Ashes of Empire.

By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Bombardment.

On the 5th of January, at seven minutes after 5 in the afternoon, the first shell fell in Paris. The projectile entered the city a little northeast from the fort of Vanves and plunged into the street, exploding with frightful force. A moment later the ominous quaver of another shell was heard from the Porte Rouge. The huge projectile seemed to hang above the rue d'Ypres, growing larger and larger as it neared the street. Suddenly it exploded, sweeping the roof-tops with a hail of iron fragments, wrecking chimneys and tiles and showering the street with shattered slates.

An old woman ran shrieking along the sidewalk, her gray hair dripping with blood. A cannoneer on the ramparts lay writhing beside the Prophet. The artillerymen recovered from their amazement and swung the great gun southwest. A clap of thunder shook the bastions, a white cloud, ever spreading, wrapped the Prophet. But again came the terrifying shriek of a shell, nearer, nearer—then the street trembled with its impact and the houses rocked and reeled to their foundations as the Prophet thundered its reply.

The forts of the south were flaming and blazing from every embrasure; the batteries, the redoubts, the southern bastions of the fortifications were covered with smoke; but still into the city plunged the Prussian shells, blowing houses to ruins, setting fire to roofs, exploding in the streets, on the sidewalks, on bridges and quays, squares and boulevards, hurling death and destruction to the four quarters of the city. Three little children crossing the Rue Malaise were blown to atoms; a woman running for shelter to the Prince Murat barracks was disembowelled in the rue d'Ypres. A convent was struck repeatedly; two shells entered a hospital and tore the helpless wounded to shreds, another killed a poor American student in his room in the rue de Seine. Faster and faster came the shells; night added to the horror of the scene; the darkness was lighted with the flames of burning houses. The uproar of the forts, the scream and hiss of shells, the deafening explosions of the cannon blended in a tumult indescribably frightful. At moments, in the brief lulls of the uproar, the iron knelling of the tocsin was heard, the fainter booming of drums calling to arms, the distant rush of artillery, galloping pellmell to the bastions.

In the rue Serpente, Hilde and Yolette crouched, half dead with terror. A shell had fallen at the corner of the street and had torn a cafe to pieces. Bourke had been away since noon, and Yolette's fright and anxiety for him drove Hilde to forget her own fear.

In that dark, narrow street, with its rows of ancient houses, women and children, frantic, shrieking, dishevelled, ran hither and thither to escape the shells. Some shouted, "The other side of the river! Save yourselves!" Others ran back into the tall crumbling houses to cower on the worm-eaten stairs or crawl into the cellars.

"We must go to the cellar," repeated Hilde with white lips. "Yolette, everybody is going to the cellar."

"I cannot—I will not stir until he comes

AN OLD WOMAN RAN SHRIEKING ALONG THE SIDEWALK.

back," whispered Yolette. "Go to the cellar if you wish."

Shell after shell, moaning, whistling, flew high overhead. The air hummed with the quaver; the windows vibrated. There came a terrific report from the corner of the street; a house bulged outward, falling slowly amid the crash and crackle of wooden beams. A heap of plaster choked the street. Some woodwork afire lighted up the mass of lime and bricks, under which something writhed feebly—a man, perhaps.

Red Riding Hood knelt clinging to Hilde's skirt in an agony of fright. The child was still in her night gown and her little limbs, numb with cold, quivered.

Somebody on the stairs cried out: "The roof is on fire!" Another rushed screaming to the cellar.

"Come!" murmered Hilde, "we cannot stay, Yolette—we shall be burned if we stay; O come!"

"Not to the cellar!" cried Yolette. "What are you doing—the house will burn over you!" They were on the stairs now, Hilde dragging the child by the hand, Yolette following and trying to make herself heard in the din.

"Don't go into the street!" she cried again.

"We can't stay in the house!" panted Hilde, desperately.

"Go back! Go back!" shouted a crowd of soldiers, who came stampeding through the street and poured into the houses. "The cellars are safe. Go to the cellars."

They pushed past the doorway, motioning Hilde to follow. She shrank against the doorpost, holding tight to Yolette and Red Riding Hood.

