The Civil War in France

By

KARL MARX

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY FREDERICK ENGELS,

Translated from the German by E. BELFORT BAX

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INTRODUCTION.

On the 28th of May, the last of the combatants of the Commune were crushed by superior numbers on the heights of Belleville, and two days later, on the 30th, Marx read to the General Council of the International the pamphlet in question, in which the historical significance of the Paris Commune is presented in short, powerful, and in such incisive and above all such true phrases as have never again been equalled in the whole of the extensive literature on the subject. Thanks to the economical and political development of France since 1789, Paris has for fifty years been placed in the position that no revolution could break out there without assuming a proletarian character in such wise that the proletariat which had bought the victory with his blood did not put forward immediately afterwards its own demands. These demands were more or less indefinite, and even confused in accordance with the particular phase of development through which the Paris workmen were passing at the time; but the upshot of them all was the abolition of the class antagonism between capitalist and laborer. How this was to be done, 'tis true nobody knew.—but the demand itself, however in definite its form, was a danger for the existing order of society; the workmen who made it were still armed; if the bourgeoisie at the head of the State would maintain their political supremacy, they were bound to disown the workmen. Accordingly after every revolution fought out by the working classes there a new struggle arose which ended with the defeat of the working classes. This nappened for the first time in 1848. The Liberal bourgeoisie of the Parliamentary opposition held retor-
banquets in favor of an electoral change which should assure to them party domination. In their struggles with the Government more and more driven to appeal to the people, they were obliged to admit to the front rank the Radical and Republican elements of the small middle class as well as of the wealthier bourgeoisie. But behind these stood the revolutionary workmen; and the latter had, since 1830, acquired for themselves far more political independence than even the Republicans amongst the middle classes suspected. In the moment of crisis between Government and Opposition the workmen inaugurated the battle in the streets; Louis Philippe disappeared, and with him the electoral reform. In its stead arose the Republic, designated by the victorious workmen as the "Social" Republic. As to what was to be understood by this "social" Republic nobody was quite clear, not even the workmen themselves. But they now had weapons and wielded power in the State. So soon, therefore, as the bourgeois Republicans who were at the head of affairs began to feel their feet, their first object was to disarm the workmen. To effect this, the bourgeoisie drove them to insurrection in June, 1848, by the direct breach of pledges; by scornful and defiant treatment, and by the attempt to banish the unemployed into a distant province. The Government had taken care to have sufficient repressive force at hand. After five days heroic struggle, the workmen succumbed, and now followed a massacre of the defenceless prisoners, the equal of which has not been seen since the days of the Civil Wars preceding the downfall of the Roman Republic. It was the first time that the bourgeoisie showed to what a mad ferocity of vengeance it can be stirred up so soon as the proletariat ventures to stand up as a separate class with its own interests and demands. And yet 1848 was child's play compared with their fury in 1871.

But Nemesis straightway followed; if the proletariat
could not as yet rule France, the bourgeoisie could not do so any more. At that time especially not, when it was in its majority monarchical, and moreover split into three dynastic parties besides one Republican. The internal dissensions of the bourgeoisie allowed the adventurer Louis Bonaparte to filch all positions of influence—army, police, administrative machinery—and, on December 2nd, 1851, to burst up the last stronghold of the bourgeoisie, the National Assembly. The second Empire followed. It brought about the exploitation of France by a band of political and financial adventurers, but at the same time an industrial development such as had not been possible under the narrow and timid system of Louis Philippe, in other words, under the exclusive domination of a faction only of the wealthier middle classes. Louis Bonaparte took from the capitalists their political power under the pretence of protecting them against the working classes and the working classes against them; but, on the other hand, his Government favored speculation and industrial activity, in short, the rise and enrichment of the whole of the middle classes in a hitherto unheard of degree. Corruption and wholesale robbery, it is true, developed themselves to a still greater extent, at the Imperial Court, and its hangers on, who exacted no trifling percentage of the new wealth accumulated by the bourgeoisie.

But the second Empire, that meant also the appeal to French Chauvinism, that implied the demand for the re-acquisition of the frontier of the first Empire lost in 1814, at the very least those of the first Republic. A French Empire within the boundaries of the old Monarchy, or even in those still more circumscribed of 1815, was impossible for long. Hence the necessity of occasional wars and extensions of frontier; but no extension of frontier so dazzles the imagination of French Chauvinists as that comprising the German left bank of the Rhine. One
square mile on the Rhine to them was worth more than ten in the Alps or elsewhere. Given the second Empire the demand for the requisition of the left bank of the Rhine either in the lump or piecemeal was only a question of time. This time came with the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, but Bonaparte was juggled out of the expected territorial indemnity through Bismarck and his own cunning policy of hesitation. There remained nothing for Bonaparte but war—a war which broke out in 1870, and drove him first to Sedan and from thence to Wilhelmshohe.

The necessary consequence was the Paris Revolution of the 4th September, 1870. The Empire collapsed like a house of cards, the Republic was again proclaimed. But the enemy stood before the gates. The armies of the Empire were either hopelessly shut up in Metz or prisoners in Germany. In this extremity the people allowed the Parisian Deputies of the former parliament (CORPS LEGISLATIF) to set themselves up as the “Government of National Defence.” This was the more readily conceded, as, for the purposes of defence all Parisian capable of bearing arms had been enrolled in the National Guard, of which now the workmen constituted the great majority. But the antagonism between the Government, composed almost exclusively of bourgeois, and the armed proletariat soon came to an issue. On the 31st of October the working class battalions stormed the Hotel de Ville, and took some of the Members of the Government prisoners. Treachery, direct breach of faith on the part of the Government, and the intervention of some middle-class battalions freed them again, and in order not to provoke civil war inside a town besieged by a foreign power, the existing government was permitted to remain in office.

Finally, on the 28th of January, 1871, Paris starved out capitulated, but with honors hitherto unheard of in military history. The forts were surrendered, the line fortifications disarmed, the weapons of the line, and of the Guard
Mobile, were handed over to the Germans, and the men themselves regarded as prisoners of war. But the National Guard retained its weapons and cannon, and only entered into a truce with the conquerors. The latter did not venture upon a triumphal entry into Paris. Only a small portion of Paris, for the most part consisting of public parks, did they attempt to occupy, and even this only for a few days. And during the whole time they who had kept Paris in a state of siege for 131 days found themselves in their turn surrounded by armed Parisian workmen who carefully watched lest any Prussian should overstep the narrow limits of the quarter reserved for the foreign conqueror. Such respect the Parisian workman extorted from that army before which all the armies of the Empire successively had laid down their weapons, and the Prussian Junkers who had come thither in order to take revenge on the hotbed of revolution were compelled to stand and against their own will salute this very armed revolution.

