butchery, and summary assassination has grown to be no longer practicable? Why, then—who knows?—it is quite possible. . . .

This is too absurd. Solitary confinement is beginning to tell on my brain. The idea of venturing on anything like a possibility of escape! Thousands upon thousands of my friends have been slaughtered without even the semblance of a trial, and I, one of their elected leaders, who would certainly not discard the responsibility of any of the measures agreed to in our councils, suffered to get out scot-free? Nonsense! Too many irresponsible persons have perished. Scapegoats are wanted now to bear the weight of the reaction. To spare me would be practically to admit that unnecessary haste was used in the work of

wholesale murder. Not to shoot me would amount to a confession that the shooting of so many prisoners of war was an abominable crime. I am clearly a predestined victim on the altar of Versaillist consistency.

It matters very little, after all, if it is to be now or within a few days. For thirty-six consecutive hours I have been thinking of that one contingency. It is far more than it deserves. Enough of it! I will have no more of such absurd inward prattle. The first time I again find myself arguing on the subject, I will inflict upon myself the heaviest penalty at my disposal—suppression of tobacco-smoking.

June 5th. I have just made a discovery which had not occurred to me before. I am in 'close confinement'—au secret—that is to say, deprived by special orders of any communication whatever with the outer world.

This morning a portmanteau from home was delivered to me, not without having undergone the most searching examination, and the warder informed me, in the number of words strictly indispensable, that a bottle, apparently of Cologne, had been kept at the record office for analysis by an expert. They are afraid lest it should be poison.

I can see now the reason why I had no sign from home. The explanation is a welcome one, for their silence was most disheartening. I know them better than to doubt their loving anxiety; but so many dreadful events may have taken place within those terrible days. It was on the 23d May when I saw them last, and I have not since had any communication with their part of the town. The portmanteau shows at least that they are alive, and know where I am.

Close confinement is rather a poor affair. Some remains of the torture of old, I suppose. Why do they put me in close confinement? Could they not let me enjoy, to the last minute, the presence of my own dear ones P The Commune, which they continue madly charging with cruelty, found time enough, pending the battle, to abolish close confinement in its prisons. If only that could be of any use to them. But they have not even such justification.

It is a mere question of form. I am in close confinement because gaol regulations entail it in criminal cases, and, it need hardly be said, I am the worst of criminals.

I believe I am grudging my fate. This is good indeed. How many of my friends would only be too glad to be in close confinement just now, packed up as they are in damp cellars, in dirty stables, in cattle railway-carts, on a bed of straw, or perhaps on no straw at all, without sufficient air to breathe, no water, hardly any food, and double ration of insults!

The precaution these people take against poison is simply idiotic. I have two or three processes of suicide within my reach, if I choose to try my hand at that game. First of all, the iron rod in my window, to which it would be the easiest thing in the world to fasten a cord torn out from my bed-clothes, for the purpose of hanging myself. I would raise myself against the wall by force of hands, put

my neck in the noose, and let go. It would be done in a minute. On the other hand, I have noticed, in the walking-yard, small fragments of glass, quite sufficient to open my veins or cut my throat, if I had the taste for a Roman exit. Even poison I could get, if my preferences lay in that direction. I should only have to scrape the copper-basin underneath to obtain verdigris. There is enough of it to kill twenty rats or one man. Finally, although I am not allowed the luxury of a knife, and my fork and spoon are wooden ones, I have the use of a regulation military truss, in which, together with a thimble and thread, there is a long big needle—quite long enough to puncture one's heart or spinal chord. Now you see, gentlemen, that you are putting yourselves to useless trouble. I am still the master of my own life. But do not feel uneasy, you philanthropic turnkeys, I do not want to take it. I deem the spectacle too interesting by far, to desert my stall previous to the fall of the curtain.

Olympe is, according to my standard, exquisitely pretty. She has got very, very tiny feet, of which she is somewhat too proud, by the way, like the true Parisian that she is. But I cannot be very indignant at the weakness, as I have it in common with her, and its objects are really the most wonderful little things I ever saw. Then she is such a light, airy, pleasant, womanly creature to look at—such a clever girl, such an accomplished musician. What I like most in her, however, is her limpidness. She is as clear as spring-water, and never fails to utter at once what happens to come to her mind, which is always fresh and charming. Although she is not a bit affected, she has not one single movement in her which is not graceful. I am delighted at her ways of speaking, and sadly addicted to fall into silent raptures whenever I see her walking, dancing, or doing anything. She is something of a flirt, I am afraid. At all events she knows her power, and is never tired of trying it. But she confesses her familiar sin with such affecting frankness, that she manages to turn it into a further seduction. In short, I am over head and ears in love with her.

Does she love me? Chi lo sa. She hardly knows her mind herself. She is such a child. When I mastered courage enough to break the question—just one year ago, on the terrace of St. Germain—she looked at me with her deep blue unabashed eyes, and without getting shy in the least, she said: 'Yes.' She certainly felt considerably more at home than I did. Perhaps she had some previous experience of the situation, or else she had been for some time guiding my strategical moves, without my knowledge.

It was an evening. A lukewarm breeze incensed us with the fragrance of the beds of mignonette by the Pavilion, as we walked some twenty paces in front of the mammas. I can see every detail of the scene as if it had just taken place: the huge black mass of the forest in the background, the silver streak of the river down the valley, the faint roaring of Paris in a haze of reverberated light in the distance, the moon slowly rising on the horizon, and surrounding the sweet face of my dear girl with a kind of halo. Some one spoke to me. We were not able to

exchange any more words by ourselves. To tell the truth, I was not over sorry for the circumstance. I was too happy not to want to be silent, and I am afraid I did not utter a reasonable sentence, or indeed any further sentence at all, for the whole evening. When I took my departure, I felt, as I said good-bye to her, that her hand was as fresh as a fish. Mine was burning.

We were to be married in October last. The war came, which of course upset everything. On the news of Sedan, I enlisted with my friend Silvestre as a volunteer. Good-will we had, to be sure, but scanty opportunities of putting it to the test. During the five months of the siege we were kept in the Aubervilliers Fort, drilling night and day for a sally that never came, and without, except on two occasions—at Champigny and Buzenval—getting any chance of firing a shot at a German line.

As often as I was allowed I ran to Paris; I put down my regimentals and called on my betrothed. These were holidays! She was somewhat angry with me for having enlisted without her leave. If only I had entered a regiment of colonels! But the idea of being a private—a common private—like those who used to walk with her nursery-maid, years ago, in the Luxembourg Gardens! She could not put up with the disappointment, and this was my reason for never donning military honours when I had a chance of being shown into her presence. She knew well that I had declined being elected a Chief-of-Battalion in the National Guard, and teased me so about it, that when I got the stripes of a sergeant, after the battle of Champigny, I never ventured to impart the circumstance to her, although these dear stripes were to me no mean object of pride.

Apart from that special point, we got on capitally together. Hour after hour glided swiftly away, by the cheerful fire of logs, whilst the distant booming of the bombardment went on every minute without even being heeded. My future mother-in-law went to and fro, or sat by the window, busy with her Penelopian tapestry. Olympe and I chatted in whispers, and never felt tired of building castles in the air.

We were to live at Passy, by the side of the Bois. A small house to ourselves, without the nuisance of a concierge, with a lawn in front and one in the rear. The drawing-room was to be blue, the dining-room yellow, the study dark crimson. Lots of books and pictures and china. Not one single bore was ever to have admittance. Only a few tried friends and selected relations would obtain the password. Plenty of work and love. Such was the programme.

'Ladies and Gentlemen,—Owing to the unaccountable circumstances, the intended idyll is not to take place. A short scene in an open field, with a stake in the middle and a firing-party in the rear, is to be substituted. The bride is no longer to be Mademoiselle Olympe Desarnaux, but that well-known and respectable widow, Madame La Terre.'

Well, it does not matter. These were hours of infinite sweetness, and whoever knew them once has lived long enough. I took their sacred warmth

away within my breast when I went back to the outposts. With my feet deep in the snow, on advanced guard at night, or, again, rolled up in my cloak in the scanty kennel-tent, under the whizzing and bursting of the Krupp shells, I dreamed of all those things, and I did not feel our hardships. Now, again, in this solemn watch-of—arms—the bitter dulness of which all the philosophy in the world could not entirely counteract—the memory of those passing visions, the flavour of that living poetry, penetrate me with a kind of glee. Yes, glee—it is not saying too much. It is hard to part with all that was summed-up to me in that one affection; and still, how empty I should feel if I were not intoxicated with that love! At times I overtake myself, speaking half-aloud in my cell and uttering her name. There is in those syllables a victorious power, perceptible to myself alone. When I die, I will cry: 'Vive la République! Vive l'humanité!' and in the same last breath: 'Olympe!'

'My dear boy, the instinct of perpetuation of the species is somewhat predominant in your idiosyncrasy,' would be sure to remark the illustrious master, Professor Charles Robin, if I were to impart such frolics to him.

Jane 6th. Habit is a strange force, and the mind is often satisfied with very poor reasons. I am now quite at home in prison life, and I have just ascertained that the following reflection holds no inconsiderable part in my resignation:

'After all, I am in the situation of a consumptive at the last period of his disease, with the advantage of an excellent appetite and no loss of strength up to the decisive minute.'

So much for the scientific side. As to the literary, I have just remembered the very appropriate remark of Euripides:

'No use rebelling against things, as things will only laugh at the attempt.'

Upon which classical reminiscence I have spent three or four hours in trying to reconstitute the short story of my life. In order to keep some milestones along the way, I wrote the principal dates in pencil on the whitewashed wall. To my astonishment, I find that the chief events in it have left very poor traces behind them, and that a bird's eye view of life is summed up in two or three clusters of general impressions which shroud every detail in a kind of fog. It is certainly easier to retract the current of one's leading ideas than to recall to mind the chain of impressions by which they were moulded. Of childhood I remember next to nothing: the younger looks of a beautiful mother; my partiality to a favourite nurse; the pleasures of unlimited gourmandise; a month spent in bed on account of some broken bones; a peculiar pair of velvet knickerbockers, which I considered the ne plus ultra of finery; and my intense sorrow when, about half an hour after being presented with my first watch, I pulled it to pieces in attempting to study its mechanism. Of school, the temper, face, and general appearance of my masters and fellows. But many of their names have fled away, and nearly all the forms are mixed up in a shapeless chaos. Next comes Paris, university life in the Quartier Latin, work and the

reverse mixed up by fits, in somewhat unequal proportions, and then the first start, the first cares, and that great drama of the war upon which the curtain has just fallen. How narrow the circle is! Hardly eight or ten years of conscious life! Hardly eight or ten times three hundred and sixty-five days bestowed on the great human function—loving, thinking, acting! and still my visual power is only able to discern the greater masses in that limited field, whilst every particular is already confused and lost in the distance.

The very remark led me to the idea of keeping my diary like a schoolgirl. If I am allowed three or four weeks more, which after all is becoming hourly more possible, I am satisfied that I shall be glad to have preserved a diagram of my impressions. For the special purpose of hindering the police from ever putting its suspicious hands into my inner world, I indulge in the pastime of altering on every fresh page the relative value of the signs which I use in writing, according to a rule framed by myself. Thus, cryptographists will be at liberty to exercise their guessing propensities on my Ms. if they like. They are sure to believe that they have hit upon the monita secreta of a political society, and some of them will not fail to assert that they have succeeded in translating the awful charter. They will be rewarded by a grateful Government, raised to a superior rank. Here is at least a family that will bless my name. Affecting prospect!

By the way, under which form of government do I at present enjoy the advantage of being kept in durance vile? I have not the remotest idea, and should considerably like to know. Were I to learn that Napoleon III. has just been proclaimed by the ex-Imperial Guard, Henri V. by the Assembly, the Duke d'Aumale by himself and a few respectable dowagers, or the Republic by General the Marquis de Galiffet, none of these pieces of information would surprise me in the least. As a matter of course, if the Republic is done away with, the honourable Republicans of the conventional persuasion, who have quietly retained their seats at Versailles and helped in shooting down their constituents, will not fail to declare that it is all our own fault; although every one must admit that but for our desperate stand a Monarchy would have been patched up two months ago. But suppose that, through a miracle, in spite of their desertion and our crushing defeat, the Republic stands proof against all attempts: what will they say to that? Well, they will probably suggest that in the innermost of their honest soul they were on the side of Paris. Double-faced wretches! A thousand times better to be here, awaiting the platoon, than to walk outside in their traitorous shoes.

June 7th. Nothing—always nothing! What do they mean, and what is to be the end of this? I rather think the sanguinary mania is beginning to subside. A marked change is discernible on the face of the warders. The suspicion seems to dawn in their mind that I may be like any other man. It is only a dim sense as yet; its outward signs are few and far between; but I can discover them. And why not admit the fact?—it is with real satisfaction. Very foolish of me. What the

Versaillists in general—and those men in particular—may think of my line of action ought to be quite immaterial to me. But the will or the reason has no power against such feelings; it is like the sense of cold or heat with which one is impressed by the side of a block of ice or a fire of coals. The sincere horror with which I filled for the last few days the minds of those poor devils—absurd and unfair as it was—was a burden to me. From cultivated persons it would have amused me; from men of the people, on behalf of whose cause I am going to die, it hurt me.

