A DILEMMA

A Story of the Paris Commune

By LOUISE REVERE

At the fall of the second empire of France, when Napoleon III was dethroned, the communists of Paris took possession of the city. They comprised that element which brought about the reign of terror during the French uprising against the Bourbons in the previous century, only the former revolutionists were led by a mingling of patriots and demagogues, while the latter were led by impractical idealists.

Among these commune leaders was a young artist, Gaston Boyer, who was as much of a poet as an artist. There is something fascinating in the enthusiasm of these dreamers who would bring about a Eutopia. At any rate, Boyer was much beloved by all who knew him. Mlle. Adele Boivissant, a person of very different ideas from him, met and fell in love with him and, her love being returned, after their engagement did all she could to eradicate his wild notions.

However, at the first movement of the commune in 1870 Boyer threw himself into it and became the captain of one of the bands or companies in that force which obtained the control of Paris. For several days they held the power to inaugurate any governmental system they chose and had they begun to lay the foundations for such a system would undoubtedly have held it longer. But, having reached a point where their dreams must either become a realization or fall to pieces, like the wave that trembles before it breaks, the communists, not knowing what to do with their power, remained inactive, let it fall and went down with it to their ruin.

During the last struggle with those who were striving to place France again under a governing power Gaston Boyer was dangerously wounded. Being nearer the residence of his fiancee than his own home, he told those who were dragging him from the clutch of the victors to carry him there. They did so. Mlle. Boivissant received him and, finding that he was bleeding profusely, hurried out to secure the services of a surgeon.

This was just preceding that slaughter of communists which was the most pitiful accompaniment of any modern revolution. The prisons were filled with them, and in groups they were taken out into the yards, placed with their faces against a wall and shot down without mercy. In the general massacre even children were made to suffer with the rest. This method of destroying anarchy is a bloody page in the history of government.

Gaston Boyer, fighting desperately and holding his men together at the barricade he defended, was a marked man to his enemies. The officer who led a battalion of infantry against him when he took the barricade sent Lieutenant Bertrand with a file of men to get possession of the communist who had given them so much trouble. Bertrand had to fight his way after those who were carrying Boyer, but managed to keep them in sight and saw them bear him into the home of his fiancee. Entering the house, the lieutenant found a surgeon there with instruments pertaining to his profession in his hands, but no one else.

"How now, M. le Docteur?" exclaimed the lieutenant. "What are you doing here without a single patient when so many wounded men are needing your attention elsewhere?"

"I was just going out to serve the poor fellows when you entered."

"That story will not go down with me. A wounded communist has been carried here, one of the most stubborn of the lot. It is evident that you have been treating him. Where is he?"

"If you think there is any one here you want all you have to do is to search the house."

"And so I will."

Bertrand sent his men up and down stairs, instructing them to ransack every corner, while he reserved for himself a bedroom out of which he had seen the doctor coming when he entered the house. He opened a closet door, looked behind a lounge and lifted the valence of a bed. From the latter place he dragged forth Mlle. Boivissant, trembling like a leaf and pale as death.

Now the searcher by this discovery was thrown off the scent at the moment when he was within a few feet of the man he sought. Boyer had been carried into the room and, at the moment the surgeon, who had just arrived, was attempting to stop the flow of blood from the communist's wound, there came up the sound of armed men below.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Adele. "What shall we do?"

"There is but one hope," said the surgeon. "Let me lift him under the bed. Possibly they may not think of looking there for a brave man."

With help Boyer got under the bed. Then the surgeon suggested that Adele get under it with him and hold a towel tightly against the wound to stanch the flow of blood with the hope of preserving her lover from death. She succeeded in doing so, and at the same moment the surgeon passed out of the room.

"There is a game here," said the lieutenant. "Doubtless, mademoiselle, you are concealing a lover, but I am at a loss to understand why you should conceal yourself."

Adele stood shivering, but made no reply. She expected every moment that Bertrand would look under the bed. But small things will often turn the course of events. The finding of a girl instead of a man directed the course of the searcher's thoughts in a different channel. He had had no thought of finding a badly wounded man under the bed. He had looked there as a timid woman would do the same thing, not expecting to find a burglar, but to satisfy herself that no burglar is there. A puzzle occupied the lieutenant's mind. Why had the girl hid from him?

"Do you know where the communist who was carried in here is to be found?" he asked Adele.

