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ARMINE.

BY CHRISTIAN REID.

CHAPTER IV.—CONTINUED.

"In that case it is well that you should hear Duchesne," said the other; "and, as it chanced, he speaks to-night in the Faubourg Montmartre. I did not think of going, for I have heard him often; but he is always worth hearing—a man of wonderful power, *ma foi!*—and I shall find pleasure in accompanying you."

"You are very kind," said Egerton; "but is it necessary that you should give yourself that trouble? Can I not go alone, or with Winter?"

"The meeting is, of course, not secret—we have advanced beyond that," said the other; "but people of your class and general appearance are not common in Montmartre, and, in order that you should see and hear to the best advantage, it is well that you should be accompanied by some one better known than our friend Winter."

"I am only a 'looker on here in Vienna' like yourself," said Winter. "You had better accept Leroux's offer. He is one of the army of which Duchesne is a leader."

"Then I accept it with thanks," said Egerton. "But, if I may be permitted to ask a question," he added, looking at Leroux with a very clear and comprehensive glance, "it is, What ultimate end does this army propose to itself?"

The other smiled a little grimly. "An end which is not likely to please men of your order," he said. "A thorough equalizing of all the inequalities of fortune, a share of the sunshine for every human being, and such an entire recasting of society as will make it impossible for one man to accumulate wealth from the labors of others."

"They are apparently very fine ends," said Egerton. "What I fail to perceive is any means by which they can be secured which would not be a worse tyranny than that which you wish to abolish."

"It will seem a tyranny doubtless, to those who are the sufferers," said Leroux; "but they may console themselves with thinking that worse things the great mass of humanity have endured for many ages."

"That is, I am to be comforted for being robbed of my coat, by the consideration that other men have lived and died without coats."

"If you choose so to put it. Have you not an English proverb which says that 'turn about is fair play'? Well, the Socialists turn about with these men who have been so long crushed by want and agonizing distress; they only say, 'You shall share with them the fruit of their toil; the great bulk of humanity shall no longer groan and travail that a few may wear purple and fine linen. We demand and we will have an equal share of the goods of earth for every human creature.'"

"I for one, am willing to admit that the demand is natural on the part of those who make it," said Egerton, "and I am willing to go a step farther and declare that I should be glad to see the thing accomplished, if it could be done without great and overwhelming injustice."

"Do you mean that equality would be injustice?"

"I mean that to forbid a man to profit by the powers of mind or body which exalt him above another man would be manifestly unjust."

"And would it not be, is it not, more unjust for him to use those powers of mind or body to take from the other man his right of prosperity and happiness, to make that other a mere machine to minister to his pleasure and to do his bidding?"

Egerton did not answer. He was, in fact, confronted with a subject on which, as he confessed to Winter, he

had thought little, and that little in a vague manner. There was to him, as to most generous natures without, as a firm basis for thought, some attraction in the ideal which Socialism presented; but he could not blind himself to the practical difficulties in the way of the realization of that ideal, though not sufficiently equipped with arguments to be able to present those difficulties in a forcible manner. It was Winter who now broke in, saying:

"The new gospel of the world—that on which Socialism rests—is the gospel of man's duty to his fellow-man. We have outgrown and flung by the childish fable of Supreme Being with the power to bestow arbitrary rewards and punishments, and the belief that there is another life of more importance than this. We have faced the fact that this life is all of which we know or can know anything, and that it is our duty neither to spend it in misery ourselves nor suffer any one else to do so."

"It seems to me," said Egerton, "that in such case the word duty becomes unmeaning."

"On the contrary, it becomes more imperative in its meaning than ever before," said Winter, "for the object of it is close beside us instead of being remote as formerly, and is altruistic instead of egoistic."

"Yes," said Leroux, "the immortal principles of the French Revolution—that first great assertion of the rights of man—are now the watchwords and battle-cries of humanity throughout the whole world. The fundamental truth which Jean Jacques Rousseau was the first to announce, that 'man is naturally good and that by institutions only is he made bad,' is the foundation of all the teaching of modern philosophy and the hope of the human race."

