



A Race for the North
Another Fairy Tale for
Children of European Descent
Ash Donaldson

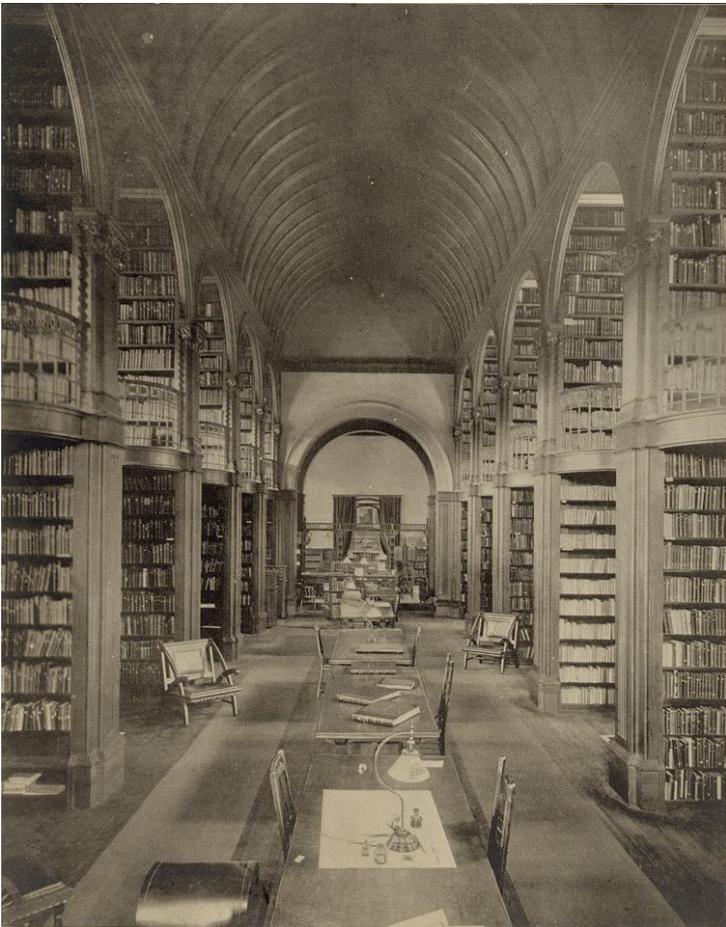


CHAPTER 4 THE SCHOLAR

Sir John was correct on both counts, for rarely has a cause so captured the imagination as the quest to find the gallant Lord Franklin and his crew. And the driving force behind it all was Lady Jane, who would not give up hope that her husband was alive somewhere. She wrote to kings and queens, to presidents and prime ministers, imploring them to aid in her quest. Her own money she spent freely, paying for ships and provisions to search all the unknown lanes of the ice-bound North. But before I continue that story, I must introduce another.

For there was another encounter in those days of June 1847, one even more fateful. In the quiet town of Brussels, Belgium, in a quiet floor of a quiet library, a young man sits at a table, surrounded by piles of dusty books. You can see that he sports the beard that is fashionable for young men of this time. He is a scholar, a man of learning, but it is not the past that concerns him. No, for him, the past is something to be overcome. His country, too, is something

to be overcome – Germany, land of poets and thinkers. For though he was born there, and his family has lived there for generations in fact, he feels himself a stranger in a strange land, not just in Germany, but everywhere in Europe. He is not of the sons of Arius, and he feels only contempt for the world they have made. But here, in the library, he can order ideas about the way he wished he could order men about, to make them do as he wishes. It is a world that exists only in his mind, but how to make it become reality? That is the question that troubles him.



The windows grow dark, for outside a storm is brewing. The young man listens to the rumbling of distant thunder, hears the storm gathering power as it moves ever closer. He watches rain fall on the window pane, sees how each droplet bulges as it takes in more water. Then that critical moment arrives, as one drop bursts its bounds and courses downwards, taking others down along with it. How he would like to be like that drop, to sweep along all who lie in his path so that they only add to his power.