A still more important problem than the one that occupied Bertrand's mind confronted Adele. If she denied knowing what he asked he would continue his search. She might say that her lover had been spirited away. In that case Bertrand would force her into showing him where he had been taken. This might save Boyer from being shot, but he would likely bleed to death. What should she do? She must take a risk. The surgeon knew his patient's condition, and there was a possibility that he would see her leave the premises with the soldiers and go to Boyer's rescue. All this flashed through Adele's brain instantaneously. She resolved to cling to the one chance. She admitted that she knew of the communist's whereabouts. Cocking his pistol, the officer pointed it at her and told her to show him the way. "He can't have gone far," he added, "in his condition."

"No," gasped Adele mechanically—"not far!"

She led him downstairs and out through a back door into a yard that opened on an alley way. While doing so she looked about her to see if there was any one in the house who would care for her wounded lover. Not a soul appeared. The fighting in the neighborhood had scared all away. She hoped she might catch a glimpse of the surgeon, but he was nowhere to be seen. Doubtless he had gone out and was ministering to other wants than those of the man upstairs alone under the bed. The poor girl was taking the only chance to save her lover's life, but she was oppressed with the thought that she was leaving him to die alone.

In the yard she stood still, not knowing just what to do. She looked up at the rear of the dwellings on either side of the house she had left, hoping she might see some one to whom she might communicate by sign a request to go in and succor her lover. But the attention of all was upon the street where the firing had not yet ceased, and had she seen any one how could she make him understand?

"Lead on!" thundered the lieutenant, aiming to terrify her.

Adele went through the opening leading out to the alley and, turning, passed to the street. There she was about to lead the officer further when he stopped her.

"It is absurd for you to try to make me believe that a wounded man would be carried so far. This fellow is doubtless very near, and you know it. Take me to him or I will blow out your brains."

He looked at her so fiercely that she was half inclined to believe he would. But just then there was a rattle of musketry very near them, and a crowd of communists came running past them wild with terror. Adele was knocked off her feet and, getting up, yielded to a desperate resolve. Without looking for Bertrand she joined the communists in their mad flight.

Having escaped from the officer, she went around the block and into a house near her own, from whence she sent a messenger to learn if it would be safe for her to go home. The messenger came back and reported that the house was deserted. Taking the risk of Bertrand's having returned to seek her, she went home and looked under the bed where she had left her lover. He was not there.

She was encouraged. It was likely that help had come to him, and yet he might have been discovered and carried away to prison. Going downstairs she was about to leave the house when the surgeon entered. She stood looking at him in an agony of suspense.

"He is saved," he said, "and by your presence of mind."

"How?"

"I lurked near till I saw you go out with the officer. Then, summoning assistance, we carried the wounded man through the yard after you had left it to a house, where I succeeded in taking up the artery through which blood was escaping and stopped the bleeding. Come, I will lead you to him."

When the massacre of communists was over and Paris had settled down under the republic, one morning a wedding party entered the Church of the Madeleine. The groom was Gaston Boyer and the bride Adele Boivissant. There was now no danger for either. After the ceremony the couple departed for Brittany, where the artist resumed his legitimate work.

One feature of Paris since the temporary triumph of communism has changed. The east front of the historic palace of the Tuileries is not there. But the fountains play and the children sport in the garden where it stood. Yet the reign of kings and the reign of emperors have ended. A republic that has taken their place has lasted forty years. But where is that Eutopia, the commune? It lived in the minds of its votaries for many years to be lifted at last on to its pedestal. But it had no sooner been placed there than it fell of its own weight. Alas, for the brave men and women and children who paid for their vision with their lives.

A TEST OF LOVE

On the Coming Home of a Soldier

By NATHAN PELHAM

"Grandpa, tell us a story about the war."

"I've told you so many stories about the war that I can't think of any more unless I invent one, and that I couldn't do. But I can tell you one about what happened when I came home from the war. How would you like to hear that?"

"Very much. Go on."

The children ranged themselves around the old man, a boy of seven climbing on one knee, a girl of six on the other. Veteran as he was, there was nothing of "grim visaged war" about him. His white locks made up in length what they lacked in thickness. His eyes beamed kindly on his grandchildren, and an arm encircled the waist of the boy and the girl sitting on his knee. A lass of sixteen stood behind him, one arm resting on his shoulder. Altogether the group made a pretty picture of age and youth.

"The first thing I have to do in telling the story is to make you understand how different we old fellows were when we were fighting the Confederates from what we are today. I was just sixteen when I enlisted. I was under age—that is, they didn't take boys for soldiers unless they were eighteen years old—and I applied at several recruiting stations before they would let me in. I had to do it all secretly, for my mother was dreading that I would be off for the war, and when finally I was accepted she didn't know anything about it. I went home and waited till after supper, when she was sitting by the globe lamp darning my stocking, then I blurted out:

"'Mother, I've enlisted.'