Whatever be the case, the glass of wine which I make a point of offering the senior warder whenever he brings in my dinner has at last been accepted. The man is now quite tamed. Wine is, of course, to him the best thing in the world, as I had inferred from the peculiar hue of his nasal organ; and a Parisian who gives his ration away, instead of drinking it, must, of necessity, upset all the notions of a Versaillist warder respecting the movement of the 18th March.

June 8th. I have taken to reading the prison-books. I did not care much for them at first. A more extraordinary olla podrida of useless and absurdly chosen trash than the two hundred odd volumes on the greasy catalogue could not easily be collected. So-called moral novels, which would be enough to make one loathe the very name of morals; family magazines of the whining school; exploded accounts of travels by literary hacks, who never left their favourite tap-room; some twenty tomes of a 'history' by Anquetil,—such is the staple of the library. Hardly five or six readable volumes, which, as a matter of course, have been generally neglected, and are the only clean ones. Most of the others are illustrated on the margin with quaint drawings and notes—sometimes signed —which are not altogether without an original flavour. Our old friend 'Volumine, of Montpernasse,' seems to have been hard at work with this kind of comment. He was evidently endowed with a gift of casting a tinge of romance on the most commonplace event. For instance, when the alleged traveller relates that at a kraal on the Orange River he had a very good supper, after the day's harassing journey, Volumine will remark, 'I wonder if he made love to the cook?' Or, again, by the side of a glowing description of tropical splendours, he will burst forth: 'This, I think, is vastly inferior to the scenery at the Bel Constant on a Sunday night.'

I have begun with reading Bossuet's Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle, which I had not perused from the days of school—a rather heavy morsel, I should say. It is now the turn of Rollin's Histoire Romaine. Dear old friend of my fifth form, what a light for me recent events are casting on your chronicles! Curiously enough, the venerable scholar—who would certainly have sided now with Versailles, had be been alive—was in his lifetime full of secret partiality to the Gracchi. How many Rollins here below, while fully admitting in theory the justice of our claims, cast the first stone at us as soon as we come to practical work?

June 9th. The first event in my cellular life. As I went to the walking-yard I just caught a glimpse between two doors of a familiar face, with large deep brown eyes, like the object-glass of a photograph. There is but a pair of such eyes in the world, which belong to my esteemed friend and colleague, Gustave Courbet, the illustrious painter. Poor fellow! He, too, has fallen by the hands of a merciless foe. I am very sorry, for his sake and for the sake of art.

The indispensable warder has seen the good-bye which I hasten to beckon to my friend. He at once remarks, with a dubious accent, irresistibly comical:

'This one does not seem to be so bad, after all.'

Is it not provoking?

'Well, the countenance of clever criminals is very apt to lead observers into error,' I answer the man, quite seriously. 'I may as well tell you, in confidence, that during the civil war the miscreant used to indulge every morning in a human steak for his breakfast. It was thus that he managed to acquire the majestic extra flesh for which he is conspicuous.'

'Again an illusion the less!' seems to say the distracted face of the man, as he locks me in the enclosure.

III. The Pale-Blue Ribbon

June 12th. Hurrah! I live, I breathe, I am mad with joy. Olympe loves me.

To-day some linen from home was delivered to me. I took a handkerchief, when something fell from it, which I picked up at once. It was a ribbon-bow—the simplest of pale-blue ribbon bows, such as girls wear in their hair. Her favourite colour. She told me so many a time.

Dear valiant soul! How did she summon courage enough for such an unusual step? How, having once dreamed of it, did she manage to bring the undertaking to a successful issue? Thus, it is true! There are no walls and no bolted doors for love! She wanted me to know that she stands by me; and at once —little aware as she is of the ways of the world—she managed to baffle the whole array of état de siége and guards and prison regulations. The idea intoxicates me—distracts me. I actually overtake myself in the act of laughing and leaping in my cage. This is very bad for a political man and an apostle of social reform. Fortunately there is no one to watch me.

When the warder came in at breakfast-time I was almost on the point of shaking hands with him, for want of imparting my happiness to some one. I said something—I really don't know what—in such an extraordinary strain of joy, that he looked at me in wonder, and went away shaking his head. He thought, probably,

'One more on whose brain solitary confinement begins to tell!'

You fool, don't you see that your cell and your bundle of keys and your whole gaol, with governor, recorder, warders, and sentries,—don't you see that

all your display of horrors has no more objective existence to me? that there is but one thing in the world to my eyes, namely, that little pale-blue ribbon that once tied the blonde hair of my beloved? How fresh, how sweet, how charming, how eloquent it looks! It is like a concentrated extract of her own adorable self. As I press it on my lips and shut my eyes it seems to me as if I could see her once again, in the light fabric of her white summer dress, sitting by the piano, and playing on the keys some vague tune of a waltz, half-lost in her musical reverie, half-laughing at what I said to her.

My own brave girl! It is when the world's dogs of rabid anger are unchained upon me, when there is no adequate obloquy for my name, no sewer dirty enough for my corpse; it is at the hour of defeat, humiliation, and agony that you are pleased to send me the assurance that I had not yet—that I would so readily have purchased at any cost. It is then that it pleases you to whisper through the space and the prison walls: 'Olympe sides with thee, Olympe loves thee!' Thank you, dear.

A cynical voice will have it, inside me, that possibly the compliment is not paid to me personally, but to my tragical fate. It is not the man, but his coming death, it suggests, which caused her to send such a gracious message. Pity for my situation

My situation be hanged! What does that matter? Why should I not savour the unexpected delicacy, even supposing that it does not by right belong to me, but to the sentence upon me? Are not the fate of a given being and his person quite inseparable? Is not my own death emphatically my property? Shall I not, as I bite at the poisoned apple, be allowed the right of appreciating its flavour? Here, here is the triumph, which it is in the power of no one to steal from me. The more they outrage and crush me, the more Olympe loves me. Strike, then, murderers!

June 13th. But how to let her know that her sweet message reached me? Impossible without help. It would be necessary to bribe some one; and I have nothing left, except, perhaps, a pair of wrist-buttons, overlooked when I came in, and worth, maybe, forty francs. I would fain offer them to Fabert the warder, but I cannot make up my mind to it. Very hard it is to ask a man to forfeit for money—especially for very little money—what he considers his duty. This one is an old soldier; his breast is covered with medals. Really, it is impossible.

'Is your situation a very good one?' I asked him as he brought in my dinner. The glass of wine by this time had become quite an institution.

'Well, sir, I would hardly say so much. Sixty-eight francs a month; ninety-two with my pension and military medal. When one has a wife and two children to maintain, you may well believe that it is not equal to a gold-mine.'

'How is it that your pension is so scanty? You certainly took part in several campaigns?'

‘Eleven campaigns, sir. Thrice wounded; four honourable mentions. I was proposed for the cross; and last year again I was led to hope that I should have it; but the war came, and good-bye to my cross. So many were wanted that there were none left for old folks like me.’

A flash of inspiration strikes me.

‘Would you be so very glad to have that cross?’

‘Of course I would. But what is the use of thinking of it? I know well that it is lost beyond hope.’

‘Perhaps. Hem! If you like, I can give you a letter for a friend of mine, who may obtain it for you.’

Fabert looks exceedingly serious all at once. He turns his laced cap in his horny hands, and after a while:

‘That depends upon what would be required from me in exchange,’ says he, in a sepulchral tone.

‘O, very little indeed; nothing, if you think it better. I will give you a letter which I am satisfied will do you good; and you, in your turn, may find it convenient to take from me an open note, with only two words on it, to its address.’

‘Well, two words are quite enough, they say, to have a man hanged.’

‘It will be nothing that could possibly be detrimental to you; simply an acknowledgment to a lady for a bow of blue ribbon which she sent to me. A red ribbon against a blue one. There is nothing political in the bargain, you can see.’

Fabert turns round’ to the door; ascertains that there is no one to spy him; then he winks to me, and says, ‘ All right.’

‘Well, in half-an-hour, if you come round, you shall have both letters.’

I am perfectly satisfied Valras will do me the favour I am about to request from him, and will actively try to obtain justice on behalf of the veteran soldier. He was my chum for years, and once we had but one room to ourselves, in which everything, work and pleasure, was in common. Still, I do not reckon so much on our old friendship—knowing well how the frictions of public life are apt to tear that stuff out—as on his peculiar temper. In spite of his robes of a maitre des requétes at the Council of State, Valras is, and will always remain, a humourist. I would readily bet that he will think obtaining the cross for a turnkey at the request of a prisoner a capital joke.

June 14th. Fabert has vanished. Another man does duty in his stead. I suppose he has obtained leave of absence and proceeded to Paris.

June 15th. This morning at dawn, I was quite awake when the

door of my cell turned silently on its hinges, and I beheld Fabert by my side.

‘Well, sir,’ he began at once, ‘I have seen M. Valras, and delivered your letter to him. He was very kind to me, bade me leave my papers to him, and promised to look after my situation.’

‘And Mademoiselle Desarnaux?’

'He recommended me to bring his compliments to you, and to thank you very much for having thought of him on a matter of justice. These were his own words.'

'Very well—and Mademoiselle Desarnaux?'

'He said, too, he wished he could call and see you, but you were sure to understand the motives which prevented him from doing so. Of course, I did not tell him you were in close confinement.'

'Why not?'

'Because he would have been too sorry, the dear gentleman. He seems to like you so much.'

'Pshaw! never mind that. He will not have a glass of wine the less at his dinner. But what about Mademoiselle Desarnaux? Did you not see her?'

'Of course I did. I was very well received too. The housemaid hesitated at first to let me in, but when I stated that I came on an errand from you, you ought to have seen her go at once to the young lady,—who, in her turn, came up breathless. She took your note, read it, and began crying. Women always do. Then she took me to the sitting-room, where the old lady was; she bade me sit down, and began asking me lots of questions: How you were; if you were allowed every requisite, if your room was a large one, if you had exercise enough; what kind of food—'

'How was she dressed?'

'In black, I think—mourning like.'

'Go on, then.'

'Well, when I had answered every question, Mademoiselle asked whether I was willing to take back a letter to you; and here, I must tell you, I could perceive the old lady did not look very pleased. She said, "But, my dear child, you see how impossible it is. The warder can certainly not—" "I beg your pardon, madam," said I, "if it is only a little friendly note, I have no objection. The young lady would never willingly put an old soldier in jeopardy." This silenced the old lady. Mademoiselle rose at once, and went to a desk by the window. She was not long in writing her note, I promise you—'

'Why, you have a letter for me, then.'

'Of course I have. Only wait a minute, please. I will just give it to you.'

As he spoke, the brave old fellow extracted from his breast pocket an old military book, and slowly, methodically, he took out of it a little square envelope, upon which I stooped like a bird of prey.

The man has long ago left my cell and drawn the heavy bolts on the door, when I am still on my elbow, reading and reading again the sweet message, and treasuring up in my memory every particular of the account.

She is in deep mourning. She wants to see me. She wants to die when I die.

Dear, dear child! How was it that my sad fortune came across the bright thread of yours? You were not born to such storms; you ought to have sailed along a smooth career with a smile on your rosy lips. Be blessed! Be blessed!

IV. A Magistrate.

I AM to be tried by Military Commissioners. This morning, about ten o'clock, Fabert entered, and said: ' They come to fetch you for the preliminary examination.'

At last!

Four Paris guards, headed by a brigadier, were waiting for me at the Record Office. The usual forms of exit once gone through, here I am out of doors.

No city in the world is quieter than Versailles of a morning, with its general look of emptiness, as if it were still waiting for bygone pageants, gilt carriages, and retinues. But six weeks in solitary confinement have inured me to the stillness of a prison-cell, and what strikes the living man as an image of death is to me a feast of life. The sun is already more than half-way to the zenith. Far away, the avenues stretch out, fan-like, under the huge bower

of the two-hundred-years-old elms. Every individual tree is as '

well combed as a big wig, and looks down in stately disgust at the rampant iconoclast below. A child trundles his hoop; a soldier mounts guard; a housewife sweeps her steps; a girl in summer dress, as light as a shadow, darts a sly glance under the brim of her parasol. All those things of the street which one is wont to elbow unawares impress me as a new spectacle, and the very sense of novelty gives me the measure of my case.

To me the world came to a stop thirty-eight days ago, like a clock which had not been wound up. Outside it has been going on its customary course, and on the walls I can read the time. Slips of white printed paper, remnants of official proclamations, are still throbbing there under the kiss of the breeze, by the side of a big brand-new bill in red and white, advertising a great novel in six parts: THE MYSTERIES OF THE HÔTEL DE VILLE. They have put us in feuilletons already.

Now we reach the Place d'Armes, which has been turned into an artillery park. As far as the eye sees, on each side of the road, guns of every size, of every pattern, in compact array, are raising their open muzzles against the dark-blue heaven. The bright seven-pounder, as clean as a new pin, fresh from the hands of Dorian, dazzles its contemptuous rays on its neighbour, the mountain howitzer. Old cast-iron naval cannons from Brest or Lorient are puzzled at finding themselves in the same row with green-bronze culverins that,

it may be, have seen the days of Montmirail. It is an incongruous and irregular army of dumb soldiers, a host of eloquent though now silent witnesses, who cry out like a curse a tale of invasion, defeat, and shame, of empty arsenals, of a country betrayed into surrender. Two typical Cookists, with guide-books in hand, and opera-glasses slung across their painfully checkered travelling-suits, look like surveyors on the bankrupt's estate.