During the war of the Parisian workmen had confined themselves to demanding the energetic continuance of the struggle. But now, the capitulation of Paris having secured peace, Thiers, the new head of the Government, could not help seeing that the rule of the propertied classes—of the great landlords and capitalists—was in continual danger so long as the Parisian workmen retained theirs arms. His first work accordingly was the attempt to disarm them. On the 18th of March he sent some troops of the line with the order to steal the artillery belonging to the National Guard, which had been manufactured and paid for by public subscription during the siege of Paris. The attempt miscarried. Paris armed herself as one man to resistance, and war was declared between Paris and the French Government sitting at Versailles. On the 26th March the Paris Commune was elected, and proclaimed on the 28th. The Central Committee of the National Guard, which had hitherto carried on the Government,
abdicated its functions into the hands of the Commune. On the 30th the Commune abolished the conscription and the standing army, and all military forces except the National Guard, to which all citizens capable of bearing arms were to belong. It remitted all rents from October, 1870, to April, 1871, such rent as had already been paid to be appointed to future quarters; and returned gratis all pledges of necessitous persons in the public pawning establishment (MONT-DE-PIEVE). The same day the foreigners elected on to the Commune were confirmed in their functions, since it was declared "the flag of the Commune is that of the Universal Republic." On the 1st of April it was decided that the highest salary of a functionary of the commune, whether a member or otherwise, was not to exceed 6,000 francs (£240) a year. On the following day was declared the separation of Church and State, and the abolition of all State payments for religious purposes, as also the transformation of all ecclesiastical wealth into national property. As a consequence of this, on the 8th of April all religious symbols, dogmas, prayers—in short, "all things appertaining to the sphere of the individual conscience," were ordered to be banished from the streets, an order which was carried out as quick as possible. On the 6th the guillotine was fetched out by the 137th battalion of the National Guard, and publicly burnt, amid loud popular applause. On the 12th the Commune ordered the column on the Place Vendome, which had been constructed by Napoleon I. after the war of 1809 out of captured cannon, to be overthrown as a monument of national vanity and international jealousy. This was accomplished on the 16th of May. On the 16th of April the Commune made an order for a statistical account of all factories and workshops which were not at work, and for the elaboration of plans for their utilization by and for account of the workmen hitherto engaged in them, who were to be formed into co-operative societies.
purpose, and, further, for the amalgamation of these societies into one great co-operative organization. On the 20th they abolished the night work of bakers, as also the register-office for procuring employment, which, since the Second Empire, had been the monopoly of certain scoundrels appointed by the police, exploiters of the worst kind. The matter was henceforward placed in the hands of the mayoralties of the twenty arrondissements of Paris. On the 30th of April it decreed the abolition of pawnshops as being incompatible with the right of workmen to their tools and to credit. On the 5th of May it ordered the destruction of the chapel erected in expiation of the execution of Louis XVI.

In these measures, the class character of the Parisian movement, hitherto thrust into the background by the struggle against the foreign invasion, came clearly and emphatically to the fore. In the Commune there sat almost exclusively workmen, or the recognized representative of workmen, its decisions naturally bore a distinctively proletarian character. They either decreed reforms which the Republican bourgeoisie had omitted to carry out from cowardice, but which formed a necessary foundation for the free action of the working class, as, for instance, the carrying out of the principle that religion as far as the State is concerned, is a purely private matter: or they were the expressions of resolutions directly in the interest of the working classes, and in a few cases, even penetrating deeply into the life tissue of the old order of society. But all this in a besieged city could not be carried beyond the first stages of realization. And from the beginning of May onwards the struggle against the ever-increasing masses of the army of the Versailles Government claimed our exclusive attention and energy.

On the 7th April the Versailles had seized the bridge over the Seine at Neuilly on the west side of Paris; on the
other hand, on the 11th they were beaten back with much loss by General Eudes in an attack they made on the south side. Paris was continually bombarded by the very people who had stigmatized the bombardment of the same city by the Prussians as a sacrilegious outrage. These very people went on their knees to the Prussian Government to implore the speedy return of the French military prisoners taken at Sedan and Metz, who were to reconquer Paris for them. The gradual arrival of these troops gave a distinct superiority to the Versaillese from the beginning of May onwards. This showed itself even as early as the 23rd of April when Thiers broke off the negotiations with the Commune respecting the latter's offer to exchange the Archbishop of Paris and a number of other priests retained in Paris as hostages against the single Blanqui who had been twice elected into the Commune, but who remained a prisoner at Clairvaux. It was shown still more in the altered language of Thiers; hitherto hesitating and ambiguous, he now suddenly became insulting, threatening, and brutal. On the south side the Versaillese took, on the 3rd of May, the redoubt of Moulin Saquet; on the 9th, the fort of Issy reduced to a heap of ruins by the cannonade; on the 14th, that of Vanves. On the West side they gradually advanced, seizing the numerous villages, which extended to the outer line of fortifications up to the enceinte itself; on the 21st they succeeded, owing to treachery and carelessness of the National Guard at certain points, in entering the city. The Prussians, who occupied the northern and eastern forts, allowed the Versaillese to press forward into the territory in the north of the city, which the conditions of peace had closed to them, and thence to inaugurate a formidable attack over a long line which the Parisians, believing to be covered by the terms of the truce, had in consequence only weakly occupied. The result of this was that the resistance in the western parts of Paris, the wealthier parts of the city, was only feeble. It was more severe and
tougher as the attacking troops approached the eastern half, the working-class parts of the city. After an eight days' struggle, the last defenders of the Commune succumbed on the heights of Belleville and Menilmontant. And now the murder of defenceless men, woman, and children, which had waged the whole week through in ever-increasing proportions reached its highest point: The breechloader no longer killed fast enough; the conquered were slaughtered in hundreds with the Mitrailleuses; "the wall of the Federals" in Pere la Chaise Cemetery, where the last massacre took place, remains to-day a dumb but eloquent witness of what frenzy of crime the governing classes are capable as soon as the proletariat ventures to stand up for its rights. Then came the arrest en masse, as the slaughter of all was seen to be impossible, the shooting down of arbitrarily selected prisoners as victims, and the transference of the remainder into great camps, where they awaited being dragged before the courts-martial. The Prussian troops, which had their camp to the north-east of Paris, received the order to allow no fugitives to pass. Nevertheless, the officers often were blind to this when their soldiers obeyed the call of humanity rather than that of their chief in command. Especially does the Saxon Army Corps deserve the credit of having acted very humanely and of having let many through whose character as combatants for the Commune was obvious.

FREDERICK ENGELS.

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THE

Civil War in France

ADDRESS OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL
OF THE
INTERNATIONAL
WORKING-MEN'S ASSOCIATION

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

I.

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

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

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

Thus, on the very evening of the proclamation of the Republic, Trochu’s “plan” was known to his colleagues to be the capitulation of Paris. If national defence had been more than a pretext for the personal government of Thiers, Favre and Co., the upstarts of the 4th of September would have abdicated on the 5th—would have initiated the Paris people into Trochu’s “plan,” and called upon them to surrender at once, or to take their own fate into their own hands. Instead of this, the infamous impostors resolved upon curing the heroic folly of Paris by a regimen of famine and broken heads, and to dupe her in the meanwhile by ranting manifestoes, holding forth that Trochu, “the Governor of Paris, will never capitulate,” and Jules Favre, the Foreign Minister, will “not cede an inch of our territory, nor a stone of our fortresses.” In a letter to Gambetta, that very same Jules Favre avows that what they were “defending” against were not the Prussian soldierno, but the working men of Paris. During the whole continuance of the siege the Bonapartist cut-throats, whom Trochu had wisely intrusted with the command of the Paris army, exchanged, in their
intimate correspondence, ribald jokes at the well-understood mockery of defence (see, for instance, the correspondence of Alphonse Simon Guiod, supreme commander of the artillery of the Army of Defence of Paris and Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor, to Suzanne, general of division of artillery, a correspondence published by the Journal officiel of the Commune. The mask of imposture was at last dropped on the 28th of January, 1871. With the true heroism of utter self-debasement, the Government of National Defence, in their capitulation, came out as the Government of France by Bismarck's permission—a part so base that Louis Bonaparte himself had, at Sedan, shrunk from accepting it. After the events of the 18th of March, on their wild flight to Versailles, the capitulards left in the hands of Paris the documentary evidence of their treason, to destroy which, as the Commune says in its manifesto to the provinces, "those men would not recoil by a sea of blood."

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

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

Ernest Picard, the Joe Miller of the Government of National Defence, who appointed himself Home Minister of the Republic after having in vain striven to become Home Minister of the Empire, is the brother of one Arthur Picard, an individual expelled from the Paris Bourse as a blackleg (see report of the Prefecture of Police, dated 13th July, 1867), and convicted, on his own confession, of a
theft of 300,000 francs, while manager of one of the branches of the Societe Generale, rue Palestro, No. 5 (see report of the Prefecture of Police, 11th December, 1868). This Arthur Picard was made by Ernest Picard the editor of his paper, l’Electeur Libre. While the common run of stockjobbers were led astray by the official lies of the Home Office paper, Arthur was running backwards and forwards between the Home Office and the Bourse, there to discount the disasters of the French army. The whole financial correspondence of that worthy pair of brothers fell into the hands of the Commune.

