

II

LES CONSPIRATEURS, PAR A. CHENU,
 EX-CAPITAINE DES GARDES DU CITOYEN CAUSSIDIÈRE.
 LES SOCIÉTÉS SECRÈTES;
 LA PRÉFECTURE DE POLICE SOUS CAUSSIDIÈRE;
 LES CORPS-FRANCS,
 PARIS, 1850
LA NAISSANCE DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE EN FÉVRIER 1848,
 PAR LUCIEN DE LA HODDE,
 PARIS, 1850²³⁶

Nothing is more to be desired than that the people who were at the head of the active party, whether before the revolution in the secret societies or the press, or afterwards in official positions, should at long last be portrayed in the stark colours of a Rembrandt, in the full flush of life. Hitherto these personalities have never been depicted as they really were, but only in their official guise, with buskins on their feet and halos around their heads. All verisimilitude is lost in these idealised, Raphaellesque pictures.

It is true that the two present publications dispense with the buskins and halos in which the "great men" of the February Revolution hitherto appeared. They penetrate the private lives of these people, they show them to us in informal attire, surrounded by all their multifarious subordinates. But they are for all that no less far removed from being a real, faithful representation of persons and events. Of their authors, the one is a self-confessed long-time *mouchard*^a of Louis Philippe, and the other a veteran conspirator by profession whose relations with the police are similarly very ambiguous and of whose powers of comprehension we have an early indication in the fact that he claims to have seen "that splendid chain of the Alps whose silver peaks dazzle the eye" between Rheinfelden and Basle, and "the Rhenish Alps whose distant peaks are lost on the horizon" between Kehl and Karlsruhe. From such people, especially when in addition they are writing to justify themselves, we can of course only expect a more or less exaggerated *chronique scandaleuse* of the February Revolution.

^a Police spy.—*Ed.*

M. de la Hodde, in his pamphlet, attempts to portray himself after the manner of the spy in Cooper's novel.^a He has, he claims, earned society's gratitude by paralysing the secret societies for eight years. But Cooper's spy is a very far cry from M. de la Hodde. M. de la Hodde, who worked on *Le Charivari*, was a member of the Central Committee of the *Société des nouvelles saisons* from 1839,²⁸⁷ was co-editor of *La Réforme* from its foundation and at the same time a paid spy of the Prefect of Police, Delessert, is compromised by no one more than by Chenu. His publication is a direct response to Chenu's revelations, but it takes very good care not to say even a syllable in reply to Chenu's allegations concerning de la Hodde himself. That part of Chenu's memoirs at least is therefore authentic.

"On one of my nocturnal excursions," recounts Chenu, "I noticed de la Hodde walking up and down the quai Voltaire.... It was raining in torrents, a circumstance which set me thinking. Was this dear fellow de la Hodde also helping himself from the cash-box of the secret funds, by any chance? But I remembered his songs, his magnificent stanzas about Ireland and Poland, and particularly the violent articles he wrote for the journal *La Réforme*" (whereas M. de la Hodde tries to make out he tamed *La Réforme*). "'Good evening, de la Hodde, what on earth are you up to here at this hour and in this fearful weather?'—'I am waiting for a rascal who owes me some money, and as he passes this way every evening at this time, he is going to pay me, or else'—and he struck the parapet of the embankment violently with his stick."

De la Hodde attempts to get rid of him and walks towards the Pont du Carrousel. Chenu departs in the opposite direction, but only to conceal himself under the arcades of the *Institut*. De la Hodde soon comes back, looks round carefully in all directions and once more walks back and forth.

"A quarter of an hour later I noticed the carriage with two little green lamps which my ex-agent had described to me" (a former spy who had revealed a large number of police secrets and identification signs to Chenu in prison). "It stopped at the corner of the rue des Vieux Augustins. A man got out; de la Hodde went straight up to him; they talked for a moment, and I saw de la Hodde make a movement as though putting money into his pocket.—After this incident I made every effort to have de la Hodde excluded from our meetings and above all to prevent Albert falling into some trap, for he was the cornerstone of our edifice [...]. Some days later *La Réforme* rejected an article by de la Hodde. This wounded his vanity as a writer. I advised him to avenge himself by founding another journal. He followed this advice and with Pilhes and Dupoty he even published the prospectus of a paper, *Le Peuple*, and during that time we were almost completely rid of him." (Chenu, pp. 46-48 [p. 55].)