The street outside was ruddy with the glare of burning houses; the shells streamed high overhead toward the Pantheon now, falling beyond the rue Serpente, some in the boulevard St. Michel, some on the Sorbonne, many on the Val de Grace and a few even in the river. The fire of the Prussian guns shifted capriciously; now the Montparnasse quarter was covered with projectiles, now the Luxembourg, now the Latin quarter. But always the shells streamed thickest toward the hospitals, the barracks, the churches, palaces and great public buildings.

As the shells ceased falling in the rue Serpente, the people crept from the cellars, the soldiers of the Garde Mobile slunk off and a company of firemen came up on a run, dragging their hand machine. Bands of skulking vagrants prowled through the street, half bold, half timid, peering into doorways, hanging about shell-wrecked houses, shoving, prying, insulting women.

One of these ruffians entered the hallway where Hilde stood, and started to ascend the stairs, but, evidently considering the shabby house not worth his attention, turned and stood hesitatingly in the full glare of a burning house.

"Mlle. Hilde," whispered Red Riding Hood. "Look! Look!" At the same moment the vagabond saw Hilde and shrank back against the wall. It was the Mouse. Hilde sprang to the shaky stairs and seized the Mouse by his ragged sleeve. That startled young ruffian suffered himself to be dragged up the stairs and into the little apartment, now brightly illuminated by the flames from the burning house on the corner. Yolette and Red Riding Hood followed.

"Now," muttered Hilde, breathlessly, "tell me where he is. What have you done with him?" She stood before the Mouse with flashing eyes and little fists clenched, repeating harshly: "You swore to me that you would be with him, that you would keep him from harm! You slunk out of the house with that promise to me—and I let you go—I promised to say nothing to the others. What have you done with him?"

"He's been shot," gasped the Mouse. "He was—"

"Shot!" whispered Hilde.

"He isn't dead," growled the Mouse. "I came to find M. Bourke, but when I went to the rue d'Ypres you had all decamped."

"Then," he continued, with a cringing gesture, "I started to look—and quite by accident, mademoiselle, I met some friends—but I was not stealing!" he whined, glancing furtively around, "no indeed, I stole nothing, as the others did. You will tell M. Bourke that! You will tell M. Bourke that I was not pillaging houses."

"Where is M. Harewood?" interrupted Hilde.

"I was going to tell you," said the Mouse, submissively. "I was going to tell mademoiselle that M. Harewood is in the casemates of the Nanterre fort—very sick since they cut the bullet out. And it is quite true I was not pillaging. God is my witness. I have never stolen a pin."

He looked obliquely at Yolette, snivelled a little, hitched his tatterred trousers and sniffed.

Twice Hilde strove to speak, but her colorless lips scarcely moved. Yolette put one arm around her and turned to the Mouse.

"What message have you for M. Bourke?" she asked. "Did M. Harewood not send a message?"

"Yes," said the Mouse. "He wants to see him. It was not until last night that those sacre Prussians gave me a chance to leave the fort. We have been there since Le Bourget, when Monsieur was shot as he left the church."

He did not add that he had half carried, half dragged Harewood across the Mollette under a frenzied fusillade from the Prussian pickets. He was a coward, as cowards go; his very ferocity proved it. Yet he had instinctively clung to Harewood when a bullet through the leg knocked him sprawling; he had hauled him out of the Prussian fire, much as a panther hauls its young from a common danger, with no reason in the world that human minds could fathom, totally unconscious that he deserved credit. The Mouse had received Harewood's thanks with ennui, if not suspicion, and now it never occurred to him to say that he had saved Harewood's life, although, like most criminals, he was a keen appreciator of the dramatic. No—what occupied the meager brain of the Mouse was the fear that Bourke might return and learn from Hilde and Yolette that he, the Mouse, had been looting.

He looked sideways at Yolette, who was leading Hilde to the bedroom. He listened stupidly to the paroxysms of grief when Hilde flung herself on the bed. That was all very confusing, but what would Bourke say? He looked down at his blackened hands, at the bludgeon still gripped in one bleeding fist, evidences of his share in the riotous night's work.