"It broke her all up for awhile. Then she went to work to get me ready to go for a soldier, fixing up a good deal more of clothes than I could stuff in a knapsack. I stepped out to see a girl who lived across the street. We'll call her Bess."

"Have you forgotten her name, grampy?"

"Not exactly. But since I've started to call her Bess we'll let it go at that. Bess and I were great chums, and I know she'd be interested in hearing about my going to the war. She praised me very highly for my patriotism, and all that, but I noticed something glistening in her eye, and that was quite a revelation to me."

"You mean," said the girl standing behind the chair, "that you knew she loved you."

"That's about it. But she had a lot of stuff in her and didn't like to show how she felt about my going to the war. She realized what I was doing better than I did. Many a boy who went off full of enthusiasm as I did never came back. I can see certain ones now whose homes are there yet. There was Charlie Mason. I am holding his head as we pushed by him sitting on the ground, his back braced against a tree, shot through the lungs, struggling for breath, the blood pouring. But that won't do for children. I'll get on with my story. As I was saying, Bess understood that the chances were I never come back, and when our regiment did return at the end of the war more than half the men who had served in it had been killed or died of wounds or disease.

"Bess was really a jolly girl, and all through that long, dreadful war she kept up my spirits by her letters. There wasn't one of them but had something funny in it, and these parts I used to read to the boys to make them laugh and cheer them up too. Persons who make merry under difficulties are treasures, so different from those dismal creatures who make every one about them feel dismal too.

"I said this was to be a story about coming home from the war, and so it is. What I've been telling you is simply to make you understand what follows. I tell you that was a happy day when we boys heard we were ordered home to the town where we had been organized to be mustered out of the service."

"What's mustered out, grampy?"

"Disbanding, going from soldiering back to being a citizen. I had several chums in my company with whom I was very thick, and we were talking over getting home and seeing all the folks, and I was the happiest one of the lot, thinking how glad mother would be to get me back again after having escaped all the perils I had been through and"—

"Wouldn't Bess be glad to see you too?"

"Oh, yes! I'm coming to Bess, and there's where the point of my story hangs. We boys were talking about one of our company who was going back with one eye shot out, which spoiled all his good looks, to a girl to whom he was engaged to be married. We wondered if his girl would love him as much with one eye as with two. Then some one suggested that I was mighty lucky to go back to my girl with a whole body, and I said, 'If I had lost both arms and both legs Bess would love me and marry me all the same.'

"One of the fellows, my particular chum, Billy Welch, said:

"'Archie, wouldn't it be a good scheme to try her?'

"'What do you mean?' I asked.

"'You might go home with an arm shot off.'

"'How would I do that?'

"'Tie one arm behind your back, concealed by an overcoat cape, letting the empty sleeve swing loose.'

"'That would be more like you than me, Billy. You're always up to some practical joke,' said I.

"'But think how jolly it would be after Bess had sympathized with you and stood by you, and all that, to undeceive her.'

"'It would be kind of nice. I've a good mind to try it on.'

"You see, it wasn't very long since we had been fighting, and I might have lost an arm and not written home anything about it. I couldn't bear to give them the pain, you know. Well, nothing more was said about the test of Bess' affection for me till we reached the town where the regiment had been organized. We came in a train of cars, and, since we arrived late at night, there were few persons to welcome us. The next morning I secured leave to go and see mother, and after she had hugged me and shed tears over me for awhile I went up to my room, doubled my arm behind my back under my blouse, buttoned the cape of my overcoat under my chin and, with an empty sleeve swinging loose, made a pretty good one armed soldier.

"Bess was at the door to let me in, and when she saw my empty sleeve she looked as if she was going to cry. I didn't wait to get inside to put one arm around her and kiss her right before persons passing on the street. Fact is, I couldn't wait. I wished I had both arms free. Those who saw me didn't mind the publicity of the thing. All the soldier boys were coming home and were mighty popular fellows, I tell you. Every one liked to see them happy.

"'Oh, Archie!' exclaimed Bess between kisses. 'My poor, dear Archie! Why didn't you write me about the loss of your arm?'

"'I couldn't,' I faltered. 'I was too broken up. Besides, I didn't know but when you knew I must be maimed for life you would'—

"'Cease to love you, discard you! Oh, Archie, how could you think that!'