Here is the gilt grate of the Chateau. Squatting by a diminutive table against the spur-stone, a poor woman is exhibiting for sale a few old newspapers. How fresh they would be to me! But it is forbidden fruit. Although I am sub Jove, through a legal fiction I am still in solitary confinement.

In the middle of the wide desert courtyard, Louis XIV., sitting on a charger as bountifully maned as himself, keeps majestic and solemn watch. Right and left, Bayard and Duguesclin are mournfully gazing from under the vizors of their helmets at what their sons have allowed to be made with France. Richelieu and Sully, Turenne and Condé, Dugay Trouin and Suflren, Lannes and Duquesne, are holding a cabinet council, and wondering whether it is true that this country of theirs has fallen into the hands of Olliviers and Gramonts, MacMahons and Bazaines, Jules Favres and Trochus, De Broglies and Belcastels.

We proceed up to the Cour de Marbre. From that balcony, on the first floor, Marie Antoinette had to bow on the morning of October 6, 1789, to the hungry insurgents who thought that they would have bread for ever henceforth, as they took the boulanger and boulangère back to Paris with them. From this passage Louis XV. used to slip out at night to the Parc aux Cerfs. On the left aisle of the palace we enter, through a postern, a subway, at the end of which may be seen, in white array, the tables of the parliamentary refreshment-room. Those vulgar tables in the very middle of the ruins and memorials of old France! What a symbol! This indeed is the true committee-room of the dirigeantes and, above all, digérantes classes. Here our bourgeois legislators must really feel at home. Can it be for such a result that our forefathers destroyed the traditional establishment?

We ascend a stone staircase, at the foot of which Louis Philippe I., Roi des Francais, is standing on his pedestal. At the top, a long lobby, hemmed in with a line of kings and queens flourishing over us their marble or stucco sceptres. A door again, and we go down a huge gallery.

It is the Galerie des Batailles, the biggest of all in this home of big galleries. On the walls, gigantic knights in full armour are bestowing tremendous blows on improbable Saracens. Here are the 'Clovis at Tolbiac' and the 'Charlemagne at Paderborn' of Ary Scheffer. There the 'Battle of Mons-en-Puelle' by Lariviere, the ' attle of Taillebourg' by Delacroix, the 'Austerlitz' of Gérard, the 'Bovines,' 'Fontenoy,' 'Jena,' 'Friedland,' and 'Wagram' of Horace Vernet—an epitome of the national history, which it is my privilege to peruse as the last and saddest page is being written for me.

In the deep recess of each bay-window, a system of wooden partitions makes up so many boxes, somewhat in the guise of the confessional of a Roman church. My would-be confessor is a young captain of the line, who sits at a table by the open window, and smokes cigarettes as he is waiting, whilst his recorder is cutting a quill-pen. A third chair is prepared for me at the other end of the paper-laden table, and a bench for the guards in the rear.

Name, surname, and address are recited. The scribe writes away, laying out with obvious satisfaction wonderful capitals and unimpeachable hangers. A silence. The captain is turning over, with rather a perplexed face, the leaves of a big brief, and seems hardly to know by what question to open fire. Over his bent head, I see the trees of the park softly swung by the morning breeze, and from the adjoining lawn, down the Parterre du Midi, childish peals of laughter, mixed with sparrow chirps, are reaching me. How pleasant it would be to walk hand-in-hand with Olympe there! I little fancy that in close proximity, down the triumphal steps of that masterpiece of Mansard, L'Orangerie, the most perfect architectural gem in the whole wonderland—such a sweet place, too, with such charming associations—hundreds of my friends are huddled in abject custody, and are grudged a pint of water to allay their thirst or wash their hungry faces, though within twenty paces of fifty fountains. O Versailles, O palace of marvels, that cost sixteen thousand lives to be built, not to speak of the hundreds of millions taken from the substance of a starving people, what crimes and miseries your deadly stones have witnessed in the short space of two centuries! Will you now feel satiated with the purest French blood—you murderous den,

white sepulchre, painted cour tesan? Do you want any more of it? or shall our sons have to burn you down and to spread salt on your site, as we did with the Tuileries?

A question wakes me up. Says the captain:

'You were present, I have reason to believe, at the sitting of the Commune, when the decree on the hostages was voted?'

Poor fellow! I cannot help feeling for him. He has been such a long time in coming to the startling discovery.

'Don't trouble yourself with any more of this examination, sir,' I said to him; ' I am not in the habit of answering questions at

secret proceedings. Please to have my declaration couched formally in the minute of your report.'

'O, is it a system?'

'A principle, sir.'

The scandalised face of the recorder is a sight for a dyspeptic to look at—so intensely comical in its amazement. Again the captain:

‘You are wrong, sir, allow me to tell you in your own interest. You ought not to overlook the fact that terrible charges are recorded against you. I have drawn up no fewer than seventeen heads of accusation involving the penalty of death.’

‘Seventeen, indeed! There is at least a comfort in the knowledge that I can only be shot once.’

‘This is no occasion for joke, sir. I can read over the charges to you.’

‘No, thank you. I hate being read to aloud;’ and I rise to take my departure.

The recorder drops a word in the captain’s ear.

‘But will you decline signing your declaration too?’

‘Not in the least—provided, however, I can look at it first, and see that no extra blanks are left. . . . All right. Here is my signature.’

I am inclined to think that the captain is not over sorry for the conclusion. What seems to warrant this opinion is the fact that he bursts forth with,

‘Sapristi! had I only known it sooner, what a lot of trouble I should have been spared over those papers of yours!’

‘I am overwhelmed with confusion at the trouble, captain; but honestly you might have reduced it to a minimum if you had called me sooner to your private tribunal. For thirty-eight days I have been in close confinement, allow me to mention—and, by the way, such confinement ought to be at an end now, considering that examination is done away with.’

‘But confrontations may be necessary.’

‘Confrontations will share the fate of questions. I beg to inform you, in advance, that I will know no one, and answer not a word.’

The captain has a good-humoured laugh.

‘Well, after all, you may be right. It is the true way of being detrimental neither to yourself nor to others.’

‘Just so. And may I ask whether the “ others” are numerous?’

‘You are fifteen members of the Commune on our hands, who will be tried together.’

‘Soon?’

‘That depends on the course of the preliminary examination. Probably by the end of the month.’

‘The sooner the better. Good-bye, sir.’

The brigadier and his four guards, who have been silent witnesses of the whole affair, are simply dumbfounded. My way of going through a preliminary examination by a captain upsets all their notions of hierarchy and discipline. They lead no more, but escort me. I rather believe that if I took it into my head to proceed to the park, and take a constitutional round the Piece d’Eau, instead of going back to prison at once, they would feel in duty bound to follow me. The indulgence, however, is hardly worth the days of arrest which it would be sure to bring upon the poor devils.

Eleven o'clock. The bolts of my prison-door are shut upon me. This is an end of the job.

An end of the job to me, who was, under the Empire, at the practical school of Judge Bernier, who knows that the worst of mistakes for a prisoner is to answer a question. A sense of interest, as well as a sense of self-respect, are tracing out the rule. . But to think of all those unhappy men, still new to political trials, who are about to be submitted to the ordinary and extraordinary torture —how to prevent their betraying themselves, their friends, and their party by being pressed into confession? If only they knew how to hold their tongues, to decline giving any answer, even as to name and address—why, a thousand court-martials would never be equal to the task of despatching such a tremendous mass of prisoners! But they will not; they will state everything—name, address, number of their battalion, strength of their company, service-days, and military feats—more than enough to seal their doom and the doom of others.

July 15th. A phenomenon has been taking place for some days, which I may as well acknowledge in its triviality. As many times as I have cream-cheese for my breakfast, the aforesaid dainty reaches me wrapped in a bit of newspaper. So far nothing extraordinary. Since newspapers have been printed it was their fate to end in wrappers for eatables. What seems worthy of notice, however, is the fact that the bit of black and white is clearly chosen with some discrimination among such items as are likely to interest me. - In this way I have learned the fall of Jules Favre, the Laluyé law-suit, the result of the complementary elections which have just been an undoubted success for the Republic, the arrest of some friends. Mere chance, I said at first. But the recurrence of the phenomenon stamps it with a peculiar character. Cream-cheese stands now every day on my bill of fare, not only at breakfast but at dinner; and I am thus able to obtain a regular supply of useful information. Whoever may be the unknown friend who thus makes a point of keeping me posted with important news, a thousand thanks to him.

July 17th. This is what I have found to-day round my cream-cheese:

'Tiburce Moray's father, who was arrested about one month ago, and sent to the hulks at Brest, has just been taken back to Versailles. He is now at the Maison de Justice.'

Then they have arrested my father too! They sent him to the hulks. He is now within the same walls as me,—it may be in an adjoining cell. O passion partisane!' as D'Aubigné said. Rabid pack of wolves! infamous dastardly deed! I thought I was prepared for anything, but this beats all that I expected. Such' blows are constructed to stun and to petrify. I stand before the abyss of malice a dazzled thunderstruck man.

Dear mother! It was not enough for her to be waiting for the execution of her son; she was to see her husband too—the kind devoted companion of her life —carried away by a brutal soldiery! And I did not even suppose that such things

were possible. Like a selfish being, I wrapped up myself in I don't know what blind dilettantism, to relish my own fate. I dared to enjoy my solitude, whilst the horrors of the hulks were reserved for my father!

A white-haired man was in his study, unassuming and modest, secluded in the silence of his quiet pursuits, a stranger to the rumours of the outside, a sorrowful witness of the civil war. He is my father—that is enough. He will be taken away from his family and interests, laden with chains, driven from damp vaults to the hulks, and from the hulks to a gaol; and then, after months or years, if he is not dead from rheumatic fever or insane from indignation, he will be set free without as much as an apology, as 'there are no charges against him.' One may well look, combine, and ponder. Anything so monstrous could hardly be imagined.

V. A Friend in Need

A CALL in the passage: 'No. 3 to visitors' room.'

I am shown into a long narrow lobby, ending in a kind of wooden square box, about one yard wide, the anterior side of which is made of an iron grating, and in which I am locked up.

Facing my grate, in another box like mine, turned towards me, I recognise in the faint light, through the double iron net, the kind, smiling, yet sad face of Silvestre. Honest Silvestre! I have hardly thought of him since I have been in custody. But he thought of me. His are the first friendly eyes that I have met for some weeks. I am not surprised in the least at the fact. Is not the devotion of Silvestre my own indisputable property? is it not a part and particle of my own life? As a boy, when we rambled through our native mountains, he always took to himself the thankless part of the task. If there was a wallet to carry, it was for his shoulders; if there remained only a drop of wine in the flask, it was for me; when it was necessary to be up early, he would rather have lost his rest than let me miss the time. At school he made my pensums, fought my detractors, and lent me his pocket-money. To think of the cakes and ices that I ate at his expense is enough to make one's hair stand on end. Later, in Paris, how often I neglected him to court trumpery friendship! When I came back from my wanderings, with empty brain and empty pockets, I always found my same Silvestre to greet and cheer me up. Never has he ventured a complaint; never has he even gone so far as to remonstrate with me. He seemed to think everything right, everything legitimate that I did, and say, with his kind sly slips, 'Pshaw! Wild oats, wild oats! I knew well enough that he would come back to me.'

Politics had no attractions for him. After Sedan he enlisted with me; but the time of the civil war he spent in retirement, a perfect stranger to the strife. Once or twice only did I see him—and then in a hurry—during those two months.

Now, however, I am in the ditch; and, of course, his hand is the first one extended to me, as his first phrase is:

'Why did you not come to me? I expected you.'

Brave heart! Most certainly I did not go to you. Why should I have done so? To involve you in the consequences of my deeds?

This, indeed, would have been a fit crowning for the unequal friendship in which you were always the donor, and I the obliged. But let us speak of the present.

Silvestre brings news from home. Mother has broken down under the weight of her anguish. She is ill in bed. Father is no longer in this building, but has been transferred to the camp of Satory—he is a cripple with rheumatism. So much for health. As for me, against all evidence Silvestre wants to hope. If I am to believe him, hatred begins to subside, a fairer sense of the responsibilities and fatalities has succeeded the tremendous reaction of the first few weeks. He wants me to believe that everything will be squared, that all will end in general reconciliation and forgetfulness. Very shortly I can hardly fail to be free: this is his individual opinion. At the most, a short banishment. Meanwhile it is necessary to act. He is not without friends; our families are well related. With a modicum of energy a favourable result may be relied upon.

Such kind illusions I must at once nip in the bud.

'My dear Silvestre, it is not possible that I could allow of any such steps as you refer to being taken. Your friendship dictates them; but a little reflection will show you that they are not consistent with a delicate sense of honour. The honesty of the vanquished man is to accept his defeat openly and frankly, as the honesty of the unlucky gambler is to pay his debt. Once for all, I declare to you—and I beg you to inform my friends—that I admit on that point of no compromise, of no attempt whatever. Let me tell you, besides, that anything of the kind would be useless. Power, my dear Silvestre, is another name for bondage; the apparently most absolute dictator is only the arm of a clique, of an anonymous tail, as blind as it is merciless. You told me yourself that, although M. Thiers sent word to let my father go free, his order was snubbed by the War Office. How do you know whether a Minister, even with a will to spare me, could do it? And supposing that he could, what a humiliation! I only ask from my friends one thing: do not meddle in my affairs; let me die properly, conformably with my sense of moral obligation.'