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

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

Thiers, that monstrous gnome, has charmed the French bourgeoisie for almost half a century, because he is the most consummate intellectual expression of their own class-corruption. Before he became a statesman he had already proved his lying powers as an historian. The chronicle of his public life is the record of misfortunes of France. Banded, before 1630, with the
Republicans, he slipped into office under Louis Phillippe by betraying his protector Laffite, ingratiating himself with the king by exciting mob riots against the clergy, during which the church of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois and the Archbishop's palace were plundered, and by acting the minister-spy upon, and the jail-accoucheur of the Duchess de Berri. The massacre of the Republicans in the Rue Transnonain, and the subsequent infamous laws of September against the press and the right of association, were his work. Reappearing as the chief of the Cabinet in March, 1840, he astonished France with his plan of fortifying Paris. To the Republicans, who denounced this plan as a sinister plot against the liberty of Paris, he replied from the tribune of the Chamber of Deputies:

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

When King Bomba tried his hand at Palermo, in January, 1848, Thiers, then long since out of office again rose in the Chamber of Deputies: "You know, gentlemen, what is happening at Palermo. You, all of you, shake with horror (in the parliamentary sense)
on hearing that during forty-eight hours a large town has been bombarded — by whom? Was it by a foreign enemy exercising the right of war? No, gentlemen, it was by its own Government. And why? Because the unfortunate town demanded its rights. Well, then, for the demand of its rights it has got forty-eight hours of bombardment. . . . . Allow me to appeal to the opinion of Europe. It is doing a service to mankind to arise, and to make reverberate, from what is perhaps the greatest tribune in Europe, some words (indeed words) of indignation against such acts. . . . . When the Regent Espartero, who had rendered services in his country (which M. Thiers never did) intended bombarding Barcelona, in order to suppress its insurrection, there arose from all parts of the world a general outcry of indignation."

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

A few days before the Revolution of February, fretting at the long exile from place and pelf to which Guizot had condemned him and sniffing in the air the scent of an approaching popular commotion, Thiers, in that pseudo-heroic style which won him the nick-name of Mirabeau-mouche, declared to the Chamber of Duputies: "I am of the party of Revolution, not only in France, but in Europe. I wish the Government of the Revolution to remain in the hands of moderate men. . . . but if the Government
should fall into the hands of ardent minds, even into those of Radicals, I shall, for all that, not desert my cause. I shall always be of the party of the Revolution." The Revolution of February came. Instead of displacing the Guizot Cabinet by the Thiers Cabinet, as the little man had dreamt, it superseded Louis Phillippe by the Republic. On the first day of the popular victory he carefully hid himself, forgetting that the contempt of the working men screened him from their hatred. Still with his legendary courage, he continued to shy the public stage, until the June massacres had cleared it for his sort of action. Then he became the leading mind of the "Party of Order" and its Parliamentary Republic, that anonymous interregnum, in which all the rival factions of the ruling class conspired together to crush the people, and conspired against each other to restore each of them its own monarchy. Then as now, Thiers denounced the Republicans as the only obstacle to then consolidation of the Republic; then, as now he spoke to the Republic as the hangman spoke to Don Carlos:—"I shall assassinate thee, but for thy own good." Now, as then, he will have to exclaim on the day after his victory; L'Empire est fait—the empire is consummated. Despite his hypocritical homilies about necessary liberties and his personal grudge against Louis Bonaparte, who had made a dupe of him, and kicked out parliamentarism—and outside of its factitious atmosphere the little man is conscious of withering into nothingness—he had a hand in all the infamies of the Second Empire, from the occupation
of Rome by French troops to the war with Prussia, which he incited by his fierce invective against German unity—not as a cloak of Prussian despotism but as an encroachment upon the vested right of France in German disunion. Fond of brandishing, with his dwarfish arms, in the face of Europe the sword of first Napoleon whose historical shoe-black he had become, his foreign policy always culminated in the utter humiliation of France from the London convention of 1841 to the Paris capitulation of 1871 and the present civil war, where he hounds on the prisoners of Sedan and Metz against Paris by special permission of Bismarck. Despite his versatility of talent and shiftiness of purpose, this man has his whole lifetime been wedded to the most fossil routine. It is self-evident that to him the deeper undercurrents of modern society remained forever hidden; but even the most palpable changes on its surface were abhorrent to a brain all the vitality of which had fled to the tongue. Thus he never tired of denouncing as a sacrilege any deviation from the old French protective system. When a minister of Louis Phillippe, he railed at railways as a wild chimera; and when in opposition under Louis Bonaparte, he branded every attempt to reform the rotten French army system. Never in his long political career has he been guilty of a single—even the smallest—measure of any practical use. Thiers was consistent only in his greed for wealth and his hatred of the men that produce it. Having entered his first ministry under Louis Phillippe poor as Job, he left it a millionaire. His last ministry
under the same king (of the 1st of March, 1840) exposed him to public taunts of peculation in the Chamber of Deputies, to which he was content to reply by tears—a commodity he deals in as freely as Jules Favre, or any other crocodile. At Bordeaux his first measure for saving France from impending financial ruin was to endow himself with three millions a year, the first and the last word of the "Economical Republic," the vista of which he had opened to his Paris electors in 1869. One of his former colleagues of the Chamber of Deputies of 1830, himself a capitalist and nevertheless a devoted member of the Paris Commune, M. Beslay, lately addressed Thiers, thus in a public placard:—"The enslavement of labor by capital has always been the corner-stone of your policy, and from the very day you saw the Republic of Labor installed at the Hotel de Ville, you have never ceased to cry out to France: "These are criminals!" A master in small state roguery, a virtuoso in perjury and treason, a craftsman in all the petty stratagems, cunning devices and base perfidies of Parliamentary party-warfare; never scrupling, when out of office, to fan a revolution, and to stifle it in blood when at the helm of the State; with class prejudices standing him in the place of ideas, and vanity in the place of a heart; his private life as infamous as his public life is odious—even now, when playing the part of a French Sulla, he cannot help setting off the abomination of his deeds by the ridicule of his ostentation.

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

As soon as this assembly of "Rurals" had met at Bordeaux, Thiers made it clear to them that the peace preliminaries must be assented to at once, without even the honors of a Parliamentary debate, as the only condition on which Prussia would permit them to open the war against the Republic and Paris, its stronghold. The counter-revolution had, in fact, no time to lose. The Second Empire had more than doubled the national debt, and plunged all the large towns into heavy municipal debts. The war had fearfully swelled the liabilities, and mercilessly ravaged the resources of the nation. To complete the ruin, the Prussian Shylock was there with his bond for the keep of half a million of his
soldiers on French soil, his indemnity of five milliards and interest at 5 per cent. on the unpaid installments thereof. Who was to pay the bill? It was only by the violent overthrow of the Republic that the appropriators of wealth could hope to shift on to the shoulders of its producers the cost of a war which they, the appropriators, had themselves originated. Thus, the immense ruin of France spurred on these patriotic representatives of land and capital, under the very eyes and patronage of the invader, to graft upon the foreign war a civil war—a slaveholders' rebellion.

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

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

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

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

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

II.