It occurred to Egerton that this hope of the human race was very much belied by its past experience; but he kept silence with the modesty befitting one who was receiving new and enlightening ideas. Whether it was owing to abstinence or inspiration, Leroux proceeded to expound these ideas at length and with considerable eloquence, so that when Egerton finally parted from his companions—having made an appointment for the evening—he felt as if it were hardly necessary to journey to Montmartre for more of the revolutionary gospel.

As has been already said, however, there was much in this gospel which attracted him. He was not one to wrap himself in material comfort and scoff at dreams for relieving the misery of mankind. He recognized the truth that in these dreams there is a great deal of noble and generous ardor, if not a large amount of practical wisdom. As he walked slowly toward the Seine, glancing here and there into those narrow streets, lined with tall, dark houses, which open from the modern boulevard, and where the poor of the great city still dwell in wretchedness and squalor and crime, some of the sentences which he had been hearing came into his mind. "An equal place in the sunlight for all." Surely it was little of physical, mental, or moral sunlight which these children of poverty knew from birth to death! "The great bulk of humanity shall no longer groan and travail that a few may wear purple and fine linen." He looked down with a slight whimsical smile at the careful attire which with him represented this purple and fine linen. "Well, if it could be made absolutely certain that they would no longer need to groan and travail and live in darkness, I should be willing to resign it," he thought.

It was at this moment that he entered the Place St. Michel, and his glance fell on the fountain, above which stands the sculptured figure of the great Archangel trampling his infernal foe, the enemy of God. No Christian faith or knowledge had this man of letters; to him that majestic angel, the captain of the heavenly host, was no more than a poetical myth; but as an allegory and a type of the eternal battle between good and evil, between the powers of light and the powers of darkness, it struck him at that moment with peculiar force. Was it not seething and roaring all around him, this battle? and was not this wonderful Paris the chief battleground of the world, the place where strife was hottest, where the loftiest good confronted the deepest evil, and where light and darkness met in an irreconcilable struggle? And then there rose in his mind the question which in these days many a perplexed soul is asking itself: "Where is light?"

Leaving the Place, he walked toward the Quai St. Michel, and as he emerged on it he lifted his eyes to see a glorious and beautiful sight—the great front of Notre Dame, with its massive towers rising in the golden sunlight of late afternoon. Many volumes have been written upon the architectural splendor of this noble church, but no words can express the air of steadfast repose in which it seems steeped, as if the ages of faith had breathed their spirit over every stone. Like that truth which is unchanging amid the changing fashions of time, it stands in the heart of the turbulent city, on that island of the Seine where the Parisii built their huts and founded the town of Paris, where St. Louis administered justice, and where for eight hundred years successive storms of human passion have raged and innumerable millions of human beings lived and died around those mighty walls, within the shadow of those splendid towers. Well may they wear their aspect of immovable calm, and well may the host of sculptured figures look serenely down from over the vast portals through which the Crusaders passed; for this old sanctuary of faith has heard the battle-cries of the League

and of the Fronde, and the wilder cries of Revolution, yet stands and looks over the great city to-day as it looked over the "good town" of Philippe le Bel.

Some of those thoughts were in Egerton's mind as, having crossed the bridge, he paused in the square before the cathedral and looked up at its marvellous facade. And as he looked the eloquent words of a writer from whom the light of faith was, and yet veiled, recurred to his memory. "There are," says Victor Hugo, "few more beautiful specimens of architecture than that facade, where the three porches with their pointed arches; plinth embroidered and fretted with twenty-eight royal niches; the immense central mutilated window, flanked by its two lateral windows, like the priest by the deacon and the subdeacon; the lofty and light gallery of open-work arcades supporting a heavy platform upon its slender pillars; lastly, the two dark and massive towers with their slated penthouses—harmonious parts of a magnificent whole, placed one above another in five gigantic stages—present themselves to the eye in a crowd yet without confusion, with their innumerable details of statuary, sculpture and carving, powerfully contributing to the tranquil grandeur of the whole—a vast symphony of stone, if we may be allowed the expression: the colossal product of the combination of all the force of the age, in which the fancy of the workman, chastened by the genius of the artist, is seen starting forth in a hundred forms upon every stone; in short, a sort of human creation, mighty and fertile like the divine creation, from which it seems to have borrowed the twofold character of variety and eternity."