'But this we cannot do. Is it possible that we can see you on the point of being shot without raising a protest?'

'Why not, if I request it? It will be the best evidence of your devotion.'

'Romantic nonsense! Sheer madness!'

'I maintain it is only good sense. Be sure, my friend, that if I am shot, it will be because they can see their way to no other course. Your intervention would consequently be both degrading and useless.'

'I hope at least you will not object to being defended before the court-martial?'

'This is a point to consider. If I am tried publicly even by prejudiced judges, I have no reason to object. Behind the tribunal of exception there is public opinion, which revises all cases, and it is not repugnant to me to see mine discussed.'

This declaration seems to relieve Silvestre from a heavyweight. Says he at once:

'The selection of a counsel may be of the first moment. He must be learned, clever, eloquent, welcome to the judges.'

'This would be another way of cringing for mercy. Nothing of the kind. I do not want my counsel to be an ass, but I want him to be an upright honest man, and perfectly resolved in saying not a word that I could not indorse. Why should you not be the man yourself?' '

'Me! How can you fancy? I have never appeared in a court before.'

'So much the better. You are just the fellow that I want. Besides, this will give us occasion to be as often and as privately together as you may wish.'

'I really do not know what to answer. Such responsibility!'

'You may try at least. There is a good boy. Go at once to the War Oflice, and get yourself registered as my counsel. Then come as soon as possible, and we will have a good talk about it. At the last moment, if you do not feel inclined to appear, it will always be time to select another counsel.'

'When you put the question on such terms—'

'Gentlemen, time is up!' says the warder, who, unseen, stands present at the interview in the lobby that divides the boxes.

'Do you want anything—books, money?'

'O yes—books, to be sure. I will give you a list when I see you again.'

'Au revoir, then.'

'Good-bye.'

The visit has thrown me back into the reality of which confinement had freed me for a month and a half. I felt at times as if I were somewhere in space, quite apart from the terrestrial spheroid, and the periodical return of night and day, unconnected with any of the usual cares of life, was productive of a strange delusion. I could see the earth revolving on its axis and walking round the sun; one after another, its continents, its seas, climates, and countries were running off under my gaze. Deserts and cultivated fields, cities and villages, nations with characteristic habits and customs, peculiar communities, even private individuals, were discernible to me, with the minutest detail, although they looked like microscopic beings under a powerful object-glass. I read fully through their minds; I witnessed their hidden ideas, their hopes, aims, and motives of action with extraordinary lucidity.

Now I am back to our planet. I am to be tried. I am to be called to proffer a defence. What shall I say to those people?

The defence would be easy enough if only I meant to make one. I should simply have to enter into a brief review of the historical chain of events from the Empire down to this day; to show the 2d of December and the abdication of the nation entailing war on its master as a system of government, whilst twenty years of Sybaritism entailed national defeat; to evoke the aspirations and sufferings of Paris; to put them side by side with the unconditional surrender of the rural constituencies, first to Bonaparte, and next to Bismarck; to show how it was impossible that what has taken place should have been otherwise, and why it is as unfair as it is absurd to charge one single man, or any peculiar set of men, with the burden of the whole responsibility.

'You want to confuse war events with motives of action,' I should say, 'and to leave at our door the weight of such fatalities? We are the guilty men, and upon us must the expiation fall? All right. 'If amongst my judges there is one who did not implicitly vote last year for the Franco-German war by giving his "Ay" to the imperial plebiscite; if there is one who can boast that he did his duty, as a patriot and a citizen, better than I in a war which I had deprecated with all my strength; if there is one single man who can rise in court and complain that I have done him any wrong from any personal motive—let me be declared guilty.'

This is what I might tell them, if I chose, because it is only the unsophisticated truth. But I will not say anything of the kind. I will only answer what will practically amount to, 'I lictor. Vae victis.' Above all, no melodrama, for goodness' sake.

A queer idea occurs to me. It is a common charge against us that we are the plagiarists of '93. Suppose a wag should follow up the hint, and say in answer to the formal questions about name, age, &c., 'My name is at the Pantheon of history; the age of the sans culotte Jésus,' &c. I can hear the protests of the true plagiarists, who are not among us, to be sure. As if one had not a right to indulge in a little fun when his head is at stake! Let us be serious, then, immensely serious.

July 18th. Yes; there is worse still than the arrest of my dear innocent father. 'Dereure's wife,' says my newspaper today, 'is now at the Prison des Chantiers. There is there a governor, Lieutenant Marsereau, who knows how to manage these

gentry. With curious perversity she declines confessing the hiding-place of her husband. Her obstinacy is exceeded, however, by that of the son of Ranvier, a boy of eleven, who baffles with distressing audacity all the questions of the examining magistrate as to the father's abode.'

At first sight, such items of news have something in them that savours of humour; and still there is nothing of the kind. They are written in earnest, printed and published without sickening the public. Those people have actually

come to the point of wondering that a wife does not betray her husband, or a boy his father. Am I at Timbuctoo, or at Versailles? In A.D. 871, or 1871? Under the sway of Louis XI., or under the magistracy of M. Thiers?

Related by a MS. chronicle in mediaeval characters, such facts might possibly sound normal. Printed in small-pica type by steam-power and improved machinery, they make up the most loathsome of nonsensical nightmares.

Silvestre is right. I must make out a list of books. It would be unpardonable to withdraw from the scenes without having said good-bye to the dozen masterpieces of human wisdom and genius to which we all owe the little that we are worth. More than enough to be utterly bereaved of music and paintings, and not to be allowed to listen once again to Don Giovanni, or, say, to that other sublime concerto of light and colour that Paolo Veronese wrote in his Nozze di Cana. Let me at least enjoy to the full the only privilege which is left to me, that of conversing for a few hours with the best representatives of mankind. No yachting fellow would embark on a cruise of three weeks without taking in his cabin a consignment of favourite volumes; and should I leave for the great cruise, whence there is no return, without storing away similar supplies?

But what to select? Here is the difficulty. I thought of a dozen books at first, and I have not been half an hour engaged in making up my list, when I find that I want nearly a hundred.

This will never do. There should be modus in rebus. For a whole afternoon I weigh and ponder and compare, and finally, after many a struggle and erasure, I come to the following conclusion: Rabelais; Shakespeare; Moliere; Voltaire, Romans et Contes, with two volumes, selected haphazard, of his correspondence; Diderot, Le Neveu de Rameau; Pascal, Lettres a un Provincial; La Bruyere, Caracteres; Honoré de Balzac, Les Paysans; Shelley, complete works; Byron, Childe Harold; Montaigne, Les Essais; George Lewes, History of Philosophy; Daguin, Traité de Physique; Legendre, Géométrie; Baudelaire, Poésies; Leconte de Lisle, Poems; Edgar Allan Poe, complete works; Goethe's Faust. In all, thirty volumes. I hope I may have time enough upon my hands to read them all. Quite lately, I have discovered a taste for fine verse in me with which I did not know I was blessed to such an extent. All the poetry that I know by heart, and a great deal that I remember only partly, comes back to me. It sings within me, as it were, and every other minute I overtake my lips scanning it almost mechanically. La Fontaine's splendid verse on behalf of Pellisson went up with such force a few minutes ago that I felt bound to write it in pencil on the wall; and the account of Othello and Dante's Francesca! Is there anything finer? Since gods are necessary to man, why does he not worship those who wrote such superhuman lines?

July 20th. Every day now I have a visit from Silvestre. He dons his gown at the Palais de Justice, close by the gaol, and comes to me through the tunnel between the two. It is his professional privilege to enter my quarters, and to

stay there as often and as long as he deems convenient between morning and the fall of the day. We sit down on my wooden bench, and we chat as in the good old times.

He sees my mother frequently, and keeps her informed of what relates to me. Twice he has visited my father at the camp of Satory—not, however, without fastidious steps and long hours of waiting at the military Provost's office. Still he finds time again to call on Madame Desarnaux, and bring to me the flowers which Olympe sends me. When does he find leisure to study his big brief, to annotate and master every page? Out of his rest, no doubt.

The fact is, he has at his fingers' ends the seventeen famous heads of accusation, and means not to let one of them stand. The honest fellow indulges in strange delusions. Little by little he has come to the point of hoping that he may save my life, and even at times of reckoning on an acquittal.

He becomes impassioned, he almost turns bitter, if I happen to impugn his opinion. Fain he would charge me with being an obtuse Reactionist, blinded by party spirit and systematically opposed to reason. He is a sight to look at when he blazes up and booms with the artillery of his arguments.

'After all, what can they charge you with?' he exclaims, in a passion. 'To have been elected to the Communal Council without even having solicited the privilege? This will not hold water. Sucking babes know, or ought to know, by this time, that the elections took place by permission of the mayors and deputies of Paris, provided with the full powers of the Government of Versailles, and were consequently perfectly lawful. To have voted in such or such a sense in the Council? But your votes are protected by the inviolability of the representative character. Is it the lawfulness of such or such measure, decreed by your Council, that is questioned? But unlawfulness of this kind could only entail governmental repression, such as the public censure or dissolution of the delinquent body, and cannot be made the subject of criminal proceedings. There remains only your own participation in given material deeds, qualified crime, or offence. But here, forsooth, we are prepared to meet any charge, and I defy the prosecution to prove anything like it. Consequently they are in duty bound to discharge you, and they shall do so, or I will lose my Latin on it.'

I laugh heartily at that sophistry of friendship. With one word I could reduce it to atoms, but I do not care to do so. Silvestre is so sincerely in earnest, that I scruple to overturn his scaffolding. If I happened to do this one day, it would be necessary to do it again on the morrow.

Besides, there is some good in his theory. I daresay he dwells on it very forcibly of an evening for the benefit of my mother, and the more willingly, as he finds in her an enthusiastic audience, ready to grasp at the faintest hope. The mirage affords at least a respite and a provisional rest to the tender soul, to which the bitter truth will only too soon come back. For not only are the arguments of Silvestre utterly groundless, but even supposing them to be

plausible I would never allow them to be submitted in court. On no account do I want to cavil with my foes, or to extort from them a piteous verdict. I mean to assume the whole responsibility of my deeds, and my very first words will be to that effect.

From what Silvestre says, I can gather that the delusion is not peculiar to him. It is a special disease that he has in common with nearly all the prisoners at Versailles and their friends. At Satory, at the Orangerie, at the Prison des Chantiers, at the St. Cloud Dépot, on the hulks, in the forts of Brest and Lorient, at Cherbourg, in the islands of Aix, Oléron, and Ré, at the Ennet and Boyard Forts, on the whole coast of the Atlantic, at every hell where some of those fifty thousand vanquished men are waiting and suffering and panting—hope is the order of the day. Every one reviews his chances and values them at the highest.

'I shall be discharged for want of evidence. At the most I shall get three months,' they all think, to one man, wondering how they may still stand on their legs after the cataclysm.

In Paris, rumours of a coming amnesty find a ready echo even in streets which have lost one half of their population, and the weight of an unexampled military pressure is unavailable to put them down. Every one is bent upon averting his gaze from the present calamity, and looking at a brighter morrow. Every one tries not to see the gaping abyss, but rather to watch the doubtful star that glitters above. Pandora's box is no longer the privilege of demigods, and two hundred thousand Parisians keep a two-penny facsimile of it in their pocket.

July 31st. It will be in four days. A major of the line has just entered my room, in company with an adjutant, the governor; and the chief warder. The adjutant has unfolded a sheet of paper, and read to me a warrant of committal for trial at the 30th Court Martial, sitting at Versailles in the hall of the Petites Ecuries, on the 4th of August next.

As he proceeded with his reading, he looked from time to time in a little yellow code, full of white markers, for the articles aimed at by the prosecution—a long litany, the burden of which was 'penalty of death.'

That man has otherwise a good jolly face, that contrasts with his present avocation, being one of those short plump little men who always seem to look at the bright side of things; whilst his superior officer is a long bony sample of humanity, with a big nose, small unsteady eyes, a yellowish and malcontent complexion.

The ceremony once over, I have the minute of the warrant delivered to me, and Tristan the Hermit withdraws with Little John and the governor.

As for the chief warder, he considerately lingers to propose a loan of his own copy of the code, that I may enjoy thoroughly the fun of the document. Out of sheer courtesy I accept the offer, when I find to my utter disgust that it is an

old copy, full of articles that will never do, or have been cancelled, and do not concur with my case.

I confess, however, at finding some gratification in the perusal of the 'Title of Matrimony,' and the comfortable certainty that I am past its dreadful provisions.

August 2d. The trial threatens to be a long one, as we are no fewer than eighteen accused, and more than four hundred witnesses are to be called. I shall see Olympe pretty often in the interval, as she has managed to secure cards of admission, and means to use them in spite of all remonstrances. The dear little thing is full of hope, and fancies that I am discharged already.

As for Silvestre, he loses much of his confidence as the ordeal approaches. Did he not want yesterday to throw up his brief and to apply to Me. D——, the great barrister? I had to laugh at him, and to remind him seriatim of his irresistible arguments.