As we see, this spy à la Cooper turns out to be a political prostitute of the vilest kind who hangs about in the street in the rain for the

^a Harvey Birch, the hero of Fenimore Cooper's novel *The Spy*.—Ed.

payment of his *cadeau*^a by the first *officier de paix*^b who happens to come along. We see furthermore that it was not de la Hodde, as he would have us believe, but Albert who was at the head of the secret societies. This follows from Chenu's whole account. The *mouchard* "in the interests of order" is here suddenly transformed into the offended writer who is angry that the articles of the *Charivari* correspondent are not accepted without question by *La Réforme*, and who therefore breaks with *La Réforme*, a real party organ in which he was able to be of some use to the police, to found a new paper in which at best he was able to satisfy his vanity as a writer. Just as prostitutes make use of sentiment of a kind, so this *mouchard* sought to make use of his literary pretensions in order to escape from his dirty role. Hatred for *La Réforme*, which pervades his whole pamphlet, is resolved into the most trivial writer's vindictiveness. In the end we see that during the most important period of the secret societies, shortly before the February Revolution, de la Hodde was being increasingly forced out of them; and this explains why they, according to his account, quite contrary to Chenu, declined more and more in this period.

We now come to the scene in which Chenu describes the exposure of de la Hodde's treacheries after the February Revolution. The *Réforme* party had assembled with Albert in the Luxembourg at Caussidière's invitation. Monnier, Sobrier, Grandménéil, de la Hodde, Chenu, etc., were present. Caussidière opened the meeting and then said:

"There is a traitor among us. We shall form a secret tribunal to try him."—Grandménéil, as the oldest of those present, was appointed chairman, and Tiphaine secretary. 'Citizens,' continued Caussidière as public prosecutor, 'for a long time we have been accusing honest patriots. We were far from suspecting what a serpent had slipped in among us. Today I have discovered the real traitor: it is Lucien de la Hodde!'—The latter, who hitherto had sat quite unperturbed, leapt up at so direct an accusation. He made a move towards the door. Caussidière closed it quickly, drew a pistol and shouted: 'One move and I'll blow your brains out!'—De la Hodde passionately protested his innocence. 'Very well,' said Caussidière. 'Here is a file containing eighteen hundred reports to the Prefect of Police'... and he gave each of us the reports specially concerning him. De la Hodde obstinately denied that these reports, signed Pierre, originated with him until Caussidière read out the letter published in his memoirs, in which de la Hodde offered his services to the Prefect of Police and which he had signed with his real name. From then on the wretched man stopped denying and tried to excuse himself on the grounds of poverty which had given him the fatal idea of throwing himself into the arms of the police. Caussidière held out to him the pistol, the last means of escape left to him. De la Hodde then pleaded with his judges and whimperingly begged for mercy, but they remained

^a Gift.—*Ed.*

^b Officer of the peace.—*Ed.*

inflexible. Bocquet, one of those present, whose patience was exhausted, seized the pistol and offered it to him three times with the words: 'Allons,^a blow your brains out, you coward, or I'll kill you myself!'—Albert snatched it out of his hand, saying, 'But just think, a pistol-shot here in the Luxembourg would bring everybody running here!'—'That's true,' cried Bocquet, 'we need poison.' 'Poison?' said Caussidière. 'I brought poison with me—of every kind.' He took a glass, filled it with water, which he sugared, then poured in a white powder and offered it to de la Hodde, who recoiled in horror: 'You want to kill me then?'—'Yes we do,' said Bocquet, 'drink.'—De la Hodde was fearful to look at. His features were ashen, and his very curly, well-kempt hair stood on end on his head. His face was bathed in sweat. He implored, he wept: 'I don't want to die!' But Bocquet, inflexible, still held out the glass to him. 'Allons, drink,' said Caussidière, 'it will be all over before you know what has happened.'—'No, no, I will not drink.' And in his deranged state of mind he added with a terrible gesture: 'Oh, I shall have my revenge for all these torments!'