ARMED Paris was the only serious obstacle in the way of counterrevolutionary conspiracy. Paris was, therefore, to be disarmed. On this point the Bordeaux Assembly was sincerity itself. If the roaring rant of its Rurals had not been audible enough, the surrender of Paris by Thiers to the tender mercies of the triumvirate of Vinoy the Decembriseur, Valentin the Bona-
partist *gendarme*, and Aurelles de Paladine the Jesuit general, would have cut off even the last subterfuge of doubt. But while insultingly exhibiting the true purpose of the disarmament of Paris, the conspirators asked her to lay down her arms on a pretext which was the most glaring, the most barefaced of lies. The artillery of the Paris National Guard, said Thiers, belonged to the State, and to the State it must be returned. The fact is this:—From the very day of the capitulation, by which Bismarck's prisoners had signed the surrender of France, but reserved to themselves a numerous body-guard for the express purpose of cowing Paris, Paris stood on the watch. The National Guard reorganized themselves and intrusted their supreme control to a Central Committee elected by their whole body, save some fragments of the old Bonapartist formation. On the eve of the entrance of the Prussians into Paris, the Central Committee took measures for the removal to Montmartre, Belleville, and La Villette of the cannon and mitrailleuses treacherously abandoned by the capitulards in and about the very quarters the Prussians were to occupy. That artillery had been furnished by the subscriptions of the National Guard. As their private property, it was officially recognized in the capitulation of the 28th of January, and on that very title exempted from the general surrender, into the hands of the conqueror, of arms belonging to the Government. And Thiers was so utterly destitute of even the flimsiest pretext for initiating the war against Paris, that he had to resort to the flagrant lie of the artillery of the National Guard being State property!
The seizure of her artillery was evidently but to serve as the preliminary to the general disarmament of Paris, and, therefore, of the Revolution of the 4th of September. But that Revolution had become the legal status of France. The Republic, its work, was recognized by the conqueror in the terms of the capitulation. After the capitulation, it was acknowledged by all the foreign Powers, and in its name the National Assembly had been summoned. The Paris working men's revolution of the 4th of September was the only legal title of the National Assembly seated at Bordeaux, and of its executive. Without it, the National Assembly would at once have to give way to the Corps Legislatif, elected in 1869 by universal suffrage under French, not under Prussian, rule, and forcibly dispersed by the arm of the Revolution. Thiers and his ticket-of-leave men would have had to capitulate for safe conduct signed by Louis Bonaparte, to save them from a voyage to Cayenne. The National Assembly, with its power of attorney to settle the terms of peace with Prussia, was but an incident of that Revolution, the true embodiment of which was still armed Paris, which had initiated it, undergone for it a five months siege, with its horrors of famine, and made her prolonged resistance, despite Trochu's plan, the basis of an obstinate war of defence in the provinces. And Paris was now either to lay down her arms at the insulting behest of the rebellious slaveholders of Bordeaux, and acknowledge that her Revolution of the 4th of September meant nothing but a simple transfer of power from Louis Bonaparte to his Royal rivals; or she had to stand forward as the
self-sacrificing champion of France, whose salvation from ruin, and whose regeneration were impossible, without the revolutionary overthrow of the political and social conditions that had engendered the second Empire, and, under its fostering care, matured into utter rottenness. Paris, emaciated by a five months' famine, did not hesitate one moment. She heroically resolved to run all the hazards of a resistance against the French conspirators, even with Prussian cannon frowning upon her from her own forts. Still, in its abhorrence of the civil war into which Paris was to be goaded, the Central Committee continued to persist in a merely defensive attitude, despite the provocations of the Assembly, the usurpations of the Executive, and the menacing concentration of troops in and around Paris.

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

From the 18th of March to the entrance of the Versailles troops into Paris, the proletarian revolution remained so free from the acts of violence in which the revolutions, and still more the counter-revolutions, of the "better classes" abound, that no facts were left to its opponents to cry out about, but the execution of Generals Lecomte and Clement Thomas, and the affair of the Place Vendome.

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

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

The massacre of unarmed citizens in the Place Vendome is a myth which M. Thiers and the Rurals persistently ignored in the Assembly, entrusting its propagation exclusively to the servants’ hall of European journalism. “The men of order” the reactionists of Paris, trembled at the victory of the 18th of March. To them it was the signal of popular retribution at last arriving. The ghosts of the victims assassinated at their hands from the days of June, 1848, down to the 22nd of January, 1871, arose before their faces. Their panic was their only punishment. Even the sergents-de-ville, instead of being disarmed and locked up, as ought to have been done, had the gates of Paris flung wide open for their safe retreat to Versailles. The men of order were left not only unharmed, but allowed to rally and quietly to seize more than one stronghold in the very centre of Paris. This indulgence of the Central Committee—this magnanimity of the armed working men—so strangely at variance with the habits of the “party of order,” the latter misinterpreted as mere symptoms of conscious weakness. Hence their
silly plan to try, under the cloak of an unarmed demonstration, what Vinoy had failed to perform with his cannon and mitrailleuses. On the 22nd of March a riotous mob of swells started from the quarters of luxury, all the *petits creves* in their ranks, and at their head the notorious familiars of the Empire—the Heecke- ren, Coetlogon, Henri de Pene, &c. Under the cowardly pretence of a pacific demonstration, this rabble, secretly armed with the weapons of the bravo, fell into marching order, illtreated and disarmed the detached patrols and sentries of the National Guard they met with on their progress, and, on debouching from the Rue de la Paix, with the cry of “Down with the Central Committee! Down with the assassins! The National Assembly for ever!” attempted to break through the line drawn up there, and thus to carry by a surprise the head-quarters of the National Guard in the Place Vendome. In reply to their pistol-shots, the regular *sommations* (the French equivalent of the English Riot Act) were made, and, proving ineffective, fire was commanded by the general of the National Guard. One volley dispersed into wild flight the silly coxcombs, who expected that the mere exhibition of their “respectability” would have the same effect upon the Revolution of Paris as Joshua’s trumpets upon the walls of Jericho. The runaways left behind them two National Guards killed, nine severely wounded (among them a member of the Central Committee), and the whole scene of their exploit strewn with revolvers, daggers, and sword-canes, in evidence of the “unarmed” character of their “pacific” demonstration. When, on the 13th of June, 1849, the National
Guard made a really pacific demonstration in protest against the felonious assault of French troops upon Rome. Changarnier, then general of the party of order, was acclaimed by the National Assembly, and especially by M. Thiers, as the saviour of society, for having launched his troops from all sides upon these unarmed men, to shoot and sabre them down, and to trample them under their horses' feet. Paris, then, was placed under a state of siege. Dufaure hurried through the Assembly new laws of repression. New arrests, new proscriptions—a new reign of terror set in. But the lower orders manage these things otherwise. The Central Committee of 1871 simply ignored the heroes of the pacific demonstration; so much so, that only two days later they were enabled to muster, under Admiral Saisset, for that armed demonstration, crowned by the famous stampede to Versailles. In their reluctance to continue the civil war opened by Thiers' burglarious attempt on Montmartre, the Central Committee made themselves, this time, guilty of a decisive mistake in not at once marching upon Versailles, then completely helpless, and thus putting an end to the conspiracies of Thiers and his Rurals. Instead of this, the party of order was again allowed to try its strength at the ballot-box, on the 26th of March, the day of the election of the Commune. Then, in the mairies of Paris, they exchanged bland words of conciliation with their too generous conquerors, muttering in their hearts solemn vows to exterminate them in due time.