"'I only feared it. I had confidence in your nobility of soul, but I wasn't quite sure'—

"'Wasn't quite sure! Why, Archie, if I thought for a moment that you had believed I would be so base as to turn you away after you had fought all this time for your country, while I have not been able to stand my share of the burden, I would feel outraged.'

"I began to feel a bit nervous. If this was the way she felt, what would she do when she knew I had put up a job to test her? I had intended to surprise her by bringing forward the missing arm a few minutes after our meeting. Now I dared not do so. We sat down on a sofa side by side. Bess, dreading lest I should hurt the stump, kept at a distance from me on that account. I tried to get her to let me put the other arm around her waist, but she said that not for worlds would she risk hurting that poor wounded member or as much of it as the surgeon had left. The consequence was I was obliged to sit at one end of the sofa, while she sat at the other.

"I couldn't get her to talk about anything except my self. She wanted to know all about how I had lost the arm, just how far up it had been severed, how long I had been in the hospital. I tried to head her off, but it was no use. By and by she conquered her repugnance at looking at such a thing sufficiently to suggest that I let her see how much of the arm was left. I wasn't ready to make a confession just then, so I told her that to uncover the wounded end would pain me terribly.

"Of course I should have been ashamed of myself, but, having got into the scrape, how was I to get out of it? I tried to screw up my courage to tell her, but every time I was about to begin that look of mingled reproach, indignation and contempt that would surely come over her face if I did scared me off. I couldn't do it.

"There was a ring at the doorbell, and who should come in but Billy Welch.

"'Oh, Mr. Welch,' exclaimed Bess, 'isn't it terrible about the loss of Archie's arm? Why didn't you write me about it?'

"'I didn't have the heart to break the news to you.'

"'To think that when other boys are coming home whole Archie should suffer this loss!'

"'It's awful!' exclaimed Billy, turning his back to get a chair, or, rather, to hide an effort to repress a laugh.

"'I wish you would tell me,' Bess went on to him, 'how much of the arm is left. Archie won't let me see it.'

"'Won't he? Then I'll make him.'

"Billy came to me and landed a blow on that part of my lost arm which was near the shoulder. Bess gave a cry.

"'You awful man!' she said to Billy. 'How could you be so cruel?'

"By this time I could see that both Bess and Billy were trying to keep from exploding with laughter. Well, that ended my imposition. I threw off my cape and put the lost arm into the sleeve of my blouse. As I did so I said to Billy:

"'What did you want to give me away for—you who proposed this ridiculous scheme? I'll get even with you if it takes a lifetime!'

"I was mad, but Bess took my shot off hand and put it in Billy's and said that I must either forgive him for telling or she would not forgive me for my attempt to deceive her.

"So there I was. I stammered an unwilling forgiveness to Billy, and that ended the matter."

"I know who Bess was," said the girl behind the chair. "She was grandma."

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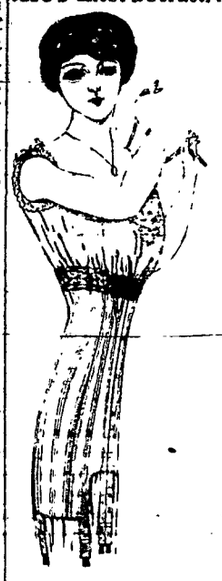

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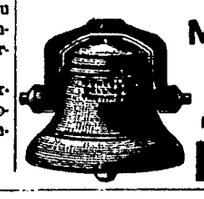

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Mills, a fellow collegian of Goldsmith's, called one morning to offer Oliver a breakfast, when he was adjured in answer to his knock and in a smothered voice to force open the door and enter. When Mills and others had at last forced the bolted door they found Goldsmith so entangled in the ticking of his bed that he could not extricate himself without help. He explained that as the night before had been piercing cold he had given a poor perishing woman with five children all his bedclothes. What could he do? He had nothing else, not a penny, to give her. "It was a cold night, too," he added, "for I couldn't at first sleep till I thought of ripping open the mattress to lie in the ticking."—"Oliver Goldsmith," by R. Ashe King.

A Surprise For Swagger.

"Yes," said Swagger, "this is a turkeze ring."

"Excuse me," said Bangs; "the correct pronunciation of that word is 'turkwoise.'"

"No turkeze, excuse me."

"I say turkwoise."

"Well, let's go to the jeweler and ask him."

"Right."

"In order to settle a wager," said Swagger to the jeweler, "would you mind telling me if the correct pronunciation of the stone in this ring is turkeze or turkwoise?"

The jeweler took the ring and examined it carefully. "The correct pronunciation," he said, "is glass."—London Tit-Bits.

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