VI. COURT-MARTIAL.

The Hall of the Petites Ecuries is an old riding-school of the time of Louis XV., rather elegantly decorated for its present destination with green serge, carpets, and flags. At one end a Praetorium is drawn up by two tribunes on right and left, one for the press, the other for us prisoners. At the top of it a dais, with a long table for the judges; on a smaller table the pièces à conviction—revolvers, swords, laced caps, and red sashes, somewhat artistically displayed by the upholsterer. Farther on, a barrier to stop the public, for which a pit and two galleries, with numbered seats, have been prepared.

It was through the vaults of the gaol, and along the courtyards of some neighbouring artillery barracks, connected by a breach opened into a wall, that we were led to the tribunal.

Exactly at eleven the roll-call had taken place. We were put in a line between two ranks of Paris guards, and on the word of command the column moved on.

For the first time since the journées sanglantes we met. Hearty shakes of the hand, swift questions in suppressed tones, were interchanged.

'Hallo! You are a guest too! I did not know you were.'

'Any news of So-and-so?'

'Killed at the barricade of the Rue Myrrha.'

'Vermorel died the other day from his wounds.'

'Varlin was torn to pieces at Montmartre.'

Ghastly as were the news, the meeting was merry enough.

'Silence!' shouts the officer rudely.

In less than ten minutes we are at the Petites Ecuries. A wooden structure, propped against the old gray wall, and connected with the ' dock' by a temporary

flight of steps, is our waiting-room. There at last we are allowed to chat for a while, and to make common whatever information on the past two months each of us has been able to gather. A poor total on the whole. And still the fifty guards who surround us, with drawn swords and angry eyes, are obviously little satisfied that we have any right to breathe, still less to speak.

Twelve o'clock. En séance I

The court, filled with a hard raw light, crammed to suffocation by a thousand spectators, is buzzing in a flutter. Everywhere gold lace and epaulets, ladies in light summer dresses, fans in motion, rustlings of silk, wavings of feathers.

'Here they are!'

The wild-beasts are loosened in the arena. A loud murmur hails our appearance, as one after the other we emerge from the narrow staircase. All necks are stretched out, all eyes bent upon us, as we sit down on the benches, with a guard next to each one of us. The audience looks for some stigma on our faces, for some bloody stain on our hands, and being unable to discover anything of the kind, feels disappointed.

'The wretches! They were afraid! They have washed it!' seem to tell the irate countenances.

In front of us, along our tribune, the counsels in black gowns, with their caps on their heads, are sitting. The younger ones attitudinising, and the elders simply perusing their briefs. Silvestre is there amongst them. On the dais, behind the vacant seats of the judges, a string of privileged persons, ministers, members of the Assembly, ambassadors or distinguished foreigners, have found accommodation; but I see little of all of them. I no sooner sat down than, in the middle of the fashionable crowd, on the front row of the west gallery, I discovered a light form, white and fair, in a cloud of black grenadine. Who could she be but my own girl, who greets me silently with her little close-gloved hand and heavenly smile?

'Portez armes I Présentez armes!' shouts inside the praetorium the sergeant in charge of the platoon of honour. And the court-martial is sitting.

One, two, three, five, seven military commissioners in full dress; the President, a white-haired artillery colonel, with clear gray eyes, a pug nose, and lips as slender as a thread. On his right a stout commandant of the staff is bridling up over his stiff collar, ready to burst at any moment like a shell. On his left, a cavalry major is so lean that he seems to have been bodily cut out of a poor man's coflin. The captain, who comes next, has not one single hair left on the top of his head—let us hope this is the result of immoderate reading at night of his tactics. His neighbour sports uncommonly red eyelids and a falling under-lip. Lieutenant, beware of the green goddess! The sub stands erect on his gorget, and tries to look as grave as possible. As for the non-commissioned officer,

overwhelmed with a sense of his passing dignity, he sits on the narrow edge of his leather chair.

Close by us, Little John, in full uniform, does duty. On the other side, close by the newspaper men, Tristan the Hermit is about to open the case for the prosecution, and this being his début in the forensic line, he does not seem to be quite at home.

The calling out of witnesses begins. Little John is the man of the situation. He should be seen bestirring his short self, busy, consequential, overflushy in the face, and still amiable and condescending; but for him, the affair would never go on. He keeps the key to everything, knows the witnesses by Christian and surnames, and calls them in stentorian tones.

'Jacques Isidore Chardin!'

'Here I am.'

'Mathurin Népomucene Leroux! Come on, sir, or this business will last all the daylong! Sit down, M. Chardin, please. Mathurin Népomucene Leroux is not here. He was duly summoned, however. Mathurin Népomucene Leroux, accountant, Impasse des Vinaigriers, No. 14.'

A cloud saddens the radiant face of poor Little John. Is M. Leroux's absence to upset everything?

No; here he is, as red as a lobster, in his brand-new frockcoat, wiping his forehead with a wide-checkered kerchief. Little John breathes more freely, and scolds the late man in fatherly fashion.

It is at an end. The list is exhausted. Every one has sat down in his due place. La parole est d M. le Commissaire du Gouvernement.

A general flutter; a dying report of unsteady feet and tongues; a silence.

M. le Commissaire du Gouvernement rises slowly. He waddles on his endless legs, puts his left hand on the hilt of his sword, darts an enticing glance at the ladies on the front row, and 'takes a pause' as the word is on the stage. Every mouth in the audience is gaping; every ear, every eye, wide open. The fans themselves have subsided. Something grand, something extraordinary, is going to be uttered. It is not a man who is about to speak out; it is France herself, in the majesty of her grief; it is the Law, Social Order, Civilisation. All the old world incarnate under this uniform, saddled with those epaulets, and girthed in this varnished belt, is about to call to account the indiscreet innovators for their culpable attempt; to brand, with indignant comments, their impotence and failure; to overwhelm them under the weight of their defeat; to expose to the public gaze the baseness and the indignity of their motives; to show with pitiless logic the insanity of their theories.

But, lo, a Bossuet would barely be equal to the task, and M. le Gommissaire is not a Bossuet.

Nor only has M. le Commissaire du Gouvernement no natural fluency of speech, but he has very little voice, and the falsetto notes that he succeeds in summoning from his throat are shaken with a tremolo which does not help to give effect to his maiden oration. Every other second he stammers, he dabbles, he falters, and seems on the point of breaking down. He had taken good care, however, to learn by heart the lesson that, according to current rumour, no less a personage than M. Thiers wrote for him. But his confused memory declines to serve him, and although he slyly darts desperate glances at his open brief on the desk, he only succeeds in stringing together a few incoherent sentences. The situation is growing critical. The audience feels uneasy, and begins to wonder if the unlucky prosecutor is not going to vanish suddenly under the boards. Why did he ever accept such unfamiliar duties? These are your tricks on a poor major, O passive obedience!

Now he is at a standstill; hopelessly run aground in the middle of a long sentence. What a pity the office of prompter that used to be maintained in the parliaments of old for the eldest sons of councillors has been abolished! Conveniently posted under the green serge tablecloth, the worthy officer would here be invaluable.

A felicitous idea, however, has dawned on the major. He leans over his MS., he turns the leaves with feverish hand, and begins manfully to read aloud. It is all right henceforth. The audience breathes more freely. Society will be avenged, and the prosecutor's address will come to its natural conclusion.

Apart from its exponent it looks rather flat as a rhetorical effort. Religion, Family, and Property hold in it prominent parts. These are no longer names given to things, mere abstractions, but real beings in the flesh, with individual and objective lives, to whom it seems that we wish evil. It is in the name of these persons that Tristan the Hermit grinds his organ and plainly asks for our heads. Whilst he is stumbling along his dreary way I look in front at the well-known faces in the press-gallery. Every one of them on the shoulders of a spotless knight of the aforesaid ladies, if I am to judge from the indignant looks that they bestow upon us unworthy prisoners. Pure and generous souls, stout hearts, lofty brains! The spectacle of your goodness would alone console mankind for giving birth to such monsters as we are. When the Roman faith is at stake it is a comfort to think that it numbers amongst its stanchest advocates wealthy Joshua Mayer, as genuine a Jew as ever came from Jerusalem. In the face of the appalling danger to Property one is glad to hear that young Marcas, who is chronically hard-up for twenty francs, has enlisted amongst its supporters. As to the lady Family, how could she be in jeopardy when she can boast for her champions, here honest Minimus, the bastard of a Belgian curé by his cook, who once threw the wife of his bosom out of the window of a fifth flat;

there that swell De Help, who has a sad habit of sending his better-half of a morning to borrow an occasional bank-note from his bachelor friends. They should be seen sharpening their valiant pencils, making notes, and preparing to fall upon us in their next leading article with all the weight of high morality. It is with a mixture of horror and curiosity that they study our case as psychologists. In their private capacity of honnétes gens they could not find words hard enough to stigmatise us; but in their capacity of philosophers and enlighteners of the people they feel bound to proceed to our post-mortem examination, and to look for the latent causes of the national disease of which we are symptomatic. They will not fail in the sacred duty. Society may go to sleep: D'Assas is on sentry.

Tristan the Hermit, however, is going on with his MS. Having disposed of the movement from a general standpoint, he is now about to proceed to mangle us in detail. One after the other he introduces us to the public in colours the reverse of flattering, and, in fact, exceedingly coarse. The queerest part of it is that the prosecution seems really but inditferently acquainted with the leading features in each case. Either from want of legal training or from negligence, it has obviously been satisfied with secondhand items of information textually borrowed from the hasty biographical sketches that have suddenly swarmed during the late events or from the columns of the demi-monde newspapers, in both cases monuments of impudence and calumny. As it comes to the chapter that refers to me I cannot help thinking that to insult publicly, under privilege and for fifteen minutes running, a prisoner whom the law keeps within its grasp, is hardly the part that befits either a soldier or a representative of social order. Take his life; yes, be it so. But the idea of besmearing him with mire picked up from the lowest strata of journalism! What is the good? How can that man whom I do not know, to whom I never did any harm, think of such dirty work? How is it that the mere attempt does not raise the indignation of the audience? No use expecting anything of the kind, however. The audience is on a level with the speaker, and clearly relishes the dish to which it is treated. What would revolt and sicken a northern public is quite welcome to those fickle and fervid people. They consider it quite natural that a prisoner who is going to be tried on the most serious issue, before a tribunal composed of men picked from amongst his deadliest adversaries, should be first basely abused. The idea does not occur to them that this alone would be enough to invalidate and quash the verdict. Their hatred is tickled, and they ask for nothing more. Why should Tiburce Moray, who has put himself beyond the pale of the law, claim any right to its protection? 'Down, down with him!' I can read on every face, as the ignoble libel proceeds. There is but one that is rosy with disgust under its veil, and the fire of whose eyes would be sufficient to make M. le Commissaire burst to pieces, if only he were truffed with gunpowder.

Really, modern civilisation, which has devised a process for putting a live pig at the entrance of a steam apparatus and finding it at the opposite door in the shape of sausages, ought to devise some system of the kind for criminal proceedings. There is no public function in which personal feeling and vanity ought to have a lesser scope, and there is probably none in which both are more extensively displayed. Thrice wise and beautiful is the British law, that shuts up the mouth of the accused man and protects him against all abuse. But how much wiser and more admirable would be any improvement of the legal machinery that would protect him against the spectacle of the many-shaped interests -and affectations that feed on his misery! Here I am in the dock. The drama is barely at its first stage, and I have only to review the actors to see them all a prey to gratified conceit. Of the prisoners the less said the better. Who would be quite sure of avoiding in such a case a tinge of cabotinage? But, beyond doubt, every counsel is convinced that the world is suspended to his lips and thinks of him: 'What a keen intellectual-looking face!' Every judge puts on his blandest air of fairness and austerity. The prosecutor, the recorder, the witnesses, the sheriff's officers, the privates who mount guard at the limit of the praetorium, every one of them in their part is a subject of self-applause and importance. Even the spectators have caught the contagion, and there is not one of -them who does not feel socially the better for having succeeded in securing a seat at this sensational trial. Villemessant, comfortably enthroned on his treble bankruptcy, shines in his glory in the front row of the press-gallery, and seems to say,

'C'est moi qui suis Guillot, pasteur de ce troupeau.' Little B., who takes shorthand notes for the Gazette des Tribunaux, evidently thinks that the special end of all this is to supply him with an extraordinary total of eight hundred lines a day. Handsome Z. keeps his right hand in his breast, like M. de Lamartine, and is quite convinced that people go on saying, 'He is the famous Z. of the Petit Journal, you know.' As for the plump lady with the yellow bonnet there, she takes it for granted that all the army-fellows in the room are making eyes at her, and that the prisoners themselves, hardened sinners as they are, cannot be entirely callous to her spell.

Meanwhile heat becomes unbearable, as does the tediousness of the dry monotonous reading. It comes to a close at last. The prosecutor has exhausted his store of imprecations and epithets. The examination of the accused—a judicial ceremony, for the maintenance of which we are indebted to the Code Napoléon—is about to commence.

'Prisoner Ferré, stand up!' orders the colonel.