It is this twofold character of variety and eternity—but chiefly of eternity—which the mighty stones of Notre Dame most fully breathe, and which at this moment appealed even more than its beauty to the man who gazed. "It had that repose—the old faith," he thought with something like a pang of regret. It did not occur to him to question what he had long accepted as a truth, that this old faith, having helped mankind in upward progress, was now to be thrown aside as a thing fit only for the infancy of the human intellect; but he felt that none of the new creeds offered the sublime repose which was expressed here. "If I could put myself into the thirteenth century how undoubtingly I should enter and kneel before that altar!" he thought. "But a man must belong to his age."

He did not enter. He turned and walked away, while the great front of Notre Dame with its solemn grandeur mutely answered that man's dreams and theories indeed pass with the passing time, but that God's eternal truth is for all ages.

CHAPTER V.

It was with an agreeable sense of penetrating below the strata where his life was spent, and exploring certain social and political phenomena, that Egerton went with Leroux to the Socialist meeting in the Faubourg Montmartre. But his lightheartedness vanished and something like a sense of weight seemed to fall upon him when he entered the place of meeting and found himself in the midst of a throng of men—mostly artisans, as he perceived at a glance—some of whom looked weary, many of whom looked pale, but all of whom looked resolute and grave with an almost menacing concentration of purpose. It was plainly for no mere airing of discontent, no mere purpose of listening to political harangues, that these men were assembled. Their attitude, and seemed to say that the time for words had well nigh passed and the time for action well-nigh come. As Egerton looked around he felt that if he had ever stood on the crest of a volcano before the mighty flood of lava and flames burst forth, and had felt the trembling earth grow hot beneath his feet, he should have had much the same feeling as that which came over him in this assembly of desperate, earnest men, strong with that almost resistless force which union gives, and ready at a word to overthrow all which we know under the name of civilization.

"Duchesne is not here yet," said Leroux, with a quick glance around when they entered. A very energetic and fluent speaker was, however, on the platform, and Egerton during the next fifteen minutes heard much fiery declamation on the usual revolutionary themes—the rights of man, the oppression of Governments, the tyranny of capital, and the infamous qualities of the bourgeoisie, whom the proletariat now hates more intensely than he ever hated the aristocracy. But suddenly a side door opened and a dark, slender man with a face of higher culture than any other present made his appearance. "Duchesne!" said Leroux; and when the orator on the platform hastily finished his address, and this man stepped forward, there was a movement of sensibly quickening attention among the audience. "A man of education and a man of talent," thought Egerton, regarding critically the keen face and dark, brilliant eyes. There was a moment's pause, while those eyes passed over the sea of faces and the felt noted his own countenance, before the speaker said, "Mes Freres," in a singularly melodious voice.

By the tone of those words Egerton was at once interested. It was not the tone of a demagogue, but of one who felt the brotherhood which he expressed. Nature had done much for this man in giving him a voice which

could put meaning into the simplest utterances, could sink into men's hearts to sway them with magnetic power. But it was soon apparent that he had also much besides this. As he went on Egerton was struck by that clearness and precision which distinguishes French thought even in its wildest aberrations; that is, given certain premises, the Frenchman uncompromisingly carries them out to their logical conclusion, and does not, like the Englishman, halt at a middle and illogical point of compromise. You might readily take issue with Duchesne upon his premises; but, granting those premises, there was no escape from the merciless logic of his conclusions. And the eloquence with which those conclusions were pressed was genuine, burning, almost resistless. If he decreed the destruction of all existing forms of social order, it was that the new order should arise from the ruins of the old—the new humanity, strong in solidarity, ruled by justice and love, with equal rights of property and happiness secured to all, and an ideal of perfection set before the race to which it might advance unimpeded by the social fetters now fastened on it. And toward this ideal France should march in the van, as she has ever marched on the long road of human progress. But in order to do this she must first shake off the bourgeois rule which had fastened itself upon her in the name of the liberty, equality and fraternity which it professed.