"Mince! je me sauve!" he blurted out, and at the same moment he saw Red Riding Hood staring at him from the sofa.

"What are you making eyes at—hein?" he demanded, sullenly. "Perhaps you are going to say I was pillaging houses!"

The child, seized with a fit of shivering, cowered against the wall, drawing her feet in under her nightdress.

The Mouse regarded her fiercely, twirling his bludgeon between his blackened fingers. Then, apparently satisfied that she was too terrified to understand, he pulled his cap over his sightless eye, put the bludgeon in his pocket and started toward the door. Before he went out he hesitated. The sight of the frightened child seemed to exercise a certain fascination for him. He looked back, frowning, just to see whether it would frighten her a little more. It did; but, strangely enough, her fear gave him no gratification.

"Voyons, petite, do I scare you?" he asked, curiously.

"Yes," whispered the child. A curious sensation, an unaccustomed thrill, something that had never come over him before, sent the blood tingling in the Mouse's large ears. He peered at the child narrowly.

"Don't look like that," he said, "for I ain't going to hurt you."

The child was silent.

"You're cold," said the Mouse, awkwardly. "Go to bed."

"I'm afraid," she whispered.

"Of me?" asked the Mouse, with a strange sinking of the heart.

"Yes, and the shells."

"I'll knock the head off any pig of a Prussian who harms you," said the Mouse, waving his club. "You never mind the shells; they won't hurt you. Now are you afraid of me, little one?"

"No," sighed the child. A glow of pleasure suffused the Mouse's ears again. Then he felt ashamed, then he looked at the child, then he wondered why he should take pleasure in telling the little thing not to be afraid. For a while they contemplated each other in silence; then the child said: "When you were in the Rue d'Ypres I used to make you split wood. Do you remember?"

"Yes," said the Mouse, much gratified.

"And you were afraid of the lion," pursued Red Riding Hood.

"Dame," muttered the Mouse, "I am afraid yet."

The child laughed—such a sad, thin little laugh. The Mouse, to please her, made an awful grimace and winked with his sightless eye.

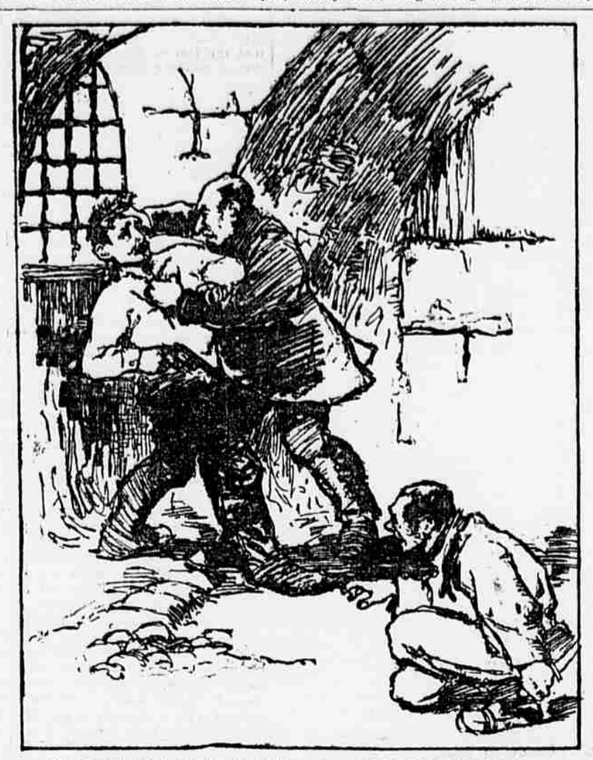
"Will you stay with us now?" asked the child.

The innocent question completely upset the Mouse; the idea that he was wanted anywhere, the sensation of protecting anything was so new, so utterly astonishing that even his habitual suspicion was carried away in the overwhelming novelty of the proposition.

Red Riding Hood rose from the sofa, went to the bed and climbed in, then turned gravely to the Mouse.

"Don't let anything harm us," she said. "Good night."

