

ON THE FLY-LEAF OF ERCKMANN-CHATRIAN'S NOVEL
ENTITLED "MADAME THÉRÈSE"¹

Wavered the foremost soldiers,—then fell back.
Fallen was their leader, and loomed right before
The sullen Prussian cannon, grim and black,
With lighted matches waving. Now, once more,
5 Patriots and veterans!—Ah ! 'Tis in vain!
Back they recoil, though bravest of the brave;
No human troops may stand that murderous rain;
But who is this—that rushes to a grave?

It is a woman,—slender, tall, and brown!
10 She snatches up the standard as it falls,—
In her hot haste tumbles her dark hair down,
And to the drummer-boy aloud she calls
To beat the charge; then forwards on the *pont*^o
They dash together;—who could bear to see
15 A woman and a child, thus Death confront,
Nor burn to follow them to victory?

bridge

I read the story and my heart beats fast!
Well might all Europe quail before thee, France,
Battling against oppression! Years have past,
20 Yet of that time men speak with moistened glance.
*Va-nu-pieds!*² When rose high your Marseillaise³
Man knew his rights to earth's remotest bound,
And tyrants trembled. Yours alone the praise!
Ah, had a Washington⁴ but then been found!

¹ Erckmann-Chatrion was the pen name of two nineteenth-century French authors who wrote collaborative novels together, Émile Erckmann and Louis-alexandre Chatrion. *Madame Thérèse* (published in 1863) is set in France during the years 1793 and 1794. This was an extremely volatile period in France's history; 1793 is the year of Robespierre's Reign of Terror. It also was a time during which the French Republic was vigorously defending itself against an alliance of armies representing many European countries that sought to bring stability to France via a restoration of the French monarchy (though King Louis XVI was executed in January 1793 and Queen Marie Antoinette was executed in October 1793). Dutt's sympathies here are (again, as in "France, 1870") with the French. In this poem, she renders a particular scene from *Madame Thérèse* in which the French are engaged with part of the Prussian army.

² "*Va-nu-pieds!*" serves as a rallying cry here, invoking the earlier 1639 popular uprising in France known as the Revolt of the Tramps.

³ "La Marseillaise" is the French national anthem.

⁴ George Washington was the leader of the American army during the American Revolutionary War and the first President of the United States.