

always toward the dawn, the blossoming, the birth; that which falls encourages that which mounts. The cracking of the old tree is an appeal to the new tree. Each century must do its work; to-day civic, to-morrow human. To-day, the question of right; to-morrow, the question of pay. Pay and right—the same word at bottom. Man does not live to be paid nothing. In giving life, God contracts a debt. Right is the inborn payment; payment is right acquired."

Gauvain spoke with the earnestness of a prophet. Cimourdain listened. Their rôles were changed; and now it seemed the pupil who was master.

Cimourdain murmured, "You go rapidly."

"Perhaps because I am a little pressed for time," said Gauvain, smiling. And he added, "O my master! behold the difference between our two Utopias. You wish the garrison obligatory, I the school. You dream of man the soldier; I dream of man the citizen. You want him terrible; I want him a thinker. You found a republic upon swords; I found"

He interrupted himself, "I would found a republic upon minds."

Cimourdain bent his eyes on the payment of the dungeon. and said, "And while waiting for it, what would you have?"

"That which is."

"Then you absolve the present moment?"

"Yes."

"Wherefore?"

"Because it is a tempest. A tempest knows always what it does. For one oak uprooted, how many forests made healthy! Civilization had the plague, this great wind cures it. Perhaps it is not so careful as it ought to be. But could it do otherwise than it does? It is charged with a difficult task. Before the horror of miasma, I understand the fury of the blast."

Gauvain continued:

"Moreover, why should I fear the tempest if I have my compass? How can events affect me if I have my conscience?"

And he added in a low, solemn voice:

"There is a power that must always be allowed to guide."

"What?" demanded Cimourdain.

Gauvain raised his finger above his head. Cimourdain's eyes followed the direction of that uplifted finger, and it seemed to him that through the dungeon vault he beheld the starlit sky.

Both were silent again.

Cimourdain spoke first.

"Society is greater than Nature. I tell you, this is no longer possibility, it is a dream."

"It is the goal. Otherwise of what use is Society? Remain in Nature. Be savages. Otaheite is a paradise. Only the inhabitants of that paradise do not think. An intelligent hell would be preferable to an imbruted heaven. But no—no hell. Let us be a human society. Greater than Nature? Yes. If you add nothing to Nature, why go beyond her? Content yourself with work like the ant; with honey like the bee. Remain the working drudge instead of the queen intelligence. If you add to Nature, you necessarily become greater than she; to add is to augment; to augment is to grow. Society is Nature sublimated. I want all that is lacking to beehives, all that is lacking to ant-hills—monuments, arts, poesy, heroes, genius. To bear eternal burthens is not the destiny of man. No, no, no; no more parishes, no more slaves, no more convicts, no more damned! I desire that each of the attributes of man should be a symbol of civilisation and a patron of progress; I would place liberty before the spirit, equality before the heart, fraternity before the soul. No more yokes! Man was made not to drag chains, but to soar on wings. No more of man reptile. I wish the transfiguration of the larva into the winged creature; I wish the worm of the earth to turn into a living flower and fly away. I wish"

He broke off. His eyes blazed. His lips moved. He ceased to speak.

The door had remained open. Sounds from without penetrated into the dungeon. The distant peal of trumpets could be heard, probably the reveille; the butt-end of muskets striking the ground as the sentinels were relieved; then, quite near the tower as well as one could judge, a noise like the moving of planks and beams; followed by muffled, intermittent echoes like the strokes of a hammer.

Cimourdain grew pale as he listened. Gauvain heard nothing. His reverie became more and more profound. He seemed no longer to breathe, so lost was he in the vision that shone upon his soul. Now and then he started slightly. The morning light which lay in the pupils of his eyes grew brighter.

Some time passed thus. Then Cimourdain asked, "Of what are you thinking?"

"Of the Future," replied Gauvain.

He sank back into his meditation. Cimourdain rose from the bed of straw where the two were sitting. Gauvain did not perceive it. Keeping his eyes fixed upon the dreamer, Cimourdain moved slowly backward toward the door and went out. The dungeon closed again.