"When it was seen that no appeal to his *point d'honneur*^b had any effect, de la Hodde was finally pardoned on Albert's intercession, and was taken to the Conciergerie prison." (Chenu, pp. 134-36 [pp. 147-50].)

The self-styled spy à la Cooper becomes increasingly pathetic. We see him here in all his ignominy, only able to stand up to his opponents by cowardice. What we reproach him for is not that he did not shoot himself but that he did not shoot the first comer amongst his opponents. He seeks to justify himself after the event by means of a pamphlet in which he attempts to represent the whole revolution as a mere *escroquerie*.^c The title of this pamphlet ought to be: *The Disillusioned Policeman*. It demonstrates that a true revolution is the exact opposite of the ideas of a *mouchard*, who like the "men of action" sees in every revolution the work of a small coterie. Whilst all movements which were to a greater or lesser extent arbitrarily provoked by coteries did not go beyond mere insurgency, it is clear from de la Hodde's account itself that on the one hand the *official republicans* at the beginning of the February days still despaired of achieving the republic, and that on the other hand the *bourgeoisie* was obliged to help achieve the republic without wanting it, and thus that the February Republic was brought about by the force of circumstances driving the proletarian masses, who were outside any coterie, out into the streets and keeping the majority of the bourgeoisie at home or forcing them into common action with the proletarians.—What de la Hodde reveals apart from that is scanty indeed and amounts to no more than the most banal gossip. Only one scene is of interest: the meeting of the official democrats on the evening of February 21 on the premises of *La Réforme*, at which the leaders declared themselves firmly opposed to an attack by force.

^a Go on.—Ed.

^b Sense of honour.—Ed.

^c Act of fraud.—Ed.

The content of their speeches testifies by and large to what was for that date still a correct understanding of the situation. They are ridiculous only because of their pompous style and the later claims of the same people to have consciously and deliberately worked towards the revolution from the start. And the worst thing, incidentally, that de la Hodde can say of them is that they tolerated him for so long in their midst.

Let us turn to Chenu. Who is M. Chenu? He is a veteran conspirator, took part in every insurgency since 1832 and is well known to the police. Conscripted for military service, he soon deserted and remained undiscovered in Paris, despite his repeated participation in conspiracies and the 1839 revolt.²⁹⁸ In 1844 he reported to his regiment, and strangely enough, despite his well-known record, he was spared a court-martial by the divisional general. And that was not all: he did not serve his full time with the regiment but was allowed to return to Paris. In 1847 he was implicated in the incendiary bomb conspiracy²⁹⁹; he escaped an attempted arrest, but for all that remained in Paris, although he had been sentenced to four years *in contumaciam*.^a Only when his fellow-conspirators accused him of being in league with the police did he go to Holland, whence he returned on February 21, 1848. After the February Revolution he became a captain in Caussidière's guards. Caussidière soon suspected him (a suspicion having a high degree of probability) of being in league with Marrast's special police and dispatched him without much resistance to Belgium and later to Germany. M. Chenu submitted willingly enough to successive enrolments in the Belgian, German and Polish volunteer corps. And all this at a time when Caussidière's power was already beginning to totter and although Chenu claims to have had complete control over him; thus he maintains he forced Caussidière by means of a threatening letter to free him immediately when he had once been arrested. So much for our author's character and credibility.

The quantities of make-up and patchouli beneath which prostitutes attempt to smother the less attractive aspects of their physical being have their literary counterpart in the *bel esprit* with which de la Hodde perfumes his pamphlet. The literary qualities of Chenu's book on the other hand frequently remind one of *Gil Blas*^b by their naivety and the vivacity of their presentation. Just as in the most varied adventures *Gil Blas* always remains a servant and judges everything by a servant's standards, so Chenu always remains, from

^a For contempt of the court (in refusing to appear).—*Ed.*

^b *Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane*, a novel by Alain René Le Sage.—*Ed.*

the 1832 revolt up to his dismissal from the prefecture, the same low-ranking conspirator, whose own particular form of narrow-mindedness can incidentally be very clearly distinguished from the dull ruminations of the literary "*faiseur*" apportioned to him by the Elysée. It is clear that there can be no question of any understanding of the revolutionary movement in Chenu's case either. For this reason the only chapters in his book which are of any interest are those in which he describes things more or less uninhibitedly from his own observation: *the Conspirators* and *Caussidière the Hero*.