Now, look at the reverse of the medal. Thiers
opened his second campaign against Paris in the beginning of April. The first batch of Parisian prisoners brought into Versailles was subjected to revolting atrocities, while Ernest Picard, with his hands in his trousers’ pockets, strolled about jeering them, and while Mesdames Thiers and Favre, in the midst of their ladies of honor (?) applauded, from the balcony, the outrages of the Versailles mob. The captured soldiers of the line were massacred in cold blood; our brave friend, General Duval, the ironfounder, was shot without any form of trial. Gallifet, the kept man of his wife, so notorious for her shameless exhibitions at the orgies of the Second Empire, boasted in a proclamation of having commanded the murder of a small troop of National Guards, with their captain and lieutenant, surprised and disarmed by his Chasseurs. Vinoy, the runaway, was appointed Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor by Thiers, for his general order to shoot down every soldier of the line taken in the ranks of the Federals. Desmaret, the gendarme, was decorated for the treacherous butcher-like chopping in pieces of the high-souled and chivalrous Flourens, who had saved the heads of the Government of Defence on the 31st of October, 1870. “The encouraging particulars” of his assassination were triumphantly expatiated upon by Thiers in the National Assembly. With the elevated vanity of a parliamentary Tom Thumb, permitted to play the part of a Tamerlane, he denied the rebels against his littleness every right of civilized warfare, up to the right of neutrality for ambulances. Nothing more horrid than that monkey allowed for a time to give
full fling to his tigerish instincts, as foreseen by Vol-
taire. (See note, p. 79).

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

III.

ON the dawn of the 18th of March, Paris arose
to the thunderburst of „Vive la Commune!” What is
the Commune, that sphinx so tantalizing to the bour-
geois mind?

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

The centralized State power, with its ubiquitous organs of standing army, police, bureaucracy, clergy, and judicature—organs wrought after the plan of a systematic and hierarchic division of labor—originates from the days of absolute monarchy, serving nascent middle-class society as a mighty weapon in its struggles against feudalism. Still, its development remained clogged by all manner of mediæval rubbish, seignorial rights, local privileges, municipal and guild monopolies and provincial constitutions. The gigantic broom of the French Revolution of the eighteenth century swept away all these relics of bygone times, thus clearing simultaneously the social soil of its last hindrances to the superstructure of the modern State edifice raised under the First Empire, itself the offspring of the coalition wars of old semi-feudal Europe against modern France. During the subsequent regimes the Government, placed under parliamentary control—that is, under the direct control of the propertied classes—became not only a hotbed of huge national debts and crushing taxes; with its irresistible allurements of place, pelf, and patronage, it became not only the bone of contention between the rival factions and adventurers of the ruling classes; but its political character changed
simultaneously with the economic changes of society. At the same pace at which the progress of modern industry developed, widened, intensified the class-antagonism between capital and labor, the State power assumed more and more the character of the national power of capital over labor, of a public force organized for social enslavement, of an engine of class despotism. After every revolution marking a progressive phase in the class struggle, the purely repressive character of the State power stands out in bolder and bolder relief. The revolution of 1830, resulting in the transfer of Government from the landlords to the capitalists transferred it from the more remote to the more direct antagonists of the working men. The bourgeois Republicans, who, in the name of the Revolution of February, took the State power, used it for the June massacres, in order to convince the working class that “social” republic meant the republic ensuring their social subjection, and in order to convince the royalist bulk of the bourgeois and landlord class that they might safely leave the cares and emoluments of government to the bourgeois “Republicans.” However, after their one heroic exploit of June, the bourgeois Republicans had, from the front, to fall back to the rear of the “Party of Order”—a combination formed by all the rival factions and factions of the appropriating class in their now openly declared antagonism to the producing classes. The proper form of their joint stock Government was the Parliamentary Republic, with Louis Bonaparte for its President. Theirs was a regime of avowed class terrorism and deliberate insult
towards the "vile multitude." If the Parliamentary Republic, as M. Thiers said, "divided them (the different fractions of the ruling class) least," it opened an abyss between that class and the whole body of society outside their spare ranks. The restraints by which their own divisions had under former regimes still checked the State power, were removed by their union; and in view of the threatening upheaval of the proletariat, they now used that State power mercilessly and ostentatiously as the national war engine of capital against labor. In their uninterrupted crusade against the producing masses they were, however, bound not only to invest the executive with continually increased powers of repression, but at the same time to divest their own parliamentary stronghold—the National Assembly—one by one, of all its own means of defence against the Executive. The Executive, in the person of Louis Bonaparte, turned them out. The natural offspring of the "Party-of-Order" Republic was the Second Empire.

The Empire, with the coup d'état for its certificate of birth, universal suffrage for its sanction, and the sword for its sceptre, professed to rest upon the peasantry, the large mass of producers not directly involved in the struggle of capital and labor. It professed to save the working class by breaking down Parliamen-
tarism, and, with it, the undisguised subserviency of Government to the propertied classes. It professed to save the propertied classes by upholding their economic supremacy over the working class; and, finally, it professed to unite all classes by reviving for all the
chimera of national glory. In reality, it was the only form of government possible at a time when the bourgeoisie had already lost, and the working class had not yet acquired, the faculty of ruling the nation. It was acclaimed throughout the world as the savior of society. Under its sway, bourgeois society, freed from political cares, attained a development unexpected even by itself. Its industry and commerce expanded to colossal dimensions; financial swindling celebrated cosmopolitan orgies; the misery of the masses was set off by a shameless display of gorgeous, meretricious, and debased luxury. The State power, apparently soaring high above society, was at the same time itself the greatest scandal of that society and the very hotbed of all its corruptions. Its own rottenness of the society it had saved, were laid bare by the bayonet of Prussia, herself eagerly bent upon transferring the supreme seat of that regime from Paris to Berlin. Imperialism is, at the same time, the most prostitute and the ultimate form of the State power which nascent middle-class society had commenced to elaborate as a means of its own emancipation from feudalism, and which full-grown bourgeois society had finally transformed into a means for the enslavement of labor by capital.

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

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

The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class. The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time. Instead of continuing to be the agent of the Central Government, the police was at once stripped of its political attributes, and turned into the responsible and at all times revocable agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the Administration. From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at workmen's wages. The vested interests and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of State disappeared along with
the high dignitaries themselves. Public functions ceased to be the private property of the tools of the Central Government. Not only municipal administration, but the whole initiative hitherto exercised by the State was laid into the hands of the Commune.

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

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

The Paris Commune was, of course, to serve as a model to all the great industrial centres of France. The communal regime once established in Paris and the secondary centres, the old centralized Government
would in the provinces, too, have to give way to the self-government of the producers. In a rough sketch of national organization which the Commune had no time to develop, it states clearly that the Commune was to be the political form of even the smallest country hamlet, and that in the rural districts the standing army was to be replaced by a national militia, with an extremely short term of service. The rural communes of every district were to administer their common affairs by an assembly of delegates in the central town, and these district assemblies were again to send deputies to the National Delegation in Paris, each delegate to be at any time revocable and bound by the *mandat imperatif* (formal instructions) of his constituents. The few but important functions which still would remain for a central government were not to be suppressed, as has been intentionally misstated, but were to be discharged by Communal, and therefore strictly responsible agents. The unity of the nation was not to be broken; but, on the contrary, to be organized by the Communal constitution, and to become a reality by the destruction of the State power which claimed to be the embodiment of that unity independent of, and superior to, the nation itself, from which it was but a parasitic excrecence. While the merely repressive organs of the old governmental power were to be amputated, its legitimate functions were to be wrested from an authority usurping pre-eminence over society itself, and restored to the responsible agents of society. Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to represent
the people in Parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people, constituted in Communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for the workmen and managers in his business. And it is well known that companies, like individuals, in matters of real business generally know how to put the right man in the right place, and, if they for once make a mistake, to redress it promptly. On the other hand, nothing could be more foreign to the spirit of the Commune than to supersede universal suffrage by hierarchic investiture.

