

CHAPTER V

THE REVOLUTION OF 1848

Russian Secret Societies—The Dekabrist rising—The French Revolution of 1830—The *bourgeoisie* before 1848—The Secret Societies—Apathy of the Government—The outbreak of February—Fall of the Monarchy—The Social Democratic Republic—National workshops—Associations of working-men—The 17th of March—The 16th of April—The 15th of May—The days of June—Reaction—The European conflagration.

THE first visible result of the work of the Secret Societies in the nineteenth century occurred in Russia, whither the doctrines of illumined freemasonry had been carried by Napoleon's armies and by Russian officers who had travelled in Germany.¹ It was owing to the intrigues of these societies that the band of true reformers calling themselves "The Association of Welfare" was dissolved and two new parties were formed, the first known as the Northern Association demanding constitutional monarchy, the second called the Southern Association under Colonel Pestel, who was in direct communication with Nubius—which aimed not only at a Republic but at the extermination of the whole royal family.² Many attempts indeed were made on the life of Alexander I. through the agency of the Secret Societies,³ and after his death in 1825 an insurrection broke out, led by the "United Slavs" who were connected with the Southern Association and the Polish Secret Societies at Warsaw.⁴ The pretext for this outbreak, known as "The

¹ *La Russie en 1839*, by Astolphe de Custine, ii. 42; *The Court of Russia in the Nineteenth Century*, by E. A. Brayley Hodgetts, i. 116.

² *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia*, by Konni Zilliacus, p. 8; Brayley Hodgetts, *op. cit.* i. 122.

³ Deschamps, *op. cit.* ii. 242; Frost's *Secret Societies*, ii. 213.

⁴ Zilliacus, *op. cit.*; Brayley Hodgetts, *op. cit.* i. 123.

Dekabrist rising " because it occurred in December, was the accession to the throne of Nicholas I. at the request of his elder brother Constantine, and a crowd of mutinying soldiers were persuaded to march on the Winter Palace and protest against the acceptance of the crown by Nicholas, represented to them by the agitators as an act of usurpation. The manner in which the movement was engineered has been described by the Marquis de Custine, who travelled in Russia a few years later :

Well-informed people have attributed this riot to the influence of the Secret Societies by which Russia is worked. . . . The method that the conspirators had employed to rouse the army was a ridiculous lie : the rumour had been spread that Nicholas was usurping the throne from his brother Constantine, who, they said, was advancing on Petersburg to defend his rights by armed force. This is the means they took in order to decide the revolutionaries to cry under the windows of the Palace : " Long live the Constitution ! " The leaders had persuaded them that this word Constitution was the name of the wife of Constantine, their supposed Empress. You see that an idea of duty was at the bottom of the soldiers' hearts, since they could only be led into rebellion by a trick.¹

This strange incident tends to confirm the assertion of Père Deschamps that the word " Constitution " was the signal agreed on by the Secret Societies for an outbreak of revolution. It had been employed in the same manner in France in 1791, and, as we shall see, it was employed again in Russia at intervals throughout the revolutionary movement.

The Dekabrist rising was ended by three rounds of grape-shot, and five of the ringleaders were hanged. In no sense was it a popular insurrection, in fact the people regarded it with strong disapproval as an act of sacrilege, and so little did it aid the cause of liberty that General Levashoff declared to Prince Troubetzkoy " it had thrown back Russia fifty years." ²

Further evidence of the connection between the French Revolution and the engineering of revolution in Russia is

¹ De Custine, *op. cit.* ii. 42 ; Brayley Hodgetts, *op. cit.* i. 192.

² Brayley Hodgetts, *op. cit.* i. 201, 205.

supplied by de Custine on his travels in the latter country fourteen years later. Now in those days before the abolition of serfdom, the peasants on an estate were bought and sold with the land, and since the Emperor's serfs were the best treated in the whole country the inhabitants of estates newly acquired by the Crown became the objects of envy to their fellow-serfs. In this year of 1839 the peasants, hearing that the Emperor had just bought some more land, sent a deputation to Petersburg, consisting of representatives from all parts of Russia, to petition that the districts from which they came should also be added to the royal domains.

Nicholas I. received them kindly, for whilst adopting repressive measures towards insurrection his sympathies were with the people. We must not forget that it was he who visited Robert Owen at New Lanark to study his schemes of social reform. When, therefore, the peasants petitioned him to buy them he answered with great gentleness that he regretted he could not buy up all Russia, but he added: "I hope that the time will come when every peasant of this Empire will be free; if it only depended on me Russians would enjoy from to-day the independence that I wish for them and that I am working with all my might to procure for them in the future."

These words, interpreted to the serfs by "savage and envious men," led to the most terrible outbreak of violence all along the Volga. "The Father wishes for our deliverance," cried the deluded deputies on their return to their homes, "he only wishes for our happiness, he told us so himself; it is therefore the seigneurs and their overseers who are our enemies and oppose the good designs of the Father! Let us avenge ourselves! Let us avenge the Emperor."

And forthwith the peasants, imagining they were carrying out the Emperor's intention, threw themselves upon the seigneurs and their overseers, roasted them alive, boiled others in coppers, disembowelled the delegates, put everything to fire and sword and devastated the whole province.¹

Now when we compare this incident with the "Great Fear" that took place in France precisely fifty years earlier

¹ *La Russie en 1839*, ii. 219-220.

(i.e. in July 1789) how can we doubt the connection between the two? In both the pretext and the organization are identical. The benevolent intentions of Louis XVI., interpreted by the emissaries to the provinces in the words, "The King desires you to burn down the châteaux; he only wishes to keep his own"; the placards paraded through the towns, headed "Edict of the King," ordering the peasants to burn and destroy, and the massacres and burnings that followed—all this was exactly repeated in Russia fifty years later quite obviously by the same organization that had engineered the earlier outbreak. How otherwise are we to explain it?

Five years after the Russian explosion of 1825 the second French Revolution took place, which, however, hardly enters into the scope of this book. The revolution of 1830 was in the main not a social but a political revolution, a renewed attempt of the Orléaniste conspiracy to effect a change of dynasty and as such formed a mere corollary to the insurrections of July and October 1789. It is true that beneath the tumults of 1830, as beneath the Siege of the Bastille and the march on Versailles, the subversive force of Illuminism made itself felt, and that during "the glorious days of July" the hatred of Christianity expressed by the Terror broke out again in the sacking of the "Archevêché," in the pillage and desecration of the churches, and in the attacks on religion in the provinces. But the driving force behind the revolution that precipitated Charles X. from the throne was not Socialist but Orléaniste; it was a movement led by the tricouleur of July 13, 1789, not by the red flag of August 10, 1792, emblem of the social revolution; its strength lay not with the workmen but with the *bourgeoisie*, and it was the *bourgeoisie* who triumphed.

The régime that followed has well been named "the *bourgeois* monarchy." For Louis Philippe, once the ardent partisan of revolution, followed the usual programme of demagogy, and as soon as the reins of power were in his hands turned a deaf ear to the demands of the people. It was thus that in 1848, organized by the Secret Societies, directed by the Socialists, executed by the working-men and aggravated by the intractable attitude of the King and his

ministers, the second great outbreak of World Revolution took place.

There were then, just as in the first French Revolution, real grievances that rankled in the minds of the people; electoral reform, the adjustment of wages and hours of labour, and particularly the burning question of unemployment, were all matters that demanded immediate attention. The people in 1848 even more than in 1789 had good cause for complaint.