The propensity of the Latin peoples to conspiracy and the part which conspiracies have played in modern Spanish, Italian and French history are well known. After the defeat of the Spanish and Italian conspirators at the beginning of the twenties, Lyons and especially Paris became the centres of revolutionary clubs. It is a well-known fact that the liberal bourgeoisie headed the conspiracies against the Restoration up to 1830. After the July Revolution the republican bourgeoisie took their place; the proletariat, trained in conspiracy even under the Restoration, began to dominate to the extent that the republican bourgeoisie were deterred from conspiring by the unsuccessful street battles. The *Société des saisons*, through which Barbès and Blanqui organised the 1839 revolt, was already exclusively proletarian, and so were the *Nouvelles saisons*, formed after the defeat, whose leader was Albert and in which Chenu, de la Hodde, Caussidière, etc., participated. Through its leaders the conspiracy was constantly in contact with the petty-bourgeois elements represented by *La Réforme*, but always kept itself strictly independent. These conspiracies never of course embraced the broad mass of the Paris proletariat. They were restricted to a comparatively small, continually fluctuating number of members which consisted partly of unchanging, veteran conspirators, regularly bequeathed by each secret society to its successor, and partly of newly recruited workers.

Of these veteran conspirators, Chenu describes virtually none but the class to which he himself belongs: the *professional conspirators*. With the development of proletarian conspiracies the need arose for a division of labour; the members were divided into occasional conspirators, *conspirateurs d'occasion*, i.e. workers who engaged in conspiracy alongside their other employment, merely attending meetings and holding themselves in readiness to appear at the place of assembly at the leaders' command, and professional conspirators who devoted their whole energy to the conspiracy and had their living from it. They formed the intermediate stratum between the workers and the leaders, and frequently even infiltrated the latter.

The social situation of this class determines its whole character from the very outset. Proletarian conspiracy naturally affords them only very limited and uncertain means of subsistence. They are therefore constantly obliged to dip into the cash-boxes of the conspiracy. A number of them also come into direct conflict with civil society as such and appear before the police courts with a greater or lesser degree of dignity. Their precarious livelihood, dependent in individual cases more on chance than on their activity, their irregular lives whose only fixed ports-of-call are the taverns of the *marchands de vin*^a—the places of rendezvous of the conspirators—their inevitable acquaintance with all kinds of dubious people, place them in that social category which in Paris is known as *la bohème*. These democratic bohemians of proletarian origin—there are also democratic bohemians of bourgeois origin, democratic loafers and *piliers d'estaminet*^b—are therefore either workers who have given up their work and have as a consequence become dissolute, or characters who have emerged from the lumpenproletariat and bring all the dissolute habits of that class with them into their new way of life. One can understand how in these circumstances a few *repris de justice*^c are to be found implicated in practically every conspiracy trial.

The whole way of life of these professional conspirators has a most decidedly bohemian character. Recruiting sergeants for the conspiracy, they go from *marchand de vin* to *marchand de vin*, feeling the pulse of the workers, seeking out their men, cajoling them into the conspiracy and getting either the society's treasury or their new friends to foot the bill for the litres inevitably consumed in the process. Indeed it is really the *marchand de vin* who provides a roof over their heads. It is with him that the conspirator spends most of his time; it is here he has his rendezvous with his colleagues, with the members of his section and with prospective recruits; it is here, finally, that the secret meetings of sections (groups) and section leaders take place. The conspirator, highly sanguine in character anyway like all Parisian proletarians, soon develops into an absolute *bambocheur*^d in this continual tavern atmosphere. The sinister conspirator, who in secret session exhibits a Spartan self-discipline, suddenly thaws and is transformed into a tavern regular whom everybody knows and who really understands how to enjoy his wine