For a long time the Mouse stood and stared at the pale little face on the pillow. There were blue circles under the closed eyes;



THE NEXT MOMENT HE WAS AT BUCKHURST'S THROAT.

the clustering black hair cast shadows over the hollow temples. The exhaustion from hunger, fatigue and fright brought sleep to tired lids. Even when Yolette and Hilde came in the child did not wake.

"I'm going to stay," said the Mouse, sullenly. "If the shells come the little girl will be frightened."

As he spoke he furtively felt for some purloined silver forks that filled one pocket, found them still there, glanced maliciously at Yolette and coughed gently.

"Where is the Nanterre fort?" asked Hilde, faintly.

The Mouse explained in a weird whisper, apparently much relieved that nobody offered to examine his pockets.

"Is he all alone?" said Hilde.

"Parbleu! There's not much society in the casemates," observed the Mouse, "no, nor many surgeons to spare. I'm going back to him tomorrow." He said it indifferently; he might have added that he was going at the risk of his life, but risks were too common at that time to occupy the attention of even such a coward as the Mouse. Wherever he went there were shells and bullets and bayonets now, and it mattered little whether they were French or Prussian.

He boldly rattled the silver forks in his pockets, leered, pulled his cap lower, for the reflection of the flames annoyed him, and said:

"A la guerre comme a la guerre mesdames."

At the same moment hurried steps sounded on the landing. Yolette opened the door and Bourke entered.

When he saw Yolette and Hilde he could not speak at first.

"Don't, don't" sobbed Yolette; "we are all safe—all of us. It was you that I feared for. Oh, if you knew, if you knew."

"I was in the rue d'Ypres," stammered Bourke. "The shells rained on the ramparts, and I ran to the Prince Murat Barracks. I never dreamed they were shelling this part of the city until somebody said the Luxembourg had been struck. Then I came Yolette, look at me! Good God, what a fool I was!"

She clung around his neck, smiling and weeping, telling him she should never again let him go away. Hilde was silent. The Mouse fidgeted by the door. The child slept.

Then Hilde spoke of Harewood, of his message sent by the Mouse. Yolette cried out that she could not let Cecil go away again, and Bourke, devoured by anxiety, questioned the Mouse until that young bandit's mind was a hopeless chaos.

"You can't ask him to go, Hilde," implored her sister. "Oh, how can you ask Cecil to go to the forts, when you know what they are doing out there? I can't let him go—I cannot!"

"If Jim is not in danger I can go out with the next escort," said Burke gravely. "If he is, then I must go at once."

The Mouse was vague; he didn't know what might happen since they cut out the bullet. His habitual distrust of doctors, of science in all its branches, made it plain to Bourke that there was nothing accurate to be learned from him.

The Mouse lingered a minute or two, watching the sleeping child in the bed. Bourke told him he might go and he went as a dismissed dog goes, apologetically, half resentful, half conciliatory, clutching the forks in his pocket with dirty fingers. Hilde turned and went into her room, closing the door behind her.

"I must sleep with the child," said Yolette; "she wakes in the night and trembles so I almost fear she may die of fright. Cecil, is there any danger now from the shells?"

"I don't know," he said. "I will lie down in the kitchen. If then bombard the quarter again we must go to the cellar. Tomorrow I am going to take you and Hilde and Red Riding Hood to the American minister's. And, my darling, before we go, you must marry me."

"Marry—now!" faltered Yolette.

"Otherwise the American minister cannot protect you. If you are my wife he is bound to do so. I can't stand this sort of thing; the city has gone distracted, nobody is safe outside an embassy. The Prussians must respect our flag, dear, and anarchists and kindred ruffians dare not enter the embassy. Shall I tell you what has happened in the Rue d'Ypres? A gang of communists, cutthroats and thieves have broken open our house and are carousing in the cellar with our red wine. Stauffer, Mortier and Buckhurst are there and they will do us mischief if they have a chance.

He went up to her and drew her head down to his shoulder.

"Will you marry me tomorrow, Yolette?" he asked, "so that I can leave you safe at the embassy and go to my friend?"

"Yes," she whispered, then threw both arms about him in a passion of tenderness and fear.