But in justice to the *bourgeoisie* it must be recognized that they were in the main sympathetic to the cause of the workers. "Bourgeois opinion," even the Socialist Malon admits, "was . . . open to renovating conceptions. Before 1848 the French *bourgeoisie* had as yet no fear of social insurrections; they readily allowed themselves to indulge in innocent Socialist speculations. It was thus that Fourierisme, for example, founded entirely on seeking the greatest sum of happiness possible, had numerous sympathizers in the provincial bourgeoisie."¹

Like the aristocrats of 1788 who had voluntarily offered to surrender their pecuniary privileges, and on the famous 4th of August 1789 themselves dealt the death-blow to the feudal system by renouncing all other rights and privileges, so the *bourgeoisie* of 1848 showed their willingness to co-operate not merely with reforms but with the most drastic social changes directly opposed to their own interests.

"In the first weeks of 1848," Malon says again, "it was not only the proletarians who spoke of profound social reforms; the *bourgeoisie* that Fourieriste propaganda (but above all the novels of Eugène Sue and of George Sand) had almost reconciled with Socialism, thought themselves the hour had come, and all the candidates talked of ameliorating the lot of the people, of realizing social democracy, of abolishing misery. Great proprietors believed that the Provisional Government was composed of Communists, and one day twenty of them came to offer Garnier Pagès to give up their goods to the community."²

But the art of the revolutionaries has always been to check reforms by alienating the sympathies of the class in power, and they had no intention of allowing the people to

¹ Malon, *Histoire du socialisme*, ii. 295.

² *Ibid.* ii. 520.

be contented by pacific measures or to look to any one but themselves for salvation.

As on the eve of all great public commotions, a great masonic congress was held in 1847.¹ Amongst the French masons present were the men who played the leading parts in the subsequent revolution—Louis Blanc, Caussidière, Crémieux, Ledru Rollin, etc., and it was then decided to enlist the Swiss Cantons in the movement so that the centre of Europe should form no barrier against the tide.

It was by the Secret Societies that the plan of campaign was drawn up and the revolutionary machine set in motion. Caussidière, a prominent member of these associations, and at the same time Prefect of Police in Paris during the tumults of 1848, has himself provided us with the clearest evidence on this point.

“The Secret Societies,” he writes, “had never ceased to exist even after the set-back of May 12, 1838. This freemasonry of devoted soldiers had been maintained without new affiliations until 1846. The orders of the day, printed in Brussels or sometimes in secret by compositors of Paris, had kept up its zeal. But the frequency of these proclamations, which fell sooner or later into the hands of the police, rendered the use of them very dangerous. Relations between the affiliated and the leaders had thus become rather restricted when, in 1846, the Secret Societies were reorganized and took up some initiative again. Paris was the centre around which radiated the different ramifications extending into the provincial towns. In Paris and in the provinces the same sentiment inspired all these militant phalanxes, more preoccupied by revolutionary action than by social theories. Guns were more talked of than Communism, and the only formula unanimously accepted was Robespierre’s ‘Declaration of the Rights of Man.’ The Secret Societies found their real strength in the heart of the people of the working-classes, which thus had its vanguard, a certain disciplined force always ready to act, their co-operation was never wanting to any political emotion and they were found in the forefront of the barricades in February.”²

But the working-classes were not admitted to the inner councils of the leaders; the place of the vanguard was on

¹ Deschamps, *op. cit.* ii. 281, quoting Gyr, *La Franc-Maçonnerie*, ii. 189 and 220.

² *Mémoires de Caussidière*, i. 38, 39.

the barricades when the shooting began, not in the meetings where the plan of campaign was drawn up.

Amongst these secret agencies the Haute Vente naturally played the leading part, and two years before the revolution broke out Piccolo Tigre was able to congratulate himself on the complete success of his efforts to bring about a vast upheaval.

On the 5th of January 1846 the energetic agent of Nubius writes in these hopeful terms to his chief :

The journey that I have just accomplished in Europe has been as fortunate and as productive as we had hoped. Henceforth nothing remains but to put our hand to the task in order to reach the *dénouement* of the comedy. . . . The harvest I have reaped has been abundant . . . and if I can believe the news communicated to me here (at Livorno) we are approaching the epoch we so much desire. The fall of thrones is no longer a matter of doubt to me now that I have just studied the work of our societies in France, in Switzerland, in Germany, and as far as Russia. The assault which in a few years and perhaps even in a few months from now will be made on the princes of the earth will bury them under the wreckage of their impotent armies and their decrepid thrones. Everywhere there is enthusiasm in our ranks and apathy or indifference amongst the enemies. This is a certain and infallible sign of success. . . . What have we asked in return for our labours and our sacrifices ? It is not a revolution in one country or another. That can always be managed if one wishes it. In order to kill the old world surely, we have held that we must stifle the Catholic and Christian germ, and you, with the audacity of genius, have offered yourself with the sling of a new David to hit the pontifical Goliath on the head.¹

Piccolo Tigre was perfectly right in his estimate of the "apathy and indifference" of the ruling classes, and in the success this attitude promised to the conspirators. No civilized modern government can be overthrown by violence if it realizes the danger that threatens it and firmly resolves to defend itself. It is not resistance but weakness that produces revolution, for weakness invites audacity and audacity is the essence of the revolutionary spirit. "Osez !" said St-Just, "ce mot est toute la politique de la

¹ Crétineau-Joly, *L'Église Romaine en face de la Révolution*, ii. 387.

Révolution!" ("Dare! this word is the whole policy of revolution.") So whilst the revolutionary forces were mustering, the Government of France remained sublimely oblivious to the coming danger. On the surface few signs of popular effervescence were apparent. The incendiary doctrines of the agitators seemed to have made little headway amongst the great mass of the people. The peasants, indeed, with their passionate love of possession, saw little to attract them in the communal ownership of the land and continued to dig and plant with undiminished ardour. Only in the towns the fire of revolutionary Socialism was smouldering silently, unnoticed or ignored by those in power. The government, reassured by the loyal spirit of the army and deluded by the perfect calm that reigned in the streets, made no preparations for defence. The circulation of seditious papers was known to be small, the theories of Buchez and of Louis Blanc were believed to have taken no hold on the masses—one could afford to shrug one's shoulders at the number of their following. As to Proudhon the police had declared in 1846: "His doctrines are very dangerous, there are gun-shots at the end of them; fortunately they are not read." Perhaps the most unconcerned person was the King himself. "No human power," wrote M. Cuvillier Fleury, "could have made him read a page of M. Louis Blanc, of M. Pierre Leroux, of M. Buchez, or of M. Proudhon."¹

So with sublime insouciance the "monarchy of July" awaited the explosion.

This is not the place to relate in detail the political events which led up to the four months revolution of 1848. Ministerial corruption—always the bane of France from the first revolution onwards—opposition to electoral reform, indifference to the interests of the people provided quite sufficient grounds for insurrection. In vain de Tocqueville warned the Chamber of Deputies whither this state of public affairs must lead them: "My profound conviction is that we are sleeping on a volcano." And after quoting various scandalous instances of corruption he went on to say:

¹ Imbert de Saint-Amand, *Marie Amélie et la société française en 1847*, pp. 102-110.