^a Publicans.—*Ed.*

^b Public house regulars.—*Ed.*

^c Persons with a criminal record.—*Ed.*

^d Boozer.—*Ed.*

and women. This conviviality is further intensified by the constant dangers the conspirator is exposed to; at any moment he may be called to the barricades, where he may be killed; at every turn the police set snares for him which may deliver him to prison or even to the galleys. Such dangers constitute the real spice of the trade; the greater the insecurity, the more the conspirator hastens to seize the pleasures of the moment. At the same time familiarity with danger makes him utterly indifferent to life and liberty. He is as at home in prison as in the wine-shop. He is ready for the call to action any day. The desperate recklessness which is exhibited in every insurrection in Paris is introduced precisely by these veteran professional conspirators, the *hommes de coups de main*.^a They are the ones who throw up and command the first barricades, who organise resistance, lead the looting of arms-shops and the seizure of arms and ammunition from houses, and in the midst of the uprising carry out those daring raids which so often throw the government party into confusion. In a word, they are the officers of the insurrection.

It need scarcely be added that these conspirators do not confine themselves to the general organising of the revolutionary proletariat. It is precisely their business to anticipate the process of revolutionary development, to bring it artificially to crisis-point, to launch a revolution on the spur of the moment, without the conditions for a revolution. For them the only condition for revolution is the adequate preparation of their conspiracy. They are the alchemists of the revolution and are characterised by exactly the same chaotic thinking and blinkered obsessions as the alchemists of old. They leap at inventions which are supposed to work revolutionary miracles: incendiary bombs, destructive devices of magic effect, revolts which are expected to be all the more miraculous and astonishing in effect as their basis is less rational. Occupied with such scheming, they have no other purpose than the most immediate one of overthrowing the existing government and have the profoundest contempt for the more theoretical enlightenment of the proletariat about their class interests. Hence their plebeian rather than proletarian irritation at the *habits noirs*,^b people of a greater or lesser degree of education who represent that aspect of the movement, from whom, however, they can never make themselves quite independent, since they are the official representatives of the party. The *habits noirs* also serve at times as their source of money. It goes without saying that the

^a Men of daring raids.— *Ed.*

^b Frock-coats.— *Ed.*

conspirators are obliged to follow willy-nilly the development of the revolutionary party.

The chief characteristic of the conspirators' way of life is their battle with the police, to whom they have precisely the same relationship as thieves and prostitutes. The police tolerate the conspiracies, and not just as a necessary evil: they tolerate them as centres which they can keep under easy observation and where the most violent revolutionary elements in society meet, as the forges of revolt, which in France has become a tool of government quite as necessary as the police themselves, and finally as a recruiting place for their own political *mouchards*. Just as the most serviceable rogue-catchers, the Vidocqs and their cronies, are taken from the class of greater and lesser rascals, thieves, *escrocs*^a and fraudulent bankrupts, and often revert to their old trade, in precisely the same way the humbler political policemen are recruited from among the professional conspirators. The conspirators are constantly in touch with the police, they come into conflict with them all the time; they hunt the *mouchards*, just as the *mouchards* hunt them. Spying is one of their main occupations. It is no wonder therefore that the short step from being a conspirator by trade to being a paid police spy is so frequently made, facilitated as it is by poverty and prison, by threats and promises. Hence the web of limitless suspicion within the conspiracies, which completely blinds their members and makes them see *mouchards* in their best people and their most trustworthy people in the real *mouchards*. That these spies recruited from among the conspirators mostly allow themselves to become involved with the police in the honest belief that they will be able to outwit them, that they succeed in playing a double role for a while, until they succumb more and more to the consequences of their first step, and that the police are often really outwitted by them, is self-evident. Whether, incidentally, such a conspirator succumbs to the snares of the police depends entirely on the coincidence of circumstances and rather on a quantitative than a qualitative difference in strength of character.

These are the conspirators whom Chenu parades before us, often in a most lively manner, and whose characters he sometimes eagerly and sometimes reluctantly describes. He himself, incidentally, is the epitome of the conspirator by trade, right down to his somewhat ambiguous connections with Delessert's and Marrast's police.