Ferré is the most heavily charged amongst us, if twenty-two heads of capital accusation may be said to be more than seventeen. Rightly or wrongly, he is considered a regular pétroleur; the darkest misdeeds are placed to his personal account. Several newspapers have published the facsimile of an alleged order for setting the Ministry of Finance on fire,—flambez finances,——which is

ascribed to him. The very nature of his duties, as head of the insurrectionary police, points him out to the public rage and rancour. A little spare man of twenty-seven, with a wonderfully white and clear complexion, aquiline nose, sharp black eyes behind a pair of glasses, and nacreous teeth shining in the middle of a brown beard, he is coolness, composure, and soberness incarnate, yet withal has a kind of quiet out-of-the-way touch of fun. Now and then he cannot help smiling and showing his teeth, when the audience shudders visibly, and a murmur arises: 'The cannibal! Look at his ferine incisors!' But he, on the first words of the president:

'I don't want to answer anything. No use putting questions.'

His whole self was unassuming and dignified, perfectly correct and natural. Not to answer a plain question, under the searching gaze of a thousand foes, when the most dreadful charges are uttered against one, may look very easy; there is in reality no greater strain put on one's will. Guatimozin, Toussaint Louverture, Barbes, almost alone in history, were able to rise to that serene height of absolute contempt for their judges and the public. As the author of the Comédie Humaine remarked, the savage man alone, as a rule, knows how to keep in his doom the majesty of silence. Such a proud feeling of decency, such a folding-up of a conscience on its own secret, ought, it seems, to be sacred to any mob, whether in rags or lace. What else could one want from a man who accepts his fate, and disdains to argue with his prosecutors? But the mob is a cruel beast,—the very beast unmasked that was lurking under the skin of your improved nineteenth-century man; and in such a silence it sees merely another offence, and a defiance to its curiosity, so that its remark is at once: ' The coward! He dares not face his crimes like a man. He wants the benefit of the doubt.' The fact is Ferré might perfectly well answer, especially on the alleged flambez finances, which is not in his own handwriting, and is not even produced in the original; for, strange to relate, the original was never in existence, and the whole affair was only a miserable newspaper dodge, such as the foulest class of journalists think legitimate, if only it increases their sale. With a word he could have disposed of the charge, but did not care to do so. As he said to me a few days later: 'What is the use? I never sent the order; but I would have sent it if I had thought it of any avail to the defence, would I not? Why, then, should I disclaim it?'

The march past of witnesses begins. We all are implicated in one common prosecution; but none the less the case of each prisoner is to be taken separately. Amongst those witnesses, concierges are in a majority: I mean people who have really a house-door in charge; for if such as possess merely the characteristic temper of the tribe were to be included as well in the category, they might nearly all be called by the name. Next to them, the strongest contingent belongs to the Church. Clerics we have of every robe and hue: Carmelites and Franciscans, Jesuits and Dominicans, Christian Brothers and

Marists, abbés and canons, deacons and sub-deacons, regulars and free-lances, black and white, gray and blue, with and without shoes. Out of that concile two figures above all others stand out in bold relief.

One, a curate, lean, squalid, wan, with long yellow hairs stuck to his narrow skull by some mysterious device of clerical trimming, young in years and old in looks, sporting a pair of blear eyes entirely devoid of the usual border of lashes, and still burning with a He spoke in one breath, without any pause, and poured down upon us a torrent of gall. He foamed, he was the living image of spite and fanaticism. As he stood in the middle of the court, stamping the floor with his dusty shoe over a blue-cotton stocking, his weakly arm stretched towards us, his long bony hand issuing from a shabby sleeve, I thought that Torquemada himself had risen against us from his grave.

Another, a stately white friar, with feet bare in his sandals, and a close-shaven pate shining on shoulders that would befit a sawyer. What a handsome monk! and what a consummate art of perfidious charity and feline hatred! Every word from his lips hit the mark. 'Yes, colonel, I unfortunately know the prisoner. I once held the holy ministry in the small country town where he was a schoolmaster. Heaven knows I was then far from foreseeing in what an abyss of sin he was to tumble. But I had already noticed in him that unmanageable pride, the principle of every blindness and evil, that was to lead him to wholesale murder and arson. Pretty often, as I walked through the meadows by the river, reading my Breviary, and raising my thoughts towards the Almighty, he accosted me to talk about his earthly interests and ambitions. I could remark in him a leaven of impious revolt against everything that is respectable.' So on for twenty minutes, and then he bows unctuously with a kind of semi-genuflexion—he withdraws modestly, or rather he flies away on the wings of his white peplum. The audience is deeply impressed. Fair eyes are moist. An admiring murmur arises slowly. He is not a man, but an angel.

A large class includes the good people that have ' saved' somebody or something. The Bank of France, for instance. Nobody will ever fathom the machiavelism and courage which were indispensable to M. de Ploeuc to defend that great institution against the Parisians. There were three hundred thousand National Guards, armed to the teeth, who had no other idea in their minds than to lay hands on the bank-note press. He was alone, unarmed, a lame and sickly man in the bargain. Still he managed to have the best of it, and to tame the hydra. At least, he says as much, and probably he believes it to be the truth. M. Thiers has just raised him to a superior rank in the Legion of Honour for the exploit. Poor hungry people of Paris, who for two months mounted guard round the milliard; this is the thanks you get for it!

A type as old as the glyptodon claripes is the witness who wants to help the prosecution as far as possible, but at the same time is afraid of hurting the feelings of an advanced constituency. He is a Republican, even a Radical, but a

'man of order' as well, and above all a candidate. How to conciliate a generous indignation against the vanquished with due regard to the electoral body is a hard problem, but still a soluble one—only a matter of histrionic address. Who will remember a gesture, a mere look, whilst the letter-press itself stands proof against all investigation?

Then there is the mob of witnesses who do not know anything of the business, and wonder why they were summoned: the chatty witness, who gives us an insight into his private affairs; the shy witness, who speaks in broken tones, and seems on the point of fainting; the graceful witness, who has a smile on his lips as he describes the ghastliest incidents; the hostile witness, 'who fumes at the formal question, 'whether he is related or connected in any way with the prisoner,' and answers with gusto, 'No, thank God!' and last, but not least, here is the true witness of political trials, the one that we were waiting for, and we were surprised at not seeing before—a big man, with military gait, cropped hair, a moustache and virgule, shiny broadcloth, and the yellow ribbon of good service in the buttonhole. He steps in boldly is sworn, answers in an offhand manner the formal questions, feels quite at home. He does not make any mistake—O, no! His calling is a vague one; he is 'in business.' What kind of business, I wonder. The curious point of his case is, that he has been everywhere, has seen and knows everything. Not merely the fact, but the hour, the very minute, the shape of the dress, the hue of the cravat. He rejoices in details. He gives too many of them. On n'est pas parfait.

So they march past, one after another, four hundred of them, during thirty consecutive sittings, in the stuffy court, from morning to night. It is exquisitely wearisome, even for us prisoners. Every day to turn out, to sit down on the same bench, in the same dock, between the same guards, facing the same judges; to grow accustomed to the tie of this officer, or the nose of that counsel; to hear the same story told and retold, asserted, opposed, reasserted, shattered to pieces, and rebuilt on fresh ground, to be again pulled down; to be charged with loads of tremendous accusations in the same breath with trifling or thoroughly ridiculous ones; to see deeds treated as heinous offences that are described as glorious in every historical book; to be reproached with having been in such a place on a given day, as if to hold a portion of the space were not a. law of nature; with having written such a letter or spoken to such a person, as if those everyday occurrences, of which you have not kept the slightest remembrance, were so many atrocities. Next, the public prosecutor again, and the eighteen counsel for the defence speaking in turn, on an average of three hours each, on the same subject, with a display of argument as strange and absurd as the charges are. And to know all along that the whole is a miserable farce, a parody of justice, and a sham; that what is wanted by foes and by alleged friends alike is to suppress you; that the military jury, to one man, expects promotion for its sentence; and that the very barrister who is struggling, apparently on your

behalf, only thinks of making with your own carcass a stepping-stone for himself to a seat in Parliament. The hour comes at last, when every head alike aches and seems ready to split; when all ears decline hearing any more of it; when a desperate haste of having done with it overtakes every one; when all notions as to right and wrong, evidence and no evidence, guilt and no guilt, get confused and reel in one's brain; when every actor in the tragicomedy actually comes to the point of wondering whether he is a judge or a prisoner or a counsel, free or not, a guilty or an innocent man, awake or asleep. Then, it is at an end, and the idea occurs that there is some good in summary execution after all.

VII. The Verdict.

For the last time, we are led to court-martial. It is only six in the morning of a bright September day: there are five hundred and seventy questions drawn up for the military jury, who want to answer them all in one single day, and the consequence is that we were called up at five, and sent out without any breakfast whatever,. as the gaol regulations cannot be interfered with.

Then comes the time for being shown in the dock once more, answering the formal request whether we have anything to add on our defence—O dear, no!—and being shut up in our waiting-room, there to remain till the delivery of the verdict.

The counsel, knowing well that it is a matter of hours, have hurriedly fled away. The judges are, like us, shut up in their room, and still the court—we feel through the wall, as it were, or it may be we only guess—is crowded to its utmost, and patiently awaiting the result. We at least have an excuse for doing so—that we cannot help it. Sitting on the rough bench round the wooden structure, or walking to and fro on the gravel ground, we chat cheerfully enough under the eyes of our guards. Only one in our number is giving way under the strain of mental tension, and, thinking perhaps of his deserted home, of a wife or child to whom his disappearance will be heavily felt, he isolates himself in a corner,. and, shutting his eyes, propping his weary head against the wall, pretends to sleep. Another, guilty of having not kept, during the trial, within the bounds of party propriety, and actually boasting that he had entered into a secret agreement with the Versaillists for the purpose of betraying the Commune, is shunned by us all like a man with the plague. With those two exceptions, everybody stands erect and looks straight in the face of the coming catastrophe. Once more we sum up the case, disputing and debating the odds, like betting-men in a racecourse enclosure. 'All condemned to death!' thinks the majority. ' All discharged!' asserts. young Hopeful.

For hours running we hold out, and the general excitement does not seem to undergo any decrease. But at last a sense of physical lassitude is stealthily creeping over us and crushing down our spirits, when all at once, as two o'clock is struck, some one explains the general uneasiness by exclaiming,

'Two o'clock, and we have had nothing to eat yet!'

Now we know what is the matter with us. We are simply" ravenous. Is it done on purpose? Have our kind gaolers resorted to the scheme of making so many Ugolini of us, and disposing in that convenient fashion of the troublesome burden? Or is it simply a gracious device of theirs to weaken our nerves and make us look unmanly at the decisive minute? The supposition seems to be ungenerous; but we have experienced such strange treatment within the last twelve weeks—seen such extraordinary outbursts of fanaticism and hatred—that nothing would astonish any of us.

The guards, questioned by the proprietors of such stomachs as are loudest in their cry for the cupboard, maintain the most stolid and stony composure. They have no orders as to food, and dare not, will not, take anything on themselves. Besides, we are now pending the sittings under the direct and special authority of the president of the court-martial, who cannot be disturbed in the council-room. And to think that meanwhile our respective breakfasts, duly brought up to our cells by the working of the gaol regulations, are waiting uselessly!

Towards half-past three the subject of victuals has decidedly absorbed and suppressed all other topics. The question is no more death or discharge, but to eat or not to eat.

Five o'clock. Twenty-four hours have now passed—it seems more like twenty-four days—since we dined yesterday afternoon. Some begin to feel as if they could almost try their propensity for cannibalism upon one of the Paris guards, when the governor of the gaol hits at last upon the idea of paying us a visit, for the purpose of ascertaining how his flock fares with that long expectation. He is one of those men who put their whole heart and soul into their calling, whatever it is, and he would rather blow out his brains, I believe, than lose any of his boarders through escape, poison, hunger, or in fact any natural or unnatural cause, other than discharge or a receipt in due form from the officer in command of a platoon of execution. So that he resents at once most warmly our tragical situation—I mean the deprivation of food—as a kind of personal offence, overwhelms the guards with obloquy, and hastens to the next restaurant, there to order a luncheon, which a posse of white-aproned waiters bring to us in large baskets.

What a luncheon! Cold beef, ham and chicken, cheese, grapes, a dozen bottles of wine, and last, but not least, hot coffee in wide glasses. Were I to live till I became a centenarian, I would keep a grateful remembrance of that coffee. Never have I tasted anything that did me half so much good and gave me so much pleasure. It was as if its blessed warmth were running in one's veins and giving the heart a fresh impulse. In other respects the whole affair was a gay one. Under the magical influence of the fragrant stimulant, and the diversion that we found in the satisfaction of our appetites, a reaction set in against the tediousness of the dreary day, and again we began laughing and cracking jokes like true Parisian boys, chaffing at the public that persisted in waiting on the other side of the wall, and even at the guards who cast indignant looks on our cheer. Much fuss is made in history about the famous dinner of the Girondins, on the night previous to their execution, when Vergniaud availed himself of the opportunity of delivering a last speech, Ducos followed with a piece of verse, and all wound up singing a parody of the 'Marseillaise.' From personal experience I have no hesitation in asserting that their conviviality only showed that they had a satisfactory menu, and was simply the outcome of a law of nature which,

under similar circumstances, is sure to produce identical effects—namely, the protestation of the powers of nutrition against the coming catastrophe, and the physical delight of reparation that the frame on the brink of dissolution appreciates more keenly.

In the very middle of our glee, the sad face of my friend and counsel Silvestre puts in a dejected appearance at the wicket.

'What news? Have they not done yet with their farce of a deliberation?'