It is by such acts as these that great catastrophes are prepared. Let us seek in history the efficacious causes that have taken away power from the governing classes ; they lost it when they became by their egoism unworthy to retain it. . . . The evils I point out will bring about the gravest revolutions ; do you not feel by a sort of intuition that the soil of Europe trembles once more ? Is there not a breath of revolution in the air ? . . . Do you know what may happen in two years : in one year, perhaps to-morrow ? . . . Keep your laws if you will, but for God's sake change the spirit of the Government. That spirit leads to the abyss.¹

No truer words were ever spoken. Corrupt and selfish politicians will always be the most useful allies of Anarchists. We cannot doubt that Proudhon and Blanqui rejoiced over the callous attitude of the Government as heartily as de Tocqueville deplored it. The very real grounds for popular discontent would serve, as de Tocqueville clearly saw, to "magnify doctrines which tend to nothing less than the overthrow of all the foundations on which society rests."

The ministerial banquets planned by the heads of the masonic lodges² for the 22nd of February and forbidden by the government provided the pretext for insurrection. When in the morning of that day the obedient army of the proletariat assembled in answer to the summons of the revolutionary papers *Le National* and *La Réforme*, the cry of "A bas Guizot !" that rose from their ranks was less a protest against Guizot's policy than a call to revolution for revolution's sake. Deluded by the promises of the Utopian Socialists, inflamed by the teachings of the Anarchists, it was now no longer electoral reform nor even universal suffrage that could satisfy the people ; it was not a mere Republic they demanded or a change of ministry, it was the complete overthrow of the existing system of government in favour of the social millennium promised them by the theorists, and which the agitators had urged them to establish by force of arms.

The dismissal of Guizot by the King on the 23rd of February did nothing, therefore, to allay popular agitation, and according to the usual revolutionary programme the

¹ Émile de Bonnechose, *Histoire de France*, ii. 647.

² Deschamps, *op. cit.* ii. 282.

insurgents proceeded to barricade the streets and to pillage the gunsmiths' shops.

But even then it proved difficult to bring about a conflict, for the sympathies of the *bourgeoisie* were still with the people, and the National Guards, seeing in the working-men their brothers, showed reluctance to use force against them.¹ This feeling of *camaraderie*, contemptuously described by Marx as "charlatanry of general fraternity,"² was dispelled by the menacing attitude the working-men were persuaded to assume, and inevitably the demonstrations that followed—the hoisting of the red flag, the marching of processions amongst which could be seen the glint of steel and brandishing of sabres—led to a collision with the troops. In the confusion a number of the insurgents fell victims to the fire of the irritated soldiery. This skirmish, described as "the massacre of the Boulevard des Capucines," gave the signal for revolution.

Throughout that night of February 23-24 the Secret Societies were at work issuing their orders; meanwhile Proudhon busied himself drawing up a plan of attack.³ Dawn found the city in a state of chaos, the trees of the boulevards were broken to the ground, the paving-stones torn up, excited bands of insurgents—working-men of the faubourgs, students, schoolboys, deserters from the National Guard—collected round the Tuileries, shots were fired in at the windows of the young princes. This was the moment chosen by Louis Blanc and his friends to issue a protest against the employment of troops in civil commotions, which, handed from barricade to barricade, immensely emboldened the audacity of the revolutionaries, who now proceeded to seize munitions and attack the municipal Guard, killing a number of them. The hesitating policy of the government and the declarations of the agitators inevitably affected the morale of the troops, and by the middle of the morning they ceased to offer any further resistance and left the people in possession of the field. Already Proudhon and Flocon had posted up a placard demanding

¹ *Cambridge Modern History*, vol. xi. 97.

² Marx, *La Lutte des classes en France*, p. 40.

³ *Cambridge Modern History*, vol. xi. p. 99.

the deposition of the King, and amongst the leaders—Caussidière, Arago, Sobrier, and others—the word “Republic” made itself heard. In vain Louis Philippe, profiting by the error committed by his predecessor Louis XVI. in precisely the same circumstances, mounted a gorgeously caparisoned horse in order to inspect the troops assembled in the Tuileries gardens and promised reforms to the excited populace; the hour of the Orléaniste dynasty had struck, and at one o’clock the royal family chose the prudent course of flight.

Thus in the space of a few hours the monarchy was swept away and the “Social Democratic Republic” was proclaimed.¹

But now the men who had brought about the crisis were faced with the work of reconstruction—a very different matter. For it is one thing to sit at one’s desk peaceably writing about the beauties of revolution, it is quite another to find oneself in the midst of a tumultuous city where all the springs of law and order have been broken; it is one thing to talk romantically about “the sovereignty of the people,” it is less soothing to one’s vanity to be confronted with working-men of real flesh and blood insolently demanding the fulfilment of the promises one has made them. This was the experience that fell to the lot of the men composing the Provisional Government the day after the King’s abdication. All advocates of social revolution, they now for the first time saw revolution face to face—and liked it less well than on paper.

The hoisting of the red flag by the populace—described by Lamartine as “the symbol of threats and disorders”—had struck terror into the hearts of all except Louis Blanc, and it was not until Lamartine in an impassioned speech had besought the angry multitude to restore the *tricolore* that the red flag was finally lowered and the deputies were able to retire to the Hôtel de Ville and discuss the new scheme of government.

In all the history of the “Labour Movement” no more dramatic scene has ever been enacted than that which now

¹ Louis Blanc, *La Révolution de 1848*, p. 23; *Mémoires de Causidière* p. 62.

took place. Seated around the council table were the men who for the last ten years had fired the people with enthusiasm for the principles of the first Revolution—Lamartine, panegyrist of the Gironde, Louis Blanc the Robespierrieste, Ledru Rollin, whose chief source of pride was his supposed resemblance to Danton.

Suddenly the door of the council chamber burst open and a working-man entered, gun in hand, his face convulsed with rage, followed by several of his comrades. Advancing towards the table where sat the trembling demagogues, Marche, for this was the name of the leader of the deputation, struck the floor with the butt end of his gun and said loudly : “Citizens, it is twenty-four hours since the revolution was made ; the people await the results. They send me to tell you that they will brook no more delays. They wish for the right to work—the right to work at once.”

Twenty-four hours since the revolution had been made, and the New Heavens and the New Earth had not yet been created ! The theorists had calculated without the immense impatience of “the People,” they had forgotten that to simple practical minds to give is to give quickly and at once ; that the immense social changes represented by Louis Blanc in his *Organisation du travail* as quite a simple matter had been accepted by the workers in the same unquestioning spirit ; of the enormous difficulties incidental to the readjustment of the conditions of the labour, of the time it must take to reconstruct the whole social system, Marche and his companions could have no conception. They had been promised the “right to work,” and the gigantic organization that brief formula entailed was to be accomplished in one day and instantly put into operation.

Louis Blanc admits that his first emotion on hearing the tirade of Marche was that of anger ;¹ it were better if he had said of shame. It was he more than any other who had shown the workers the land of promise, and now that it had proved a mirage he, more than any other, was to blame. Before promising one must know how to perform—and to perform without delay.

It was apparently Lamartine whom the working-men

¹ Louis Blanc, *La Révolution de 1848*, p. 31.

regarded as the chief obstacle to their demand for "the right to work," for throughout his speech Marche had fixed his eyes, "blazing with audacity," on those of the poet of the Gironde. Lamartine, outraged by this attitude, thereupon replied in an imperious tone that were he threatened by a thousand deaths, were he led by Marche and his companions before the loaded cannons down beneath the windows, he would never sign a decree of which he did not understand the meaning. But finally conquering his irritation, he adopted a more conciliatory tone, and placing his hand on the arm of the angry workman he besought him to have patience, pointing out that legitimate as his demand might be, so great a measure as the organization of labour must take time to elaborate, that in the face of so many crying needs the government must be given time to formulate its schemes, that all competent men must be consulted. . . .