To the extent that the Paris proletariat came to the fore itself as a party, these conspirators lost some of their dominant influence, they

^a Swindlers.— *Ed.*

were dispersed and they encountered dangerous competition in proletarian secret societies, whose purpose was not immediate insurrection but the organisation and development of the proletariat. Even the 1839 revolt was decidedly proletarian and communist. But afterwards the divisions occurred which the veteran conspirators bemoan so much; divisions which had their origin in the workers' need to clarify their class interests and which found expression partly in the earlier conspiracies themselves and partly in new propagandist associations. The communist agitation which Cabet began so forcefully soon after 1839 and the controversies which arose within the Communist Party soon had the conspirators out of their depth. Both Chenu and de la Hodde admit that at the time of the February Revolution the Communists were by far the strongest party group among the revolutionary proletariat. The conspirators, if they were not to lose their influence on the workers and thus their importance as a counterbalance to the *habits noirs*, were obliged to go along with this trend and adopt socialist or communist ideas. Thus there arose even before the February Revolution that conflict between the workers' conspiracies, represented by Albert, and the *Réforme* people, the same conflict which was reproduced shortly afterwards in the Provisional Government. We would of course never dream of confusing Albert with these conspirators. It is clear from both works that Albert knew how to assert his own independent position above them, his tools, and he certainly does not belong to that category of people who practised conspiracy to earn their daily bread.

The 1847 bomb affair, a matter in which direct police action was greater than in any previous case, finally scattered the most obstinate and contrary-minded of the veteran conspirators and drove their former sections into the proletarian movement proper.

These professional conspirators, the most violent people in their sections and the *détenus politiques*^a of proletarian origin, mostly veteran conspirators themselves, we find again as Montagnards in the Prefecture of Police after the February Revolution. The conspirators however form the core of the whole company. It is understandable that these people, suddenly armed and herded together here, mostly on quite familiar terms with their prefects and their officers, could not fail to form a somewhat turbulent corps. Just as the Montagne in the National Assembly was a parody of the original Montagne and by its impotence proved in the most striking manner that the old revolutionary traditions of 1793 no longer

^a Political detainees.— *Ed.*

suffice today, so the Montagnards in the Prefecture of Police, the new version of the original sansculottes, proved that in the modern revolution this section of the proletariat is also insufficient and that only the proletariat as a whole can carry the revolution through.

Chenu describes the sansculotte life-style of this honourable company in the Prefecture in a most lively manner. These comic scenes, in which M. Chenu was obviously an active participant, are sometimes rather wild, but very understandable in view of the character of the old conspiratorial *bambocheurs*, and form a necessary and even a healthy contrast to the orgies of the bourgeoisie in the last years of Louis Philippe.

We will quote just one example from the account of how they established themselves in the Prefecture.

“When the day broke, I saw the group leaders arrive one after the other with their men, but for the most part unarmed [...]. I drew Caussidière's attention to this. 'I'll get arms for them,' he said. 'Look for a suitable place to quarter them in the Prefecture.' I carried out this order at once and sent them to occupy that former police guardroom where I had once been so vilely treated myself. A moment later I saw them come running back. 'Where are you going?' I asked them. 'The guardroom is occupied by a crowd of policemen,' Devaisse replied to me; 'they are fast asleep and we're looking for something to waken them with and throw them out.'—They now armed themselves with whatever came to hand, ramrods, sabre-sheaths, straps folded double and broom-sticks. Then my lads, who had all had greater or lesser reason to complain of the insolence and brutality of the sleepers, fell on them with fists flying and for over half an hour taught them such a harsh lesson that some of them took a considerable time to recover. At their cries of terror I dashed up, and I only managed with difficulty to open the door which the Montagnards wisely kept locked on the inside. It was a sight for sore eyes to see the policemen dashing half-undressed into the courtyard. They jumped down the stairs in one bound, and it was lucky for them they knew every nook and cranny in the Prefecture and were able to escape from the sight of their enemies hard on their heels. Once masters of the place whose garrison they had just relieved with such courtesy, our Montagnards decked themselves out triumphantly in what the vanquished had left behind, and for a long time they were to be seen walking up and down the courtyard of the Prefecture, swords by their sides, coats over their shoulders and their heads resplendent in the three-cornered hats once so feared by the majority of them.” (Pp. 83-85 [pp. 95-96].)

Now we have made the acquaintance of the Montagnards, let us turn to their leader, the hero of the Chenu saga, *Caussidière*. Chenu parades him all the more frequently before us as the whole book is actually directed against him.