## VI.—WHEN THE SUN ROSE.

Day broke along the horizon. And with the day, an object, strange, motionless, mysterious, which the birds of heaven did not recognise, appeared upon the plateau of La Tourgue and towered above the forest of Fougères.

It had been placed there in the night. It seemed to have sprung up rather than to have been built. It lifted high against the horizon a profile of straight, hard lines, looking like a Hebrew letter or one of those Egyptian hieroglyphics which made part of the alphabet of the ancient riddle.

At the first glance the idea which this object roused was its lack of keeping with the surroundings. It stood amid the blossoming heath. One asked oneself for what purpose it could be used? Then the beholder felt a chill creep over him as he gazed. It was a sort of trestle having four posts for feet. At one end of the trestle two tall joists, upright and straight, and fastened together at the top by a cross-beam, raised and held suspended some triangular object which showed black against the blue sky of morning. At the other end of the staging was a ladder. Between the joists, and directly beneath the triangle, could be seen a sort of panel composed of two movable sections which, fitting into each other, left a round hole about the size of a man's neck. The upper section of this panel slid in a groove, so that it could be hoisted or lowered at will. For the time, the two crescents, which formed the circle when closed, were drawn apart. At the foot of the

two posts supporting the triangle was a plank turning on hinges, looking like a see-saw.

By the side of this plank was a long basket, and between the two beams, in front and at the extremity of the trestle, a square basket. The monster was painted red. The whole was made of wood except the triangle—that was of iron. One would have known the thing must have been constructed by man, it was so ugly and evil-looking; at the same time it was so formidable that it might have been reared there by evil genii.

This shapeless thing was the guillotine.

In front of it, a few paces off, another monster rose out of the ravine—La Tourgue. A monster of stone rising up to hold companionship with the monster of wood. For when man has touched wood or stone, they no longer remain inanimate matter; something of man's spirit seems to enter into them. An edifice is a dogma; a machine an idea. La Tourgue was that terrible offspring of the Past, called the Bastille in Paris, the Tower of London in England, the Spielberg in Germany, the Escorial in Spain, the Kremlin in Moscow, the Castle of Saint Angelo in Rome.

In La Tourgue were condensed fifteen hundred years—the middle ages—vassalage, servitude, feudality; in the guillotine, one year—'93, and these twelve months made a counterpoise to these fifteen centuries.

La Tourgue was Monarchy; the guillotine was Revolution. A tragic confronting!

On one side the debtor, on the other the creditor.

On one side the inextricable Gothic complication of serf, lord, slave, master, plebeian, nobility, the complex code ramifying into customs; judge and priest in coalition, shackles innumerable, fiscal impositions, excise laws, mortmain, taxes, exemptions, prerogatives, prejudices, fanaticism, the royal privilege of bankruptcy, the sceptre, the throne, the regal will, the divine right;—the other, a unit—the knife.

On one side the knot; on the other the axe.

La Tourgue had long stood alone in the midst of this wilderness. There she had frowned with her machicolated casements, whence had streamed boiling oil, blazing pitch, and melted lead; her oubliettes paved with human skeletons; her torture-chamber; the whole hideous tragedy with which she was filled. Rearing her funereal front above the forest, she had passed fifteen centuries of savage tranquillity amid its shadows; she had been the one power in this land, the one object of respect and fear; she had reigned supreme; she had been the realisation of barbarism, and suddenly she saw rise before her and against her something (more than a thing—a being) as terrible as herself—the guillotine.

Inanimate objects sometimes appear to be endowed with strange eyes. A statue observes, a tower watches, the façade of a building contemplates. La Tourgue seemed to be studying the guillotine. It seemed to be asking itself about it. What was that object? It looked as if it had sprung out of the earth. It was from there, in truth, that it had risen.

The evil tree had budded in the fatal ground. Out of the soil watered by so much of human sweat, so many tears, so much blood—out of the earth in which had been dug so many trenches, so many graves, so many caverns, so many ambushes—out of this earth wherein had rolled the countless tyrannies—out of this earth spread above so many abysses wherein had been buried so many crimes—terrible seeds—had sprung on a destined day this unknown, this avenger, this ferocious sword bearer, and '93 had said to the old world: "Behold me!"