The eloquence of the poet triumphed, gradually Marche's indignation died down; the workmen, honest men touched by the evident sincerity of the speaker, looked into each other's eyes questioningly, with an expression of relenting, and Marche, interpreting their attitude, cried out, "Well, then, yes, we will wait. We will have confidence in our government. - The people will wait; they place three months of misery at the service of the Republic!"¹

Have more pathetic words ever been uttered in the whole history of social revolution? Like their forefathers of 1792 these men were ready to suffer, to sacrifice themselves for the new-formed Republic represented to them as the one hope of salvation for France, and animated by this noble enthusiasm they were willing to trust the political charlatans who had led them on with fair promises into abortive insurrection. Even whilst Lamartine was urging patience, Louis Blanc, still intent on his untried theories, had retired into the embrasure of a window, where, with Flocon and Ledru Rollin, he drew up the decree, founded on the 10th article of Robespierre's "Declaration of the Rights of Man," by which the Provisional Government undertook to "guarantee work to all citizens." Louis Blanc was probably the only man present who believed in the possibility of

¹ Daniel Stern, *op. cit.* i. 379.

carrying out this promise, yet all ended by subscribing to it, and the same day the decree was publicly proclaimed throughout Paris.

Two days later the *National Workshops*, which were to provide the promised employment, were opened under the direction of Émile Thomas and of M. Marie. The result was inevitably disastrous, necessary work being insufficient, the workmen were sent hither and thither from one employer to another, useless jobs were devised that necessarily proved discouraging to the men engaged on them, whilst the workers in the skilled trades for whom no employment could be found had to be maintained on "an unemployment dole." This last measure, the most demoralizing of all, had the effect of attracting thousands of workers from all over the country, and even from abroad, into the capital.¹

The organization of the National Workshops and their lamentable failure has frequently been ascribed by opponents of Socialism to Louis Blanc. This is inaccurate. The manner in which these workshops were conducted was not that advocated by Louis Blanc in his *Organisation du travail*, and must be ascribed solely to MM. Marie and Thomas. But the principle on which they were founded, namely the duty of the State to provide work or payment for every man, was nevertheless the one adopted by Louis Blanc from Robespierre. Once this premise is accepted many of the difficulties that contributed to the failure of the National Workshops are bound to follow. The mere fact that a man has no longer to depend on his own efforts to seek and find employment must inevitably lead to lack of enterprise and to idleness on the part of those who do not want to work; moreover, if payment is to be received whether a man is in or out of employment it will be obviously a matter of indifference to the slacker whether he keeps his job or loses it.

That in a civilized state no man should be allowed to starve because he cannot find work is clearly evident, but that some degree of privation should attach to unemployment is absolutely necessary to the very existence of industry.

¹ Daniel Stern, *op. cit.* i. 484. See also report of May 29 given in *The Economist* for June 3, 1848 (vi. 617).

The truth is, as Mermeix points out, the Provisional Government of 1848 had promised the impossible because "a government cannot guarantee work since it does not depend on it to provide consumers."¹ Moreover, the funds with which it pays out unemployment doles can only be raised in the form of taxation which automatically reduces the spending power of the community, thus creating further unemployment.

Magnificent, then, as the recognition of "the right to work" may be in theory, no Government has so far been able to put it into practice without aggravating the evil it has set out to cure.

If, therefore, Louis Blanc cannot be held responsible for the methods of the National Workshops, it is impossible to deny that his precipitate action in formulating the proclamation of "the right to work" largely contributed to the chaos that followed. Moreover, we shall see that when at last he was able to put his own theories into practice the experiment proved not much more successful than that of MM. Thomas and Marie.

It was on the 10th of March that a committee began its sittings at the Luxembourg, presided over by Louis Blanc with the workman Albert as vice-president. Before this board employers and employed were summoned to attend and put forward their claims or grievances; builders and their workmen, master bakers and baker boys, omnibus owners and drivers, all arrived in crowds to discuss the questions of hours and payment. In general the employers showed themselves magnanimous and perfectly ready to co-operate in any reasonable reforms,² but this, as Mme. d'Agoult observes, could not satisfy the ambition of Louis Blanc, "which dreamt of changing the world."³ A sane and practical man with the interests of the people really at heart, given his opportunity, might have laid for ever the foundations of an improved industrial system, but Louis Blanc seated in the historic armchair of the Chancellor Pasquier could only fall back, like his predecessors of 1789,

¹ Mermeix (G. Terrail), *Le Syndicalisme contre le socialisme*, p. 51.

² "The employers gave evidence of the most conciliatory disposition" (Daniel Stern, *op. cit.* ii. 49).

³ *Ibid.* p. 48.

on the fatal gift of eloquence, and at every moment "began again the epic recital of the Revolution and the tableau of the great things accomplished by the people."¹

Strange this tendency of Socialism that imagines itself progressive to hark back eternally to the past !

The working-men on their part showed themselves in the main perfectly sane and reasonable, demanding protection from the exploitation of middle-men, and a reduction in the hours of labour to ten or eleven a day, giving for their reason a theory tenable perhaps at a period when working days consisted of fourteen or fifteen hours, but which to-day has been perverted into the disastrous system known as "Ca' Canny," namely that "the longer the day is the fewer workers are employed, and that the workers who are occupied absorb a salary which might be divided amongst a greater number of workers." They also "criticised excessive work as an obstacle to their education and the intellectual development of the people."²

At any rate, whether sound or not in their political economy, the people of Paris at this crisis showed themselves in no way prone to violence ; the people did not wish for bloodshed and for barricades, for burnings and destruction. Reduced to its simplest expression, they asked for two things only—bread and work : what juster demand could have been formulated ? And they were ready, as Marche had said, to wait, to suffer, to sacrifice themselves not only for their own ultimate welfare but for the glory of France. Misled as they had been by visionaries, illusioned as they were on the benefits of the first French Revolution, they asked for no repetition of its horrors but only to be allowed to work in peace and fraternity.

"Citizens, . . ." wrote the cloth printers to the Provisional Government at the end of March 1848, "we, workers ourselves, printers on stuff, we offer you our feeble co-operation, we bring you 2000 francs to help towards the success of your noble creation. . . . Let them be reassured those who may believe in a return to the bloody scenes enacted in our history ! Let them

¹ Daniel Stern, *op. cit.* p. 41.

² *Mémoires de Caussidière*, i. 286.

be reassured ! Neither civil war, nor war abroad shall rend the entrails of our beautiful France ! Let them be reassured on our National Assembly, for there will be neither Montagnards nor Girondins ! Yes, let them be reassured and let them help to give to Europe a magic sight, let them show the universe that in France there has been no violence in the revolution, that there has only been a change of system, that honour has succeeded to corruption, the sovereignty of the people and of equity to odious despotism, force and order to weakness, union to castes, to tyranny this sublime device : ' Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, progress, civilization, happiness for all and all for happiness ! ' " ¹

What might not have been done with a people such as this, so filled with gay enthusiasm, with noble patriotism, if only they had had leaders worthy of them ? But on one side Louis Blanc, helpless and hesitating now that he was brought face to face with realities, pushing aside sane reforms in favour of unrealizable ideals, and on the other Blanqui, Proudhon, wild beasts crouching to spring, waiting to rend and destroy that very civilization for which the people were ready to sacrifice their all !

