

THE WANDERING JEW.

BY EDGEE SUE

CHAPTER LXI.

THE WOLVES AND THE DEVOURERS.

"There come the ants out of their holes!" cried Ciboule, stooping to pick up a stone. "We must have a fling at them for luck!" The stone, hurled by the steady, masculine hand of the virago, went straight to its mark, and struck an unfortunate woman who was trying to close one of the shutters.

"Hit in the white!" cried the hideous creature. "Well done, Ciboule! You've rapped her 'coker-nut'!" cried a voice.

"Ciboule for ever!"

"Come out, you Devourers, if you dare!"

"They have said a hundred times, that the neighbors were too cowardly even to come and look at their house," squealed the little man with the ferret's face.

"And now they show the white feather!"

"If they will not come out," cried the quarryman, in a voice of thunder, "let us smoke them out!"

"Yes, yes!"

"Let's break open the door!"

"We are sure to find them!"

"Come on! come on!"

The crowd, with the quarryman at their head, and Ciboule not far from him, brandishing a stick, advanced tumultuously towards one of the great doors. The ground shook beneath the rapid tread of the mob, which had now ceased shouting; but the confused, and, as it were, subterranean noise, sounded even more ominous than those savage outcries. The Wolves soon arrived opposite the massive oaken door. At the moment the blaster raised a sledge-hammer, the door opened suddenly. Some of the most determined of the assailants were about to rush in at this entrance; but the quarryman stepped back, extending his arm as if to moderate their ardor and impose silence. Then his followers gathered round him.

The half-open door discovered a party of workmen, unfortunately by no means numerous, but with countenances full of resolution. They had armed themselves hastily with forks, iron bars, and clubs. Agricola, who was their leader, held in his hand a heavy sledge-hammer. The young workman was very pale; but the fire of his eye, his menacing look, and the intrepid assurance of his bearing, showed that his father's blood boiled in his veins, and that in such a struggle he might become fear-inspiring. Yet he succeeded in restraining himself, and challenged the quarryman, in a firm voice: "What do you want?"

"A fight!" thundered the blaster.

"Yes, yes! a fight!" repeated the crowd.

"Silence, my Wolves!" cried the quarryman, as he turned round, and stretched forth his large hand towards the multitude. Then addressing Agricola, he said: "The Wolves have come to ask for a fight."

"With whom?"

"With the Devourers."

"There are no Devourers here," replied Agricola; "we are only peaceable workmen. So begone."

"Well! here are the Wolves, that will eat the quiet workmen."

"The Wolves will eat no one here," said Agricola, looking full at the quarryman, who approached him with a threatening air; "they can only frighten little children."

"Oh! you think so," said the quarryman, with a savage sneer. Then, raising his weapon, he shook it in Agricola's face, exclaiming: "Is that any laughing matter?"

"Is that?" answered Agricola, with a rapid movement, parrying the stone-sledge with his own hammer.

"Iron against iron—hammer against hammer that suits me," said the quarryman.

"It does not matter what suits you," answered Agricola, hardly able to restrain himself. "You have broken our windows, frightened our women, and wounded—perhaps killed—the oldest workman in the factory, who at this moment lies bleeding in the arms of his son." Here Agricola's voice trembled in spite of himself. "It is, I think, enough."

"No; the Wolves are hungry for more," answered the blaster; "you must come out (cowards that you are!) and fight us on the plain."

"Yes! yes! battle!—let them come out!" cried the crowd, howling, hissing, waving their sticks, and pushing further into the small space which separated them from the door.

"We will have no battle," answered Agricola; "we will not leave our home; but if you have the misfortune to pass this," said Agricola, throwing his cap upon the threshold, and setting his foot on it with an intrepid air, "if you pass this, you attack us in our own house, and you will be answerable for all that may happen."

"There or elsewhere we will have the fight! the Wolves must eat the Devourers. Now for the attack!" cried the fierce quarryman, raising his hammer to strike Agricola.