This (in substance), and much more than this, was the matter of a speech that seemed to Egerton the most thrilling to which he had ever listened. The enthusiasm of his nature was stirred by the glowing words which painted the future of mankind as contrasted with its past of wretchedness; he seemed in listening to discern what the other saw with the clear gaze of a prophet and described with a power that lent unspeakable fascination to the vision. All the misery of all the centuries seemed summoned before him, all the long travail of toil and pain in which myriads of millions had lived and died without hope of escape. He did not wonder that the men around him were like reeds shaken by the wind. It was not denunciation alone in which this man dealt. He indicated, in terms that could not be mistaken, the means to the end; but he did not dwell on those means. It was the end on which he fixed his gaze, and which he described with passionate fervor.

"Eh bien, what do you think of him?" said Leroux when the address was concluded.

Egerton turned quickly. "Think of him!" he repeated. "I think that I have never heard anything like it before! He ought to be sent to preach a new crusade."

"What else is he doing?" asked the other. "He does not spare himself; he comes and goes, speaks, organizes, works incessantly. You might think from his speech to-night that he is visionary, but it is not so: he has great practical ability."

"His face indicates it," said Egerton. "That keen glance does not belong to a visionary." Then, after a moment, he added: "I should like to know him. Is it possible?"

"Entirely possible," replied Leroux. "I will introduce you at once."

So Egerton followed him up the now thinning room to where the orator of the evening stood, surrounded by a group of friends. He turned as Leroux approached, and the latter held out his hand.

"Let me congratulate you," he said. "You spoke—more than well. And let me present M. Egerton, an Englishman—no, an American—who wishes to offer his congratulations also."

"They are most sincere congratulations, monsieur," said Egerton. "I have seldom heard such eloquence."

"You do me too much honor," said the other, with the air of a man of the world. "But my subject is one to inspire eloquence, if one has any power at all. You are interested in it, or you would not be here," he added, with a quick glance. "I hope that you are in sympathy with us?"

"I am in sympathy with you," Egerton answered. "But my sympathy does not mean going all lengths, and I confess that I am in doubt on many practical points."

"Yet we are very practical," said the other, with a smile. "Indeed, the fault that most people find with us is that we are too practical."

"Oh! I know that you aim at revolution," said Egerton; "and that is certainly practical enough. But the difficulties of which I speak will confront you afterwards."

"There are difficulties in everything," said Duchesne. "Can you conceive the smallest undertaking without them? And what we aim at is not small, for it is nothing less than the regeneration of society."

"But you denounce all forms of government," said Egerton, "and I am unable to conceive a state of society without some power to maintain law and enforce order."

"In other words, because man has long been a slave you think that he cannot exist without a master," said the other. "But we hold that he is capable of governing himself, and that when the institutions are abolished which have been the cause of his crime as well as of his wretchedness—when he has his fair share of the goods of earth and the happiness of life—he will no longer need to be throttled or overruled by the bayonets of standing armies."

There was a murmur of assent from those around, and one man remarked that they would soon make an end of

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such infamies as police and armies. "How?" asked Egerton. "By any means that will serve our end," he answered. "Desperate diseases require desperate remedies." "It is impossible, M. Egerton," interposed Duchesne quickly, "that you can form any clear idea of our plans and aims from what you have heard to-night; but I shall be happy if you will afford me the opportunity to explain them to you more at length."

"I shall be very happy if you will take the trouble to do so," said Egerton, who, apart from his curiosity about Socialism, felt great interest in this socialistic tribune.