CHAPTER XXVII.

An Underground Affair.

When the Mouse left the Rue Serpente the bombardment had shifted to the southern forts and the southeast secteurs of the fortifications were covered with exploding shells. As he slunk across the city he could hear the fracas of the distant bombardment and he gave the danger zone wide berth. His mind was preoccupied by two problems—how to conceal his silver forks and how to get back to the Nanterre fort.

The second problem could wait till morning; the first needed serious study. He already possessed one burrow. It was in the cellar of the house in the Rue d'Ypres. For, while doing menial service for Bourke and Harewood, he had managed to abstract booty from neighboring windows—a spoon here, a silk handkerchief there—nothing much, but still a modest little heap of plunder, which he had concealed in the cellar of the house on the ramparts. Therefore his first instinct led him back to the Rue d'Ypres, where, if the cachette in the cellar remained undisturbed, he could further avail himself of it by depositing the forks with the rest of the loot.

"Thrift," muttered the Mouse, "cannot be too early acquired. Sapristi! One must live in this world of bandits!"

As he crossed the boulevard Montparnasse he saw that the railroad station was on fire. For a moment he hesitated—there might be fine pickings yonder—but prudence prevailed and he shambled on, scanning the passersby with crafty face half everted, bludgeon swinging, cap over one eye, the incarnation of communism militant. Affrighted citizens gave him room, turned and looked after him as though in him they saw the symbol of all that was secret and dreadful in the city—the embodied shape of anarchy—the omnious prophet of revolution.

He passed on, swaggering when prudent, cringing when the sentries of the guard, pacing the devastated streets, halted to look after him, lanterns raised. At such moments he cursed them as loud as he dared; sometimes when far enough away he would insult them with gestures and epithets, gratifying to his vanity because of the slight risk such amusement entailed. He rattled the forks in his pocket as he walked; once or twice he broke into a song a doggerel verse or two of some sentimental bariere ditty that attracted him because, like criminals of his type, he adored sentiment—in song. He thought of Harewood, lying in the casemates of the Nanterre fort. Would he live or die? His wounds had turned so bad that the surgeons began to look at him in that musing way that even the dying understand.

The Mouse scratched his ear; dead or alive he must find his way back to Harewood; for the necessity that he felt for Harewood's company left him restless as a lost cur.

He thought often of Red Riding Hood. She was so small and thin and so afraid of him that he wondered why he thought of her at all. In his burrow he had buried an infant's silver cup. This he decided to present to Red Riding Hood when he could do so without fear of aspersions on his honesty. He chuckled as he thought how it would please that child—she would look at him with those big eyes—she would perhaps smile—Nom de Dieu!—what a droll young one! And so he came to the house on the ramparts in the rue d'Ypres.

The cellar of the house was reached from the garden through a flight of stone steps. The heavy slab that closed the manhole had no padlock.

The Mouse, on his hands and knees, groped about in the dark, stumbling among dead weeds and broken cucumber frames, puffing and cursing, until, without any warning, he almost fell into the manhole itself. Startled, alert, he crouched breathless by the slab on the grass. Somebody had removed it; somebody then was in the cellar!

Stealthily he crawled into the manhole and descended the first three steps. His worn shoes made no noise; he crept three steps further.

At the end of the cellar, in the full light of a lantern on the floor, sat three men. Two of them wore uniforms of officers of the carbineers; the third was in civilian dress. Their voices were indistinct, but their features were not, and the Mouse fairly bristled as he recognized them. They were Stauffer, Mortier and Buckhurst.

The first thought of the Mouse was instinctively personal. They had come to rob him of his plunder! It was that, rather than curiosity that led him to creep toward them, nearer, nearer, wriggle behind a barrel, and crawl so that, with outstretched arm, he could have stabbed Mortier—if Mortier had been alone.

Buckhurst, pale-faced calm, bent his colorless eyes on Mortier, and spoke in the passionless voice that always struck a chill to the Mouse's marrow:

"M. Mortier, you misunderstand me, I am not in this city for my health, nor am I here to preach the commune. There is but one thing I am looking for—money—and I don't care how I get it or where I get it. Prussian thalers or French francs, it's all one to me."