But Louis Blanc, obsessed with his idea of " working-men's associations," led the people from the path of true reform into the wilderness. The National Workshops, he afterwards declared, were a failure because they were not conducted on the Socialistic lines he advocated, and the Government refused to give him funds to put his own theories into practice. But, as Mme. d'Agoult explains, what the Government really refused to M. Blanc was " a budget and a ministry " which would have satisfied his ambitions. The Government *did* provide M. Blanc with funds to start " associations of working-men " on his own lines, and gave him a perfectly free hand in organizing them. The first of these experiments was made at the Hôtel de Clichy, which M. Blanc was allowed to transform from a debtors' prison into an enormous national tailors' shop ; he was then given capital free of interest, " subsistence money " was advanced to the workers, and an order for 25,000 uniforms for the National Guards was placed by the Government. The usual contractor's price for these uniforms was eleven francs each, " a sum found sufficient to provide the profit of the

¹ Daniel Stern, *op. cit.* i. 514.

master tailor, remuneration for his workshop and tools, interest on his capital and wages for the workmen."¹ But now that the profits of the rapacious capitalist were to be eliminated it was expected that a handsome balance would remain over after the cost of materials had been defrayed, and this was to be divided equally amongst the workers. Unhappily when the first order was completed the cost proved to be far higher than under the old capitalistic system, and the uniforms worked out at 16 instead of 11 francs each. Moreover, though "the principle of glory, love, and fraternity was so strong that the tailors worked twelve and thirteen hours a day, and the same even on Sundays," the ragged new recruits to the army were kept waiting so long for their uniforms that, driven to exasperation, they went several times to Clichy and quarrelled violently with the tailors over the delay. "This," says Mme. d'Agoult, "was the origin of the scission between the 'people' in blouses and the 'people' in uniforms which led at last to a mortal combat."²

Louis Blanc's other experiments were attended with not much more success. His "association of arm-chair makers" dwindled in one year from 400 members to 20, and out of 180 associations in all only 10 survived until 1867.³

A further breach was brought about between the soldiers and the industrial workers by the attempt of the Government to establish "equality" in the army. On the 14th of March it had passed the decree ordering the smartest battalions of the National Guards to renounce their distinctive uniforms and likewise all insignia of superior rank. More preposterous still, the election of new officers was to be made henceforth by universal suffrage.⁴

The result was of course an explosion of indignation amongst the soldiers, and on the 16th of March a procession of 4000 to 5000 National Guards marched on the Hôtel de Ville to protest against the decree. Here they encountered

¹ *Problems and Perils of Socialism*, by J. St. Loe Strachey, quoting contemporary account on this experiment in *The Economist* for May 20, 1848 (vol. vi. p. 562).

² Daniel Stern, *op. cit.* ii. 165.

³ Heckethorn, *Secret Societies*, ii. 222, 223.

⁴ Daniel Stern, *op. cit.* ii. 55; Caussidière, *op. cit.* i. 176.

a crowd of workmen and young boys, with whom they came into collision; insults and blows were exchanged, and the breach between the *bourgeoisie* and the people was now definitely created.

This breach was necessary to the Socialist leaders if they were to retain their ascendancy, and the revolution was not to end in the peaceful amelioration of the workers' lot. Accordingly they seized the opportunity offered by popular excitement to organize a demonstration for the following day, and as in the first French Revolution the people were ordered out *en masse*. A huge crowd was to assemble in the Place de la Concorde and march to the Hôtel de Ville in order to congratulate the members of the Provisional Government and demand the postponement of the elections, which might possibly remove the Socialists from power. This programme, naively drawn up by the Socialists themselves—Louis Blanc, Caussidière, and Ledru Rollin—was issued to all the different districts of Paris on the evening of the 16th.

But already the organizers of the procession found themselves outdistanced by the clubs acting under the orders of the Secret Societies, and whilst the people were being invited by the members of the Provisional Government to come and demonstrate in favour of their remaining in office Blanqui was concerting another agitation for the purpose of ejecting them. It was thus that, when the immense procession arrived at the Hôtel de Ville on the 17th March, Louis Blanc and his colleagues found themselves confronted not by congratulatory and admiring bands of workers but by a hostile army, at the head of which were found their enemies and rivals to power—Barbès, Blanqui, Cabet, Sobrier, and others—"whose expression," says Louis Blanc, "held something sinister."

In vain Louis Blanc took refuge in his habitual revolutionary eloquence, declaring that the only desire of the Provisional Government was "to march with the people, to live for them, if necessary to die for them"; the crowd, wearied of such protestations, gave way to prolonged murmurs. "The people," cried one of them, "expect more than words."¹

¹ Caussidière, *op. cit.* i. 182.

But words in the end prevailed, and floods of oratory poured forth by Ledru Rollin and Lamartine finally had the effect of calming the agitation of the crowd, which towards five o'clock in the afternoon gradually melted away to the cries of "Vive Louis Blanc, Vive Ledru Rollin!"

Caussidière afterwards described this "day of March 17" as the "pacific victory of the people by calm and reason"; in reality it was a victory for the Socialists of the Provisional Government. From the people's point of view the day had proved as abortive as most of the "great days" of the first revolution, in which they had acted simply as the tools of political adventurers. "The greater number of the workmen," says Mme. d'Agoult, "who had joined spontaneously in the manifestation in a sincere and naïve spirit of Republican fraternity, were persuaded that they had given the Government a mark of respect and had defended them against royalist plots." For themselves they had gained nothing but an increase of hostility on the part of the *bourgeoisie*, who had watched with growing anxiety the menacing aspect of the procession.

The result of "the day of March the 17th" was to throw back irretrievably the cause of the Paris workmen. So far they had gained certain points in their programme—the establishment of the "social and democratic Republic," the promise of universal suffrage at the coming elections, the recognition by the Provisional Government of "the right to work," and the application of this principle in the National Workshops, which, however unsatisfactory from the point of view of the State, had relieved unemployment. Had the revolution ceased early in March, before the passing of the impolitic decree concerning the National Guards, it must have ended in a triumph for the workers. But the action of the Socialists in throwing this apple of discord between the people and the *bourgeoisie* turned the tide in favour of reaction. Not only in Paris but all over the country the display of force exhibited by the procession of March 17 created widespread alarm. The provinces had no intention of falling again, as in 1793, under the domination of the Paris populace, and a strong Conservative spirit was aroused that boded ill for the success of Socialist

candidates at the elections. "From this moment," writes the Comtesse d'Agoult, "there begins for the proletariat a series of reverses in which it is to lose all the advantages it had won in a few hours, and of which it had made use generously, it is true, and with greatness, but without discernment or foresight."¹

This was the whole cause of the working-men's failure in 1848. Instead of acting on their own initiative, instead of pressing the advantages they had really gained, they allowed themselves to be led into fruitless agitation by a band of political charlatans who were mainly occupied in quarrelling amongst themselves.

Thus whilst Louis Blanc continued to represent himself to the people with his usual eloquence as the sole representative of their cause, the partisans of Ledru Rollin (amongst them George Sand the novelist) intrigued to establish a revolutionary government under his dictatorship, and Blanqui stirred up the workmen to resist the convocation of the National Assembly. Meanwhile Lamartine, seeing his own power waning, endeavoured to frighten Ledru Rollin "with visions of Blanqui sharpening his dagger in the background," and at the same time continued to confer secretly with Blanqui in the hope of winning him over to his side. Amidst all this confusion of plans the people counted for nothing, but each faction hoped by a further "popular manifestation" to triumph finally over its rivals.

