

The Salon Anarchiste of Paris

The most interesting anarchists in Paris are not those of the Ravachol - Vaillant school. The propaganda made in the noisy, ranting anarchist journals is not the most enlightening. I perhaps not the most influential. The Salon Anarchiste - if ^{to me have been} ~~it is~~ ^{has been} allowed the expression - ~~are~~ ^{has} much more worthy of attention.

The evening of the day that Vaillant threw the bomb in the French Chamber of Deputies, a gentleman came in late to a French dinner party where I happened to be a guest and brought the Gaul-lux any one had had of the affair. A dead silence greeted his story. No one was stirred by the horror of the act - a horror intensified by the uncertainty, at that moment, about the extent of the harm done. The silence was broken by a poet, well-known in Paris salons, the author of some very pleasing verses, a member of the staff of a successful review, a man of letters, culture, and talent.

"Superb!" he cried. "superb, nobly done!" The effect was profound. The bomb of the Chamber was nothing beside this unexpected approval of dynamite throwing, coming from such a source.

The news-beater remarked that most of the victims were said to be women.

"But that is nothing to me" answered the handsome, rosy poet.

The next evening at a literary dinner in the city a young poet declared in a wait-still-the hand which had thrown the bomb had made a beautiful gesture.

These are samples of a kind of talk which

that

~~have~~ ^{been} heard in many Parisian salons ~~last~~ ^{last} winter. As a rule those who ~~use~~ ^{use} express these opinions are insistent. It is not a pose. It is not mere "talk". They are convinced that society is badly organized and that nothing less than dynamite will force its suppression to reconstruction. They would not throw a bomb themselves, but they are willing to approve when it can be done safely. They probably would conceal the thrower of the dynamite if they had the chance.

So numerous are these anarchist-dilettanti that they have even ~~received~~ ^{been} dignified by the name of a school. In literature ^{and art} their aim is to break down the traditions, to force new forms of speech, a new style, a fresh ideal. To give room for airing their ideas. They have founded several reviews. The earliest of which ~~has~~ ^{was} begun 1891 was called L'En Dehors or Without. According to the motto which it adopted the new union appealed to "him who ~~was~~ ^{was} enrolled under no banner and that ^{national} impulse alone guided" to him ^{who is} "without the law, without the schools". It numbered among its contributors some writers well-known to readers of French journals: Octave Mirabeau, de Regnier, Paul Adam, Alex. Cohen.

Among the followers of L'En Dehors are several reviews which ~~will~~ ^{are} openly anarchist nevertheless ~~are~~ ^{are} none or less incendiary. Such are Entretiens, the Mercure de France, the Idée Libre, the Revue Blanche. Decidedly the wildest of all these periodicals is the Revue Anarchiste.

This. Organ, unhappily cut short in its career by the reaction which followed the Vaillant bomb and which led to new and severe laws against the license of the press, boldly defended the person who attempted to ^{kill} ~~kill~~ ^{murder} a Serbian minister a few months ago in Paris. It found his arguments sound, his action heroic.

"He did right" said one of the defenders of the new school to me. "The man who dies of hunger has no right to kill himself or to die until he has killed a bourgeois. It is the fault of the bourgeois element that he has not been able to get work. His death or suicide alone will make no body stink out let him kill somebody before he dies and he will free society - to think."

In matters of social policy ~~there~~ this is the gay doctrine of this new school.

"The fault of the bourgeois" is the reason always given. If you quote an act of selfishness "It is bourgeois!" If you cite ~~an~~ ^{the} ~~case~~ ^{case} of narrow-mindedness. "It is bourgeois spirit!" In fact among many of the French just now the word bourgeois has the same meaning that aristocrat ~~is~~ had a hundred years ago.

Many things unpleasant or weak, silly or wicked were dubbed aristocrat by the patriots of 1789. The pet adjective for the shells of Paris then notoriously unseemly and disagreeable, was aristocrat. So now all that offends the taste or the intellect is bourgeois. It is not merely a class which the word designates. It is an attitude of mind, a way of looking at things.

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When Mr. ^{Charles} ~~Stead~~ ^{Stead} ^{of} ^{the} ^{Editor} ^{of} ^{the} ^{Illustrated} ^{London} ^{News} ^{said} ^{that} ^{the} ^{Woman} ^{of} ^{Chicago} ^{that} ^{they} ^{were} ^{the} ^{most} ^{disreputable} ⁱⁿ ^{the} ^{city}; ^{he} ^{would} ^{have} ^{said}, ^{had} ^{he} ^{been} ^a ^{Frenchman}, ^{the} ^{most} ^{bourgeois}. In applied to society it means that a selfish character which occupies itself simply with itself, which is bent on helping all it has and getting all it can, with being comfortable before everything else, with thinking as little as possible of what is disagreeable in life, with following the easy traditions it has adopted and with resenting nothing so much as the effort of another to change ^{its} ~~its~~ opinions, to call its attention to those things in life which it does not want to see.