Mortier raised his hideous head and fixed his little green eyes on the bloodless face before him.

"One minute," said Buckhurst, "then I've finished. Not to waste words, the situation is this: Captain Stauffer has arranged to open the Nanterre fort to the Prussians; I have agreed to run a tunnel from this cellar under the street to the bastion where the Phophet is—I think its bastion No. 73. Powder exploded in the tunnel opens a breach in the ramparts directly behind the Nanterre fort. Do you comprehend?"

He paused a moment, then added: "For this we divide 500,000 thalers."

Stauffer began to speak eagerly, his weak face lighting up as he proceeded.

"It was Speyer's plan; he had it in view before war was declared last July. He and I lodged in this house and planned it all out—even to excavating the tunnel to bastion No. 73—d—n the man who knocked him on the head! But we can do it alone—all we want of you is to help with the tunnel. It will be worth your while—really it will!"

Mortier's eyes seemed to grow incandescent; the great veins swelled out on his bald dome-shaped head, his throat, under the red flannel rags, moved convulsively.

As he spoke he rose. Buckhurst, with the easy grace of a panther, rose too. Stauffer lumbered to his feet and began to speak again, but Mortier silenced him and turned on Buckhurst like a wild beast.

"I refuse!" he shouted. "I am an anarchist, not a traitor! I kill, I destroy, I burn, I murder if necessary; but I will not betray—no, not for all the thalers in the kingdom of Prussia!"

His eyes glittered with the light of insanity. His misshapen hands menaced Buckhurst.

"Judas!" he shrieked. "The commune shall rise and live to judge you! Cursed son of a free people! Renegade! Thief!"

There was a flash, a report, and Mortier clapped his hands to his face, which the blood suddenly covered. The next moment he was at Buckhurst's throat, bore him down, twined him closer in his long, misshapen arms and fastened his teeth in his throat, and Buckhurst shot him again and again through the body. They swayed and fell together, the deadly light died in Buckhurst's glazing eyes. After a minute neither moved again.

Stauffer had gone, fleeing like one distracted, when the Mouse crawled out into the lantern light and gazed down at the dead.

Presently he picked up the lantern, grubbed a hole in the ground, deposited his forks with the rest of his booty, rose, glanced at the dead again and picked up the lantern. He spat on the ground—for Buckhurst had tricked him once—so he insulted the corpse with a contemptuous gesture, and went out, swinging his lantern and sneering.

"Give up the Nanterre fort, eh?" he repeated, mimicking Stauffer's effeminate voice; "Oh, ma souer! O, la, la! A nous deux monsieur pipelet—a demain!"

The Prophet was firing up as he left the city by the Porte Rouge; he looked up at the great cannon and mocked it: "Tiens! boum! boum! O, la, la! Oh, Signeur Dieu! —que la guerre est ridicule tout d'meme!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Night of Atonement.

That night, the zone of bombardment having been shifted far to the southwest, Bourke went to the American embassy. It was 11 o'clock when he returned, thoroughly discouraged. He had seen the minister, but that official could do nothing to protect Yolette and Hilde against the shell fire. There was no room at the embassy. It was not even certain that the embassy itself would be safe, although the minister, in some heat, denounced those responsible for the bombardment and promised to protest against the destruction of foreign consulates and embassies. So Bourke came back to the Rue Serpente, worried and anxious, for it was not possible for him to go to the Nanterre fort and leave Yolette and Hilde alone, without the protection of responsible people. He and Yolette sat up late into the night discussing the situation. Hilde lay on the bed, listening, perhaps, but she offered no suggestions. About midnight Red Riding Hood awoke, sobbing from hunger, and Yolette comforted the child, saying good night to Bourke and kissing her sister tenderly.

"Listen, Hilde," she said. "Cecil is going to the Nanterre fort, so you must not be sad, my darling. Look up at me, little sister. I am not selfish and heartless, after all. Cecil must go."