It is generally the fate of completely new historical creations to be mistaken for the counterpart of older and even defunct forms of social life, to which they may bear a certain likeness. Thus, this new Commune, which breaks the modern State power, has been mistaken for a reproduction of the mediæval Communes, which first preceded, and afterwards became the substratum of, that very State power. The communal constitution has been mistaken for an attempt to break up into a federation of small States, as dreamt of by Montesquieu and the Girondins, that unity of great nations which, if originally brought about by political force, has now become a powerful coefficient of social production. The antagonism of the Commune against the State power has been mistaken for an exaggerated form of the ancient struggle against over-centralization. Peculiar historical circumstances may have prevented the classical development, as in France, of the bourgeois form of government, and may have allowed, as in England, to complete the great central State organs by corrupt
vestries, jobbing councillors, and ferocious poor-law guardians in the towns, and, virtually hereditary magistrates in the counties. The Communal Constitution would have restored to the social body all the forces hitherto absorbed by the State parasite feeding upon, and clogging the free movement of, society. By this one act it would have initiated the regeneration of France. The provincial French middle-class saw in the Commune an attempt to restore the sway their order had held over the country under Louis Phillippe, and which, under Louis Napoleon, was supplanted by the pretended rule of the country over the towns. In reality, the Communal Constitution brought the rural producers under the intellectual lead of the central towns of their districts, and there secured to them, in the working man, the natural trustees of their interests. The very existence of the Commune involved, as a matter of course, local municipal liberty, but no longer as a check upon the, now superseded State power. It could only enter into the head of a Bismarck, who, when not engaged on his intrigues of blood and iron, always likes to resume his old trade, so befitting his mental calibre, of contributor to Kladderadaich (the Berlin Punch), it could only enter in such a head, to ascribe to the Paris Commune aspirations after that caricature of the old French municipal organization of 1791, the Prussians municipal constitution which degrades the town governments to mere secondary wheels in the policemachinery of the Prussian State. The Commune made that catchword of bourgeois revolutions, cheap government, a reality, by destroying
The two greatest sources of expenditure—the standing army and State functionarism. Its very existence presupposed the non-existence of monarchy, which, in Europe at least, is the normal incumbrance and indispensable cloak of class-rule. It supplied the Republic with the basis of really democratic institutions. But neither cheap government nor the “true Republic” was its ultimate aim; they were its mere concomitants.

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

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

It is a strange fact. In spite of all the tall talk and all the immense literature, for the last sixty years, about Emancipation of Labor, no sooner do the working men anywhere take the subject into their own hands...
with a will, than uprises at once all the apologetic phraseology of the mouthpieces of present society with its two poles of Capital and Wage-slavery (the landlord now is but the sleeping partner of the capitalist), as if capitalist society was still in its purest state of virgin innocence, with its antagonisms still undeveloped, with its delusions still unexploded, with its prostitute realities not yet laid bare. The Commune, they exclaim, intends to abolish property, the basis of all civilization! Yes, gentlemen, the Commune intended to abolish that class-property which makes the labor of the many the wealth of the few. It aimed at the expropriation of the expropriators. It wanted to make individual property a truth by transforming the means of production, land and capital, now chiefly the means of enslaving and exploiting labor, into mere instruments of free and associated labor. But this is Communism, "impossible" Communism! Why, those members of the ruling classes who are intelligent enough to perceive the impossibility of continuing the present system—and they are many—have become the obtrusive and fullmouhted apostles of co-operative production. If co-operative production is not to remain a sham and a snare; if it is to supersede the Capitalist system; if united co-operative societies are to regulate national production upon a common plan, thus taking it under their own control, and putting an end to the constant anarchy and periodical convulsions which are the fatality of capitalist production—what else, gentlemen, would it be but Communism, "possible" Communism?

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

When the Paris Commune took the management of the revolution in its own hands; when plain working men for the first time dared to infringe upon the Governmental privilege of their "natural superiors," and, under circumstances of unexampled difficulty, performed their work modestly, conscientiously, and efficiently,—performed it at salaries the highest of which barely amounted to one-fifth of what, according to high scientific authority, is the minimum required for a secretary to a certain metropolitan school board,—the old world writhed in convulsions of rage at the sight of the Red Flag, the symbol of the Republic of Labor, floating over the Hotel de Ville.
And yet, this was the first revolution in which the working class was openly acknowledged as the only class capable of social initiative, even by the great bulk of the Paris middle-class—shop-keepers, tradesmen, merchants—the wealthy capitalist alone excepted. The Commune had saved them by a sagacious settlement of that ever recurring cause of dispute among the middle-class themselves—the debtor and creditor accounts. The same portion of the middle class, after they had assisted in putting down the working men's insurrection of June, 1848, had been at once uncercemoniously sacrificed to their creditors by the then Constituent Assembly. But this was not their only motive for now rallying round the working class. They felt there was but one alternative—the Commune, or the Empire—under whatever name it might reappear. The Empire had ruined them economically by the havoc it made of public wealth, by the wholesale financial swindling it fostered, by the props it lent to the artificially accelerated centralization of capital, and the concomitant expropriation of their own ranks. It has suppressed them politically, it has shocked them morally by its orgies, it had insulted their Voltairianism by handing over the education of their children to the freres Ignorantins, it had revolted their national feeling as Frenchmen by precipitating them headlong into a war which left only one equivalent for the ruins it made—the disappearance of the Empire. In fact, after the exodus from Paris of the high Bonapartist and capitalist Boheme, the true middle class Party of Order came out in the shape of the "Union Republicane,"
enrolling themselves under the colors of the Commune and defending it against the wilful misconstruction of Thiers. Whether the gratitude of this great body of the middle class will stand the present severe trial, time must show.

The Commune was perfectly right in telling the peasants that "its victory was their only hope." Of all the lies hatched at Versailles and re-echoed by the glorious European penny-a-liner, one of the most tremendous was that the Rurals represented the French peasantry. Think only of the love of the French peasant for the men to whom, after 1815, he had to pay the milliard of indemnity! In the eyes of the French peasant, the very existence of a great landed proprietary is in itself an encroachment on his conquests of 1789. The bourgeoisie, in 1848, had burdened his plot of land with the additional tax of forty-five cents in the franc; but then he did so in the name of the revolution; while now he had fomented a civil war against the revolution, to shift on the peasant's shoulders the chief load of the five milliards of indemnity to be paid to the Prussians. The Commune, on the other hand, in one of its first proclamations, declared that the true originators of the war would be made to pay its cost. The Commune would have delivered the peasant of the blood tax, would have given him a cheap government, transformed his present blood-suckers, the notary, advocate, executor, and other judicial vampires, into salaried communal agents, elected by, and responsible to himself. It would have freed him of the tyranny of the garde champêtre, the gendarme, and
the prefect; would have put enlightenment by the
schoolmaster in the place of stultification by the priest.
And the French peasant is, above all, a man of
reckoning. He would find it extremely reasonable
that the pay of the priest, instead of being extorted
by the tax-gatherer, should only depend upon the
spontaneous action of the parishioners' religious
instincts. Such were the great immediate boons which
the rule of the Commune—and that rule alone—held
out to the French peasantry. It is, therefore, quite
superfluous here to expiate upon the more complicated
but vital problems which the Commune alone was
able, and at the same time compelled, to solve in
favor of the peasant, viz., the hypothecary debt,
lying like an incubus upon his parcel of soil, the
proletariat foncier (the rural proletariat), daily growing
upon it, and his expropriation from it enforced, at a
more and more rapid rate, by the very development
of modern agriculture and the competition of capitalist
farming.

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

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

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

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

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

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

While the Versailles Government, as soon as it had recovered some spirit and strength, used the most violent means against the Commune; while it put down the free expression of opinion all over France, even to the forbidding of meetings of delegates from the large towns; while it subjected Versailles and the rest of France to an espionage far surpassing that of the Second Empire; while it burned by its gendarme inquisitors all papers printed at Paris, and sifted all correspondence from and to Paris; while in the National Assembly the most timid attempts to put in a word for Paris were howled down in a manner unknown even to the Chambre introuvable of 1816; with the savage warfare of Versailles outside, and its attempts at corruption and conspiracy inside Paris—would the Commune not have shamefully betrayed its trust by affecting to keep up all the decencies and appearances of liberalism as in a time of profound peace? Had the Government of the Commune been akin to that
of M. Thiers, there would have been no more occasion to suppress Party-of-Order papers at Paris than there was to suppress Communal papers at Versailles.