The main accusations levelled against Caussidière relate to his moral life-style, his cavalier dealings in bills of exchange and other modest attempts to rustle up money such as any spirited Parisian *commis voyageur* in debt may and does resort to. Indeed, it is only the amount of capital which determines whether the cases of fraud, profiteering, swindling and stock-exchange speculation on which the

whole of commerce is based, impinge to any degree on the *Code pénal*. With regard to stock-exchange coups and the Chinese fraud which are especially typical of French commerce, it is worth referring for instance to Fourier's spicy descriptions in the *Quatre mouvements*, the *Fausse industrie*, the *Traité de l'unité universelle* and his posthumous works.²⁴⁰ M. Chenu does not even try to prove that Caussidière exploited his position as Prefect of Police for his own ends. Indeed a party can congratulate itself if its victorious opponents can do nothing more than expose such pathetic instances of commercial immorality. What a contrast between the petty dabbings of the *commis voyageur* Caussidière and the grandiose scandals of the bourgeoisie in 1847! The only reason for the whole attack is that Caussidière belonged to the *Réforme* party, which sought to conceal its lack of revolutionary energy and understanding behind protestations of republican virtue and an attitude of sombre gravity.

Caussidière is the only entertaining figure amongst the leaders of the February Revolution. In his capacity as *loustic*^a to the revolution, he was a most appropriate leader for the veteran professional conspirators. Sensual and endowed with a sense of humour, a regular of long standing in cafés and taverns of the most varied kind, happy to live and let live, but at the same time a brave soldier, concealing beneath broad-shouldered bonhomie and lack of inhibition great cunning, astute thought and acute observation, he possessed a certain revolutionary tact and revolutionary energy. At that time, Caussidière was a genuine plebeian who hated the bourgeoisie instinctively and shared all the plebeian passions to a high degree. Scarcely was he established in the Prefecture when he was already conspiring against the *National*, but without in so doing neglecting his predecessor's cuisine or cellar. He immediately organised a military force for himself, secured himself a newspaper, launched clubs, gave people parts to play and generally acted from the first moment with great self-confidence. In twenty-four hours the Prefecture was transformed into a fortress from which he could defy his enemies. But all his schemes either remained mere plans or amounted in practice to no more than plebeian pranks leading to nothing. When the conflicts became more acute, he shared the fate of his party, which remained indecisively in the middle between the *National* people and the proletarian revolutionaries such as Blanqui. His Montagnards split; the old *bambocheurs* grew too big for him and were no longer to be restrained, whilst the revolutionary section went over to Blanqui. Caussidière himself became increasingly

^a Wag, joker.—Ed.

bourgeois in his official position as Prefect and representative; on May 15²⁴¹ he kept prudently in the background and excused himself in the Chamber in an irresponsible manner; on June 23 he deserted the insurrection at the crucial moment. As a reward he was naturally removed from the Prefecture and shortly afterwards sent into exile.

We now go on to some of the most significant passages from Chenu and de la Hodde concerning Caussidière.

Scarcely was de la Hodde established on the evening of February 24 as General Secretary to the Prefecture under Caussidière when the latter said to him:

“I need reliable people here. The administrative side of things will always take care of itself more or less; for the time being I have kept on the old officials; as soon as the patriots have been trained, we shall *send them packing*. That is a secondary matter. What we must do is to make the Prefecture the stronghold of the revolution; give our men instructions to that effect; bring them all here. Once we have a thousand trusty comrades here, we shall have the whip hand. Ledru-Rollin, Flocon, Albert and I understand each other, and I hope everything will turn out all right. The *National* is for the high jump. And after that we shall republicanise the country all right, whether it likes it or not.”

“Thereupon Garnier-Pagès, the Mayor of Paris, under whose command the *National* had placed the police, arrived on a visit and suggested to Caussidière he might prefer to take over command of the castle at Compiègne instead of the unpleasant post at the Prefecture. Caussidière replied in that thin high-pitched voice of his which contrasted so strangely with his broad shoulders: ‘Go to Compiègne? Out of the question. I am needed here. I have got several hundred merry lads down there doing a splendid job; I am expecting twice as many again. If you at the Hôtel de Ville haven’t enough good will or courage, I’ll be able to help you.... Ha, ha, *la révolution fera son petit bonhomme de chemin, il le faudra bien!*’^a—‘The revolution? But it’s over!’—‘Pshaw, it’s not even started yet!’—The poor Mayor stood there looking like an utter ninny.” (De la Hodde, p 72 [pp. 103-05].)