On the 16th of April the people of Paris were once more summoned forth on the pretext of electing fourteen officers for the staff of the army, according to the new decree of election by popular suffrage. At 10 o'clock in the morning a procession of 8000 working-men assembled in the Champ de Mars, holding aloft their banners with Socialist devices such as: "Abolition of the exploitation of man by man," "Equality," "Organization of work," etc. This army, which had started out quite peaceably, now stirred up by Blanqui, increased to 40,000 and then proceeded to march on the Hôtel de Ville, whereat a panic spread throughout the city. Scare news was passed from mouth to mouth: "The Faubourg St. Antoine has risen in revolt! The

¹ Daniel Stern, *op. cit.* ii. 154.

Communists have taken the Invalides, they are setting fire to it; 200,000 proletarians in arms are preparing to sack Paris!"

On arrival at the Place de Grève before the entrance to the Hôtel de Ville a number of troops, however, were drawn up, and now the scission that had been created between the soldiers and the working-men became again apparent. The inclination to fraternize with their comrades in blouses that earlier in the Revolution had marked the attitude of the troops had changed to active hostility, and from their ranks arose the cry: "Down with the Communists! Down with Blanqui! Down with Louis Blanc!"

The tide had turned irrevocably against the workers. As the dejected battalions of the industrial "proletariat" filed past the Hôtel de Ville through the serried ranks of the soldiery and finally dispersed, no doubt remained that the day had ended in defeat and it was to the Socialists the workers owed their humiliation. The working-men had not on their own initiative assumed the menacing attitude that alarmed the citizens of Paris; they had not devised the truculent mottoes inscribed upon their banners. It was Blanqui with his ferocious methods of agitation, it was Louis Blanc with his foolish theorizings, who had turned their just demands for social reform into war on the community and created the gulf that yawned between the workmen and the rest of Paris. Up to the outbreak of the 1848 revolution the *bourgeoisie*, as we have seen, had regarded the aspirations of the "people" with the greatest sympathy; the work of the Socialists was to destroy this understanding and to consolidate not only the *bourgeoisie* but the whole non-industrial population in a mass antagonistic to the workers. It is from this moment that we can date that narrowing down of the word "people" to signify only the "industrial proletariat,"¹ the sense in which it has been used throughout by Marxian Socialists, and that has contributed so largely to the divorce between Socialism and democracy.

The 16th of April was followed by a great wave of reaction in all quarters of the city. The authors of the manifestation

¹ Daniel Stern, *op. cit.* ii. 15.

became the objects of indignant denunciations; a furious crowd carried a coffin beneath the window of Cabet. "One half of Paris," wrote the Prefect of the Police, "wishes to imprison the other."¹ Even the allies of the Socialists were suddenly smitten with misgivings, and it was George Sand, the disciple of Babeuf and Pierre Leroux, who was believed to have written these words in the *Bulletins de la République* for the 20th of April:

As to the Communists, against whom so many cries of reprobation and of anger have been heard, they were not worth the trouble of a demonstration. That a little number of sectarians should preach the chimerical establishment of the impossible equality of fortunes need not surprise or alarm one. At all periods misguided minds have pursued the realization of this dream without ever attaining it.²

The reaction was not confined to Paris alone. All over France the tide turned irrevocably against Socialism, and in the elections that followed the people showed themselves overwhelmingly in favour of the moderates. But the revolutionaries had gained one point, namely that they had put an end to what Marx described as "the charlatanism of universal fraternity," and the gulf between the industrial proletariat and the rest of the nation yawned more widely than ever.

When the new National Assembly met on the 4th of May the extremists Proudhon, Cabet, Louis Blanc, and Blanqui were all rejected by the electors, as also the "Labour" candidates in favour of Communism who had been put forward by the Committee of the Luxembourg: and it was Lamartine who now received the plaudits of the crowd. This was largely owing to the attitude of Louis Blanc, who had made it clear that he aimed at nothing less than "the absolute domination of the proletariat,"³ a proposition that, placed before a spirited nation possessing an energetic and intelligent *bourgeoisie*, must necessarily encounter determined opposition.

Louis Blanc, moreover, possessed the irritating characteristic, common to many Socialists, of imagining that he

¹ Daniel Stern, *op. cit.* ii. 179-180.

² *Ibid.* p. 183.

³ *Ibid.*, *op. cit.* ii. 207.

alone was animated by sincere love for the people, and his discourse to the Assembly on the 10th of May, again demanding "a ministry of work and progress," was so tinged with this peculiar form of egoism as to provoke cries of protest. Finally the whole Assembly rose in a body, whilst from all sides shouts went up: "You have not the monopoly of love for the people! We are all here for the social question, we have all come in the name of the people! The whole Assembly is here to defend the rights of the people!"¹

The new assembly thus found itself crushed between two forces—on one hand the *bourgeoisie* rendered intractable by the menace of Communism, on the other the revolutionaries who, now legally excluded from the government, were obliged to cast about for a further pretext to stir up the people. This was provided by a revolt in Poland which the Prussian troops had ruthlessly suppressed on the 5th of May, and the working-men of Paris were summoned to assemble in their thousands as a protest against this display of arbitrary authority. Accordingly, on the 13th a procession of 5000 to 6000 people, led by Sobrier and Huber, a professional agitator of equivocal antecedents, marched to the Place de la Concorde, shouting: "Vive la Pologne!" The working-men in the crowd, who had started out in all good faith to agitate, as they had been told to do, in favour of oppressed Poland, were animated by no revolutionary intentions and never dreamt of overthrowing the Assembly elected by universal suffrage. But, as usual, agents of disorder had mingled in their ranks, strangers of sinister appearance ready to side either with police or mob in order to provoke a riot, well-dressed women not of the people were observed inciting the crowd to violence.²

At the bridge of the Concorde the procession seemed to hesitate, but Blanqui, now placing himself at its head, cried loudly, "Forward!" and the whole mass surged towards the palace occupied by the Assembly. The small number of National Guards assembled proved powerless to stem the oncoming tide of 150,000 men and women, which pressed onwards with such force that a number of people were crushed to death at the entrance of the Palace.

¹ Daniel Stern, pp. 237-238.

² *Ibid.*, *op. cit.* ii. 258.

It was then that Lamartine, braver than his predecessors the revolutionaries of 1792, came forward out of the Assembly and faced the people.

"Citizen Lamartine," said one of the leaders, Laviron, "we have come to read a petition to the Assembly in favour of Poland. . . ."

"You shall not pass," Lamartine answered imperiously.

"By what right will you prevent us from passing? We are the people. Too long have you made fine phrases; the people want something besides phrases, they wish to go themselves to the Assembly and signify their wishes."

How true was the word uttered by a voice in the crowd at this juncture: "Unhappy ones, what are you doing? You are throwing back the cause of liberty for more than a century!"