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

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

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

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

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

The Paris of M. Thiers was not the real Paris of the “vile multitude,” but a phantom Paris, the Paris of the francs-fileurs, the Paris of the Boulevards, male and female—the rich, the capitalist, the gilded, the idle Paris, now thronging with its lackeys, its blacklegs, its literary behome, and its cocottes at Versailles, Saint-Denis, Rueil, and Saint-Germain; considering the civil war but an agreeable diversion, eyeing the battle going on through telescopes, counting the rounds of cannon, and swearing by their own honor and that of their prostitutes, that the performance was far better got up than it used to be at the Porte St. Martin. The men who fell were really dead; the cries of the wounded were cries in good earnest; and, besides, the whole thing was so intensely historical.

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

IV.

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

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

His banditti-warfare against Paris, exalted in his own bulletins, and the attempts of his ministers at the establishment, throughout France, of a reign of terror, Thiers was from the beginning anxious to accompany with a little byplay of conciliation, which had to serve more than one purpose. It was to dupe the provinces, to inveigle the middle-class element in Paris, and, above all, to afford the professed Republicans in the National Assembly the opportunity of hiding
their treason against Paris behind their faith in Theirs. On the 21st of March, when still without an army, he had declared to the Assembly: "Come what may, I will not send an army to Paris." On the 27th of March he rose again: "I have found the Republic an accomplished fact, and I am firmly resolved to maintain it.' In reality, he put down the revolution at Lyons and Marseilles in the name of the Republic, while the roars of his Rurals drowned the very mention of its name at Versailles. After this exploit, he toned down the "accomplished fact" into an hypothetical fact. The Orleans princes, whom he had cautiously warned off Bordeaux, were now, in flagrant breach of the law, permitted to intrigue at Dreux. The concessions held out by Thiers in his interminable interviews with the delegates from Paris and the provinces, although constantly varied in tone and color, according to time and circumstances, did in fact never come to more than the prospective restriction of revenge to the "handful of criminals implicated in the murder of Lecomte and Clement Thomas," on the well-understood premiss that Paris and France were unreservedly to accept M. Thiers himself as the best of possible Republics, as he, in 1830, had done with Louis Philippe. Even these concessions he not only took care to render doubtful by the official comments put upon them in the Assembly through his Ministers. He had his Dufaure to act. Dufaure, this old Orleanist lawyer, had always been the justiciary of the state of siege as now in 1871, under Thiers, so in 1839 under Louis Philippe, and in 1849 under Louis Bonaparte's presi-
dency. While out of office he made a fortune by pleading for the Paris capitalists, and made political capital by pleading against the laws he had himself originated. He now hurried through the National Assembly not only a set of repressive laws which were, after the fall of Paris, to extirpate the last remnants of Republican liberty in France; he foreshadowed the fate of Paris by abridging the, for him, too slow procedure of courts-martial, and by a new-fangled, Draconic code of deportation. The Revolution of 1848, abolishing the penalty of death for political crimes, had replaced it by deportation. Louis Bonaparte did not dare, at least not in theory, to re-establish the régime of the guillotine. The Rural Assembly, not yet bold enough even to hint that the Parisians were not rebels, but assassins, had therefore to confine its prospective vengeance against Paris to Dufaure's new code of deportation. Under all these circumstances Thiers himself could not have gone on with his comedy of conciliation, had it not, as he intended it to do, drawn forth shrieks of rage from the Rurals, whose ruminating mind did neither understand the play, nor its necessities of hypocrisy, tergiversation, and procrastination.

In sight of the impending municipal elections of the 30th April, Thiers enacted one of his great conciliations scenes on the 27th of April. Amidst a flood of sentimental rhetoric, he exclaimed from the tribune of the Assembly: "There exists no conspiracy against the Republic but that of Paris, which compels us to shed French blood. I repeat it again and again. Let those
impious arms fall from the hands which hold them, and chastisement will be arrested at once by an act of peace excluding only the small number of criminals.”

To the violent interruption of the Rurals he replied: “Gentlemen, tell me, I implore you, am I wrong? Do you really regret that I could have stated the truth that the criminals are only a handful? Is it not fortunate in the midst of our misfortunes that those who have been capable to shed the blood of Clement Thomas and General Lecomte are but rare exceptions?”

France, however, turned a deaf ear to what Thiers flattered himself to be a parliamentary siren’s song. Out of 700,000 municipal councillors returned by the 35,000 communes still left to France, the united Legitimists, Orleanists, and Bonapartists did not carry 8,000. The supplementary elections which followed were still more decidedly hostile. Thus, instead of getting from the provinces the badly-needed physical force, the National Assembly lost even its last claim of moral force, that of being the expression of the universal suffrage of the country. To complete the discomfiture, the newly-chosen municipal councils of all the cities of France openly threatened the usurping Assembly at Versailles with a counter Assembly at Bordeaux.

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

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

In the interval between the conclusion of peace and the arrival of the Bonapartist prisoners, Thiers felt more bound to resume his comedy of conciliation as his Republican tools stood in sore need of a pretext for blinking their eyes at the preparations for the carnage of Paris. As late as the 18th of May he replied to a deputation of middle-class conciliators—"Whatever the insurgents will make up their minds for capitulation, the gates of Paris shall be flung wide open during a week for all except the murderers of Generals Clement Thomas and Lecomte."

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

So it was. The civilization and justice of bourgeois order comes out in its lurid light whenever the slaves and drudges of that order rise against their masters. Then this civilization and justice stand forth as undisguised savagery and lawless revenge. Each new crisis in the class struggle between the appropriator and the producer brings out this fact more glaringly. Even the atrocities of the bourgeois in June, 1848, vanish before the ineffable infamy of 1871. The self-sacrificing heroism with which the population of Paris—men, women, and children—fought for eight days after the entrance of the Versailles, reflects as much the grandeur of their cause as the infernal deeds of the soldiery reflect the innate spirit of that civilization of which they are the mercenary vindicators. A glorious civilization, indeed, the great problem of which is how to get rid of the heaps of corpses it made after the battle was over!
To find a parallel for the conduct of Thiers and his bloodhounds we must go back to the times of Sulla and the two Triumvirates of Rome. The same wholesale slaughter in cold blood; the same disregard, in massacre, of age and sex; the same system of torturing prisoners; the same proscriptions, but this time of a whole class; the same savage hunt after concealed leaders, lest one might escape; the same denunciations of political and private enemies; the same indifference for the butchery of entire strangers to the feud. There is but this difference, that the Romans had no mitrailleuses for the despatch, in the lump, of the proscribed, and that they had not "the law in their hands," nor on their lips the cry of "civilization."

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

"With stray shots," writes the Paris correspondent of a London Tory paper, "still ringing in the distance, and untended wounded wretches dying amid the tombstones of Pere la Chaise—with 6,000 terror-stricken insurgents wandering in an agony of despair in the labyrinth of the catacombs, and wretches hurried through the streets to be shot down in scores by the mitrailleuse—it is revolting to see the cafes filled with the votaries of absinthe, billiards, and dominoes; female profligacy perambulating the boulevards, and the sound of revelry disturbing the night from the cabinets particuliers of fashionable restaurants." M. Edouard Herve writes in the Journal de Paris, a Versaillist journal suppressed by the Commune:—"The way in which the
population of Paris (!) manifested its satisfaction yesterday was rather more than frivolous, and we fear it will grow worse as time progresses. Paris has now a fete day appearance, which is sadly out of place; and, unless we are to be called the Parisiens de la decadence, this sort of thing must come to an end.” And then he quotes the passage from Tacitus:—“Yet, on the morrow of that horrible struggle, even before it was completely over, Rome—degraded and corrupt—began once more to wallow in the voluptuous slough which was destroying its body and polluting its soul—ali praedia et vulnera, aliis balnea popineeque—(here fights and wounds, there baths and restaurants.)” M. Herve only forgets to say that the “population of Paris” he speaks of is but the population of the Paris of M. Thiers—the frans-fileurs returning in throngs from Versailles, Saint Denis, Rueil, and Saint Germain—the Paris of the “Decline.”