But the latter, throwing himself on one side by a sudden leap, avoided the blow, and struck with his hammer full in the chest of the quarryman, who staggered for a moment, but instantly recovering his legs, rushed furiously on Agricola, crying, "Follow me, Wolves!"

CHAPTER LXVII.

THE RETURN.

As soon as the combat had begun between Agricola and the blaster, the general fight became terrible, ardent, implacable. A flood of assailants, following the quarryman's steps, rushed into the house with irresistible fury; others, unable to force their way through this dreadful crowd, where the more impetuous squeezed, stifled, and crushed those who were less so, went round in another direction, broke through some lattice-work, and thus placed the people of the factory, as it were, between two fires. Some resisted courageously; others, seeing Ciboule, followed by some of her horrible companions, and by several of the most ill-looking ruffians, hastily enter that part of the Common Dwelling-house in which the women had taken refuge, hurried in pursuit of this band; but some of the hag's companions, having faced about, and vigorously defended the entrance of the staircase against the workmen, Ciboule, with three or four like herself, and about the same number of no less ignoble men, rushed through the rooms, with the intention of robbing or destroying all that came in their way. A door, which at first resisted their efforts, was soon broken through; Ciboule rushed into the apartment with a stick in her hand, her hair dishevelled, furious, and, as it were, maddened with the noise and tumult. A beautiful young girl (it was Angela), who appeared anxious to defend the entrance to a second chamber, threw herself on her knees, pale and supplicating, and raising her clasped hands, exclaimed: "Do not hurt my mother!"

"I'll serve you out first, and your mother afterwards," replied the horrible woman, throwing herself on the poor girl, and endeavoring to tear her face with her nails, whilst the rest of the ruffianly band broke the glass and the clock with their sticks, and possessed themselves of some articles of wearing apparel.

Angela, struggling with Ciboule, uttered loud cries of distress, and still attempted to guard the room in which her mother had taken refuge; whilst the latter, leaning from the window, called Agricola to their assistance. The smith was now engaged with the huge blaster. In a close struggle, their hammers had become useless, and with bloodshot eyes and clenched teeth, chest to chest, and limbs twined together like two serpents, they made the most violent efforts to overthrow each other. Agricola, bent forward, held under his right arm the left leg of the quarryman, which he had seized in parrying a violent kick; but such was the Herculean strength of the leader of the Wolves, that he remained firm as a tower, though resting only on one leg. With the hand that was still free (for the other was gripped by Agricola as in a vice), he endeavored with violent blows to break the jaws of the smith, who, leaning his head forward, pressed his forehead hard against the breast of his adversary.

"The Wolf will break the Devourer's teeth, and he shall devour no more," said the quarryman.

"You are no true Wolf," answered the smith, redoubling his efforts; "the true Wolves are honest fellows, and do not come ten against one."

"True or false, I will break your teeth."

"And I your paw," said the smith, giving so violent a wrench to the leg of the quarryman, that the latter uttered a cry of acute pain, and, with the rage of a wild beast, butting suddenly forward with his head, succeeded in biting Agricola in the side of the neck.

The pang of this bite forced Agricola to make a movement, which enabled the quarryman to disengage his leg. Then, with a superhuman effort, he threw himself with his whole weight on Agricola, and brought him to the ground, falling himself upon him.

At this juncture, Angela's mother, leaning from one of the windows of the Common Dwelling-house, exclaimed in a heart-rending voice: "Help, Agricola! They are killing my child!"

"Let me go—and on my honor—I will fight you tomorrow, or when you will," said Agricola, panting for breath.

"No warmed-up food for me; I eat all hot," answered the quarryman, seizing the smith by the throat, whilst he tried to place one of his knees upon his chest.

"Help! They are killing my child!" cried Angela's mother, in a voice of despair.

"Mercy! I ask mercy! Let me go!" said Agricola, making the most violent efforts to escape. "I am too hungry," answered the quarryman.

