

GERMINAL

Émile Zola

Introduction and Notes by **Dominique Jullien**Translated by **Havelock Ellis**

Émile Zola's unflinchingly told story of a daring coal miners' strike in northern France was published in 1885, when the prolific author was at the height of his powers. Today some readers believe this novel will prove to be his most enduring work. Spare yet compassionate, *Germinal* takes us from the comfortable homes of the bourgeoisie to the dark bowels of the earth, describing unbearable human suffering and exploitation in vivid and unsentimental prose.

Étienne Lantier, a poor but spirited young laborer in search of work, shares the wretched lives of the coal miners of Le Voreux, where the brutish and dangerous working conditions consume the health and prospects of young and old, one generation after another. Impoverished, ill, and hungry, the miners inspire Étienne to attempt a revolt against the Company, an overthrow of "the tyranny of capital, which was starving the worker." They answer his desperate call for a strike that grows increasingly violent and divisive, testing loyalties and endangering Étienne's life even as it offers the workers their only hope of a decent existence. In a harrowing climax, the unforeseen consequences of the strike threaten to engulf them all in disaster.

Dominique Jullien is a professor of French at Columbia University and the University of California-Santa Barbara, and the editor-in-chief of the *Romanic Review*. Her books include *Proust et ses modèles: Les Mille et une Nuits et les Mémoires de Saint-Simon* and *Récits du Nouveau Monde: les Voyageurs français en Amérique de Chateaubriand à nos jours*.

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