Light flashes through the window as a booming crack splits the air. The window shatters, and the shards of glass fall on the floor, only inches from his feet. At first he shrinks back in terror, for if the blast had any more force, one of those shards could have struck him. But then he notices something in the jagged pieces of glass, a pattern in how they lie on the floor. His eyes trace the orderly rows, the geometric patterns of glass bits. Surely this is not the randomness of Nature, but an order only man can impose.

Or something more than man.



The rumbling returns, only now it is within the room, not outside it, carried there by the force of wind that rustles through the young man's unkempt hair. He hears a voice, but the voice is not in the rumbling that swells and dips and rises again, but in a gentle whisper:

“Karl, son of Herschel, son of Marx, why do you busy yourself with dry books?”

The scholar, nearly frightened out of his wits, stutters in reply, “B-because they have p-power.”

The whisper speaks again, “True enough. But do you know how to wield it?”

The young man answers, “I – I know how to s-s-silence anyone who disagrees with me. They – they don't see the vision.”

“What vision?” the voice whispers, while outside the thunder rolls like a kettle drum.

Karl looks down at the broken glass. He thinks of the world that others have created, the world that scorns geniuses like him. He doesn't want to create; he wants to destroy everything they have made, to watch their faces as everything they love comes crashing down. And on the ruins of the old world, he would create a new. Like the glass shards in their neat, orderly rows, it would be a world of order. Everyone would be the same, so there would be no disagreements. A world without borders, without nations, without any distinctions.

He tells all this to the voice, as best he can. The whoosh of the wind seems to Karl like laughing. The voice replies, “Yes, mortal man, it will be as you say! The world

will come undone, and I will give you the power. But first you must go back to your comrades and tell them that the time for secret societies and nighttime meetings is over. They must form a league, and be bold, and unfurl the red banner in open air, where Brother Wind will flutter it. And you, Karl, son of Herschel, son of Marx, will write a book of your own, a pamphlet with the power of a thousand books, a million books, all in one!”

“But how shall I write such a book?”

“I will make you as myself, and share some of my power with you: the violence of the storm, the power to sweep all before you.”

And he shares a vision with the young man, showing that power as it will play out in years to come. Young Karl sees the millions who will flock to his banner across the world, sees their ruthlessness as the forces of the past try to resist. He sees rivers of blood, and great camps where those who disagree with his plan are worked to death. And watching over it all, he sees his own face, etched in granite, looking down on the masses like a Giant. They would all know and appreciate his genius then.

There will be setbacks, and those, too, he sees. His ideas will be scoffed at and ridiculed; his walls will be torn down, his statues toppled. But he will have his revenge. There are weapons more dangerous than guns, long marches that not just soldiers undertake. In the heart of the enemy his disciples will lodge, in his schools and his churches, in his newspapers and universities, in all the places where minds are shaped and the young formed. He



is given a vision of tiny Brussels, sprouted into the capital of Europe, as all the borders of nations which stood against him become meaningless. There will be no need to force men to adopt his ideas then, for they will stumble into them on their own. It shall be the rule of the scholars, the experts, those who know better than their own people, with no god but Progress, with Karl as his prophet.

“Do you desire this?” the voice whispers, and lightning cracks outside.

“Yes!”

“I have given you more than mortal man has a right to know, and of all this you will remember only the essence.”

And in that moment, the storm relents.

It is as the Storm Giant said – when Karl steps out into

the bright sunlight of June, he has no clear memory of what has happened. But he finds himself possessed of a new energy, as he sweeps away his opponents and unites the movement into a new league under the red banner.

That winter, however, as he sits in the tavern of the white swan, the howling wind outside brings back that day in the library. What had it been? A ghost? A specter? Or that creature they call the golem, of which his superstitious grandfather, the rabbi, would tell stories? Or had it been his own imagination? No, the shattered glass was real enough.



He writes the opening lines of his manifesto: “A specter is haunting Europe –”

He looks down at the words on the page. *Specter or not*, he decides, *I am the genius, I am the one whose ideas will storm the world. Crowns will fall and governments will tremble at what I hereby unleash.* And so Karl Marx finishes the sentence before him:

“– the specter of communism.