Exasperated by the terror which Angela's danger occasioned him, Agricola redoubled his efforts. When the quarryman suddenly felt his thigh seized by the sharp teeth of a dog, and at the same instant received from a vigorous hand three or four heavy blows with a stick upon his head. He relaxed his grasp, and fell stunned upon his hand and knee, whilst he mechanically raised his other arm to parry the blows, which ceased as soon as Agricola was delivered.

"Father, you have saved me!" cried the smith, springing up. "If only I am in time to rescue Angela!"

"Run!—never mind me!" answered Dagobert, and Agricola rushed into the house.

Dagobert, accompanied by Spoilsport, had come, as we have already said, to bring Marshal Simon's daughters to their grandfather. Arriving in the midst of the tumult, the soldier had collected a few workmen to defend the entrance of the chamber, to which the marshal's father had been carried in a dying state. It was from this post that the soldier had seen Agricola's danger. Soon after, the rush of the conflict separated Dagobert from the quarryman, who remained for some moments insensible. Arriving in two bounds at the Common Dwelling-house, Agricola succeeded in forcing his way through the men who defended the staircase, and rushed into the corridor that led to Angela's chamber. At the moment he reached it, the young girl was mechanically guarding her face with both hands against Ciboule, who, furious as the hyena over its prey, was trying to scratch and disfigure her.

To spring upon the horrible hag, seize her by her yellow hair with irresistible hand, drag her backwards, and then with one cuff, stretch her full length upon the ground, was for Agricola an achievement as rapid as thought. Furious with rage, Ciboule rose again almost instantly; but at this moment, several workmen, who had followed close upon Agricola, were able to attack with advantage, and whilst the smith lifted the fainting form of Angela, and carried her into the next room, Ciboule and her band were driven from that part of the house.

After the first fire of the assault, the small number of real Wolves, who, as Agricola said, were in the main honest fellows, but had the weakness to let themselves be drawn into this enterprise, under the pretext of a quarrel between rival unions, seeing the excesses committed by the rabble who accompanied them, turned suddenly round, and ranged themselves on the side of the Devourers.

"There are no longer here either Wolves or Devourers," said one of the most determined Wolves to Oliver, with whom he had been fighting roughly and fairly; "there are none here but honest workmen, who must unite to drive out a set of scoundrels, that have come only to break and pillage."

"Yes," added another; "it was against our will that they began by breaking your windows."

"The big blaster did it all," said another; "the true Wolves wash their hands of him. We shall soon settle his account."

"We may fight every day—but we ought to esteem each other."

This defection of a portion of the assailants (unfortunately but a small portion) gave new spirit to the workmen of the factory, and all together, Wolves and Devourers, though very inferior in number, opposed themselves to the band of vagabonds, who were proceeding to new excesses. Some of these wretches, still further excited by the little man with the ferret's face, a secret emissary of Baron Tripeaud, now rushed in a mass towards the workshops of M. Hardy. Then began a lamentable devastation. These people, seized with the mania of destruction, broke without remorse machines of the greatest value, and most delicate construction; half-manufactured articles were pitilessly destroyed; a savage emulation seemed to inspire these barbarians, and those workshops, so lately the model of order and well-regulated economy, were soon nothing but a wreck; the courts were strewed with fragments of all kinds of wares, which were thrown from the windows with ferocious outcries, or savage bursts of laughter. Then, still thanks to the incitements of the little man with the ferret's face the books of M. Hardy, archives of commercial industry, so indispensable to the trader, were scattered to the wind, torn, trampled under foot, in a sort of infernal dance, composed of all that was most impure in this assembly of low, filthy, and ragged men and women, who held each other by the hand, and whirled round and round with horrible clamor. Strange and painful contrast! At the height of the stunning noise of these horrid deeds of tumult and devastation, a scene of imposing and mournful calm was taking place in the chamber of Marshal Simon's father, the door of which was guarded by a few devoted men. The old workman was stretched on his bed, with a bandage across his blood-stained

white hair. His countenance was livid, his breathing oppressed, his look fixed and glazed.