"Then if you have no farther engagement for this evening, and will do me the honor to accompany me home—I regret to say that I must leave Paris to-morrow morning."

Egerton eagerly accepted the invitation, and Leroux, to whom it was also extended, accepting likewise, Duchesne bade his other friends good-night, and the three went out together. The cab in which Egerton and Leroux arrived had been kept by the advice of the latter—cabs not being easily obtained in Montmartre—so Duchesne entered it with them, after giving his address to the coachman. This address rather surprised Egerton, for he had expected that the advocate of social equality, notwithstanding his refined appearance, would probably live in the Faubourg St. Antoine, but instead it appeared that he had his abode in the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs.

After leaving the Montmartre quarter it was through the most brilliant part of Paris that their road lay, passing down the Rue Chaussee d'Antin to the Place de l'Opera—with its floods of electric lights, its sparkling cafes, and constant stream of carriages crossing the Boulevard des Italiens, with its flowing throng of well dressed people—and following the Avenues de l'Opera to the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs, where, before a house which occupied an angle of the street, the cab stopped.

"I am sorry that you will be forced to mount *au quatrieme*," said Duchesne, as they entered under the *porte-cochere*; "but rents are very high in this quarter, and as I find it necessary to live in a central part of Paris I compromise by ascending towards the sky. Fortunately, my daughter does not object."

"So he has a daughter!" thought Egerton. "And she does not object to living *au quatrieme* in the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs! Where does she expect to live, I wonder, when the *Revolutions Sociale* has taken place? By the bye, I must ask Duchesne whether, under such circumstances, Montmartre will come down in force and take possession of the hotels of the rich, or whether everybody will be driven to Montmartre to live."

These somewhat flippant conjectures were cut short by their arrival on the landing place of the fourth floor, where Duchesne with a pass-key admitted them into a vestibule on which three or four doors opened. Unclosing one of these, he led the way into a small but very cosy room, oblong in shape and evidently cut off from the *salon*, with which it communicated by a draped doorway. This apartment had an altogether masculine air and was plainly a place for study and work. On a large table a student's lamp burned in the midst of a litter of books, pamphlets, and newspapers. There were some comfortable leather-covered chairs and an array of pipes and cigars.

Leaving his guests here with a few words of apology, Duchesne passed into the next room, where his voice was heard mingled with feminine accents. He returned in a few minutes, saying with a smile: "I find that my daughter has prepared for me a little supper, in which she begs that you will join us."

Both men rose at once—Egerton with a strong sense of curiosity concerning the daughter of this well-bred Socialist—and they passed into the next room, which proved to be a very pretty *salon*. Before the open fire a slender, girlish figure stood. It turned as they approached, and Egerton thought that one of the most charming faces he had ever seen was revealed by the movement. If he had been struck by the father's refinement both of physiognomy and manner, what could be said of this delicate, sensitive countenance, with its large, soft eyes of golden brown—eyes which regarded him gravely and, he thought, with a certain surprise?

"M. Egerton is an American, Armine," said her father; "and then he added, 'My daughter has some friends who are Americans.'"

"Yes some very special friends," said Armine in her musical voice.

"May I ask who they are?" said Egerton. "I find generally that nothing expedites acquaintance like discovering that one has acquaintance in common."

"The friends of whom I speak are M. and Mme. D'Antignac," she answered. "Although their name is French, they are Americans by birth."

"The D'Antignacs—is it possible?" said Egerton, as much surprised as the Vicomte de Marigny had been when he heard of the acquaintance from the other side. "I am glad to say that I know them very well and admire them immensely. In fact, I esteem it an absolute privilege to know such a man as D'Antignac. He is the truest hero I have ever seen."

The beautiful eyes gave him a quick look of approval. Then saying simply, "M. d'Antignac's heroism seems to me beyond all words of praise," she turned, spoke to her father, and led the way through another draped door into the *salle a manger*, where a small, bright supper-table was set.

"Armine seldom fails to have this ready for me when I come home at night," said Duchesne as they seated

himself at the table.

at the table.