In all its bloody triumphs over the self-sacrificing champions of a new and better society, that nefarious civilization, based upon the enslavement of labor, drowns the moans of its victims in a hue-and-cry of calumny, reverberated by a world-wide echo. The serene workingmen’s Paris of the Commune is suddenly changed into a pandemonium by the bloodhounds of “order.” And what does this tremendous change prove to the bourgeois mind of all countries? Why, that the Commune has conspired against civilization! The Paris people die enthusiastically for the Commune in numbers unequalled in any battle known to history. What does that prove? Why, that the Commune was
not the people’s own government, but the usurpation of a handful of criminals! The women of Paris joyfully give up their lives at the barricades and on the place of execution. What does this prove? Why, that the demon of the Commune has changed them into Megæras and Hecates! The moderation of the Commune during two months of undisputed sway is equalled only by the heroism of its defence. What does that prove? Why, that for months the Commune carefully hid, under a mask of moderation and humanity, the bloodthirstiness of its fiendish instincts, to be let loose in the hour of its agony!

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

When governments give state-licences to their navies to “kill, burn, and destroy,” is that a licence for incendiaryism? When the British troops wantonly set fire to the Capitol at Washington and to the summer palace of the Chinese Emperor, was that incendiaryism? When the Prussians, not for military reasons, but out
of the mere spite of revenge, burned down, by the help of petroleum, towns like Chateaudun and innumerable villages, was that incendiarism? When Thiers, during six weeks, bombarded Paris, under the pretext that he wanted to set fire to those houses only in which there were people, was that incendiarism? In war, fire is an arm as legitimate as any. Buildings held by the enemy are shelled to set them on fire. If their defenders have to retire, they themselves light the flames to prevent the attack from making use of the buildings. To be burned down has always been the inevitable fate of all buildings situated in the front of battle of all the regular armies of the world. But in the war of the enslaved against their enslavers, the only justifiable war in history, this is by no means to hold good! The Commune used fire strictly as a means of defence. They used it to stop up to the Versailles troops those long straight avenues which Haussmann had expressly opened to artillery fire; they used it to cover their retreat, in the same way as the Versaillese, in their advance, used their shells which destroyed at least as many buildings as the fire of the Commune. It is a matter of dispute, even now, which buildings were set fire to by the defence, and which by the attack. And the defence resorted to fire only then, when the Versaillese troops had already commenced their wholesale murdering of prisoners. Besides, the Commune had, long before, given full public notice that, if driven to extremities, they would bury themselves under the ruins of Paris, and make Paris a second Moscow, as the Government of Defence, but only as
a cloak for its treason, had promised to do. For this purpose Trochu had found them the petroleum. The Commune knew that its opponents cared nothing for the lives of the Paris people, but cared much for their own Paris buildings. And Thiers, on the other hand, had given them notice that he would be implacable in his vengeance. No sooner had he got his army ready on one side, and the Prussians shutting up the trap on the other, than he proclaimed: "I shall be pitiless! The expiation will be complete, and justice will be stern!" If the acts of the Paris working men were vandalism, it was the vandalism of defence in despair, not the vandalism of triumph, like that which the Christians perpetrated upon the really priceless art treasures of heathen antiquity; and even that vandalism has been justified by the historian as an unavoidable and comparatively trifling concomitant to the Titanic struggle between a new society arising and an old one breaking down. It was still less the vandalism of Haussman, razing historic Paris to make place for the Paris of the sightseer!

But the execution by the Commune of the sixty-four hostages, with the Archbishop of Paris at their head! The bourgeoisie and its army in June, 1848, re-established a custom which had long disappeared from the practice of war—the shooting of their defenceless prisoners. This brutal custom has since been more or less strictly adhered to by the suppressors of all popular commotions in Europe and India; thus proving that it constitutes a real "progress of civilization"! On the other hand, the Prussians, in France, had re-
established the practice of taking hostages—innocent men, who, with their lives, were to answer to them for the acts of others. When Thiers, as we have seen, from the very beginning of the conflict, enforced the humane practice of shooting down the Communal prisoners, the Commune, to protect their lives, was obliged to resort to the Prussians practice of securing hostages. The lives of the hostages had been forfeited over and over again by the continued shooting of prisoners on the part of the Versaillese. How could they be spared any longer after the carnage with which MacMahon’s prætorians celebrated their entrance into Paris? Was even the last check upon the unscrupulous ferocity of bourgeois governments—the taking of hostages—to be made a mere sham of? The real murderer of Archbishop Darboy is Thiers. The Commune again and again had offered to exchange the archbishop, and ever so many priests in the bargain, against the single Blanqui, then in the hands of Thiers. Thiers obstinately refused. He knew that with Blanqui he would give to the Commune a head: while the archbishop would serve his purpose best in the shape of a corpse. Thiers acted upon the precedent of Cavaignac. How, in June, 1848, did not Cavaignac and his men of order raise shouts of horror by stigmatizing the insurgents as the assassins of Archbishop Affre! They knew perfectly well that the archbishop had been shot by the soldiers of order. M. Jacquemet, the archbishop’s vicar-general, present on the spot, had immediately afterwards handed them in his evidence to that effect.
All this chorus of calumny, which the party of order never fail, in their orgies of blood, to raise against their victims, only proves that the bourgeois of our days considers himself the legitimate successor to the baron of old, who thought every weapon in his own hand fair against the plebian, while in the hands of the plebian a weapon of any kind constituted in itself a crime.

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

That after the most tremendous war of modern times, the conquering and the conquered hosts should fraternize for the common massacre of the proletariat—this unparalleled event does indicate, not, as Bismarck thinks, the final repression of a new society upheaving, but the crumbling into dust of bourgeois society. The highest heroic effort of which old society is still capable is national war; and this is now proved to be a mere governmental humbug, intended to defer the struggle of the classes, and to be thrown aside as soon as that class struggle bursts out in civil war. Class rule is no longer able to disguise itself in a national uniform; the national Governments are one as against the proletariat!

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

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

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

"The column of prisoners halted in the Avenue Uhrlch, and was drawn up, four or five deep, on the footway facing to the road. General Marquis de Gallifet and his staff dismounted and commenced an inspection from the left of the line. Walking down slowly and eyeing the ranks, the General stopped here and there, tapping a man on the shoulder or beckoning him out of the rear ranks. In most cases, without further parley, the individual thus selected was marched out into the centre of the road, where a small supplementary column was thus soon formed.

. . . . It was evident that there was considerable room for error. A mounted officer pointed out to General Gallifet a man and woman for some particular offence. The woman, rushing out of the ranks, threw herself on her knees, and, with outstretched arms, protested her innocence in passionate terms. The general waited for a pause, and then with most impassable face and unmoved demeanor, said, 'Madame, I have visited every theatre in Paris, your acting will have no effect on me' (ce n'est pas la peine de jouer la comedie'). . . . . It was not a good thing on that day to be noticeably taller, dirtier, cleaner, older, or uglier than one's neighbors. One individual in particular struck me as probably owing his speedy release from the ills of this world to his having a broken nose. . . . . Over a hundred being thus chosen, a firing party told off, and the column resumed its march, leaving them behind. A few minutes afterwards a dropping fire in our rear commenced, and continued for over a quarter of an hour. It was the execution of these summarily-convicted wretches."—Paris Correspondent "Daily News," June 8th.—This Gallifet, "the kept man of his wife, so notorious for her shameless exhibitions at the orgies of the Second
Empire," went, during the war, by the name of the French "Ensign Pistol."

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

OR

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