Amongst the most amusing scenes described by Chenu is the reception of the police officers and *officiers de paix* by the new Prefect, who was in the middle of a meal when they were announced.

“‘Let them wait,’ said Caussidière, ‘the Prefect is *working*.’ He went on working for a good half-hour more and then set the scene for the reception of the police officers who were meanwhile lined up on the great staircase. Caussidière sat down majestically in his armchair, his great sabre at his side; two wild, bloodthirsty-looking Montagnards were guarding the door, arms ordered and pipes in their mouths. Two captains with drawn sabres stood at each side of his desk. Then there were all the section leaders and the republicans who formed his general staff, grouped around the room, all of them armed with great sabres and cavalry pistols, muskets and shot-guns. Everyone was smoking and the cloud of smoke filling the room made their faces seem even more sombre and gave the scene a really frightening aspect. In the centre a space had remained clear for the police officers. Each man put on his hat and Caussidière gave the order for them to be brought in. The poor police officers wanted nothing

^a The revolution will go its little way, it will have to!—*Ed.*

better, for they were exposed to the vulgarity and threats of the Montagnards, who would have liked to fricassee them in every sauce known to man. 'You gang of blackguards,' they bellowed, 'now it's our turn to have got you! You won't get out of here, you'll be flayed alive!...' As they entered the Prefect's office they felt they were exchanging Scylla for Charybdis. The first to set foot on the threshold seemed to hesitate a moment. He was uncertain whether to advance or retreat, so menacing were all the eyes fixed upon him. At last he ventured a step forward and bowed, another step and bowed more deeply, another step again and bowed even more deeply still. Each made his entry with deep bows in the direction of the awful Prefect, who received all these marks of respect coldly and in silence, his hand resting on the hilt of his sabre. The police officers took in this extraordinary scene with eyes like saucers. Some of them, beside themselves with fear and no doubt wanting to curry favour with us, found the tableau imposing and majestic.—'Silence!' commanded a Montagnard in sepulchral tones.—When they had all come in, Caussidière, who had neither spoken nor moved until that moment, broke the silence and said in his most fearful voice:

"A week ago you scarcely expected to find me here in this position, surrounded by trusty friends. So they are your masters today, these cardboard republicans, as you once called them! You tremble before those whom you subjected to the most ignoble treatment. You, Vassal, were the vilest *séide*^a of the fallen government, the most violent persecutor of the republicans, and now you have fallen into the hands of your most implacable enemies, for there is not one present here who escaped your persecutions. If I listened to the just demands that are put to me, I would take reprisals. I prefer to forget. Return to your posts again, all of you; but if I ever hear that you have lent a hand to any reactionary trickery, I shall crush you like vermin. Go!

"The police officers had been through every gradation of terror, and happy to escape with a dressing-down from the Prefect, they went off in good spirits. The Montagnards who were waiting for them at the bottom of the stairs escorted them to the end of the rue de Jérusalem with a hubbub of catcalls and jeers. Scarcely had the last of them disappeared when we burst out into a tremendous fit of laughter. Caussidière was beaming and laughed more than anyone at the magnificent prank he had just played on his police officers." (Chenu, pp. 87-90 [pp. 99-102].)

After March 17, in which Caussidière played a big part, he said to Chenu:

"I can raise up the masses and set them against the bourgeoisie whenever I like." (Chenu, p. 140 [p. 154].)

Caussidière never actually went further with his opponents than playing at giving them a fright.

Finally, concerning Caussidière's relations with the Montagnards, Chenu says:

"When I mentioned to Caussidière the excesses his men were indulging in, he sighed, but his hands were tied. The majority of them had lived his life with him, he had shared their joys and sorrows; several had done him good turns. If he was unable to restrain them, it was a consequence of his own past." (P. 97 [pp. 109-10].)

^a Fanatic.—Ed.

We would remind our readers that both these books were written at the time of the campaign for elections of March 10.²⁴² Their effect is clear from the election result—the brilliant victory of the reds.

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