A curious feature of this hatred of the bourgeois spirit which always strikes me when I hear the discussions of the salon anarchists is that its basis is largely artistic, thus

young men - they are almost invariably young - are
 lords of beauty. They sing to the finger tips at the
 sight of a new harmony in color, a fresh image
 in verse. They are sensitive to the harmony of
 things. Now it is unquestionable that there is
 nothing more artistic in the world than self-
 ishness. If there is anything profoundly in-
 harmonious it is your comfortable, well-to-do
 man who ~~closes~~ closes his eyes to misery and
 eats, sleep, and enjoys himself as if there was
 nobody in the world but himself.

A purely frivolous woman occupies her-
 self simply with society & her own pleasure is
 profoundly & disagreeable from an artistic stand-
 point. Everything about her is "out of proportion"
 she hasn't a proper "perspective". She doesn't har-
 monize with her surroundings.

At bottom this lack of harmony explains the no
~~French~~ little of the anarchist spirit among culti-
 vated Frenchmen. They want to get ^{the wrong element} out of sight.
 It is ugly. It spoils the ensemble of society. It
 is commonplace & vulgar, ~~and they~~ ^{it} is mildly and
 degrading ^{to} ~~to~~ taken pity and sympathy. There are
 noble and generous sentiments and are essential in
 every man to make him harmonious in society.
 But when a class refuses to ^{be} touched, refuses even to
 see or to think of the suffering side of life, then
 you have an ugly deformed cement. Put a
 bomb under it. It is the simplest way of getting
 rid of the blot.

No more who believe with the utopians that
 great movements occur each cycle of a
 hundred years there is amusement in tracing
 the ~~connections~~ resemblances between the present
 anarchist movement in France and the Revolution

of 100 years. These "salon anarchists" have their counterpart in the Girondins, those brilliant and audacious young fellows who having their heads full of Plutarch and Rousseau thought themselves capable of reconstructing society on an entirely new basis and did their best to destroy from the bottom all that existed in order to have a chance to realize ~~their~~ ^{their} social construction made of dreams and to put into operation their paper constitution.

The Girondins, like these salon anarchists, were not ready to use the guillotine any more than these salon anarchists are the bomb, but they justified the practice and applauded the destruction as necessary to make the aristocrats think and they saw in general massacre a fitting vengeance on the part of the long-suffering people.

If one wants to ~~to~~ carry the comparison between 1794 and 1894 further he finds some very entertaining parallels. One especially curious ~~one~~ ^{rather trivial} is the difference between the anarchist almanac of this year, and time of 100 years ago. The former, the Almanach des Pères Peinards and is called — discards entirely the calendar

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is called _____ discards entirely the calendar
in use and returns to that of the Convention. Its com-
illustration shows even as a motto, a bare(?) work-
man, his knee holding a bourgeois against a wall
shakes him. With his knee while he chokes him
with his hands. Other cheerful pictures of this
sort adorn the book which mainly occupies
itself with calling the rich hated names
and advising dynamite and ^{at every opportunity} ~~hymns~~. Its closing
suggestion is that - a ^{brigandage} ~~bourgeois~~ fin-de-siècle
is in order and that - the new society should
occupy itself with stopping locomotives instead
of diligences - a suggestion which no doubt Piers
Prinard drew from Western news papers.

The modern anarchists - like the revolutionists -
have their Carmagnole, a campaign song, it
is called the Ravachole and its chorus runs:

Come dance the Ravachole
Long live the sound, long live the sound, long live the
sound of dynamite -
All the bourgeois shall taste the fight -
All the bourgeois shall taste the fight -

4.
Oh, its coming, coming, coming.

All the bourgeois 'll be put to flight."

A translation rather too free, perhaps, to be put in quotation marks but which serves to show that the spirit of the rallying songs of these modern destroyers of society is sufficiently like that of Carraquole and C. a. m.

Indeed all their songs are not less sanguinary than those of the Terrorists; in all of them the doctrine seems to be as one of them puts it:
"If you want to be happy
Go hang your neighbor"

A singular comparison which might be made is between the apotheosis of Marat after his assassination by Charlotte Corday and that - which the anarchists have attempted to create for Ravachol, who was guillotined last year. Like Marat, Ravachol has become the martyr of his party. A genuine cult honors him. He is their type and their inspiration. The almanac of PÈRE PEINARD represents the "hero" apotheosized. His bust, framed in a guillotine and illuminated by the rays of the sun serves as a ^{design} ~~model~~ for a stained glass window - a ^{suggestion} ~~decoration~~ which some of the artistic and well-to-do "salon anarchists" certainly would do well to follow in their decorations of their apartments.

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