'There is no cause for laughing,' said he. 'I have been for half a day at the Prefecture, waiting for information, as I knew that the special instructions of M. Thiers were that the verdict should be imparted to him before delivery to the public; and the information that I have got is simply dreadful. Nine condemnations to death.'

'Who are the doomed ones?'

'I have not been able to ascertain. It seems that the business has already been disposed of for more than two hours. But when M. Thiers heard of the finding, he began shrieking in his usual way, and saying this was too absurd, and was not at all what he wanted; protesting that nine executions at a time were out of the question; that he was sure to have no end of difficulties on account of such a verdict; that he would like much better so many condemnations to prison for life, which would attain the same end, and so on. "Three death-warrants, this is the maximum that I admit in this case," he exclaimed in conclusion; and the military commissioners have set to work again, somewhat puzzled at having thus overshot the mark.'

'Is not that palace gossip? Do you really believe it to be the truth?' I asked from Silvestre.

'I am sure it is,' was the reply, 'although I am not at liberty to state how I have got the information. The scene took place in the presence of five people.'

'Don't you think it looks much like a preconcerted comedy, and a bad imitation of the timely fits of temper in which the first Napoleon used to indulge?'

'I don't know; but I am so certain of its authenticity, that I am actually going back to the Prefecture to try again if I can scrape up a little more news.'

He vanishes, and again we start debating the odds. Who were the nine? Who are to be the three? Ferré laughs a good deal at the general indecision, as, for his own part, he feels quite sure of the result, the president of the court-martial having been kind enough to warn him, in terms more forcible than courteous, of the treatment that he might expect.

Hour after hour whiles away. Eight o'clock. Nine. Night has set in long ago; bull's-eyes have been brought in, which cast a scanty flittering light within our enclosure. Once more the general excitement has given way to weariness, and no wonder, after fifteen hours of such waiting. Some have already accommodated themselves for the night on the wooden benches round the wall,

and are going to sleep, when we hear a stampede, a distant uproar, outside. It is the public going out of court. Most certainly the verdict has just been delivered. We alone in the building, with our guards, are still ignorant of it.

But here is our door wide open at last, and we are called up-stairs. The court is empty now, totally cleared of strangers, and even of judges. Three or four lamps on the table only help in making the wide nave look deeper and gloomier, as the light of a match does at the bottom of a cave. In the rear, within the large open space left behind the rows of benches, and in front of the closed gate, the guards are drawn up in a circle, with a lantern here and there, and swords shining in the darkness. We are bidden to enter the circle. In the middle stands the military recorder, with a bundle of papers in his hand. There is a beating of drums, and then he begins reading, by the light of a lamp that a private holds up close to his face.

It is the answer to the four hundred and seventy questions, and the verdict in each case. Still and silent, we listen to the long litany of our fate. From time to time—once, twice, thrice—a phrase glitters like a steel blade in the monotonous recital—'Penalty of death'—then the reader proceeds. Now it is my turn.

'Tiburce Moray—negative answer on all heads of accusation, except on the principal question of high treason. Prison for life in a fortress.'

This is the outcome of what I hear as in a kind of dream, and the litany goes on.

I feel a hand that creeps to mine and shakes it. It is Ferré's.

'I am so glad—I am so glad!' he whispers to me.

Poor fellow! he means for me. His sentence was the first delivered, and is—death. The next, curiously enough, was that of the man who boasted of having been in the pay of the Versaillists.

The business, however, is at an end. Again a drum-roll, then we are set in a row between a double line of guards and marched back to the gaol through the barrack-yards. As soon as we appear outside, we are greeted with a volley of yells and hisses. About a hundred individuals, for the most part belonging to the 'man on 'Change' type, with white hats and waistcoats and big chains on their bellies, have been at the trouble of waiting for us, for the purpose of unburdening their gentle souls of the disgust they feel at the mildness of the verdict. 'They ought to have been skinned alive!' says one of them, with obvious sincerity. (A 'bull,' I should think, with whose operations the Commune did not quite agree.) Another succeeds in breaking through the line of guards and actually striking a blow at one of us. He is removed, however; and a little farther, under a lamp-post, as we go on, we can acknowledge with a wink the sorrowful countenances and silent adieus of a small, very small, knot of sympathisers. Next we reach the prison; the file is broken, hands are hurriedly

shaken; and after the protracted brotherhood of the public battle, here we are back again to the solitude and mental freedom of the cell.

Do I want to reflect, to ponder, to muse over that turning-point of my existence, as I come in another man, with a doubt the less and a heavy certainty the more? Quite the reverse. A kind of queer torpor seizes me; the confidence of one who knows that he has spare time enough on his hands to consider the case under its various aspects, and who chooses rather to indulge in a few hours of complete unconcern. It may be that I want to earn for myself a character of indifference to the finding of that mock tribunal, or that I crave to procure for my own mind tangible evidence that I feel above their verdict, and do not grant it even the honour of a minute's consideration. The fact is, as soon as I am locked up I take to my books again, and I read on by the faint light of my night-lamp till I fall asleep.

It is only on the morrow, when I have satisfied myself that I feel no unseemly gratification at being spared the last penalty of the law, that I allow my thoughts to dwell on the novel side of the question. Prison for life in a fortress. It is only a matter of six words. But did the military commissioners, who applied them so easily to one whom they were unable to find guilty of anything beyond belonging to the losing side, only realise what the words represent? I, for one, have but a vague idea of it. I need to summon all my legal notions to remember that any penalty inflicted for life entails transportation beyond the high seas; and that consequently it is not on French soil and in a French fortress that I shall have to spend my lifetime, but somewhere at the Antipodes, I believe in one of the Marquesas Islands, latitude so much, longitude so much. No Bastille for me; no hope of imbibing between Parisian walls—or be it between European walls—cette quantite d'ennui qui rend fou, as Linguet said. This would be too mild. In a Bastille I should still breathe the same air as my people, feel somehow the pulse of my generation, partake to some extent of the general current of my time. Through a warder, through an occasional newspaper smuggled in, through a letter or a visitor, I should now and then find myself connected with the world. I could wait, listen, perceive a distant report of private or popular sympathy. But it will not be so.

Short of animal life, I must be stripped of everything. I am the tabooed man; and to the very cradle of taboo I shall be sent. 'If there was a French settlement more remote than Xukahiva Island, thither I should be despatched. The Vaithau Valley,—that is the name, I remember now,—a kind of well surrounded by granite walls four hundred feet high, within a coral reef in the South Sea, some twelve thousand miles from the Boulevard; not a soul, not a tree, not a blade of grass. Once a year a Government vessel with a consignment of biscuit, preserved meat, and warders. There I am to be given up to the tender mercies of the mosquitoes and some local sea-wolf. Exile and prison combined, under the tropical clime and

the general conditions of life which, at the Seychelles, so soon released Napoleon I., and at Cayenne Napoleon III., of the greatest part of their opponents.

Shall I, at least, be allowed a kind of comparative freedom there: the life of a colonist, the option of doing work of some kind, of raising a family, or fulfilling a mission, however humble? Not even that.

'Nec jus mihi ciris ademit, Nil nisi me patriis jussit abesse focis,'

Ovid could write of his proscriptor, when he was transported to the Euxine. But mine, forsooth, wants to excel, at least in one respect, the twelve Caesars, as he has already exceeded Sylla in the art of massacre. The men who dared to oppose Monsieur Thiers will lose at once country, freedom, property, legal status, civic, political, and private qualifications, parents, wife, friends, love, children, use of their affections, of their muscles, of their brain, of their whole self. They must be reduced to the condition of mere fowls, fed from Government biscuit in a Polynesian cage.

Transportation for life is, of course, only a way of speaking. That means, practically, ten, fifteen, twenty years, up to the next turn of the political hour-glass. But supposing that the dry guillotine should spare me for such a long mortalis avi spatium, I shall none the less have spent in durance the ten, fifteen, twenty better years of my life—from twenty-five upwards. Supposing that I ever come back from that circle of the Inferno not described by Dante, it will be in the condition of a wreck, of a mere human rag and waif, a perfect stranger to everything around me, a fossil, a ghost, a walking anachronism. I know, from the example of our predecessors of '48, what the disease means even when the patient happens to recover. It is one whose name could only be appropriately written in the skeleton letters of the alphabet of Holbein; and I can well fancy the slow but sure process of disorganisation that such a dreadful agent must of necessity bring to the brightest intelligence: when the miserable subject of the experiment has seen first his wonted surroundings and atmosphere fail him; next the family ties and friendships get loose, the stanchest devotions dropped one after another, through time, distance, and despair; when he discovers that his own powers turn slow and rusty through want of practice; when he ascertains that for lack of appropriate fuel his analytical, synthetical, comparative, coordinative, and aesthetical faculties are growing confused; that his social instincts get obliterated; that his memory glides away; that even his moral strength vanishes; that, in spite of himself and the most desperate fighting against the monster of insulation, he turns a prey to the canker; when, in short, he can measure day by day, year after year, his own decadence, and anticipate the moment when he shall have been definitively transformed, by the pitiless compression on his skull of the clime and the prison-walls, into a kind of sugar-cane in human shape!

I wanted a conscious death a few weeks ago. This will be conscious death indeed.

Never mind. Vive la Republique!

VIII. November Landscape.

Nearly three months have elapsed since I have given up keeping my diary. Such landmarks of my inner life, which I found amusement in noting down when I thought that they were the last impressions of a vanishing day, lost all interest for me the moment I knew that the dismal journey was to be resumed. At times I feel as if I were already on my reef in the South Sea, all things of the outside world having grown so foreign to me. Even the newspapers that I am allowed to take in fail to galvanise my fakir-like indifference. What is the use henceforth of looking at the stirrings, flutterings, and ambitions of men? Am I not struck out of the roll? Am I not dead, although I continue to breathe?

There is but one subject—the fate of my friends under sentence of violent death—in which I persist in taking a deep concern; and the more I do so, the more I feel bound to admire the pharisaical powers of the dictator of the day.

At the close of our mockery of a trial he wanted to appear before the world in the character of a magnanimous hero; and just as he was devoting three of our number to suppression by firearms, and the remainder to another equally sure, though slower and less sensational, process of annihilation, he managed to have it circulated that to his personal exertions on our behalf was due a reduction of the death-warrants from nine to three. As if he might not as well have reduced the figure to 0, and the whole proceedings to nothing! Soon, however, he found himself confronted with a trifling difficulty in the way of the aforesaid desirable character. Being in possession of the right of pardon, it depended upon him to show conclusively whether he was or was not inclined to magnanimity. L'homme eminent was equal to the occasion. He hastened to surrender his privilege. Knowing well his own absurd kind-heartedness and tenderness of soul, he had it reported, he felt he had better transfer the right of pardon to a Parliamentary Committee of fifteen members.

As a matter of course, the Commission ties Graces, as it is called, or rather committee of privileged and irresponsible murderers, is picked up from amongst the men best known for their fanatical hatred of Paris; its decisions are taken by secret ballot and covered by the parliamentary immunity. To be cast on its mercy, therefore, is tantamount to being given up to the executioner. But M. Thiers will none the less be able to wash his hands of any blood shed by its orders, and to claim that but for him not a drop would have been spilt. Is not that a triumph of Pontius-Pilatism? and was ever such an improved machinery of lawful assassination put in working order? Raoul Rigault, at least, had the courage of his opinion. When he thought that an opponent ought to be suppressed, he proceeded personally to the gaol with a shooting-party, put Chandey to the wall, and ordered the firing. M. Thiers wants to indulge in the

same kind of sport, and none the less be considered a nice sort of old grandpapa. Only yesterday I read in a paper that he bad expressed his sorrow at the sentence of death passed on Rossel. 'What a pity he was ever caught!' said he. The practical comment of the phrase has not been long in coming.

Thi3 morning—a bitterly cold November morning, the 28th—I had just sat down to my desk in the tireless cell, with my legs rolled np in a rug, when Fabert, the warder, came in. As I looked up I was struck with something unusual in his face, and he seemed gruff and gloomy.

'Did you hear nothing?' he asked.

'No.' And then, with a flash of thought, 'You don't mean to say—'

He bent his head.

'Yes,' he resumed, in a subdued tone. 'It has just been done. I was detailed on duty to wait upon Colonel Rossel, and I come back. He was shot, with Ferré and Bourgeois, an hour ago.'

I stood aghast, unable to realise the terrible news, which to me seemed the more incredible as the cell of Ferré was next to mine, and only three days before I had met Rossel in the gallery. Such a long time had been allowed to elapse since the trial, that I could not bring myself to believe that the wanton and cruel deed would be carried out. I can understand that much is done in the heat of the struggle, when the blood is up, and when all notions are confused and passions are loose. But half a year after the close of the civil war, in cold blood, to resume shooting prisoners—young men under twenty-seven too, in the bloom and strength of life, a bright officer like Rossel, or stout heart like Ferré, an obscure soldier like Bourgeois (a sergeant of the Line, guilty of having come over to the side of Paris)—this was more than I could have believed even of the fifteen hyenas and their master. And still who knows but that their very youth formed the chief crime and doom of my friends? Who knows but M. Thiers and his myrmidons—who between them must make about a thousand years—did not say, 'You boys, you shall die before us!'

'Tell me all as you saw it,' I said to Fabert, after a while, as I took pen and paper.