And the guillotine had the right to say to the dungeon, "I am thy daughter."

And, at the same time, the tower—for those fatal objects possess a low vitality—felt itself slain by this newly risen force.

Before this formidable apparition La Tourgue seemed to shudder. One might have said that it was afraid. The monstrous mass of granite was majestic, but infamous; that plank with its black triangle was worse. The all-powerful fallen trembled before the all-powerful risen. Criminal history was studying judicial history. The violence of bygone days was comparing itself with the violence of the present; the ancient fortress, the ancient prison, the ancient seigniorly where tortured victims had shrieked out their lives; that construction of war and murder, now useless, defenceless, violated, dismantled, uncrowned, a heap of stones with no more than a heap of ashes, hideous yet magnificent, dying, dizzy with the awful memories of all those bygone centuries, watched the terrible living Present sweep up. Yesterday trembled before to-day; antique cruelty acknowledged and bowed its head before this fresh horror. The power which was sinking into nothingness opened eyes of fright upon this new-born terror. Expiring despotism stared at this spectral avenger.

Nature is pitiless; she never withdraws her flowers, her music, her joyousness, and her sunlight from before human cruelty or suffering. She overwhelms man by the contrast between divine beauty and social hideousness. She spares him nothing of her loveliness, neither butterfly nor bird. In the midst of murder, vengeance, barbarism, he must feel himself watched by holy things; he cannot escape the awful reproach of universal nature and the implacable serenity of the sky. The deformity of human laws is forced to exhibit itself naked amid the dazzling rays of eternal beauty. Man breaks and destroys; man lays waste; man kills; but the summer remains summer; the lily remains the lily; the star remains a star.

Never had a morning dawned fresher and more glorious than this. A soft breeze stirred the heath, a warm haze rose amid the branches; the forest of Fougères, permeated by the breath of hidden brooks, smoked in the dawn like a vast censer filled with perfumes; the blue of the firmament, the whiteness of the clouds, the transparency of the streams, the verdure, that harmonious gradation of colour from aquamarine to emerald, the groups of friendly trees, the mats of grass, the peaceful fields, all breathed that purity which is Nature's eternal counsel to man.

In the midst of all this rose the horrible front of human shamelessness; in the midst of all this appeared the fortress and the scaffold, war and punishment; the incarnations of the bloody age and the bloody moment; the owl of the night of the Past and the bat of the cloud-darkened dawn of the Future. And the flowering and scent-giving creation, loving and charming, and the grand sky golden with morning spread about La Tourgue and the guillotine, and seemed to say to man, "Look at what I do, and what you are doing." Such a searching use does the sun make of his light.

This spectacle had its spectators.

The four thousand men of the little expeditionary army were drawn up in battle order upon the plateau. They enclosed the guillotine on three sides in such a manner as to form about it the shape of a letter E; the battery placed in the centre of the longest side made the notch of the E. The red monster was enclosed by these three battle fronts; a sort of wall of soldiers spread out on two sides to the edge of the plateau; the fourth side, left open, was the ravine, which seemed to frown at La Tourgue.

These arrangements made a long square, in the centre of which stood the scaffold. Gradually, as the sun mounted higher, the shadow of the guillotine grew shorter on the turf. The gunners were at their guns; the matches lighted.

A faint blue smoke rose from the ravine—the last breath of the expiring conflagration.

This cloud encircled without veiling La Tourgue, whose lofty platform overlooked the whole horizon. There was only the width of the ravine between the platform and the guillotine. The one could have parleyed with the other. The table of the tribunal and the chair shadowed by the tri-coloured flags had been set upon the platform. The sun rose higher behind La Tourgue, bringing out the black mass of the fortress clear and defined, and revealing upon its summit the figure of a man in the chair beneath the banners, sitting motionless, his arms crossed upon his breast. It was Cimourdain. He wore, as on the previous day, his civil delegate's dress; on his head was the hat with the tri-coloured cockade; his sabre at his side; his pistols in his belt. He sat silent. The whole crowd was mute. The soldiers stood with downcast eyes, musket in hand—stood so close that their shoulders touched, but no one spoke. They were meditating confusedly upon this war; the numberless combats, the hedge-fusillades so bravely confronted; the hosts of peasants driven back by their might; the citadels taken, the battles won, the victories gained, and it seemed to them as if all that glory had turned now to shame. A sombre expectation contracted every heart. They could see the executioner come and go upon the platform of the guillotine. The increasing splendour of the morning filled the sky with its majesty.