In vain the men who had raised the storm now tried to quell it. Whilst the crowd pressed onwards into the hall of the Assembly, Thomas, Raspail, Barbès, Ledru Rollin, Buchez, Louis Blanc struggled amidst the suffocating heat of the May day and the odour of massed humanity to make their voices heard. Louis Blanc at the table declared that "the people by their cries had violated their own sovereignty"; the crowd responded with shouts of: "Vive la Pologne! Vive l'organisation du travail!" Louis Blanc, attacked with the weapon he himself had forged, was reduced to impotence; it was no longer the theorist who had deluded them with words that the people demanded, but Blanqui, the man of action, the instigator of violence and fury. "Blanqui! Where is Blanqui? We want Blanqui!" was the cry of the multitude. And instantly, borne on the shoulders of the crowd, the strange figure of the famous agitator appeared—a little man prematurely bent, with wild eyes darting flame from hollows deep sunk in the sickly pallor of his face, with black hair shaved close like a monk's, his black coat buttoned up to meet his black tie, his hands encased in black gloves—and at this sinister vision a silence fell upon the crowd. Blanqui, suiting himself to the temper of his audience, thereupon delivered a harangue demanding that France should immediately declare war on Europe for the deliverance of Poland—truly a strange

measure for the relief of public misery in Paris! Meanwhile Louis Blanc, with a Polish flag thrust into his hands, was making a valiant effort to recover his popularity. An eloquent discourse on "the sovereignty of the people" had at last the desired effect, and amidst cries of "Long live Louis Blanc! Long live the social and democratic Republic!" he too was hoisted on to the shoulders of the people and carried in triumph. But the emotion of the moment proved too great for the frail body; Louis Blanc, his face streaming with perspiration, attempted in vain to address the crowd, but no sound came from his lips and, finally lowered to earth, he fell fainting on a seat.

The dementia of the crowd, urged on by the "Clubistes," now reached its height. Whilst Barbès vainly attempted to deliver a speech the tribune was assailed by a group of maniacs, who with clenched fists threatened each other and drowned his voice in tumultuous cries. To add to the confusion the galleries began to break down under the weight of the increasing crowd and a bursting water-tank flooded the corridor.

At this juncture Huber, who had likewise fallen into a long swoon, suddenly recovered consciousness, and, mounting the tribune, declared in a voice of thunder that the Assembly was dissolved in the name of the people.

At the same moment Buchez was flung out of his seat, Louis Blanc was driven by the crowd out on to the esplanade of the Invalides, Raspail fainted on the lawn, Sobrier was carried in triumph by the workmen, and Huber disappeared.

Then followed the inevitable reaction. The troops arrived on the scene and dispersed the crowd, Barbès was arrested. Louis Blanc, with tumbled hair and torn clothes, succeeded in escaping from the National Guards and took refuge in the Assembly, only to find himself assailed with cries of indignation.

"You always talk of yourself! You have no heart!"

Whilst these extraordinary scenes had been taking place at the Assembly another crowd of 200 people had invaded the Prefecture of Police, where Caussidière, following the example of Pétion on the 10th of August, remained discreetly waiting to see which way the tide turned before

deciding on the course he should take. Faced by an angry mob of insurgents the wretched Caussidière, hitherto in the vanguard of revolution, now began to talk of "constitutional authority" and threatened to run a rebel through the body with his sabre.¹

With the aid of the Republican Guard the Prefecture of Police was finally evacuated, and throughout Paris the troops set about restoring order. "The repression," writes the Comtesse d'Agoult, "is without pity because the attack has been terrible"—words ever to be remembered by the makers of revolution. The fiercer the onslaught the fiercer must be the resistance, and anarchy can only end in despotism. Even the revolutionary leaders are obliged to admit the reactionary effects of May the 15th, and the people themselves, always impressed by a display of authority, sided with the victors. When on the 16th of May the arrested conspirators leave for Vincennes "they hear, on going through the Faubourg St. Antoine, the imprecations of the crowd of men, women, and children who, in spite of the extreme heat of the day, follow the carriages with insults in their mouths as far as the first houses of Vincennes."

But this revulsion of popular feeling was only momentary; before long the Socialists had re-established their ascendancy over the people. In the by-elections on June the 5th Pierre Leroux, Proudhon, and Caussidière were all successful, and the situation was further complicated by the election of Louis Napoléon Bonaparte.

It was now that the Imperialist schemes of the Bonapartistes first became apparent, and that the cry of "Vive l'Empereur!" was first heard. The leaders of this faction, no less than those of the Socialists, realized that the overthrow of the existing government must be brought about by a popular insurrection, and the usual weapon of class hatred was employed by both with equal unscrupulousness. Side by side with the hawkers of such gutter-press journals as the *Robespierre*, the *Père Duchesne*, the *Carmagnole*, the *Journal de la Canaille*, the vendors of the *Napoléon Républicain* pressed their wares on the soldiers, warning them that "the bourgeois Terror" would represent

¹ *Mémoires de Caussidière*, ii. 136.

them as the murderers of their brothers and invoking the red flag of social revolution.¹

The government elected by the system of universal suffrage so long demanded thus found itself between two fires, and the whole revolutionary movement turned into a contest between the warring political parties.

The industrial situation had now become chaotic. Trade was paralysed by the feeling of general insecurity and by continual strikes of workmen, whilst the men employed in the National Workshops showed an increasing tendency to revolt. This method of absorbing unemployed labour had, as we have seen, from the beginning provided a failure ; and at last, after a vain attempt to improve matters by dismissing the provincial workmen who had crowded into Paris, and by reintroducing the system of piece-work, the Government announced its intention of abolishing the National Workshops. A decree to this effect was passed on the 21st of June and inevitably brought about the final crisis. On the evening of the same day bands of workmen again assembled, and to the rival cries of " Vive Barbès ! " and " Vive Napoléon ! " planned a fresh demonstration.

Then followed the three fearful days of June the 22nd to the 25th. Barricades were once more erected in the streets, and war to the knife was declared on the Republic. As in every outbreak of the World Revolution, the insurgents were composed of warring elements, all resolved to destroy the existing order and all animated by opposing aims. Thus, according to the report of Panisse, the head of the division for general security, the crowds that took part in the insurrection included, besides the workmen driven by hunger and despair to revolt, a number of honest and credulous people duped by the agitators—" Communists, dreamers of a Utopia amongst which each has his system and disagreeing with each other ; " Legitimists, demanding the restoration of the Bourbon dynasty in the person of the Duc de Chambord ; Bonapartistes, partisans of a regency ; and, finally, " the scum of all parties, convicts and wastrels ; in a word, the enemies of all society, men vowed by instinct to ideas of insurrection, theft, and pillage." ²

¹ Daniel Stern, *op. cit.* ii. 341.

² *Ibid.*, ii. 598.

Against this terrible army the troops, led by the Generals Cavaignac and Lamoricière, reinforced by National Guards from all over France, displayed the greatest vigour, and on the 26th of June, after terrible fighting which left no less than 10,000 killed and wounded in the streets of Paris, Cavaignac remained master of the situation and a military dictatorship assumed control.

It is unnecessary to follow the French Revolution of 1848 through its final political stages—the election of Prince Louis Napoléon to the Presidency of the Republic in December of the same year, the *coup d'État* carried out by him three years later (on December 2, 1851), by which the Constitution of 1848 was overthrown, and, finally, the proclamation of the Empire on December 10, 1852, with the prince as Napoléon III. at its head. Throughout this period the fire of social revolution could only smoulder feebly, and with the accession of the Emperor was temporarily extinguished in France. The régime that followed, like that which succeeded to the first French Revolution, was one of absolute repression. The Socialist leaders were arrested, no less than 25,000 prisoners were taken by the Government and a great number deported without trial. At the same time the Secret Societies were put down with an iron hand, all the liberties guaranteed to the French people, including the liberty of the press, were abolished by the Constitution of 1852, and this despotism was accepted by a majority of 7,000,000 to 600,000 votes. For as in 1800 the nation, wearied of revolution, was ready to throw itself at the feet of a strong man who would restore order and give it peace once more.