"I will go as soon as you and Hilde are in safe quarters," began Bourke, but Hilde sat up on the bed and forbade him to go. "It is enough that one life is in danger," she said. "Your place is here with Yolette. You can do nothng for him. He is in the Casemates and under medical attendance. What could you do?" "I shall go when I see you and Yolette secure," repeated Bourke. "Secure? How?" asked Hilde, bitterly. "Your embassy has no room for us; and do you think M. Bismarck will order his cannoners to respect any part of the city? The people in the street say that convents and hospitals have been struck repeatedly. Have the Prussians not sent their shells into the crowded streets of the poor?"

It was the first time that Yolette had ever heard Hilde speak with bitterness. Bourke, too, looked at her sharply, wondering at the change in the gentle, reserved girl he had known.

"No," continued Hilde rapidly, "no! no! no!—the Prussians spare neither young nor old, man nor woman! You cannot go, Cecil; Yolette needs you now if ever."

She rose, putting her arms around Yolette, saying, "Dearest, he must not go to the Nanterre fort. It is wrong for him to leave you; it is wrong for him to expose his life."

"Confound it!" said Bourke helplessly, "I'd go to him if it were at the south pole, but I can't leave Yolette in danger; my skin is no longer my own to risk."

"Nor was his," said Hilde gravely; and she went into her own room and closed the door.

The night was bitter cold; the frost covered the window panes with mosslike tracery, silvered by a pale radiance from without. And Hilde, opening the window, looked off over the dark city and saw the midnight heavens blazing with stars. Her cheeks were burning now; the icy air seemed grateful. After a little she closed the window, fearing the cold might harm the others. But there was a short ladder in the hallway, leading to the scuttle, and she found it and climbed up and out onto the roof. Her hot cheeks and aching eyes grew no cooler in the freezing wind. She even threw back her shawl and bared her white throat.

The heavens were resplendent; the tremendous sky-vault, far-reaching, fathomless, was dusted with myriads of stars, among which, deep set, the splendid planets sparkled and the gigantic constellations traced their signs in arcs and angles and gem-set circles that spanned the diamond-showered heavens from horizon to horizon.

Spire on spire the city towered, domed, battlemented, magnificent in the starlight—the beautiful, sinful city, whose lacelike spires and slender pinnacles rose from squares and streets where men lay dying by the score from lack of bread. There was starlight on the bridges, on the quays, on the carved facades of palaces, on the strange towers of St. Sulpice.

The jeweled spire of the St. Chapelle, the silvery dome of the Invalides, the grotesque gothic tower of St. Jacques loomed distinctly from the endless mass of house and palace, monument and church. In the east an enormous bulk detached itself against the sky—the Pentheon. In the north the stupendous twin towers of Notre Dame dominated the shadow shapes of roof and chimney. And through the world of shade and shadowy silhouette wound the star-tinted, ghostly river—a phantom tide spanned by a score of fairy bridges, impalpable, vague, ghostly as their own reflections in the frozen, ice bound stream.

And, now, far beyond the walls, Hilde could see the forts. The tiny flashes ran from east to west, then south, then back again, a running chain of sparks. The cannon's solid thunder rolled and surged majestically, wave after wave, harmonious, interminable. On the heights of Meudon, Clamart and Chatillon the flicker of the Prussian guns ran parallel to the flashes from the forts of the south and west; their shells were falling on the Point du Jour.

Hilde could see the bright reflections of fires along the frozen river, the red smoke, the nearer blasts from the great guns on the ramparts. Overhead raced the shells, streaming by with kindling wakes of sparks dropping and fading one by one. Then from Mont Valerien the rockets towered to the zenith and drifted and faded while the Point du Jour answered, rocket on rocket, and the bastions reechoed with the double thunder of the shotted guns.

Could that be real war? This Venetian fete of colored fires, rockets, illuminations, dull reports? Hark! The jar of a great iron bell came quavering over the city. The faint rattle of drums broke out across the river—the tocsin and the alarm! Hilde did not hear them. She was talking to herself, under her breath, counting the forts on her slender fingers. Issy Vanves, Mont Valerien, St. Denis. O, then there must lie the Nanterre fort—there where the darkness is shot with streak after streak of flame! At last she knew.