Marshal Simon, standing at the head of the bed, bending over his father, watched in despairing anguish the least sign of consciousness on the part of the dying man, near whom was a physician, with his finger on the falling pulse. Rose and Blanche, brought hither by Dagobert, were kneeling beside the bed, their hands clasped, and their eyes bathed in tears; a little further, half hidden in the shadows of the room, for the hours had passed quickly, and the night was at hand, stood Dagobert himself, with his arms crossed upon his breast, and his features painfully contracted. A profound and solemn silence reigned in this chamber, only interrupted by the broken sobs of Rose and Blanche, or by Father Simon's hard breathing. The eyes of the marshal were dry, gloomy, and full of fire. He only withdrew them from his father's face, to interrogate the physician by a look. There are strange coincidences in life. That physician was Dr. Baleinier. The asylum of the doctor being close to the barrier that was nearest to the factory, and his fame being widely spread in the neighborhood, they had run to fetch him on the first call for medical assistance.

Suddenly, Dr. Baleinier made a movement; the marshal, who had not taken his eyes off him, exclaimed: "Is there any hope?"

"At least, my lord duke, the pulse revives a little."

"He is saved!" said the marshal.

"Do not cherish false hopes, my lord duke," answered the doctor gravely; "the pulse revives, owing to the powerful applications to the feet, but I know not what will be the issue of the crisis."

"Father! father! do you hear me?" cried the marshal, seeing the old man slightly move his head, and feebly raise his eyelids. He soon opened his eyes, and this time their intelligence had returned.

"Father! you live—you know me!" cried the marshal, giddy with joy and hope.

"Pierre! are you there?" cried the old man, in a weak voice. "Your hand—give it—" and he made a feeble movement.

"Here, father!" cried the marshal, as he pressed the hand of the old man in his own.

Then, yielding to an impulse of delight, he bent over his father, covered his hands, face, and hair with kisses, and repeated: "He lives! kind heaven, he lives! he is saved!"

At this instant the noise of the struggle which had recommenced between the rabble, the Wolves and the Devourers, reached the ears of the dying man.

"That noise! that noise!" said he; "they are fighting."

"It is growing less, I think," said the marshal, in order not to agitate his father.

"Pierre," said the old man, in a weak and broken voice, "I have not long to live."

"Father—"

"Let me speak, child; if I can but tell you all."

"Sir," said Baleinier piously, to the old workman, "heaven may perhaps work a miracle in your favor; show yourself grateful, and allow a priest—"

"A priest! thank you sir—I have my son," said the old man; "in his arms I will render up my soul—which has always been true and honest."

"You die!" exclaimed the marshal; "no! no!"

"Pierre," said the old man, in a voice, which, firm at first, gradually grew fainter, "just now—you asked my advice—in a very serious matter. I think, that the wish to tell you of your duty—has recalled me—for a moment—to life—for I should die miserable—if I thought you in a road unworthy of yourself and me. Listen to me, my son—my noble son—at the last hour, a father cannot deceive himself. You have a great duty to perform—under pain—of not acting like a man of honor—under pain of neglecting my last will. You ought, without hesitation—"

Here the voice failed the old man. When he had pronounced the last sentence, he became quite unintelligible. The only words that Marshal Simon could distinguish, were these: "Napoleon II—oath—dishonor—my son!"

Then the old workman again moved his lips mechanically—and all was over. At the moment he expired, the night was quite come, and terrible shouts were heard from without, of "Fire! Fire!" The conflagration had broken out in one of the workshops, filled with inflammable stuff, into which had glided the little man with the ferret's face: At the same time, the roll of drums was heard in the distance, announcing the arrival of a detachment of troops from town.

During an hour, in spite of every effort, the fire had been spreading through the factory. The night is clear, cold, starlight, the wind blows keenly from the north, with a moaning sound. A man, walking across the fields, where the rising ground conceals the fire from him, advances