The revolution of 1848 thus ended in the total defeat of the workers, and for this it is impossible to deny that the principal blame lay with the Socialist leaders—above all with Louis Blanc. It is only just to recognize the excellent intentions of the man, who devoted all his energies to the reorganization of labour on an ideal system, yet it must surely be admitted that social experiments of this kind can only be judged by results. The scientist who fails in a laboratory experiment may be pardoned for failure, but in the case of men who juggle with human lives failure is

crime. If a duke were to invent a novel system of drainage, and, without assuring himself of its efficacy, were to instal it in all his tenants' cottages, thereby killing them off by diphtheria, he would not be regarded as a noble enthusiast whose only crime was excess of zeal, but as a criminal fool for whom no mercy should be demanded. Why then should reckless ventures, merely because they are conducted in the name of Socialism, ensure the immunity of their authors? Louis Blanc may well have been a sincere and well-meaning man, the fact remains that through his application of impracticable schemes and obstinate belief in his own infallibility he led the working-classes to disaster. No one has recognized this truth more clearly than the anarchist Proudhon, who in these words has apportioned to this dangerous dreamer the blame he so truly deserves :

A great responsibility will rest in history on Louis Blanc. It was he who at the Luxembourg with his riddle "Equality, Fraternity, Liberty," with his abracadabra "Every one according to his strength, to every one according to his needs!"—began that miserable opposition of ideologies to ideas, and who roused common sense against Socialism. He thought himself the bee of the revolution and he was only the grasshopper. May he at last, after having poisoned the working-men with his absurd formulas, bring to the cause of the proletariat, which on a day of error fell into his feeble hands, the obol of his abstention and his silence !¹

But a further reproach to be brought against Louis Blanc and his colleagues of 1848 is their habit of perpetually reverting to the past. "Let us respect the past," said Victor Hugo, "provided it is content to be dead; but if it wishes to be alive, we must attack it and try to kill it." Socialists who are quite willing to apply this maxim to the noblest traditions of the past reject it when it is a matter of reviving exploded subversive doctrines or methods. So the men of 1848, instead of considering the needs of the present hour, instead of pressing forward to more enlightened schemes of social reform, persisted in harking back eternally to the principles of the first French Revolution; soaked in the doctrines of their revolutionary predecessors all craved to

¹ *La Révolution au XIXième siècle*, p. 108.

emulate them, and thus the so-called popular demonstrations organized by them in Paris between February and June of 1848 were directly modelled on those of 1789 to 1792. On this point both Marx and Proudhon are in accord. "The Revolution of 1848," says Marx, "could do nothing better than parody first 1789 and then the revolutionary tradition of 1793-1795";¹ and Proudhon covers with ridicule the manner in which the "souvenirs" of 1793 were constantly evoked by the leaders. It was "a universal mania," Mme. d'Agoult observes likewise, "from the 24th of February onwards to refer everything back to our first revolution." The failure of 1848 lay, therefore, not in over-zeal for progress, but in reactionariness, in blind attachment to past and dead traditions.

The outbreak of revolution in Paris had given the signal for the European conflagration. On the 1st of March insurrection began in Baden, on the 12th in Vienna, on the 13th riots took place in Berlin, on the 18th a rising in Milan, on the 20th in Parma, on the 22nd a Republic was declared in Venice, on the 10th of April a Chartist demonstration was organized in London, on the 7th of May troubles began in Spain, on the 15th in Naples, and during the course of the year no less than sixty-four outbreaks of serfs occurred in Russia.

Of course, in the pages of official history we shall find no explanation of this sudden recurrence of the revolutionary epidemic, which is once more conveniently ascribed to the time-honoured theory of contagious popular enthusiasm for liberty. Thus the *Cambridge Modern History*, describing the revolution in Germany, observes: "The Grand Duchy of Baden was the natural starting-place for the revolutionary movement, which, once set on foot, seemed to progress almost automatically from State to State and town to town."

Precisely; but we are given no hint as to the mechanism which produced this automatic action all over Europe. The business of the official historian is not to inquire into causes but to present the sequence of events in a manner unin-

¹ Marx, *La Lutte des classes*, p. 192.

telligible to the philosopher but satisfying to the uninquiring mind of the general public.

That the European Revolution of 1848 was the result of masonic organization cannot, however, be doubted by any one who takes trouble to dig below the surface. We have already seen how Mazzini and the "Young Italy" movement had proved the blind instruments of the Haute Vente Romaine, and how the same society operating through the lodges had prepared the ground in every country. In France the part played by Freemasonry in the revolutionary movement was quite frankly recognized, and the Supreme Council of the Scottish rite presenting themselves before the members of the Provisional Government on the 10th of March received the congratulations of Lamartine in these words :

I am convinced that it is from the depths of your lodges that have emanated, first in the shade, then in the half-light, and finally in the full light of day, the sentiments which ended by producing the sublime explosion we witnessed in 1789, and of which the people of Paris have just given to the world the second and, I hope, the last representation.¹

But, of course, the people were to be allowed to think they had acted on their own initiative. Thus the Jewish Freemason Crémieux, whom the Revolution had raised to a place in the Provisional Government, declared in a speech to the crowd that on the ruins of the shattered monarchy "the people took for the eternal symbol of revolution 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity'" ;² it was only to the Freemasons themselves—this time a deputation of the Grand Orient, on the 24th of March—that he acknowledged the true origin of this device : "In all times and under all circumstances . . . *Masonry* ceaselessly repeated these sublime words : 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.'"³

In Germany as in France the principal leaders of the revolution—Hecker, Fickler, and Herwegh in Baden ; Robert Blum in Saxony ; Jacobi in Königsberg ; von Gagern in Berlin—were all Freemasons who had been present at the aforesaid Masonic Congress in 1847.

¹ Deschamps, *op. cit.* ii. 282.

² *Mémoires de Caussidière*, i. 131.

³ Deschamps, ii. 283.

The 1848 Revolution was thus the second great attempt of illumined Freemasonry to bring about a world conflagration. But there was one country where the movement proved completely abortive; this was England. It is true that for many years the Chartist riots had created widespread anxiety, but the independent character of the English people had hitherto always prevented them from modelling their agitations on continental precedents; and "the People's Charter," aiming rather at political reform than at social disintegration, was essentially a national product. That agitators working for the overthrow of the existing social system had introduced themselves into the movement as earlier they had found their way into Trade Unionism cannot be doubted; it was this, however, that led to the final defeat of Chartism. When on the 13th of April 1848 a great demonstration was organized and a monster petition carried to Kennington Common, London prepared itself for self-defence and prudent tradesmen put up their shutters in expectation of riots, but the insignificant proportions of the assembled mob, and the discovery that a great number of the signatures appended to the petition were fraudulent, covered the whole affair with ridicule, and the dreaded explosion ended in smoke. The truth is that in a country where reforms were in progress revolution could make little headway, and the passing of the Ten Hours Bill in 1847 had done much to quell agitation. Moreover, as we have already seen, the Co-operative movement had begun and was taking a strong hold on the imaginations of the British workers. It is not a little to the credit of our country that, whilst France continued to turn in a vicious circle of abortive revolution, the English people, true to their traditions, had struck out a fresh path entirely on their own initiative, which but for Socialist opposition might have led—and may yet lead—to the regeneration of the industrial system.

Thus the situation stood at the end of 1848. Socialism in every conceivable form had been tried and found wanting. It had failed in the form of peaceful experiments under Robert Owen, St-Simon, Fourier, Pierre Leroux, and Cabet; it had failed still more signally when the attempt was made

to establish it by revolutionary methods. So we find that at this crisis a change came over the revolutionary movement, and Socialism, a derelict concern, was taken over by a company. What that company was we shall see in the next chapter.