

**MARGARET MULLER,
A STORY OF THE LATE
WAR IN FRANCE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649643363

Margaret Muller, a Story of the Late War in France by Eugene Bersier & Mrs. Carey Brock

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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EUGENE BERSIER & MRS. CAREY BROCK

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WAR IN FRANCE**



"Laying her trembling hand upon my head, she said, 'Go on, my child; go on as you have begun, my dear, dear child.'" — Page 54.

MARGARET MULLER.

A STORY OF THE LATE WAR IN FRANCE.

BY

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FREELY TRANSLATED

BY

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LONDON. MDCCCLXXII.



MARGARET MULLER.

CHAPTER I.

MY GRANDMOTHER.

MY grandmother is a very old woman. She has many things to tell us. She was twenty-two years old when she married, and came from Alsace to settle in our village of St. Rémy. She had often seen the great Emperor Napoleon, who constantly passed through our provinces on his way to his wars. At first, he was happy and successful, there seemed no limit to his power and his popularity; afterwards, every one owed him a grudge, and my grandmother used to feel quite sorry for him. She had seen kings go through

our village also, and the Emperor of Russia—all, she used to say, sent by God to punish the man who, in order to increase his own dominions, had deprived the poor French mothers of their sons.

I had always envied my grandmother the glory of having seen so many things. I used often to say to myself, that, however old I might grow, it would never be my fate to see anything worth seeing, and that I should never have anything to repeat to *my* grandchildren, when they gathered round me in my old age, in the chimney-corner, which would be worth the telling. I don't know, of course, what may have been happening in other parts of this big world since I came into it, but this I know for certain, that until quite lately I had never seen or heard anything in our part that was worth talking much about. I believe that great things have been going on elsewhere, wars and revolutions, but they did not affect us in our quiet corner.

We have never had but one ruler ever since I was born. One day has always been exactly

like another, no difference at all between yesterday and to-day, except such little difference as was made by the small gossip of the village, and I was beginning to feel quite tired of leading such a still, dull life. So young and strong as I was too, I felt myself made for something much more stirring. I said something of the kind to grandmother one day, when we had settled ourselves as usual for our evening talk in the twilight, she in her old-fashioned arm-chair in the chimney-corner, Charlot and I at her feet.

"Grandmother," I said, "I'm getting quite tired of never seeing anything new, especially when I hear you tell of all the things you've seen and heard in those exciting times."

My grandmother frowned at me from underneath her heavy tortoise-shell spectacles.

"Child," she said, "for the love of God never wish to see war, or you'll live to repent of it. I could wish that I had never seen any of the things that I tell you about, and if such things are to come over again, may the Lord in His mercy see fit to take me to my rest first."

She never spoke another word the whole evening, but remained buried in thought. And she looked at me so gravely that I felt a kind of repentance come over me, as though I had said something which I ought not to have said, and a kind of dread lest God should take me at my word, and give me some terrible thing which in my folly I had wished to have.

Now I understand well all that my grandmother was feeling, and wished to say. I have seen more during the last two months than I ever desired to see, and I would gladly forget the horrors, which it makes my blood run cold to remember. Our poor little village! Our poor old grandmother! Well might she say that it would be better for her to die first! Once in a lifetime is indeed enough. Old people cannot bear such things twice. As for me, it seems to me that my twenty years have been doubled during these few weeks. If I was careless and giddy before, I am not so now. Folly and frivolity ought not to live through such times.

CHAPTER II.

THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR.

WE had been so quiet, so very quiet, in our old house, which did not stand quite in the village, but just at the entrance of the forest, hidden amongst the nearest trees, at the end of a lonely road. I had never felt the least frightened at living there alone with our grandmother, and my little brother Charlot. No one would have been the better for trying to molest us. And one thing is certain—if we had not lived where we did, in our out-of-the-way corner, we should have lost everything we possessed before now. Most probably, indeed, I should not be alive to tell my little tale of all that came to pass very soon after I had uttered my foolish wish, and grandmother had frowned at me, and replied to it with words of remonstrance and reproof.