Suddenly the sound of muffled drums broke the stillness. The funeral tones swept nearer. The ranks opened—a cortege entered the square and moved toward the scaffold.

First, the drummers with their crape-wreathed drums; then a company of grenadiers with lowered muskets; then a platoon of gendarmes with drawn sabres; then the condemned—Gauvain. He walked forward with a free, firm step. He had no fetters on hands or feet. He was in an undress uniform and wore his sword. Behind him marched another platoon of gendarmes.

Gauvain's face was still lighted by that pensive joy which had illuminated it at the moment when he said to Cimourdain, "I am thinking of the Future." Nothing could be more touching and sublime than that smile.

When he reached the fatal square, his first glance was directed towards the summit of the tower. He disdained the guillotine. He knew that Cimourdain would make it an imperative duty to assist at the execution. His eyes sought the platform. He saw him there.

Cimourdain was ghastly and cold. Those standing near him could not catch even the sound of his breathing. Not a tremor shook his frame when he saw Gauvain.

Gauvain moved towards the scaffold. As he walked on, he looked at Cimourdain and Cimourdain looked at him. It seemed as if Cimourdain leant for support upon that clear look.

Gauvain reached the foot of the scaffold. He ascended it. The officer who commanded the grenadiers followed him. He unfastened his sword and handed it to the officer; he undid his cravat and gave it to the executioner.

He looked like a vision. Never had he seemed so handsome. His brown curls floated in the wind; at that time it was not the custom to cut off the hair of those about to be executed. His white neck reminded one of a woman; his heroic and sovereign glance made one think of an archangel. He stood there on the scaffold lost in thought. That place of punishment was a height too. Gauvain stood upon it, erect, proud, tranquil. The sunlight streamed about him till he seemed to stand in the midst of a halo.

But he must be bound. The executioner advanced, cord in hand.

At this moment, when the soldiers saw their young leader so close to the knife, they could restrain themselves no longer; the hearts of those stern warriors gave way.

A mighty sound swelled up—the united sob of a whole army. A clamour rose: "Mercy! mercy!"

Some fell upon their knees; others flung away their guns and stretched their arms towards the platform where Cimourdain was seated. One grenadier pointed to the guillotine, and cried, "If a substitute will be taken, here am I!"

All repeated frantically, "Mercy! mercy!" Had a troop of lions heard it, they must have been softened or terrified; the tears of soldiers are terrible.

The executioner hesitated, no longer knowing what to do.

Then a voice, quick and low, but so stern that it was audible to every ear, spoke from the top of the tower—

"Fulfil the law!"

All recognized that inexorable tone. Cimourdain had spoken.

The army shuddered.

The executioner hesitated no longer. He approached, holding the cord.

"Wait," said Gauvain.

He turned towards Cimourdain, made a gesture of farewell with his right hand, which was still free, then allowed himself to be bound.

When he was tied, he said to the executioner—

"Pardon; one instant more."

And he cried, "Lo g live the Republic!"

He was laid upon the plank. That noble head was held by the infamous yoke. The executioner gently parted his hair aside, then touched the spring. The triangle began to move—slowly at first—then rapidly—a terrible blow was heard—

At the same instant another report sounded. A pistol shot had answered the blow of the axe. Cimourdain had seized one of the pistols from his belt, and, as Gauvain's head rolled into the basket, Cimourdain pierced his own heart by a bullet. A stream of blood burst from his mouth; he fell dead.

And those two souls, Tragic Sisters! soared away together, the shadow of the one mingled with the radiance of the other.