The fort was silent now, but within her breast a voice spoke. And she listened, leaning from the iron railing. She knew that God's justice was passing—passing in the fire through the heavens above the city—the fair city, brought low in shame. For the night of atonement was at hand.

(To Be Concluded.)

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OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

A hemlock tree recently cut down in Appleton, Me., showed 360 grains, and this was taken as an indication that the tree was nearly four centuries old.

Romano and Lost Springs are towns in Kansas. The population of each is about 200 people. Neither town has an idle man or boy or unoccupied house. Neither has a saloon and dogs are unknown.

An alligator, the first of its species found in the Colorado river, measured eleven feet in length and thirty-eight inches around. It was lassooed recently by a cowboy, who, having landed it, tied it to a tree.

In 1852 J. F. Stearns of Saco, Me., lent $100 to a young man who had an offer in the far west. The understanding was that the money was to be repaid quarterly. A few days ago Mr. Stearns received a check for $10, as the first installment.

Percy Boedecker, 10 years old, while walking in his sleep at his home in Mount Vernon a few nights ago fell from the roof, a distance of thirty-five feet. He struck a tent in the yard before reaching the ground, and when picked up was not only unhurt, but still sound asleep.

According to the latest New York City directory, just published, the honored name of Smith still holds first place in point of numbers in the borough of Manhattan, but the name of Brown, though still holding a second place, is hard pushed by the name of Cohen, while the Cohens, the Cohns and the Kohns, taken collectively, exceed in number the Browns, the Brownes and the Brauns.

A stranger from central Illinois, who was arrested in Chicago on suspicion of his being the "long man" notorious some time ago for his bold robbing of shopkeepers in company with "the short man," was kept in confinement until his parents came on and identified him, and now he has sued the city for $10,000 damages for false arrest.

Adam Hudson, the colored janitor of the Stevens building in New York, has left a fortune of over $30,000. He had been an employe of the Stevens family for fifty years and was the autocrat of the building of which he was janitor, having more to say than any tenant, or even, at times, the owners themselves, who stood by him through thick and thin. His salary was $1,800.

A food strike is going on at the London general postoffice, 3,000 of the clerks refusing to patronize the official caterer, and taking their lunches in with them in parcels. They object to the quality and price, and to the long waits. Formerly the clerks clubbed together and managed their own catering, but the government took the matter out of their hands. They are not allowed to leave the building during office hours.

Mrs. Johanna Regan of Chicago seized a thief whom she found lurking in the hallway of her own house, but lost her grip and he escaped to the street. She followed, seizing a brick as she ran, and when she caught up with the fleeing man she aimed the missile and called out for him to halt in such a tone that he looked around. Thereupon on the strength of what he saw he turned pale with fear and, distrusting all the jokes he had heard concerning a woman's aim, surrendered. The paper that tells the story refrains from presenting Mrs. Regan's portrait.

Charles Broadway Rouss, the blind millionaire of New York, who is said to have offered a million dollars for the restoration of his sight, is perhaps in a way to have the opportunity to pay the money. His offer has been regarded as a standing one, and has brought such a large number of specialists and doctors of all kinds with cures that for the past two years Mr. Rouss has employed John P. Martin, afflicted with the same sort of blindness to test the many treatments offered. Now Mr. Martin is under the care of Dr. Cassidy, and with some new methods is reported as beginning to regain his vision.

The new blast furnace of the Union Iron works, at Buffalo, N. Y., will soon be completed and put in operation.

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Mr. B. A. Chellen, Valley City, N. D., says: "Two bottles of Munyon's Bladder Cure completely cured me of a disagreeable case of bladder trouble, from which I had suffered for eighteen years."

Mr. Chas. W. Askins, Brunswick Hotel, 148 6th street, San Francisco, Cal., says: "At a cost of 75 cents Munyon cured me of rheumatism and piles from which I had suffered for a long time."

Mr. A. Wright, 641 N. Market street, Wichita, Kan., says: "Munyon cured my wife of rheumatism and myself of kidney trouble. We believe in Munyon's Remedies."

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