'Well, sir,' he began, 'this morning, about six, I went, with the governor and the chief warder, to the cell of Ferré. He was asleep, but he started up as we came in, and said, with a smile, "I suppose it is for to-day?" The governor bowed assent, and asked whether he had any particular request to make. "No, thank you," said the prisoner. "I only wish to remain alone up to the last minute, if possible." The governor complied with this desire; and we next proceeded to the cell of Colonel Rossel. In the interval, his counsel, who had been granted permission to bid him adieu, joined us. He, too, was asleep, and he did not hear us coming in. The barrister had to touch him on the shoulder. He opened his eyes, and at once understood that the hour had come, although he seemed to be surprised at first, as if he had not expected it. After talking a few minutes with

his counsel, and shaking hands with him, he was left in the company of a Protestant clergyman who had had several interviews with him lately. Both kneeled by the side of the bed and appeared to be praying. Meanwhile Bourgeois, who had just been transferred from the Military Gaol to cell No. 9, was quietly discussing a bottle of wine and a cigar; and Ferré, after dressing with his usual care, sat writing two letters: one, asking for the release of his father from custody, was to the Minister of War; the other, to his sister, bidding her adieu, stating that he died in the philosophical belief of his whole life, and expressing a wish that all religious rites should be dispensed with at his funeral.'

'Did you see the letters?'

'I heard him reading them over to the governor previous to putting them in the envelopes. At a quarter to seven all three were called out. A squadron of cavalry was waiting outside, under command of Major de Crenitz, round three ambulance-vans. Colonel Rossel went into the first one, with the clergyman, whilst I took my seat outside with the coachman. Bourgeois went into the next, with the prison chaplain, who persisted in waiting upon him, although the poor fellow declined his attentions. Ferré was alone in the third. In the same order we went, at a brisk pace, towards Satory, about two miles up the south side of the Park. The coachman told me the instructions were to turn in the opposite direction, to the camp of Rocqnencourt, if there was any large concourse of people at the Satory Butts. This, however, was not the case, as very few persons in town were aware of what was going to take place. So that when the vans stopped in front of the Butts, there were only a dozen civilians there, besides a force of, I should say, six thousand men, formed in a square on the plateau, under command of Colonel Merlin.'

'Why, the same fellow who presided over the court-martial! Bat do tell me about the plateau.'

'It is a large open space at the top of the hill, surrounded by the woods of Gonard, and closed to the east by the Butts. There was no sun, only a gray cold dawn. At the foot of the Butts three stakes, painted white, were stuck in the ground in a line, at about twenty paces' distance apart, and facing each stake a platoon of twelve men, under an adjutant. On the vans stopping by the side of the troops, an alarum was sounded, and the three prisoners went to their respective stakes: Rossel first, who on passing by a cluster of officers bowed to them, and took his position on the left; then Bourgeois, in the middle; and Ferré, who was smoking a cigar, on the right.'

'How were they dressed?'

'Colonel Rossel had a gray overcoat and velvet wide-awake. Ferré, a black frockcoat and hat. Bourgeois wore a pair of regulation red trousers, a brown patrol-jacket, and a kepi.'

'Did they shake hands?'

'No. They did not seem to know one another. I would rather believe it was the first time they met. Then the recorder began to read the death-warrants. The silence was so complete that every word was heard. When it was done Colonel Rossel asked whether he might be allowed to order the firing. Being answered in the negative, he. requested the assurance to be conveyed to Colonel Merlin that he bore him no ill-will; and at once, taking off his hat and overcoat, he let a bandage be put over his eyes by a sergeant—which the two others, however, quietly declined. Ferré, with a familiar gesture, was adjusting his eyeglass on his nose, and looking straight at the platoon before him, when, at a sign from the commanding officer, the adjutants lowered their swords, and the treble volley was fired. Rossel and Bourgeois fell at once on their backs. Ferré stood erect; he had only been wounded. A fresh volley knocked him down; but he stirred still, and the sergeant had to fire a coup de grace in his left ear, which split up his skull. Directly two greyhounds, belonging probably to some officer, were seen running towards the bleeding corpses, and had to be driven away. Meanwhile the military band struck up, and all the forces on the ground marched past before the three dead men.' 'Did you notice the tune?'

'I think it was some of those Belle Helene airs, as they call them. As soon as the march-past was finished, the corpses were put into the vans, and we proceeded to convey them to the cemetery, where three shells had been prepared and three graves dug. The remains of Ferré and Rossel, I understand, are claimed by their families; those of Bourgeois are to stay there. This is all, as far as I know; and I can only compliment you, M. Moray, upon your not being one of the party this morning,' added the old warder good-naturedly.

He had hardly uttered the last words, when the door opened, and the governer came in. After looking askance at Fabert, who 'ought not to have been there,' he said to me:

'I come to give you notice, sir, that you leave to-morrow for a fort on the west coast, there to await the first ship ready for the South Sea.'

And when I was once more alone I could not help thinking that Ferré, Rossel, and Bourgeois had perhaps gained the better prize in the lottery of Versaillist clemency. They were now asleep in the embrace of eternal repose; whilst for me there was opening the grave that was to keep me alive, though dead—dead, and yet retaining the capacity for suffering.

SOURCE: Time (London) vol. 3 (1880).

Speech pronounced by Paschal Grousset at the grave of Verdure

My friends, an awful bit of news came yesterday to strike us with astonishment and sadness. A man that we loved, that we esteemed, that we venerated like a father, had unexpectedly succumbed to the attacks of a sudden illness. Just a few days ago, we greeted him with a friendly word when we met him along this shore that he frequented, calm and smiling in the midst of misfortune, with every appearance of strength and health. Today, we pay our last respects to his corpse: [Augustin] Verdure will never again see France. He died, the doctors tell us, of a terrible malady which is called "general paralysis;" but, my friends, I tell you that he died of a far more terrible disease, which is called "deportation."

At the age of rest and retirement, at a hour when the tired body and mind need to stop at the end of the road and contemplate the path traveled, Verdure, like all of us, was violently torn from his interests, his habits, his affections, from everything that gave charm and happiness to life. More painfully, if it is possible, than most, he was personally stricken. On the even of embarkation, his son-in-law, the natural and legal support of all that the old man left behind him, and of a grandchild still to be born, his son-in-law was dead, suddenly, in the same cell as [Théophile] Ferré, to whom he had brought advice based on his legal experience. Then, misfortune would have it that, since his departure from Brest, for ten long months, our venerable friend would remain without any news of his relations. Finally, if we must tell everything — and why shouldn't we speak our saddest truths before the grave of this honest man? — the depressing spectacle that has too often given, even here, to our adversaries, men unworthy of the honor of being banished, the scandal of the failures and disorders that you know, these sources of bitterness had come to mix with deep personal sufferings. It was more than enough to crush that noble, pure, sensitive and proud heart. He was broken without making any complaint, without breathing a sigh.

My friends, those among us to whom it will be given to return to their hearth can say that they witnessed the death of a just man. The entire life of the citizen Verdure has been dedicated to the people, for which reason he came to die so far from his own. I wanted to tell you the detailed history of that life; but I lack the documents, and I must limit myself to a sketch in broad strokes.

Led early by a decided vocation towards the career of teaching, Verdure devoted himself to the most modest of tasks: he distributed to the children of his country, in the Pas-de-Calais, that primary instruction, the most necessary of all, and which is most lacking; in the accomplishment of his duties, he bore an untiring devotion, the rare patience that you have known in him, and which was in him one of the ornaments of the most solid and varied professional knowledge. It is there that in the heart of his village, among his family, his school and his garden, he lived his best years. This happiness would not last.

Our friend had the fault of separating religious questions from school questions, of wanting to be a teacher and not a church-warden: the reaction of 1850 and the men who received their watchword from Mr. de Falloux, could not tolerate such detestable principles. Verdure was dismissed, with so many others, during that famous massacre of teachers, which has given primary instruction, in our country, a wound of which our latest disasters have measured the depth.

The career of teaching being closed to him, he had to think of other ways to use his multiples aptitudes. Verdure went to Paris and found, not without difficulty, work as a bookkeeper. But, if his daily labor belonged to his family, his leisure was always for the people: he dedicated it entirely from them on to the study of the questions of labor, of these great problems of the modern world, which we stupidly think to solve by shooting or deporting them, when it would not be too much effort, with the intelligence, amity, and good faith of all to resolve them. Verdure acquired in these matters, and especially on the questions of association, a competence based o an imposed mass of observations and experimental facts, patiently accumulated by him during the eighteen years of harmful servitude which has cost France so much generous blood, two provinces, all its treasures, and the first rank among nations.

It is with these credentials that he joined, in 1869, the Marseillaise; I will astonish no one by saying that he was for us, in that journal of so rapid and tragic destiny, a collaborator distinguished on more than one account by the excellence and precision of the documents which he prepared, as much as for the uprightness of his character and the complete reliability of his commerce. Seeing the misfortune of his country: none felt them more keenly than Verdure, and the sufferings of the siege, none contributed more to ease them. His perfect knowledge of the needs and miseries of that heroic Parisian population, always decimated, but never beaten, naturally designated him for the municipal functions in the eleventh arrondissement, where he had lived for long years. I was for him like a big family. The voters of that constituency sent him, on March 20, to the Commune.

From that date citizens, I have nothing to tell you of the life of our friend: it became public and was never lost to your view. You saw him seated in the Councils of the Commune, bringing his eminent qualities, a great modesty and precious special knowledge, a conciliatory character joined with an inflexible rectitude of judgment and principles. You see him, on the other hand, presiding over the difficult administration of that populous arrondissement, where so many regrets will meet the news of his end, and giving to that weighty task every moment that that the assembly of the Hôtel de Ville left to him. Then, when the hour of defeat was sounded, Verdure escaped as by a miracle from the death that struck the best among us. Verdure was taken, led to Versailles, brought before a military tribunal, inscribed on the tables of proscription. History when it reviews this trial, will judge the judges; it will be astonished by

the singular crime reproached by them in this gentle defendant, who looked them full in the face, strong in his acts, his conscience and his honesty. Do you know what that crime was, my friends? Ah! Don't search for it in the Code, for you will not find it there: it is called the crime of philanthropy. "Verdure," the report of his accuser says literally, "Verdure is a utopian philanthropist..." A utopian if you wish, citizens, but a philanthropist for sure! Yes, Verdure was a philanthropist, a friend of men, a friend of the people; he wanted the good and the just; if suffered from the sorrows of others and from the evils of humanity; he wanted to cure them, or at least to relieve them; it is to that we that he gave what he had of strength, intelligence, courage and life: it is for that cause he has died as he lived, as a free man, as a son of the Revolution.

We, citizens, who accompany this good man to that grave, where his wife and daughter cannot come to weep, let his life serve us as an example and his death as a lesson! Do you know what I was thinking of just now, seeing the long spiral of the cortege that we have made for him uncoil on the flanks of these barren hills, seeing all the heavy hearts and all the damp eyes, looking back again towards that immensity of the oceans that separates us from our homeland? I thought of some very different cortèges that you will have been able to see, like me, spread along some avenues of our Paris, pompous funerals of some power of the day. I saw again those cars draped with velvet and silk, this plumed litter, those horses adorned with silver and all those social vanities accumulated to dress up the dead. But I also thought of the ordinary impressions of the crowd suite passage of this pomp, to those impressions which are so often summarized in two words: indifference and scorn. I heard them recall the titles of the dead man, enumerate his positions, evaluate his wealth, count the perjuries of his life; and there was always someone to say out loud what many thought: one villain less!

How different it is here, my friends! A poor casket carried by some exiled laborers; on that casket, a crown of wild flowers; for that casket, a hole dug in the sand of an isle lost beyond the borders of the world. But, behind that casket, a unanimous support of sad friends, a concert of regrets and affection, some mute sorrows and some expansive despairs, mourning on all the faces and even on the very ones who guard us, forced to respect, grasped by the majesty of this death!

However, these men, escorted in such dissimilar manners, the one towards a marble necropolis, the other to this desert, they both started from the same point; they both emerged from the French nation as our fathers have rebuilt it on the principle of equality; both were chosen by the free suffrage of their fellow citizens; both had their hour of triumph; both, in all, went to the same end, to unavoidable crucible where the immortal matter goes to melt, to return in a new form in the great current of life... Why is it that the sentiments awakened by the view of their funerals differ so profoundly? Do you ask it, my friends? It comes

from an abyss which is found between them and of which the masses have a profound sense. One made politics a stepstool towards fortune and honors; his thoughts have all been individual; he has deserted the cause of the people to serve that of his own selfishness; he has made his place by base acts; he has raised himself by treasons; he has ruled over some corpses. The other has only seen in politics an instrument of progress; he has entered the lists with generous ideas and guarded them up to the end; his life has been a life of self-denial and struggle, of renunciation, suffering, and sorrows nobly borne, from faithfulness to duty... And that is why the justice of the world comes to the threshold of death, avenger for the one, restorer for the other. That is why the remains of the one, before being cast to the ridicule of history, already encounter on their way the ridicules of opinion; — while the other, the vanquished, the exile, sleeps in that inestimable peace, a satisfied conscience, and, in that glory, the sorrow of the people.

SOURCE: Achille Ballière, La déportation de 1871 : souvenirs d'un evadé de Nouméa (1889) : 415-419. Working translation by Shawn P. Wilbur

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